

Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

# Annual Review 2020/21



# Chair's Foreword

Our last Annual Review came out just at the start of the Covid restrictions, and we're all hoping that this one will mark the end of them. The intervening year has been unusual and remarkable for all in the Partnership. Access to the countryside proved valuable for physical and mental health as never before; there was an upsurge of interest in Nature and our place in it and the litter bins filled to overflowing. All matters for the Partnership's future attention.

Despite the various restrictions the Partnership managed to deliver positive change in the AONB, even in this most difficult of years. Trees have been planted in historic parks and orchards, hedgerows have been laid and woodlands have been managed. Many of the volunteer groups that we assist, such as the Geosite Maintenance Volunteers, managed to continue their good works. Much of our social activity, be it governance meetings, training or discussions with landowners moved online, but progress was made.

During this year, larger scale projects which look to be of great significance for the future of the AONB were conceived: we started work on the AONB's first ever Nature Recovery Plan and the National Association for AONBs produced an Arts Strategy to enable areas such as ours to help people to make a stronger, emotional connection with the natural world. The government also announced the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme which means dedicated funds for conservation within protected landscapes during a time of transition in how land management is funded and prioritised.

The diversity of voices and experience within the Partnership has helped us navigate this unexpected year. We all draw comfort from that strength and look forward to a clearer run in 2021/22.

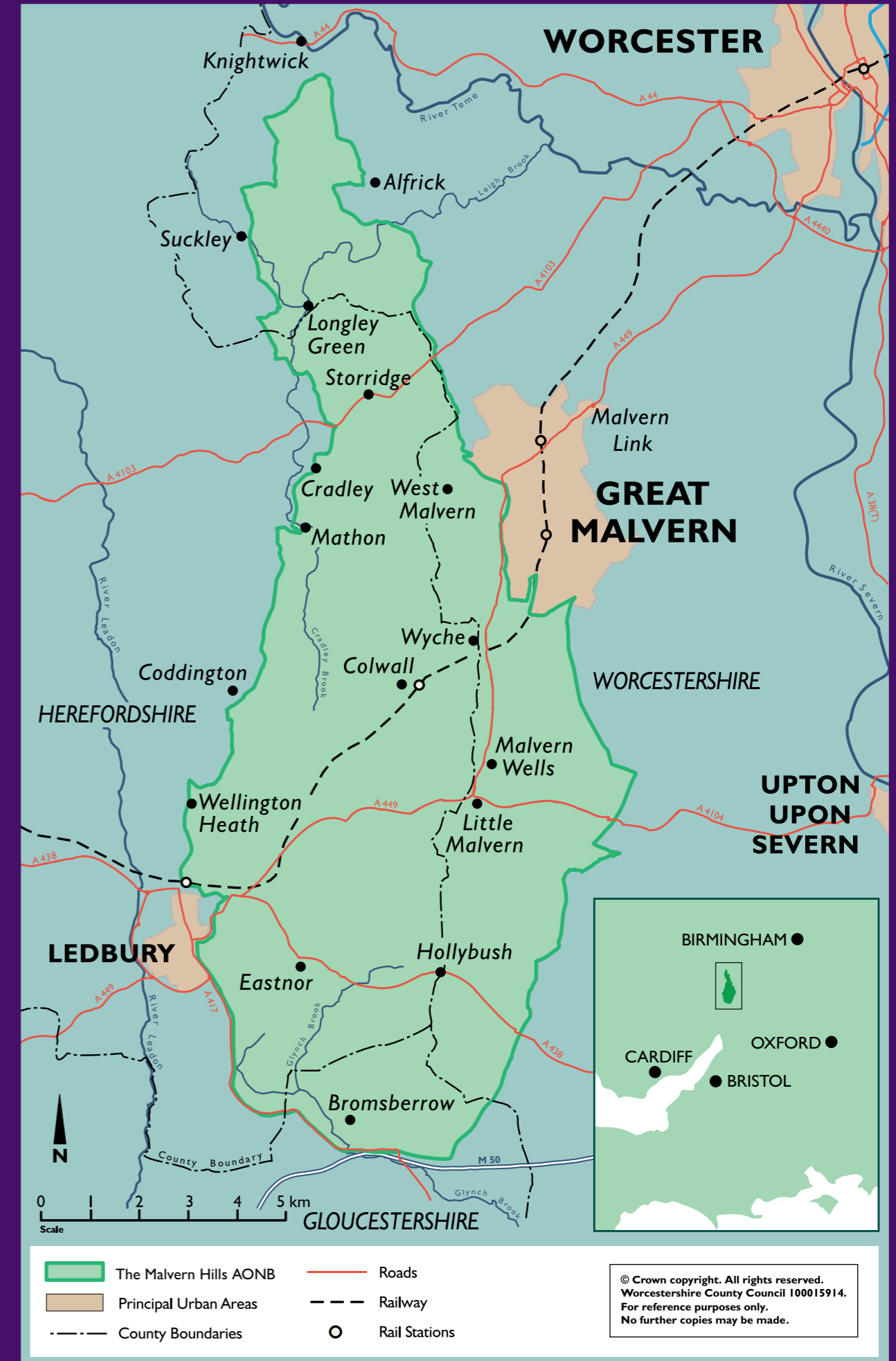


Gwyneth Rees  
Chair, Malvern Hills AONB  
Joint Advisory Committee

The AONB Partnership is an umbrella term comprising all of those bodies and individuals that work together to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB. More information on the Partnership can be found at: [www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/aonb-partnership](http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/aonb-partnership)

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# Location of the Malvern Hills AONB



# An overview of key points



**44 advisory visits** to support landowners

**c.200 acres of land** entered into Countryside Stewardship



**4 partnerships supported** by the AONB team

- Worcestershire Local Nature
  - Wentwood to Wyre
  - Teme Catchment
- Natural Capital Mapping

**72 detailed comments** made on planning applications within the AONB, 185 appraised



**Over £10,000 awarded** to 13 projects through the AONB sustainable development fund



**6 draft strategies or plans** appraised by the AONB team

- 4 Neighbourhood Development Plans
- 1 Planning Guidance document
- 1 Land Management Plan



**60 trees leaflet published** celebrating tree planting in our 60th year as an AONB



**5 Parish/Town councils** made a financial contribution to the work of the AONB partnership

**78 volunteers** actively supported the work of the AONB



**Over £15,000 worth of volunteer time** given to AONB Projects:

- Habitat Restoration
- Wildlife Surveys
- Sustainable Development Fund Projects



**1 barn painted** - to showcase how large agricultural buildings can 'fit' into the landscape

# A snapshot of activity highlights



**10 traditional orchards restored and planted** with the help of Colwall Orchard Group.



**Helping a local grazier** become an early-adopter of a fenceless grazing system.



**Assisting Butterfly Conservation** with the re-introduction of the Pearl Bordered Fritillary.



**Reaction Theatre** – AONB walks and workshops held for able and less able actors creating a film for our website.



**The Ecosystem Services** of the AONB were mapped\*



**Over £11,000 awarded** to 8 biodiversity enhancement projects

**4 important geological sites maintained** by Earth Heritage Trust volunteers.

**GEOLOGICAL SITE**

- 3 habitat surveys
- 2 Countryside Stewardship Schemes developed
- 2 Woodland and Meadow restoration plans



- 4 ha of parkland restored
- 4.5 ha of Traditional Orchards restored
- 4ha of meadow and coppice revived
- 400 native trees and shrubs planted



**250 hectares of grassland** across 9 land holdings surveyed for plant interest

**2 projects** to control tree destroying pests initiated.



\* Ecosystem services are the many benefits to humans provided by the natural environment, such as food and water, regulation of floods and carbon storage and recreational and spiritual benefits in natural areas.

# Working together

Every five years a management plan for the MHAONB is prepared, setting out our aims for protecting and enhancing this special area for those who live, work and visit here. We do this in partnership with our local communities and landowners and we aim:

- To maintain the distinctive character and natural beauty of the AONB
- To help people enjoy, value and care for the AONB
- To make the AONB a place of rich, diverse and abundant wildlife

The annual review is an opportunity to look at what we have achieved and to think about the future. Here are just a few of the projects we've supported this year.

With a local historian: producing a history of our most ancient and substantial estate in the area.



With Colwall Parish Council and Colwall Orchard Group: a nature board was created at Luggs Mills Orchard.



With Malvern Car Club: a contribution to an electric car for their fleet.



With the Earth Heritage Trust: a contribution to making access to Loxter Ashbed easier, as well as maintaining 4 geological sites.



With Graziers on the Hills, a Christmas marketing campaign to encourage diners to eat local meat from the Hills.



With a meadows volunteer: providing sampling equipment to test if field soils can grow wild flowers.



With 10 landowners in the North of the AONB. Advice about Countryside Stewardship and the proposed Environmental Management Scheme (ELMS).



With the Colwall Orchard Group and their volunteers: 9 traditional orchards were restored with 69 trees planted.



# Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund:

For three years now the Malvern Hills AONB unit has been running the Countryside Facilitation Fund. Funded by Defra. It is aimed at bringing together landowners to work on issues that know no property boundaries. This 'landscape scale' land management forms much of the government's conservation policy. The present round of funding has come to an end, but has now been extended. Some of what has been achieved in the last 3 years is shown below:

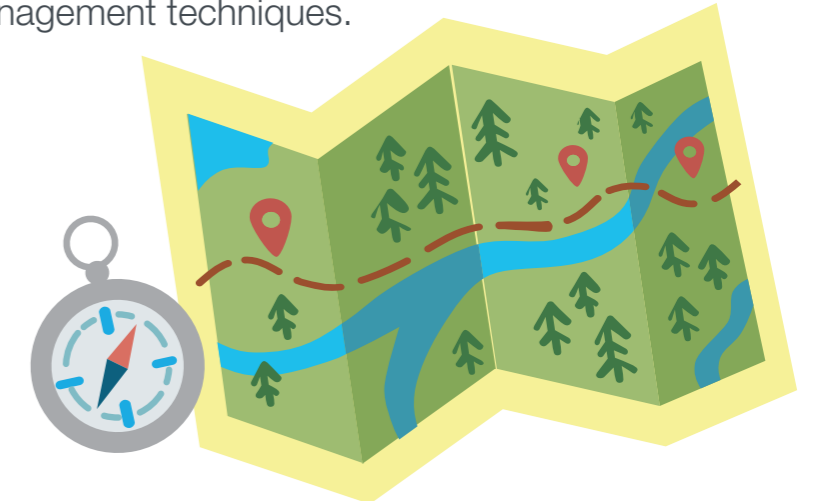
The Group has 15 members whose holdings cover most of the south-west quadrant of the AONB designation. The owners range from big estates to smallholders, covering 3600 hectares, all of whom are united in the 'landscape scale' vision of conservation.



A visit was made to the Eastnor estate to look at pest control. Deer, together with squirrels, are particularly damaging to new trees.



A mapping exercise was carried out with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust to reveal where species lived and how different populations could be connected by land management techniques.



Local woodlands were improved with the planting of 2000 trees under a Tree Health Grant and 2 woodland management plans were prepared.



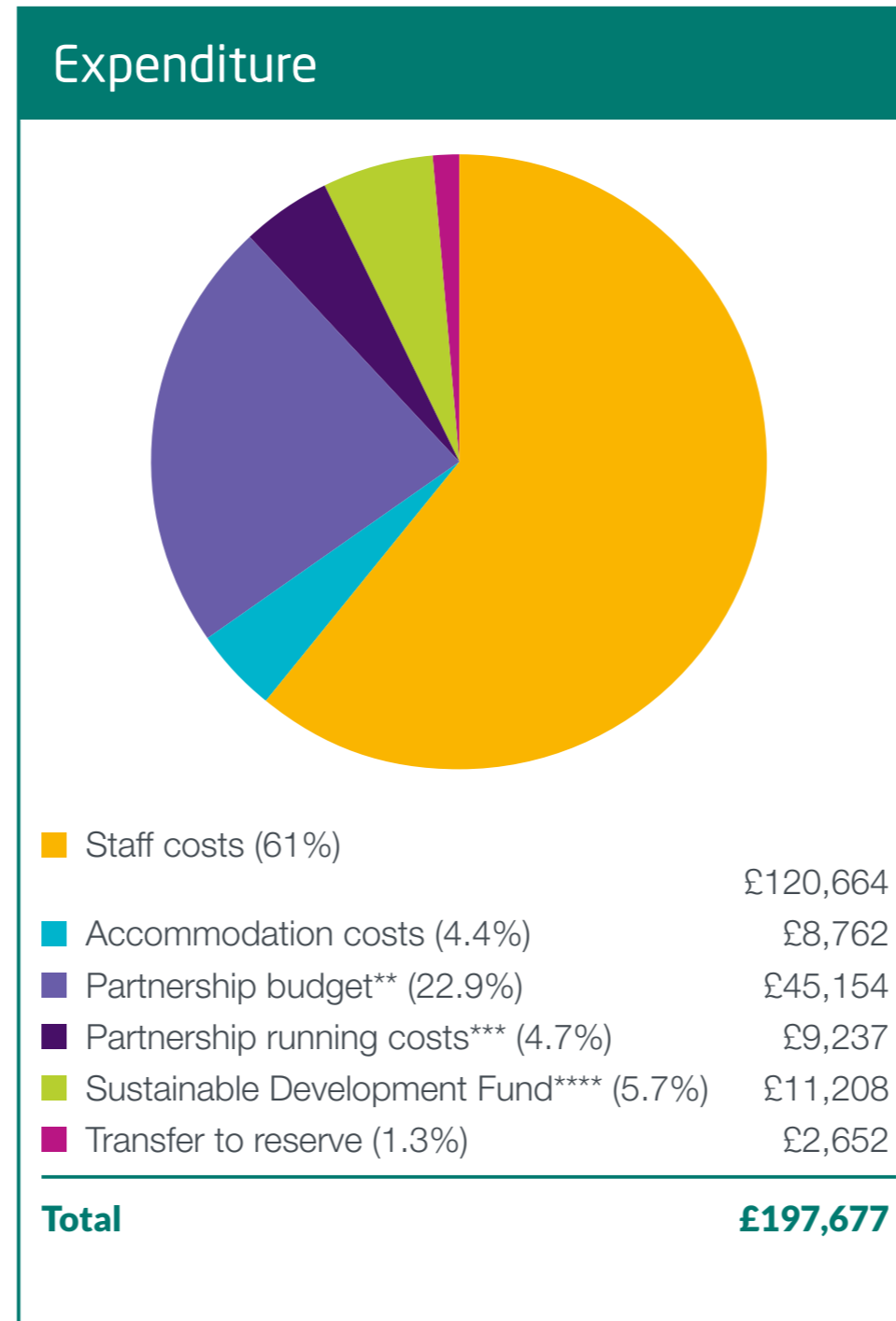
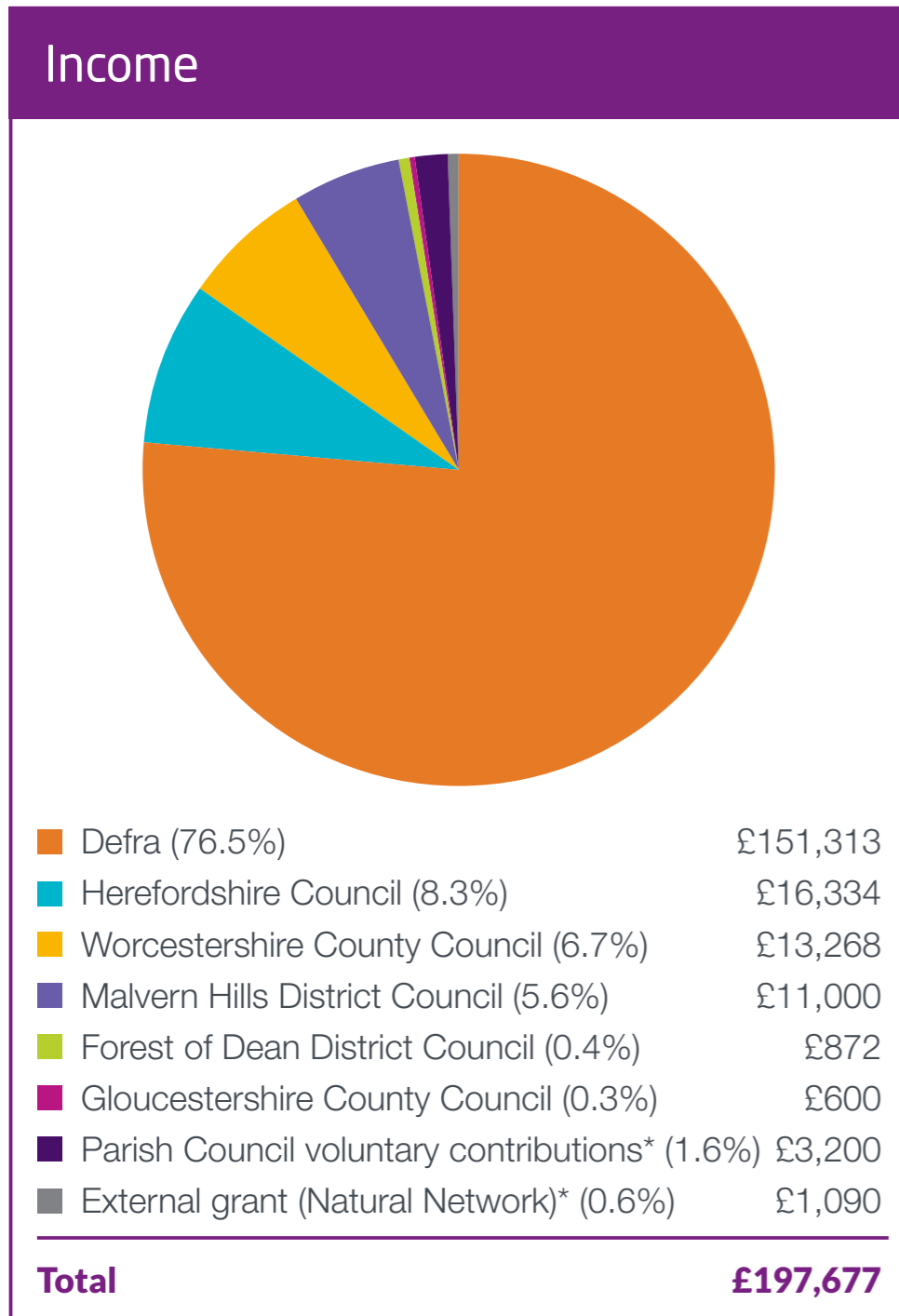
6 training events were held, attended by 131 people, covering topics from tree health to regenerative agriculture. A course on woodland management showed how landowners can combine shooting with conservation, with benefits for both.



Four botanical surveys were carried out, discovering areas rich in wildflower meadow plants. Two meadow restoration plans were prepared.



# AONB Unit Financial Structure



### Additional project income (and expenditure)

Malvern Hills Facilitation Fund	£1,921
Environmental Land Management Scheme advocacy	£7,202
<b>Total</b>	<b>£9,123</b>

\* Warm thanks to the Parish Councils of Colwall, Malvern Wells, Little Malvern and Welland, West Malvern and Wellington Heath

\*\* This supports a wide variety of projects undertaken by partners and the AONB Unit

\*\*\* This is paid to our host authority, Worcestershire County Council in return for services such as HR, Finance and IT Support

\*\*\*\* This supports projects that bring economic, social and environmental benefits in the AONB.

## The Unit staff structure for the year was as follows

AONB Partnership Manager:  
Paul Esrich

AONB Partnership Assistant Manager (job share):  
Karen Humphries and David Armitage

The following bodies provide core grant support to the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership:



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