



Malvern Hills
National
Landscape

Annual Review 2025-26

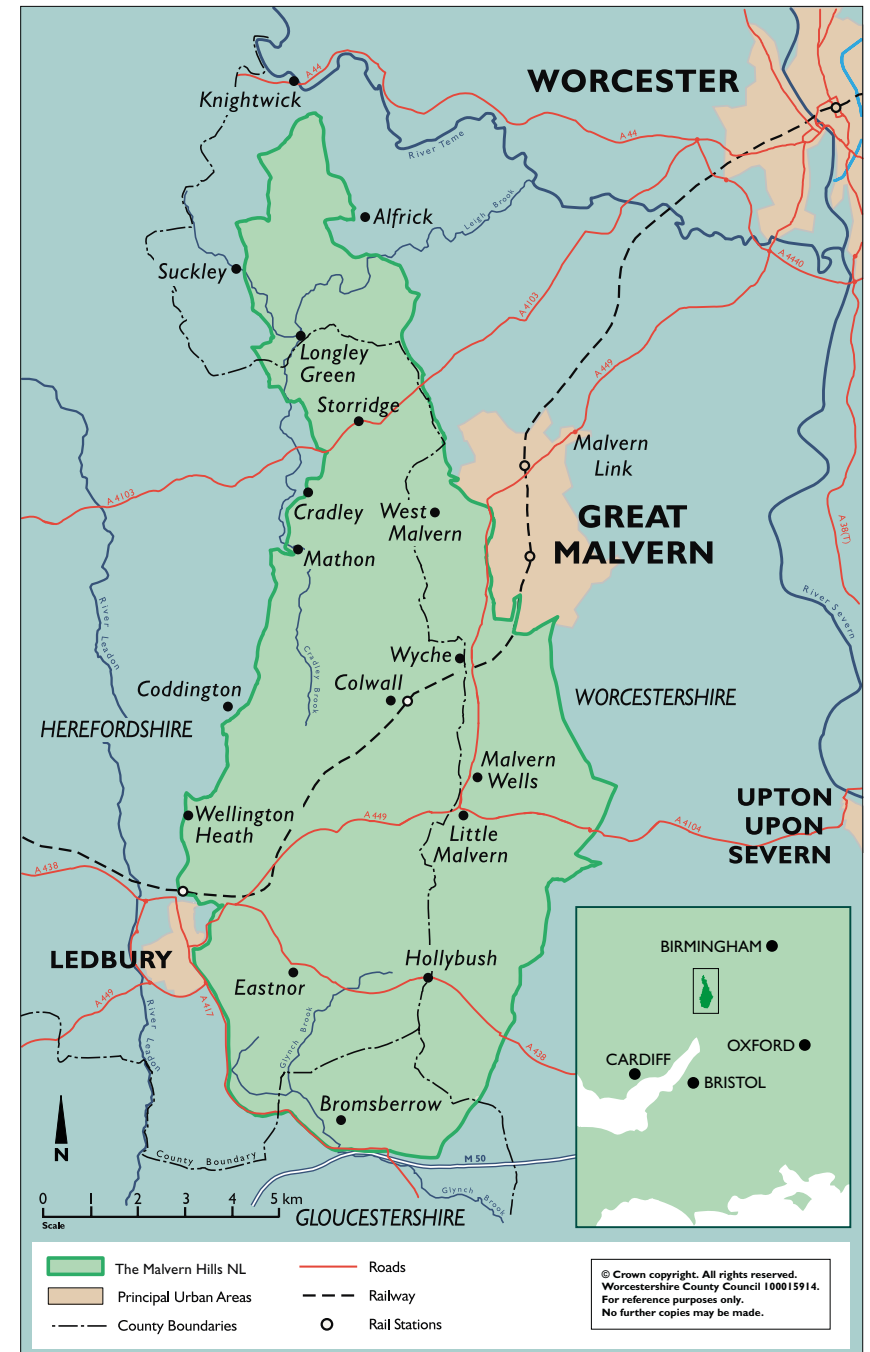
malvern hills-nl.org.uk

Contents

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

Front cover image: New woodland connecting Halesend and Bearswood Coppice ancient woodlands

Right: Location of the Malvern Hills National Landscape



Chair's Foreword

Yet again 2025-26 has been another year of successful delivery in our Malvern Hills National Landscape. Progress has been made via Defra's Farming in Protected Landscapes, with just over £256,000 invested in 21 local projects, such as the Three Counties Showground being supported to enhance their Perry Pear Collection. The brilliant news is that FiPL has been extended by a further three years.

Nature and climate were supported by a focus on water, both in terms of water quality and flood management. Water sampling along Whippets and Careys Brooks has already proved its use and eleven new 'leaky' dams are making a difference to flooding from Swinyard Hill. We're looking forward to a closer working relationship with the Environment Agency on work to improve water quality. Other projects included new woodland in Suckley, improving the management of six ancient woodlands so they better support nature, work to attract more swifts and the successful end to a four year programme to vaccinate badgers against bovine TB.

The Hills' sense of place was invested in via a condition assessment of Shire Ditch and the first ever management plan for parkland around Old Colwall. The team has continued to be busy dealing with planning allocations, not least the recent application for 3500 homes near Glynchbrook, on the southern edge of the National Landscape.

We encouraged more people to get involved with the Hills via reprinting the Ledbury Loop and Cider leaflets, supporting Cradley Wild, continuing to work with the Earth Heritage Trust and being part of Nature Calling, which celebrated the beauty of the Hills and the range of artistic relationships people feel with the area. We also worked with local people to promote availability of venison from the Hills, as a drone survey showed the deer population is worryingly high.

I'm so proud of everything that this tiny yet mighty staff team achieve, in partnership with a wide range of partner organisations and brilliant volunteers, and am looking forward to what will be achieved throughout 2026 into 2027.



Helen Heathfield
Chair, of the MHNL Joint
Advisory Committee

Highlights



A total of £700,440 was spent through the National Landscape Team.



£21,309 was awarded to 11 projects through the Community Projects Fund.



The MHNL landowner group grew to 60 members who together own 57% of the protected area.



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



11 farm visits undertaken by the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group.



53.7 ha of habitat conserved or enhanced for biodiversity..



The National Landscape Team commented on 11 draft Woodland Management Plans and woodland creation schemes.



209 people attended MHNL events such as talks and arts events. 99 volunteers helped with enhancing this National Landscape.



The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme supported 21 local projects with almost £256,000 of grant.



The Farming in Protected Landscapes Scheme was so successful that DEFRA has extended the programme for another 3 financial years.

Nature and Climate



A new 6 hectare woodland of 7700 native shrubs and trees created to join two areas of ancient woodland in Suckley.



32 Swift boxes and 11 Swift callers installed by a local RSPB group in Colwall, Malvern and Cradley.



6 ancient woodlands managed for nature (through ride widening, tree planting etc) to help meet the government's 30 by 30 target.



11 debris or 'leaky' dams installed on water courses on the side of Swinyard Hill to slow the flow of water and help prevent flooding.



A water sampling programme commenced on the Whippets and Careys Brooks to help identify links between local white clawed crayfish populations and changing climatic and environmental conditions.



A 4 year programme to vaccinate badgers in part of the National Landscape completed. 351 doses of Badger BCG administered to cubs and adults.



47 hectares of grassland across 8 holdings surveyed for plant interest and 6 different sites received species rich meadow restoration across >29 Ha.



A grant given to the Malvern Hills Trust to purchase a remote controlled mower (Robocut). This will enable vegetation on the steep slopes of the Malvern Hills SSSI to be managed safely.

Place



41 gates replaced stiles this year in the MHNL. All funded by Defra's Access for all Fund.



The first ever Management Plan produced for an area of parkland at Old Colwall. This included an ecological assessment, tree surveys and historical research.



Water quality monitoring took place on 14 sites across the Teme Catchment in the northern part of the National Landscape see MHNL-Water-Quality-Report.pdf.



Bike racks have been installed at 3 sites around the MHNL to allow for peaceful, and secure enjoyment of the area.



72 planning applications were commented on. We responded to the national planning reforms and challenged the Glynchbrook Village allocation.



FiPL supported the 3 Counties showground to expand, DNA test, label and enhance the National Collection of Perry Pears, and support perry education.



A new condition assessment of the Shire Ditch was completed. This will inform future management of this Scheduled Ancient Monument.



Work commenced to assess whether 3 overhead power lines in the National Landscape could be buried underground at Eastnor and Mathon.

People



Two local land managers were supported to undertake Deer Safety Certification and food hygiene courses.



Geology is such a complex topic, so together with the Earth Heritage Trust we put together explanatory videos of key sites in the area.



Charged with providing a welcome for all to the area, a report was written, following a walk, on the perceived barriers to accessing the area.



Cradley Wild, a local environmental group, was funded to give educational talks, and do small projects, such as making bird boxes.



The MHNL relies so much on the goodwill of expert volunteers. This year, many came on our study tour and picnicked in one of the traditional barns we'd restored.



With a grant to the Earth Heritage Trust, we funded the continued maintenance of 4 sites of geological interest in the area. EHT's volunteer army was deployed to the task with skill and joy.

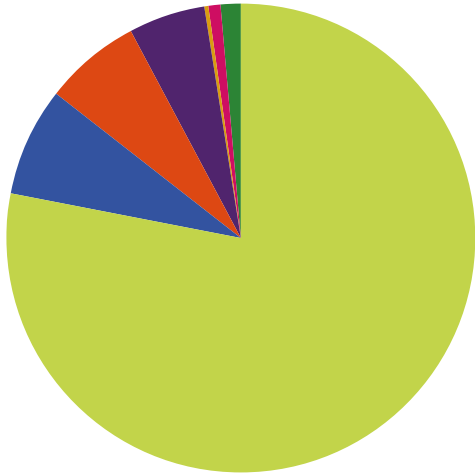


Nature Calling was a project run jointly with the National Landscape Association, to encourage people to express what they felt about the area, artistically. These tapestries were just one of the artworks produced.



The Ledbury Loop and Cider Route leaflets were reprinted in collaboration with the Ledbury Area Cycle Forum, to encourage a safe way to taste the area's treasures.

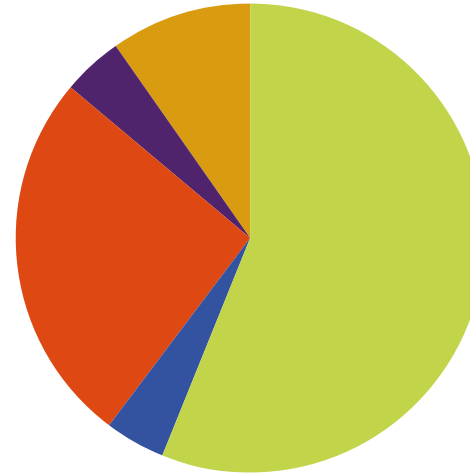
National Landscape Team Finance and Staff Structure



Core Income

- Defra (78.3%) £173,490
- Herefordshire Council (7.4%) £16,334
- Worcestershire County Council (6.6%) £14,594
- Malvern Hills District Council (5.2%) £11,550
- Gloucestershire County Council (0.3%) £693
- Parish Council voluntary contributions (0.9%) £2,050¹
- Reserve Funds (1.3%) £2,967

Total £221,678



Core Expenditure

- Staff costs (56.3%) £124,848
- Accommodation costs (4.1%) £9,163
- Partnership budget (25.8%) £57,121²
- Partnership running costs (4.2%) £9,237³
- Community Projects Fund (9.6%) £21,309⁴

Total £221,678

Additional project income (and expenditure)

- Capital grant funding/30by30 programme (Defra) £83,521
- Access for All grant programme (Defra) £89,248
- Farming in Protected Landscapes grant programme (Defra) £301,993
- Nature Calling £4,000

Total income and expenditure £700,440

The Team Staff Structure for the year was as follows:

- National Landscape Partnership Manager: Paul Esrich
- National Landscape Partnership Assistant Manager: David Armitage
- Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer: Sash Warden
- National Landscape Planning Officer: Catherine Laidlaw

1 Warm thanks to the Parish Councils of Coddington & Bosbury, Colwall and Little Malvern and Welland.
 2 This supports a wide variety of projects undertaken by partners and the NL Team.
 3 This is paid to our host authority, Worcestershire County Council in return for services such as HR and Finance support.
 4 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
Manor House, Grange Road
Malvern, Worcestershire WR14 3EY

Tel: 01905 845057
Email: aonb@worcestershire.gov.uk
Web: www.malvern hills-nl.org.uk



Follow us on Facebook