



Image: Photo credit: Steve Welch

Cannock Chase National Landscape Annual Review 2023-2024

www.cannock-chase.co.uk



**Cannock
Chase**
National
Landscape

Welcome From Our Chair

My first year as Chair of the Joint Committee coincides with the re-naming of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty as National Landscapes. We may have a new name and a new logo, but Cannock Chase is still the same beautiful place that we all love and cherish. As you read through this Annual Review of the highlights of our impressive and wide-ranging achievements, it is also clear that our partners, volunteers and communities remain united and determined to keep it special.

Our re-name is just one of several significant national policy changes for Protected Landscapes announced during the year:

- A Protected Landscapes Partnership has been established for National Landscapes, National Parks and National Trails to deliver collective programmes on nature recovery, widening access to nature, and boosting opportunities for private sector investment.
- Legislation in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 has enhanced our management plans and placed a stronger requirement on partners to contribute to their delivery and to further the purposes of National Landscapes.
- **A Targets and Outcomes Framework** sets out the contribution that Protected Landscapes should make to national targets for the environment, including how we can help achieve the Government's commitment to protecting 30% of land for nature by 2030.

As a Partnership we stand ready to respond to these and other changes, and deliver more for nature, climate, people and place. The forthcoming preparation of our new Management Plan for the period 2025-30 provides a timely opportunity to re-new and re-focus our efforts, set ambitious targets, and demonstrate our desire to make a real difference. Working collaboratively and pooling our skills, expertise and resources has never been more important or urgent.

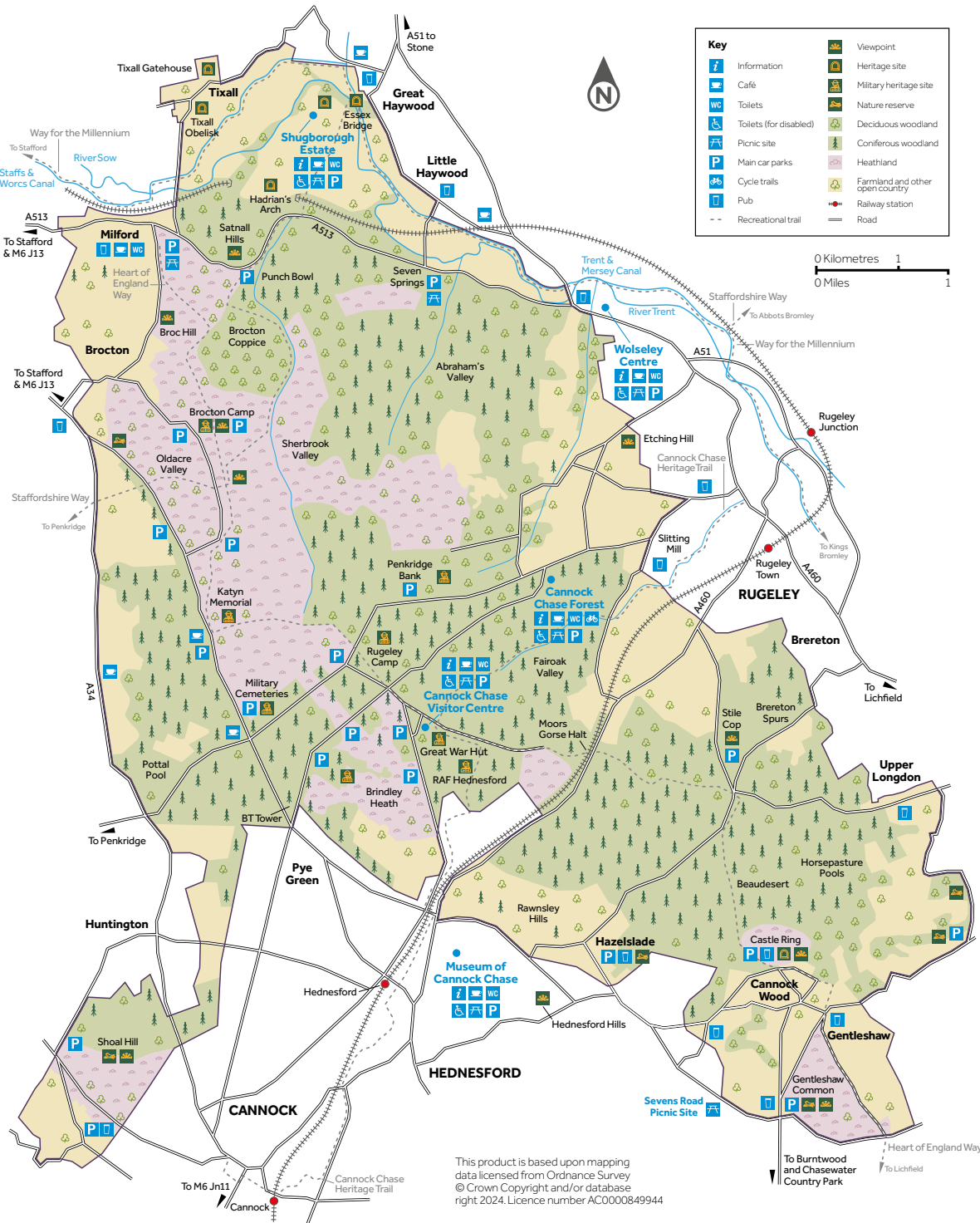
I hope that you enjoy reading this Review. Please do make contact with the Team if you want to find out more, have ideas for projects or want to get more directly involved in our work to keep Cannock Chase special.



Councillor Victoria Wilson

Chair, Cannock Chase National Landscape Joint Committee

This Annual Review highlights some of our achievements for 2023/24, which link to the actions laid out in our current Business Plan and AONB Management Plan 2019-25.



Cannock Chase

Cannock Chase National Landscape is situated in Staffordshire in the West Midlands within easy access of several large towns and cities.

Wild and Beautiful

Designated in 1958 and covering 26 sq miles (69 sq kms) of forests, heaths and historic parklands, Cannock Chase is mainland England's smallest National Landscape.

Cannock Chase National Landscape Partnership

The National Landscape Partnership comprises all those bodies and individuals that collaborate to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of Cannock Chase. More information on the Partnership is available at: www.cannock-chase.co.uk

Cannock Chase National Landscape at a glance

Heathland is internationally important for wildlife

Cannock Chase has the **LARGEST** area surviving in the Midlands



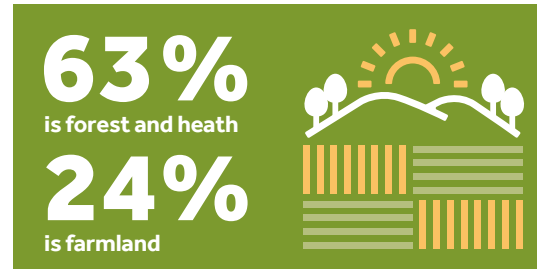
8,700 people live in the AONB

2 million people live within 30 kms



63% is forest and heath

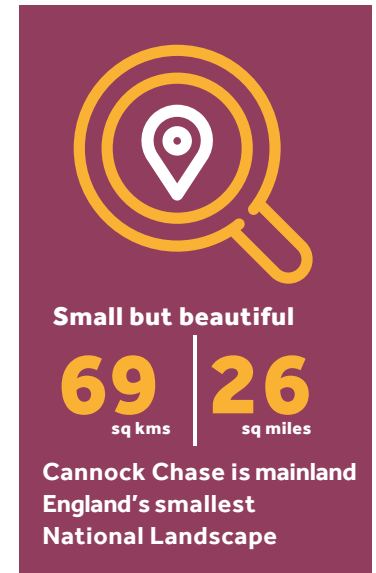
24% is farmland



Small but beautiful

69 sq kms | **26** sq miles

Cannock Chase is mainland England's smallest National Landscape



One of England's finest landscapes

protected since **1958** for its outstanding natural beauty



Over **1,000** cultural heritage assets including one of the largest Great War training camps in England



1,000 year old hunting landscape



2.5 million visitors each year



Industrial history of mining, charcoal and glass and iron making



157 kms of public rights of way, including sections of Heart of England Way, Staffordshire Way & Way for the Millennium



7 Scheduled Monuments

64 Listed Buildings

5 Conservation Areas

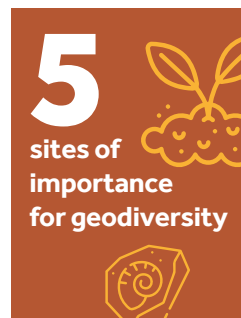
2 Registered parks and gardens



31% is protected for biodiversity



5 sites of importance for geodiversity




5 local authorities
15 town and parish councils



63% is owned by public and charitable bodies

37% is privately owned



51% is publicly accessible land

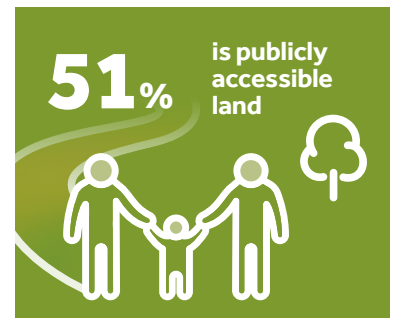




Image: Photo credit Sam Carpenter

Grazing Cannock Chase heathlands and wood-pasture

Visitors to Cannock Chase can now see more livestock grazing its heathlands and wood pasture. These habitats are nationally and internationally important for rare and threatened wildlife. Grazing helps to ensure that these distinctive and historic landscapes survive and thrive.

This year, Cemex introduced Belted Galloway cattle on its land adjoining Rugeley Quarry. Each cow wears a small GPS collar which allows it to be tracked and restricted to areas where grazing is required without the need for extensive fencing. Meanwhile, the grazing trial on Moors Gorse in Cannock Chase Country Park has continued for its third year, whilst cattle grazing continues on Hednesford Hills Local Nature Reserve just outside the National Landscape.



Image: Cattle grazing Photo credit Cemex

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust is making preparations to re-establish grazing on key connecting heathland corridors in Cannock Chase Forest, with the support of Forestry England

Annual Review 2023-24

and funding from the Farming in Protected Landscape programme. The National Trust and Natural England are also working together on a 20-year project to restore 119 hectares of wood pasture across the north of the National Landscape. The area will be grazed by the Trust's livestock to aid the management of the area.

Aquatic invertebrates

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust has begun an aquatic invertebrate survey to assess the health of the main watercourses that drain Cannock Chase. Different invertebrate species often have very specific requirements and tolerances, and their presence, or absence, tells us a great deal about the health of the water environment.

The survey is repeating baseline watercourse surveys carried out ten years ago in 2014/15 to see if the water quality has changed and to assess the impacts of any management works carried out. Initial findings suggest that the quality of the surveyed streams is good. However, pesticide/herbicide usage has been detected at two sample points.



Image: Orange striped Stone fly Photo credit Nick Mott

Long eared owls

Audio equipment and thermal cameras, funded from the Cannock Chase Sustainable Development Fund, are improving our knowledge of long-eared owls, a secretive and nocturnal bird. The new technology has successfully identified the location and nesting behaviour of the owls, monitored roosting behaviour, courtship, breeding attempts and provided estimates of population size.

Unfortunately breeding attempts in 2022 failed, but the 2023 season was successful with five owls fledged from two nests. The information collected about the owls has been shared with landowners to assist future management plans to help the species.

The Chase is an important breeding area for long-eared owls and is possibly acting as a 'reservoir' for birds to spread out over the rest of the county.



Image: Long eared owl Photo credit Joe Banton

Other news in brief...

- Field surveying for **adders** began in the spring of 2024 to ground truth the adder habitat suitability model that is being developed by the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UK CEH). Led by Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the UK (ARG UK) and UK CEH and funded by the Farming in Protected Landscape Programme, this ground-breaking study has brought together partners and volunteers from the charitable, public and private sectors to build a picture of where the adders are and what we need to do to help this nationally declining species.
- The **Farming in Protected Landscape programme** also paid for the purchase of new equipment and the involvement of specialists to supervise the capture and translocation of white-clawed crayfish from known strongholds on the Chase to other watercourses, so strengthening the overall population of this globally endangered aquatic invertebrate. Terrestrial invertebrates have also benefitted from FiPL funding this year, with the creation of bare earth scrapes at Etching Hill and Gentleshaw Common.
- The Cannock Chase National Landscape Partnership and Staffordshire County Council have supported the West Midlands Ringing Group to purchase a drone equipped with a thermal camera to monitor the breeding success of **European nightjar** on the Chase.
- Working with our partners at Staffordshire County Council, National Trust and Forestry England we jointly commissioned deer surveys across Cannock Chase. This repeats the survey in 2022 to give us a clearer picture of deer numbers and population trends to help inform our forthcoming **Deer Management Statement**.
- Cannock Chase was used as a case study by the National Landscapes Association to assess the potential contribution of National Landscapes to deliver the Government's commitment to **protect 30% of the land for nature by 2023 (30by30)**. A significant proportion of Cannock Chase is protected for nature, with a number of other, non-designated, areas of land that have great potential to encourage wildlife.

Natural solutions to climate change

Hazelmoor Farm is a 7-acre smallholding bordering Stony Brook, near Slitting Mill. The paddocks are lightly grazed by ponies and a small herd of sheep. As part of the **Farming in Protected Landscape** funded project here a derelict pond was reprofiled to create a wetland scrape. This will provide valuable habitat and also contribute to water storage and managing water flow during wet periods. With wetter winters and increasingly unpredictable flow rates this is a practical solution to tackling the impacts of climate change.



Image: Hazelmoor Farm. Photo credit Karen Davies

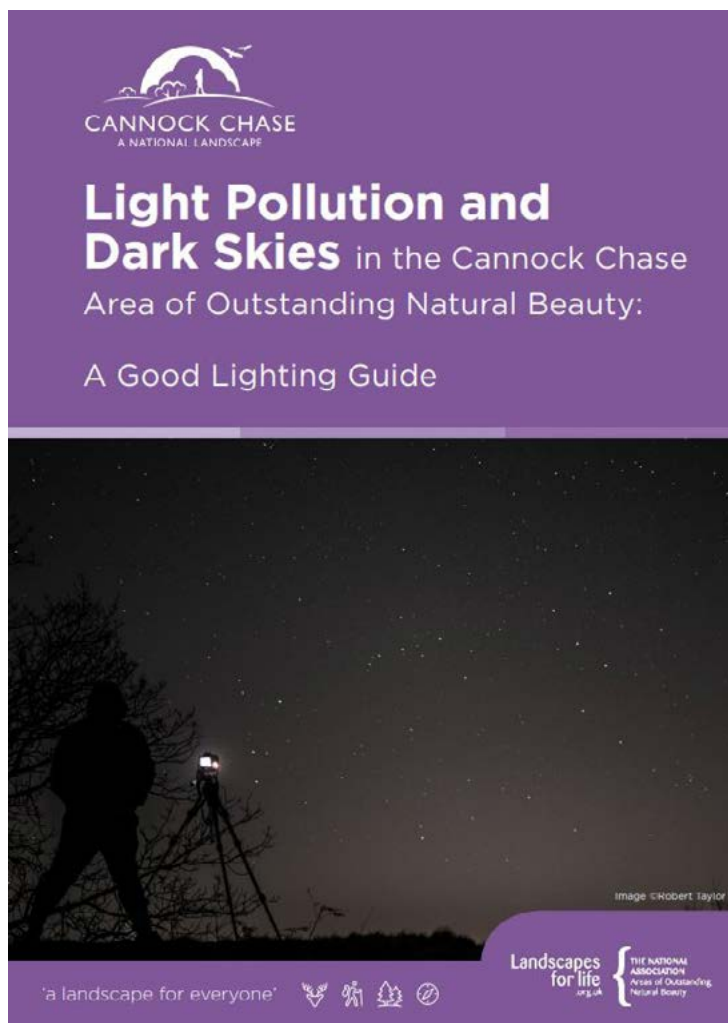
The Farming in Protected Landscape programme has also supported farmers to plant 5,592 metres of new hedgerows and 147 hedgerow trees. Four of these projects also gapped up existing hedgerows to strengthen them for the future. Hedgerows and hedgerow trees are important for capturing and storing carbon, as well as providing landscape and nature benefits.



Image: Hedgerow planting. Photo credit Karen Davies

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions

Our **Good Lighting Guide** for the National Landscape highlights that poorly designed and misdirected lighting wastes energy. The document includes information and advice to property and business owners to avoid and reduce light pollution that will lower greenhouse gas emissions, as well as help keeping our skies dark.



Other news in brief...

- On 15 February 2023 the National Landscape supported a **star-gazing session** with CPRE Staffordshire for Guides and Brownies at Beaudesert Outdoor Activity Centre. 34 Brownies and 22 Guides attended and were given a presentation by Keele Observatory who brought along their telescope for everyone to take a look at the night sky with an explanation on what they could see.



Image: Keele Observatory at Beaudesert Outdoor Activity Centre

- New data gathered for the updated State of the AONB report shows that semi-natural habitats in Cannock Chase National Landscape are significant **carbon stores** - collectively storing a staggering 1.3 million tonnes of carbon. The largest amount of carbon is stored in woodland (62% of all the carbon on the Chase). Cannock Chase also has areas of peaty soils in the Trent and Sow Valley as well as isolated pockets elsewhere. However, our knowledge of their full extent, condition and restoration potential is incomplete.

Volunteering in the National Landscape

For the first time we have estimated the combined contribution that our volunteers make. In 2022, over 600 volunteers contributed a staggering 47,400 hours with the Team and our partners. That's the equivalent of 24.6 full-time members of staff. The range of activities carried out includes visitor engagement, landscape monitoring, ecological and heritage surveys, practical conservation tasks and trail maintenance.

Volunteering is open to everyone and is a great way for people to be physically active, meet people and develop new skills.

Farmer engagement

Two events have taken place this year for farmers and landowners to learn more about the **Farming in Protected Landscapes** programme. The first was hosted by farmer Richard Shropshire at Teddesley Park Farm, Penkridge, Stafford on 8th June 2023.



Image: Beaudesert Park Farm Photo credit Colin Manning

Fifteen landowners, land managers and farmers joined Richard to see how funding is helping his business and the farm.

On 29th November 2023, 23 people joined farmer Mary Cope at Beaudesert Park Farm to see how the programme has helped to diversify her farming business. A talk by Faye Edwards from Linking Education and Farming (LEAF) explained how farmers can develop their education provision, connect with communities whilst also generating an additional income. The event also provided an opportunity to discuss funding options for restoring old farm buildings.

Horse riding on the Chase

We received over 250 responses to our survey asking how the experience for horse riders on the Chase can be improved. Riders told us that they get information about where they can ride on the Chase from a variety of sources including Ordnance Survey maps, social media, the British Horse Society (BHS) website and from previous rides they have been on or from recommendations from friends. Riders want to know whether there is parking available for horse trailers, the type of terrain they can expect, where can they canter, and where are the bridleways and water crossings. The findings will be used to develop a web page to signpost horse riders on Cannock Chase to the information they need.

The Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Partnership together with the British Horse Society also organised two guided horse rides on the Chase to raise awareness of the importance of the European wildlife site and how riders can help to look after it.

Dog awareness campaign

The **SAC Partnership** has begun a campaign to raise the awareness of dog owners to the impact of our canine companions on the Chase and its wildlife. A competition to design a poster for Cannock Chase Visitor Centre at Marquis Drive and selected other locations was run for under 11s in the late autumn 2023. For the start of the 2024 bird nesting season banners have been installed in the main car parks with key messages to remind dog owners why it is important to manage their pets to protect ground nesting birds, as well as to remove dog poo to avoid harming heathland soils, plants and animals. A canine calendar has been produced and distributed to support these key messages and provide further information.



Image: Credit SAC Partnership

Other news in brief...

- As reported in last year's Annual Review, the National Landscape and SAC Partnerships have developed the **Future Guardians programme** to inspire today's youngsters to become the future guardians of Cannock Chase. The programme was officially launched on 20th June 2023 at Beaudesert Outdoor Activity Centre.
- We are delighted that several new members have joined our **Joint Committee**, bringing different perspectives from the arts, health and wellbeing and young people. We are still looking to broaden representation, particularly from people who can provide a voice for ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.
- In 2023/24 the **Cannock Chase Sustainable Development Fund** supported the development of wildlife gardens at John Bamford primary school in Rugeley and West Hill Primary School in Hednesford, as well as improving the facilities for schools and groups visiting Beaudesert Park Farm.
- The second year of funding from Defra's **Access for All Fund** has allowed us to continue our work to improve accessibility on the Chase, through: the purchase of portable hearing loop systems to assist guided walks and talks on the National Trust's Shugborough Estate; improving the accessible path network and interpretation at the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust's Wolseley Centre, and; improving the waymarking of Public Rights of Way Team, with the support of the County Council's Public Rights of Way Team and the Ramblers.
- An **induction slide-deck** about the National Landscape is now available for new members, staff and volunteers to provide context and explanation of the work that we do to look after this special place

HS2

In October 2023, the Government announced the cancellation of the northern leg of the HS2 high-speed rail project. The planned route crossed the Trent valley north of Great Haywood on a viaduct. The cancellation means that harm to the National Landscape and its setting will now be avoided. HS2 has committed to funding in full the package of Environmental Enhancement projects that were approved to conserve and enhance the area's special qualities. The 6 projects will: create 40 hectares of new/restored wood pasture at Shugborough, restore 50 hectares of wet grassland along the Trent Sow river corridor, improve access along the Staffordshire and Worcestershire towpath, restore the Ingestre Orangery Garden, improve the garden and landscape views on the Shugborough Estate garden, and improve understanding of the archaeology and heritage around Tixall Gatehouse.

Monitoring heritage assets

Historic England and the County Archaeologist visited Essex Bridge and Spring Hill Saucer Barrow in January 2024. As part of these visits, they also provided training to the Chase Through Time Volunteer Group on how to undertake condition surveys of heritage assets, including filling in a bespoke condition survey form. The volunteers have spent a number of days in the field recording the condition of non-designated heritage assets on County Council land around Marquis Drive/Moors Gorse, and Brindley Heath. They have been provided with survey 'packs' by the County Archaeologist, which includes Staffordshire Historic Environment Record data, base mapping, and LiDAR

interpretation mapping.

Chase Through Time Volunteers have also been out on the National Trust Shugborough Estate completing condition assessments of designated and non-designated heritage assets. Completed forms have been provided to the National Trust Archaeologist.



Image: Essex Bridge Photo credit Sam Carpenter

Farming in Protected Landscapes delivering for Equines and for 'Neigh-ture'

This year we have reached out to several new audiences, particularly the equine community, including private horse owners, livery yards and stud farms. Horse paddocks occupy a quarter of the agricultural land area of Cannock Chase, with around 1500 horses registered in the National Landscape area. Projects developed so far have included planting new copses and shelter belts, hedgerows and hedgerow trees, creating wetland scrapes and enhancing wetland habitats. We are also seeing improvements in pasture management and more sustainable practice, as well as a general 'tidying up' of land where FiPL projects have taken place.

Rebranding AONBs to National Landscapes

On November 22nd 2023, all AONBs in England and Wales were re-named as National Landscapes, including Cannock Chase which has become Cannock Chase National Landscape. The new name reflects our national importance; the vital contribution we all make to protecting the nation from the threats of climate change, nature depletion and the wellbeing crisis, whilst also creating greater understanding and awareness for the work that we do. This is a significant milestone in our collective ambition to be leading exemplars of how thriving, diverse communities can work with and for nature in the UK.

The new visual identity will be slowly incorporated into our promotional assets and communications, beginning with our welcome leaflet and guide to Cannock Chase.



Other news in brief...

- National Landscape Team officers attended the National Landscapes Association annual conference held at the University of Bath, 4-7 September 2023, the theme of which was 'Invested and Investing in Landscape: Who, Why, How'.
- Our local **annual conference** this year was held at The Aquarius Ballroom, Hednesford on 25 April 2024. The theme of Nature Recovery was timely, with Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Councils working on the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and the forthcoming review of our AONB Management Plan in which nature recovery will be central to our vision for the Chase for the next 5 years. The conference allowed us to reflect on the state of nature in the National Landscape; what we mean by nature recovery; and how we can work in partnership to deliver a better future for nature. Policymakers, experts and practitioners shared their knowledge and experience across a range of projects.

Media coverage over the past year has included:

- A piece on the BBC news website about the launch of the Future Guardians of Cannock Chase programme.
- An interview with Ian Marshall on ITV Midlands evening news about the new national naming to National Landscape and branding.
- An interview with Keele Observatory on Capital FM about the Dark Skies event with Staffordshire girl guides organised with Staffordshire CPRE.
- 11 e-newsletters sent out to 2324 subscribers.
- Posting on X (formerly Twitter) since Jan 2024, with 1700 followers

Expenditure

Staff and associated costs ¹	£167,905
Other 'core' costs ²	£31,942
Partnership running costs ³	£9,000
Sustainable Development Fund ⁴	£9,436
AONB projects ⁵	£14,388
Access for All projects ⁶	£36,100
Total	£268,771

¹ Salaries, training expenses and travel and subsistence for the National Landscape Team

² Other 'core' costs include office equipment, national liaison, print and publicity, Annual Conference, core activities

³ This is paid to our host authority, Staffordshire County Council in return for services such as HR, Finance and IT support.

⁴ This supports community projects that contribute towards the purpose and aims of the National Landscape.

⁵ Projects undertaken by the National Landscape Team and partners that help to deliver priorities in the AONB Management Plan.

⁶ This includes additional expenditure on Access for All programme projects.

Funded by

Defra ⁷	£209,852
Staffordshire County Council	£24,600
Cannock Chase Council	£10,010
Stafford Borough Council	£10,010
Lichfield District Council	£2,503
South Staffordshire Borough Council	£2,503
National Landscapes Association ⁸	£3,000
Funding from reserve	£6,293
Total	£268,771

⁷ Defra Grant includes additional allocation of £37,100 for Access for All Fund.

⁸ Contribution from the National Landscapes Association towards the costs of implementing the National Landscape branding.

NB Sales and donations totalling £1,051 have been added to the reserve.

Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme

Expenditure	
Programme administration	£25,952
Programme advice and guidance	£51,904
Project spend (grants to farmers)	£263,082
Total	£340,938
Funded by	
Defra ⁹	£340,938

⁹ Funding from Defra for the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme is separate from Defra core funding allocation for Cannock Chase National Landscape.



Image: People walking on the Chase. Credit: Sam Carpenter

Cannock Chase National Landscape Team

Team Leader: Ian Marshall

Land Management Officer: Richard Harris

Communications Officer: Samantha Hall (part-time)

Landscape Planning Officer: Liz Garbutt (part-time)

Farming in Protected Landscape Officer: Colin Manning

Farming in Protected Landscape Officer: Karen Davies

Contact Us

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www.cannock-chase.co.uk



Please **sign up here** to find out the latest news from the National Landscape



**Cannock
Chase
National
Landscape**



Image: Photo credit Ian Jones