

Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Annual Report 2008/09
(incorporating highlights of the Malverns Heritage Project)



Chairman's Foreword



Dr Bryan G. Smith,
Chairman of the Joint Advisory Committee

Contents

Chairman's Foreword	2
Location of the Malvern Hills AONB	3
Malverns Heritage Project	4
Sustainable Development Fund	8
Landscape	10
Biodiversity	11
Geology	12
Historic Environment	13
Transport	14
Strategy and Planning	15
Understanding and Engaging	16
Enjoyment	17
Management Planning and Monitoring	18
Working in partnership	19
AONB Unit Report	20
AONB Governance	22
Credits	23

By any standards last year was a good one for the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Firstly, the area's flagship 'Malverns Heritage Project' was completed. This project, which was originally conceived of ten years ago, drew over £700,000 of support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and significant additional support from a range of local and national partners. It has delivered a wide range of improvements in the AONB. Conservation grazing on the Malvern Hills (including on Bromsberrow and Eastnor estates) has been facilitated by the construction of a number of cattle grids. The future management of Castlemorton Common and its surrounding commons has been clarified and bolstered by a significant study commissioned from consultants and by the establishment of a joint management committee. Seventeen of the water features on and around the Hills have also been restored, not least Holywell which was the original water bottling plant. All this has involved a massive amount of work, not to mention some serious soul-searching and I compliment the project team which has stuck to its task so assiduously over the past four years.

Secondly, Natural England announced last year that the Malvern Hills AONB is a target area for the Government's Higher Level Stewardship scheme. This top tier agri-environment support package provides significant financial help to those who wish to manage their land in line with key conservation principles. As you will see from this report, the AONB Partnership used its resources to help a number of landowners in the area to access these funds last year.

Finally, the revised AONB Management Plan for the next five years was produced. To some people this may now appear to be a slightly bland document but it is actually the glue that holds the whole AONB Partnership together. Its preparation involved partners in a great deal of thinking about the challenges facing the area and in discussions about what they should be doing to meet these challenges. This process of bringing people together to discuss priorities and to agree actions and ways of working is surely what partnership is all about. The result is undoubtedly the best researched, most readable five year plan that the AONB has had. I also compliment all those who put so much work into its preparation.

As I said at the outset - a thoroughly successful year!

Location of the Malvern Hills AONB



Malverns Heritage Project

Project overview

Introduction

The Malverns Heritage Project was originally conceived of over 10 years ago. The project has been implemented over the last four years and finally drew to a close in March 2009. Progress has been reported in previous annual reports but what follows is an overall summary of the project and its key achievements.

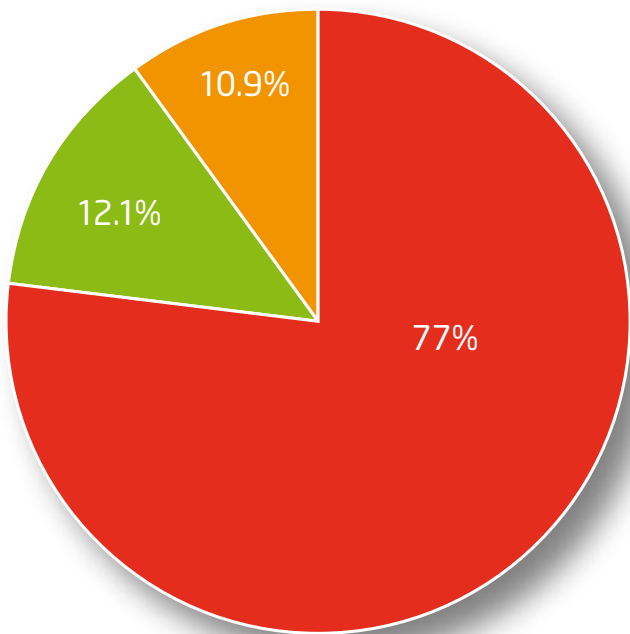
The Malverns Heritage Project had the following two aims:

- to promote and support grazing activity as a form of sustainable management of the nationally important grasslands on the Malvern Hills and Commons;
- to restore Malvern’s distinctive water features (wells and spouts) and to raise awareness of the area’s water heritage.

Financial summary

Total expenditure - £916,000

Heritage Lottery Fund	£705,320	
National Partners*	£110,954	
Local Partners+	£ 99,726	
*Countryside Agency and English Nature		
+Includes Worcestershire County Council		



A partnership of interests

In the best tradition of co-operative working the Malverns Heritage Project has been delivered through the resources and efforts of many different partners (see box below). The Malvern Hills AONB Unit applied for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and managed the project delivery on behalf of these partners.

Key partners

- Malvern Hills Conservators
- Malvern Spa Association
- Worcestershire County Council
- Malvern Town Council
- Mike Humm
- Malvern Wells Parish Council
- Diocese of Worcester
- Madresfield Estate
- Cadbury Estate
- Carol Walsh
- Ron Mason
- West Malvern Parochial Church Council
- Eastnor Estate
- Bromesberrow Estate
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Natural England
- National Trust
- Castlemorton Commons Coordinating Committee
- Birtsmorton Estate
- Severn Trent
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Butterfly Conservation

Sound testing for the Public Inquiry into Cattle Grids at Chase End Hill



Malverns Heritage Project

Project aim: To promote and support grazing activity

Much of the effort on the grazing side of the project went towards encouraging and supporting graziers to re-stock the commons, and towards exploring ways in which grazing activity could be sustained into the future. The management through grazing of most of the Malvern Hills and commons can be seen as a landscape scale approach to conservation across a considerable part of the Malvern Hills AONB. The Malvern Hills Conservators, Natural England and Eastnor and Bromesberrow Estates have led the way on this work.



Engaging partners at the Castlemorton Commons Open Day

Key achievements

- The Malvern Hills between the A449 (British Camp road) and the A438 (Hollybush road) were encompassed with cattle grids and gates to assist those managing livestock on the Hills.
- A Coordinating Committee was established to promote consultation between all those who hold grazing rights over the Castlemorton Commons. This was necessary to achieve consensus amongst graziers prior to applying for agri-environment support for grazing management in this part of the AONB.
- A booklet and a website on the Castlemorton Commons were published to promote information exchange and to enthuse and inform both locals and visitors.
- A public inquiry into the installation of cattle grids in the Highway at Chase End Hill was successfully negotiated and two new grids were subsequently installed to assist in stock management at the southern end of the Malvern Hills.
- Financial support has been provided to a local grazier to help manage livestock on the Malvern Hills.
- Site based information and interpretation has been provided.

Cllr Derek Prodger and Andy Maginnis inspect cattle grid at Chase End



Malverns Heritage Project

Project aim: To restore Malvern's distinctive water features

The development of the town of Malvern in the Victorian era was a direct result of the establishment of the water cure. The explosion of interest in Malvern Water at this time led to the embellishment of many of the water sources (where water emanates from the Hills) with elaborate structures. By the turn of the 21st century many of these structures had seen better days.



Anne Jenkins of the Heritage Lottery Fund inspects Beauchamp Spout

Key achievements

- Seventeen water features have been restored (see box below) under the guidance and supervision of a group of expert volunteers in the Malvern Spa Association.
- The Malvern Spa Association website has been redesigned and now provides an up-to-date source of information on Malvern Water.
- Two walks leaflets have been produced which guide visitors to the various water features of the northern and central Malvern Hills.
- Holywell was the site of the original bottled water in Malvern. The well building has been refurbished and an education room established there, complete with displays of water paraphernalia and information on the geology of the Hills that gives rise to its water.
- A junior education pack has been produced and made available to 25 local schools. This should ensure that school children learn about the role of Malvern Water in the development of the town and in its continuing popularity.

Restored water features

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Hayslad | 2. Weaver's Well |
| 3. Wynds Point | 4. Jubilee Fountain |
| 5. Willows Spring | 6. Lower Wyche Spout |
| 7. Ellerslie | 8. Barnard's Green Trough |
| 9. Westminster Bank | 10. Lord Sandy's Spout |
| 11. St Ann's Well | 12. North Malvern Clock Tower |
| 13. Holywell | 14. St James' Spout |
| 15. Beauchamp Spout | 16. West Malvern Tap |
| 17. Royal Well | |



Bifurcating spout, Hayslad



Jubilee Spout



Celebration to mark restoration works at St Ann's Well



Holywell water bottles

Malverns Heritage Project

Life after the Project

The future

The Malverns Heritage Project has been a significant undertaking for the AONB Partnership and for all those involved. However, the hard work does not stop with its completion. The Project should be seen as an important step in the process of helping to conserve key heritage assets in the AONB. The responsibility for continuing this work now passes once again to the lead players, notably those who own and manage land in the area. Some examples of continuing progress are as follows.

- The Malvern Hills Conservators, as owners of Castlemorton Common, have taken forward the task of applying for Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) to underpin the long term management of the Common. HLS schemes for the northern and central Malvern Hills have already started and the Conservators are also applying for HLS for the southern hills.
- Bromesberrow Estate will take forward the management of grazing on Chase End Hill in conjunction with the Malvern Hills Conservators as landowners.
- The owner of Holywell has installed a new bottling plant on site and is now producing bottles of water for sale. He will use some of the the income from water sales to maintain the historic building in which it is housed.
- The Malvern Spa Association will continue in its work to conserve, protect and restore the water features and to promote the study, conservation, development and awareness of Malvern's water heritage.

The Malverns Heritage Project has stimulated interest nationally, especially since it featured on the BBC's Countryfile programme. The local Tourist Information Centres have reported a sharp rise in inquiries since this programme was aired, helping to illustrate another way in which local features can enrich the nation.



Well dressing, Lower Wyche spout



Managing grazing on the Malvern Hills



Filming for the BBC's Countryfile programme



Clock tower dressing 2008

Sustainable Development Fund

Management Plan aim: To ensure the sustainable and efficient use of the AONB's resources, such as land, air and water

The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) is a grant scheme to assist projects that promote sustainable development in the AONB. The money for the fund comes from DEFRA via Natural England. A wide range of projects were supported this year,

with funding going to businesses, organisations and groups in the public, private and voluntary sectors. In total just over £55,300 of grant was allocated in 2008/09. This helped to lever in almost £56,000 of match-funding contributions.

SDF grants to voluntary and charitable bodies

Grant recipient	Key project outputs	Expected project outcomes
Herefordshire Amphibian and Reptile Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Training given to local volunteers on reptile identification ■ Publication of leaflets and website with species recording facility ■ Local school visits ■ Site management plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Greater understanding and awareness of reptiles within the AONB
Malvern Hills Coppice Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Support for a full time trainee coppice worker based in the Malvern Hills area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Better management of local woods ■ Increase in local skills and knowledge base
Welcome to Our Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An information seminar providing advice to local community groups on sustainable building practices and renewable energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Greater use of renewable energy/energy conservation in community buildings
Transition Malvern Hills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Transition and permaculture training courses for members of local Transition Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Better promotion and development of the Transition Town movement in the Malvern area
Malvern Hills Agenda 21 Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Promotional website and leaflets produced to encourage less use of plastic bags ■ Survey work with local retailers and shoppers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reduced plastic bag use and reduced plastic litter in the AONB ■ Raised public awareness of the relationship between production of plastic and climate change
The Bulmer Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bursary support to enable students to complete a Masters Level programme in Sustainable Development Advocacy ■ Students working with businesses and organisations in the AONB to improve sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improved sustainability in organisational practices
Caring for God's Acre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Production of 'Churches and churchyards of the AONB' leaflets ■ Information and training day on churchyard conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Greater appreciation of the natural and built heritage ■ Greater conservation minded management of church yards
River Wye Preservation Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Survey of veteran trees in Colwall, Mathon and Cradley ■ C. 450 trees recorded and mapped 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Better understanding of biodiversity resource and its management needs
Worcestershire Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 18 farmers (covering 799ha of land) provided with conservation management advice ■ Eight Entry Level and six Higher Level Stewardship applications within the AONB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ More land managed in accordance with conservation principles

For further information on the Sustainable Development Fund please visit www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk

Sustainable Development Fund

SDF grants to public sector bodies and private businesses

Grant recipient	Key project outputs	Expected project outcomes
Malvern Hills District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local tourism businesses provided with targeted information on how to conserve energy Production of 2,000 laundry cards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource conservation, reduced energy use and cheaper bills for local tourism businesses
Colwall Parish Council/ Colwall Community Orchard Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase of tools for orchard management Wildlife surveys Orchard management plans produced Training for Volunteers Trees planted in 10 local orchards Promotional events held such as the 'Fungi Foray', and the 'Apple Day' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation of local orchards Greater community engagement and awareness of orchard conservation
Small Woods Association (on behalf of private property owners)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four wood fuel feasibility assessments carried out Local properties given advice on wood fuel harvesting and boiler installations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased utilisation of on-site wood fuel resources in farms and estates leading to reduced carbon emissions
Wild Wood Coppice Crafts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase of specialist equipment to help extract and move timber for local sale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better management of special wildlife sites Sustainable local businesses



Tree survey, Colwall Orchard Group



Reptile identification, Malvern Hills



Church yard conservation training, Mathon



Apple Juicing, Colwall Apple Day



What's that Snake project banner

Landscape

Management Plan aim: To protect and enhance those characteristics and features that contribute to the landscape beauty and amenity of the AONB

What's in a view?

On a clear day people on top of the Malvern Hills can enjoy stunning views to every point of the compass. As one of the iconic landmarks of the West Midlands, views towards the Malvern Hills are also enjoyed and valued by a great many people. A project commissioned by the AONB Partnership this year has, for the first time, devised a methodology which can be used to grade the importance of a view. Using this methodology the study also identified 50 key views from and towards the Malvern Hills. It is intended that this work will help to inform decision making and to preserve the area's most important views.

Malvern Hills AONB a priority for Higher Level Stewardship

Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) is an agri-environment support scheme which offers significant funding to deliver environmental benefits on land. Natural England secured additional funding for this work during the year and announced that the Malvern Hills AONB was one of its target areas for HLS spending in the West Midlands. The AONB Partnership commissioned the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group to provide environmental advice to 18 land managers in the AONB. Amongst other things, these visits generated six new Higher Level Stewardship applications which will help to secure good conservation management across 196 hectares of the AONB.

Burying overhead electricity cables

The AONB Unit has continued in its work to identify low voltage power lines which could be considered for burial to improve the amenity value of the AONB. Fourteen schemes covering over five kilometers of power line were submitted this year. Central Networks - the electricity provider for the West Midlands - is the key partner in this work and officers have worked hard to assess the viability of these new schemes and to develop those submitted in previous years.



Overhead cables, West Malvern

Linking the Malvern Hills and Wye Valley AONBs

At their closest points the nationally important landscapes of the Wye Valley and Malvern Hills AONBs are separated by a distance of just a few miles. A small partnership of organisations including Natural England, the Forestry Commission and the Herefordshire Nature Trust worked together this year to identify a corridor or 'link' between these AONBs. The Partnership also developed a proposal for a project which aims to deliver sustainable land management, rural regeneration and community-led approaches to the management of land in this corridor. If funding can be found for the project it is hoped that the corridor would develop into a strategic link by joining up the high quality environments of the AONBs.



Recently laid hedge, Welland

The Historic Landscape Character of the AONB

The Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service produced an interim report on the current historic landscape character of the AONB in Worcestershire. The report is based on a study which analysed and interpreted data from a variety of mapping sources. A small working group of landscape officers and archaeologists from Herefordshire Council and Worcestershire County Council have been working towards the linking of data on Landscape Character Assessment and Historic Landscape Character in the AONB, with a view to producing a fuller understanding of the character of the landscape.



A view towards the Ledbury Hills and beyond

Management Plan aim: To protect, restore and enhance those habitats and species which contribute to the biodiversity of the AONB

Lesser Horseshoe Bats in the Malvern Hills Site of Special Scientific Interest

Lesser Horseshoe Bats are a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species, largely confined to the South West and West Midlands regions in England. A disused railway tunnel at Colwall provides an important hibernation roost for these mammals. A count carried out by Natural England staff this year discovered that the size of the overwintering colony in the tunnel is fairly stable at around 200 individuals. However, survey work has also found that a much higher number of individuals emerge from local maternity roosts in the area, suggesting that there may be other hibernation sites which are as yet unknown. The network of hedgerows, tree lines and extensively managed landscapes which characterise parts of the AONB provide ideal hunting grounds for this species.

Conservation at St Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve

Worcestershire County Council's Countryside Services Team continued to work closely with local people to implement the agreed management plan for this site. Highlights during the year included:

- the re-introduction of cattle to graze grassland on the reserve (the first such grazing for 10 years);
- two days of hedge laying, planting and coppicing with volunteers as part of the Worcestershire Wardens Partnership initiative;
- wildlife survey work which found the rare Barbastelle Bat feeding on the reserve and which identified a range of grassland types.

Landscape and Biodiversity Grants

The AONB Partnership has small cash grants available to help those who want to improve the landscape, biodiversity and countryside character within the area. Funding this year was provided through Natural England's European Landscape Convention programme. Eight local projects shared £5,590 of grant which in turn helped to secure almost £14,000 in additional contributions. Funding was used to support a range of practical habitat improvements with hedge laying proving most popular (almost 650m of new hedgerow was laid in the area). The small grants programme was administered by Herefordshire Council.

In brief

The Malvern Hills Conservators appointed local graziers to manage the cattle and sheep that graze on the northern and central Malvern Hills. This significant move will help to ensure that the tradition of local people managing common land in the area is continued.

Eastnor and Bromesberrow Estates in the southern part of the AONB continued their management of habitats for the benefit of key wildlife species, including the rare High Brown Fritillary butterfly.

60 oak trees were planted in Eastnor Deer Park and SSSI - a gift from Land Rover which celebrated its 60th anniversary this year and which has a long-running association with Eastnor.

The Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan was reviewed in 2008. It contains several actions for habitat and species management in the AONB.



Lesser Horseshoe Bat



Cattle arriving at St Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve

Geology

Management Plan aim: To protect and enhance those characteristics and features that contribute to the landscape beauty and amenity of the AONB

Monitoring the condition of Local Geological Sites

Local Geological Sites (previously known as Regionally Important Geological Sites - RIGS) represent some of the best sites for geology in an area. The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust devised a template this year to monitor the condition of such sites. This work began as a local project initiated by the AONB Partnership. However, following extensive consultation with others, the template has now become a national model and looks set to be used by those involved in geoconservation around the country. Following the development of the template, the condition of all 47 Local Geological Sites in the AONB was assessed. The information recorded provides a baseline which will be used to inform site management and to monitor changing condition in the future.

Community Earth Heritage Champions

The 'Champions' project aims to increase community awareness and understanding of earth heritage by encouraging and supporting local people to care for, and to make use of, their local geological sites. A grant of £302,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund has enabled the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust to provide training and support to achieve this goal. Local people have begun to monitor the condition of their local sites and to use them for educational and recreational purposes. Champions sites in the Malvern Hills AONB include quarries on the Malvern Hills and surrounding areas. The Malvern Hills Conservators and Madresfield Estate are key partners in the area.

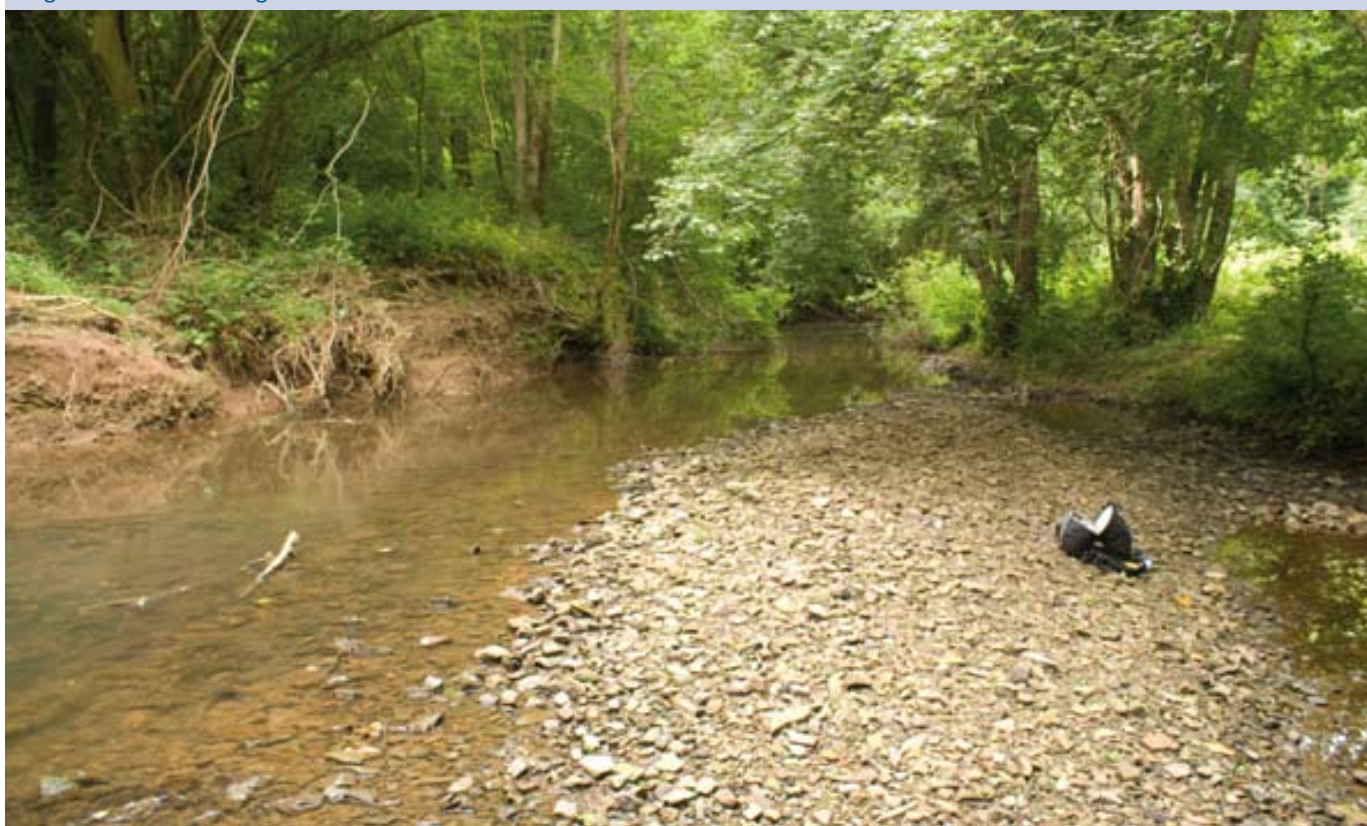
Geodiversity Action Plans

The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust published Geodiversity Action Plans (GAPs) for the two counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The plans provide an important framework of objectives and actions which will help to provide long term and sustainable support for geodiversity conservation throughout the area. A range of individuals, organisations and interested groups will be working together to deliver these actions in the years ahead.



Geodiversity Action Plans - front covers

Leigh Brook Local Geological Site



Historic Environment

Management Plan aim: To support the conservation and enhancement of the wider historic environment and to improve awareness and appreciation of it

History at St Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve

St Wulstan's has a special place as the only designated Local Nature Reserve in the AONB. It also has a fascinating history dating from its use as a hospital site to accommodate the American wounded in the D-day invasion of WWII. During the year Worcestershire County Council launched a project to gather together people's memories of the site. Almost 50 people took part in the project. A booklet recounting the history of the site will be published in due course.

Redundant Building Conversion at Fairoaks Farm

Finding a productive use for historic buildings is often the best way of ensuring their survival. The future of buildings at Fairoaks Farm, Hollybush has been secured with help from a Redundant Buildings Grant of £62,500 from Advantage West Midlands. The buildings - which were eligible for grant assistance due to their location in a Rural Regeneration Zone - have been sympathetically converted into new office accommodation. The first tenants of the farm are Natural Power - a company who provide consulting and risk management for the renewable energy industry - a 'new' business for the AONB which will benefit the local economy. The Redundant Buildings Grant for the area is administered by Herefordshire Council.

Buildings at Fairoaks Farm - before conversion



Buildings at Fairoaks Farm - after conversion



Strategic Stone Study

The distinctive buildings which contribute so much to the character of many protected areas in the present day is often a result of the availability of local building stones in years gone by. In response to concerns about a reduction in the availability of indigenous building and roofing stones English Heritage commissioned a national project this year to identify, record and link representative stone buildings to their sources. The ultimate aim is to ensure that appropriate materials are available to carry out repair and restoration of historic buildings. The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust undertook one of a number of pilot studies to test the methodology for collecting information on different building stones, buildings and quarries. It is hoped that this work will be developed in future years.

The West Midlands Historic Farmsteads Characterisation Project

English Heritage and local authorities in the area continued to work together on this two year project to survey surviving historic farmsteads and to identify their most significant features. Key steps this year included defining the detailed attributes of farmsteads and the patterns that contribute to local distinctiveness in the landscape. This work will add to our understanding of the special historic character of the AONB and will also help to identify priorities for practical action, for example, through grant advice and support to owners.

In brief

A scrub management programme has been produced to tackle vegetation which is damaging the Shire Ditch - a Scheduled Monument running the length of the Malvern Hills.

The Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England (SHINE) dataset was developed. This should help to promote the uptake of historic environment management options to land owners in the Entry Level Stewardship Scheme.

Malvern Wells Parish Council commissioned the repair of a stained glass window at a Victorian Chapel in the Malvern Wells cemetery.

Seventeenth century barn, Suckley



Transport

Management Plan aim: To reduce the impact of car traffic on the special qualities of the AONB, and the quality of life of its communities

Hills Hopper

The Hills Hopper is a local bus service operated by Malvernian Tours and supported by Worcestershire County Council. The bus runs on weekends and bank holidays between April and September. The aim of the service is to provide an alternative to the use of private cars for those who wish to access the countryside and key settlements in the area.

Passenger numbers for the year were very similar to those recorded in each of the previous two years. Some key statistics are as follows:

- the bus carried 2382 passengers throughout the season;
- 552 passengers used the service in August (the busiest month);
- 69 passengers used the service on Saturday 30 August (the busiest day);
- 68.6% of all passengers were concessionary pass holders;
- the subsidy per passenger was £4.16.

The Big Chill

The Big Chill festival in August 2008 was attended by 30,000 people and changed the face of the Eastnor Deer Park – but only for a few days. Event organisers worked hard to encourage festival goers to leave their cars at home and so to reduce their carbon footprints and their impacts on the AONB. Key initiatives included:

- the development of a coach and festival package deal offering cheap travel to the festival on National Express coaches, from locations throughout the UK;
- reduced rail fares for festival goers travelling to the festival on First Great Western trains;
- a free shuttle bus between Great Malvern train station and the festival site;
- free and secure cycle storage on site;
- a green tax on all cars parking on site. Money raised by the parking charges is used to subsidise coaches and provide free shuttle buses for train travellers.

Highways Signage

Herefordshire Council installed new traffic management measures this year at Chances Pitch – a known accident spot in the AONB. Following discussions with the AONB Partnership the Council were able to rationalise and remove some signage clutter as part of this work. Due to the accident record at this site it was necessary to use a high visibility backing on one of the new signs.



Signage at Chances Pitch - before



Signage at Chances Pitch - after

The Big Chill Festival, Eastnor



Strategy and Planning

Management Plan aim: To minimise the adverse impact that development proposals and implementation have on the AONB's landscape character, biodiversity and historic environment

Development planning activity

New development can have a positive or negative impact on the special features of the AONB. Many different individuals and organisations such as Parish Councils and the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) help to keep the area special by monitoring planning activity and by commenting on applications for development.

Statistics on planning activity in the AONB are compiled each year. This information enables the AONB Partnership to better understand the nature and scale of development in the area and to begin to identify trends in this activity. As is to be expected during an economic down turn, the figures for 2008/09 reveal a significant reduction in the scale of planning activity in the AONB.

Summary statistics on planning activity in the Malvern Hills AONB in 2008/09

Item	No.
Planning applications registered in the AONB	182
New dwellings applied for	17
New affordable dwellings applied for	0
Applications for household extensions/alterations	117
Applications for barn/agricultural building conversions	6
Applications for equestrian uses/developments	1
Applications for renewable energy installations (domestic)	3
Applications for new access tracks	7
Applications for new educational facilities	9

Microgeneration

Small scale generation of heat and power (microgeneration) using renewable sources can play a valuable role in helping to tackle climate change. The AONB Partnership is supportive of such technologies where they do not impact negatively on the distinctive attributes or special qualities of the AONB. The Malvern Hills and Wye Valley AONB Teams worked together this year to develop guidance sheets on the use of small-scale wind turbines, solar panels and ground and air source heat pumps. The purpose of the guidance is to provide simple advice which could help to reduce the impacts of these technologies on the special features of the area.

Microgeneration Guidance Sheets

AONB GUIDANCE – Heat Pumps

Introduction

The Government has set targets to increase energy generation from renewable sources. This is due to growing concerns over the impacts of climate change and the future decline in the supply of fossil fuels. Air source heat pumps still require planning permission, but it is expected that they will become permitted development as soon as standards and safeguards have been established to deal with noise.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Malvern Hills and Wye Valley AONBs are nationally designated areas of great distinctive character and natural beauty. Management Plans for the Malvern Hills and Wye Valley AONBs support the continued use of renewable energy through microgeneration.

Planning Requirements

Ground and water source heat pumps are permitted development within the curtilage of a dwelling house. Air source heat pumps still require planning permission, but it is expected that they will become permitted development as soon as standards and safeguards have been established to deal with noise.

The Purpose of this Guidance

The purpose of this guidance is to help you to plan for installing a heat pump in an AONB. Specifically it provides simple advice on ways in which you could help to reduce any impacts on the special features of the area.

AONB GUIDANCE – Solar Panels

Introduction

The Government has set targets to increase energy generation from renewable sources. This is due to growing concerns over the impacts of climate change and the future decline in the supply of fossil fuels. Micro-scale generation of heat and power is being encouraged. The microgeneration is generally considered to be an installation with a capacity of less than 50kW of heat or 50kW of electricity.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are nationally designated areas of great distinctive character and natural beauty. Management Plans for the Malvern Hills and Wye Valley AONBs support the continued use of renewable energy through microgeneration.

Landscape

- If you are proposing to install a solar panel in an AONB it is important that you consider the likely visual impacts. You should identify local views and, if possible, choose the least prominent location in the landscape. There may be important views from settlements, public access land, public rights of way etc.
- Preferably panels should be mounted on buildings as these will be likely to have less effect on the landscape. If freestanding panels, to be used they should be sited close to existing buildings and avoid open landscape wherever possible. Impacts could be reduced by siting them on down slopes.
- In villages, consider whether there might be any impacts on the overall appearance of a collection of buildings or north face before further advice.
- Aim to choose a colour and design that blends with building materials and surrounding landscapes. For example, consider matt shiny anti-glare options that will be less conspicuous in the wider landscape.

Planning Requirements

There are two types of solar panel. Photovoltaic panels (PV) generate electricity from the sun's energy. Solar panels or collectors that store hot water. The installation of both types of technology is permitted development if it is on or within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse and does not protrude more than 200mm beyond the plane of the roof edge and it is no higher than the highest part of the roof. There are further limitations in Conservation Areas and on listed buildings.

The Purpose of this Guidance

The purpose of this guidance is to help you to plan for installing solar panels in an AONB. Specifically it provides simple advice on ways in which you could help to reduce any impacts on the special features of the area.




West Malvern



Understanding and Engaging

Management Plan aim: To promote awareness and pride in the designation of the Malvern Hills AONB

On-site interpretation

Helping people to understand and enjoy the AONB takes many forms. Site-based interpretation and map boards were erected this year at Chase End Hill in the south of the AONB and in the villages of Colwall, Mathon and Suckley. A focus for the village based boards has been orientation and the provision of information on local paths and tracks.

A new look for the AONB Partnership

A new logo for the Malvern Hills AONB was developed this year alongside a set of corporate guidelines which will provide a distinctive look to new publications produced by the AONB Partnership. A 'key achievements' booklet providing an overview of how the AONB Partnership has helped to meet a wide range of objectives was also produced. Copies of this booklet can be downloaded from www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk.

Learning about geology at Whitman's Hill Quarry

The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust continued its programme of educational visits at the Whitman's Hill Quarry Geology Reserve. Fifteen visits took place through out the year with local school groups, children staying at the Malvern Hills Outdoor Education Centre, students from the University of the Third Age and members of the Women's Institute all learning about the area's unique geology, landscape and wildlife.

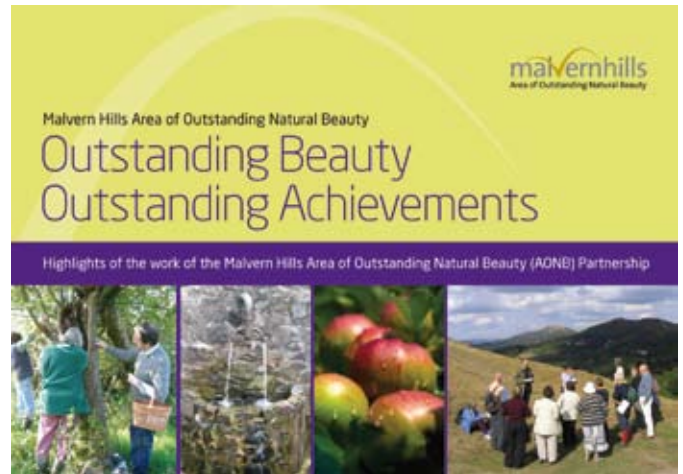
Veteran trees and tree wardens

The two year Worcestershire Veteran Tree Survey, which was partly financed by a Heritage Lottery Fund grant and managed by Worcestershire County Council, concluded in March 2009. The project confirmed the importance of 'working' trees in the AONB, especially coppice and pollards in the north and boundary trees on the common land in the east. The project helped to train 70 volunteers across Worcestershire. Six volunteer tree wardens operating as part of the Worcestershire Tree Warden Scheme also continued to play an active role in conserving and enhancing trees, woodlands and hedgerows in different parts of the AONB.

In brief

The AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) study tour took place in October and focused on renewable energy with visits to local wind turbines, solar panel and wood fuel facilities.

The Malvern Hills Conservators expanded their volunteer programme allowing greater community involvement in managing the Hills.



Outstanding achievements booklet - front cover



Fossil hunting at Whitman's Hill Quarry



Exploring wormeries on the JAC study tour

Management Plan aim: To ensure that tourism, recreation and access are provided for in a sustainable manner

'Greening' tourism

Whilst the Malvern Hills AONB may not be known as a long stay visitor destination the high quality environment does attract many day visitors and those on short breaks. Tourism is a key industry in supporting local economic development and it is likely that more visitors to nationally protected areas will want to know that local businesses are behaving responsibly and helping to keep the area special. Malvern Hills District Council worked with the Marches Energy Agency and Destination Worcestershire on a suite of initiatives to support local tourism businesses including:

- an energy awareness campaign - leaflets were sent to tourism businesses with practical tips on reducing energy use;
- a laundry card scheme - 2000 cards were distributed which encourage guests staying overnight to help reduce carbon emissions and chemical use;
- raising the standard of tourist accommodation - the number of accredited/ graded accommodation providers in the area rose by almost 20% over the year.

Miles Without Stiles

'Miles Without Stiles' are promoted footpaths and tracks which are suitable for those who may find walking a challenge and who don't want to clamber over barriers and obstacles when out in the countryside. This was the third year in which Herefordshire Council had delivered work under the Miles Without Stiles programme in the AONB. Key achievements included the installation of over 20 pedestrian and kissing gates to replace stiles around the parishes of Colwall, Cradley and Mathon. Information on Miles Without Stiles can be downloaded from www.herefordshire.gov.uk/circularwalks. Financial support for this project was provided by Natural England's European Landscape Convention programme.

Contributing to the health of the nation

Exercise plays a key role in keeping people fit, healthy and happy and can also be helpful in rehabilitation after certain illnesses. For the first time this year the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership took out 'advertising space' and made local walking and cycling leaflets available in the Malvern Community Hospital and in the Prospect View Medical Centre in the town. It is hoped that this information will help visitors to these centres to get out and about and to enjoy the high quality environment of the AONB.

In brief

The Malvern Hills AONB featured in a promotional video which was filmed this year and which will be screened by "Britain's Best Breaks" on the internet and Sky.

The Malvern Hills Conservators established a Recreation Advisory Panel of local experts and individuals who will help to influence the management of recreation on the Malvern Hills.

The installation of new footbridges by the Malvern Hills Conservators has made Malvern Common more accessible to those with limited mobility.



Miles Without Stiles Project, Mathon

Enjoying the Malvern Hills AONB



Management Planning and Monitoring

Management Plan review

The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act (2000) states that AONB management plans must be reviewed at least once every five years. A review of the management plan for 2004-2009 was completed this year and a revised management plan for the period 2009-2014 was agreed and adopted. Enormous thanks go to all those individuals and organisations who took part in the review and who helped to ensure that the new plan accurately identifies the issues facing the area and the priorities for action.

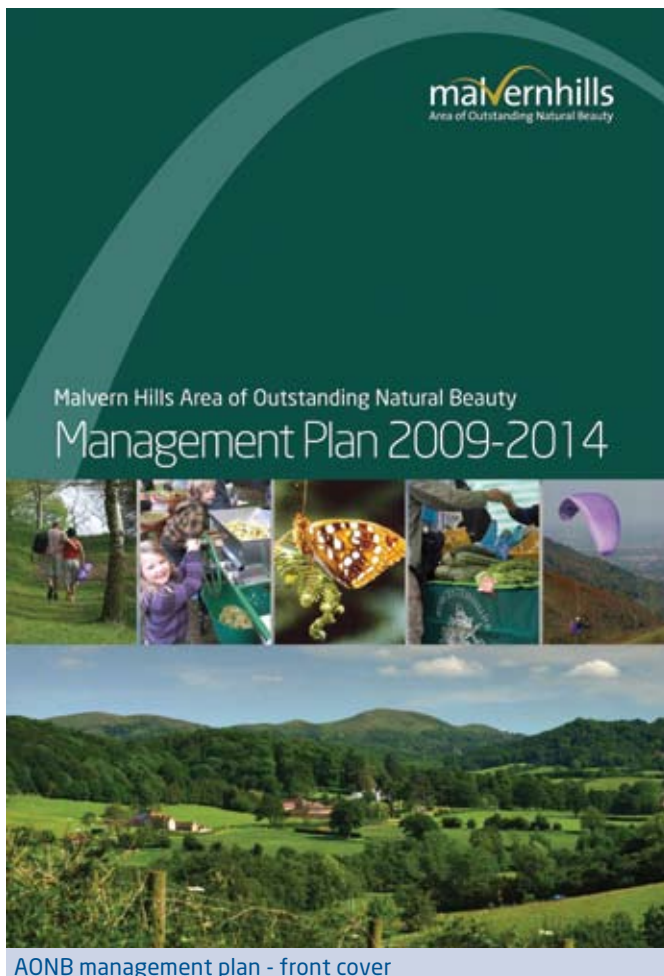
The AONB management plan is the key document for the AONB Partnership. It provides guidance for all those organisations and individuals involved in managing the land, as well as for those who live and work there and who have an interest and involvement in the AONB. The management plan also formulates local authority policy for the management of the Malvern Hills AONB and for the carrying out of local authority functions in relation to that policy.

The State of the AONB

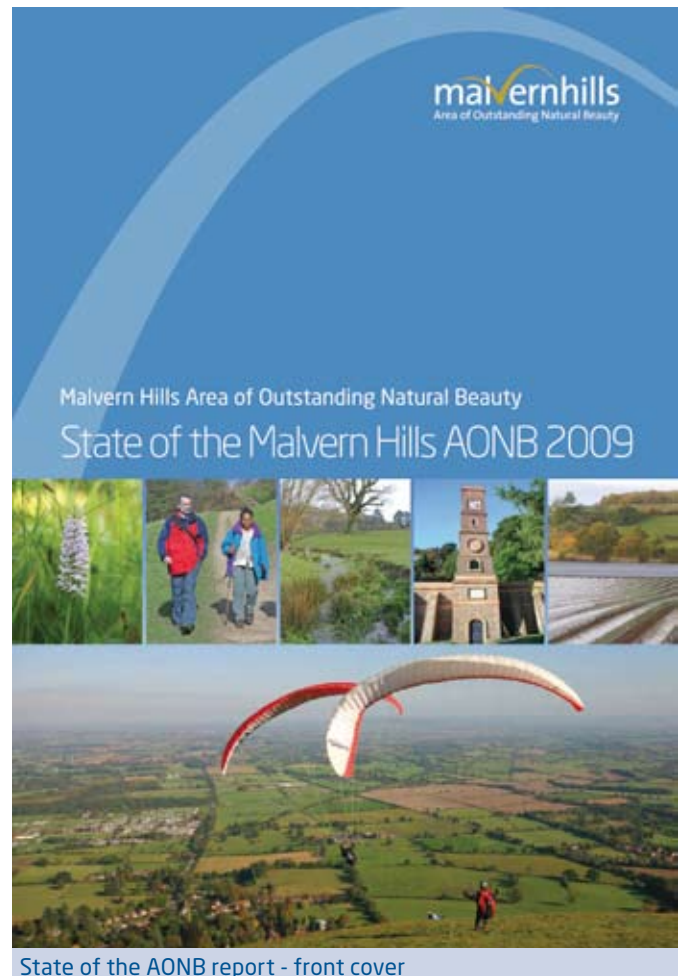
The management plan for the Malvern Hills AONB is a key document. However, of equal importance is the need to monitor how the special characteristics of the AONB are changing. Information gleaned by monitoring allows the AONB Partnership to identify and respond to challenges whilst also providing a gauge of the effectiveness of the Partnership in conserving and enhancing the area.

Throughout the year data on a range of subjects - from the ease of use of rights of way to the condition of scheduled monuments - has been collected and compiled into a State of the AONB report for 2009. This report provides the baseline against which the delivery of the new management plan will be measured.

The AONB management plan (2009-2014) and the State of the Malvern Hills AONB report can be downloaded from www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk.



AONB management plan - front cover



State of the AONB report - front cover

Working with others

Partnership working to meet AONB objectives is a day-to-day occurrence and takes place at the local, regional and national levels. Some of the formal partnerships and initiatives which the Malvern Hills AONB Unit has been engaged with in 2008/09 are as follows.

Local Partnerships

- Herefordshire Council Local Sites Partnership
- Abberley and Malvern Hills Geopark Partnership
- Worcestershire Leader Group
- Herefordshire Leader Group
- Malverns-Woolhope Link Steering Group
- Worcestershire County Council Making Information Manageable Group

Regional and National Partnerships

- West Midlands Protected Landscape Forum
- Rural Heritage Group
- The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The AONB Partnership

In its broadest sense the AONB Partnership is a working partnership between those who live and work in the area, those who manage the land and those charged with conserving and enhancing the special features of the area. There is no limit or restriction on who can be involved. The aim is to support and to add value to the efforts of those involved in conserving and enhancing natural beauty, whoever they may be.

The AONB Partnership is governed by a Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) and guided by a Steering Group. A full list of members can be found on page 22. The governance structure of the AONB Partnership is provided in the table below.

AONB Partnership governance structure

Title	Purpose	Participants
Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)	To coordinate the management of the AONB and the implementation of the AONB Management Plan	Representatives from a variety of public, private and voluntary sector bodies
Steering Group	To provide guidance, advice and support to the Joint Advisory Committee and Staff Unit	Officers from local authorities and the Malvern Hills Conservators
Staff Unit	To assist the Joint Advisory Committee in fulfilling its duties	AONB Unit Manager and staff

The National AONB conference 2008

The National AONB conference 'Adding Value in Valuable Landscapes - Partnership Working for Real' was based in the West Midlands this year. The Malvern Hills AONB was one of the joint hosts of the conference alongside its neighbouring AONBs in the Shropshire Hills and Cannock Chase. People from around the UK attended the conference and explored how local organisations, communities and landowners are working to conserve and enhance the region's AONBs.



Conference delegates on the Malvern Hills



JAC study tour, 2008

AONB Unit Report

AONB Unit Performance Indicators

A new national framework for monitoring AONB Partnership performance has been introduced by Natural England.

A slightly abridged version of this framework and the performance of the Malvern Hills AONB Unit in 2008-09 are set out in the table below.

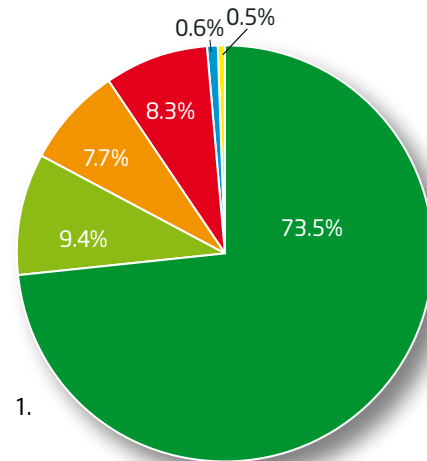
Theme	Measure for the indicator	Definition	Performance
AONB Management Plan.	The AONB Partnership has a current Management Plan in line with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000).	The Plan has been reviewed within five years of the last one; it conforms to the guidance for AONB Management Plans provided by Natural England; it has been formally adopted and published by all the relevant local authorities.	Yes
AONB Partnership.	The AONB has an active and effective governance structure.	Record of regular Joint Advisory Committee and Steering Group meetings.	5 meetings
		AONB has undertaken a formal review of its governance structures within the last 5 years and had an adopted current set of terms of reference.	Yes
AONB Staff Unit.	The AONB Unit has staff resources to undertake its work.	Total number of AONB staff, in full-time equivalents, that were directly managed and hosted by the AONB Unit, at the financial year end.	3
	AONB Unit staff invests in continuous professional development.	Of the total given above, list the number who undertook and recorded a minimum of 30 hours of training, personal development or similar during the year.	2
Financial resources.	The AONB Unit secures direct income to fund its work.	Total income received into the AONB Unit's own account from all sources during the financial year.	Total £447,710
		The percentage of the figure given above which was received from Natural England and Local Authorities.	56.6%
		The amount received from Natural England and Local Authorities.	Total £253,405
Leverage and "added value".	Additional resources mobilised by AONB Unit through its partnership work.	Total direct funding received plus the total funding for projects and partnership programmes including matching income for SDF funded projects, total funds for HLF Project etc.	Total £561,925
		The percentage of the figure above which was received from Natural England.	36%
Financial management and reporting.	Agreed timetable and requirements for financial management and reporting with Natural England met by the AONB Unit.	The Unit submitted its final grant claim to Natural England by the required date.	Yes
		Published its annual report for the preceding year within six months of the financial year end.	Yes
		Submitted its business plan and grant application for the succeeding financial year by the required date.	Yes
Partnership working with management communities.	The AONB Unit is an active partner in the work of the National Association of AONBs.	The AONB Unit (through its host authority or partnership organisation) was a full member of the National Association of AONBs.	Yes
		Was represented by attendance at the Annual Conference of the Association.	Yes
		All AONB Unit core staff attended at least 1 other national or regional NAAONB sponsored event.	Yes
		The AONB Unit actively involved in partnership working at a local level.	Total number of project steering groups, research initiatives, working groups and partnerships where the AONB Unit played an active and key role.
	The AONB Management Plan is formally endorsed and supported by partner organisations.	List the number of organisations who formally endorsed the plan when written and at the last review.	7
Business Plan targets.	Achievement of the targets set out by the AONB Unit in its annual business plan or equivalent.	Include all actions set out in the annual business plan/core bid document agreed with Natural England.	Yes (85% of bid actions met)

AONB Unit Financial Summary

Finances

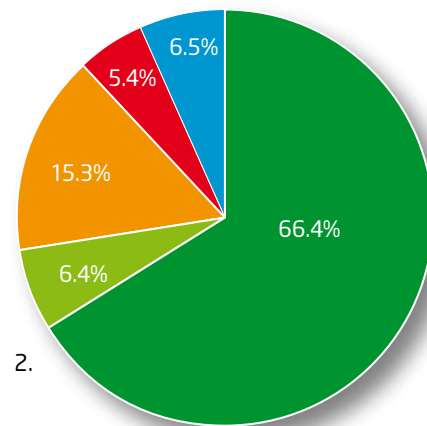
1. Core Income

Natural England	124,338	
Herefordshire Council	15,936	
Worcestershire County Council	12,944	
Malvern Hills District Council	14,000	
Gloucestershire County Council	1,051	
Forest of Dean District Council	851	
Total	169,120	



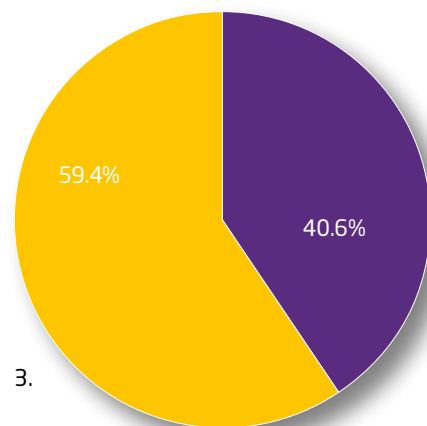
2. Core Expenditure

Staff costs (inc. travel & training)	110,011	
Accommodation and office costs	10,596	
Partnership Budget	25,379	
Partnership Running costs	9,056	
Management Plan review	10,743	
Total	165,784	



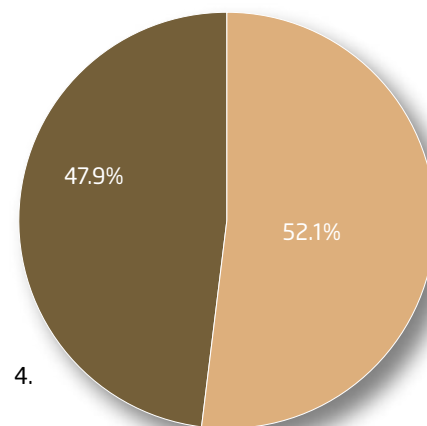
3. Project Income & Expenditure (excluding Malverns Heritage Project)

Natural England contribution	17,225	
Partner contributions (estimated)	25,215	
Total	42,440	



4. Sustainable Development Fund Income & Expenditure

Natural England grant	60,835	
Partner contributions	56,000	
Total	116,835	



Staff

The staff structure for the year was as follows.

AONB Unit Manager	Paul Esrich
AONB Unit Assistant Manager	David Armitage
Heritage Lottery Fund Project Officer (until August 2008)	Victoria Oaten
AONB Team Support Officer	Emma Conquest

Joint Advisory Committee 2008-09

Elected Members:

Dr B Smith (<i>Chairman</i>)	Malvern Hills Conservators
Mr J Raine (<i>Vice-Chairman</i>)	Malvern Hills District Council
Mr C Cheeseman	Malvern Hills District Council
Ms J Bowden	Worcestershire Association of Local Councils
Mr R Farmer	Worcestershire County Council
Mrs D Rayner	Worcestershire County Council
Mrs N Carless	Herefordshire Association of Local Councils
Miss M Cooper	Herefordshire Council
Mr R Mills	Herefordshire Council
Dr R Long	Forest of Dean District Council
	<i>(also representing Gloucestershire County Council)</i>

Non-Elected Members:

Mr M R Allfrey	National Farmers Union
Mr A Fleming	English Heritage
Mr P Hands	Visit Herefordshire/Destination Worcestershire
Mr J Hervey-Bathurst	Country Landowners and Business Association
Mr W Barnes	Forestry Commission
Mr J Payne	Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust
Mr D Ward/Mr F Hill	Campaign to Protect Rural England
Ms K White	Natural England

Co-opted Members:

Mr A Lee	Herefordshire Local Access Forum
----------	----------------------------------

Steering Group 2008-09

Kelda White (<i>Chairman</i>)	Natural England
Andy Maginnis	Worcestershire County Council
Heather Royle	Malvern Hills District Council
James Bisset/Rob Hemblade	Herefordshire Council
Angela Newey/Robert Niblett	Gloucestershire County Council
Bill Cronin /Nigel Gibbons	Forest of Dean District Council
Ian Rowat	Malvern Hills Conservators

Photography Credits

All photographs copyright Malvern Hills AONB Unit except:

Tree survey, Colwall Orchard Group - Helen Stace

Reptile identification, Malvern Hills - Herefordshire Amphibian and Reptile Trust

Church yard conservation training, Mathon - Sue Cooper

Apple juicing, Colwall Apple Day - Simon Copeland

Lesser Horseshoe Bat - Professor Gareth Jones, University of Bristol

Cattle arriving at St Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve - Worcestershire County Council

Leigh Brook Local Geological Site - Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust

Buildings at Fair Oaks Farm, before conversion - Herefordshire Council

Seventeenth Century Barn, Suckley - Worcestershire County Council

Miles without Stiles project, Mathon - Herefordshire Council

The following bodies provide financial support to the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership



Malvern Hills AONB Partnership
Manor House, Grange Road
Malvern, Worcestershire WR14 3EY

Tel: 01684 560616

Fax: 01684 560616

Email: aonb@worcestershire.gov.uk

Web: www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk