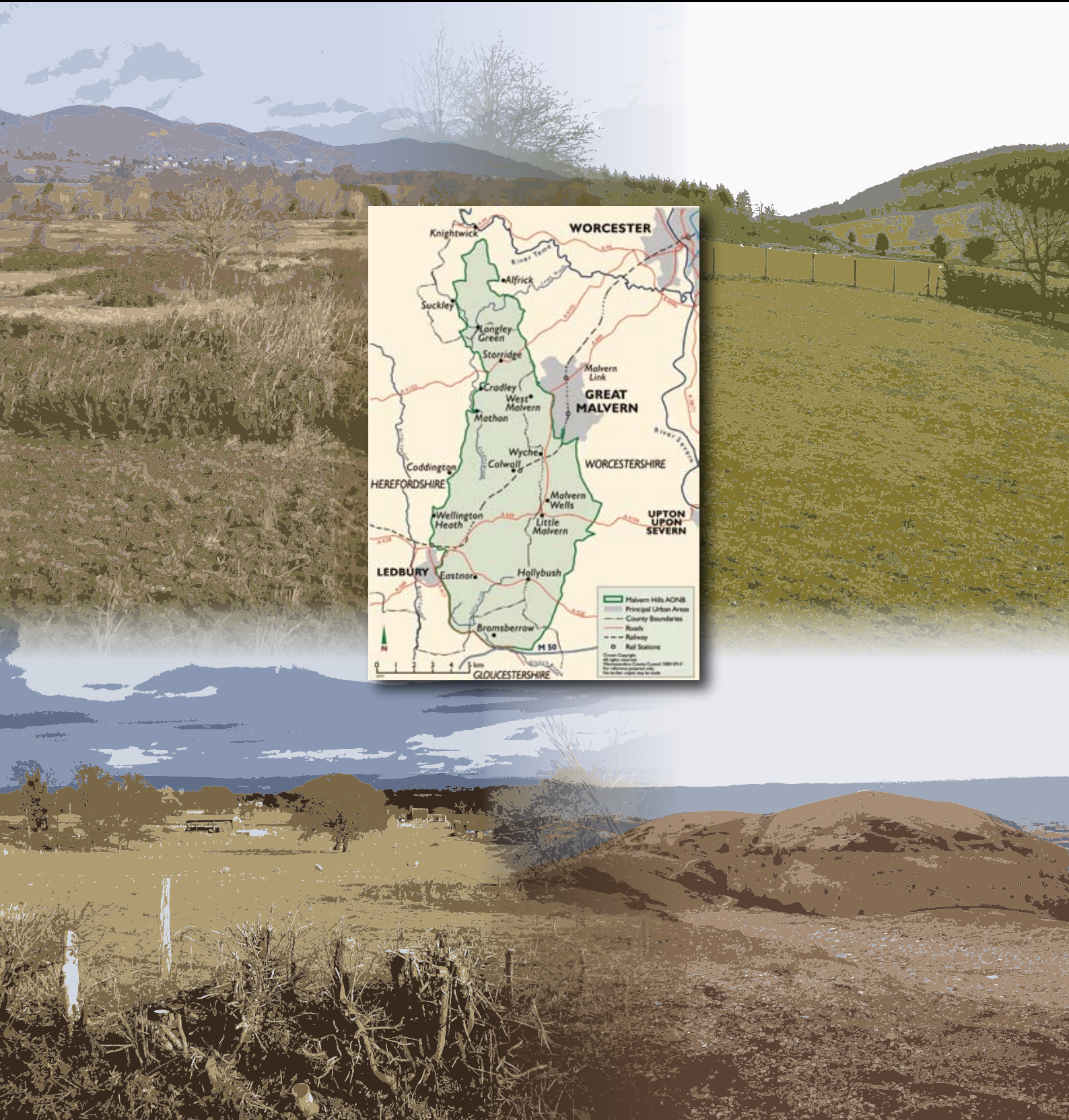


State of the Malvern Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty 2006

LANDSCAPE BIODIVERSITY GEOLOGY HISTORIC & BUILT ENVIRONMENT TRANQUILLITY ENJOYMENT



Introduction

This report provides a snap-shot of the condition of the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 2006. It does this by presenting information about a range of elements, or attributes, which are deemed to be characteristic of the area. The aim of the report is to provide a baseline of data against which future change can be monitored. When compared with future state of the AONB reports it will also aid decision making and provide a gauge of the effectiveness of the AONB Management Plan in conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the area.

At the time of writing, work to monitor the condition of designated areas is being developed at the national and local levels. New data sets are being collected and, at the same time, some data are becoming both easier to access and easier to utilise. The approach to data collection and analysis which has been used to compile the report is intended to be a start, rather than the final word, in how the special features of the Malvern Hills AONB should be monitored. We are aware that this report has its limitations and will consider new data sets and new approaches to collecting and using data as they emerge. We will then refine and improve our own methodology accordingly.

It should be noted that this report focuses on the presentation of data rather than on why or how it has been collected. Information on the justification and rationale for this work can be found in a report entitled 'A Methodology for Monitoring the Changing Condition of the Malvern Hills AONB' (Centre for Rural Research, 2006) available at www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk

Paul Esrich
 Manager, Malvern Hills AONB Unit

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I. LANDSCAPE: Fixed-point photography

Overview:

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) has emerged as a key approach to identifying and describing variation in the character of landscapes. This framework is used here to establish an objective programme of fixed point photographic monitoring of change throughout the AONB. In this way, subjectivity and cultural bias in the selection of key views, largely based upon scenic beauty and knowledge of accessibility, can be avoided.

Current Situation:

Drawing upon work conducted in the counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire, 27 detailed Landscape Description Units (LDUs) can be identified within the Malvern Hills AONB (Figure 1). LDUs are distinct, relatively small areas in which historical, physical and biological features are similar in their appearance and purpose. Hence, LDUs can be regarded as the individual building blocks of the landscape.

One fixed point photography location has been identified for each of the 27 LDUs in the AONB. A mathematically calculated central point, known as a 'centroid', informs the objective selection of each monitoring point. The images taken from these monitoring points provide an indication (and no more than an indication) of the appearance and condition of each LDU.

All images depicted over the subsequent 9 pages were recorded in February and March 2006. The images are organised according to the general appearance of the landscape, known as Landscape Character Type. Each LDU belongs to a generic Landscape Character Type (Figure 1). The text provided alongside each image identifies some of the features that are deemed to be characteristic of each LDU and also refers to current condition. This has been done with reference to detailed descriptive work that exists at the local level. The LDU number is included simply by way of cross-reference to its geographic location shown in Figure 1.

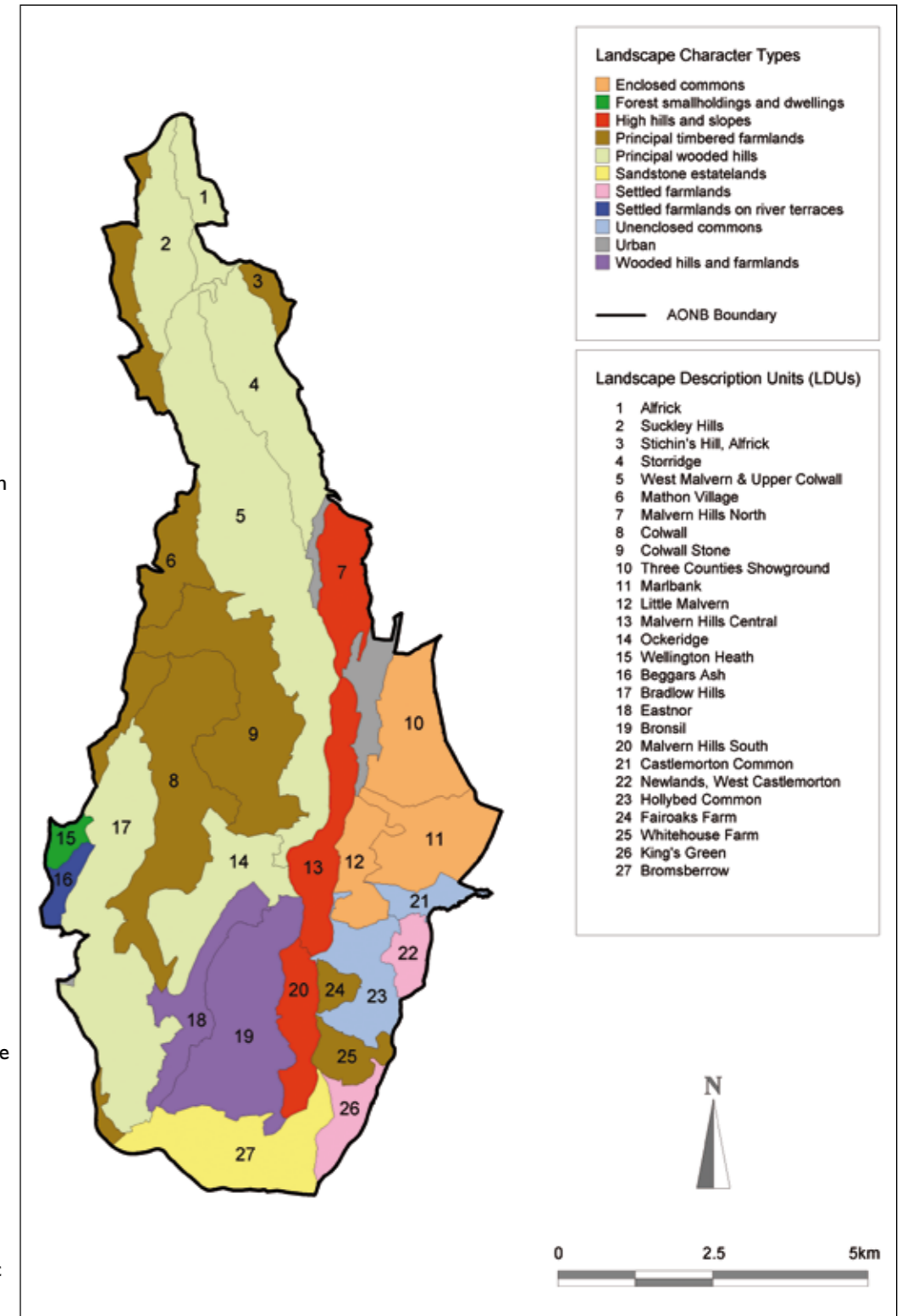


Figure 1: Landscape Character Types and Landscape Description Units for fixed photographic monitoring within the Malvern Hills AONB.

Principal Wooded Hills

West Malvern and Upper Colwall (LDU 5)

Characteristics:

- Wooded hilltops are characteristic
- Field trees are relatively abundant adding to wooded character
- Land use is extensive

Condition:

- There is some incursion of conifers into the landscape
- The influence of nearby urban areas is evident by structures associated with a sewage farm



Storrige (LDU 4)

Characteristics:

- Blocks of woodland dominate hill summits
- Land use is extensive
- Hedged field boundaries contribute to visual unity

Condition:

- There are fewer hedgerow trees than might be expected
- Uniformity of woodland age is a concern



Suckley Hills (LDU 2)

Characteristics:

- Hills are dominated by blocks of woodland
- Old orchards link woodland with the practice of agriculture

Condition:

- Coniferisation has a negative visual impact
- Non-vegetative boundaries detract from wooded character
- Gardens associated with new dwellings add a suburban element



Principal Wooded Hills

Bradlow Hills (LDU 17)

Characteristics:

- Blocks of woodland dominate hilltops

Condition:

- Intensive arable production undermines wooded character
- Field boundaries are becoming discontinuous
- Field boundary trees are more evident where they are near the main blocks of hill woodland



Alfrick (LDU 1)

Characteristics:

- Woodland is prominent on hilltops, framing views
- There is a mixture of extensive and intensive land use

Condition:

- Some field boundaries and trees have been lost
- Intensive cultivation breaks the link between woodland and field habitats



Ockeridge (LDU 14)

Characteristics:

- Ancient semi-natural woodland dominates hills

Condition:

- Land is intensively farmed for arable production
- The link between woodland and farmland has been broken
- Field boundaries are in poor condition with few hedgerow trees



Principal Timbered Farmlands

Colwall (LDU 8)

Characteristics:

- Views filtered by trees and woodland are characteristic
- Hedgerow trees are particularly dominant in the landscape

Condition:

- Species and age variation of trees remain good
- Some arable land use incursion and deterioration in boundary condition is evident



Stichin's Hill, Alfrick (LDU 3)

Characteristics:

- This is a small-scale landscape of irregular fields
- Hedgerow trees are important landscape features

Condition:

- Hedgerow boundaries themselves are becoming 'gappy'
- Derelict standard tree orchards dominate this unit



Colwall Stone (LDU 9)

Characteristics:

- Tree cover is prominent within the landscape
- Fields are small and pastoral

Condition:

- Native species, such as oak, are becoming replaced with non-natives or specific trees associated with land use (note the line of poplars)
- Gardens associated with settlement also disrupt landscape character



Principal Timbered Farmlands

Fairoaks Farm (LDU 24)

Characteristics:

- Irregular field pattern
- Landscape has a wooded character

Condition:

- Field reorganisation towards a more planned landscape is evident
- Hedgerow trees are now the main link with wooded landscape character
- Arable cultivation is apparent, reducing the functionality of hedge boundaries
- Hedgerow trees survive best along boundaries associated with small watercourses



Whitehouse Farm (LDU 25)

Characteristics:

- Field trees, hedgerow trees and small copses contribute to the wooded character of this landscape
- Settlement is dispersed

Condition:

- There has been significant replacement of hedgerows with post and wire fencing
- This has added straight line elements undermining the irregular, small field pattern



Mathon Village (LDU 6)

Characteristics:

- Ideally, a small-scale, irregular landscape with prominent tree cover
- Dispersed timber and brick buildings

Condition:

- Intensive agriculture undermines the complex, small scale nature of this landscape
- The associated 'organic' field enclosure pattern is absent
- Tree cover is not well represented
- Incongruous modern buildings, both agricultural and residential, are evident



Enclosed Commons

Little Malvern (LDU 12)

Characteristics:

- Planned enclosure pattern is apparent
- Hedgerow trees are prominent
- Field trees are a feature of this view, though are uncommon in the LDU and this landscape character type

Condition:

- The enclosure pattern is becoming less distinct over time
- Boundary removal and/or replacement is in evidence
- Field pattern is relict and vulnerable, shown by hedgerow trees growing out



Marlbank (LDU 11)

Characteristics:

- Hedgerow trees are strongly associated with watercourses
- Landscape has a pastoral tradition

Condition:

- Arable cultivation represents a break with the pastoral tradition of this landscape type
- Enclosure boundaries are tightly managed and growing out
- Hedgerow removal is evident as functionality is lost



Three Counties Showground (LDU 10)

Characteristics:

- Fields are relatively large and regular in shape
- Tree cover is sparse, with isolated specimens surviving
- A relatively open landscape of small dispersed settlement

Condition:

- There has been removal of 19th century enclosure boundaries
- Modern agricultural structures are conspicuous



High Hills and Slopes

Malvern Hills North (LDU 7)

Characteristics:

- This is unenclosed, steeply sloping land of highland character
- Rough grassland and heath dominate
- Prominent hills give exposed views

Condition:

- The landscape is unwooded, though scrub encroachment is a problem
- Significant recreational pressure, with some erosion, is a feature of these northern, highest hills



Malvern Hills South (LDU 20)

Characteristics:

- Bare summits are characteristic
- These southern high hills have greater evidence of woodland surrounding their bare summits
- Former quarrying activity is conspicuous in the LDU

Condition:

- There is incursion of bracken and scrub on the hills themselves and in adjacent fields
- Visitor pressure is evident from paths in the vegetation, but is generally less acute than in the higher central and northern hills



Malvern Hills Central (LDU 13)

Characteristics:

- Summits of unenclosed high hills are prominent

Condition:

- A lack of grazing is leading to encroachment by bracken and scrub
- Encroachment has reached an advanced stage with the establishment of trees in a sheltered col on the ridge line.
- Heavy recreational pressure is evidenced by distinct, wide paths



Wooded Hills and Farmland

Bronsil (LDU 19)

Characteristics:

- Mixed land use is characteristic of this landscape type
- Woodland occurs in discrete blocks, sometimes as plantations

Condition:

- The sub-regular enclosure pattern is becoming lost as hedgerows disappear
- Decline of hedgerows lessens the visual unity of the landscape between fields and woodland



Eastnor (LDU 18)

Characteristics:

- This is a relatively open landscape framed by tree cover
- Lines of trees are prominent along watercourses
- Moderate slopes offer flexibility for mixed agricultural land use

Condition:

- The pattern of previous field enclosure has largely been lost



Forest Smallholdings and Dwellings

Wellington Heath (LDU 15)

Characteristics:

- An intimate landscape of dense settlement and scattered trees
- Small wayside red-brick cottages are distinctive
- Features associated with smallholdings, such as ranch style fencing and 'horsiculture', are prominent

Condition:

- Infill has led to a mixture of settlement types undermining distinctive character
- Landscape is assuming a suburban appearance



Unenclosed Commons

Hollybed Common (LDU 23)

Characteristics:

- An open landscape of distinctive character
- There are occasional patches of scrub
- Residential development occupies the periphery

Condition:

- Character is essentially being maintained in this LDU
- Paths are evident as a criss-cross of darker green lines within the pale brownish unimproved grassland, indicating recreational pressure



Castlemorton Common (LDU 21)

Characteristics:

- The landscape has a distinctive open character
- The land is unenclosed rough grazing with few trees
- Settlement is restricted to wayside dwellings on the perimeter of commonland

Condition:

- A lack of grazing is leading to scrub encroachment



Sandstone Estatelands

Bromesberrow (LDU 27)

Characteristics:

- A landscape of intensive, often arable, agriculture
- Fields are characteristically large within a planned landscape
- Woodland occurs in discrete blocks in an otherwise open landscape of few trees
- Reddish soil reveals sandstone geology
- Clusters of red-brick dwellings are common

Condition:

- The high intensity of agriculture is leading to a lack of need for, and thus loss of, distinctive features
- Post and wire fencing replaces vegetative enclosure boundaries



Settled Farmlands Pastoral Land Use

King's Green (LDU 26)

Characteristics:

- Topography is rolling with a general lack of tree cover
- There was traditionally a pastoral use of land

Condition:

- Intensive arable farming has now commonly replaced pasture
- Hedgerow functionality has been reduced as indicated by gaps in, and removal of, these boundaries
- Rationalisation of field pattern has left some irregularly shaped boundaries in the landscape



Newlands, West Castlemorton (LDU 22)

Characteristics:

- A patchwork of pastoral land uses is associated with this landscape character type
- Land use is mixed
- Fields are regular, reflecting planned enclosure
- Trees are thinly scattered as occasional hedgerow trees or sometimes as field trees where boundaries have been removed

Condition:

- Intensive agriculture now dominates
- Fields are becoming larger in size
- Hedgerows are very uniform and becoming gappy



Settled Farmlands on River Terraces

Beggars Ash (LDU 16)

Characteristics:

- Only a fragment of this landscape character type exists within the AONB
- River terraces give rise to fertile sandy soils, encouraging horticultural land use
- Woodland is generally absent, with hedgerows demarcating field boundaries

Condition:

- Intensive orchard fruit cultivation dominates this LDU



2. LANDSCAPE: Agricultural Change

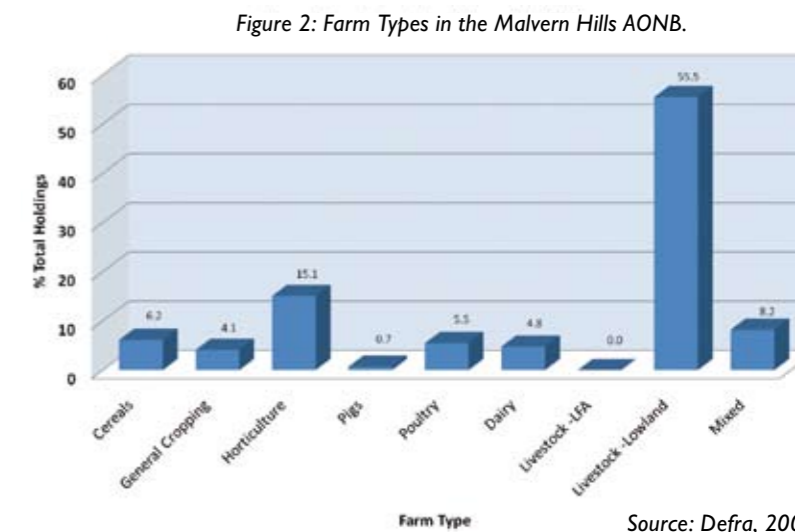
Overview:

Grass-based farming systems are the predominant land use within the AONB. The importance of livestock in the AONB is also reflected in the holding size structure. Almost one half (48.5%) of holdings within the Malvern Hills AONB are less than 20 hectares in size and only 10.6% are in excess of 50 hectares. Part-time farmers constitute 44.1% of the agricultural labour force. Owner-occupation is overwhelmingly the most common form of land tenure at 80.5% of the AONB land area.

Current Situation:

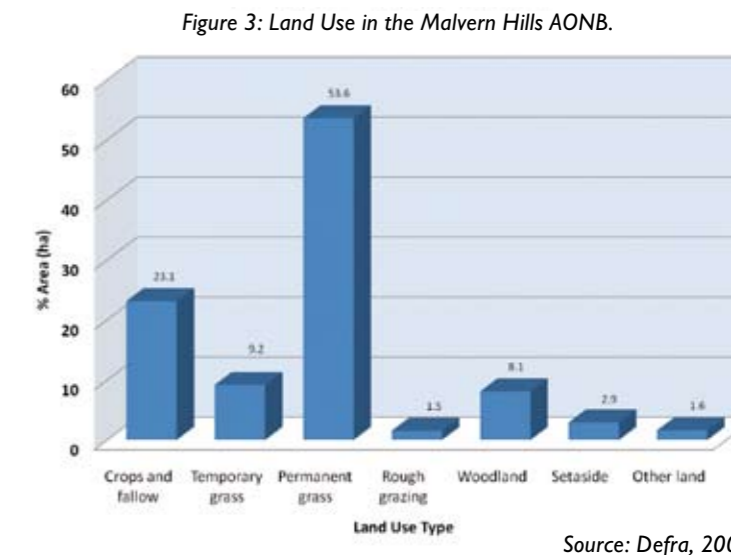
i) Farm type

Figure 2 demonstrates that farms devoted to livestock production dominate the agricultural scene in 2006. Horticultural farms are the second most prevalent holding type. Cereals and general cropping together account for just over 10% of the AONB's holdings by type.



ii) Land use

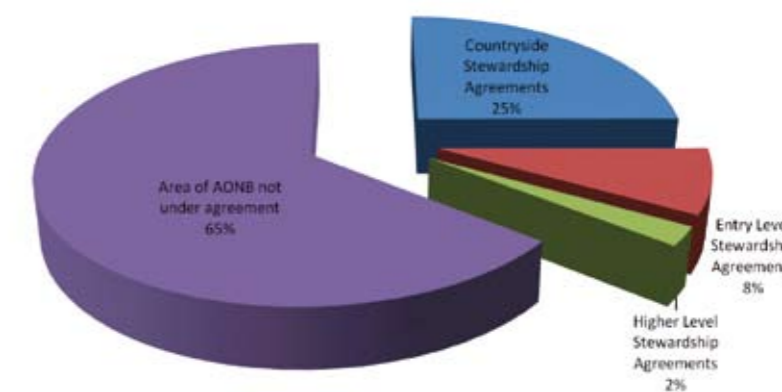
In land use terms, permanent grassland occupies the greatest area (Figure 3). Woodland area is small but relatively significant at 8.1% of the utilised agricultural area.



iii) Area under agri-environmental schemes

Figure 4 demonstrates the uptake of the main English agri-environmental schemes in the AONB. In 2006, 24 active agreements cover 35% of the AONB land area. Although closed to new applicants, Countryside Stewardship (CSS) is active over one quarter of the Area. Entry Level Environmental Stewardship (ELS) stands at 8% of area. Although difficult to assess due to changes in recording within the Agricultural Census, there has been an AONB trend towards an increased area of permanent grassland and a decrease in cropped area since 2000. The agreement totals for ELS and Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) are modest, but it must be remembered that these options are relatively new. The area under ELS may increase in future years, as may HLS through new entrants and the transference of some of those currently in CSS into HLS. Overall, because 35% of the AONB is managed in this way, it can be anticipated that a significant reduction has been achieved in the propensity of agricultural activities to act as a force for detrimental landscape change within the AONB

Figure 4: Area (%) of Malvern Hills AONB Under Agri-environmental scheme agreement.



3. BIODIVERSITY: Condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Overview:

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) have been designated since 1949 to protect the very best of the country's wildlife and earth heritage (geology, geomorphology). The Malvern Hills AONB has 15 SSSIs either completely or partially within its boundary, representing 10.9% of its total area. The broad habitat and other types of SSSI in the AONB are recorded in Table 1.

Current Situation:

During 2006, no SSSI has been wholly or partially destroyed and only 2% of the total area is found to be declining in condition (Figure 5 and Table 1). The Government has set a Public Service Agreement (PSA) dedicated to improving the condition of SSSIs. The target is to have 95% of the total SSSI area in favourable or recovering condition by 2010. The Malvern Hills AONB achieves 89% of the SSSI area in favourable or recovering condition. This compares well with the current level of 71% of SSSI area reaching the PSA target in the West Midlands Region and 74% across England as a whole.

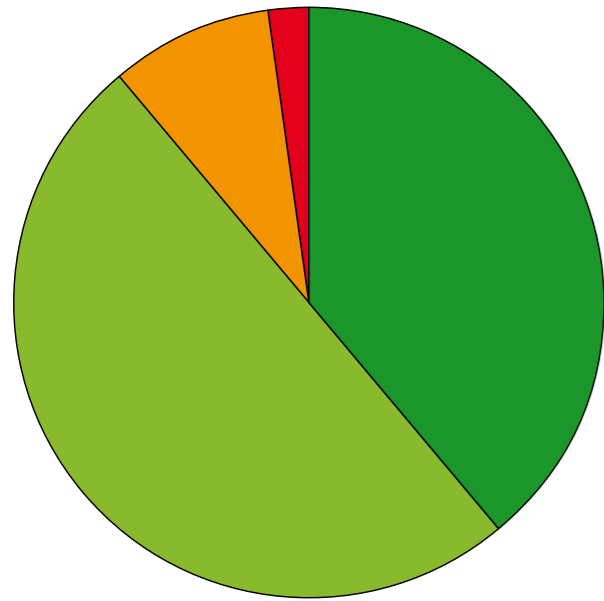


Figure 5: The Condition of SSSIs in the Malvern Hills AONB.

% Area favourable	457.28 ha	(39%)
% Area unfavourable recovering	577.94 ha	(50%)
% Area unfavourable no change	104.06 ha	(9%)
% Area unfavourable declining	24.04 ha	(2%)
% Area destroyed / part destroyed	0.00 ha	(0%)
% Area meeting PSA Target	1035.22 ha	(89%)

Source: Natural England, 2006

Table 1: The condition of SSSIs in the Malvern Hills AONB according to habitat type.

HABITAT TYPE	AREA (ha)	% of AONB SSSI area	CONDITION OF SSSI BY % AREA				
			Favourable	Unfavourable recovering	Unfavourable no change	Unfavourable declining	Destroyed/ part destroyed
Acid Grassland	535.28	46.01%	-	100.00	-	-	-
Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland	409.07	35.16%	68.25	10.08	21.67	-	-
Earth heritage	110.53	9.50%	86.94	-	-	16.06	-
Neutral grassland	101.94	8.76%	82.95	1.39	15.12	0.53	-
Calcareous grassland	5.74	0.49%	-	-	-	100.00	-
Built up areas and gardens	0.76	0.07%	100.00	-	-	-	-

Source: Natural England, 2006

4. GEOLOGY: Number and Condition of Regionally Important Geological Sites

Overview:

A reflection of the exceptional earth heritage of the Malvern Hills AONB is the number of sites that have been designated as Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS). These are selected on the basis of their educational, historic, aesthetic value or role in scientific study.

Current Situation:

Table 2 shows that there are 36 RIGS in the AONB at present and Figure 6 illustrates their geographical distribution. There are 28 different bedrock formations and 10 types of superficial drift deposits found within the Malvern Hills AONB. Currently, 18 bedrock formations and four superficial deposits are exposed at designated RIGS sites.

Three main types of site dominate:

- i) natural exposures, where rock comes to the surface;
- ii) former quarries where exposures of rock have been made visible;
- iii) cuttings made either naturally by rivers or artificially through road construction.

At present, information on the condition of RIGS in the AONB is unavailable. However, a condition monitoring regime for the Sites is currently being planned.



Figure 6: The occurrence and distribution of RIGS in the Malvern Hills AONB.

Table 2: The number of RIGS in the Malvern Hills AONB by type.

Bedrock	No of RIGS
Arden Sandstone Formation	-
Aymestry Limestone Formation	2
Bishop's Frome Limestone Member	-
Bridgnorth Sandstone Formation	1
Bromsgrove Sandstone Formation	-
Bronsil Shale Formation	2
Coalbrookdale Formation	1
Cowleigh Park Formation	1
Downton Castle Sandstone Formation	2
Eldersfield Mudstone Formation	-
Haffield Breccia Formation	-
Halesowen Formation	-
Hollybush Sandstone Formation	1
Lower Ludlow Shales Group	1
Ludlow Rocks (Undifferentiated)	-
Malvern Quartzite Formation	2
Malverns Complex	14
Much Wenlock Limestone Formation	3
Raglan Mudstone Formation	1
St Maughans Formation	-
Townsend Tuff Bed	-
Twynning Mudstone Formation	-
Unnamed Igneous Intrusion, Ordovician	2
Upper Ludlow Shales Group	1
Warren House Formation	2
White-Leaved Oak Shale Formation	1
Woolhope Limestone Formation	1
Wyche Formation	2
Superficial Deposits	
Alluvial Fan Deposits	-
Alluvium	1
Coddington Till Formation	-
Colwall Gelifulctate Formation	-
Glaciofluvial Deposits, Undifferentiated (Middle Pleistocene)	-
Head (Undifferentiated)	4
Mathon Sand and Gravel Formation	1
Power House Terrace Deposits (River Severn)	-
Redmarley Member	-
Tufa	1

Source: Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust and Gloucestershire Geoconservation Trust, 2006

5. HISTORIC AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT: Condition of Scheduled Ancient Monuments

Overview:

Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) are archaeological sites or historic buildings that are of national importance and have been afforded legal protection by English Heritage. SAMs can represent any period of human activity, from prehistoric times to the twentieth century, and not all are visible above ground. English Heritage is responsible for monitoring the condition of SAMs.



Table 3: Type and condition of SAMs in the Malvern Hills AONB.

Monument	Type	Condition
Midsummer Hill Camp	Iron Age hill fort	Last excavated 1969, surveyed 1999
Herefordshire Beacon (British) Camp	Iron Age hill fort	Excavated 1879, last surveyed 1999/2000
Dovecote at Barton Court	Medieval and later building	Cement rendered 1961, since whitewashed
Moated Site at Aubrey's Farm	Medieval and post-Medieval water-filled moat	Moat has been reduced in width by the dumping of rubble into it during the 1980s and 1990s
Bronsil Castle	15th century fortified house	BAR Register, Category D
Barrows adjoining county boundary (east of Gardener's Common)	Bronze Age round barrows	Evidence of early excavations apparent
The Shire Ditch	14th century boundary	Reappraisal through excavation and field mapping, 2005
Little Malvern Priory	Benedictine monastery, built 12th century, rebuilt late 15th century	Watching brief associated with drainage works, 1990s

Source: English Heritage, 2006

Current Situation:

The Malvern Hills AONB contains 8 SAMs, ranging from small individual structures, such as Bronsil Castle or the Dovecote at Barton Court, to the linear feature of the Shire Ditch which runs for many miles. Table 3 shows the classes of monuments found in the Malvern Hills AONB.

The condition of these monuments is known where there has been recent archaeological work conducted or where listed in the SAM record, as is noted in Table 3. Some sites occur on private property and are not open to investigation by the general public. More information on condition is available where a monument is recorded in the English Heritage Buildings at Risk (BAR) Register. This includes all Grade I, Grade II and II* listed buildings and scheduled monuments (structures, rather than earthworks) that are known to be 'at risk' through neglect or decay, or are vulnerable to becoming so. These are given a priority category between A (immediate risk of further rapid deterioration with no solution agreed) and F (repair in progress and new use agreed). No systematic information on the condition of SAMs is currently available.

In the AONB, only Bronsil Castle is on the BAR Register. It is rated priority category D, indicating that the structure is in slow decay but with an agreed solution that is waiting to be implemented. Consolidation work was undertaken in 1991 to secure the structure, and tree felling work was scheduled at the site in 2006 as part of a management agreement. These measures will work towards removing Bronsil Castle from the Register and securing its long term future.



6. HISTORIC AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT: Condition of Listed Buildings, Parks and Gardens

Overview:

The built environment makes an important contribution to the character of the Malvern Hills AONB and is recognised as one of its special qualities. 'Listed buildings' are buildings or other structures officially designated by English Heritage as being of special architectural, historical or cultural significance. Listing does not mean a building must be 'fossilised', but does ensure that its architectural and historic interest is carefully considered before any internal or external alterations are approved.

Buildings are graded in one of three categories according to their importance, with Grade I listed buildings given the greatest amount of legal protection.

- Grade I buildings of exceptional interest
- Grade II* particularly important buildings of more than special interest
- Grade II buildings of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them

Current Situation:

Listed Buildings

The most recent figures available indicate that there are a total of 339 listed buildings within the Malvern Hills AONB (Table 4). Their spatial distribution is shown in Figure 7. Of these, 5 are classified as Grade I listed, indicating that they are of exceptional national interest (Table 5).

Parks and Gardens

In addition to the listed buildings, the Malvern Hills AONB also has two listed parks and gardens:

- Grade II* Eastnor Castle
- Grade II Hope End

Table 4: Listed buildings by category in the Malvern Hills AONB.

Grade	Number of Properties	% of Total Listed Buildings - AONB
I	5	1.5
II*	25	7.4
II	309	91.1
Total	339	100

Source: English Heritage, 2006

Information on the condition of listed buildings, parks and gardens is currently unavailable.

Figure 7: The occurrence and distribution of listed buildings in the Malvern Hills AONB

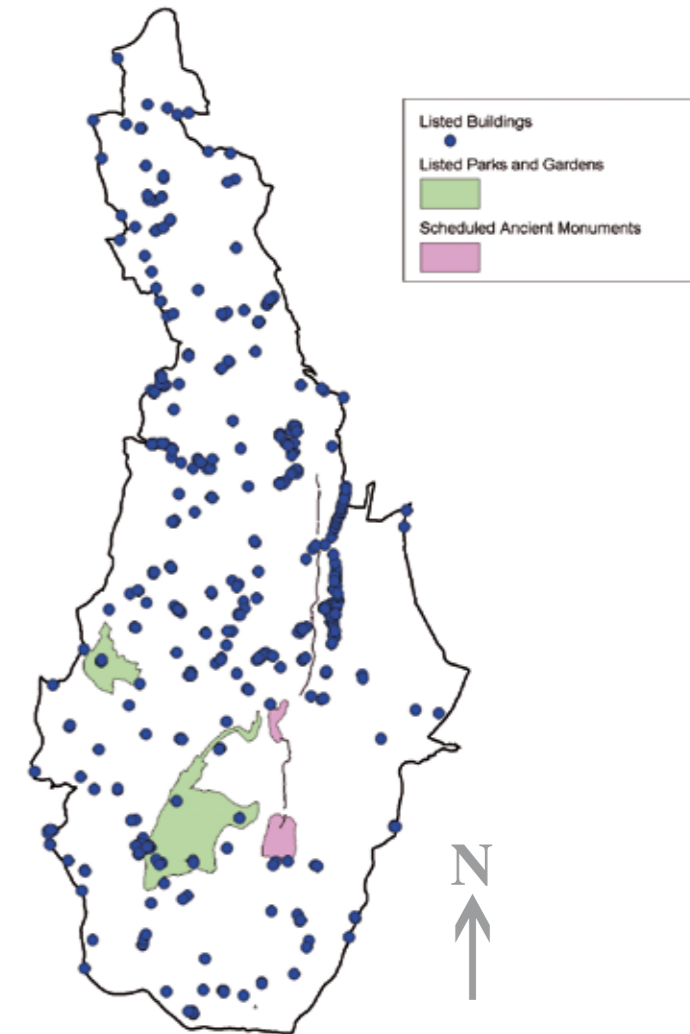


Table 5: Grade I listed buildings in the Malvern Hills AONB.

Grade I Listed Buildings
The White House, Suckley
Church of St John the Baptist, Eastnor
Ledbury Park, Ledbury
Eastnor Castle, Eastnor
Church of St Giles, Little Malvern

Source: English Heritage, 2006



7. TRANQUILLITY: Tranquillity Index

Overview:

Tranquillity is one of the special qualities of the Malvern Hills AONB. Its assessment is facilitated by the recent publication of the tranquillity map of England by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE). The country has been divided into 500m by 500m squares and then scored positively or negatively on 44 factors relating to people's feeling of tranquillity. Each square is assigned a colour ranging from green (most tranquil) to red (least tranquil) to indicate where people feel most or least tranquil. CPRE hopes to acquire future funding to allow the tranquillity map to be updated.

A full exposition of the methodology can be found in Jackson, S., Fuller, D., Dunsford, H., Mowbray, R., Hext, S., MacFarlane, R. and Haggett, C. (in preparation) *Tranquillity Mapping: developing a robust methodology for planning support. Report to CPRE, Centre for Environmental and Spatial Analysis, Northumbria University, Bluespace Environments and the University of Newcastle upon Tyne.*

Current Situation:

Figure 8 shows that the AONB is characterised by moderate tranquillity from the predominance of yellow shading. Tranquillity is geographically uneven within the AONB. The compact nature of the AONB makes it vulnerable to influences immediately beyond its boundary that undermine tranquillity, a factor particularly evident in the east and south. From the map, three distinct pockets of high tranquillity can be observed.

- i) South, in a band from Castlemorton Common over Swinyard Hill to Eastnor.
- ii) Centre West, between the villages of Colwall and Mathon.
- iii) North, encompassing the Suckley Hills.

A lack of tranquillity in the AONB can be observed in five areas due to the influence primarily of roads and settlement.

- i) The A449 corridor connecting Ledbury, Malvern Wells and Great Malvern. Great Malvern is the least tranquil place, although the situation worsens significantly eastwards towards Malvern Link just beyond the AONB boundary.

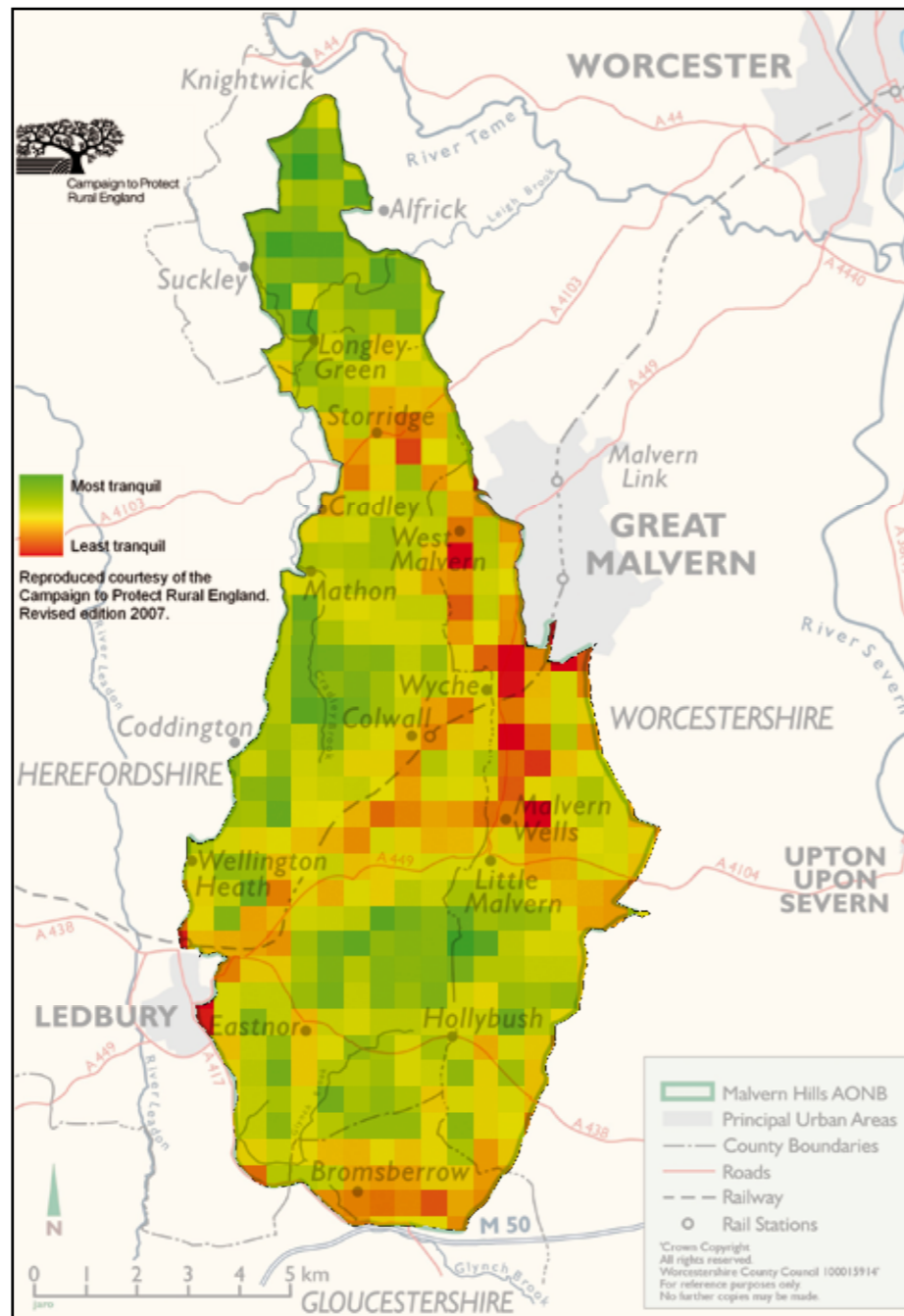


Figure 8: The CPRE Tranquillity index for the Malvern Hills AONB.

- ii) The Wyche Cutting provides a route for the B4218 through the high hills and clearly detracts from tranquillity (observe the diagonal line of orange squares running south-west to north-east in the centre of the map).
- iii) West Malvern, extending a band of least tranquillity to encircle the northern high hills.
- iv) The southern boundary of the AONB, where the presence of the M50 motorway seriously compromises tranquillity.
- v) Storrige, where the major Hereford to Worcester A4103 road traverses the north of the AONB.

8. ENJOYMENT: Condition of Rights Of Way

Overview:

Public Rights of Way (PRoW) include footpaths, bridleways and byways on which the public have a legal right to pass. Since 2000, the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act has additionally given the public a right of pedestrian access over open land comprising mountain, moor, heath, down and registered common land. In the Malvern Hills AONB, the Malvern Hills Conservators Act of 1884 had already formalised public access on foot and horseback to land under the jurisdiction of the Malvern Hills Conservators (MHC). Also from 2000, the Government has required county councils and unitary authorities to report on the standard of their PRoW network. This is assessed through Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 178, defined as 'the percentage of the total length of footpaths and other rights of way which are easy to use by members of the public'. The percentage is calculated based on an annual survey of a 5% random sample of the total length of the PRoW within the county. This sample is drawn each year, so that any one sample may contain some or none of the PRoW that exist within the AONB.

Current Situation:

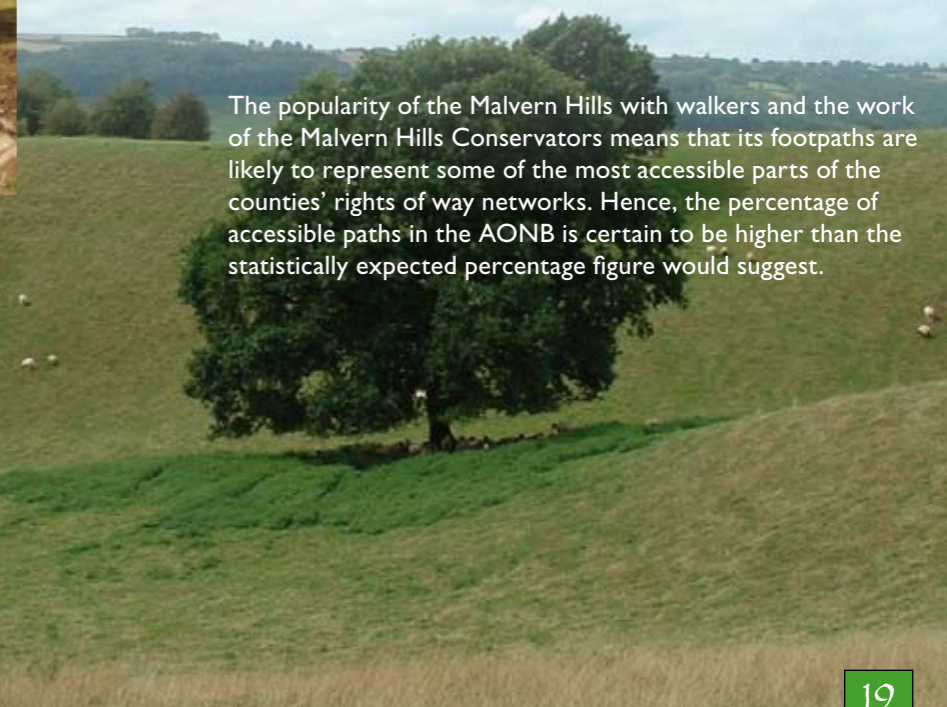
Survey work specific to the AONB is necessary to gain an accurate profile and understanding of rights of way condition. At present, BVPI 178 is only available at a county level, and Table 6 gives the figures for Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire. Only Gloucestershire, which contains less than 6% of the AONB, scores on BVPI 178 above the national average. However, both Herefordshire and Worcestershire have made significant improvements to their rights of way networks in the last three years.

Unfortunately, the BVPI 178 methodology prevents the extraction of data relevant just to footpaths within the AONB. In view of this limitation, the best that can be achieved at present is the calculation from county data of an indicative AONB figure (%) weighted according to the percentage county area comprising the AONB. This is given in Table 6. Statistically, this results in an expected BVPI 178 score of 48.8% of AONB paths easy to use in 2002/3, increasing to 57.3% in 2005/6. The statistical weighting is based solely upon area and takes no account of the actual characteristics of the AONB.

Table 6: BVPI 178 Results for AONB Counties: % of rights of way that are easy to use.

Area	% of AONB area	2002-03 (%)	2005-6 (%)
Herefordshire	58.5	41.0	52.0
Worcestershire	35.8	58.5	63.0
Gloucestershire	5.7	67.8	75.3
Malvern Hills AONB	100	48.8	57.3
ENGLAND	—	65.1	74.6

Source: Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006



The popularity of the Malvern Hills with walkers and the work of the Malvern Hills Conservators means that its footpaths are likely to represent some of the most accessible parts of the counties' rights of way networks. Hence, the percentage of accessible paths in the AONB is certain to be higher than the statistically expected percentage figure would suggest.



The Centre for Rural Research
University of Worcester
01905 855185
www.worcester.ac.uk/crr



for the

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This report is produced on Neusiedler paper which carries the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) seal of approval. The FSC seal identifies timber and timber products from sustainable forest management.