



Malvern Hills
National
Landscape

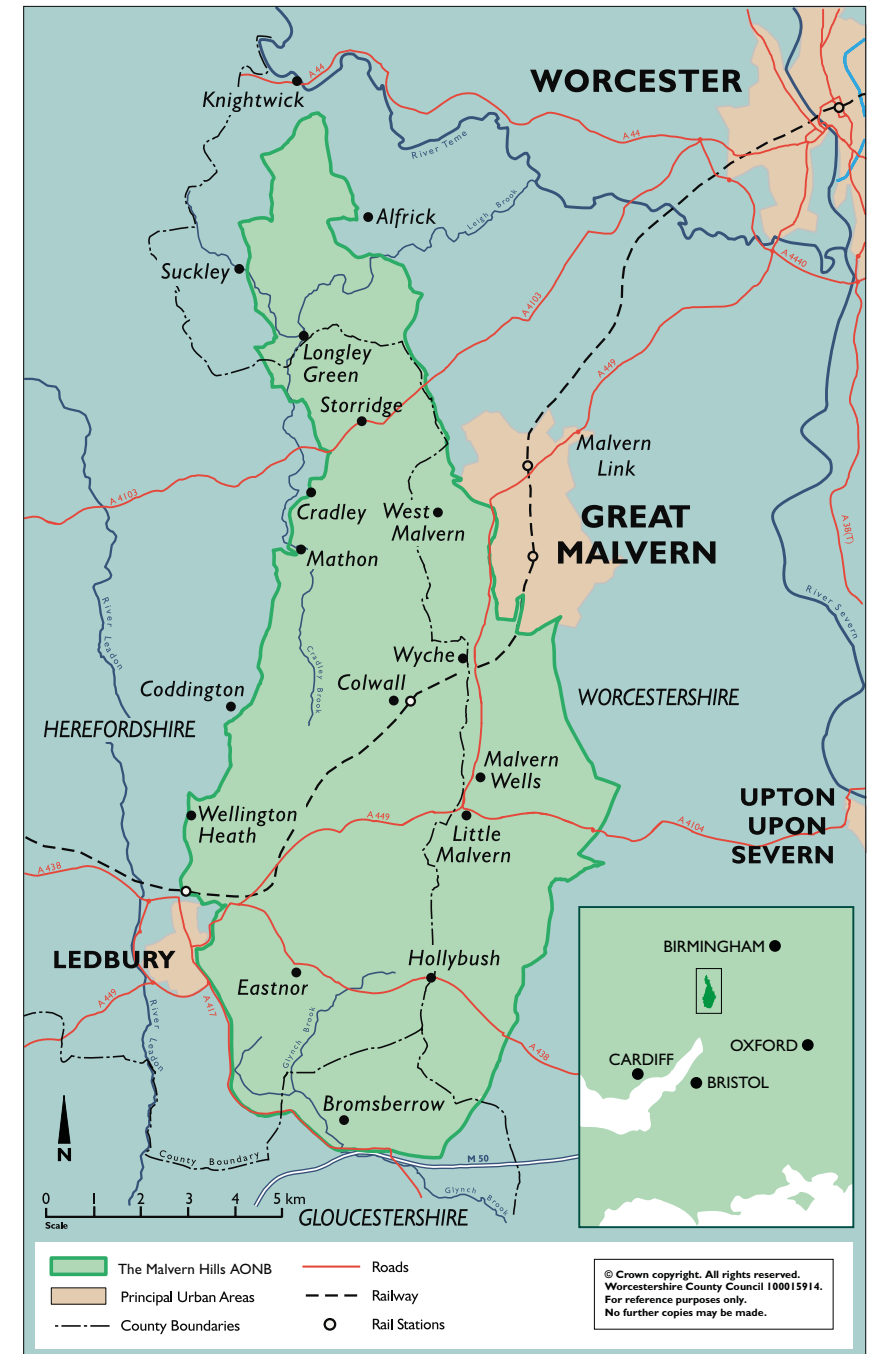
Annual Review 2024-25

malvernhills-nl.org.uk

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Right: Location of the Malvern Hills National Landscape



Chair's Foreword

2024/25 has been a year of success and progress in the Malvern Hills National Landscape. We strive to use as much of our resource as possible to deliver real change on the ground and one of the most significant programmes for the year was again Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) which is funded entirely through Defra. It provided just under £375,000 of grants to 30 local landowners to improve their land for nature, climate, people and place. Running alongside FiPL as a one-off programme was the national Historic Buildings Restoration Grant. We successfully accessed this to help local owners to repair and restore 4 historic, rural buildings, ensuring that these remain stable, watertight and useful features in our landscape for decades and hopefully centuries to come.

Projects for people also featured highly this year. Experiencing nature through the arts is a great therapy for many so we created a programme of arts adventures, based on the lived and recalled experiences of local people including less-abled residents. Volunteer groups such as the Earth Heritage Trust who care for our geologically important sites and Colwall Orchard Group who are taking on small meadow restoration were grant-aided to help them in their work. Defra's Access for all grant programme in the area was used to make substantial improvements for those with mobility problems - including the replacement of 33 stiles with pedestrian gates – whilst a further pot of funding enabled 360 school children from more deprived areas to visit and experience this fantastic landscape. Our work influencing planning and development in the area included attending a Public Inquiry into the South Worcestershire Development Plan.

Away from delivering direct change we met a statutory duty during the year by reviewing and then publishing a new Management Plan. This review was very much a 'joint enterprise' involving local communities, local authorities, national agencies and others and the new plan will guide all with an interest and a role in conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area over the next 5 years. For the first time ever our Management Plan contains targets which relate directly to national targets set down by government, so our progress will be more closely monitored and assessed than it ever has been. We welcome this change. Another first was the development during the year of a Climate Change Adaptation Plan for the area. The driest Spring on record (in 2025) is just the latest example of the need for such a document. The Partnership now needs to get behind its delivery. We look forward to doing this, to seizing opportunities and to meeting other challenges in the year ahead.



Helen Heathfield
Chair, of the MHNL

Highlights



The 5 year Management Plan for the National Landscape was published after much consultation.



293 Volunteers actively supported the work of the MHNL with an equivalent cash contribution of nearly £5,000.



The MHNL Team influenced the development of the South Worcestershire Development Plan, including by attending a Public Examination; 58 planning applications appraised, and a Renewable Energy Position Statement published.



The MHNL landowner group grew to 58 members who together own 57% of the protected area.



£23,414 was awarded to 14 projects through the Community Projects Fund.



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



68.2 ha of habitat conserved or enhanced for biodiversity.



The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme supported 36 local projects with almost £375,000 of grant.



515 people attended MHNL supported events such as training events for farmers, 'Eco' festival events and guided walks. On top of that 80 young people got involved in MHNL activities.



A total spend of £1,441,295 was spent through the National Landscape Team (a 163% increase on the previous year).



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



A new 5 year Management Plan (2025-30) was produced for the Malvern Hills National Landscape.

Nature and Climate



127 ha of grassland across 13 land holdings were surveyed for plant interest.



The first ever Climate Change Adaptation Plan for the Malvern Hills National Landscape was produced.



39 new trees were planted in the historic Hope End Park near Ledbury.



Equipment, such as a small bailer for the maintenance of local hay meadows was grant aided.



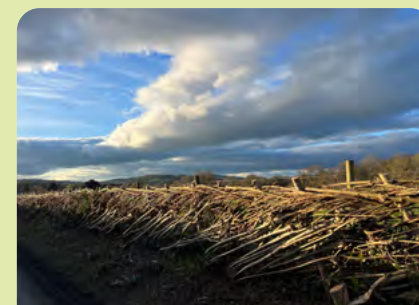
Over 66km² of land (46 separate land holdings) was surveyed by drones to establish the size of the local deer population.



The University of Worcester used drones to map features of conservation interest for White-clawed crayfish (an endangered species) on the edge of Malvern.



A report was produced outlining opportunities for Natural Flood Management across the National Landscape.



5 farmers successfully submitted applications for funding under the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme with support from the National Landscape Team.

Place



Agricultural soils on 7 land holdings were surveyed with results used to inform land management planning.



5 partner strategies/plans and 4 land management schemes were appraised by the MHNL Team.



A new Position Statement to guide renewable energy development in the MHNL was produced.



Colwall Churchyard was given a grant for an information board to explain what had been done for nature.



Under the Historic Buildings Restoration Grant, 4 'old time' agricultural buildings were conserved, with grants totalling £620,000.



A proposed development in open countryside in the NL in Colwall was refused planning permission and was then dismissed at appeal by the Planning Inspectorate, meaning it will not be built.



32 Planning Officers employed by Herefordshire Council and Malvern Hills District Council received training on the significance of the National Landscape when decision-making in the area.



Expressions of interest for burying 3 sections of overhead electricity cable were submitted for consideration to a regional panel.

People



120 primary school children eligible for free school meals spent a day in the National Landscape funded by the Generation Green programme.



240 secondary school pupils eligible for free school meals spent two days and a night in the National Landscape funded by the Generation Green programme.



A land art project was grant aided to reach less able, such as dementia groups, to express their memories of the area in art. There was an exhibition in Malvern Library.



The Earth Heritage Trust has continued its volunteer-led conservation of geological sites in the area. 41 volunteers worked on 4 sites throughout the year.



The NL Team delivered 80 engagements (provision of support, advice and/or funding) to landowners and managers.



A grant was given to the Police to provide electric bikes to patrol the hills and try to influence behaviour for the better.

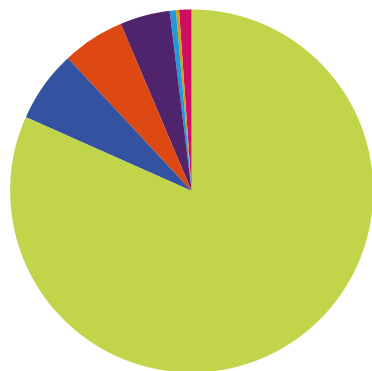


Welland Environmental Group, staged an event for children, to spark their curiosity about nature.



33 stiles were replaced by pedestrian gates to help the less able make easy progress on public footpaths. Thanks to Defra's Access fund for the grant to do this.

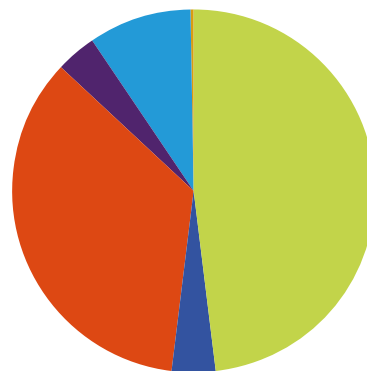
National Landscape Team Finance and Staff Structure



Core Income

■	Defra (81.7%) £208,207 ¹
■	Herefordshire Council (6.4%) £16,334
■	Worcestershire County Council (5.7%) £14,594
■	Malvern Hills District Council (4.5%) £11,550
■	Forest of Dean District Council (0.4%) £959
■	Gloucestershire County Council (0.3%) £693
■	Parish Council voluntary contributions ¹ (1%) £2,575 ²

Total £254,912



Core Expenditure

■	Staff costs (48.3%) £123,181
■	Accommodation costs (3.9%) £10,029
■	Partnership budget ³ (34.9%) £88,933 ³
■	Partnership running costs (3.6%) £9,237 ⁴
■	Community Projects Fund (9.2%) £23,414 ⁵
■	Transfer to reserve (0.1%) £118

Total £254,912

Additional project income (and expenditure)

Capital grant funding (Defra) £42,644
 Access for All grant programme (Defra) £54,739
 Farming in Protected Landscapes grant programme (Defra) £430,689
 Historic Building restoration grant programme (Defra) £619,311
 Generation Green project funding (National Landscape Association) £39,000

Total income and expenditure £1,441,295

The Team Staff Structure for the year was as follows:

National Landscape Partnership Manager:
Paul Esrich

National Landscape Partnership Assistant Manager (job share): Karen Humphries (for part of the year) and David Armitage

Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer:
Sash Warden

National Landscape Planning Officer:
Josh Bailey (for part of the year) then Catherine Laidlaw

- 1 Includes enhanced in-year revenue funding
- 2 Warm thanks to the Parish Councils of Coddington & Bosbury, Castlemorton, Colwall, Little Malvern and Welland, West Malvern and Wellington Heath.
- 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.

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



**Malvern Hills
National
Landscape**

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