



Cannock Chase National Landscape

Cannock Chase National Landscape Partnership Meeting of the Joint Committee Monday 9th December 2024 at 14:00 HRS

To be held at the Main Conference Room, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Wolseley
Centre, ST17 0WT

Members of the public are welcome to attend in person.

No	Time	Item	Item for	Page
1	14.00	Welcome and introductions		3
2	14.05	Apologies for absence		3
3	14.10	Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2024	APPROVAL	4
4	14:20	Sustainable Development Fund <i>To approve Terms of Reference for the Assessment Panel, endorse its constituency, and invite representation on the Panel</i> Report of the Land Management Officer	DECISION	11
5	14:30	AONB Management Plan 2025-2030 <i>To consider and approve for public consultation a draft Management Plan with any amendments determined at the meeting</i> Report of the Team Leader	DECISION	15
6	15:20	Finance report – Revenue Budget Forecast 2024/25 <i>(1) To note progress on the current net revenue position for 2024-25 and the forecast outturn position</i> <i>(2) To note progress on spend for the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme</i> Report of the Treasurer to the Joint Committee	INFORMATION INFORMATION	18
7	15:30	Date, time and venue of next meeting <i>Monday 10 March 2025, 2-4 pm, (Wolseley Centre)</i>		24
		Exclusion of the Public and Press The Chairman to move: "That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the local Government Act 1972 (as amended) indicated below"		25

		Part Two (All reports in this section are exempt)		
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Item 1 **Welcome and introductions**

Item 2 **Apologies for absence**

Item 3	Minutes of the meeting held on 18th March 2024
Item for:	Approval
Author:	Ian Marshall, Team Leader
Financial implications:	None
Recommendations:	The Committee approves the minutes of the meeting and considers any matters arising.

**Cannock Chase National Landscape Partnership
AGM and meeting of the Joint Committee
Friday 19th July 2024 at 10.00 HRS**

Held at the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Wolseley Centre, ST17 0WT

(Draft) Minutes

Attendees

Voting Members present

Cllr Tony Pearce	(TP)
Cllr Victoria Wilson	(VW)
Cllr John Preece	(AM)

Representing

Stafford Borough Council
Staffordshire County Council
Cannock Chase Council

Officers

Ian Marshall	(IM)	National Landscape Team
Samantha Hall	(SH)	National Landscape Team
Claire Geoghegan	(CG)	National Landscape Team
Karen Davies	(KD)	National Landscape Team
Catherine Mann	(CM)	Staffordshire County Council
John Rowe	(JR)	Staffordshire County Council
Alex Yendole	(AY)	Stafford Borough Council

Advisers

Trevor Warburton	(TW)	Friends of Cannock Chase
Doug Smith	(DS)	British Horse Society
Sarah Burgess	(SBu)	CPRE Staffordshire
Cherry Doyle	(CD)	Independent
Jackie Wyke	(JW)	Independent
Glen Probert	(GP)	Independent
Frances Beatty	(FB)	CLA
Lisa Shepherd	(LS)	Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles

1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

- 1.1 The election of Chair and Vice-Chair for the next 12 months was overseen by John Rowe, Honorary Secretary of the National Landscape Joint Committee.

1.2 A call for nominations of Chair was made. Councillor Wilson proposed Councillor Pearce as Chair of the Joint Committee for the next 12 months. This was seconded by Councillor Preece. No further nominations were received.

1.3 A call for nominations for Vice-Chair was made. Councillor Pearce nominated Councillor Wilson as Vice-Chair for the next 12 Months. Councillor Preece seconded the proposal. No further nominations were received.

1.4 **RESOLVED:**

(1) That Councillor Tony Pearce is appointed Chair of the National Landscape Joint Committee for the next 12 months.

(2) That Councillor Victoria Wilson is appointed Vice-Chair of the National Landscape Joint Committee for the next 12 months.

2. Welcome and introductions

2.1 Councillor Pearce opened proceedings and welcomed everyone to the meeting of the National Landscape Partnership Joint Committee.

3. Apologies for absence

3.1 IM paid tribute to June Jukes of the Friends of Cannock Chase.

It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of June Jukes on Saturday 1st June. June had been unwell for several months and went into hospital for major surgery, but sadly she didn't pull through.

Cannock Chase was part of June's life. She lived on its doorstep, knew it like the back of her hand, and was passionate for its conservation and sharing that passion with others. She joined the Friends of Cannock Chase in 1970 and within two years became a member of its Committee, using her shorthand skills as the Minutes Secretary. By the late 1990's she became its Chair and was a very capable and outspoken leader, forever projecting the core values of the group to protect the Chase.

She was also a significant supporter of the work of the AONB Partnership – she represented the Friends Group on the Joint Committee, was a member of the Land Management and Biodiversity Task and Finish Group, and sat on the Sustainable Development Fund panel. June was a great help to me when I joined the AONB team in 2019, sharing her knowledge and insight about the Chase, its wildlife, history and people.

She was a little bit old school – you could only contact June by landline telephone or post. It was only within the past 12 months or so that she embraced the digital age, got a mobile phone, and had an email address.

On 10th October 2007, June's voluntary work was recognized when she received an MBE from The Queen at Buckingham Palace for services to Conservation on Cannock Chase. The honour was well deserved and she will be greatly missed.

3.2 Apologies for absence were received from: Cllr Michael Wilcox (Lichfield District Council), Cllr Kath Perry (South Staffordshire Council), Richard Harris (National

Landscape Team), Liz Garbutt (National Landscape Team), Nikki Mihajlovic (Staffordshire County Council), Paddy Harrop (Forestry England), Mary Cope (Beaudesert Park Farm / NFU), George Sharp (Cannock Chase SAC Partnership), Jeff Sim (Staffordshire Wildlife Trust), Bill Waller (Stafford Borough Council), Sarah Bentley (Staffordshire County Council), Antony Jones (independent), Louise Rose (Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles), and Staffordshire Parish Council Association.

- 3.3 IM informed the Committee that: Councillor Janice Silvester-Hall is replacing Councillor Mike Wilcox as Member representative for Lichfield District Council; that Councillor John Preece has replaced Councillor Andrea Muckley as Member representative for Cannock Chase Council; that Trevor Warburton has replaced June Jukes as adviser representative for the Friends of Cannock Chase.

4. **Minutes of the meeting held on 18th March 2024**

- 4.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18th March 2024 were approved as an accurate record (nominated by VW and seconded by TP). The following matters arising were noted (numbers refer to those in previous minutes):

3.1. The SPCA and Forestry England have both confirmed that they hope to be able to attend meetings of the Joint Committee from time to time. Natural England is currently unable to field any officers to meetings of the Joint Committee.

3.1. Liz Garbutt, Landscape Planning Officer remains off work. Landscape planning advice is, therefore, being provided through consultancy.

4.5. SH confirmed that the National Landscape website has been amended to provide clarity who the public should contact at which local authority where issues of concern arise regarding litter and fly tipping.

- 4.2 **RESOLVED:**
That the minutes of the previous meeting are approved.

5. **Public Questions**

- 5.1 The following written question was received from the public:

There are many major paths on Cannock Chase, particularly within the Milford - German Cemetery – Seven Springs triangle area, that have significant water damage. This includes large sections washed away, uneven pathways, deep ruts and waterways. Large pools occur in some areas with resultant use of adjacent areas being walked on to navigate around the pools. Loose stone that has been used to form paths previously is washed away in places and where it is in situ makes for difficult walking. These pathways are not accessible for families with young children needing to use a pushchair or wheelchair users, thus excluding people of all age groups, from cradle to grave, from accessing this wonderful outdoor area for their physical and mental health and well-being when we should be trying to be inclusive to all. What is the plan and programme to improve the main footpaths on Cannock Chase so that they are more robust for walking, enable walkers to remain on the pathways and would be useable for pushchairs and wheelchairs users to be able to undertake significant outdoor time for leisure and physical activity pursuits?

5.2 IM advised that:

- 1) Cannock Chase National Landscape is one of the most accessible National Landscapes in England. 51% is open access land or other accessible greenspace. It has 157 kms of public rights of way, canal towpaths, sections of long-distance recreational trails, and designated walking, horse-riding and mountain biking trails.
- 2) The land is largely unenclosed and consequently physical barriers, such as, gates and stiles are few.
- 3) Easy access for wheelchair users, trampers, and pushchairs is available at certain locations, for example, at Shugborough, Cannock Chase Visitor Centre, the Wolseley Centre, and Cannock Chase Forest, and on some sections of canal towpaths. The Chase Heritage Trail is also largely accessible, and is undergoing improvements.
- 4) Away from these areas across the wider Chase, we can't get away from the fact that the nature of the landscape, its uneven terrain and natural gravelly surface is not accessible (or is difficult) for some people – the elderly, parents with pushchairs, and those with disabilities.
- 5) The Equality Act 2010 states that 'service providers' need to make reasonable adjustments where disabled customers or employees would otherwise be at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled people. The definition of what is reasonable depends on the circumstances including the type of service being provided, and includes:
 - Cost of adjustment and availability of funds
 - Resources of the service provider
 - The potential benefit
 - Practicalities
- 6) Levelling, draining and surfacing paths with materials like asphalt or resin bound grit would not be appropriate in most situations in a countryside location, within a National Landscape of high scenic quality, and in ecologically sensitive locations. Such measures would also incur high initial capital and subsequent maintenance costs – way beyond existing budgets. They may also have unintended consequences, for example, encouraging cyclists to go faster.
- 7) The National Landscape has started on its journey to make Cannock Chase more accessible, and helping people to plan their visits:
 - Assessing the current situation (the audit)
 - Identifying a series of recommendations for improvements (the audit)
 - Offered funding to partners for improvements
 - Making information available to help people with disabilities plan their visits (the guide and trail videos).
- 8) The Cannock Chase SAC Detailed Implementation Plans are also an opportunity to improve surfaces to the main car parks, as well as improving surfaces of paths to and from them.
- 9) The Management Plan review is a timely opportunity to set out a new ambition for accessibility on the Chase, and we are keen to discuss what this might be with partners and stakeholder groups and include targets.

- 5.3 DS commented that the maintenance of paths as a quick-fix would constitute a 'reasonable adjustment'. LS commented that the TOC-h Trail is undergoing surface improvements.

6. **Finance Report – Revenue Budget 2023/24**

- 6.1 In the absence of Nikki Mihajlovic, Ian Marshall advised:

Final outturn 2023/24

- The final net revenue outturn for 2023/24 was a breakeven position, after £6,292 had been transferred from the AONB Reserve. (The draw down from the Reserve was less than the anticipated £16,780 at the start of the financial year).
- The net position for the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme was an underspend of £70,493, which will have to be repaid to Defra.

Revenue budget update 2024/25

- An updated revenue budget for 2024/25 was presented following confirmation of Defra's funding settlement for Cannock Chase, which included core funding plus additional one-off funding of £42,288.10 for capital, £42,288.10 for revenue and £70,748.87 for the third year of the Access for All fund. After reflecting the increase in funding, the revised net budget now stands at £390,520. IM explained that the additional capital element had been added to AONB Projects, and that the additional revenue element had been allocated to salaries (to cover an increase in the hours of the Communication Officer as well as landscape planning consultancy cover during Liz's absence), and printing and publicity to cover design, artwork and printing costs associated with the implementation of the National Landscapes re-brand.
- The Sustainable Development Fund panel has approved one application, with decisions on a further two applications pending.
- Committed AONB projects include the second phase of an aquatic invertebrate survey; the purchase of IT tablets and licences for Chase Through Time volunteers to survey heritage assets; and the commissioning of a SEA and HRA for the new AONB Management Plan. Other potential projects include the preparation of a report for the Fixed Point Photography project 2024-24, a peatland assessment, and school activities for the Future Guardians programme.

Reserve

- The AONB Reserve currently stands at £57,161 for 2024/25.

Farming in Protected Landscapes programme

- The predicted outturn is a breakeven position.

- 6.2 FB requested that urgency be given to carrying an assessment of the peatlands on the Chase.

6.3 **RESOLVED that:**

1. *The final outturn position for 2023/24 is noted.*
2. *The revised net revenue budget for 2024/25 is approved, and progress on expenditure is noted.*
3. *Spend on the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme is noted.*

7. **AONB Management Plan review 2025-30**

7.1 IM presented the emerging key issues and areas of updated and new work for the new Plan. These were set out as A) General principles for the new Plan, and B) Specific topic recommendations.

A. General principles for the new Plan

- The Committee agreed with the general principles for the new Plan as set out in the report.
- FB queried how the delivery of targets will be enforced, particularly the mandatory targets we will need to embed in the new Plan. IM is not aware of any sanctions if delivery is not met.
- FB asked who is responsible for monitoring? IM responded that he perceived monitoring of both the condition of the AONB and performance against targets to be collective responsibilities of all relevant partners.

B. Specific topic recommendations

Nature

- The Committee agreed with the specific topic recommendations for nature, climate, people and place for the new Plan.
- TP queried how the target to bring SSSI into favourable condition can be met, and asked if the SAC Partnership can help in this regard? FB pointed out that most other SAC Partnerships in the country have a nature recovery remit, but that ours has an education and engagement remit. AY explained that SAC's vary across the country, and that on Cannock Chase monies collected from development surrounding the Cannock Chase SAC are earmarked solely for mitigating the effects from additional anticipated visitors. VW emphasised the importance of education. AY stated that 2 engagement wardens are out and about on the Chase this summer meeting the public and encouraging positive behaviours. FB observed that the amount of funds available to the SAC Partnership runs into millions, and contrasts with the budget for the National Landscape.

People

- LS – need to integrate with healthy neighbourhood planning.
- VW mentioned the County Council's investment in plans for a new discovery centre at Marquis Drive. This should be mentioned in the new Management Plan.
- GP felt that there should be better co-ordination for the various events that are held on the Chase to avoid clashes. There is also a need for more information for the events to be held responsibly.
- FB felt that consideration should be given to the provision of alternative greenspace in the wider area to reduce visitor pressure on the Chase. VW supported a county-wide approach to spreading visitors.
- SBU suggested that improving the condition of PRoW in the countryside surrounding the Chase may help to spread visitor usage.

7.2 IM offered 1:1 meetings with those partners who want to discuss the emerging issues in more detail and to hear any other suggestions for the new Plan.

7.3 **RESOLVED:**

That progress on the review of the Management Plan is noted.

8. **Update on National Landscape team activities**

8.1 Karen Davies updated the Joint Committee on Farming in Protected Landscape funded activities, as well as the adder conservation project, plans to improve our knowledge about the veteran trees on the Chase, hosting the recent National Landscape Association Annual Conference, and various communication activities. (Powerpoint slides circulated separately).

8.2 **RESOLVED:**

(1) That the update of National Landscape activities is noted.

9. **Annual Review 2023-24**

9.1 SH presented to members the latest Annual Review of the achievements of the National Landscape Partnership during 2022-23. It showcases the breadth of work that has gone on in delivering our core purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of Cannock Chase.

9.2 TP congratulated officers for a superb Annual Review and that the range of work that has been delivered reflects well on the Team.

9.3 **RESOLVED:**

That the Annual Review is approved for publication.

10. **Date, time and venue of next meeting**

10.1 The dates and venues of upcoming meetings of the Joint Committee are confirmed as:

- *Monday 9 December 2024, 2-4 pm (Wolseley Centre)*
- *Monday 10 March 2025, 2-4 pm, (Wolseley Centre)*

Item 4 Cannock Chase National Landscape Sustainable Development Fund

Item for:	Decision
Authors:	Richard Harris, Land Management Officer
Financial implications:	Funding for the Sustainable Development Fund is 100% funded through Defra.
Recommendations:	The Committee notes the report and is invited to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree Terms of Reference for the Panel 2. Endorse the constituency of the Sustainable Development Fund Assessment Panel 3. Confirm elected Member representation on the Panel

Background

1. The National Landscape Partnership operates a grant fund, the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), to support projects delivered by local communities, organisations, businesses and individuals that can help to conserve and enhance the special qualities of Cannock Chase.
2. Expressions of interest to the Fund are announced annually (sometimes biannually), and applications are assessed by an Assessment Panel drawn from the Joint Committee and representatives from the local community. The National Landscape Team carries out all administration for the Fund as well as providing the secretariat for meetings and the work of the Panel.
3. The current annual budget for the Fund is £10,000, including £1,000 administration fee.

Panel – Terms of Reference

4. Although guidelines for the operation of the Fund are in place, Terms of Reference for the Panel are not. To remedy this situation and ensure the integrity, objectivity, accountability and openness of the Panel, Terms of Reference are appended for approval.

Panel – Membership

5. The Terms of Reference set out the constituent members of the Panel to represent the range of community, business and environmental interests of the National Landscape. A number of these roles are currently vacant.
 - Joint Committee representative (elected member) (vacant)
 - Private sector representative (vacant)
 - Voluntary sector representative, Dick Turton, representing Staffordshire Area of the Ramblers
 - Environment sector representative, (vacant)
 - Local authority officer representative, (vacant)
 - National Landscape officers in attendance, Richard Harris, Land Management Officer, Cannock Chase National Landscape

6. The Committee is invited to endorse the constituency of the Panel.
7. The Committee is also invited to nominate an elected member to serve on the Panel.

Recommendations

8. The Committee notes the report and is invited to:
 - (1) Agree Terms of Reference for the Panel
 - (2) Endorse the constituency of the Sustainable Development Fund Assessment Panel
 - (3) Confirm elected Member representation on the Panel

Appendix



Cannock Chase National Landscape Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) Assessment Panel

Terms of Reference

1. Role of the Panel

- 1.1 The purpose of the Panel is to decide upon allocation of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) in the Cannock Chase National Landscape based on applications to the SDF in accordance with the published SDF Guidelines.
- 1.2 The SDF is a delegated grant from Defra administered by Cannock Chase National Landscape Partnership.

2. Panel membership

- 2.1 The Panel is a sub-group of the Cannock Chase National Landscape Joint Committee.
- 2.2 Membership of the panel will be based on representation from the public, private and voluntary sectors, aiming to embrace a range of community, business, and environmental interests. The constituent membership of the Panel is appended.
- 2.3 Nominations and co-options to the Panel will be normally for three years. Thereafter, Panel members are eligible to re-apply, alongside an open recruitment process.
- 2.4 Nominations and co-options will be endorsed every three years by the Joint Committee.
- 2.5 The Panel will elect a Chair at its first meeting. In their absence, those Panel members present will choose a Chair for the meeting.

- 2.6 If a member of the Panel has any direct and significant involvement with a proposed project being considered, then they should declare this at the appropriate point on the agenda and revoke their voting rights for any vote on that project.

3. Pre-panel guidance to applicants

- 3.1 Prior to the application closing date, we may contact applicants to provide guidance on how to develop and enhance a project and application. We may seek the informal views of Panel Members. Comments will be fed back to the applicant to ensure the strongest possible applications are presented.
- 3.2 All correspondence related to applications and the application process will be treated in the strictest confidence.

4. Meetings

- 4.1 Meetings will be held at least once each year.
- 4.2 The secretariat will be provided by the National Landscape Team.
- 4.3 The quorum for a Panel meeting shall be three.
- 4.4 The order of business at each meeting shall be as follows:
- to receive any apologies for absence
 - receive disclosures of interest
 - report on progress of approved schemes
 - consider applications for grants
 - receive reports on grant applications fast tracked and /or under £500
 - any other business.
- 4.5 Decisions by the Panel shall be made by show of hands, after consideration of any previously submitted comments by absent Panel Members.
- 4.6 National Landscape officers in attendance shall keep minutes of each meeting. This includes reasons for decisions made at the meeting. The minutes shall be circulated to Panel members as soon as possible after each meeting.
- 4.7 The outcomes of the meeting shall be reported to the next meeting of the Cannock Chase National Landscape Joint Committee for information.
- 4.8 Applications of less than £500 are delegated to the National Landscape Team Leader to determine following endorsement from the Land Management officer. The result will be reported to the next Panel meeting.
- 4.9 All decisions shall be communicated to applicants within fourteen working days of the Panel meeting, giving the reasons for the decision. Applicants will have a right of appeal to the Cannock Chase National Landscape Joint Committee.
- 4.10 All applications and matters discussed at grants panel meetings should be treated in the strictest confidence. It should also be noted that all communication in relation to the fund is on the public record and subject to Freedom of Information legislation.

Appendix**Membership of the Assessment Panel**

- Public sector representative (elected member from the National Landscape Joint Committee)
- Private sector representative
- Voluntary sector representative
- Environment sector representative
- Local authority officer representative
- National Landscape officer in attendance

Richard Harris, November 2024

Item 5 **AONB Management Plan 2025-2030 – Consultation Draft**

Item for: Decision

Author: Ian Marshall, Team Leader

Financial implications: The cost of reviewing the AONB Management Plan is budgeted as part of the National Landscape’s core functions.

Delivery of the policies and actions included within the published Management Plan will be funded through a combination of the National Landscape core budget, external funding contributions, as well as the actions of partner organisations.

Recommendations: The Committee is requested to consider the AONB Management Plan 2025-2030 Consultation Draft and approve its release for consultation subject to any amendments determined at the meeting.

Background

1. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires local authorities with land in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to prepare and publish a management plan which formulates their policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it; and to review that plan every five years.
2. The National Landscape Team, on behalf of the local authorities, has prepared a Consultation Draft of the AONB Management Plan 2025-2030. This is the fifth edition of our Management Plan for the area. The draft has been informed by a combination of:
 - A review of the current AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 (extended to 2025).
 - Evidence from the updated State of the AONB Report.
 - Public perceptions of key issues and priorities for the National Landscape.
 - Government guidance for Protected Landscape Management Plans, and new targets and outcomes for Protected Landscapes.
 - Input from the Task and Finish Groups and key stakeholders.

Focus of the Management Plan

3. The new Management Plan sets out the vision and priorities for the National Landscape for the next 5 years. It proposes a concise vision for Cannock Chase to be *“a wild and beautiful place, distinctive, thriving, resilient and welcoming”*, supported by four integrated strategic aims under the themes of nature, climate, people and place. These themes reinforce the Government’s ambitions for Protected Landscapes in England to be distinctive cultural landscapes that support the nation’s health and wellbeing, tackle climate change and restore nature. For the first time, mandatory targets are embedded within the Plan, supplemented with locally determined targets.
4. As the Foreword for the Plan states, *“the programme of work we have set out for the next five years is wide-ranging, ambitious and challenging. We will drive forward nature recovery and contribute to the Government’s target of protecting 30% of our*

land for nature by 2030 (30by30). We have set a pathway for the National Landscape to be net zero and will need to think creatively about how we deliver the challenging tree planting targets and changes to agricultural practices this will require. We will be taking measures to reinforce the Chase's distinctive sense of place and protect its landscapes and rich heritage. We will also be continuing our essential work to make people feel a part of Cannock Chase, including improving our welcome and the quality of the experience for visitors from all backgrounds and abilities".

5. The Plan emphasises the need for strong collaboration between partners and greater accountability, reflecting the strengthened duty under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 for 'relevant authorities' to 'seek to further' the statutory purpose to conserve and enhance natural beauty. The Plan includes a Delivery Plan which timetables the actions for Nature, Climate, People and Place across 2025-2030, estimates the scale of resources required, and identifies the principal partners involved in delivering each action.
6. The National Landscape Team Leader will present the Draft Plan to the Committee at the meeting, and invite discussion.

Consultation

7. For a 6 week period between December 2024 and January 2025, feedback will be invited on the Draft Management Plan via an online questionnaire. The draft consultation will be promoted through a media release as well as being circulated to all 2,541 subscribers to the National Landscape e-newsletter. Comments will be particularly sought on:
 - Our ambitions for Cannock Chase – are these realistic and achievable? Could we do more?
 - What needs to be done – have we identified the right policies and actions to deliver for Cannock Chase and conserve and enhance its natural beauty?
8. Paper copies of the Consultation Draft will also be available to view at local libraries around the National Landscape.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

9. Consultants have been appointed to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Management Plan in line with legislative and policy requirements. The scoping report for the SEA has been issued to Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency and responses are awaited.

Preparation of the Final Management Plan

10. A report will be produced outlining the responses received from the public consultation and how these have been addressed. A revised, Final Management Plan will be presented for approval and adoption at the National Landscape Joint Committee meeting on 10th March 2025. The draft final reports of the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment will also be presented at the meeting.

Recommendation

11. The Committee is requested to consider the AONB Management Plan 2025-2030 Consultation Draft and approve its release for consultation subject to any amendments determined at the meeting.

Appendix

Cannock Chase National Landscape AONB Management Plan 2025-2030 (circulated separately to members of the Joint Committee).

Item 6 Finance report – Revenue Budget Forecast 2024/25

Item for: Noting and Decision

Author: Nikki Mihajlovic, Senior Finance Business Partner

Financial implications: The Joint Committee in its role under the AONB Partnership Agreement is responsible for the management of the core funding from Defra and the co-ordination of partner projects.

Recommendations:

1. That progress on the current net revenue budget for 2024/25 and its current forecast outturn position is noted.
2. That progress on spend for the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme for 2024/25 is noted.

Background

1. The Joint Committee in its role under the AONB Partnership Agreement is responsible for the management of the core funding from DEFRA and the co-ordination of the partner projects.
2. This paper sets out progress on the current net revenue budget for 2024/25 and its current forecast outturn position. The recommendations represent an effective way to continue to carry forward the implementation of the Management Plan for the Cannock Chase AONB Partnership.

Revenue Budget Update 2024/25

3. The approved budget presented at the last Joint Committee for the AONB for 2024/25 was £390,520. This included the third year of Access for All funding as well as one-off capital and revenue uplifts. The current forecast outturn position when compared to budget is a breakeven position as set out in Appendix 1.
4. Savings due to staff absence of £21,902, offset by other increased costs within staff and associated costs, have given rise to a net saving of £7,724. This has been utilised, along with a further saving against core activity of £2,805 and National Liaison of £85 within the core budget to fund additional costs mainly against print and publicity and the annual conference.
5. The individual projects, totalling £10,000 for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) including the £1,000 administration fee, are set out in Appendix 2. Currently £987 of the original £10,000 budget remains unallocated.
6. The individual projects, totalling £57,440 for the AONB Projects and £70,750 for Access for All Projects are set out in Appendix 3. Currently £5,585 of the original £57,440 against AONB projects and £8,855 of the original £70,750 against Access for All projects budgets remains unallocated.

Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme

7. Since July 2020 the AONB has been delivering the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme collaborating with farmers and land managers. The funding is for a three-

year programme and is provided by Defra and is additional funding on top of the annual core grant that the AONB receives.

8. The detailed net position for the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme is set out in Appendix 4 and is compared to the approved budget of £555,264. The current forecast outturn position when compared to budget is a breakeven position. In the event of there being any underspend, this will have to be returned to Defra.

Reserve

9. The balance on the Cannock Chase AONB Reserve currently stands at £65,505 for 2024/25. A summary of the Reserve is attached as Appendix 5.
10. It has previously been recommended that the priorities for the use of the Reserve Fund should be as follows:
 - Income from sales, donations and consultancy work should be available to supplement the delivery of projects within the Annual Action Plans and to provide 'matched funding' for any major grant applications and;
 - The remaining funds should be earmarked to enable the AONB unit to respond to the implications of any potential future reductions in funding.
11. These priorities are reviewed annually in December of each year.
12. It is anticipated that the balance on the reserve at the end of 2024/25 will be £63,160, after accounting for the proposed transfers in for the SDF Administration fee of £1,000 along with £5,895 from the Farming in protected Landscapes budget for AONB and Finance colleagues time spent administering/monitoring the programme during the current financial year, this will then be used to offset the transfer out of £13,240 to fund the 2024/25 budget shortfall that was previously agreed at the December 2023 Committee to be funded out of the reserve.

Equalities Implications

13. This report has been prepared in accordance with the Equal Opportunities policies of the County Council.

Legal Implications

14. Actions recommended in this report are in accordance with the provisions of the Cannock Chase AONB Partnership Agreement.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

15. This report recommends actions to ensure the continued efficient delivery of the Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan and reflects the principles set out in the Partnership Agreements.

Risk Implications

16. If continuity of funding and spend are not continued as recommended to the Joint Committee, then the five authorities involved in the current Partnership will need to seek other methods of fulfilling their statutory obligations for the AONB under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Recommendations

17. The following recommendations are made to the Joint Committee:
 - (1) That progress on the current net revenue budget for 2024/25 and its current forecast outturn position is noted.
 - (2) That progress on spend for the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme for 2024/25 is noted.

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

Cannock Chase AONB Core & Project Costs

Forecast for 2024/2025

	Budget	2024	Predicted	Variation
	£	Actuals	Outturn	£
	£	£	£	£
Core Budget				
Salaries	196,960	99,657	175,058	-21,902
Consultancy Costs	5,000	6,446	16,426	11,426
Recruitment	0	1,726	1,726	1,726
Training Expenses	1,510	2,534	2,534	1,024
Travel and Subsistence	700	162	702	2
Staff and Associated Costs	204,170	110,525	196,446	-7,724
Office Equipment	1,400	991	1,537	137
Print & Publicity	25,750	3,475	34,509	8,759
Annual Conference	2,000	1,195	3,195	1,195
Catering	0	208	208	208
Clothing	0	604	604	604
Volunteer Costs	500	18	210	-290
Core Activity (including monitoring, community involvement, etc)	6,350	50	3,545	-2,805
National Liaison	3,160	0	3,075	-85
Partnership Running Costs	9,000	0	9,000	0
Core Budget Subtotal	252,330	117,067	252,330	0
Sustainable Development Fund	10,000	0	10,000	0
AONB Projects	57,440	6,408	57,440	0
Access 4 All	70,750	0	70,750	0
SDF/AONB Projects Subtotal	67,440	6,408	67,440	0
Total Budget/Initial Forecast Outturn	390,520	123,475	390,520	0
Funded By:				
DEFRA Grant				
Core	-189,890	0	-189,890	0
Sustainable Development Fund	-10,000	0	-10,000	0
AONB Projects	-57,440	0	-57,440	0
Access 4 All	-70,750	0	-70,750	0
DEFRA Grant Subtotal	-328,080	0	-328,080	0
Local Authority Contributions				
Lichfield District Council	-2,460	0	-2,460	0
South Staffordshire District Council	-2,460	0	-2,460	0
Cannock Chase District Council	-9,840	-9,840	-9,840	0
Stafford Borough Council	-9,840	-9,840	-9,840	0
Staffordshire County Council	-24,600	0	-24,600	0
Local Authority Contributions Subtotal	-49,200	-19,680	-49,200	0
Funding from(+)/to reserve(-)	-13,240	0	-13,240	0
Total Funding	-390,520	-19,680	-390,520	0

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

Sustainable Development Fund

Budget Update for 2024/25

	Budget	2024 Actuals	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Approved Projects				
Pye Green Academy - sensory garden - Greenheart Learning Acad	2,762	0	2,762	0
The O'Conner Gateway Trust O'Conner Ecotherapy Gateway	2,554	0	2,554	0
St Joseph's RC Primary School Rugeley Woodland Project	2,697	0	2,697	0
Unallocated Spend	987	0	987	0
Approved Projects Total	9,000	0	9,000	0
Admin Fees	1,000	0	1,000	0
SDF Funding Transfer to AONB Projects	0	0	0	0
Total Budget/Initial Forecast Outturn	10,000	0	10,000	0

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

AONB Projects & Access For All

Budget Update for 2024/2025

	Budget	2024 Actuals	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Approved Projects:				
AONB Projects:				
Stream corridor & aquatic invertebrate survey - phase 2	6,950	0	6,950	0
Check the Chase - IT tablets and licences	6,100	0	6,100	0
Management Plan - SEA and HRA	5,800	0	5,800	0
eDNA kits for white-clawed crayfish.signal crayfish/plague tests prior to translocation/restocking works	1,380	0	1,380	0
Priority list of INNS species for Cannock Chase	375	0	375	0
Dark skies event X 2 (SWT sessions, February 2025)	510	0	510	0
Dark skies event X 2 (Keele sessions, February 2025)	260	0	260	0
Fixed Point Photography 2004-2024 report	14,000	0	14,000	0
Peatland assessment	10,000	0	10,000	0
Tinker Taylor Video and Photography Project	6,480	6,480	6,480	0
Currently Unallocated - AONB	5,585	0	5,585	0
AONB Approved Projects Total	57,440	6,480	57,440	0
Access for All - Year 3 - Projects				
Purchase of replacement tramper	8,500	0	8,500	0
MoCC - resurfacing of sculpture trail	16,929	0	16,929	0
NT - accessible gates	10,000	0	10,000	0
NT - mobile induction loops	3,000	0	3,000	0
NT - tramper purchase	8,500	0	8,500	0
NT - accessible path in the forest garden	7,647	0	7,647	0
NT - accessible picnic tables across the estate - £800 each X 5	4,000	0	4,000	0
CCCP - Mobile induction loops	199	0	199	0
Tactile interpretation maps for VCs. 6 maps @ £520 each for design and printing 100 copies of each)	3,120	0	3,120	0
Currently Unallocated - Access for All	8,855	0	8,855	0
Access For All Approved Projects Total	70,750	0	70,750	0
TOTAL	128,190	6,480	128,190	0

Appendix 4

Farming in Protected Landscapes Grant

Budget Update for 2024/2025

	Budget	2024 Actuals	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Farming in Protected Landscapes Expenditure:				
Programme Advice & Guidance	68,825	52,258	92,598	23,773
Programme Administration	40,486	5,261	16,713	-23,773
Project Spend	445,953	46,889	445,953	0
Total Budget/Initial Forecast Outturn	555,264	104,407	555,264	0

Appendix 5

Cannock Chase AONB Reserve

Financial Year	Opening Balance	Income/Sales	Membership Fees	Visitor Survey Work	Website Development	Admin Fees	Transfer to/from Reserve	Balance of Admin Fees / Underspends	Interest	Transfer To Fund Core Service	Closing Balance
	£	£		£		£	£	£	£	£	£
2007/2008	10,214						-1,766	-1,766			8,448
2008/2009	8,448	572				9,303	-1,590	7,713			16,733
2009/2010	16,733	1,326				6,166	-371	5,795			23,854
2010/2011	23,854	896	525	9,564		4,744	-921	3,823			38,662
2011/2012	38,662	1,240	1,367	17,845		3,983	-4,204	-221			58,893
2012/2013	58,893	387	1,108			3,218	-533	2,685	195		63,270
2013/2014	63,270	1,001	1,675			2,459	0	2,459	249		68,654
2014/2015	68,654	596	1,720			1,327	-54	1,273	289		72,532
2015/2016	72,532		569			500	-2,383	-1,883	293		71,512
2016/2017	71,512	1,475	553			1,565	-108	1,457	132		75,129
2017/2018	75,129	1,471	52			1,809	30,703	32,512	189		109,353
2018/2019	109,353	169	104			2,056	34,361	36,417	685		146,728
2019/2020	146,728					2,307	-94,792	-92,485	577		54,819
2020/2021	54,819					1,307	0	1,307	78		56,204
2021/2022	56,204	5,740				1,000	3,418	4,418	44		66,406
2022/2023	66,406	644				1,000	1,026	2,026	1,372		70,448
2023/2024	70,448	1,051				1,000	0	1,000	3,195	-6,292	69,401
2024/2025	69,401	105				6,895	0	6,895		-13,240	63,160
		16,674	7,673	27,409	0	50,639	-37,214	13,425	7,297	-19,532	63,160

Item 7**Date, time and venue of next meeting**

Monday 10 March 2025, 2-4 pm (Wolseley Centre)

Exclusion of the Public and Press

The Chairman to move:

"That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the local Government Act 1972 (as amended) indicated below"

Part Two

(All reports in this section are exempt)