

Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
State of the Malvern Hills AONB 2009



Introduction

This report provides a snap-shot of the condition of the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 2009. It does this by presenting information about a range of elements, or attributes, which are deemed to be characteristic of the area.

Where possible, comparisons are made between new data and those presented in the State of the Malvern Hills AONB report for 2006. In this way the reader can begin to understand how the condition of the AONB is changing. This comparison can also be seen as a gauge of the effectiveness of the AONB Partnership in conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the area.

Whilst the text does make brief references to methodology, 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

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View from Fairoaks Farm



Landscape: Fixed point photography

Overview

Landscape Character Assessment is a key tool for identifying and describing variations in landscape character. Drawing upon the work of local authorities in the area, 30 detailed Landscape Description Units (LDUs) can be identified within the Malvern Hills AONB (Figure 1). LDUs are distinct, relatively small areas in which the 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.

For monitoring purposes, one fixed-point photographic location has been identified for each LDU in the AONB. A mathematically calculated central point, known as a 'centroid', has informed the selection of each monitoring point. Photographs and assessments taken from these points provide an indication of the appearance and condition of each LDU.

All images depicted over the subsequent pages were recorded either in February/ March 2006 (thumbnail photos) or in late January/February 2009 (larger photos*). The images are organised according to the general appearance of the landscape, known as Landscape Character Type (Figure 1). The LDU number is included simply by way of cross-reference to its geographic location, also shown in Figure 1. Descriptions of Landscape Character Types can be found at www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/pages/managing.

Current condition

The text presented alongside each photograph in the following pages provides a summary assessment of the condition of each LDU in 2009.

Trend in condition

Changes in the condition of landscapes are often only discernable over longer periods of time. However, arrows on the 2009 photographs do highlight some discernable changes in the landscape view since 2006. As is to be expected, such changes are often small-scale. Where no arrows are provided this indicates no change in the landscape view between 2006 and 2009.

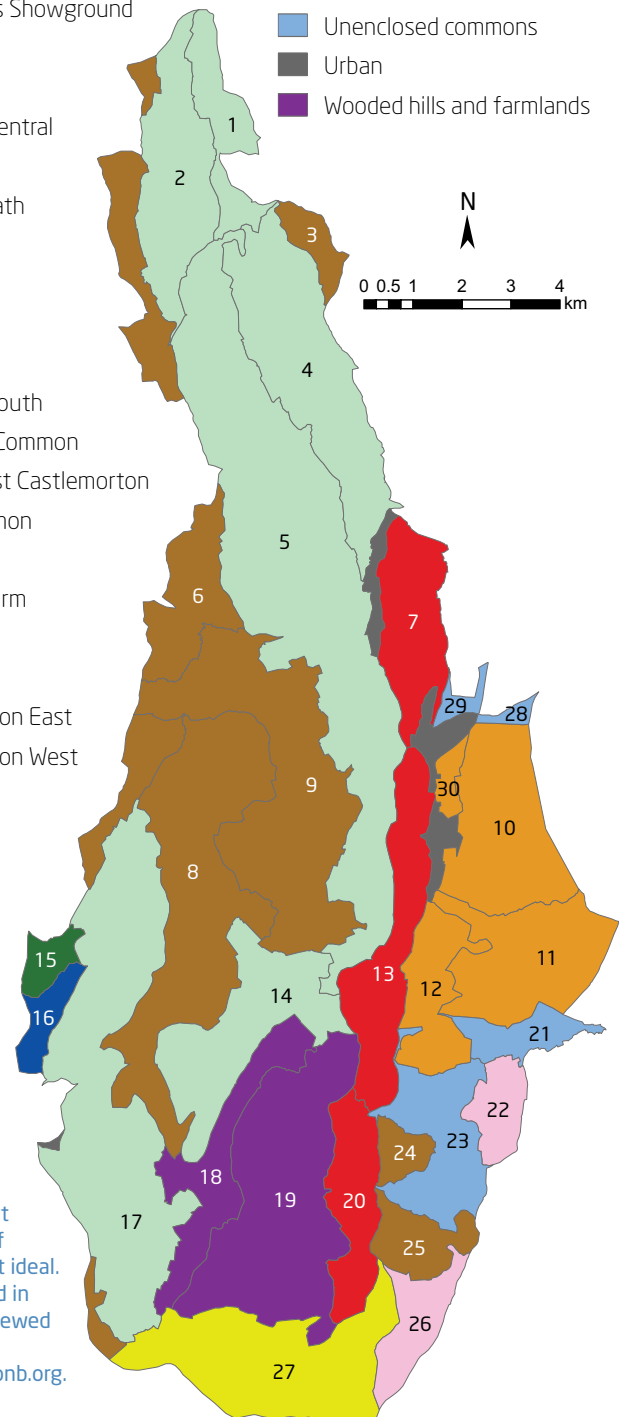
Figure 1: Landscape Description Units and Landscape Character Types

Landscape Description Units (LDUs)

- 1 Alfrick
- 2 Suckley Hills
- 3 Stitchin's Hill, Alfrick
- 4 Storridge
- 5 West Malvern & Upper Colwall
- 6 Mathon Village
- 7 Malvern Hills North
- 8 Colwall
- 9 Colwall Stone
- 10 Three Counties Showground
- 11 Marlbank
- 12 Little Malvern
- 13 Malvern Hills Central
- 14 Ockeridge
- 15 Wellington Heath
- 16 Beggars Ash
- 17 Bradlow Hills
- 18 Eastnor
- 19 Bronsil
- 20 Malvern Hills South
- 21 Castlemorton Common
- 22 Newlands, West Castlemorton
- 23 Hollybed Common
- 24 Fair Oaks Farm
- 25 Whitehouse Farm
- 26 King's Green
- 27 Bromesberrow
- 28 Malvern Common East
- 29 Malvern Common West
- 30 Malvern Wells

Landscape Character Types

- Enclosed commons
- Forest smallholdings and dwellings
- High hills and slopes
- Principal timbered farmlands
- Principal wooded hills
- Sandstone estatelands
- Settled farmlands
- Settled farmlands on river terraces
- Unenclosed commons
- Urban
- Wooded hills and farmlands



Principal Wooded Hills

Alfrick (LDU 1)

Current condition:

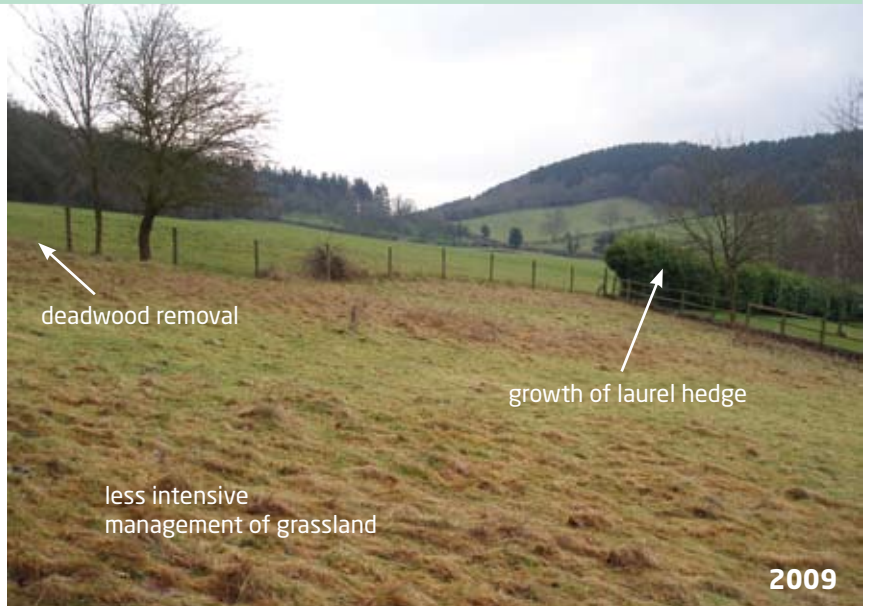
- Substantial loss of wooded land use to intensive arable cultivation
- Major loss of hedgerows and therefore of organic field pattern
- Very few remaining hedgerow trees



Suckley Hills (LDU 2)

Current condition:

- Substantial loss of woodland cover
- Introduction of non-native conifers
- Hedges replaced by post and wire fences
- Gardens and orchards associated with new dwellings add a suburban element



Storrige (LDU 4)

Current condition:

- Some loss of woodland cover and subsequent increase in the proportion of pasture
- Fewer hedgerow trees than might be expected
- Uniformity of woodland age is of concern



Principal Wooded Hills

West Malvern and Upper Colwall (LDU 5)

Current condition:

- Extensive loss of woodland and consequent increase in pasture
- Some conifer introductions in the vicinity of housing
- The influence of nearby urban areas is evident by the presence of sewage farm structures



Ockeridge (LDU 14)

Current condition:

- Extensive loss of woodland and change of land use to intensive arable cultivation
- Hedgerows are in poor condition with few hedgerow trees



Bradlow Hills (LDU 17)

Current condition:

- Intensive arable production has replaced the wooded character
- Field boundaries are becoming discontinuous
- Significant loss of hedgerow trees



Principal Timbered Farmlands

Stichin's Hill, Alfrick (LDU 3)

Current condition:

- Hedgerows are becoming 'gappy'
- Derelict traditional orchards dominate this Landscape Description Unit



Mathon Village (LDU 6)

Current condition:

- Intensive arable agriculture undermines the complex, small scale nature of this landscape
- The associated organic enclosure pattern is absent
- Poor tree cover
- Incongruous modern agricultural and residential buildings are evident



Colwall (LDU 8)

Current condition:

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



Principal Timbered Farmlands

Colwall Stone (LDU 9)

Current condition:

- Native species such as oak are being replaced with exotics or species associated with other land uses such as the line of poplars
- Gardens are increasingly disrupting the landscape character, introducing a suburban quality



Fairoaks Farm (LDU 24)

Current condition:

- Field re-organisation towards a more planned landscape is evident
- Woodland is concentrated in one area
- Arable cultivation has intensified, leading to the loss of hedges
- Loss of hedgerow trees, those remaining are concentrated along watercourses



Whitehouse Farm (LDU 25)

Current condition:

- There has been substantial replacement of hedgerows with post and wire fencing
- Consequent loss of small scale enclosure pattern
- Poor age structure of hedgerow trees with derelict trees and evidence of progressing Dutch Elm disease



Enclosed Commons

Three Counties Showground (LDU 10)

Current condition:

- A landscape highly modified by urbanisation
- Tree cover is sparse with isolated specimens surviving
- Some introduction of conifers
- There has been removal of 19th century enclosure hedges and introduction of fences along different boundaries
- Modern agricultural structures are conspicuous



Marlbank (LDU 11)

Current 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



Little Malvern (LDU 12)

Current condition:

- The enclosure pattern is becoming less distinct over time
- Boundary removal and/or replacement is evident, leaving some isolated trees
- Some pastoral land use replaced by arable
- In places this is a smaller scale, more intimate landscape than typical for this landscape type with a greater density of hedgerow trees



Enclosed Commons

Malvern Wells (LDU 30)

Current condition:

- Eastern part now occupied by golf course
- Loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Expansion of urban area into southern part

No image taken in 2006



Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use

Newlands, West Castlemorton (LDU 22)

Current condition:

- Intensive agriculture is replacing pastoral land use
- Loss of hedgerows is resulting in larger field size and loss of intimacy through an increase in scale
- Remaining hedgerows are very uniform and becoming gappy with loss of hedgerow trees



King's Green (LDU 26)

Current condition:

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



Wooded Hills and Farmlands

Eastnor (LDU 18)

Current condition:

- Loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- The pattern of previous field enclosure has largely been lost
- Introduction of fences



Bronsil (LDU 19)

Current condition:

- Some hedgerow loss and associated loss of hedgerow trees
- Consequent loss of traditional enclosure pattern



Unenclosed Commons

Castlemorton Common (LDU 21)

Current condition:

- A lack of grazing is leading to scrub encroachment



Unenclosed Commons

Hollybed Common (LDU 23)

Current condition:

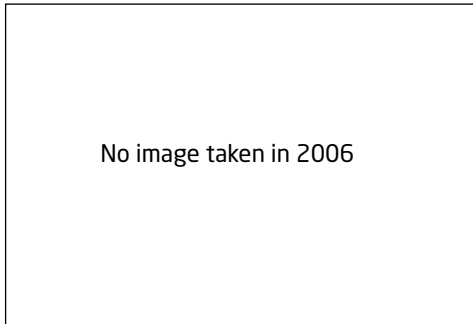
- Scrub encroachment due to insufficient grazing
- Recreational pressure is creating trodden paths across the unimproved grassland



Malvern Common East (LDU 28)

Current condition:

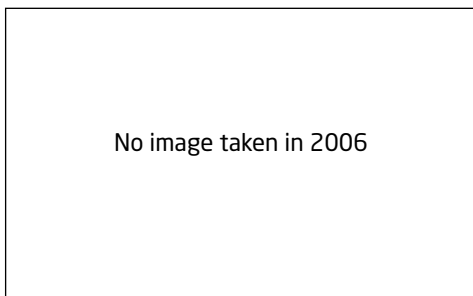
- Some intrusion by neighbouring golf course
- Recreational pressure has resulted in erosion and heavily trodden paths
- Degraded grassland



Malvern Common West (LDU 29)

Current condition:

- Peripheral formal tree planting has introduced an urban element
- Some scrub encroachment
- Heavy recreational use has resulted in well trodden paths and some ground erosion
- Degraded grassland



Forest Smallholdings and Dwellings

Wellington Heath (LDU 15)

Current condition:

- Infill has led to a mixture of settlement types, undermining the distinctive character
- Uncharacteristic features associated with smallholdings, such as ranch style fencing and 'horsiculture' are prominent
- The landscape is assuming a suburban appearance



Sandstone Estatelands

Bromesberrow (LDU 27)

Current condition:

- The high intensity agriculture is leading to a lack of need for, and thus loss of, distinctive features
- Post and wire fencing replaces hedges
- Arable reversion to pasture



Settled Farmlands on River Terraces

Beggars Ash (LDU 16)

Current condition:

- Intensive commercial orchards dominate this Landscape Description Unit



High Hills and Slopes

Malvern Hills North (LDU 7)

Current condition:

- The open, unwooded character of the landscape is being compromised by scrub and bracken encroachment
- Significant recreational pressure, with some erosion, is a feature of these northern, highest hills



Malvern Hills Central (LDU 13)

Current condition:

- A lack of grazing is leading to encroachment by scrub and bracken
- 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



Malvern Hills South (LDU 20)

Current condition:

- Scrub and woodland encroachment. These southern high hills have greater evidence of woodland surrounding their bare summits than the northern hills
- There is incursion of scrub and bracken on the hills themselves and in adjacent fields
- Partial enclosure of lower slopes
- Visitor pressure is evident from paths in the vegetation, but is generally less acute than in the higher central and northern hills
- Former quarries are conspicuously colonised by trees and shrubs





Hay cutting at Longley Green



Cattle at Castlemorton Common

¹ Eligible land is here taken as 1899ha - the total area of woodland in the AONB according to the National Inventory of Woodland and Trees

Landscape: Agricultural change

Overview

Current condition

i) Farm type - Farms devoted to livestock farming dominate the agricultural scene. (see Figure 2). Horticultural farms are the second most prevalent holding type (16.7% of holdings). Very small and small-sized farms (those under 20 hectares) overwhelmingly account for the majority of holdings, with only 26 (10.6%) being greater than 50 hectares in size. Reflecting this size structure, just 22.9% of the farm labour force comprised full-time farmers in 2007. The amount of land rented for agriculture remains modest at 21.5%.

ii) Land use - Figure 3 shows that permanent grassland occupies the greatest area in land use terms (55.5%). Cropping (26%) and woodland (7.3%) are other notable land use components. The almost negligible amount of rough grazing recorded (0.8%) is much lower than an impression of the 'Hills' might convey, demonstrating the extent of intensive land use (agriculture and woodland) in the AONB.

iii) Area under agri-environment schemes - Table 1 shows the uptake of the main English agri-environmental schemes in the AONB. There are 63 live schemes now covering almost 51% of the eligible land of the AONB.

iv) Area under woodland grant schemes - Table 2 shows that nine active woodland grant scheme agreements cover 208ha or 10.9% of the wooded area of the AONB¹. Six grants are for woodland management, four for woodland improvement and two for woodland regeneration.

Trend in condition

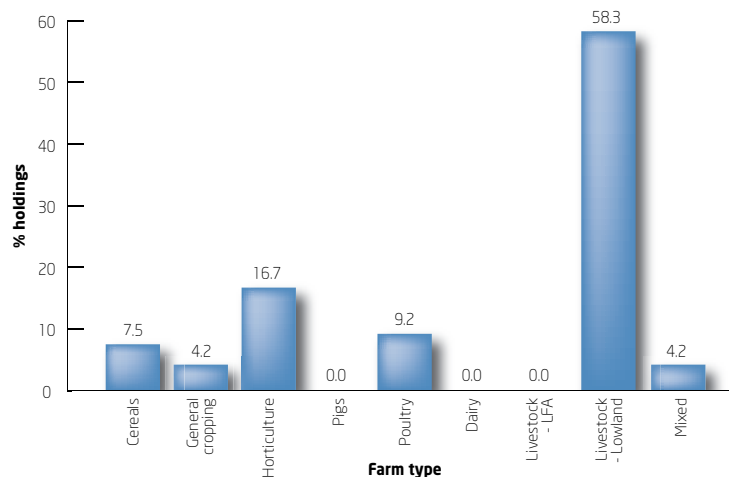
As is to be expected, figures for 2007 show only small differences in 'farm type' and 'land use' from those for 2006. Some caution also has to be exercised due to the sample nature of Defra's

June Agricultural Survey. Nevertheless, with these caveats in mind, some possible trends can be discerned.

- There is a suggestion that enterprise specialisation in the AONB's farming is still occurring. 'Cereal' and 'Horticulture' farm types appear to be increasing at the expense of 'General Cropping' and 'Mixed' classified holdings.
- Dairy farms have declined to such an extent between 2006-7 that Defra will no longer declare the number of them in the AONB (this means that the number of farms is probably less than six).
- The data hint at an ongoing replacement of the full-time farm labour force with part-time labour under both the 'Farmer' and 'Worker' headings. Much less casual labour was employed in 2007 (7 workers) compared with 2006 (15 workers).

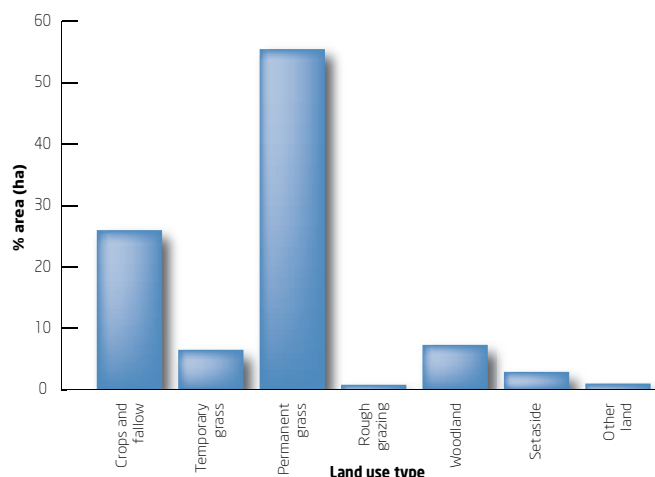
Table 1 shows that since 2006 there has been a decline in the number of Countryside Stewardship agreements and an increase in the number of Entry Level and Higher Level Stewardship schemes. This is to be expected as schemes closed to new entrants (Countryside Stewardship) are phased out and new ones phased in. The number of Countryside Stewardship agreements has not decreased dramatically since 2006 but there has been a significant fall in the amount of land covered by these agreements. This can be explained by the fact that many of the early Stewardship agreements were for large areas of land and these agreements have now expired. The smaller schemes were often agreed at a later date when funding was less readily available. These remain in place. Overall there has been a significant (22%) increase in the number of agri-environment agreements in the AONB since 2006 but a smaller (9.5%) increase in the amount of land covered by such schemes.

Figure 2: Farm types in the Malvern Hills AONB, 2007



Source: Defra, 2007

Figure 3: Land use in the Malvern Hills AONB, 2007



Source: Defra, 2007

Table 1 - No of active agri-environmental scheme agreements and area of land under such agreements in the Malvern Hills AONB in January 2009 (figures in brackets are for 2006)

Type of scheme	Number of agreements	Area under agreement (ha)	% of eligible land in AONB
Entry level Stewardship	38 (20)	2943 (871)	36% (10.5%)
Entry level plus Higher Level Stewardship	4 (0)	325 (0)	4% (0%)
Higher Level Stewardship	1 (1)	449 (252)	5% (3.2%)
Organic Entry Level Stewardship	1 (0)	73 (0)	1% (0%)
Countryside Stewardship Scheme	19 (24)	381 (2659)	5% (32%)
Total	63	4172 (3782)	51% (45.7%)

Source: Natural England, January 2009 (and 2006)

Table 2 - No of active Woodland Grant Scheme agreements and area of land under such agreements in the Malvern Hills AONB (not including woodland creation grants)

Type of scheme	Number of agreements	Area under agreement (ha)	% of eligible land in AONB
Woodland Grant Schemes (WGS)	4	67	3.5%
England Woodland Grant Schemes (EWGS)	8	140ha	7.4%
Total	9	208ha	10.9%

Source: Forestry Commission, January 2009



Apples at Suckley orchard

Biodiversity:

Condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)



Common spotted orchid in Suckley Woods

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 3.

Current condition

The most up-to-date information available for this indicator is from 2006. No SSSI has been wholly or partially destroyed and only 2% of the total area is found to be declining in condition

(Figure 4 and Table 3). 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 thus achieves 89% of the SSSI area in favourable or recovering condition. This compares very favourably with the 2006 level of 71% of SSSI area reaching the PSA target in the West Midlands Region and 74% across England as a whole.

Trend in condition

No previous data exist to effect a comparison with current condition.

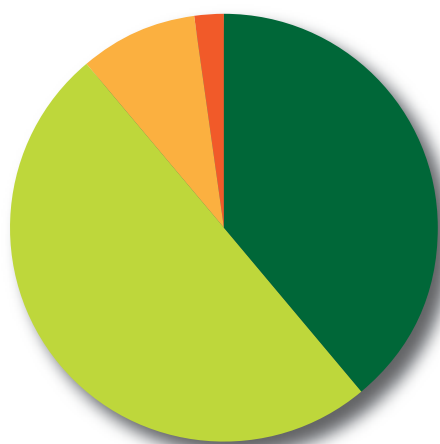


Figure 4: The Condition of SSSIs in the Malvern Hills AONB.

■ % 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 3: 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	-	-	-	-

Geology:

Number and condition of Local 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 Local Geological Sites (previously known as Regionally Important Geological Sites - RIGS). These are selected on the basis of their scientific, educational, historic, or aesthetic value. In 2008, the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust developed a methodology for monitoring the condition of these sites.

There are 47 Local Geological Sites in the Malvern Hills AONB. In 2008 and 2009, 45 (95.7%) of these sites were visited and their condition and management status assessed.¹

Current condition

Table 4 shows that of the 45 Local Geological Sites visited, 76% are in desirable condition. Just over 15% of sites are classed as undesirable and almost 9% are in uncertain condition. In

percentage terms, geomorphological sites tend to be in the best condition (100% classed as desirable), with superficial deposit features in the worst condition (60% classed as undesirable).

With respect to management status (Table 5), 75% of Local Geological Sites are classed as good and slightly more than 24% as poor. Significantly, almost 38% of all visited sites are assessed as being in decline.

Trend in condition

In 2006 36 Local Geological Sites (previously RIGS) were designated in the AONB. This number has since risen to 47 (an increase of almost 33%). No previous data exist to effect a comparison with the current condition of these sites.

¹ Permissions to access the remaining two sites had not yet been obtained at the time of writing.

Table 4 – Condition of Local Geological Sites in the Malvern Hills AONB

Type of site	No. of sites	Condition of site		
		Desirable	Undesirable	Uncertain
Bedrock	36	28 (77.8%)	4 (11.1%)	4 (11.1%)
Superficial deposit feature	5	2 (40%)	3 (60%)	0
Geomorphology feature	4	4 (100%)	0	0
Total (AONB)	45	34 (75.6%)	7 (15.5%)	4 (8.9%)

Table 5 – Management status of Local Geological Sites in the Malvern Hills AONB

Type of site	Number of sites	Management status							
		Poor declining/lost	Poor declining	Poor steady	Poor improving	Good declining	Good steady	Good improving	Good
Bedrock	36	1	3	4	0	9	2	1	16
Superficial deposit feature	5	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	1
Geomorphology feature	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3
Total (AONB)	45	2 (4.4%)	5 (11.1%)	4 (8.8%)	0	10 (22.2%)	3 (6.7%)	1 (2.2%)	20 (44.4%)

Source: Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust, 2008/9



Little Malvern Priory

Historic and Built Environment: Condition of Scheduled Monuments

Overview

Scheduled Monuments (SMs) are archaeological sites or historic buildings that are of national importance and have been afforded legal protection by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport on the advice of English Heritage. The Malvern Hills AONB contains eight Scheduled Monuments (Table 6).

Between October 2004 and July 2006 English Heritage assessed the condition and vulnerability of monuments in the West Midlands region through its Monuments at Risk programme, a part of the Heritage at Risk initiative. The information provided in Table 6 is based on the findings of this research, together with more recent assessments of condition in the case of a small number of monuments.¹

Current condition²

The overall condition of 63% of monuments in the AONB has been assessed as generally satisfactory with 37% unsatisfactory. In respect of condition trend, 50% of monuments are described as being in declining condition, 38% are stable and 12% are in improving condition. In

respect of risk, 25% of monuments in the AONB are considered to be at high risk, 63% at medium risk and 12% at low risk.

When compared with data for the West Midlands as a whole, results show that slightly fewer Scheduled Monuments in the AONB are at high risk (25%) compared with the regional average (29%). However, a higher percentage of monuments in the AONB are at medium risk (63% compared with 34% for the region) and a lower percentage are deemed to be at low risk (12% compared with 37% for the region).

Trend in condition

No previous data exist to effect a comparison with current condition. However, it is noteworthy that work in 2007 and 2008 on British Camp and Bronsil Castle has improved the condition of these monuments and their risk ratings.

Information about the Monuments at Risk programme, including the West Midlands report, can be viewed on the English Heritage website at www.english-heritage.org.uk by clicking on the Heritage at Risk button.

¹ Monuments are not named in this report since some owners may not yet be aware of the results of the Heritage at Risk survey.

² % figures should be viewed in the knowledge that there are only 8 monuments in the AONB and that these sites are not representative of those in the West Midlands as a whole.

Table 6 – Summary of Scheduled Monument condition and vulnerability in the Malvern Hills AONB

Monument	Type	Overall condition	Condition trend	Risk
A	Boundary feature	Generally unsatisfactory – extensive localised problems	Declining	High
B	Iron Age hill fort	Generally satisfactory – minor localised problems	Declining	Medium
C	Iron Age hill fort	Generally satisfactory – minor localised problems	Stable	Medium
D	Fortified house	Generally satisfactory – minor localised problems	Improving	Medium
E	Bronze Age round barrows	Generally unsatisfactory – major localised problems	Declining	Medium
F	Monastery	Generally satisfactory – minor localised problems	Stable	Medium
G	Medieval and later building	Generally satisfactory – minor localised problems	Stable	Low
H	Medieval and post-Medieval feature	Generally unsatisfactory – significant localised problems	Declining	High

Source: English Heritage, 2008

Historic and Built Environment: Condition of Listed Buildings, Parks and Gardens

Overview

Listed buildings are buildings or other structures officially designated by English Heritage as being of special architectural, historical or cultural significance. Buildings are graded in one of three categories (Grade I, II* and II) according to their importance with Grade I being the most important.

The most recent figures indicate that there are a total of 344 listed buildings within the AONB. Of these, 329 buildings (almost 96%) were visited between January and March 2008¹. The condition of each building was quickly assessed in accordance with the standard Listed Building at Risk condition methodology developed and used by English Heritage.

The Malvern Hills AONB also contains two listed Parks and Gardens:

- Grade II* Eastnor Castle
- Grade II Hope End

Initial research into the condition of all designed landscapes was carried out by English Heritage in 2008 as part of its Heritage at Risk programme.

Current condition

Listed buildings

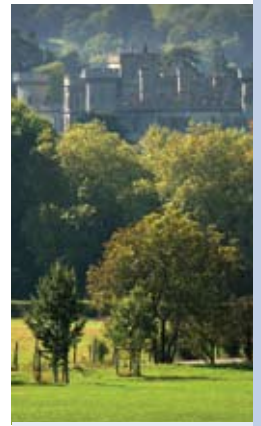
Table 7 shows that 302 (almost 92%) of visited buildings are in fair or good condition. 27 buildings (8%) are in poor or very poor condition and can be classed as at risk. When looking at figures by building grade (Table 8) all Grade I listed buildings are either in fair condition (40%) or good condition (60%). 9% of visited Grade II* listed buildings were found to be in poor condition, 9% in fair condition and 82% in good condition.

Parks and Gardens

At the time of publication English Heritage has not officially released information from its Designed Landscapes at Risk survey. However, early indications are that neither of the listed parks and gardens in the AONB are at risk.

Trend in condition

No previous data exist to effect a comparison with current condition.



Eastnor Castle

¹ 15 properties were not visited, either because access was denied or because repairs were being carried out.

Table 7 – Results of listed building condition surveys by AONB County

Area	No. of buildings (by condition status)				Total (buildings assessed)
	1 (very poor)	2 (poor)	3 (fair)	4 (good)	
Herefordshire	5	18	66	132	221
Malvern Hills District Council	0	3	34	53	90
Forest of Dean District	0	1	10	7	18
Malvern Hills AONB	5 (1.5%)	22 (6.7%)	110 (33.4%)	192 (58.4%)	329 (100%)

Source: Malvern Hills AONB Unit, 2008

Table 8 – Results of listed building condition survey by building Grades I and II*

Grade of building	No. of buildings (by condition status)				Total (buildings assessed)
	1 (very poor)	2 (poor)	3 (fair)	4 (good)	
Grade I	0	0	2 (40%)	3 (60%)	5
Grade II*	0	2 (9%)	2 (9%)	18 (82%)	22

Source: Malvern Hills AONB Unit, 2008

Tranquillity: Tranquillity Index

Overview

Tranquillity is one of the special qualities of the Malvern Hills AONB. Its assessment is facilitated by the publication of the tranquillity map of England by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) in 2006. 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., Mowbray, R., Hext, S., Macfarlane, R. and Hagget, C. *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 condition

The most up-to-date information available for this indicator is from 2006. Figure 5 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 in the entire area, although the situation worsens significantly eastwards towards Malvern Link just beyond the AONB boundary.
- 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) Storridge, where the major Hereford to Worcester A4103 road traverses the north of the AONB.

Trend in condition

No previous data exist to effect a comparison with current condition.

Bluebells at Old Hollow



Tranquillity: Tranquillity Index

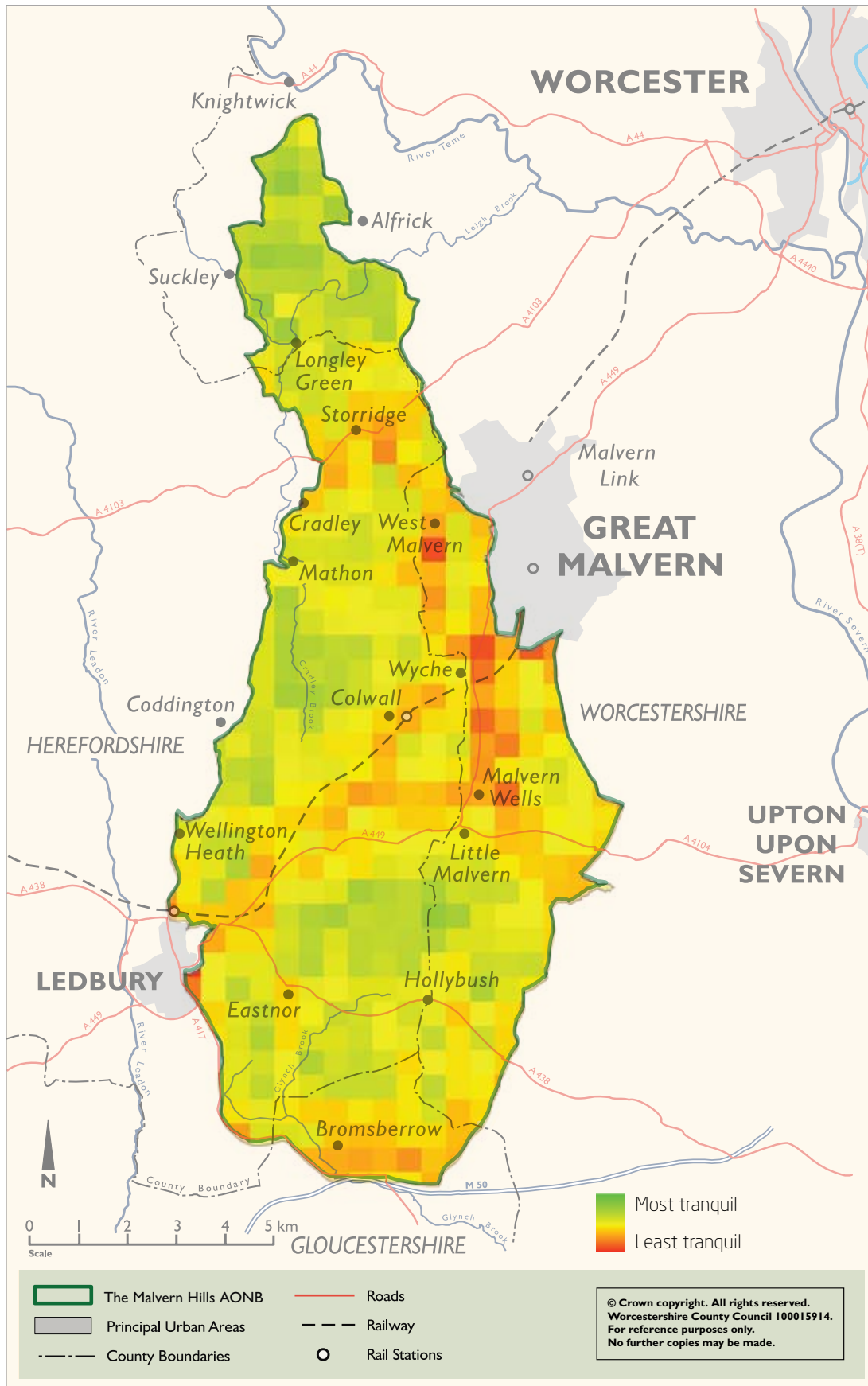


Figure 5: Tranquillity map: Malvern Hills AONB

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Enjoyment: Condition of Rights of Way

Overview

In 2000 the Government announced that it required local authorities to report on the standard of their public rights of way network. This has been 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 rights of way within each county.

In the autumn of 2008 a random sample of 5.6% of the total public rights of way network in the Malvern Hills AONB was identified. This was surveyed by trained practitioners using the BVPI 178 methodology employed by Worcestershire County Council.

Current condition

Overall, 73.2% of the public rights of way network in the Malvern Hills AONB can be classed as being easy to use. When disaggregated according to county, easy to use paths were encountered at an incidence of 78.7% of paths surveyed in Worcestershire, 58.2% in Herefordshire and 100% of paths in Gloucestershire^{1,2}. Significantly, all of these figures compare favourably with the latest county-wide BVPI 178 scores see final column in Table 9). This suggests that a higher standard of rights of way management is being achieved within the AONB.

Trend in condition

The current condition figures provided in Table 9 are the first to be generated from a dedicated BVPI 178 survey of paths in the AONB. Previously, BVPI 178 data were only available at a county level. The % figures for the AONB for 2002/3 and 2005/6 in Table 10 are thus only indicative and have been derived from the county figures, (calculated according to the percentage of the AONB in each county). The figures for 2008 in Table 10 are based on the dedicated AONB survey described above. It is not possible to compare current and previous data directly but Table 10 does suggest an upward trend in the condition of rights of way in the AONB.



Cycling near the Wyche Cutting



¹ NB Only four paths in Gloucestershire were assessed as part of the survey.

² Local authorities divide up their paths in different ways for the purpose of BVPI assessment and this helps to explain differences in the county figures.

Table 9 – BVPI 178 Results for AONB counties: rights of way that are easy to use

Area	Length of path surveyed (metres)	Rights of way easy to use		County BVPI 178 scores (%)
		metres (%)	(%)	
Worcestershire	9497	7471	78.7	73.2 (2007)
Herefordshire	6361	3702	58.2	39% (2007)
Gloucestershire	1539	1539	100	78% (2007/8)
Malvern Hills AONB	17379	12712	73.2	

Source: AONB Unit, 2009

Table 10 – BVPI 178 Trend Results for AONB counties: % rights of way that are easy to use

Area	2002/3 (%)	2005/6 (%)	2008 (%)
Malvern Hills AONB	48.8	57.3	73.2



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



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