



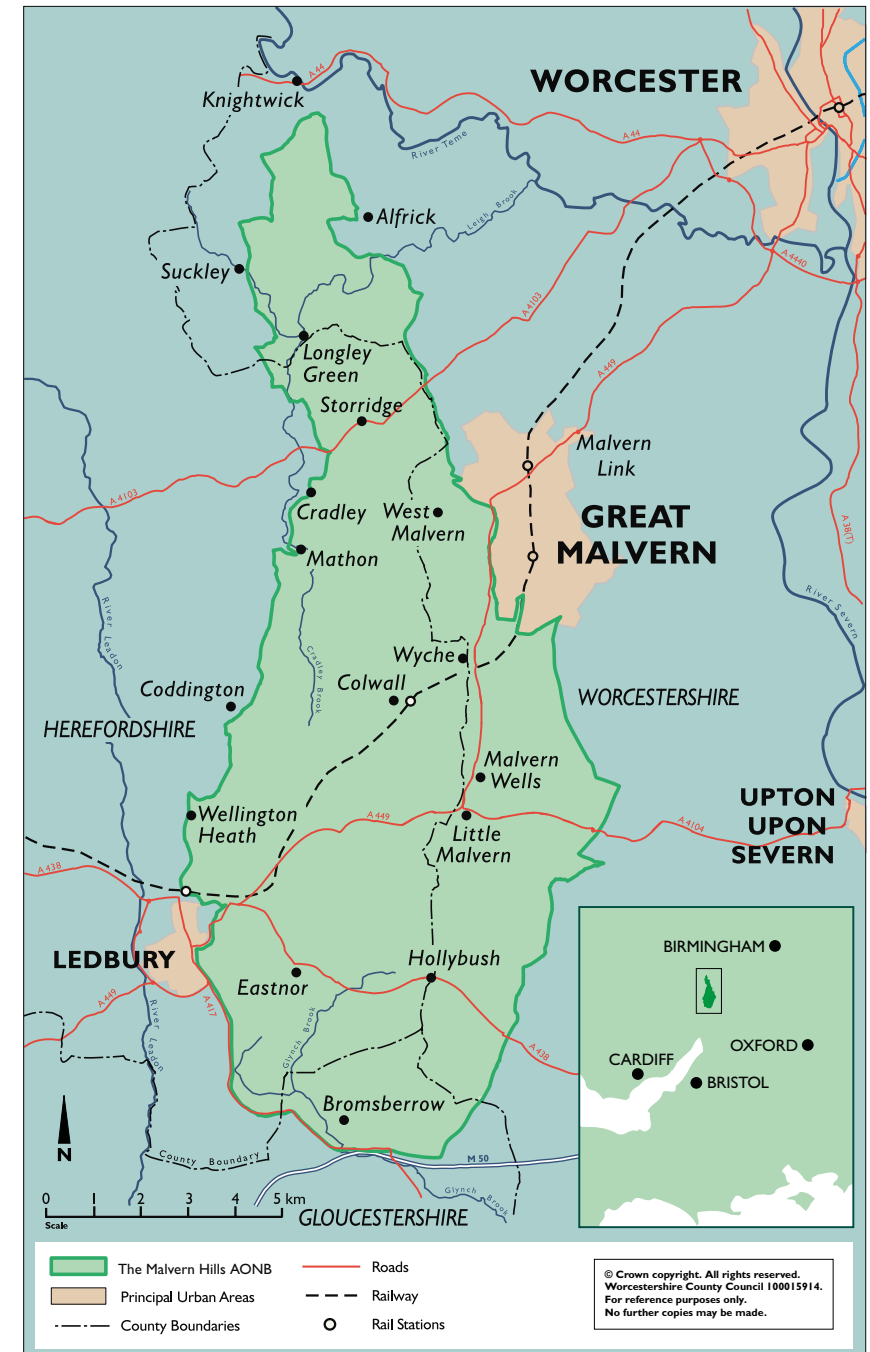
Annual Review 2023-24

malvernhills-nl.org.uk

Contents

Chair's Foreword	3
Highlights	4
Nature and Climate	5
Place	6
People	7
National Landscape Team Finance and Staff Structure	8

Right: Location of the Malvern Hills National Landscape



Chair's Foreword

2023/24 has been a year of change for the Malvern Hills AONB. All AONBs in England have been rebranded as National Landscapes, with the idea that the new name will prove more welcoming to people and create a more recognisable 'family' brand for these designated areas. However, until parliamentary time is awarded, the legal name of the designation will remain as an AONB. Positive change also came in the form of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023) which significantly strengthened the legal duty that exists in relation to the designation. Various bodies known as 'relevant authorities' must now 'seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty' of these areas.

During the year the Farming in Protected Landscape (FiPL) programme provided nearly £259,000 in grants (up from £208,000 the previous year) to over 40 local projects to 'do good' for nature and the environment. This remains one of the most significant grant schemes in the Malvern Hills NL, and thanks go to Sash Warden, its dedicated officer, and to those on the local grant-awarding panel who make the decisions on funding.

'People' focussed projects have also been wide-ranging and have included the visual arts, theatre, creative interviews, access projects, information boards and a walks app. The app contains all the National Landscape's popular Discovery Walks which can now be followed on your mobile phone. Partners are also contributing their walks and cycle rides, so no one need get lost in the National Landscape again!

In 2024/25 we look forward to a significant investment from central government sources in the National Landscape. This includes £329,000 that has been awarded to help restore historic buildings in the area and fund the final year of the FiPL programme. Importantly, the Management Plan for the area will be reviewed for the next five years. We are hoping for a strong and positive response to consultations and discussions in order to create a Plan worthy of the ambition of the Malvern Hills National Landscape Partnership.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'John Raine' in a cursive style.

John Raine
Chair, Malvern Hills NL

Highlights



117 planning applications appraised by the MHNL Team, and 10 policy or guidance documents appraised or developed.



754 people attended MHNL events such as training events for farmers, 'Eco' days, well-being days and guided walks.



MHNL joined 33 English protected landscapes in being re-branded as a National Landscape; providing a stronger voice for the National Landscape family.



The MHNL landowners group grew to 52 members covering 52% of the area.



The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme supported 41 local projects with almost £260,000 of grant.



£13,410 awarded to 11 projects through the Community Projects Fund.



The Farming In Protected Landscapes Scheme Was so successful that DEFRA increased funding and extended the programme.



106 ha of habitat conserved or enhanced for biodiversity.



6 Parish/town councils made a financial contribution to the work of the MHNL Partnership.



222 Volunteers actively supported the work of the MHNL with an equivalent cash contribution of £16,668.



3 major development schemes and 7 land management schemes appraised by the MHNL team.



The current condition of the National Landscape was assessed for the first time in 5 years.

Nature and Climate



600 new trees planted to protect ancient woodland and slow the flow of water across land in Alfrick.



Just over 33 ha of traditional orchards restored or planted anew at 24 sites.



15 ha of woodland was created or managed at 3 sites.



6.5 ha of grassland across 6 land holdings were surveyed for plant interest.



Over 16 ha of wild flower meadows were restored or managed at 6 sites.



29 new parkland trees were planted in 3 old parklands.



791 m of hedges have been laid, gapped up or planted at 6 sites.



7 new water sampling sites were established to help monitor water quality.

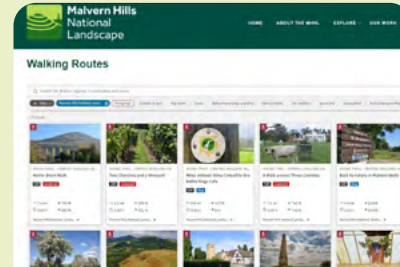
Place



Lack of toilets in the countryside is a well known barrier to access, so the MHNL was pleased to be able to contribute to the new loos at Eastnor Park.



New Position Statements on Housing and Landscape-led Development were produced, as well as guidance on Lighting and Horse Related Development.



The most visited pages on our website are the 'walks' pages so we've now got a page where you can download routes on to your phone and enjoy commentary on the landscape.



The whole of the village green of Malvern Wells was managed as a hay meadow for the first time in many years.



2 Conservation Management Plans were developed for 2 historic buildings.



Road Verges in Little Malvern and Castlemorton were managed for nature and monitored.



3 major development schemes and 7 land management schemes were appraised by the MHNL team.



2 new information boards were put up to explain the meadow management of public spaces in Malvern Wells.

People



Under DEFRA's Access for All Programme disabled buggy tracks were improved on the southern hills.



A diverse range of people were interviewed and portraits of their relationship with the area were created to inform our future projects.



The 5 year review of the AONB Management Plan commenced with an online survey to seek a wide range of views.



Volunteers in Colwall surveyed the parish hedges, and promoted their work in an event with 130 people and a couple of hedgerow hawks.



By working with schools groups and dementia groups, a drama about climate change in the area was created.



80 young people were involved in landscape events to care for the National Landscape.

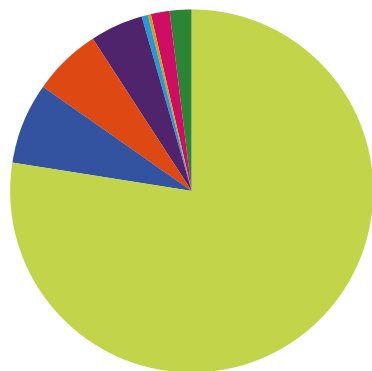


53 landowners attended 4 training events.



A local artist led under-represented groups to create nature based art about the area.

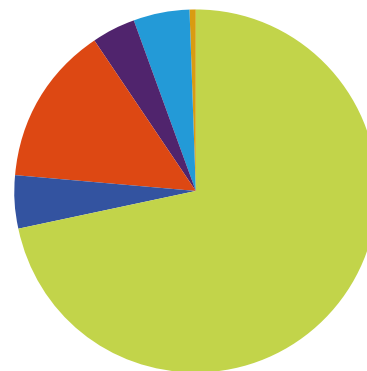
National Landscape Team Finance and Staff Structure



Core Income

Defra (77.6%)	£173,490
Herefordshire Council (7.3%)	£16,334
Worcestershire County Council (6%)	£13,268
Malvern Hills District Council (4.9%)	£11,000
Forest of Dean District Council (0.4%)	£959
Gloucestershire County Council (0.3%)	£630
Parish Council voluntary contributions ¹ (1.7%)	£3,775
Transfer from the FiPL programme ² (1.8%)	£4,000

Total £223,456



Core Expenditure

Staff costs (71.6%)	£159,884
Accommodation costs (4.9%)	£11,105
Partnership budget ³ (14%)	£31,474
Partnership running costs ⁴ (4.1%)	£9,237
Community Projects Fund ⁵ (5%)	£11,200
Transfer to reserve (0.3%)	£556

Total £223,456

Additional project income (and expenditure)

Access for All grant programme £3,953
 Farming in Protected Landscapes grant programme⁶ £317,1316
 Rebranding to National Landscapes £3,000

¹ Warm thanks to the Parish/Town Councils of Colwall, Ledbury, Malvern Wells, Little Malvern and Welland, West Malvern and Wellington Heath.

² This is the cost of time that the core NL Team spent helping to deliver the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme.

³ This supports a wide variety of projects undertaken by partners and the NL Team.

⁴ This is paid to our host authority, Worcestershire County Council in return for services such as HR and Finance support.

⁵ This supports projects that bring economic, social and environmental benefits in the area.

⁶ Income was £317,131. Expenditure was £307,725. The underspend of £9,406 will be deducted from the FiPL grant allocation for 24/25.

The Team Staff Structure for the year was as follows:

National Landscape Partnership Manager - Paul Esrich
 National Landscape Partnership Assistant Managers (job share) - Karen Humphries and David Armitage
 Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer - Sash Warden
 National Landscape Planning Officer - Josh Bailey (part time)

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



**Malvern Hills
National
Landscape**

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