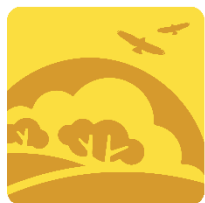


# **Cannock Chase National Landscape**

## **State of the AONB Report 2024**



**Cannock  
Chase**  
National  
Landscape

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## Introduction

This report presents the latest update of the state of Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)<sup>1</sup>. In November 2023, AONBs in England were renamed as ‘National Landscapes’, but the AONB designation remains in law. Understanding why this protected landscape is special, and the challenges and issues it faces, are central to ensuring it is looked after and continues to be special for future generations. The evidence and insight the report provides will help to inform the next statutory review of the Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan which covers the period 2025-30.

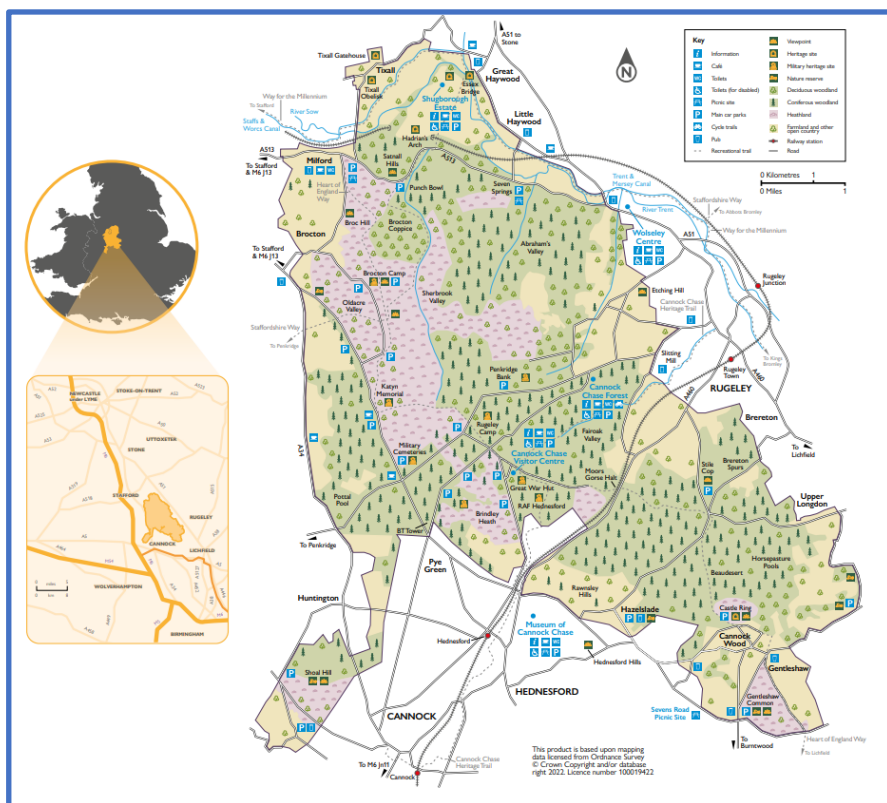
A broad range of evidence is presented about the status and condition of the special qualities of the National Landscape. We also report on:

- how these special qualities are used and enjoyed
- issues affecting the health of environmental resources of soils, air and water
- climate change, and its impacts on the special qualities, and
- the economic and social wellbeing of the National Landscape’s communities insofar as it is connected to our core purpose to ‘conserve and enhance natural beauty’.

The report adopts a new structure around the framework of ‘Nature, Climate, People and Place’ that has been introduced by Government to guide and track progress against national targets and outcomes of all Protected Landscapes (National Landscapes and National Parks) in England<sup>2</sup>. Natural England has provided Protected Landscapes with new baseline statistics for the framework’s indicators, and these are adopted in this report together with locally collected evidence.

Each chapter sets out the key findings from the evidence, policy recommendations for the AONB Management Plan, and includes key indicators. The latter are a mixture of national and local indicators, and describe current status, condition and trends (where known), and recommendations for future monitoring. Where available, detailed data are included in accompanying separate appendices to the main report.

Wherever possible, comparable data to that used in previous state of the AONB reports has been used to allow comparisons and trends over time. Much of the evidence has been collected for the first time, however, and will establish a new baseline against which the outcomes of future monitoring can be compared. In a few instances, evidence is out of date, incomplete, or not available. These issues are raised throughout the report to guide future monitoring requirements.



**Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

<sup>1</sup> AONBs are designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. In pursuing that purpose, account should be taken of the social and economic needs of local communities. Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses. Its special qualities are described in appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> On 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024 the Government published a Targets and Outcomes Framework for all protected landscapes, including a set of indicators to measure progress.

## Statement of significance – the special qualities of Cannock Chase

Cannock Chase is a nationally and internationally important landscape. It has been protected as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) since 1958. This special place is also part of a worldwide family of protected landscapes that includes the UK's national parks and those of North America and elsewhere<sup>3</sup>.

With an area of 26 square miles / 69 square kilometres the Chase is England's smallest inland National Landscape, but its influence, reputation and reach extends far beyond its boundary. The special qualities that distinguish Cannock Chase from other National Landscapes and other parts of the country are set out below.

<b>Factors of Natural Beauty</b>	<b>The special qualities of Cannock Chase</b>
<b>Landscape quality</b> A measure of the physical state or condition of the landscape	A largely intact landscape, particularly in its heathland and wood pasture, providing a historical and spatial continuity of scale, openness, semi-natural land cover, public ownership and access which is in marked contrast to the more urban and fragmented landscapes that surround it.
<b>Scenic quality</b> The extent to which the landscape appeals to the senses (primarily, but not only, the visual senses)	A varied landscape of heathland, woodland, wood pasture, parkland, mixed pastoral and arable farmland and traditional farmsteads. The large blocks of heathland and woodland in the centre of the National Landscape contrast with the smaller scale farmed countryside, bisected by thick hedgerows and narrow lanes, around its fringes.
	A domed plateau landform, created by ancient faulting and folding of the rocks, which has been eroded by rivers and streams, particularly on its northern edge by the River Trent.
	Inspiring views, both to the elevated plateau of the Chase from surrounding areas and from the high ground of the Chase across the farmed vales and countryside of the Midlands.
<b>Relative wildness and tranquillity</b> The degree to which relatively wild character and tranquillity can be perceived in the landscape	A haven of tranquillity and wildness compared to the busy towns and roads that surround it, providing popular spaces for informal recreation, such as, Shugborough, Marquis Drive and Birches Valley, as well as less visited spots for quiet contemplation and watching nature.
<b>Natural heritage</b> The influence of natural heritage on the perception of the natural beauty of the area. Natural heritage includes flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features	An underlying geology of red sandstone containing sand-cemented pebbles that was formed 220 million years ago, over coal measures formed 300 million years ago. This geology has contributed to the economic prosperity of the area, through a long history of coal mining (now finished) and quarrying (which continues).
	Extensive areas of lowland heathland and associated habitats, which form one of the largest such areas in England, most of it designated for its European importance.
	Rivers, wetlands and waterways, including the Trent and Sow rivers, the Staffordshire and Worcestershire and Trent and Mersey Canals and the spring-fed mires and wet heaths of the Sherbrook and Oldacre Valleys.
	Ancient broadleaved woodland and wood pasture, such as, Brocton Coppice, containing veteran oak trees, woodland flowers, birds, bats and insects.
	Wildlife species which are nationally rare, protected and/or strongly associated with the Chase. These include birds like nightjar and woodlark, reptiles, such as, adder and common lizard, plants, such as, Cannock Chase berry, invertebrates like small pearl-bordered fritillary and bog bush-cricket, and the herds of deer.

<sup>3</sup> The UK's AONBs and National Parks are classified as Category V Protected Landscapes by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

<p><b>Cultural heritage</b> The influence of cultural heritage on the perception of natural beauty of the area and the degree to which associations with particular people, artists, writers or events in history contribute to such perception</p>	<p>A rich history, whose layers in the landscape can be experienced first-hand, including at the Iron Age Hillfort at Castle Ring; the remnants of a medieval hunting landscape; historic houses and parkland; historic field patterns; the rich heritage of iron and glass working and coal mining; the Staffordshire and Worcestershire and Trent and Mersey Canals; and military camps and cemeteries from the two World Wars.</p>
	<p>Historic parkland, ornamental landscapes, and the relationships between them, often associated with fine houses and landed estates, such as those at Shugborough, Beaudesert, Teddesley, Wolseley and Hatherton.</p>
	<p>Common land, which has an ancient history providing grazing for local farms and smallholdings, including the commons of Cannock Chase, Haywood Warren, Brindley Heath, Penkridge Bank, Shoal Hill and Gentleshaw.</p>
<p><b>Additional qualities</b> These apply to public understanding and enjoyment of natural beauty</p>	<p>Local communities and interest groups who cherish and help care for the Chase and its designated status.</p>
	<p>Accessible greenspace and a network of well-maintained rides and paths through woodland and heathland providing opportunities for stimulating exercise and exploration.</p>

## Key forces for change

Cannock Chase is a lived-in, working landscape, shaped by people over millennia. It will continue to evolve in the face of new and emerging issues. The new Plan needs to anticipate and respond positively to these forces for change so that the natural beauty and special qualities of the National Landscape endure and the area continues to meet the needs of future generations.

## Climate change

The latest UK climate projections (2022)<sup>4</sup> show an increased chance of warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers along with an increase in the frequency and intensity of extremes. These changes are predicted to:

- Reduce the amount of carbon stored in the soil due to changes in the vegetation cover.
- Change soil temperatures and moisture levels, making farm planning difficult.
- Increase the threat of soil erosion and further loss of soil fertility.
- Increase the risk of flooding, wildfires and problem pests and diseases, and
- Further reduce water tables.

These impacts will likely alter the character of historic and designed landscapes, change species distribution and composition of habitats, threaten above and below ground archaeology, and damage the fabric of historic buildings. Additionally, the measures we take to mitigate and adapt to climate change, for example, tree planting, restoration of peatlands, and adapting forestry and agricultural practices may also have profound effects on the character of the landscape, habitats and species, as well as soil, air and water quality.

The UK Government passed laws in 2019 to end its contribution to global warming by 2050<sup>5</sup>. This means the UK will be required to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by that date. In 2022, Cannock Chase National Landscape established a baseline of greenhouse gas emissions and adopted a pathway to reach net zero by 2034 through emission reductions and land use changes to sequester and store carbon<sup>6</sup>.

As published in the Third National Adaptation Programme<sup>7</sup>, all Protected Landscapes will be required to have a climate adaptation management plan produced, embedded in, or linked with, their statutory management plans by 2028. This will include 'smart' actions and objectives designed to adapt to climate change. The Government's Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework<sup>8</sup> includes 3 climate change targets for protected landscapes:

- Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.
- Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat by 2050.
- Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).

## Nature recovery

The fourth UK State of Nature Report published in 2023<sup>9</sup> lays bare the stark fact that the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, and that nature is still declining. To stop the decline and facilitate nature recovery, concerted action is required to:

<sup>4</sup> Met Office, *UK Climate Projections: Headline Findings* (August 2022).

<sup>5</sup> HM Government, *The Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019*.

<sup>6</sup> Small World Consulting, *A greenhouse gas emissions assessment and target scenario for the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty* (2022).

<sup>7</sup> Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), *Third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3)* (published 2023; updated 2024). Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/third-national-adaptation-programme-nap3> [accessed 12 November 2024].

<sup>8</sup> Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), *Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework* (31 January 2024). Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework> [accessed 12 November 2024].

<sup>9</sup> F. Burns et al., *State of Nature 2023*: [www.stateofnature.org.uk](http://www.stateofnature.org.uk) [accessed 12 November 2024]

- Improve the quality of protected sites.
- Protect more, bigger, better and joined up places for wildlife.
- Reduce pollution, and
- Adopt targeted species recovery action.

Fortunately, Cannock Chase National Landscape still supports extensive areas of high value for nature, as well as other land with potential to be improved for nature. Ambitions for more, bigger and better managed and connected areas for nature will increase resilience to climate change impacts. A number of existing and planned large-scale landscape restoration projects on the Chase will be positive drivers for habitats and wildlife. These include heathland restoration works on Cannock Chase Country Park, Gentleshaw Common and Shoal Hill Common; the restoration of wood-pasture on the Shugborough Estate being carried out by the National Trust; forestry management in Cannock Chase Forest; as well as the numerous landscape and habitat improvements delivered on farms across the Chase through the Government's Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (2021-25).

The Government's Environmental Improvement Plan 2023<sup>10</sup> views protected landscapes as key to halting and reversing the decline in species abundance and contributing to the international commitment to protect 30% of land for nature by 2030 (30by30)<sup>11</sup>. The Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework includes 5 targets for thriving plants and wildlife targets for Protected Landscapes:

- Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline).
- Bring 80% of SSSIs into favourable condition by 2042.
- 60% of SSSIs assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.
- Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042.
- Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.

Co-ordinated action for nature recovery on areas of particular importance will also be driven through the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Staffordshire. In the West Midlands, the Purple Horizons landscape-scale recovery project is aiming to restore fragmented blocks of heathland between Cannock Chase and Sutton Park in Birmingham.

Cannock Chase supports a range of priority and threatened plant and animal species<sup>12</sup>. Whilst the protection and management of key sites and priority habitats will meet the needs of as many priority species as possible, additional conservation measures will be required for some priority species to be identified as National Landscape 'Champion Species'.

New diseases and invasive species are continually arriving on Cannock Chase due to changing climatic conditions and human activities. The number of established non-native species on the Chase is unknown, and the impacts have not been properly assessed.

<sup>10</sup> Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), *Environmental Improvement Plan 2023: First Revision of the 25 Year Environment Plan (2023)*. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64a6d9c1c531eb000c64ffa/environmental-improvement-plan-2023.pdf> [accessed 12 November 2024].

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, *Decision Adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, 15/4: Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (2022)*. Available at: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-15/cop-15-dec-04-en.pdf> [accessed 12 November 2024].

<sup>12</sup> 'Priority species' are defined as species that are either identified as threatened in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, and/or classed as a Red List species by the International Union for conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) 2023.



## Environmental quality

Clean air, clean and plentiful water, and healthy soils are fundamental to nature recovery, as well as being the foundation for the ecosystem services that benefit those living in and around the National Landscape, and those visiting or working in it. A wide range of activities impact on the environmental quality of Cannock Chase, and include:

- The impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition from road traffic and agricultural practices poses a considerable threat to priority wildlife sites and habitats, particularly heathlands which depend on acid soils with low nitrogen availability. The switch to electric vehicles and more active travel could, however, reduce overall emissions of air pollutants from road vehicles travelling through Cannock Chase or visiting the National Landscape. Agriculture is another major source of local contributions to air pollutants affecting the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (nitrogen, ammonia and nitrogen oxides).
- Agricultural practices can also have significant effects on water quality. For example, nitrogen and phosphate-rich fertilisers and animal manure are the primary sources of nutrient pollution of surface water and groundwater.
- The continued abstraction of surface and groundwater affects water flows in the watercourses that drain the Chase, as well as the hydrology of important wetland habitats in the Oldacre and Sherbrook valleys.
- Conifer plantations cover 40% of the recharge zone for the Cannock Chase aquifer. The main ecohydrological impacts of these plantations are likely to be through interception of precipitation, increased transpiration, and consequently changes to the recharge of the aquifer.
- Changes to the types of agricultural crops grown can present a risk to soil health and water quality. For example, maize is subject to high rates of erosion due to its shallow roots.
- Recreational pressure can reduce plant cover, cause compaction, and eventually expose underlying soils leaving them vulnerable to erosion from weather events. Dogs are increasing soil fertility through their urine and faeces, changing the composition of important heathland plant communities. Intensive agricultural and forestry operations can also damage soil structure.
- Population growth and the rising demand for housing increases the amount of agricultural and rural land being built on. Once soil is lost, its ability to deliver its functions is very difficult to retrieve. Development seals up soils, preventing them from accumulating organic matter in addition to providing other important ecosystem services, such as, water storage.

The Government's Environmental Improvement Plan sets out actions to drive improvements for clean air; clean and plentiful water, and improved soil health to meet new national targets.

To achieve clean air the Government plans to cut overall air pollution by tackling key sources of emissions, and incentivising farmers to reduce ammonia emissions. The National Air Quality Strategy 2023<sup>13</sup> provides a strategic framework for local authorities and other partners to improve air quality. It includes national emission reduction commitments for overall UK emissions of 5 damaging air pollutants:

- fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>)
- ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>)
- nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>)
- sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), and
- non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOCs)

To improve water quality and supply, the Government plans to upgrade wastewater treatment works, restore 400 miles of river through landscape recovery and new woodlands, and ensure water companies deliver a 50% reduction on leakages by 2050. The Water Environment Regulations 2017<sup>14</sup> set out requirements to prevent the deterioration of surface and groundwater aquatic ecosystems; protect, enhance and restore water bodies to 'good' status; and achieve compliance with standards and objectives for protected areas. Local planning

<sup>13</sup> Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), *Policy paper. Air quality strategy: framework for local authority delivery* (2023).

<sup>14</sup> The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017

authorities must, in exercising their functions, have regard to River Basin Management Plans. These plans contain the main issues for the water environment and the actions needed to tackle them. Cannock Chase is covered by the Humber River Basin District river basin management plan<sup>15</sup>.

For soils, the Environmental Improvement Plan includes a new target to bring at least 40% of England's agricultural soil into sustainable management by 2028 through new farming schemes and increase that to 60% by 2030. The Plan also commits to several factors that will establish comprehensive baseline data including to "establish a soil health indicator under the 25 Year Environment Plan Outcome Indicator Framework".

The Staffordshire Local Transport Plan for Staffordshire<sup>16</sup> is being updated in 2024, and will include priorities to promote sustainable travel, eradicate carbon emissions from local road traffic, and promote clean air.

Natural England's Site Improvement Plan for Cannock Chase Special Area for Conservation includes priority actions for tackling drainage, hydrological changes and air pollution (alongside undergrazing, diseases, wildfire and invasive species).

## Land management

Woodland and farmland cover over 75% of the National Landscape. Forestry and agricultural practices have a major bearing, therefore, on the natural beauty and special qualities of the Chase, as well as the quality of air, water and soil health.

Since the preparation of the last Management Plan, the UK has left the European Union, and the transition to a new environmental land management scheme is ongoing. The new system will move away from subsidies to farmers, to centre on support that rewards farmers and land managers for sustainable farming practices that improve the environment and animal health and welfare, and reduce carbon emissions. The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (2021-25) is part of the Government's Agricultural Transition Plan<sup>17</sup>, offering funding for farmers and land managers in National Landscapes and National Parks to deliver projects that achieve outcomes for nature, climate, people and place. At the time of writing, the future of the programme is uncertain after 2025.

National targets to expand forestry and woodland cover, combined with local changes to silvicultural systems and choice of species to increase resilience to disease and the effects of climate change, will affect the appearance of the landscape and impact on natural and cultural heritage.

The Environment Act includes a legally binding target to increase the combined canopy of woodlands and trees outside woodlands in England to 16.5% by 2050. The Government has also committed to protecting 30% of our land area by 2030 for nature, with tree planting and effective woodland management being a key initiative in the creation of more wildlife-rich habitat. Locally, Cannock Chase needs to plant 10 ha of new woodland each year (alongside other land use carbon sequestration measures) if it is to reach its target of being net zero by 2034. Tree planting and woodland management for wildlife will also form a key component of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Staffordshire. The Forest of Mercia (which covers South Staffordshire and the Black Country) will continue to work with private and public landowners to fund woodland creation projects that help deliver the government's commitment to increase tree planting.

Cannock Chase Forest covers over 35% of the National Landscape and provides a wide variety of ecosystem services through timber production, carbon sequestration and storage, and the diverse range of habitats and recreational opportunities it supports. A new ten-year Forest Design Plan 2024-34<sup>18</sup> has been prepared that sets out management objectives for the area.

<sup>15</sup> Environment Agency, *Policy paper. Humber river basin district river basin management plan* (2017).

<sup>16</sup> Staffordshire County Council, *Staffordshire Local Transport Plan 2011 – Strategy Plan* (2011).

<sup>17</sup> Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), *The Path to Sustainable Farming: An Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024* (November 2020).

<sup>18</sup> Forestry England, *Cannock Chase Forest Plan 2024-2034* (2024).

## Growth and development

Despite being a National Landscape, Cannock Chase is not immune from development pressure. The demand for small-scale new build, conversion, renovation of existing structures and other minor development within the designated area can change the character of the landscape and negatively impact on landscape quality, biodiversity and heritage.

The spread of built-up land around the National Landscape since its designation in 1958 has been extensive and has brought development hard up to the designated boundary in several places. Significant new areas of housing continue to be built close to the National Landscape, and further areas are being allocated in Local Plans. Cumulatively, the continuing spread of urbanisation threatens to sever the protected area from its rural hinterland, erode its character and setting, and reduce tranquillity (for example, from light spillage into the area, increasing volumes of traffic and traffic noise).

Urban expansion around the Chase also risks weakening its historic connections with surrounding settlements and communities, diminishing its sense of place and identity. The increasing population will swell the demand for recreation within the protected landscape, with consequences for the conservation of the area's special qualities and the provision and management of visitor infrastructure.

National and local planning policies have largely protected the interior of the National Landscape from development, but little noticeable account is taken about the cumulative impacts from development in the surrounding and wider area. In 2012 tranquillity gained recognition in national planning policy for the first time<sup>19</sup>. The Government now encourages local authorities to identify and protect areas that are valued by the public for their tranquillity. Artificial light was made a statutory nuisance in 2005<sup>20</sup>. Local authorities have a duty to take reasonably practicable steps to investigate complaints of 'artificial light emitted from premises so as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance'. The Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006<sup>21</sup> apply to environmental noise, mainly from transport. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends exposure levels from road traffic noise of <53 dBL before the onset of community nuisance<sup>22</sup>.

The Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) occupies the core of the National Landscape and requires that action must be taken to prevent or mitigate any negative impacts of development on the designated features and species. The SAC Partnership has adopted an action plan of mitigation measures<sup>23 24</sup> which will continue during the period of the new AONB Management Plan.

The National Landscape Partnership has published technical guidance for local planning authorities, developers and their clients to inform and help maintain the quality and distinctiveness of the National Landscape's landscape character, and enhance its setting:

- Design Guide<sup>25</sup>
- Views and Setting Guide<sup>26</sup>
- Good Lighting Guide<sup>27</sup>
- Highways Design Guide<sup>28</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, *National Planning Policy Framework* (2012).

<sup>20</sup> Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, section 102

<sup>21</sup> The Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006

<sup>22</sup> World Health Organisation, *Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region* (2018).

<sup>23</sup> Footprint Ecology, *The Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Strategic Access Management & Monitoring Measures Detailed Implementation Plan: Site User Infrastructure, Education and Engagement* (2020).

<sup>24</sup> Footprint Ecology, *The Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Strategic Access Management & Monitoring Measures Detailed Implementation Plan: Car Parking* (2020).

<sup>25</sup> FPCR Environment & Design Ltd, *Cannock Chase AONB Design Guide* (2020).

<sup>26</sup> Land Use Consultants (LUC), *Cannock Chase AONB Views and Setting Guide* (2020).

<sup>27</sup> Cannock Chase AONB, *Light Pollution and Dark Skies in the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding natural Beauty: A Good Lighting Guide* (2023).

<sup>28</sup> ARUP and Latham Architects, *Cannock Chase AONB Highway Design Guide* (2005).

The announcement in October 2023 of the cancellation of the leg of HS2 north of Birmingham has removed the anticipated impacts on the views, landscape character and habitat connectivity on the National Landscape where the route of the new line was due to be constructed on a viaduct across the Trent-Sow Valley between Great Haywood and Tixall. Attention is now focused on removing and making good construction sites and compounds as well as concluding the package of environmental enhancement measures funded through the scheme.

## Tourism and recreation

The forecast growth in population in surrounding areas over the next 20 years will increase visitor pressures on the National Landscape as well as volume of traffic, and both will need to be managed. Large number of visitors can exacerbate issues that have a negative impact on biodiversity and heritage, such as, erosion along popular access routes, wildlife disturbance, erosion of archaeological features, litter, wildfires, and aiding the spread of pests and diseases, for example, phytophthora. Travel to and around the National Landscape has a high carbon footprint, so developing sustainable travel options will help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Changes in recreational activities will also impact on the area's special qualities. For example, night-time cycling reduces tranquillity and disturbs wildlife. Technological innovation, such as, improvements to the performance capabilities of e-bikes increases the length of time people will cycle for and the type of terrain they can tackle. Climate change is affecting recreational behaviours, patterns and impacts, for example, lengthening the visitor season and increasing the risk of wildfires.

The quality of the visitor welcome and experience can have a lasting impression on people's perceptions about the National Landscape which will, in turn, influence their willingness to help look after it. Visitor spend in the National Landscape brings economic benefits to local businesses, and increasing numbers of visitors may provide opportunities for the tourism sector, but pressures will need to be managed. The National Landscape has developed a business toolkit<sup>29</sup> to encourage local businesses to make more of their location and association with one of England's finest landscapes.

The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan 2018<sup>30</sup> recognises the contribution that Cannock Chase makes to the overall visitor appeal of Staffordshire, and has a long-term interest in strengthening the visitor economy.

The Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Partnership is working to use statutory planning processes and specific site and visitor management measures to secure appropriate mitigation for the impacts on the Cannock Chase SAC from development plan policies and proposals. These include measures for car parks as well as education and engagement. The Cannock Chase Code<sup>31</sup> was introduced in 2022 and adopted by the major public landowners, local authorities and emergency services to promote responsible behaviours and encourage walkers, cyclists and horse riders to keep to designated paths and trails and safeguard sensitive places for wildlife and heritage.

## Health and wellbeing

Cannock Chase is a regionally significant amenity for large numbers of people, providing opportunities for outdoor exercise and contact with nature. The National Landscape also provides an important focus for community involvement in the conservation and enhancement of its natural beauty. In turn, volunteers provide invaluable support to a range of organisations, helping to deliver a wide range of activities that contribute to the vision and objectives for the conservation and enhancement of the area.

<sup>29</sup> Cannock Chase AONB, *A sense of place toolkit* (2021).

<sup>30</sup> Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Enterprise Partnership, *Strategic Economic Plan* (2018).

<sup>31</sup> Cannock Chase AONB, *Cannock Chase Code* (2022).

The evidence is overwhelming that a thriving, wildlife-rich environment benefits our physical and mental health<sup>32</sup>. The Government wants to increase our connection with the environment, and the Environmental Improvement Plan includes the following commitments:

- Everyone should live within 15 minutes' walk of a green or blue space
- Conserving and enhancing landscapes and the historic and natural environment for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.

Staffordshire's Health and Wellbeing Strategy<sup>33</sup> sets out key priorities and actions to improve health and wellbeing in the county. It seeks to encourage more physical activity and encourage active travel. The Chase is a resource that can help the NHS, through the Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust, to deliver social prescribing to connect patients to activities that improve their health and wellbeing.

Locally, Cannock Chase Council's 'Cannock Chase Can App' hosts a variety of wellness challenges to improve health and wellbeing. The new Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Staffordshire offers opportunities to join up with local health care plans.

## Inclusion and diversity

Inequalities exist within the National Landscape and amongst the surrounding communities<sup>34</sup>. Some people and communities experience unintentional barriers to engagement with the protected landscape which leads to their exclusion or feelings of being unwelcome. Such groups include lower income households, people with underlying health conditions, young people and ethnic minorities. The barriers to engagement may include physical obstructions, lack of knowledge, lack of confidence, fear of abuse, inability to access transport, and underlying socio-economic circumstances.

A proactive approach is required to remove the barriers and reach out to these communities to provide greater awareness and opportunities. The Government's aim is for more people, from all backgrounds, to engage with and spend time in green spaces to help improve their health and wellbeing. The majority of the recommendations contained in the Landscapes Review of England's National Parks and AONBs<sup>35</sup>, related to improving public engagement with protected landscapes, including 'A night under the stars in a national landscape for every child' and 'Landscapes that cater for and improve the nation's health and wellbeing'.

Opportunities for farmers and landowners to improve accessibility have been available through Defra's Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (2021-25). The design of the new Environmental Land Management Scheme could provide further opportunities for public enjoyment and understanding of the countryside, as well as benefitting the wildlife and landscapes that people come to enjoy.

In 2022 the Government launched Access for All – a 3 year funding programme aiming to improve access to green and blue spaces across England. This included £7.76 million for infrastructure improvements to make Protected Landscapes more accessible for people of all ages and abilities. The programme is due to finish on 31 March 2025.

The Government's Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework includes the following access target for protected landscapes:

- Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme.

<sup>32</sup> Natural England, *A narrative review of reviews of nature exposure and human health and well-being in the UK NEER030* (2024).

<sup>33</sup> Staffordshire County Council, *Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022 – 2027* (2022).

<sup>34</sup> A Meredith Associates and The Research Solution, *Cannock Chase AONB Inclusion and Diversity Study* (2022).

<sup>35</sup> Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), *Landscapes Review: Final Report* (2019). Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d8a19a3e5274a083d3b78bd/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf> [accessed 12 November 2024].

Locally, the National Landscape is committed to removing barriers to engagement, and making Cannock Chase more welcoming, relevant and inclusive. An accessibility audit for 21 sites within the National Landscape was carried out in 2023, and included over 1,000 recommendations to improve their accessibility. An accompanying Destination Access Guide was published in 2023 to help disabled people and their families and carers better plan for their visits<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> Direct Access, *Cannock Chase National Landscape Access Audit and Guide* (2023).

# Nature

## Introduction

Cannock Chase National Landscape is a haven for wildlife. It supports extensive and contiguous areas of a range of priority habitats, including internationally important lowland heathland, ancient woodland and species-rich grassland. It is home to iconic and nationally rare species, such as, nightjar, adder, bog bush-cricket and the unique Cannock Chase berry. Its habitats store and sequester carbon, and help regulate the effects of climate change. An estimated 3 million visitors each year to the Chase benefit from the experience of connecting with nature. The Government's Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework aims to maximise the contribution that England's Protected Landscapes make towards national targets for nature recovery through protection, restoration, creation and management.

Indicators selected for this theme:

- N1: Protected areas for biodiversity
- N2: Protected areas for geodiversity
- N3: Priority habitats
- N4: Priority species
- N5: Air quality
- N6: Water quality
- N7: Soil health

### Key findings

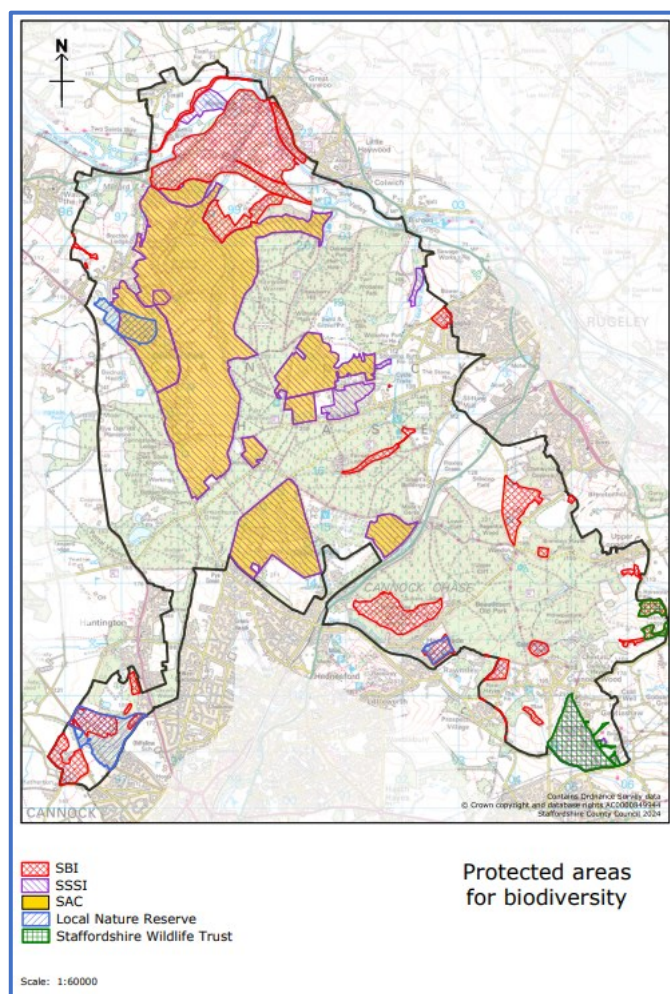
- Cannock Chase supports internationally important and locally distinctive habitats and wildlife.
- 31% of the National Landscape is protected for biodiversity.
- 6.25% of the total number of SSSI features in the National Landscape are assessed to be in favourable condition. 75% are in unfavourable – recovering condition.
- None of the 16 SSSI features in the National Landscape has actions on track to achieve favourable condition.
- The National Landscape includes six protected sites for geodiversity, of which three have a positive conservation condition.
- In comparison to the surrounding countryside, the National Landscape has extensive areas of high quality habitats – it supports 10 habitats of principal importance, covering 34 % of the National Landscape.
- Between 1992 – 2022, breeding numbers of 10 bird species have increased, declined for 15 species, and shown no significant changes for 12 species.
- White-clawed crayfish have been recorded from 9 out of 27 watercourses on the Chase in 2023 (down from 11 in 2014)
- At least 9 bat species have been recorded on the Chase (out of 12 species for the whole of Staffordshire)
- Cannock Chase supports the last remaining population of the small pearl-bordered fritillary in Staffordshire. Its population on the Chase has declined over the past 20 years, however, and the species is now considered to be vulnerable to extinction.
- In 2023 4 out of 6 keynote heathland plant species were recorded as present on the Chase.
- Deposition / concentration levels of ammonia and nitrogen exceed the critical load range for dry heath habitat, threatening its ecological status.
- The ecological status of 5 out of 7 water bodies that intersect with Cannock Chase National Landscape is rated poor or bad. Only one watercourse is rated good. Only one water body has improved since 2019.

## N1: Protected areas for biodiversity

### Status

This indicator shows the extent of protected areas for biodiversity on Cannock Chase National Landscape. Where data is available, it also shows the condition of features. The full list of protected areas is included in Appendix 1.

The designation and management of protected areas are a cornerstone of any strategy for taking action for nature recovery. Protected areas cover many of the most valuable sites for biodiversity and have associated mechanisms for safeguarding them in legislation and planning and nature policy. This indicator is a measure of the outcomes of protection, policy and management of the protected area.



**Protected areas for biodiversity**

Designation	Number		Area within CCNL (ha)		% of CCNL (area)	
	2018	2023	2018	2023	2018	2023
Special Area of Conservation	1	1	1,244	1,244	18.1%	18.1%
Site of Special Scientific Interest	4	4	1,386	1,386	20.2%	20.2%
Local Wildlife Site (SBI)	21	21	574.4	574.2	8.4%	8.4%
Local Nature Reserve	3	3	128.3	128.3	1.9%	1.9%
SWT nature reserve	2	3	16.6	95.74	0.2%	1.4%
<b>Protected areas for biodiversity (area)</b>						

The total extent of land in the National Landscape that is protected for biodiversity is 2,106 ha (31% of the area). This figure avoids double counting in the case of those areas that have more than one designation. **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)** represent the country's best wildlife and geological sites. There are 4 biological SSSI in the National Landscape covering 1,386 ha (20.2% of the designated area). 18% of the National Landscape is of international importance for nature, designated a **Special Area of Conservation**, primarily for its European dry heath habitats. **Local Wildlife Sites** (known in Staffordshire as Sites of Biological Importance) number 21, covering 574.2 ha (8.4% of the designated area). Three sites have been designated by local authorities as **Local Nature Reserves (LNR)**, and the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust manages three **nature reserves** in the area.

### Condition and trends

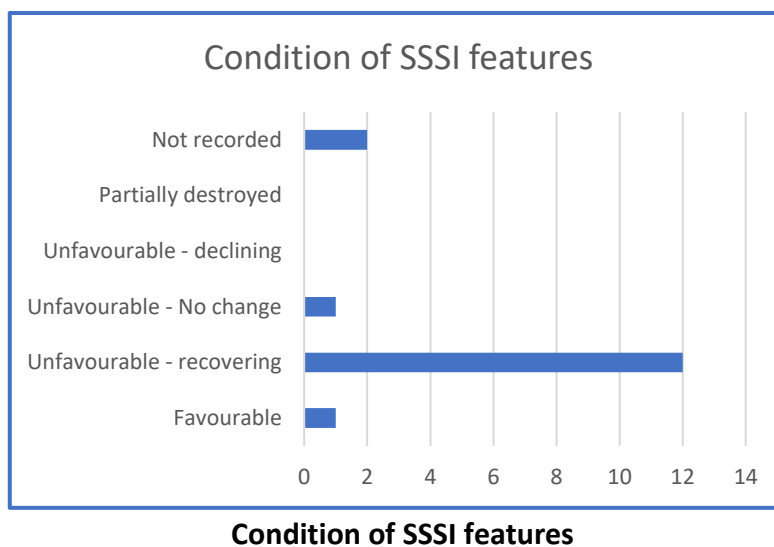
- The extent of land that is protected for biodiversity increased slightly between 2018 and 2023. This is purely an administrative re-calculation, due to Gentleshaw Common not being recorded as a Staffordshire Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve in 2018.
- The percentage of the number of all 16 SSSI features<sup>37</sup> in the National Landscape in favourable condition is 6.25% (1 feature). 75% (12 features) are in unfavourable – recovering condition. [The 2018 State of the AONB

<sup>37</sup> SSSI features are the baseline features for which the sites have been designated, for example, lowland heathland, wet woodland, invertebrate assemblage for deadwood. They are not a measurement of area.



report used a different measurement of SSSI units – a measurement of area - and recorded that 95% of all the SSSI area was in an ‘unfavourable – recovering’ condition].

- Data provided by Natural England in 2024 highlights that none of the 16 SSSI features within the National Landscape is assessed as having ‘actions on track’ to achieve favourable condition.
- Local Wildlife Sites were surveyed during 2019 and 2020, and all sites were assessed as worthy of retaining their status.



Note: Up to date data for the area of protected land in positive management under agri-environment schemes is not currently available, and so a comparison with the data presented in 2018 is not possible.

#### Recommendations for monitoring

- Continue to monitor to report every 5 years to coincide with future Management Plan reviews.

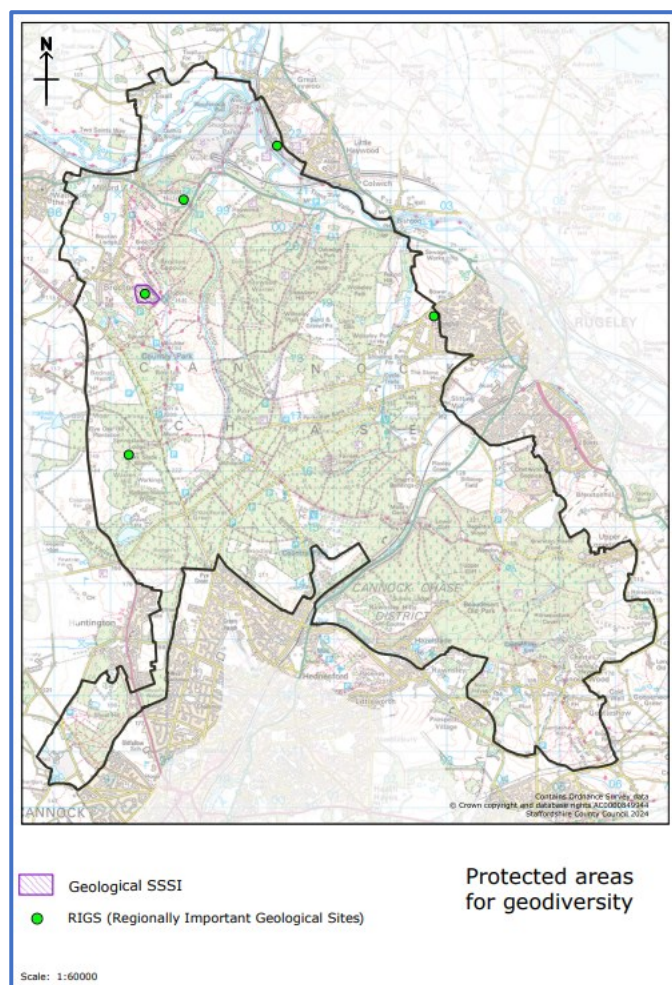
#### Data sources

- Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Local Wildlife Sites (2019 and 2020).
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2024).
- Natural England, Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework Baseline Data Release (2024).

## N2: Protected areas for geodiversity

### Status

This indicator shows the extent of protected areas for geodiversity on Cannock Chase National Landscape. Where data is available, it also shows the condition of their features. The full list of geodiversity designations is included in Appendix 2. Protected areas cover many of the most valuable sites for geodiversity and have associated mechanisms for safeguarding them in legislation and planning and conservation policy. This indicator is a measure of the outcomes of protection, policy and management of the protected area.



**Protected areas for geodiversity**

Designation	Number		Area within CCNL (ha)		% of CCNL (area)	
	2018	2023	2018	2023	2018	2023
Site of Special Scientific Interest	1	1	6.3	6.3	0.1%	0.1%
Local Geological Site	5	5	11.5	11.5	0.2%	0.2%
<b>Protected areas for geodiversity (area)</b>						

There is a total of 6 protected sites for geodiversity in the National Landscape: one geological SSSI as well as five Local Geological Sites. Their combined extent represents a very small proportion of the National Landscape by geographic area (0.3%).

### Condition and trends

- The number and extent of protected areas for geodiversity is unchanged.
- The one geological SSSI remains in an unfavourable condition (2024).
- An assessment of the condition of local geological sites carried out in 2021 indicated a slight decline in the number of sites having a positive conservation status from 4 to 3. However, one site could not be accessed and requires further investigation.

Designation	Condition	
	2018	2021 / 24
Site of Special Scientific Interest	Unfavourable recovering	Unfavourable – no change
Local Geological Site	2 sites 'good, steady' 2 sites 'good improving' 1 site 'poor declining'	3 sites in good condition, 1 site in unfavourable condition, and 1 site requiring further investigation.
<b>Condition of geological sites</b>		

### Recommendations for future monitoring

- Continue to monitor to report every 5 years to coincide with future Management Plan reviews.

## Data sources

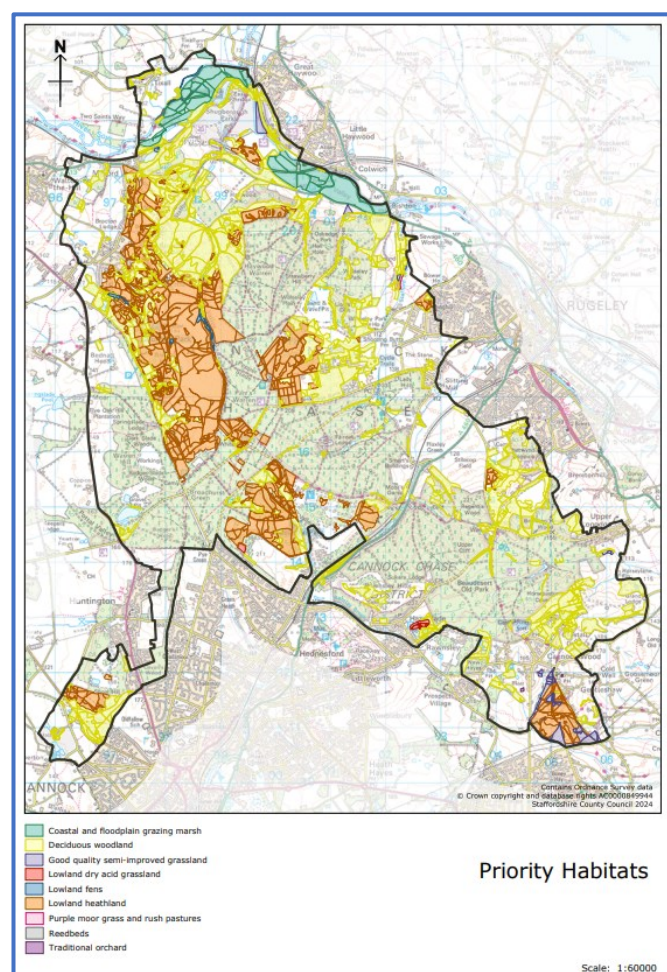
- Cannock Chase AONB, Local Geological Site assessment (2021).
- Natural England, 2024.

## N3: Priority habitats

### Status

This indicator shows the extent of priority habitats in Cannock Chase National Landscape. The priority habitats are those currently recorded in England's Priority Habitats Inventory. The indicator helps public bodies to meet their biodiversity duty<sup>38</sup> by being aware of biodiversity conservation in their policy and decision-making; landowners – to inform their nature recovery planning, action and funding applications; and funding bodies – to support suitable nature recovery. This indicator is a measure of the outcomes of the protection, policy and management of principal habitats of importance.

Cannock Chase supports 10 priority habitats (out of the UK's list of 56 habitats). The combined extent of the 10 priority habitats covers 34.4 % of the Cannock Chase National Landscape. The majority of the priority habitats lie within protected areas for biodiversity. However, some lie outside such areas, and are unprotected. Deciduous woodland is the most abundant priority habitat (14% of the National Landscape). The area of lowland heathland is the highest percentage cover of lowland heathland of any National Landscape (12.7%) in England.



**Priority habitats**

Habitat	Area within CCNL (ha)		% of CCNL (area)	
	2018	2024	2018	2024
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	148.2	148	2.2%	2.2%
Deciduous woodland	1018.2	963	14.8%	14%
Semi-improved grassland	35.3	35.4	0.5%	0.5%
Lowland dry acid grassland	5.1	9	0.1%	0.1%
Lowland fens	7.7	12	0.1%	0.2%
Lowland heathland	827.4	875	12.1%	12.7%
No main habitat but additional habitats present	257.4	Not used	3.7%	Not used
Purple moor-grass and rush pastures	1.7	2	0%	0%
Reedbeds	0.3	1	0%	0%
Traditional orchard	0.5	1	0%	0%
Wood-pasture and parkland	316.8	316.8	4.6%	4.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,618.6</b>	<b>2,363.2</b>	<b>38.1%</b>	<b>34.4%</b>
<b>Priority habitats (area)</b>				

<sup>38</sup> Under the Environment Act 2021, public authorities who operate in England must consider what they can do to conserve and end enhance biodiversity in England.

### Condition and trends

- 2024 data supplied to Protected Landscapes by Natural England excludes the category 'No main habitat but additional habitats present'. Data for wood-pasture and parkland for 2024 is not currently available, so 2018 data has been used.
- The total percentage of priority habitats recorded for the National Landscape is down from 38.1% in 2018 to 34.4% in 2024, but this reflects a change in the methodology used and not any real change on the ground.
- The drop in the area of deciduous woodland from 1018 to 963 hectares may be due to some areas of woodland being re-classified as 'no main habitat' due to tree felling.
- The increase in the area of lowland heathland from 827.4 hectares in 2018 to 875 hectares in 2024 is possibly due to clear-felled areas of conifers being re-classified as heathland (even though they will be re-stocked and managed as plantations).

Note. Up to date data for the area of priority habitats in positive management under agri-environment schemes is not currently available, and so a comparison with the data presented in 2018 is not possible.

### Recommendations for future monitoring

- Update data on the extent and condition of priority habitats across the National Landscape.
- Seek ways to better assess how the extent and quality of priority habitats is changing.
- Assess the connectivity of habitats within and outwith the National Landscapes in order to support the development of a local Nature Recovery Network and AONB Management Plan targets for the natural heritage.

### Data sources

- Natural England, Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework Baseline Data Release (2024).

## N4: Priority species

### Status

This indicator shows relative changes in the presence/absence of a selection of priority species/taxonomic groups in the National Landscape for which data are available. Species records are included in Appendices 3-8. The species have been selected as being of conservation concern locally and/or proxies for the quality of their associated habitats. Actions to conserve these priority species are included within Government and local strategies for nature recovery. This indicator is a measure of the outcomes of conservation efforts and policy aimed at halting and reversing species declines.

- **Birds** – 40 of the 49 target species monitored as part of the Cannock Chase Breeding Bird Survey were recorded as present in the National Landscape in 2022.
- **Bats** – A desk-based review completed in 2021 of all bat records revealed a total of nine bat species in the National Landscape (common and soprano pipistrelle, Natterer's bat, whiskered bat, Brandt's bat, Daubenton's bat, Leisler's bat, noctule and brown long-eared bat). This number compares well with 12 species found in the whole of Staffordshire, and shows for its relatively small area that Cannock Chase has a rich and diverse bat fauna.
- **White-clawed crayfish** - Recorded from 9 out of 27 watercourses on the Chase in 2023.
- **Small pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly** – In 2023 the small-pearl bordered fritillary was recorded from a single area in the Sherbrook Valley.
- **Heathland plants** – In 2023 4 out of 6 keynote heathland plant species were recorded as present on the Chase (round-leaved sundew, bog asphodel, cranberry and crowberry). (It is important to note that consistent long-term monitoring is not in place for some species, and that a lack of records may be due to under-recording rather than an absence of the plant.

### Conditions and trends

- **Birds** – Over the 30 year period between 1992 – 2022, breeding numbers of 10 species have increased (for example, grasshopper warbler, crossbill, raven, woodcock), and declined for 15 species (for example, common redstart, pied flycatcher, woodlark and wood warbler). Breeding numbers for 12 species have not shown any significant changes. No data is available and/or insufficient numbers of observations are available for 12 other species.
- **Bats** – Comprehensive Chase-wide data prior to 2021 is not available, so no trends can be identified.
- **White-clawed crayfish** – The number of watercourses in which this species is recorded is down from 11 in 2014 to 9 in 2023. Over the same period, the non-native North American signal crayfish has increased from presence recorded from 2 watercourses to 4 watercourses. With the ongoing loss of White-claws from England and Wales, Cannock Chase is considered to be of national importance for this species. However, these populations are themselves facing threats from the introduction and spread of North American Signal Crayfish and the crayfish plague they often spread. A Crayfish plague outbreak was confirmed in the Sher Brook in 2011 and killed all 70,000 White-claws living there. Plague outbreaks have also been suspected to have occurred and wiped out the White-claws in the Stafford Brook and Old Brook during 2015-16. Between 2014-23 nearly ten thousand White-claws have been translocated from donor populations in the Stony, Shropshire and Rising Brooks to establish new Ark sites within the AONB and at other locations in Staffordshire. Habitat works to benefit White-claws and other aquatic species has been completed at the majority of donor sites and ark sites.
- **Small pearl-bordered fritillary** – The small pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly has all but disappeared from the Oldacre Valley, and the population in the Sherbrook Valley has diminished to a single small area, with stable but low numbers.
- **Heathland plants** - Monitoring of the 6 keynote plants is not regularly and systematically carried out, making it difficult to identify condition and trends. 3 species of sundew have now been recorded on the Chase: round-leaved, Great (2020-23) and the hybrid sundew (D X obovate) (2023). Another type of insectivorous plant, butterwort has not been recorded since 2018.

### Recommendations for monitoring

- Review the list of species of conservation concern, and establish a monitoring programme with partner organisations.

### Data sources

- West Midland Bird Club, *Cannock Chase Breeding Bird Survey* (1992 – 2022)
- Staffordshire Ecological Record
- Staffordshire Bat Group (Christopher Smith)
- Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (Nick Mott)
- West Midlands Butterfly Conservation
- Jenny Joy and Oliver Joy

## N5. Air quality

### Status

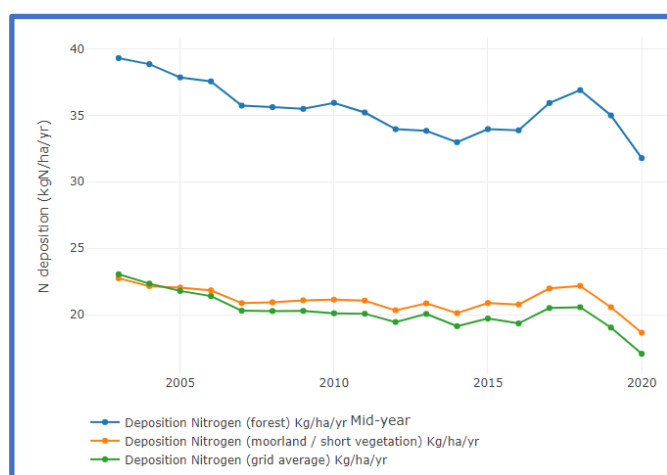
This indicator shows the levels of air pollutants (sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and ammonia) impacting on Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The SAC covers 18% of Cannock Chase National Landscape and is internationally important for its dry lowland heathland habitats. Air pollution impacts negatively on the SAC, depositing acid or excess nutrients that are toxic to sensitive heathland plant species and altering the composition of the vegetation. The most serious pollutant affecting heathland is nitrogen, due to nitrogen oxides (NOx), mostly from traffic and industry emissions, and ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>) mainly from agriculture. This indicator is a measure of the outcomes of actions by conservation and regulatory agencies to reduce pollution at source to protect a European wildlife site.

Pollutant	Critical load range for dry heath	Deposition / concentration (2019 – 2021, 3 year average)	Exceedance range
Ammonia	1.0 – 3 ug m-3	2.03 ug m-3	[1.03] to [-0.97] ug m-3
Nitrogen deposition	5 – 15 KG N/ha/year	18.7 Kg N/ha/year	[13.7] to [3.7] kg N/ha/year
Nitrogen Oxides	30 ug NOx (as NO2) m-3	8.15 ug NOx (as NO2) m-3	-21.85 ug NOx (as NO2) m-3

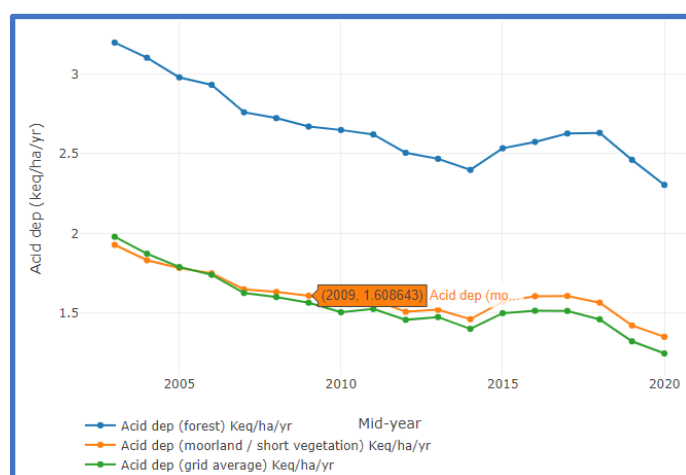
**Levels of air pollutants for dry heathland on Cannock Chase SAC, 2019-21**

Data extracted from the Air Pollution Information System (APIS) for Cannock Chase SAC shows that deposition / concentration levels of ammonia and nitrogen exceeded the critical load range for dry heath habitat, but were below the critical load range for nitrogen oxide.

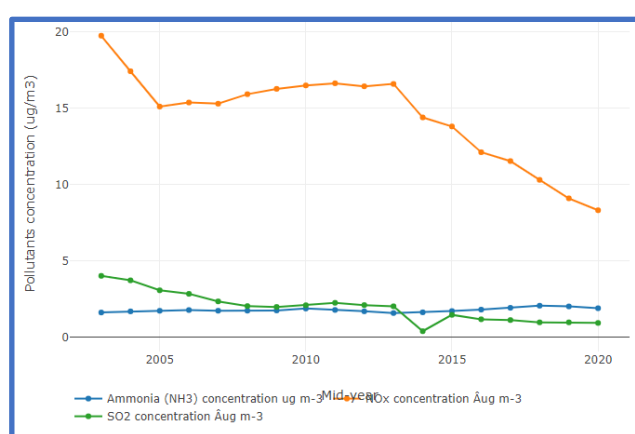
### Condition and trends



Pollution trends. Nitrogen deposition



Pollution trends. Acid deposition



Pollutants concentration

- Overall, Nitrogen deposition for short vegetation like dry heathland has fallen between 2003 and 2020. There have been a few years when it went back up before dropping again (2009, 2010, 2013, 2015-2018). However, Cannock Chase SAC still exceeds the critical load for nitrogen deposition. The figures for the west side of the site are generally higher than the east side – perhaps because of the prevailing wind direction.
- Ammonia concentration levels have slightly increased between 2003 and 2020. Levels seemed to increase in 2014 to a peak in 2018, then dropped in 2019 and 2020 (maybe due to covid?). The reasons for the increase might partly be attributed to catalytic converters- a by-product of them reducing emissions of nitrogen oxide

is that ammonia can be emitted. Figures post-Covid are not yet available. There are two critical levels for the Cannock Chase SAC/ SSSI depending on the site's features. A critical level of 1 is used for bryophytes and lichens. Bryophytes and lichens are integral for dry heathlands. A critical level of 3 is used for higher plants. The SAC is exceeding the critical level for ammonia for the features that have a critical level of 1, but it is not exceeding for features that have a critical level of 3.

- NOx concentration levels have fallen between 2003 and 2020. The SAC is not in exceedance for NOx. The reduction in NOx maybe related to the increase in catalytic converters and electric cars, although there are probably other factors too.

### Recommendations for future monitoring

- Continue to capture air quality data for Cannock Chase SAC and report every 5 years to coincide with future management plan reviews.

### Data sources

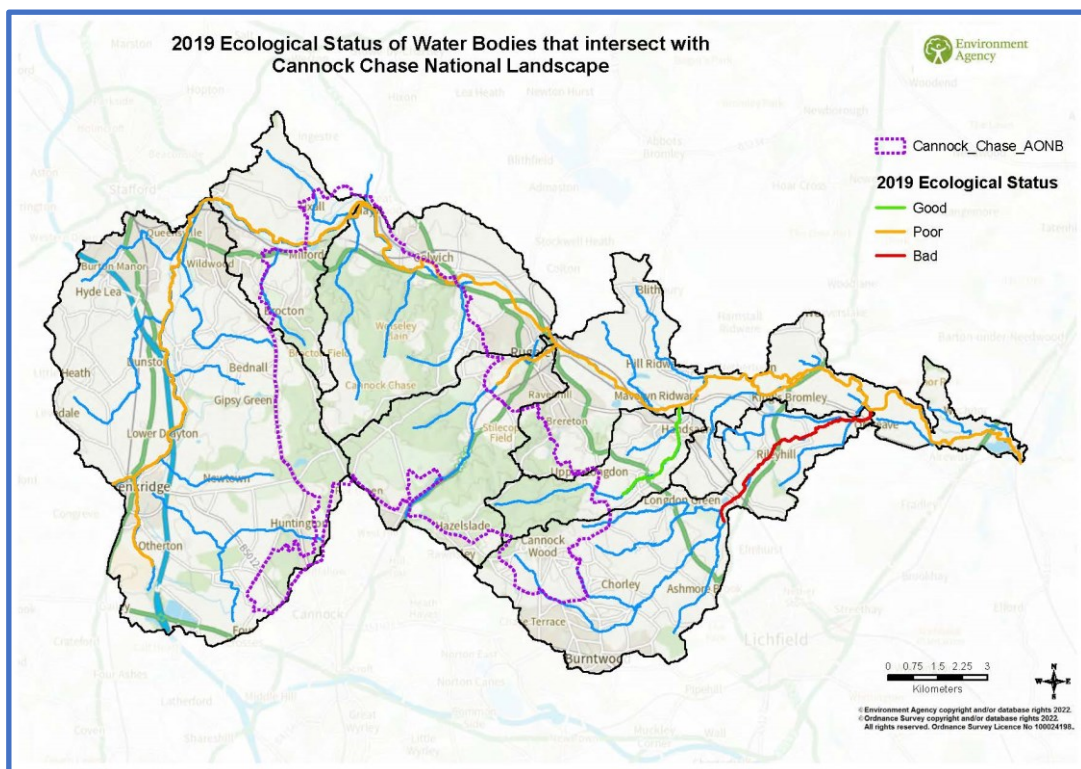
- Air Pollution Information System (APIS) (2023). [www.apis.ac.uk](http://www.apis.ac.uk)

## N6: Water quality

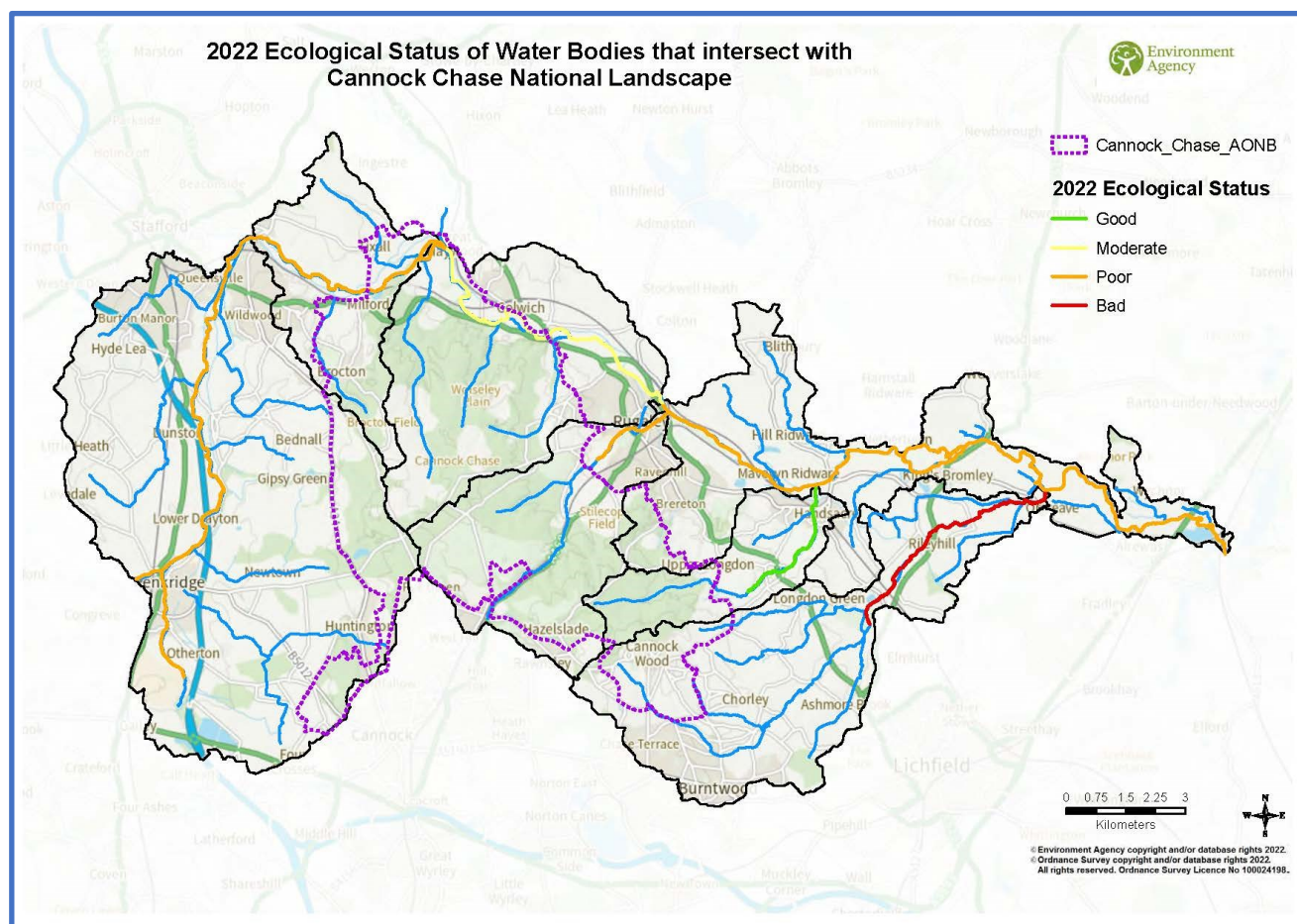
### Status

This indicator shows the ecological status of watercourses and waterbodies within the National Landscape, using statistics relating to the Water Framework Directive (WFD). With the exception of groundwater statistics, this looks at both the biological and habitat condition status of a water body. Surface waters with good status support a diverse assemblage of aquatic invertebrates, fish, mammals and birds. This indicator is a measure of outcomes to improve and protect the condition of the water environment on the Chase.

Detailed data for the ecological status of watercourses has been obtained locally from the Environment Agency. The maps below show the ecological status of seven water bodies that intersect with Cannock Chase National Landscape. In 2022 one was graded good; one moderate, four poor and one bad.



**2019 Ecological Status of Water Bodies that intersect with Cannock Chase National Landscape**



**2022 Ecological Status of Water Bodies that intersect with Cannock Chase National Landscape**

Water Body ID	Water Body Name	Management Catchment	2019 Ecological Classification	2022 Ecological Classification	Objective
GB104028047300	Trent from River Sow to Moreton Brook	Trent Valley Staffordshire	Poor	Moderate	Moderate (2021)
GB104028047190	Sow from R Penk to R Trent	Trent Valley Staffordshire	Poor	Poor	Moderate (2027)
GB104028047280	Rising Brook	Trent Valley Staffordshire	Poor	Poor	Good (2027)
GB104028047121	Penk – Whiston Bk to R Sow	Trent Valley Staffordshire	Poor	Poor	Good (2027)
GB104028047260	Shropshire Brook	Trent Valley Staffordshire	Good	Good	Good
GB104028047270	Bourne-Bilson Brook catchment	Trent Valley Staffordshire	Bad	Bad	Good (2027)
GB104028047290	Trent from Moreton Brook to River Tame	Trent Valley Staffordshire	Poor	Poor	Good (2027)

**Ecological Status of Water Bodies that intersect with Cannock Chase National Landscape 2019-22**



A 2009 evidence base relating to the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation highlighted potential negative effects of water abstraction on the wet heath component of the designated area (extent and species diversity in the Oldacre and Sher Brooks). At that time, the two water companies operating in the area (Severn Trent Water in the north and South Staffs Water in the south), abstracted some 2,300 million litres of water per day for public supplies of which about 75% came from surface water sources and about 25% from aquifers.

Hydrological investigations from the period indicate that, at current abstraction rates, water abstraction is not having any measurable effects on surface water flows in either watercourse. Abstraction rates in relation to the volumes that are licensed will need to be monitored.

Other potential factors impacting on the wetland habitats include, past mining activity; past drainage, water diversion and supply works undertaken by the military; changes to tree cover; and climate change.

### **Condition and trends**

- The condition of six of the seven watercourses has remained unchanged between 2019 and 2022.
- The rating of one water body (Trent from River Sow to Moreton Brook) has improved from poor to moderate.

### **Recommendations for future monitoring**

- Continue to monitor the ecological condition of watercourses and report every 5 years to coincide with future Management Plan reviews.
- Continue to monitor water abstraction rates and abstraction licences.

### **Data sources**

- Environment Agency (local data) (2019 and 2022).
- Evidence base relating to the Cannock Chase SAC (2009).

## **N7: Soil health**

### **Status**

An indicator of soil health for England is still under development<sup>39</sup>. As the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) report on soil health states: 'Healthy soil is important for delivering many of the ecosystem services that we rely on, from climate regulation (through carbon storage), food production (through soil's contribution to land capability for agriculture), maintenance of biodiversity (through increased abundance, diversity, connectivity and functionality of soil organisms) and water regulation (through soils' contribution to runoff reduction)'.

The whole of the Cannock Chase plateau is underlain by Triassic Pebble Beds, which have given rise to very infertile, sandy, free-draining soils. The historical removal of trees and centuries of grazing combined with weathering by rainwater, have leached the soils of their minerals and nutrients – creating conditions favoured by heathland semi-natural vegetation. More fertile sandy, acid brown soils with a higher humus content are restricted to the lower lying fringes of the Chase, where mixed farming takes place. Even here, soil quality is poor and arable farming requires the addition of fertilisers and lime.

The majority of land within the National Landscape is classified under the Agricultural Land Classification as non-agricultural. This land is fringed by Grade 4 (poor quality) and Grade 3 (good to moderate quality) agricultural land in the west, north and east.

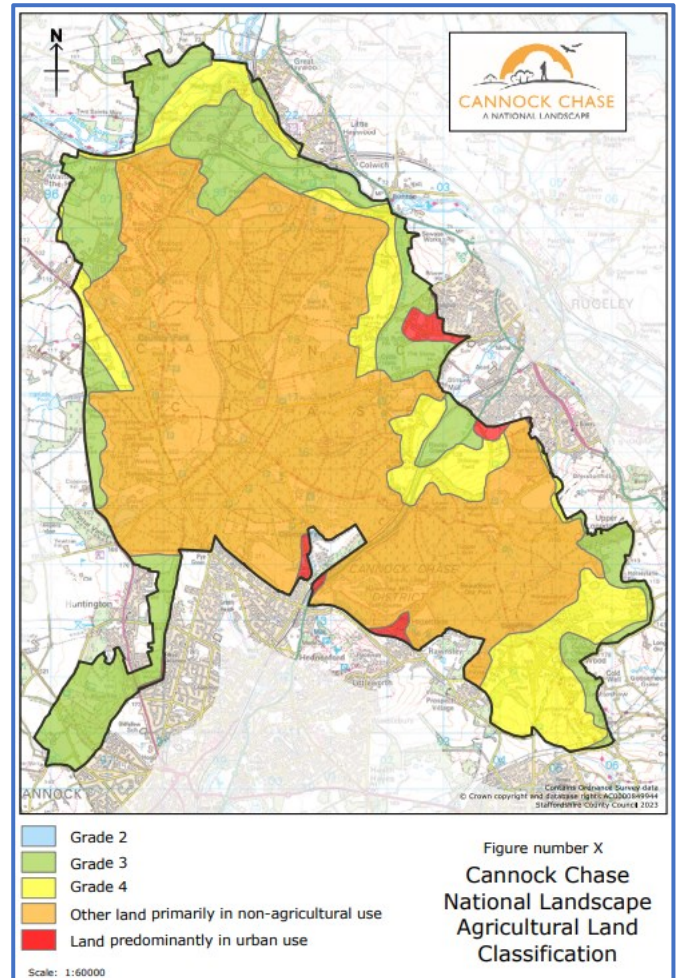
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<sup>39</sup> See Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Report 737: Towards Indicators of Soil Health. 2023.

Soil erosion is a significant concern on the forest and heath core of the Chase. Where the vegetation cover is removed, the light sandy soils are easily broken down to form highly erodible loose sand and gravel. Storm water can then wash deep gullies on slopes to form scars in the landscape.

Recreational activities including walking, cycling and horse riding can remove surface vegetation and cause compaction and physical removal of organic litter from path surfaces. The reduction of porosity and physical action of feet, hooves and wheels then loosens soil particles promoting runoff and erosion. Forestry and agricultural operations that use large and heavy vehicles can also risk changes in the soil's physical, chemical and biological characteristics.

Nutrient levels in soils are important factors determining plant species composition. The internationally important heathland plant communities on Cannock Chase, for example, are dependent on acidic and infertile conditions. The accumulation of organic matter from the natural growth of trees and bracken, as well as the local enrichment (eutrophication) effects of dog fouling (faeces and urine), threaten to reduce species-richness and the loss of specialised heathland plants and animals.



### Condition and trends

- This is the first time this measure has been used, so no trends are available.

### Recommendations for future monitoring

- Following the publication of a national indicator for soil health, incorporate into future management plans. An indicator for soil health would help us to assess and understand the effects of land management and land use change on soil's contribution to the delivery of ecosystem services.

### Data sources

- Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Agricultural Land Classification

## Policy considerations for the AONB Management Plan for 'Nature'

Considerations for the management plan in relation to 'Nature' include:

- Setting the contribution that Cannock Chase National Landscape can make to the Government's target for 30X30.
- Restoring and maintaining habitats as part of functioning ecological networks within and outside the National Landscape.
- Working with landowners and partners to improve the condition of protected areas for biodiversity and geodiversity.
- Securing the protection and management of those principal habitats for biodiversity that lie outside protected areas.
- Identifying measures that address the issues for species of conservation concern, as well as prioritising and tackling non-native invasive species.

- Promoting public understanding and awareness about the biodiversity and geodiversity of the Chase, and its importance and fragility.
- Working with conservation and regulatory agencies to reduce pollution at source to protect the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation and other ecologically sensitive sites.
- Encouraging policies and practices by regulators, water companies and landowners that deliver improvements for clean air, clean and plentiful water, and healthy soils.

# Climate

## Introduction

More unpredictable, unseasonable and extreme weather patterns will increasingly impact on the special qualities of the National Landscape and the benefits the area provides for society. Our iconic habitats and their species composition will be affected, and the integrity of ecosystems will be challenged. Pests and diseases will spread, threatening native plant communities and the wildlife which depends on them as well as the types of crops and trees that we grow. New agricultural and forestry practices will be introduced, and some cultural heritage and historic environment features will be under threat. Visitor behaviours will change, the risk of wildfires will increase, and footpaths and other infrastructure may be eroded and damaged from extreme weather events.

The UK's Protected Landscapes can become exemplars of low-carbon transition and environment-conscious land management, managing this process, taking action to adapt to the impacts of climate change and making the best of the opportunities.

Indicators selected for this theme:

C1: Greenhouse gas emissions and removal

C2: Soil carbon and peat

C3: Woodland cover and management

C4: Tree canopy

### Key findings

- The total annual CO<sup>2</sup> emissions from residents, visitors travelling to/from and whilst inside the AONB, and industry is estimated at 237,254 tCO<sup>2</sup> per year. Residents emit more than half (56%) of this total.
- Carbon sequestration targets for the National Landscape to be net zero by 2034 include planting 10ha of new woodland each year.
- 1,340,124 tonnes of carbon is stored in all of the land use types and habitats on Cannock Chase.
- Woodland (coniferous, deciduous and mixed woodlands) has the largest carbon store of any land use type/habitat on Cannock Chase (62% of all the carbon stored).
- Cannock Chase has small areas of peatland deposits that could contribute to net zero targets, but their extent, depth and condition is unknown.
- 54% of the National Landscape (3,758 ha) is under woodland. Of this area, 73.5% is being actively managed.
- The estimated extent of the canopy cover of trees outside woodland is 168 ha.

## C1: Greenhouse gas emissions and removal

### Status

The sequestration of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and storing it as carbon in living biomass, soils and peat is an essential ecosystem service that the National Landscape provides, contributing to reducing the scale and future impacts of climate change. This indicator is a measure of outcomes to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and deliver our ambition to be net zero.

For the first time, a baseline of Greenhouse Gas emissions for the National Landscape has been carried out<sup>40</sup>. It assesses GHG emissions relating to the consumption of good and services by local residents, business and visitors, in addition to land-based emissions. The baseline emissions (calculated for 2019) will become the reference point from which outcomes of measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions can be monitored.

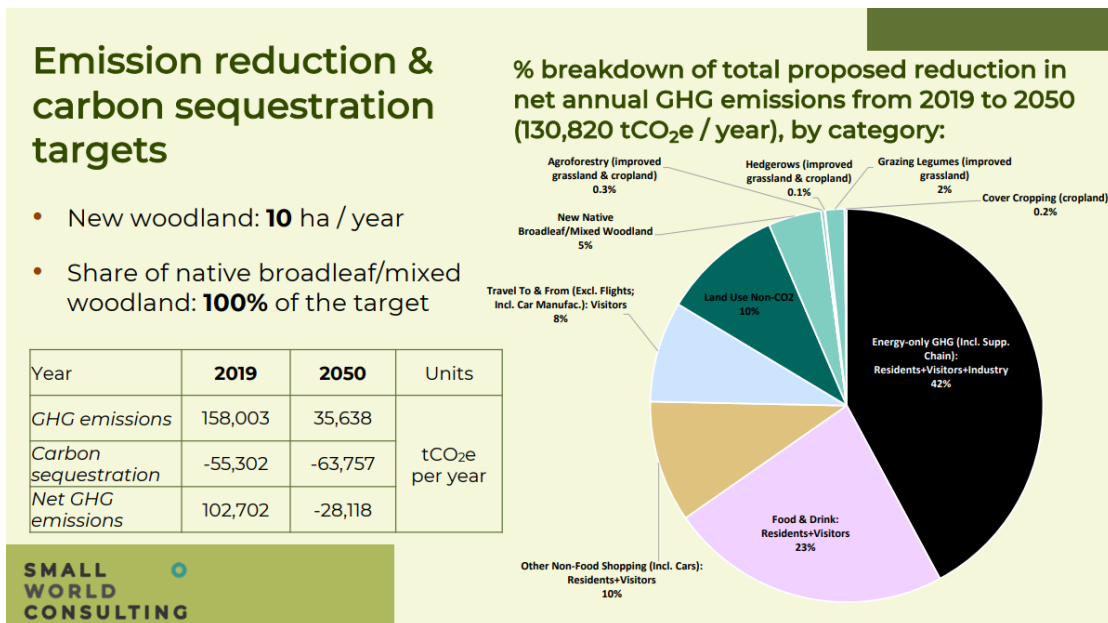
<sup>40</sup> Small World Consulting, *A greenhouse gas emissions assessment and target scenario for the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty* (September 2022).

Sector	Greenhouse gas emissions (carbon footprint)
Residents	132,384 tCO <sub>2</sub> e per year
Visitors while in the area	29,171 tCO <sub>2</sub> e per year
Visitors travelling to and from the area	13,521 tCO <sub>2</sub> e per year
Industry	62,178 tCO <sub>2</sub> e per year
Through-traffic and major roads	22,183 tCO <sub>2</sub> e per year
Land use sector (carbon sources and sinks)	-34,466 tCO <sub>2</sub> e per year
<b>Greenhouse gas emissions by sector</b>	

Residents have the greatest carbon footprint, estimated at **132,384 tCO<sub>2</sub>e**. The data shows that the typical footprint of a Cannock Chase resident is 14.1% higher than that of the average UK resident. The highest emissions arise from food and drink (24%), personal flights (12%) and vehicle fuel (12%). Emissions produced by visitors while in the National Landscape total **29,171 tCO<sub>2</sub>e**. Of the footprint of visitors while in the National Landscape, 58% is linked with food & drink, while vehicle fuel accounts for 14%. Emissions produced by visitors travelling to and from the National Landscape total **13,521 tCO<sub>2</sub>e** per year. Vehicle fuel makes up most of this figure (71%) and car manufacture & maintenance (18%), with only 0.2% arising from public transport (excluding flights).

Industry-related GHG emissions for Cannock Chase total **62,178 tCO<sub>2</sub>e**. The industry footprint is dominated by agriculture and forestry (34%), production (22%) and construction (14%), with the agriculture footprint being significantly higher than the UK average per resident. Estimated total through-traffic emissions from cars, buses, motorbikes, vans and lorries are **22,183 tCO<sub>2</sub>e**. The land use sector is different from other sectors in that it contains both sources (emissions from livestock and synthetic fertilisers) and sinks (soils and biomass) of greenhouse gases. The net value of these two elements is therefore negative **-34,466 tCO<sub>2</sub>e** per year.

The report by Small World Consulting sets out emission reduction and carbon sequestration targets by which Cannock Chase National Landscape could be net zero by 2034. Proposed land use targets include planting 10 hectares of new native broadleaf/mixed woodland each year, improving 32 hectares of grassland with legumes, and cover cropping 6.5 hectares of arable land.



Emission reduction and carbon sequestration targets

## Conditions and trends

- This is the first time that land use targets for carbon capture and storage have been included as an indicator, so no trend data is available.

## Recommendations for future monitoring

- It is anticipated that data and information relating to climate change will be more readily available for the next phase of monitoring. Natural England are in the process of exploring new climate change indicators. This will include data / information relating to Greenhouse Gas emissions and carbon sequestration. These should be considered as new or complementary monitoring indicators in the next State of the AONB report.

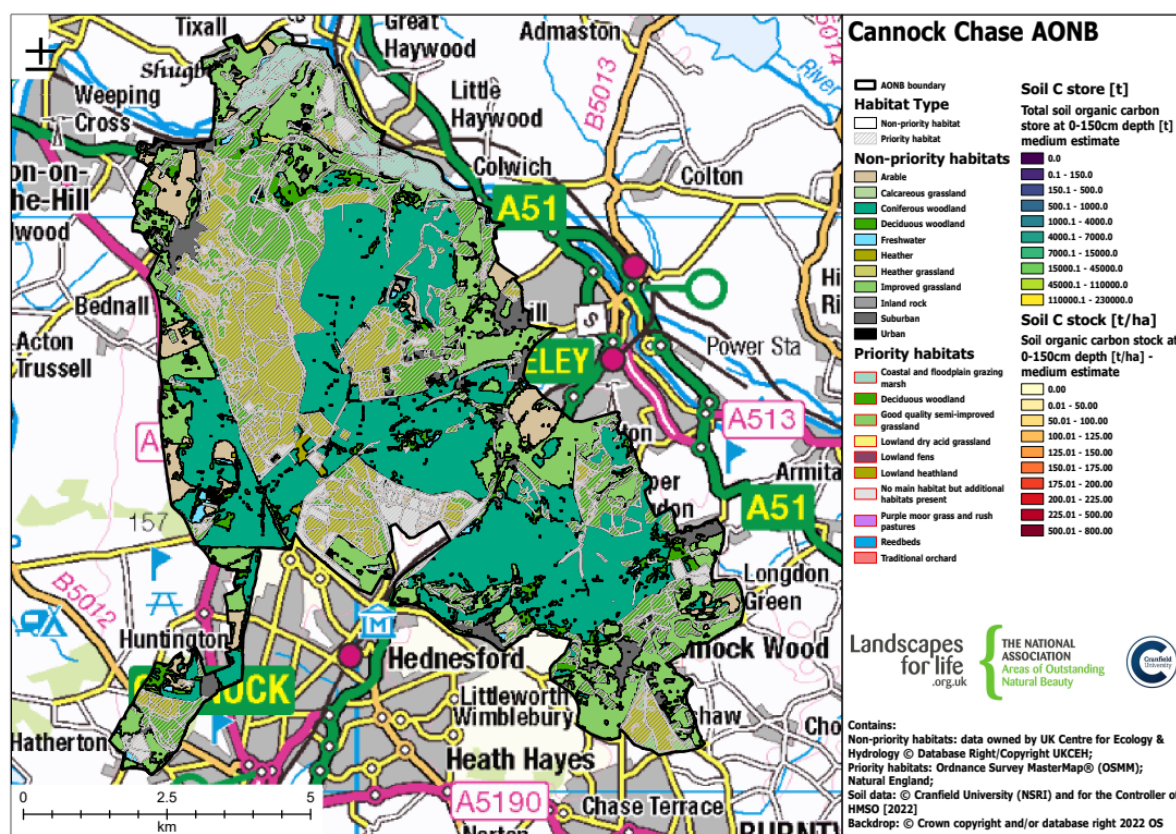
## Data sources

- A greenhouse gas emissions assessment and target scenario for the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A report by Small World Consulting September 2022.

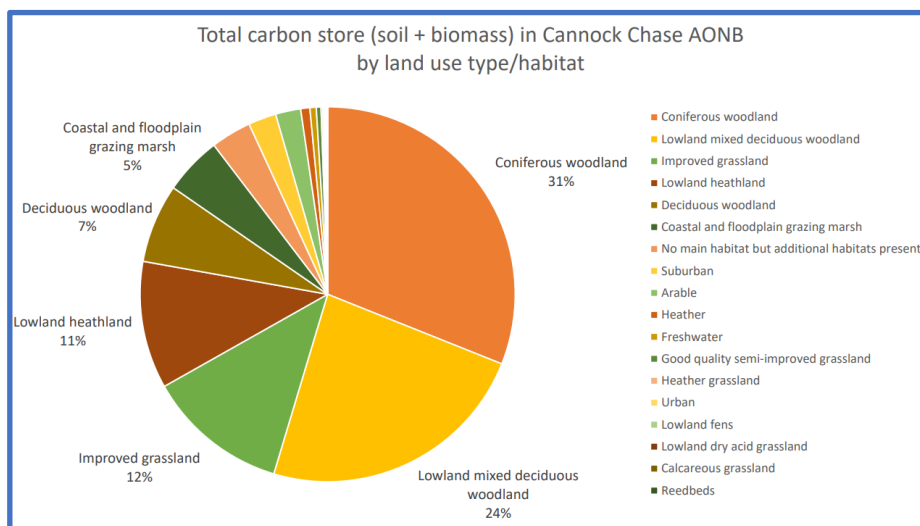
## C2: Soil carbon and peat

### Status

As mention in N7 Soil Health, an indicator of soil health for England is still under development. In the interim, this indicator provides a measure of one property of soil health – soil carbon.



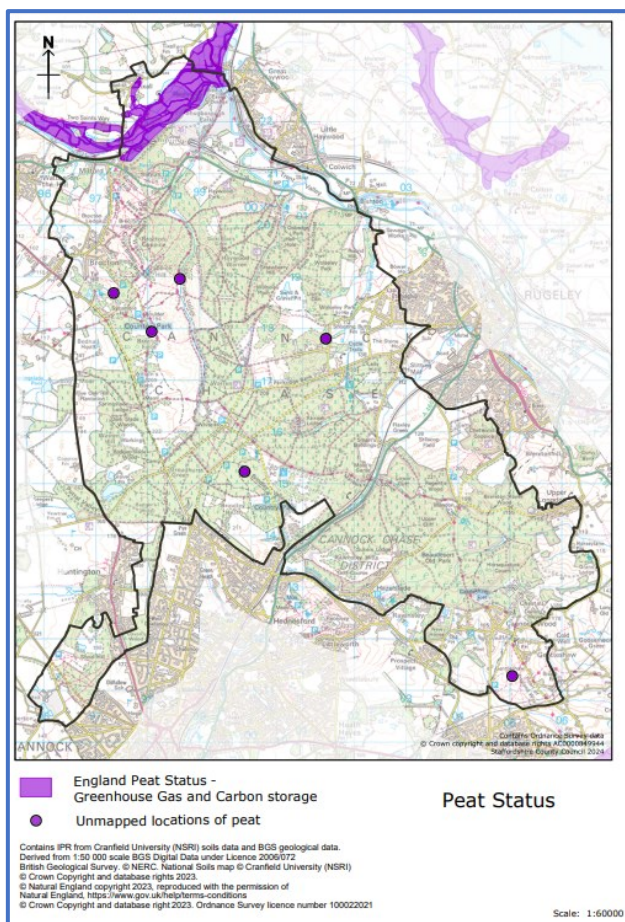
Stored carbon in habitats



**Total carbon store by land use type / habitat**

A total of 1,340,124 tonnes of carbon is stored on all of the land use types and habitats on Cannock Chase National Landscape. This can be broken down between 584,749 tonnes for priority habitats and 755,375 for non-priority habitats. Woodland (coniferous, deciduous and mixed woodlands) has the largest carbon store of any land use type/habitat on Cannock Chase (62% of all the carbon store on the Chase). Improved grassland stores 12% of all the carbon store, and lowland heathland 12%.

Cannock Chase has small areas of peaty deposits, but their full extent and condition is unknown (see map). The estimated total extent of peaty deposits in the National Landscape is 178 hectares (2.6% of the designated area).



**Peat status**

Site	Approximate area of peat in CCNL
River Sow floodplain	134.34 ha
Oldacre Valley	c6.5 ha
Sher Brook Valley	c15 ha
Womere	c2 ha
Gentleshaw Common	c15 ha
Stafford Brook	c5.6 ha
Brindley Heath	Small depressions
<b>Peatland deposits (area)</b>	

### Condition and trends

- This is the first time this measure has been used, so no trends are available. Peatland areas on the Chase have not been comprehensively mapped or assessed for their condition.

### Recommendations for future monitoring

- Following the publication of a national indicator for soil health, incorporate into future management plan reviews.
- The forthcoming England Peatland Inventory will not include all of the peat areas within Cannock Chase owing to their small extent. There is a need, therefore, to undertake an exercise locally to more accurately map and record the peatland resource on Cannock Chase, assess its condition, and potential for restoration and contributing to net zero targets.

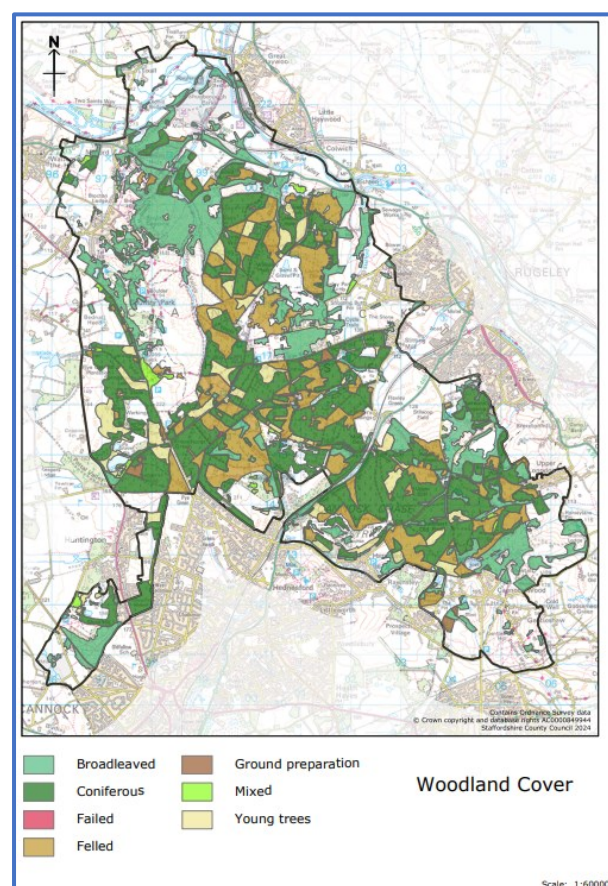
### Data sources

- Cranfield University (2022).
- Natural England, Peat status Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Carbon Storage (2021).

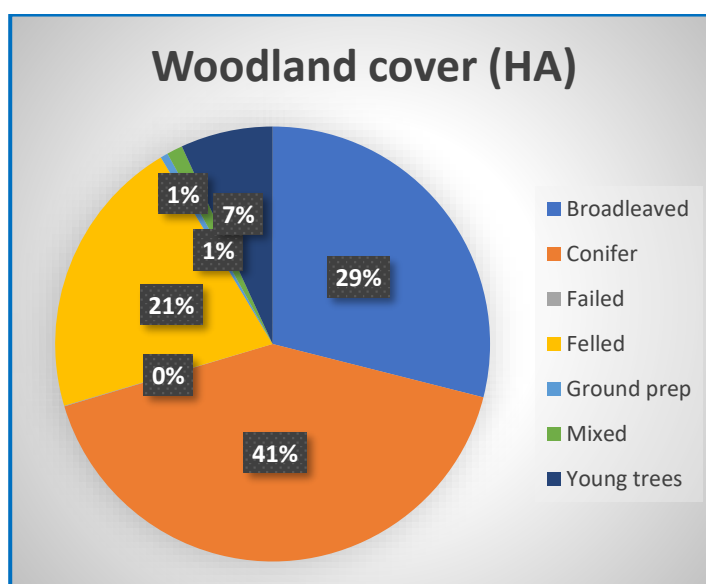
## C3: Woodland cover and management

### Status

Woodland is the predominant land cover on Cannock Chase. These indicators help us to understand the nature of that woodland and how it is managed, and consider how any changes might impact on the special qualities of the area and their ability and capacity to capture and store carbon.



Woodland cover



Extent and type of woodland cover



Woodland is the predominant land use type of the National Landscape, covering 3,715 ha (54.1% of the National Landscape). This is the highest proportion of woodland cover for any English National Landscape. The most common woodland type is coniferous (1,539 ha or 41.4% of the total area of woodland). Broadleaved woodland is also relatively widespread, covering 1,075 ha hectares or 28.9% of the total woodland area.

Relatively little of the woodland cover is ancient woodland (160.5 hectares / 2.3% of the total area of woodland). The majority of the ancient woodland is semi-natural woodland (104.8 ha), with plantations on ancient woodland sites comprising a further 55.7 ha. Most of the ancient woodland is located at Brocton Coppice.

	Area within CCNL (ha)		% of total area of woodland in CCNL that is managed / unmanaged	
	2015	2023	2015	2023
Managed woodland area	3,046	2,787	81%	73.5%
Unmanaged woodland area	713	971	19%	26.5%
<b>Total area of woodland</b>	<b>3,759</b>	<b>3,758</b>		
<b>Woodland management</b>				

Most recent figures indicate that 2,787 ha of woodland (73.5% of all the woodland in the National Landscape) is actively managed. 2,301 hectares of this is in public management; 486 hectares in private management. This is one of the highest figures of all National Landscapes in England, reflecting the fact that much of the wooded area is part of Cannock Chase Forest, a working forest managed by Forestry England. Outside Cannock Chase Forest, woodland is being managed and restored under agri-environment schemes as well as the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme, but exact data is not currently available.

### Condition and trends

- The total extent of woodland cover has not changed since 2018. There have been minor changes in the areas attributed to different woodland categories, as plantations reach the end of their rotation and are felled and replanted.
- The area of managed woodland declined between 2015 – 2023, from 81% of the total area of woodland to 73.5%.

### Recommendations for future monitoring

- Woodland data should be revisited every five years to gain a picture of any key changes in woodland cover and management.

### Data sources

- Forestry Commission, England National Forest Inventory (2017 and 2023).
- Woodland Trust, Ancient Tree Inventory (2024).

## C4: Tree canopy

### Status

Trees outside woodland, for example, in hedgerows on farmland, in parklands, on roadside verges and in urban environments, provide multiple benefits. They are integral to landscape character, provide homes for wildlife, generate shade and regulate climate, intercept rainfall and filter pollutants. Measuring tree canopy cover can be a proxy for the benefits that trees bring in the wider landscape outside woodlands.

A figure of 3,926 ha for all tree canopy cover (including woodland and non-woodland trees) within the National Landscape has been calculated. Deducting the figure of 3,758 ha for woodland cover derived from the National Forestry Inventory (see C3 above), leaves 168 ha of tree canopy cover outside woodlands. This includes trees

over 3m in height growing within hedgerows, gardens, individual parkland trees and scattered trees within open semi-natural habitats.

### Conditions and trends

- This is the first time this measure has been used, so no trends are available.

### Recommendations for future monitoring

- An assessment of tree canopy cover should be repeated every five years to identify any changes and performance against tree planting targets.

### Data sources

- Bluesky, National Tree Map (2024).

## Policy considerations for the AONB Management Plan for 'Climate'

Considerations for the Management Plan in relation to 'Climate' include:

- Incorporating land use targets and opportunities for carbon capture and sequestration to mitigate for greenhouse gas emissions and reach net zero.
- Raising awareness of the impacts of climate change on the National Landscape, and demonstrating the need for more sustainable diets, food systems and land use change to meet climate, as well as, biodiversity, health and recreation objectives.
- Encouraging visitors to travel to the National Landscape by more sustainable modes of transport.
- Delivering more, bigger, better managed and better connected protected areas for nature to build resilience of habitats and wildlife against the effects of climate change.
- Maintaining and supporting nature-based solutions to climate related issues, for example in flood attenuation.
- Encouraging take-up by farmers and land managers of options within the new Environmental Land Management Scheme that protect and regenerate soils, and conserve and restore habitats that capture and store carbon.
- Developing projects to restore the peatlands on the Chase to favourable condition.
- Working with partners to identify opportunities for tree planting in appropriate locations with landowners, farmers and local people, that will contribute to national and local tree planting targets.
- Promoting the appropriate management of woodland to deliver multiple ecosystem services.

# People

## Introduction

Cannock Chase is a lived-in, working landscape. Whilst a relatively small number of people call it home, large populations live on its doorstep in the surrounding urban areas of Cannock, Hednesford, Burntwood, Rugeley and Stafford. The local rural economy within the designated area is largely confined to the employment of people in agriculture, forestry, quarrying, in managing recreational facilities, and in the provision of services to visitors.

The National Landscape also supports the nation's health and wellbeing. It offers opportunities for outdoor exploration and exercise, quiet contemplation, contact with nature and heritage, engagement and education. Its location between a series of developed areas, combined with relatively easy access means that recreational demand is high.

Indicators selected for this theme:

PE1: Population

PE2: Health and wellbeing

PE3: Business and employment

PE4: Volunteer engagement

PE5: Visitor numbers

PE6: Open access land and other accessible greenspace

PE7: Public Rights of Way

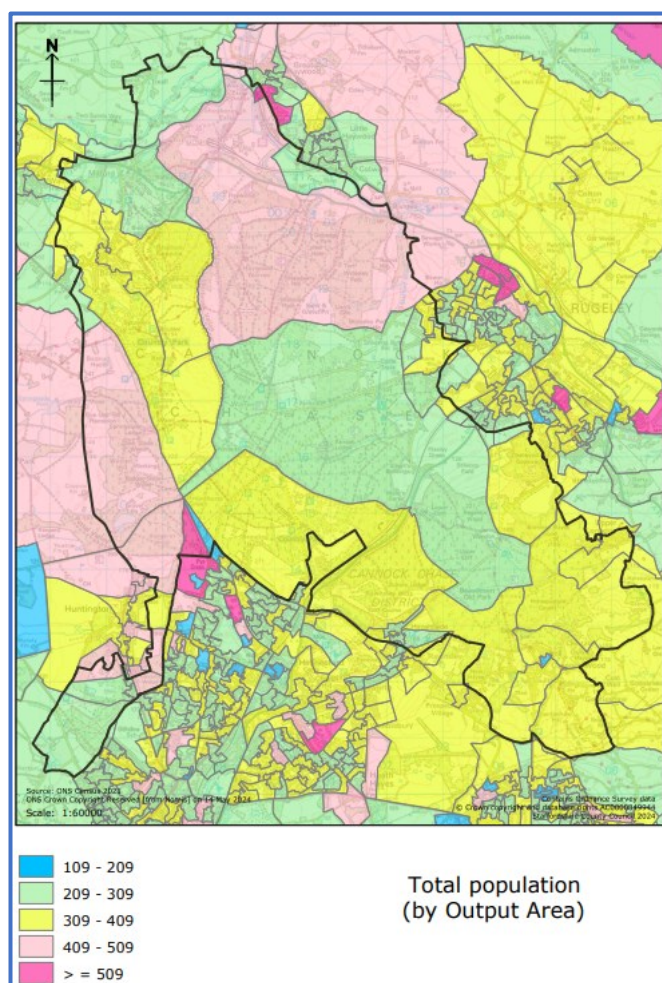
### Key findings

- The population of the National Landscape is around 9,000 people. In contrast some 502,000 people live within 10km of the boundary.
- The overall population density remains very low compared with the surrounding settlements, retaining the area's feel of wildness and tranquillity.
- The proportion of the population that considers themselves to be White British is 96% compared to 81% for England as a whole.
- The majority of the National Landscape has low levels of multiple deprivation.
- In 2021, 19.3% of the population of the National Landscape had physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expecting to last 12 months or more.
- Cannock Chase offers a range of natural benefits for local communities. Some people, however, experience unintentional barriers to engagement, leading to exclusion or feeling unwelcome.
- 52% of the resident population is in employment. Since 2008 there has been a downward trend in the recorded farm labour workforce.
- Estimates of the total monetary worth of the local economy are not available. However, 2019 figures show that tourism spend alone generated £47 million.
- In 2022, over 600 volunteers contributed 47,400 hours engaged on a range of activities helping to keep Cannock Chase special and provide a visitor welcome (24.6 FTE equivalent).
- Cannock Chase is an important resource that can support people's physical and mental wellbeing.
- An estimated 3 million visits are made to the National Landscape every year. Visitor numbers are increasing, and expected to rise by 15% over the next decade.
- The combination of statutory and permissive access gives the public some 3,531 hectares to explore and enjoy (51.5% of the National Landscape), as well 157kms of Public Rights of Way, canal towpaths, sections of long-distance recreational trails, designated cycle trails and easy-access trails for disabled people.
- In 2023 nearly 500 issues were reported about the Public Rights of Way in the National Landscape.

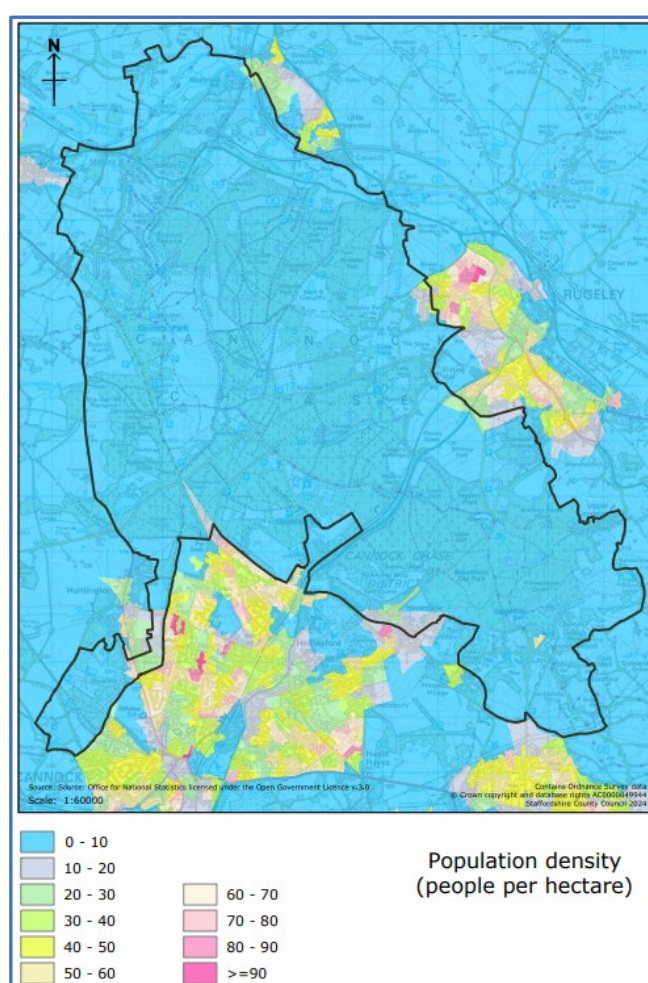
## PE1: Population

### Status

This indicator shows the population within the National Landscape and the surrounding 10km catchment. Cannock Chase is much-loved by the local communities that live on it and immediately surround it. It is also in a unique position in the West Midlands providing easy access to a large and growing population. This indicator helps us to understand our relationship with communities near and far, and inform our policies around accessibility and visitor management, and how the needs of people can be balanced with the conservation and enhancement of the area's natural beauty.



**Total population**



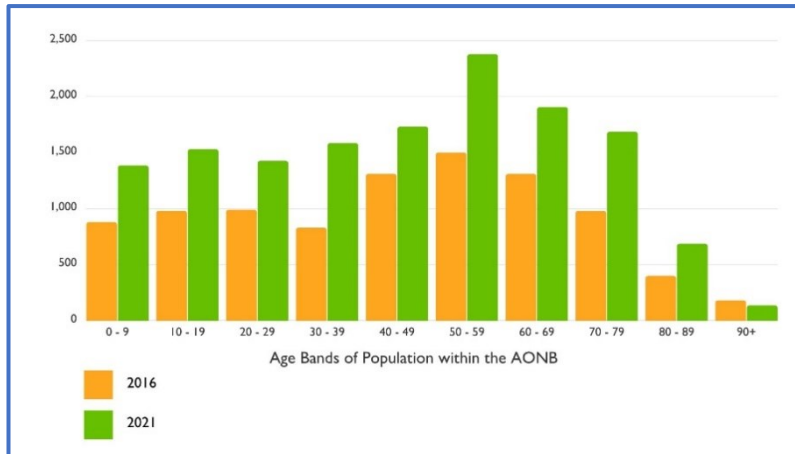
**Population density**

	Number		
	2011	2016	2021
Population within the National Landscape	N/A	N/A	8,700
Population within 10km of the National Landscape boundary	481,055	491,582	501,912
Population density within the National Landscape	Less than 10 persons/ha	Less than 10 persons/ha.	Less than 10 persons/ha
<b>Population estimates</b>			

The total estimated population resident within the National Landscape at the time of the 2021 census is around 8,700. This figure is based on allocation of Output Areas. The majority are living around Brocton and Milford in

the north-west, and Upper Longdon, Cannock Wood and Gentleshaw in the south-east. In contrast, some 501,912 people live within 10km of the National Landscape boundary.

Population density within the National Landscape is very low, with almost all of the designated area having less than 10 people per hectare. This reflects the small proportion of the area that is settlement (3%). The density of population is substantially higher in the conurbations surrounding the National Landscape, such as, Rugeley, Hednesford, Cannock and Great Haywood.



The age group with the greatest number of people resident in the National Landscape is those aged 50 to 59, followed by the age group 60 to 69. There are a relatively low number of young people aged 0-9. Defra analysis of the 2021 census is that the average age for the resident population in Cannock Chase is 45 years. This compares with 47 years for all of England's National Landscapes, and 41 years for the entire population of England.

**Age range of National Landscape residents**

At the time of the 2021 census, 51% of the population is female, and 49% male. 97% of the population consider themselves to be White British ethnicity. This compares with 96% for all of England's National Landscapes, and 81% for the entire population of England. Overall, there is low ethnic diversity across Staffordshire (6.4%), being predominantly White British. Cannock Chase District Council and Lichfield District areas have some of the lowest share of minority ethnic communities in the county. Some surrounding areas, for example, Walsall, Wolverhampton and Birmingham have far greater proportions of Asian/Asian British (15% to 27%) or Black/Black British (2.5% to 9%) communities.

### Condition and trends

- Population trends within the National Landscape are difficult to determine due to differences in the methodology used to estimate population sizes.
- The overall population density remains very low compared with the surrounding settlements, however, retaining the area's feel of wildness and tranquillity.
- The age profile of those living in the National Landscape has remained broadly the same over the 5 years between 2016 and 2021.

### Recommendations for future monitoring

- Continue to utilise UK census data every 10 years to monitor changes in the local and wider populations.

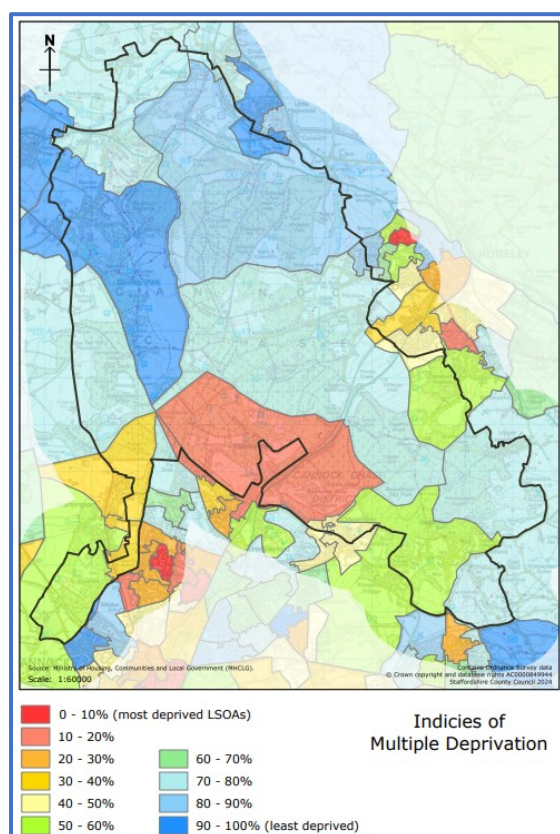
### Data sources

- Office for National Statistics. Census returns 2011 and 2021
- Defra analysis: Census 2021 population by single year of age
- Defra analysis: Census 2021 population within each ethnic group

## PE2: Health and wellbeing

### Status

This indicator provides a measure of some aspects of local people's health and wellbeing that can inform policies around accessibility that could benefit their quality of life. The Indices of Deprivation provide a set of relative measures of deprivation for small areas across England, based on seven different domains, or facets, of deprivation: Income Deprivation, Employment Deprivation, Education, Skills and Training Deprivation, Health Deprivation and Disability, Crime, Barriers to Housing and Services, Living Environment Deprivation.



**Multiple deprivation**

Disabled under the Equality Act	1640
Not disabled under the Equality Act	7033
Does not apply	0
<b>Proportion of people with a disability in Cannock Chase National Landscape, 2021</b>	

The majority of the National Landscape has relatively low levels of recorded deprivation. Greater levels of deprivation occur in the south near Huntington, north of Cannock and around Rawnsley, and to a lesser extent around Rugeley in the east – coinciding with areas of higher population density. Health / obesity / long term illness issues measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) are slightly worse for Lichfield, South Staffordshire, Cannock Chase, and Stafford than the England average.

Figures from the 2021 census of England and Wales indicate that 1670 residents (19.3% of the population of the National Landscape) responded that they had physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expecting to last 12 months or more. This is slightly higher than the national figure across both England and Wales (17.8% of the population, 10.4 million).

Average earnings for people working in Cannock Chase are £2,250 per calendar month, which is below a figure of £2,300 for all of England's National Landscapes and £2,350 for the population of England as a whole.

Cannock Chase National Landscape has a house purchase affordability ratio of 6 (the ratio of the mean house purchase price to mean gross annual household), compared to an average of 11 in all of England's National Landscapes and 8 for the whole of England. This means that housing in the area is more affordable than in many places elsewhere.

A Diversity and Inclusion Study of Cannock Chase National Landscape in 2022 highlighted that some people and sectors of society experience unintentional barriers to engagement with the protected landscape which leads to exclusion or feeling unwelcome. This includes: lower income households, people with underlying health conditions, young people and ethnic minorities. The barriers to engagement may include physical obstructions, lack of knowledge, lack of confidence, fear of abuse, inability to access transport, and socio-economic circumstances. The study has been followed up in 2023 with an accessibility audit of visitor hubs, parks and trails on the Chase, and the publication of an Access Guide for disabled people and their families and carers to understand the level of accessibility at different sites across the Chase.

### Condition and trends

Areas of deprivation have not changed over the 5 years since the last State of the National Landscape report.

### Recommendations for future monitoring

- Continue to use data from the national census to enable direct comparisons to data collected every 10 years.

### Data sources

- Office for National Statistics (2023).
- Defra analysis: Median earnings in Protected Landscapes (2024).
- Defra analysis: House purchase affordability ratios in Protected Landscapes (2024).

## PE3: Business and employment

### Status

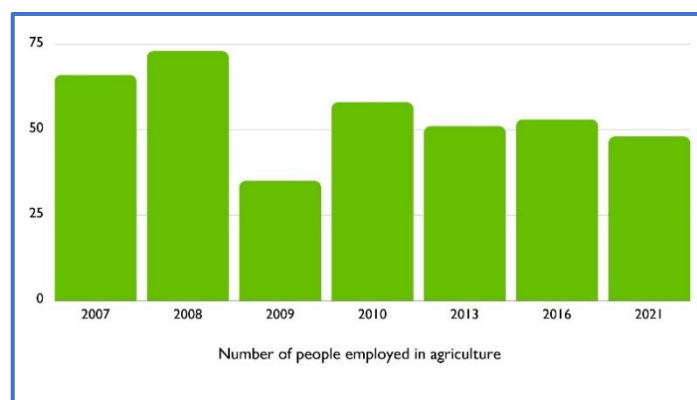
This indicator is a measure of the economic relationship between local communities and the National Landscape. The number of businesses located within the National Landscape is relatively low (estimated to be fewer than 450). Some will derive direct and indirect economic benefits from their unique location and relationship with its landscape. The indicator will inform our policies to foster our relationship with businesses, and to encourage them to embrace the landscape and their association with it as part of their business.

Accommodation and food service activities	35	8%
Administrative and support service activities	30	7%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	25	6%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	10	2%
Construction	80	19%
Education, health and social work	25	6%
Finance	X	X
Information and communication	20	5%
Manufacturing	30	7%
Mining, quarrying and utilities	X	X
Professional, scientific and technical services	60	14%
Public administration and defence: other services	15	3%
Real estate activities	15	3%
Transport and storage	15	3%
Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles	65	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Number of local units of registered businesses in Cannock Chase National Landscape by industry type, 2021/22</b>		

10+ employees	1-9 employees	0 employees	Total number of local units
45 (10%)	335 (78%)	50 (12%)	430
<b>Number of local units of registered businesses in Cannock Chase National Landscape by size band, 2021/22</b>			

Defra analysis of the ONS Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDPR) records 430 businesses registered within the National Landscape in 2021/22. The businesses represent a wide range of industry types, of which the construction industry is the highest (19%), followed by the motor car trade (wholesale, retail and repair). Most of the businesses are small size - employing between 1-9 employees.

Occupation	Number
Managers, directors and senior officials	676
Professional occupations	710
Associate professional and technical occupations	524
Administrative and secretarial occupations	412
Skilled trades occupations	511
Caring, leisure and other service occupations	342
Sales and customer service occupations	253
Process, plant and machine operatives	286
Elementary occupations	346
<b>TOTAL in employment</b>	<b>4060</b>
<b>Occupation of residents 2021</b>	



Number of people employed in agriculture 2007-21

At the time of the 2021 UK census, 52% of the resident population was in employment in a range of occupations. According to Defra's June Survey of Agriculture, the total recorded farm labour force in the National Landscape is a mere 48. However, Defra's official yearly returns do not capture all farmers and smallholders within the National Landscape. Separate figures have not been collected for the numbers of people employed in quarrying and forestry.

Estimates of the total monetary worth of the local economy are not available. However, 2019 figures show that tourism spend alone generated £47 million.

### Condition and trends

- This is the first time that business data has been reported and so 2024 will be the baseline.
- Since 2008 there has been a downward trend in the recorded farm labour workforce.

### Recommendations for future monitoring

- Continue to use data from the national census to enable direct comparisons to data collected every 10 years.
- Provide better insight into the numbers of people employed in the rural economy (farming, forestry and tourism), as well as understanding the relationship between businesses and the National Landscape.
- Identify and collect data that can provide a more comprehensive and accurate picture of the dimensions and character of the Cannock Chase economy.

### Data sources

- Office for National Statistics, census returns (2021).
- Defra, June Survey of Agriculture (2021)
- STEAM data (2019).
- Defra analysis: ONS, Inter-Departmental Business Register (2021/22)

## PE4: Volunteer engagement

### Status

Volunteer time is one way of assessing the level of public engagement with the National Landscape. There are many people who share an interest in and concern for this special place. Some volunteer with the National



Landscape Team, whilst others support a number of the National Landscape's partners. This indicator is based on statistics for the numbers of volunteers and volunteer hours supplied by the following organisations operating on the Chase:

- Cannock Chase National Landscape team (Great War Hut, Milford Hut and Fixed Point Photography)
- Cannock Chase Council (Castle Ring)
- Forestry England (Cannock Chase Forest)
- National Trust (Shugborough Estate)
- South Staffordshire Council (Shoal Hill Common)
- Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (Gentleshaw Common and George's Hayes and Piggot's Bottom)
- Staffordshire County Council (Cannock Chase Country Park)

Organisation	Number of volunteers (2022)	Volunteer hours contributed (2022)	Types of activities
Cannock Chase National Landscape (Great War Hut, Milford Common, Fixed Point Photography)	40	1500	Visitor welcome; community engagement; landscape monitoring
Cannock Chase Council	5-8	1200	Countryside activities including coppicing, hay making, invasive species control, installation of site furniture.
Forestry England(Cannock Chase Forest)	75-80	704	Mountain bike trail maintenance; litter picking.
National Trust (Shugborough Estate)	398	37,210	House experience, driving, visitor welcome, garden, ranger, Farm, Bookshop
Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (Gentleshaw Common and George's Hayes and Piggot's Bottom)	22	585	Scrub control, bracken management, invertebrate scrape creation, purple moor grass control, woodland ride management work, litter picking, access works, rhododendron control, wildlife surveys.
Staffordshire County Council (Cannock Chase Country Park)	68	6050	Heath and woodland management, litter picking, tree felling. Scrub clearance. Bird, bat hedgehog box building, fence repairs, fence construction, tree nursery, cattle checks and fence line checks, grass mowing, way marking, promoted route checks, butterfly survey, deer census and deer deterrents, wildflower meadow creation and maintenance.
Staffordshire County Council (Chase Through Time)	11	181	Heritage asset condition monitoring surveys on the Shugborough Estate and the OS trig points; contributing to project implementation such as, the creation of wildflower beds at RAF Hednesford, 'Apples on the Chase' and 'Lens on the Past'.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>619-627</b>	<b>47,430</b>	
<b>Volunteering contributions in the National Landscape</b>			
NB. Above figures exclude corporate volunteer days, and 'unorganised' volunteering.			

In 2022 a total of 619-627 people volunteered with the National Landscape team and National Landscape partner organisations (this may include some double counting of volunteers who support more than one organisation). Collectively, they contributed 47,430 volunteer hours (the equivalent of 24.6 FTE working a 37 hour week).

The activities undertaken by the volunteers are wide-ranging and include community engagement, landscape monitoring, ecological and heritage surveys, practical conservation tasks and trail maintenance. It is also worth noting that individual people also organise themselves to carry out voluntary activities like litter picking in car parks and on road verges, which goes unrecorded.

### Condition and trends

- This is the first year that comprehensive data and insight for volunteering engagement on the Chase has been collected and 2024 will be the baseline.
- All partners reported a significant drop in volunteer participation in 2020 due to the impact of Covid-19 lockdowns.

### Recommendations for future monitoring

- Continue to collect annual data on volunteering contributions in the National Landscape.

### Sources

- Cannock Chase District Council
- Cannock Chase National Landscape Annual Reports (2019 – 2022)
- Forestry England
- National Trust
- South Staffordshire Borough Council
- Staffordshire County Council
- Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

## PE5: Visitor numbers

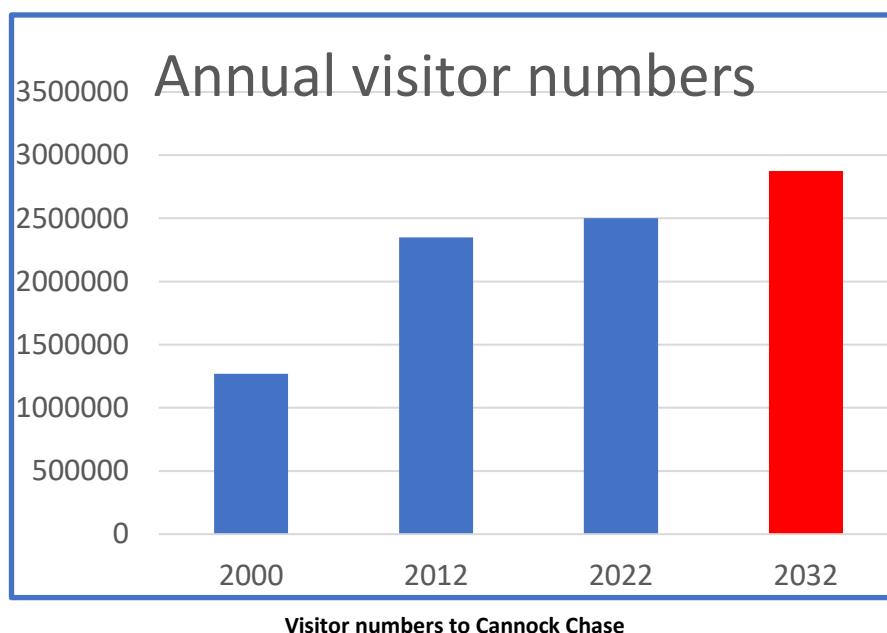
### Status

Cannock Chase is an important amenity, locally and regionally. Recreational demand is high and expected to increase over the next decade. Visitor numbers are a major consideration in the way the National Landscape will be managed going forward. This indicator will inform our policies and activities for balancing visitor management with the protection of natural beauty.

Estimates of total visitor numbers for the National Landscape have been undertaken in 2000 (1.3 million/annum) and 2012 (2.35 million/annum). A more recent estimate is not available, however, a conservative assumption is that it is at least 2.5 million/annum and probably nearer 3 million.

These figures exclude the estimated number of visitors to individual attractions such as Forestry England's Cannock Chase Centre (c300,000 p.a.), National Trust's Shugborough Estate (c250,000 p.a.), Staffordshire Wildlife Trust's Wolseley Centre (c90,000 p.a.), Museum of Cannock Chase (c34,000 p.a.) and Cannock Chase Visitor Centre (c25,000 p.a.).

Spatially, visits are concentrated on or around the main visitor centres/hubs, as well as popular countryside locations, such as, Milford Common, Seven Springs, White House, Moor's Gorse and Brocton Coppice. Walking, dog walking and cycling are the most popular activities.



### Condition and trends

- Between 2000 and 2011 the estimated annual number of visitors increased significantly from 1.3 million to 2.35 million (81% increase). The SAC Partnership anticipates a further 15% increase in visitor numbers over the next decade due to the delivery of housing near the National Landscape and a growing population. Historically, the most frequently visited locations have changed little over the decades, with the notable exception of the emergence of Cannock Chase Forest as a centre for mountain biking.

### Recommendations for monitoring

- Continue to monitor every 5 years to coincide with future Management Plan reviews.
- Carry out a repeat survey to estimate the total number of visitors to the National Landscape.

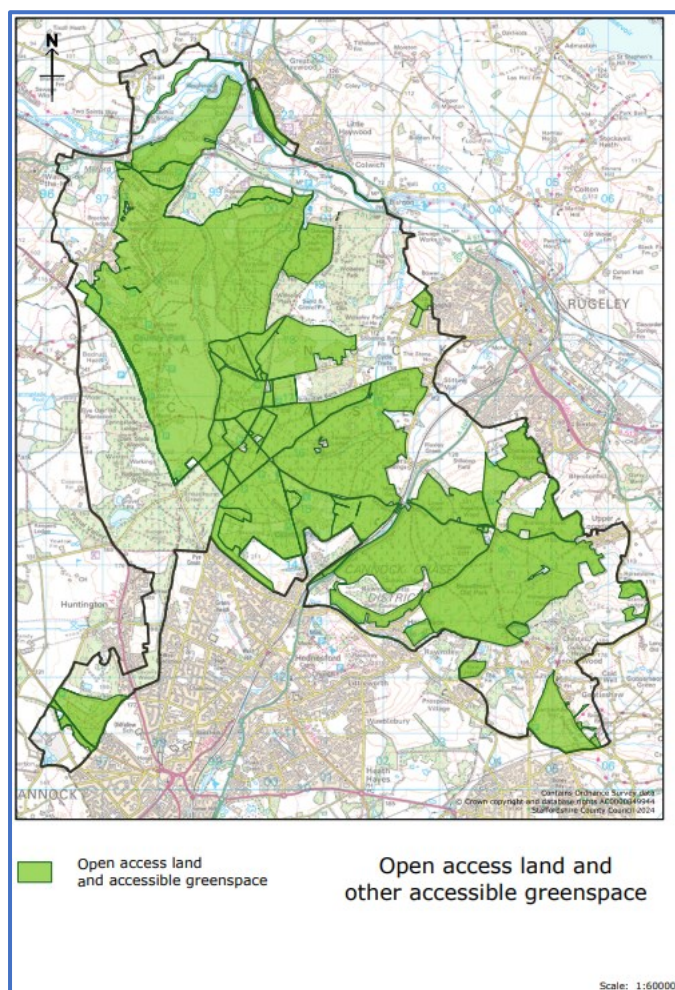
### Sources

- Cannock Chase National Landscape Visitor Survey (2000).
- Cannock Chase National Landscape Visitor Survey Analysis (2012).
- SAC Partnership various reports (2012-present).

## PE6: Open access land and other accessible greenspace

### Status

This indicator shows the extent of open access land and other accessible greenspace on Cannock Chase National Landscape. Access to greenspace and connection to nature is important for people's health and wellbeing, and this indicator will inform our policies to improve our accessibility and overall visitor management and experience.



**Open access land and other accessible greenspace**

**Open access land and other accessible greenspace**

Type of land	Area (ha)		Area (%) of National Landscape	
	2018	2023	2018	2023
Open access land (CrOW Act)	3,386.6	3,170	49.3%	46.2%
Other accessible greenspace	Data not collected	361	N/A	5.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,386.6</b>	<b>3,531</b>		<b>51.5%</b>
<b>Open access land and other accessible greenspace (area)</b>				

The total area of open access land (as defined under the CrOW Act) and other accessible greenspace is 3,531 ha. This is 51.5% of the National Landscape. Cannock Chase has the largest proportion of open access land and other accessible greenspace of any of England's lowland National Landscapes. Spatially, this area is mainly associated with the central forest and heathland core of the National Landscape, with small outliers elsewhere at places like Shoal Hill and Gentleshaw Commons.

### Condition and trends

- The 2018 State of the National Landscape report only considered the area of Open Access Land as defined by the CrOW Act. In 2024, other areas of accessible greenspace have been added to this figure. The table suggests that the area of open access land declined between 2018 and 2023. However, double counting accounts for the difference rather than any real change.

### Recommendations for monitoring

- Continue to monitor every 5 years to coincide with future Management Plan reviews.

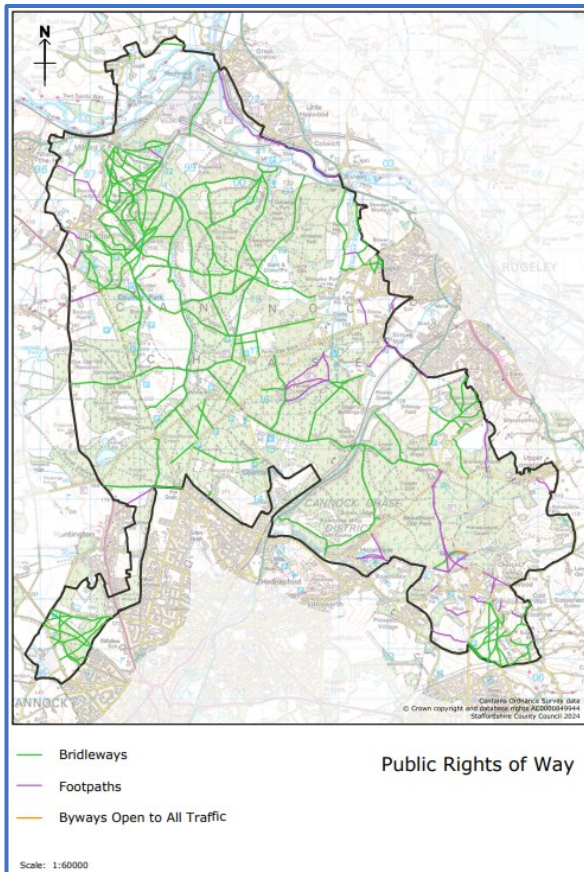
### Data sources

- Open access land, 2023

## PE7: Public Rights of Way

### Status

Access to the public rights of way network provides opportunities for people to get outdoors and experience the natural world. This indicator is a measure of people's ability to enjoy the National Landscape, and the outcomes of our policies and activities towards accessibility.



**Public rights of way**

Type of Public Right of Way	Length (km)	
	2018	2023
Footpath	23.6	23.3
Bridleway	133	133.2
Byway Open to All Traffic	0.3	0.27
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>156.9</b>	<b>156.77</b>
<b>Length of public rights of way</b>		

There are 156.77 km of Public Rights of Way in the National Landscape. The majority (85%) are bridleways. The density of the PROW network is greatest within the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation – a European wildlife site and the most ecologically sensitive part of the National Landscape.

For 2024 a new indicator has been introduced to assess the condition of the public rights of way network in the National Landscape. This uses data from reports on the network submitted online to Staffordshire County Council by members of the public, grouped according to the type of issue. In 2023 a total of 483 issues on public rights of way on Cannock Chase had been reported.

Issue type	Number		Change
	Pre 2018	2023	
Furniture – poor condition	2	33	+31
Furniture - provision	0	7	+7
Intimidating sign / human / animal	1	10	+9
Land cropped	0	1	+1
Obstruction	10	78	+68
Other	51	101	+50
Surface problem	10	38	+28
Vegetation problem	1	32	+31

Waymarking problem	1	183	+182
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>483</b>	
<b>Condition of Public Rights of Way</b>			

### Conditions and trends

- There have been no changes on the ground to the length of the PROW network. The data suggests a significant increase over the last five years in the numbers of reports for all types of rights of way issues. In 2022/23 the Ramblers and Staffordshire County Council improved the waymarking of 63 km of National Landscape promoted walking routes, including signage for many rights of way.
- This is the first time that issues reported on the public rights of ways have been included, so 2024 will be a new baseline.

### Recommendations for monitoring

- Continue to monitor every 5 years to coincide with future Management Plan reviews.
- Carry out a repeat survey to estimate the total number of visitors to the National Landscape.
- Repeat the accessibility audit of the National Landscape carried out in 2023.
- Work with the SAC Partnership to implement a condition monitoring regime of selected rights of way to assess visitor impacts on routes and the effectiveness of visitor mitigation strategies.
- Explore the possibility of carrying out visitor satisfaction surveys.

### Data sources

- Staffordshire County Council, Public Rights of Way (2023).

## Policy considerations for the AONB Management Plan for 'People'

Considerations for the AONB Management Plan in relation to 'People' include:

- Reinforcing local people's resonance and affinity with the landscape, its sense of place, and pride in the area.
- Enabling local communities to input into the future of the National Landscape.
- Raising awareness and changing perceptions about the importance of Cannock Chase, its fragility, and encouraging responsible behaviours.
- Supporting a thriving rural economy and promoting Cannock Chase as a sustainable tourism destination.
- Encouraging the involvement of volunteers to support the work of the National Landscape Partnership, and ensuring they have a positive experience that benefits their communities and their own ambitions and aspirations.
- Establishing and promoting a Cannock Chase Community Fund for voluntary giving by businesses, residents and visitors.
- Presenting a consistent visitor management strategy for the National Landscape that meets the recreational demands placed upon the protected landscape whilst conserving and enhancing its natural beauty.
- Improving accessibility and diversity within the National Landscape, and developing it as an 'accessible destination'.
- Working with partners to deliver the recommendations from the 2023 accessibility audit.
- Working with landowners, recreation managers, the SAC Partnership, accommodation providers and other relevant organisations to deliver a world class approach to visitor management that protects the National Landscape, respects our communities, enhances the experience of our visitors and supports a thriving tourism sector.
- Promoting the statutory PROW network and working with Staffordshire County Council and user groups to improve their accessibility and resolve issues.
- Utilising funding for physical and digital infrastructure improvements through the emerging Environmental Land Management Scheme and any other national initiatives supporting access improvements.

# Place

## Introduction

Cannock Chase is an area of high, unenclosed sandstone heathlands and pine plantations, fringed by historic parklands and enclosed farmlands. Its semi-natural, wilderness qualities are in strong contrast to the heavily built-up and populated centres of the Midlands. Relatively high levels of tranquillity and dark night skies can still be experienced, particularly in the heathland areas which tend to be isolated. The wealth and variety of historic environment assets in the National Landscape contribute significantly towards its special qualities and sense of place.

Indicators selected for this theme:

PL1: Land use

PL2: Landscape change

PL3: Agriculture

PL4: Development

PL5: Light pollution

PL6: Noise pollution

PL7: Protected areas for the historic environment

PL8: Sites and features on the Historic Environment Record

PL9: Management of the historic environment

### Key findings

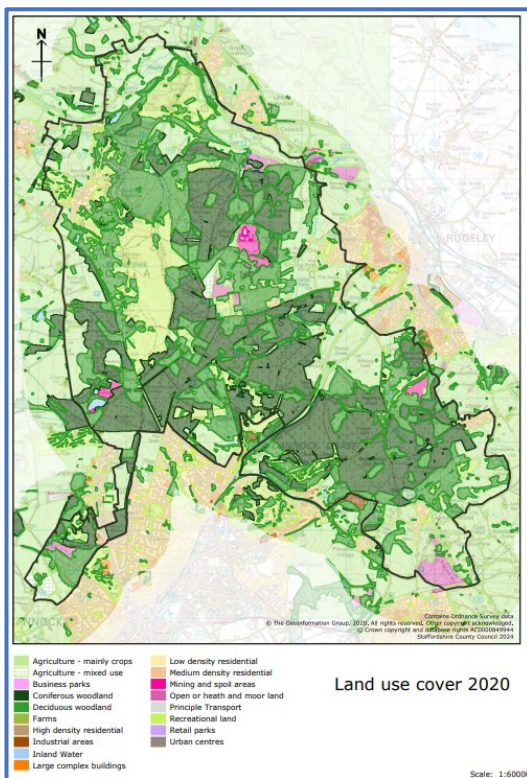
- Over half of the National Landscape comprises woodland, the majority of which is coniferous. This is the highest proportion of woodland cover for any English National Landscape.
- Only 3% of the National Landscape is built-up. However, between 1956 and 2022, the extent of built-up land within a 10km radius of the National Landscape increased by 365%, from 3,789 hectares to 13,866 hectares.
- Around 24% of Cannock Chase is farmland, the majority of which is permanent grassland. This is the lowest proportion for any National Landscape in England.
- The total number of all livestock has dropped significantly over the five year period between 2016 to 2021. The total area of land in the National Landscape under agri-environment schemes has fallen from 31.6% in 2018 to 24.3% in 2023.
- There were no noticeable changes to the appearance and condition of the landscape at 37 viewpoints (61%); whilst 22 viewpoints (36%) showed signs of deterioration and only 1 showed improvement. Growth of planted / self-sown trees was the main reason for the deterioration in appearance and condition of the landscape.
- There was a 52% increase (1,983) in the total number of dwellings in the National Landscape over the ten year period between 2011 and 2021. A further estimated 42,529 new dwellings are planned to be built within 15km of Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation over the period 2019-40.
- Compared with surrounding conurbations, Cannock Chase is an oasis of tranquillity. The most tranquil areas are in the heathland and forest core, away from the major visitor hubs, honeypots, roads and proximity to surrounding settlements.
- Cannock Chase has the highest average levels of light pollution when compared to all the other National Landscapes in England. However, large parts remain relatively dark for people to enjoy night skies.
- Around 6% of the number of heritage assets within the National Landscape are nationally significant and protected. The remaining 94% are 'non-designated' and have no formal protection, but contribute greatly to local character, sense of place and natural beauty of the National Landscape.
- There are currently no heritage assets in the National Landscape on the national 'Heritage at Risk Register' maintained by Historic England, although a number are known to be vulnerable to neglect, decay and inappropriate use and management.

- The heritage of Cannock Chase National Landscape is rich and diverse, with nearly 1,300 recorded heritage assets. The proportion of the area/number of heritage assets that is under long-term positive management is relatively low (2% in 2018).

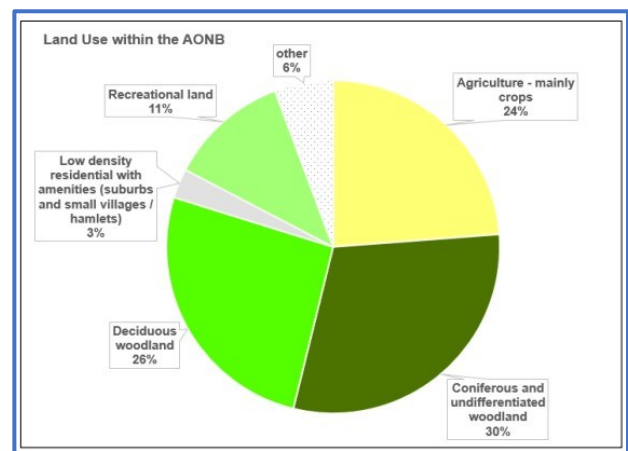
## PL1: Land use

### Status

This indicator shows the different land uses across the National Landscape, their extent and distribution. The way in which the land is used and managed will continue to be the major influence on the visual and perceptual qualities of the protected landscape. This indicator will help inform our understanding of the landscape and the reasons for landscape change.



Land use cover 2020



Percentage of land use cover within the National Landscape

In 2020, forestry is the most extensive land use on the Chase covering some 2,067ha (56% of the National Landscape), while agriculture accounts for 269ha (24%). Defra's annual census of agriculture indicates that permanent grass is the most common agricultural use. Recreational land within the National Landscape represents 11% of land use overall whilst 6% of land use is dedicated to 'other' which includes industrial, urban, mining, heath, inland water and retail parks. Sand and gravel continues to be extracted from two quarries within the National Landscape. Geographically, forestry and recreation land uses dominate the central core of the Chase, with agriculture concentrated on the fringes.

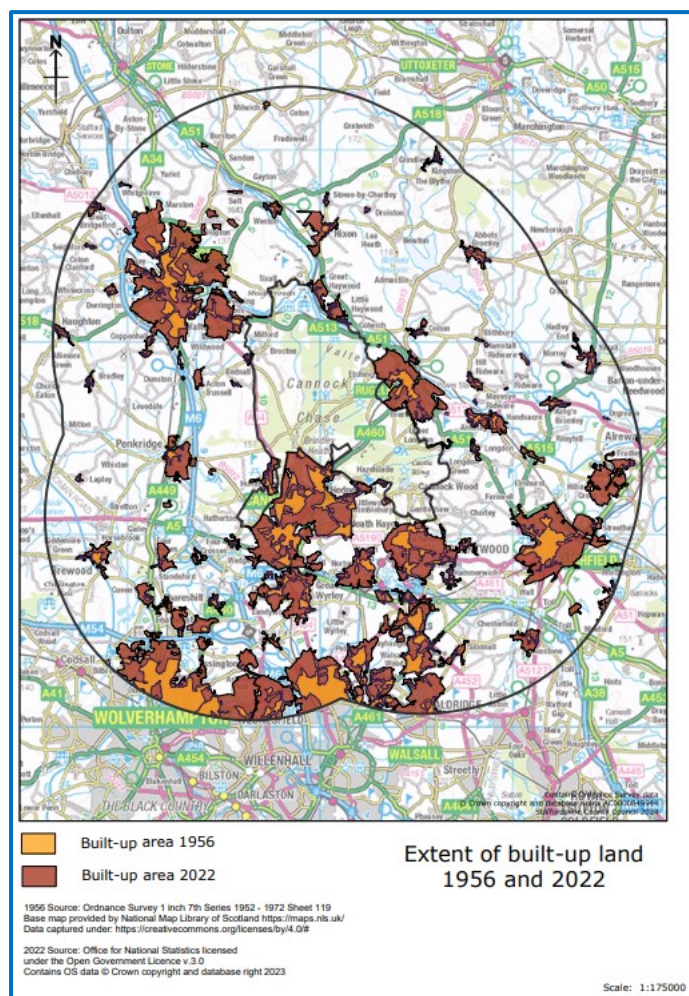
Low density residential areas are found towards the periphery of the National Landscape boundary and make up 3% of overall land use. In contrast, within 10km of the boundary of the National Landscape, some 13,866 hectares comprised built-up land in 2022.

### Condition and trends

The absence of availability of any long-term, consistently collected land use data for the Chase makes comparisons difficult. Changes in the extent of built-up land within a 10km radius of the National Landscape over a 66 year period have been mapped and calculated. In 1956, just 2 years prior to the designation of the National



Landscape, built-up land covered 3,789 hectares of this area. By 2022 it had expanded to 13,866 hectares – a 365% increase. The greatest urban expansion has occurred in the south around Hednesford, Cannock, Burntwood, Great Wyrley, Walsall and Wolverhampton, east around Rugeley and Lichfield, and north-west around Stafford. In places, development has spread right up to the boundary of the designated area.



Change in extent of built-up area within 10km radius of the National Landscape, 1956-2022

### Recommendations for future monitoring

- Explore the potential of examining and monitoring historic and future land use and landscape change using aerial photography.

### Data sources

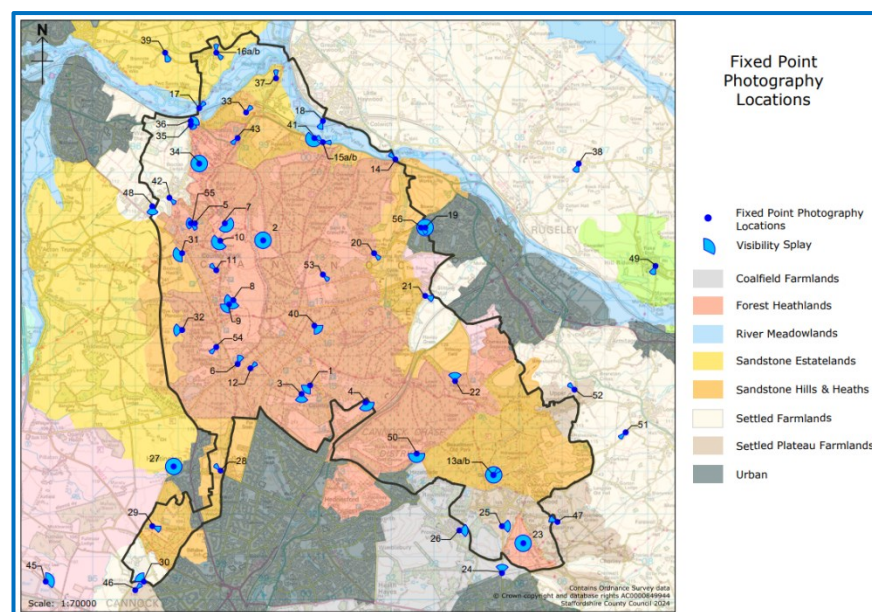
- UKLand Data, Verisk (2020).
- Defra, June Survey of Agriculture (2021).

## PL2: Landscape change

### Status

This indicator shows changes within the landscape and the reasons for those changes. The way in which the land is used and managed will continue to be the major influence on the visual and perceptual qualities of the protected landscape. A Fixed Point Photography project has been running in Cannock Chase National Landscape since 2004, and involves photographs taken by volunteers twice per year from over 61 strategic viewpoints within the National Landscape and strategic points outside the boundary. This photographic record, using a consistent methodology provides a valuable resource documenting the visible changes (or the lack of change) within the

landscape, and attribution of the causes for the changes. The indicator helps inform our understanding of the landscape and the reasons for landscape change.



Fixed point photography viewpoint locations

Condition trend	Number
No change	37 (61%)
Improvement	1
Deterioration	22 (36%)
N/A	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Fixed point photography – condition trends</b>	

Reasons for deterioration	Number
Vegetation growth (trees/scrub)	13 (59%)
Changes associated with equine use	4 (18%)
Agricultural changes	3 (14%)
Housing development	2 (9%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Fixed point photography – reasons for deterioration</b>	

### Condition and trends

- Comparison of images taken in 2004, 2014 and 2022 for the Fixed Point Photography project has revealed that there were no noticeable changes to the appearance and condition of the landscape at 37 viewpoints (61%). 22 viewpoints (36%) showed signs of deterioration and only 1 showed improvement. Growth of planted / self-sown trees (59%) was the main reason for the deterioration in appearance and condition. Changes associated with equine use (tape fencing, feeding and watering infrastructure) accounted for 18% of the viewpoints that had deteriorated, and other agricultural changes (improvement of pasture, loss of habitats) 14%. The intrusion of housing development accounted for only 9%. (Appendix 12 and 13).

### Recommendations for future monitoring

- The Fixed Point Photography project provides an unbroken record of landscape change since 2004, and should continue to be updated twice per year.
- Consideration of inclusion of additional viewpoints to monitor landscape change associated with conservation projects.
- Exploring the potential for examining and monitoring historic and future land use and landscape change using aerial photography.

### Data sources

- Fixed Point Photography, Cannock Chase National Landscape (2005-22).

## PL3: Agriculture

### Status

Some 24% of the National Landscape is farmed. These indicators help us to understand the nature of farming on the Chase, and consider how any changes might impact on the special qualities of the area. Information about agriculture is provided by analysis of Defra's June census returns.

Land cover type	Area within CCNL (ha)					% of farmed area				
	1990	2000	2010	2016	2021	1990	2000	2010	2016	2021
Crops and bare fallow	167	344	361	374	Data suppressed	17.4%	32.3%	34.5%	34.5%	
Temporary grass	220	200	Data suppressed	98	Data suppressed	22.8%	18.8%		9%	
Permanent grass	444	469	516	477	453	46.2%	44%	49.4%	44%	54.6%
Woodland on farmland	102	0	Data suppressed	103	126	10.6%	9.6%		9.5%	15.2%
Set-aside	0	52	0	N/A	N/A	0%	4.9%	0	N/A	N/A
All other land	29	0	34	34	14	3%	0%	3.3%	3.1%	1.7%
Total area of farmed land	962	1,065	1,045	1,086	830					

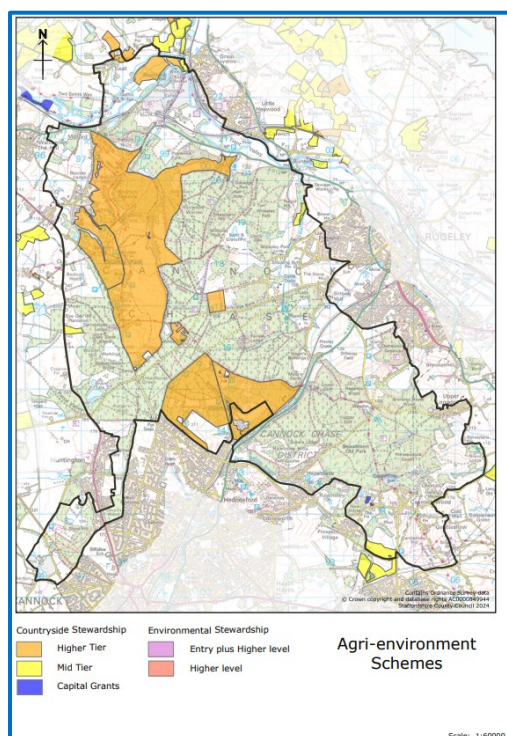
**Agricultural land cover types, 1990 – 2021.<sup>41</sup>**

Livestock type	1990	2000	2010	2016	2021
Cattle (beef)	107	104	754 (total cattle)	828 (total cattle)	581
Cattle (dairy)	160	307			
Sheep	2730	2526	1153	1422	574
Poultry	Not recorded	Not recorded	724	2891	322
Horses	Not recorded	Not recorded	139	99	90

**Livestock numbers and types, 1990 - 2021**

Number	1990	2000	2010	2016	2021
	23	20	23	21	21

**Numbers of farm holdings, 1990 - 2021<sup>42</sup>**



Type of scheme	Area within CCNL (ha)		% of CCNL (area)	
	2018	2023	2018	2023
Countryside Stewardship				
Higher tier		1227		
Mid Tier		36		
Capital grants		2		
<b>Total all schemes</b>	<b>136.4</b>	<b>1265</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>18.4%</b>
Environmental Stewardship				
Entry level	24.5	N/A		
Entry level plus higher level	392.8	291		
Higher level	1,611.6	117		
<b>Total all schemes</b>	<b>2028.9</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>29.6%</b>	<b>5.9%</b>
Sustainable Farming Incentive		Data not available		Data not available
Farming in Protected Landscapes	N/A		N/A	

**Agri-environment schemes 2018 – 2023 (area)**

<sup>41</sup> Figures relating to fewer than 5 holdings is suppressed in Defra census returns.

<sup>42</sup> Defra returns record commercial holdings, and do not capture data for smaller enterprises and smallholdings.

**Agricultural land cover** - Defra's June 2021 Survey of Agriculture recorded 830ha of farmed land in the National Landscape, representing 12% of the designated area. Permanent grass (54.6%) is the predominant land use type within the farmed area. Separate figures are not available for the areas of crops and bare fallow and temporary grass, but together they comprise 237ha or 28.6% of the farmed area. Farm woodland covers 126ha (15.2%) of the total farmed area.

**Livestock numbers and types** – A total of 1,567 livestock was recorded on the June 2021 Survey of Agriculture. Cattle make up the greatest proportion – split evenly between beef and dairy.

**Number of holdings** – In 2021, Defra's June Survey recorded 21 holdings in the National Landscape.

**Land under agri-environment schemes** – In 2023, 1,344 hectares of land within the National Landscape was under an agri-environment scheme – the vast majority in Countryside Stewardship. Spatially, this land is located on the farmland around the fringe of the protected landscape, as well as the areas of heathland within Cannock Chase Country Park.

### Condition and trends

- **Agricultural land cover** - Data from Defra's June survey of Agriculture is available for Cannock Chase between 1990 and 2021. Direct comparison of data over this period is sometimes difficult as data for land use types is not always available and definitions have changed. The total farmed area in the returns has fluctuated over the years, and in 2021 was at its lowest recorded level (830ha) since 1990 (962ha). The returns indicate that permanent grass has remained the predominant agricultural land cover throughout the 31 year period. The area of farmland under crops and fallow doubled between 1990 and 2000 and then remained constant until 2016. Data for crops and bare fallow was suppressed in 2021. The data suggests that the area of woodland on farmland increased by 23 hectares over the 5 year period between 2016 and 2021 (a 22% increase in farm woodland cover).
- **Livestock numbers and types** – The total number of all livestock has dropped significantly over the five year period between 2016 to 2021, and is the lowest number recorded in any year. The number of cattle recorded in 2021 (581) is the lowest number since 2010. Sheep numbers show a significant decline, with 848 fewer animals in 2021 than in 2016. Poultry are at their lowest number over the 14 year period for which returns are available. Numbers of recorded horses show a consistent decline since 2010.
- **Numbers of holdings** – Numbers of holdings recorded in the returns have remained consistently low over the 31 year period.
- **Land under agri-environment schemes** - The total area of land in the National Landscape under agri-environment schemes has fallen from 31.6% in 2018 to 24.3% in 2023.

### Recommendations for future monitoring

- Continue to report on indicators for agriculture every five years or as data become available from Defra.
- Seek opportunities for more refined levels of information about agriculture on the Chase.

### Data sources

- Defra, June Survey of Agriculture (2021).

## PL4: Development

### Status

This indicator shows the extent and type of development within the National Landscape. Development can have significant impacts on the natural beauty of the National Landscape. Rates of development will reflect the economic buoyancy of the area and local planning policy. This indicator helps to inform the effectiveness of planning policy to protect the National Landscape and its setting.

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Cannock Chase Council	56	33	22	32
Lichfield District Council	24	13	27	26
Stafford Borough Council	17	32	45	59

South Staffordshire Council	6	4	2	21
Staffordshire County Council	3	2	2	4
Other	0	1	3	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>Planning application consultations received by the National Landscape, 2019 - 2022</b>				

Type of development	2019	2020	2021	2022
Equine	4	4	22	13
Agriculture	4	2	2	4
Recreation	2	2	4	6
Renewables	1	1	3	0
New housing	13	15	14	13
Alterations and extensions to existing dwellings	63	47	53	71
Other	19	14	26	38
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>145</b>
Major development	15	11	14	23
Householder / dwellings	65	58	56	78
Minor development (excluding dwellings)	14	7	32	21
Change of use	0	2	9	6
Other	12	7	13	17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>Types of developments proposed within planning applications received by the National Landscape, 2019 - 2022</b>				

Property type	2011 (nos)	2011 (%)	2021 (nos)	2021 (%)
Detached	1,902	50%	2603	45%
Semi-detached	1,284	33.7%	2297	39.6%
Terraced	410	10.7%	632	10.9%
Maisonette	215	5.6%	262	4.5%
Total	3,811	100%	5794	100%
<b>Number and types of dwellings, 2011 - 2021</b>				

**Extent of development** – In 2022 the National Landscape was consulted on 145 planning applications. 59 (41%) of these were for proposed developments in Stafford Borough Council.

**Type of development** – UK census 2021 data indicates that there is a total of 5,794 dwellings in the National Landscape, 45% of which are detached, and 40% semi-detached. Spatially, the majority of dwellings are located at the edges of the National Landscape within villages such as Cannock Wood, Brocton and Upper Longdon or on the edges of larger towns including Cannock and Rugeley. In 2022, nearly half of the received consultations were for ‘alterations and extensions to existing dwellings’ (49%). New housing proposals accounted for 9% of all consultations. A number of these were ‘major developments’ comprising the provision of 10 or more dwellings in each case (sometimes several hundred).

### Condition and trends

- **Extent of development** – The number of planning consultations received in 2022 is the highest over the last four years. Numbers of consultations dropped in 2020 due to the impact of the national lockdown on building construction projects. Since Covid, numbers of consultations have risen reflecting the upturn in house building. The Cannock Chase SAC Partnership estimates that 42,529 new dwellings are planned to be built within 15km of the SAC over the period 2019-40.
- **Type of development** – UK census data indicates a 52% increase (1,983) in the total number of dwellings in the National Landscape over the ten year period between 2011 and 2021. The proportion of semi-detached dwellings of the total housing stock has increased, whilst the proportion of detached has declined. Householder development (mainly alterations and/or extensions to existing dwelling) is the predominant type

of development. Numbers of applications for major development (mainly for new housing) were up in 2022, compared with the previous three years. 2021 and 2022 showed a noticeable increase in the number of equine related developments.

### **Recommendations for future monitoring**

- Future collected planning data could helpfully differentiate between those planning applications that are within the National Landscape boundary and those which are outside. Both are equally important for the National Landscape to assess, as changes outside the National Landscape have the potential to affect the sense of place within the designated area.
- Continue to monitor the number and type of planning-related consultations the National Landscape receives, on an annual basis. A review of this information should be conducted at least every five years through State of the National Landscape reporting.
- Record the locations of applications spatially, so that areas of particular development pressures can be monitored and analysed.
- Maintain and publish annual information on the location, number and area of development that is permitted or refused in and around the National Landscape.

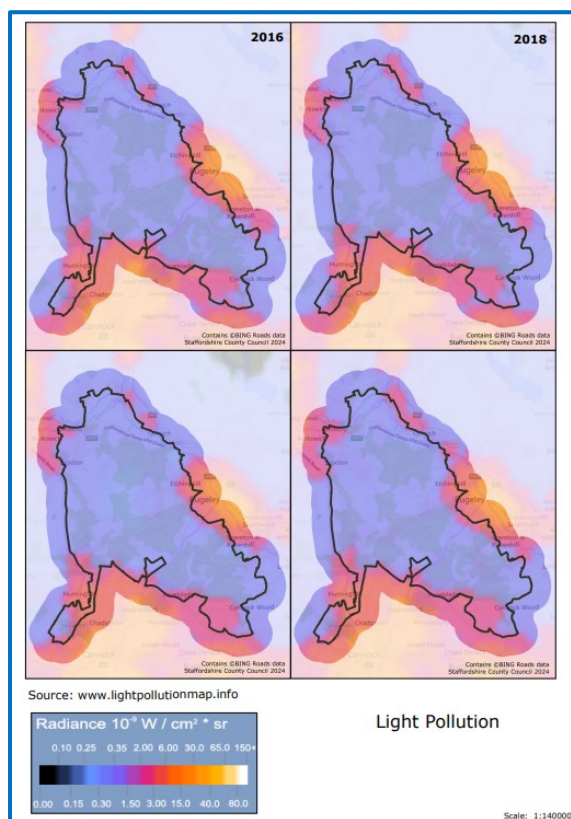
### **Data sources**

- Cannock Chase National Landscape planning records (2019-22)
- ONS UK Census (2011) and (2021)
- SAC Partnership

## **PL5: Light pollution**

### **Status**

This indicator shows the level of pollution from artificial light over the National Landscape. To demonstrate tranquillity, previous State of the AONB reports for Cannock Chase have used a national tranquillity index produced by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) in 2006, as well as a local Peace and Tranquillity study undertaken for the National Landscape in 2010. Neither exercise has since been repeated, so this current report has drawn on open-source satellite light pollution data together with noise pollution data (PL6) as proxy indicators for tranquillity in the area. Light pollution can negatively impact upon our experience of tranquillity. This indicator is a measure of the outcomes of policy towards development, dark skies and reducing pollution from artificial light.



**Light pollution**

The figure above shows four satellite images comparing zenith sky brightness (magnitude/arc second<sup>2</sup>) between 2016 and 2022. The highest levels of light pollution exist around the perimeter of the National Landscape. The darkest areas are towards the central core of the National Landscape, over areas of forest and heathland.

### Condition and trends

- Visual comparisons of the four satellite images suggests that levels of higher light pollution are spreading slightly in extent around Milford and Brocton, on the A34 towards Stafford, between Great Haywood and Little Haywood, and on the northern edge of Rugeley.
- The central core of the designated landscape still has relatively dark skies when considered in the context of the surrounding conurbations.

### Recommendations for monitoring

- Continue to monitor light pollution every 5 years to coincide with future Management Plan reviews.
- Support CPRE in efforts to increase participation in its annual Star Count, the results of which are used to produce maps of light pollution.
- Consider repeating the baseline set out in the 2010 Cannock Chase National AONB Peace and Tranquillity Study to examine if there have been any notable changes in the perceptual qualities of the landscape.

### Data sources

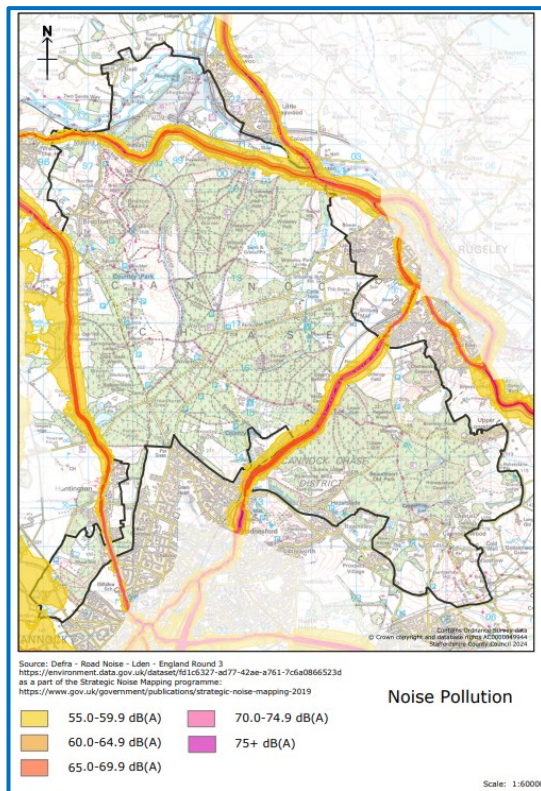
- [www.lightpollutionmap.info](http://www.lightpollutionmap.info)

## PL6: Noise pollution

### Status

This indicator shows the level of noise pollution from the major road and rail infrastructure in the National Landscape. Defra publishes strategic noise map data that gives a snapshot of the estimated noise from major road and rail sources across England. The map is a model based on the predictions of traffic flows rather than

actual noise level readings. This indicator provides a partial measure of the impact of noise on tranquillity in the National Landscape.



**Noise pollution**

The A34, A513, A51 and A460, as well as the Hednesford-Rugeley railway corridor have been highlighted with various degrees of noise levels in 2019. Noise levels are highest directly over carriageways, and dissipate below 55.0 dB within 150-200 metres either side of the carriageway.

### Condition and trends

- Road noise levels from the major roads passing through or near the National Landscape are not surprising or out of the ordinary. The data only models road traffic noise on major roads. There is no indication of noise levels in the areas of the Chase in between the major roads.

### Recommendations for monitoring

- Continue to monitor noise pollution levels every 5 years to coincide with future Management Plan reviews.
- Consider repeating the baseline set out in the 2010 Cannock Chase National AONB Peace and Tranquillity Study to examine if there have been any notable changes in the perceptual qualities of the landscape.

### Data sources

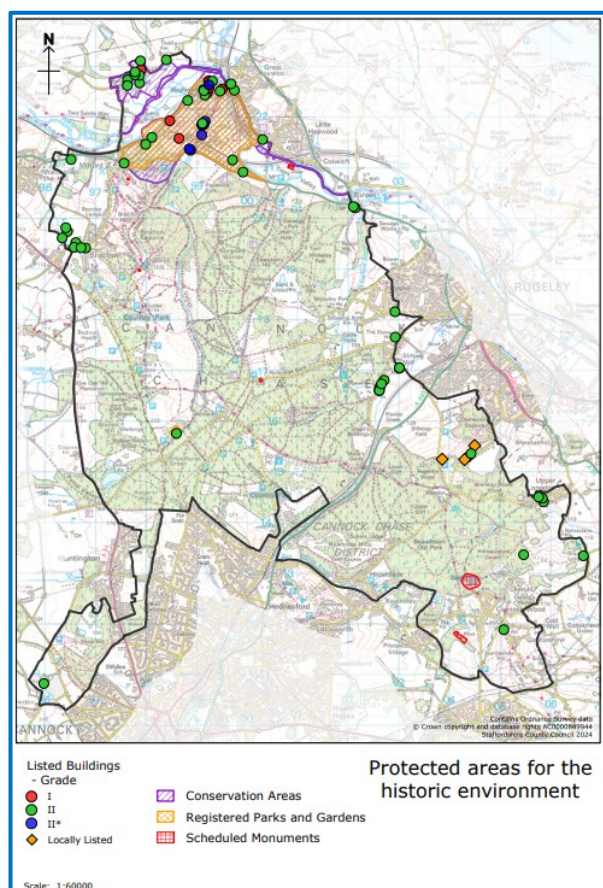
- Defra – Road Noise – Lden – England Round 3

## PL7: Protected areas for the historic environment

### Status

This indicator shows the extent of protected areas for the historic environment on Cannock Chase National Landscape. Where data is available, it also shows the condition of features. The full list of protected areas is included in Appendix 14. The designation and management of protected areas are a cornerstone of any strategy for looking after the historic environment. Protected areas have associated mechanisms for safeguarding them in legislation and planning and heritage policy. This indicator is a measure of the outcomes of protection, policy and management of the protected areas.





**Protected areas for the historic environment**

	Date	Number	Area within CCNL (ha)	% of CCNL (area)	Number at risk
<b>Scheduled monuments</b>					
	2023	7	11.28	0.2%	0
	2018	7	11.28	0.2%	0
<b>Listed buildings</b>					
	2023	Grade I (8) Grade II* (7) Grade II (49)	N/A	N/A	0
	2018	Grade I (8) Grade II* (7) Grade II (51)	N/A	N/A	0
<b>Conservation areas</b>					
	2023	5	387.2	5.6%	0
	2018	5	387.2	5.6%	0
<b>Registered parks and gardens</b>					
	2023	2	271.5	4.0%	0
	2018	2	271.5	4.0%	0
<b>Protected areas for the historic environment</b>					

**Scheduled monuments** are the nation's most important archaeological sites or historic structures. There are 7 scheduled monuments in the National Landscape, covering 11.28 hectares (0.2% of the designated area). The monuments are listed and described in Appendix 14.

**Listed buildings** are of special architectural, historical or cultural significance. There are 64 listed buildings within Cannock Chase National Landscape (8 grade I, 7 grade II\* and 49 Grade II)<sup>43</sup>. **Figure X** shows that the location of listed buildings within the National Landscape is concentrated on the National Trust's Shugborough Estate, and to a lesser extent at Tixall, Brocton, Slitting Mill and Upper Longdon. The 64 listed buildings represent 37 different asset types (Appendix 15). The range of types of buildings and structures include agricultural buildings, commemorative structures, domestic, garden and park structures, places of worship, street furniture, and transport infrastructure.

**Conservation areas** are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. There are 5 conservation areas - all in the north of the National Landscape covering 387.2 hectares (5.6% of the extent of the protected landscape). Some Conservation Areas extend beyond the boundary of the National Landscape.

The listed buildings and conservation areas in Cannock Chase National Landscape are listed and described in Appendix 14.

**Registered parks and gardens of special historic interest** in England are recorded by Historic England on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England. Registration is a 'material consideration' in the planning process, meaning that planning authorities must consider the impact of any proposed development on the landscapes' special character. There are two registered parks and gardens in the National Landscape, both grade I, covering 271.5 hectares (4% of the designated area). The 2 sites (Shugborough and the German Military Cemetery) are shown spatially on **Figure X**, and described in Appendix 14.

### Condition and trends

- **Scheduled monuments** - There have been no changes to the number and extent of scheduled monuments in the National Landscape since 2018. None of the scheduled monuments is on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register. Since 2022, all 7 sites have been inspected by Historic England's Inspector of Ancient Monuments/County Archaeologist during visits to discuss the possibility of funding for conservation works through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. Issues affecting scheduled monuments include vehicle collisions (Essex Bridge), damage from mountain bikes (Castle Ring and the Saucer Barrow). More general concerns include tree, scrub and bracken growth, visitor erosion, metal detecting, bonfires and barbeques.
- **Listed Buildings** - The number of listed buildings in 2023 is 64, compared with 67 stated in the 2018 State of the National Landscape report was 67. The reduction is due to the erroneous inclusion of three delisted buildings in 2018. None of the Grade I and II\* listed buildings is on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register. Condition information on Grade II listed buildings is not nationally available.
- **Conservation areas** - None of the Conservation Areas is on the Heritage at Risk Register and all have had a conservation appraisal prepared within the last 10 years. Detractors and forces for change within conservation areas are unchanged from those highlighted in the 2018 State of the National Landscape report:
  - The introduction of modern materials and features to historic buildings.
  - Heavy traffic and large numbers of parked vehicles.
  - Lack of unity in boundaries and paving.
  - Repair and upgrade of structures with unsympathetic modern patterns.
- **Registered Parks and Gardens** - neither of the Registered Parks and Gardens is on the Heritage at Risk Register.

### Recommendations for future monitoring

- Continue to report the status and condition of designated historic environment assets every 5 years to coincide with Management Plan reviews.
- Regularly monitor scheduled monuments by the Chase Through Time volunteers, and report every 5 years.
- Encourage the assessment of Grade II listed buildings.

### Data sources

- Historic England, Scheduled Monuments (2024).

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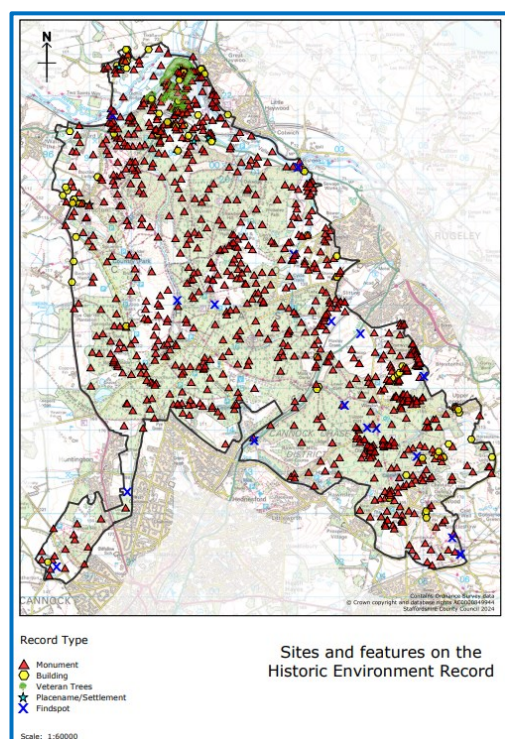
<sup>43</sup> Grade I are buildings of exceptional interest. Grade II\* are particularly important and more than special interest. Grade II buildings are of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them.

- Historic England, Listed Buildings (2024).
- Historic England, Registered parks and gardens (2024)
- Historic England, Heritage at Risk (2022)

## PL8: Sites and features on the Historic Environment Record

### Status

This indicator shows the number of known sites and features of historic environment interest on the National Landscape that are recorded on Staffordshire's Historic Environment Record. The indicator is a measure of the richness and diversity of the historic environment resource, and the scope of our current knowledge about it.



**Sites and features on the Historic Environment Record**

	HER category					Total
	Buildings	Findspot	Monuments	Place	Veteran trees	
<b>2023</b>	90	18	864	5	247	<b>1283</b>
<b>2018</b>	90	18	923	5	247	<b>1224</b>

**Categories of entries on the Historic Environment Record**

There are 1,283 entries in the Historic Environment Record (HER) within the National Landscape. In some cases, HER records overlap with designated assets including scheduled monument and listed buildings. Entries are geographically spread across the National Landscape, and represent a broad range of historical periods. Many of the veteran trees are associated with former management of the land as wood-pasture in parks, such as Shugborough, Haywood Park, Wolseley Park and Beaudesert Old Park.

### Condition and trends

- The number of entries on the Historic Environment Record has increased by 59 entries from 1224 recorded in 2018 to 1283 in 2023. The condition of most of the un-designated features is unknown. Spatial analysis of the HER assets in 2018 noted that many of them (41%) are located in woodland areas, and may be vulnerable to the impacts of tree roots and forestry operations.
- Our knowledge of the number and condition of veteran trees on Cannock Chase is incomplete. The total figure is likely to be substantially greater than the 247 entries in the Historic Environment Record.
- The Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Inventory includes records for over 100 ancient and notable trees, mainly oak, but also beech, sweet chestnut, silver birch and rowan. The total figure is likely to be significantly higher than this, as the Chase has not been subject to a comprehensive and systematic survey.

## Recommendations for future monitoring

- Encourage further monitoring of non-designated heritage assets to inform future management.
- Explore options to monitor a sample of monuments each year.
- Encourage more recording of veteran trees by volunteers through the Woodland Trust's National Ancient Tree Inventory.

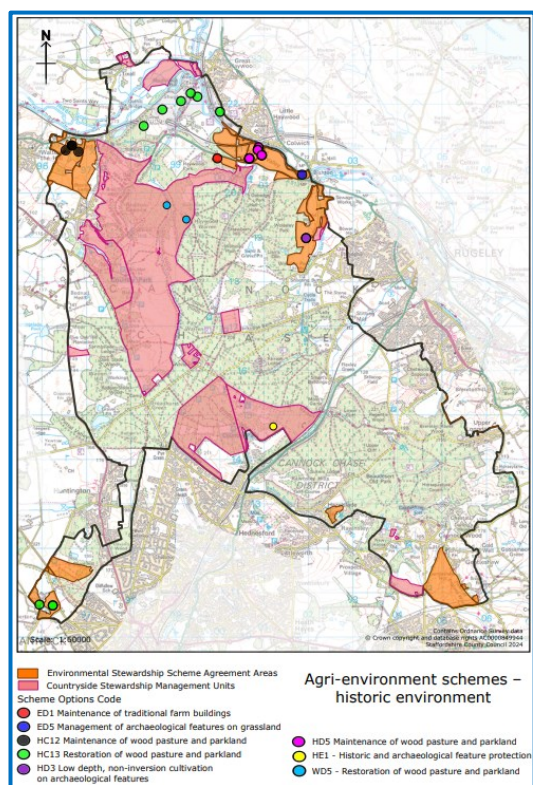
## Data sources

- Staffordshire County Council, Historic Environment Record (2023).

## PL9: Management of the historic environment

### Status

This indicator shows the area of land that is being managed under agri-environment schemes to protect the historic environment. Agriculture is a significant land use in the National Landscape (covering 24%), and changes to agricultural practices can impact on the historic environment. Agri-environment schemes are a mechanism to protect and enhance historic, landscape and biodiversity features and to promote public access and understanding. This indicator is a measure of the outcomes of policy to protect and manage historic environment features.



Agri-environment schemes - historic environment

Environmental Stewardship			
Option code	Option name	2023 (No of sites)	2018 (Area – ha)
ED1	Maintenance of traditional farm buildings	1	0
ED5	Management of archaeological features on grassland	1	14.5
HC12	Maintenance of wood pasture and parkland	4	5.5
HC13	Restoration of wood pasture and parkland	9	61.5

HD3	Low depth, non-inversion cultivation on archaeological features	2	15
HD4	Management of scrub on archaeological features	0	19.9
HD5	Management of archaeological features on grassland	10	8.4
	TOTAL	27 sites	126 has
<b>Countryside Stewardship</b>			
HE1	Historic and archaeological feature protection	1	Not available
WD5	Restoration of wood pasture	2	Not available
	TOTAL	3 sites	
<b>Area of land managed for archaeological / historic features through agri-environment schemes</b>			

Asset	Environmental Stewardship	Countryside Stewardship
Scheduled monuments	0.76 ha	0.27 ha
Registered parks and gardens	0.0006 ha	0.02 ha
Conservation areas	2.14 ha	14.32 ha
Historic environment record features	44 records	126 records
<b>Historic environment assets within areas of land managed under agri-environment schemes</b>		

In 2023 a total of 27 sites were being managed under Environmental Stewardship Scheme historic environment options, as well as 3 sites under Countryside Stewardship options. Figures for the extent of the land that these 30 sites cover is not available. Their spatial distribution (see map) is shown as point data as well as the areas of land that are in agri-environment schemes. The majority of uptake is focused on options for the management of archaeological features on grassland as well as options for parkland management (maintenance and restoration).

Relatively few areas/numbers of historic environment assets are being managed under agri-environment options which are specific to the Historic Environment. The historic environment is also being managed through the HS2 Environmental Enhancement Fund. These include schemes to restore the woodpasture scape at Shugborough, and restore the orangery at Ingestre Hall. Additionally, historic environment features are being protected through funding from the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, for example, at Castle Ring.

### Condition and trends

- The absence of current spatial data for land that is being managed under agri-environment options which are specific to the historic environment makes it impossible to compare with the situation in 2018 and to identify any trends about scheme uptake or provide any insight.
- In 2018 a total of 126 hectares (2%) of the National Landscape was being managed for archaeological/historic features through agri-environment schemes. In recent years, the HS2 Environmental Enhancement Fund and Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme have provided additional opportunities to support the management of archaeological/historic environment features in the National Landscape.

### Recommendations for future monitoring

- Encourage further monitoring of take-up for agri-environment and other schemes to inform future management.
- Future State of the National Landscape reports will need to consider how the roll-out of the new environmental management schemes will be monitored and compared against previous land management schemes.

### Data sources

- Staffordshire County Council, Historic Environment Record (2023).

## Policy considerations for the AONB Management Plan for 'Place'

Considerations for the Management Plan in relation to 'Place' include:

- Maintaining the quality and local distinctiveness of the landscape character of the National Landscape.
- Highlighting the relationship of the protected area to its wider urban and rural landscape setting
- Reinforcing and expanding the wider green and blue infrastructure and ecological networks to maintain and reinforce landscape and ecological connectivity and integrity.
- Protecting key views, in particular those which contribute to the special qualities of the protected landscape.
- Working with farmers, land managers, landowners and quarry operators to maximise opportunities for landscape conservation and enhancement that maintain and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape.
- Ensuring that development within the National Landscape and its setting respects landscape character and protects the special qualities of the National Landscape
- Protecting and promoting tranquillity by reducing the visual and noise impacts of development, pursuing measures, such as, quiet road surfaces and managing traffic to cut noise, undergrounding power lines to reduce visual intrusion, and using landscaping and tree planting to reduce visual intrusion.
- Preserving dark skies and promoting the adoption of measures set out in the Good Lighting Guide with residents, businesses, developers and local authorities.
- Through the emerging Historic Environment Strategy, plan positively for the future management of the historic environment of National Landscape and deliver projects that improve understanding, encourage greater enjoyment, and conservation.

## Cannock Chase National Landscape Profile

Designation	Statistic	Key fact
Cannock Chase is protected as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	Cannock Chase was designated an AONB in 1958	No other country in the world has Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – it is a uniquely British designation that belongs to a worldwide Protected Landscapes Family.
Land cover of National Landscapes	National Landscapes cover just under 20,000 km <sup>2</sup> equivalent to around 13% of the land area of England and Wales.	They vary greatly in size, from the Isles of Scilly (16 km <sup>2</sup> ) to the Cotswolds (2,038 km <sup>2</sup> ).
General figures	Statistic	Key fact
Total National Landscape area	69 sq km / 26 sq miles	The smallest mainland National Landscape in England
Dimensions	Width: 11 km / 6.8 miles Length: 13.5 km / 8.4 miles	
Number of parishes and town councils	15	
Total resident population	Around 9,000	Compares with: 502,000 people living within 10km. 2 million people living within 30 km.
Resident population density	209 people / km <sup>2</sup>	Compares with 36,000 visitors per km <sup>2</sup> to Cannock Chase.
Land use and management	Statistic	Key fact
Land ownership	56% public / 37% private / 7% charitable bodies	Cannock Chase has the greatest proportion of land in public ownership of any AONB.
Land use	63% forest and heath 24% is farmland	The AONB is unusual for its large amount of unenclosed land. It has the lowest proportion of farmland of any National Landscape.
Forest	2,700 hectares managed by Forestry England	Cannock Chase Forest is one of our oldest national public forests.
Land cover	54% of Cannock Chase is woodland cover, mainly coniferous	Cannock Chase has the largest proportion of woodland cover of any National Landscape in England.
Active quarries	There are 2 active quarries.	Cannock Chase has one of Europe's largest deposits of sand and gravel
Country Park	1,300 hectares managed by Staffordshire County Council	Cannock Chase country park is one of the largest in the country
Heathland	Around 875 hectares	Covers 12% of the National Landscape: the largest % cover of any National Landscape.

		Cannock Chase has the largest surviving area of heathland in the Midlands
<b>Natural heritage</b>	<b>Statistic</b>	<b>Key fact</b>
Protected areas for biodiversity	31% of the National Landscape is protected for biodiversity	One of the highest proportions for any National Landscape.
Special Area of Conservation	1 SAC covering 1,244 hectares	18% of the National Landscape.
Site of Special Scientific Interest	5 SSSI covering 1,392 hectares	20% of the National Landscape.
Local Nature Reserve	3, covering 128.3 hectares	1.9% of the National Landscape.
Staffordshire Wildlife Trust Reserves	3, covering 95.7 hectares	1.4 % of the National Landscape.
Local wildlife sites	21, covering 574.2 hectares	8.4% of the National Landscape.
Local geological sites	5	0.3% of the National Landscape.
<b>Cultural heritage</b>	<b>Statistic</b>	<b>Key fact</b>
Protected areas for the historic environment	Around 6% of the total number of heritage assets are protected.	
Cultural heritage assets	Over 1,300 recorded heritage assets	Includes internationally important military history.
Scheduled monuments	7	Includes Castle Ring, the largest Iron Age hillfort in Staffordshire.
Registered parks and gardens	2, covering 271.5 hectares	3.9% of the National Landscape.
Listed buildings and structures	64 (8 Grade I, 7 Grade II*, 49 Grade II)	The majority of listed buildings are found on the National Trust's Shugborough estate
Conservation areas	5, covering historic villages and canals	5.6% of the National Landscape.
<b>Landscape</b>	<b>Statistic</b>	<b>Key fact</b>
Landscape character types	9	Forest heathlands landscape character type makes up 75% of the National Landscape.
Historic parks and wood pasture	11	These include significant numbers of ancient trees.
Elevation	Highest point: 242 metres / 794 feet Lowest point: 71 metres / 233 feet	Castle Ring is the highest point: Tixall Broad the lowest.
<b>Access and recreation</b>	<b>Statistic</b>	<b>Key fact</b>
Open access land and other accessible greenspace	51.5% is open access land where the public has the right to roam, and other accessible greenspace	This is the largest proportion of open access land and other accessible greenspace of any of England's lowland National Landscapes.  This includes 10 areas of common land.
Public rights of way	157 kms	85% are bridleways.



Long distance trails	Includes sections of 4 long distance trails	Heart of England Way Staffordshire Way Way for the Millennium Two Saints Way
Number of visitors	>2.5 million each year (excluding visitor numbers to individual attractions).	More than the Cairngorms, Britain's largest National Park receives each year
Density of visitor usage	36,000 visitors per km <sup>2</sup>	Between 4-5 times greater than the density of visitors to the Lake District National Park

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**December 2024**