

Cannock Chase National Landscape an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

AONB Management Plan 2025-2030

(FINAL)



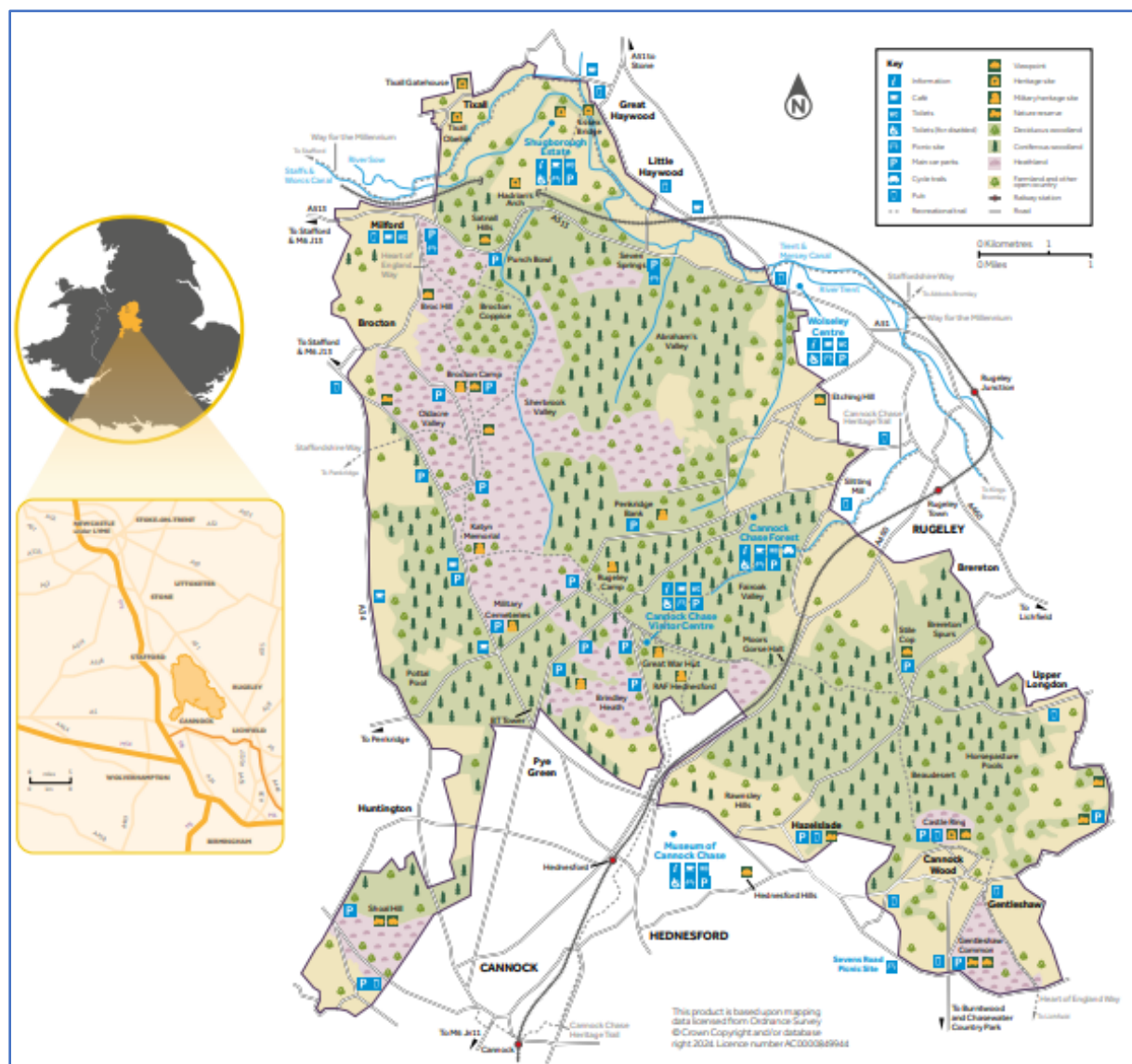
**Cannock
Chase**
National
Landscape

Cannock Chase National Landscape

AONB Management Plan 2025-2030

Prepared by the Cannock Chase National Landscape Joint Committee under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, on behalf of:

Staffordshire County Council
Cannock Chase District Council
Stafford Borough Council
Lichfield District Council
South Staffordshire District Council



Map. Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

On 22nd November 2023, all AONBs became known as National Landscapes. Cannock Chase National Landscape is the new name for our protected landscape. Cannock Chase National Landscape remains an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty insofar as all policy, legislation and guidance applies to the designated landscape. For that reason, this document is still titled and refers to Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan. The statutory purpose of the designated landscape “to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the designated landscape” remains unchanged.

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Foreword

Placeholder

Image

Welcome to Cannock Chase, one of England's finest landscapes. With its forests and heaths, rich wildlife, cultural heritage and abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation and contact with nature, the Chase is a wonderful asset for the nation and much loved by the people of Staffordshire and the West Midlands area.

This is the fifth edition of our statutory Management Plan. The Plan has been prepared by Cannock Chase National Landscape Joint Committee and sets out how we will work together with residents, businesses and visitors to deliver our vision for Cannock Chase to be *"a wild and beautiful place, distinctive, thriving, resilient and welcoming"*.

The programme of work we have set out for the next five years is wide-ranging, ambitious and challenging. We will drive forward nature recovery and contribute to the Government's target of protecting 30% of our land for nature by 2030 (30by30). We have

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

In the current climate of financial challenges, working collaboratively as a Partnership for the National Landscape and pooling our skills, expertise and resources is essential to delivering our ambitions and has never been more important. We look forward to the exciting challenge of bringing this Plan to reality.

Councillor Tony Pearce

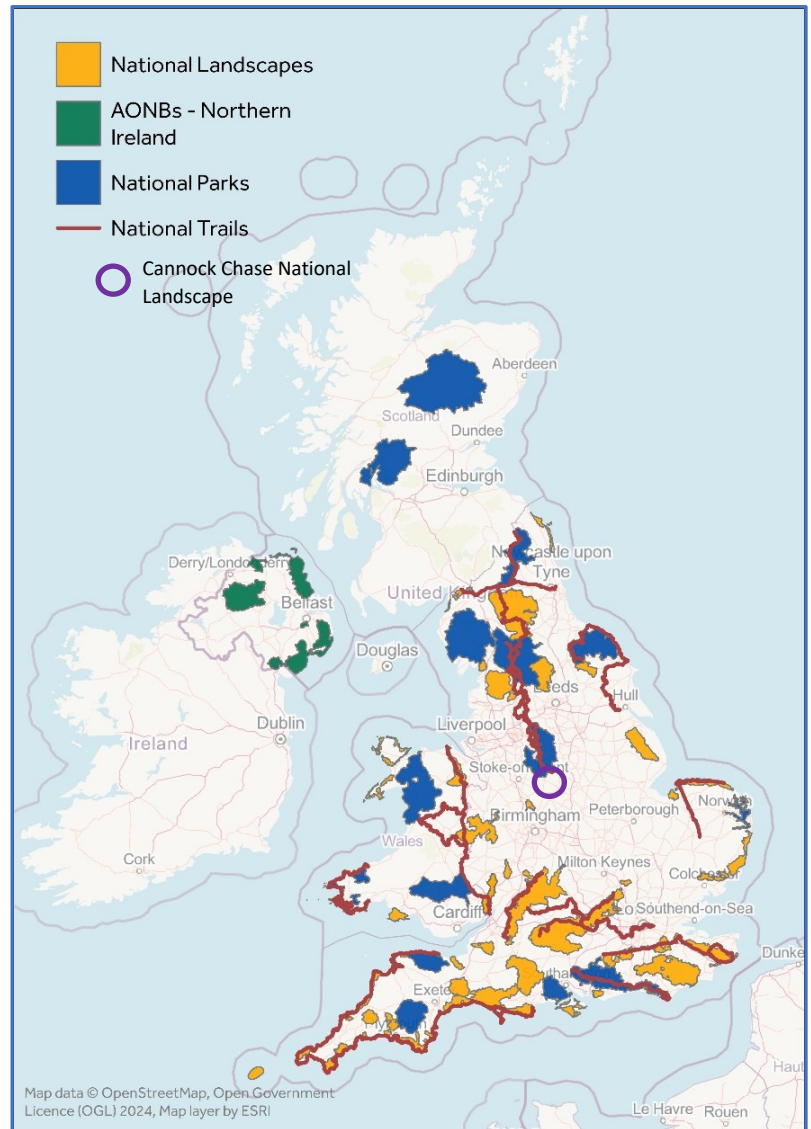
Chair of the Cannock Chase National Landscape Joint Committee

1. Introduction

Cannock Chase covers 69 km² of forests, heaths, parkland and farmland shaped over thousands of years by the people who have lived and worked here.

It was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1958¹ in recognition of its extraordinary natural beauty, representing an unspoilt almost semi-natural wilderness character, standing in contrast to the surrounding built-up conurbations. Its varied landscapes, internationally important lowland heathlands and rich cultural heritage are protected for the nation and much cherished locally. Cannock Chase is one of only 46 areas to be given this recognition in the UK (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) (see map). 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.²

The Chase is a shared space. It is a lived-in, working landscape, much-loved and cherished by those who come for recreation and to enjoy the outdoors, heritage and wildlife. Its future is interdependent, therefore, with the people who live and work here and those who visit.



Map. Protected Landscapes in the UK

Unusually for a protected landscape³, the majority (63%) of the designated area is owned by public and charitable bodies, and is managed for timber production, recreation, parkland and nature (see map). The remaining 37% is privately owned and is primarily farmed. The area also includes two working sand and gravel quarries, and two golf courses. The Chase is home to around 9,000 people who live in the communities of small villages that help to shape its character. A further two million people live within 30 kilometres of the boundary. The Chase has the highest density of visitor footfall of any protected landscape in the UK, with an estimated 2.5 million visitors annually.

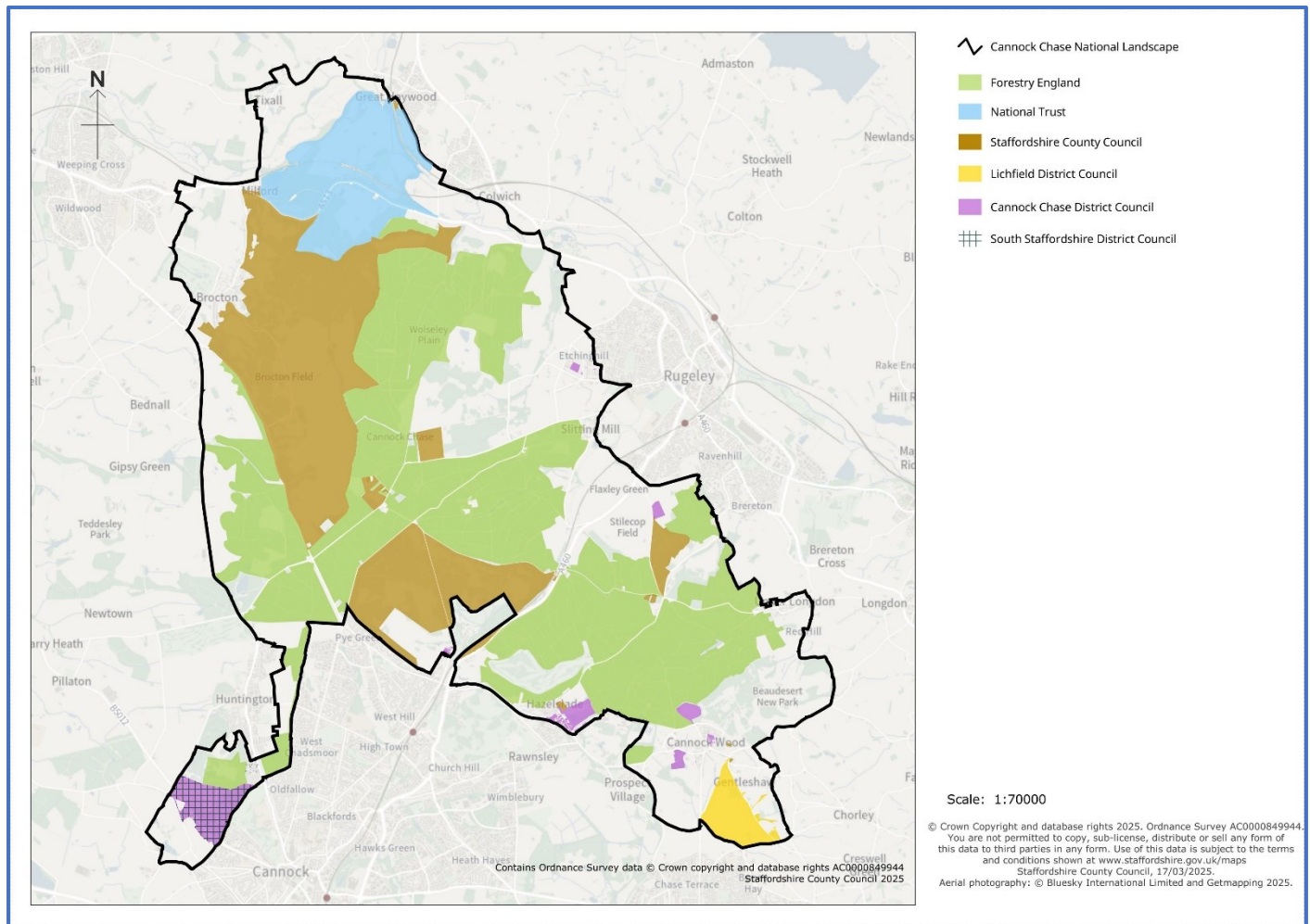
Whilst it is the smallest mainland National Landscape in the UK, the influence, reputation and reach of Cannock Chase stretches far beyond its boundary. Sitting in Staffordshire in the densely populated West Midlands, the natural beauty of the National Landscape lies at the heart of the area connecting landscapes, natural processes, habitats, history, culture and communities to it. Cannock Chase's future cannot be

¹ AONBs are designated under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act.

² The UK's AONBs and National Parks are classified as Category V Protected Landscapes by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

³ Protected Landscapes in the UK comprise National Parks, National Landscapes/AONBs (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and National Scenic Areas (Scotland).

considered in geographic isolation, therefore, and requires a joined-up, landscape-scale approach with neighbouring administrative areas and partners.



Map. Major landholdings in the National Landscape

Formal legal responsibility for Cannock Chase National Landscape lies with the five local authorities that cover the area.⁴ They comprise our Joint Committee that works together with the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Partnership, landowners, emergency services, businesses and representatives of community and user groups to look after this nationally important landscape. How we do this is set out and co-ordinated through the AONB Management Plan, delivered by a dedicated National Landscape Team and our partners.

Cannock Chase National Landscape is a member of the National Landscapes Association – a charitable company that has been set up to work for and on behalf of the family of National Landscapes, influencing policy and decision makers, and sharing good practice. As part of this family we are able to learn from other National Landscapes across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

⁴ Staffordshire County Council, Cannock Chase District Council, Lichfield District Council, Stafford Borough Council and South Staffordshire District Council.

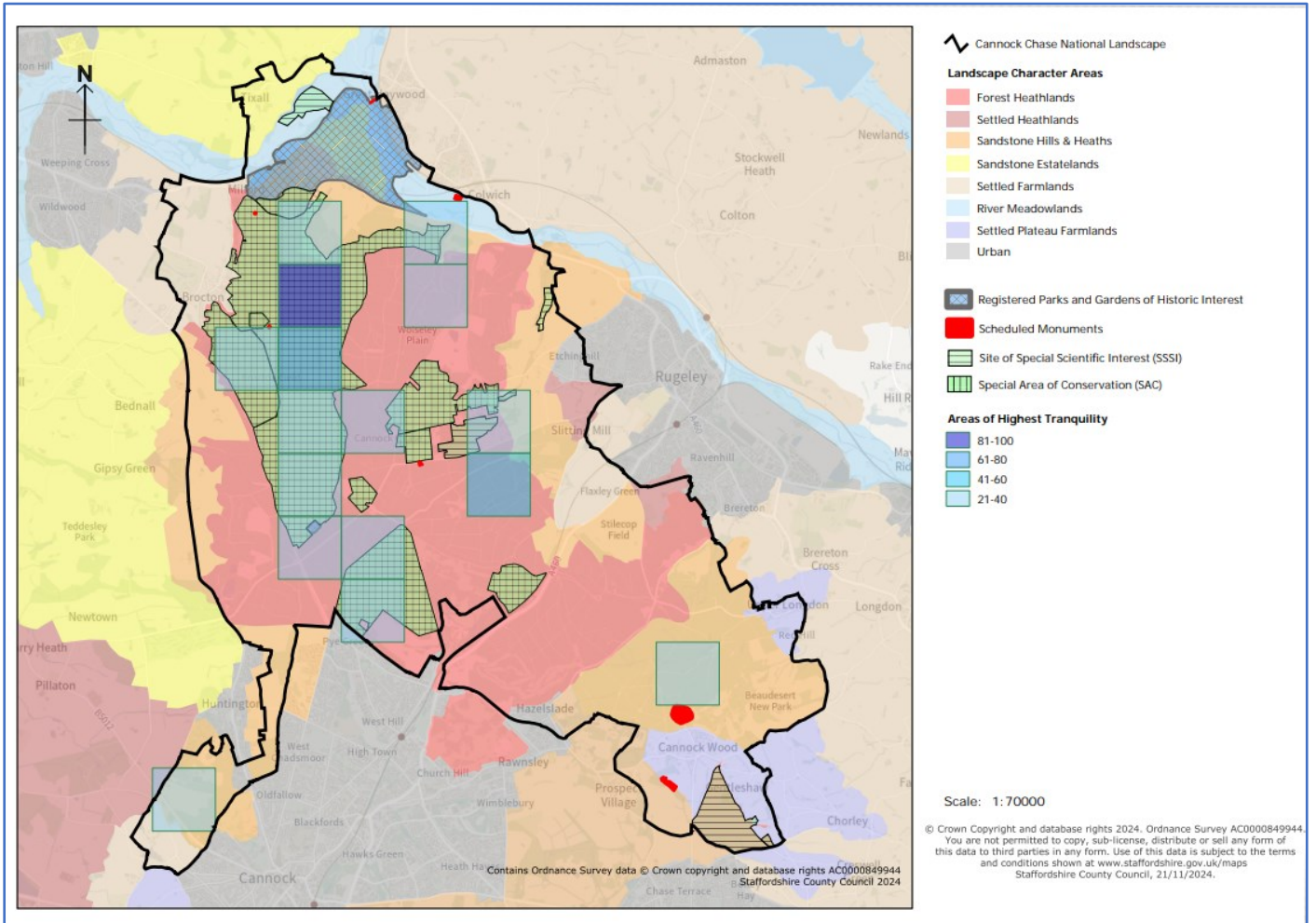
2. Overview of the Management Plan

Statutory purpose <i>To conserve and enhance natural beauty</i>		
Vision <i>A wild and beautiful place, distinctive, thriving, resilient and welcoming</i>		
Special Qualities <i>Landscape quality Scenic quality Natural heritage Cultural heritage Relative wildness and tranquillity Additional qualities</i>		
Themes	Objectives	Policy topics
Nature Strategic aim: A nature-rich, healthy National Landscape, with a thriving and connected network of habitats that is alive with wildlife, both within and beyond its borders.	Action for nature recovery	N1 Protected sites N2 Priority habitats N3 Priority species N4 Wildlife-rich countryside N5 Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) N6 Deer N7 Geodiversity
	A better-connected Chase	N8 Ecological networks N9 Integrated land management
	Improve environmental quality	N10 Water quality N11 Air quality N12 Soil health
Climate Strategic aim: A resilient National Landscape, adapted to cope with the impacts of climate change and net zero.	Lower greenhouse gas emissions	C1 Sustainable travel
	Sequester and store more carbon	C2 Land use change and management
	Adapting to climate change	C3 Improved resilience
People Strategic aim: An inclusive National Landscape, providing a quality experience in which people from all backgrounds and abilities value Cannock Chase as an important part of their lives and are empowered to care for it.	Recreation management	PE1 Working together, strategically
	Treading lightly on the Chase	PE2 Avoiding impacts PE3 Changing perceptions and behaviours PE4 Recreation provision beyond the boundaries
	A high-quality visitor experience	PE5 Improving access PE6 Visitor infrastructure
	Inclusive and empowering	PE7 A landscape for everyone PE8 Opportunities for volunteering PE9 Empower communities
	Land-based economy	PE10 Rural skills
	Place attachment	PE11 A greater sense of place
Place Strategic aim: A welcoming National Landscape, whose local character, distinctiveness and sense of place are sustained and enhanced, providing multiple benefits for all.	Maintain landscape quality and distinctiveness	PL1 High standards of design in the built environment PL2 Woodland PL3 Farmland PL4 Other land uses
	Wildness and tranquillity	PL5 Road traffic PL6 Overhead powerlines PL7 Dark skies
	Enhance the setting of the Chase within its wider urban and rural landscape	PL8 Protecting views PL9 Softening the boundary PL10 Strategic landscape links
	Understanding the Chase's historic environment	PL11 Improving knowledge of heritage
	Conserving the Chase's historic environment	PL12 Improving the condition of heritage
	Connecting communities with the Chase's history and culture	PL13 Inspire through the Chase's history and culture
Cross cutting actions Resources – Collaboration – Governance – Equality, Diversity & Inclusion – Brand and communication		
Indicators of success		
Delivery Plan		

3. The qualities that make Cannock Chase special

Cannock Chase is defined by its landscapes, wildlife, cultural heritage and natural resources that give the area its sense of place and distinguishes it from other parts of the country. Collectively these special qualities provide a statement of the significance of the natural beauty across the National Landscape, justifying its designation and providing the framework for the objectives, policies and actions set out in this Plan.

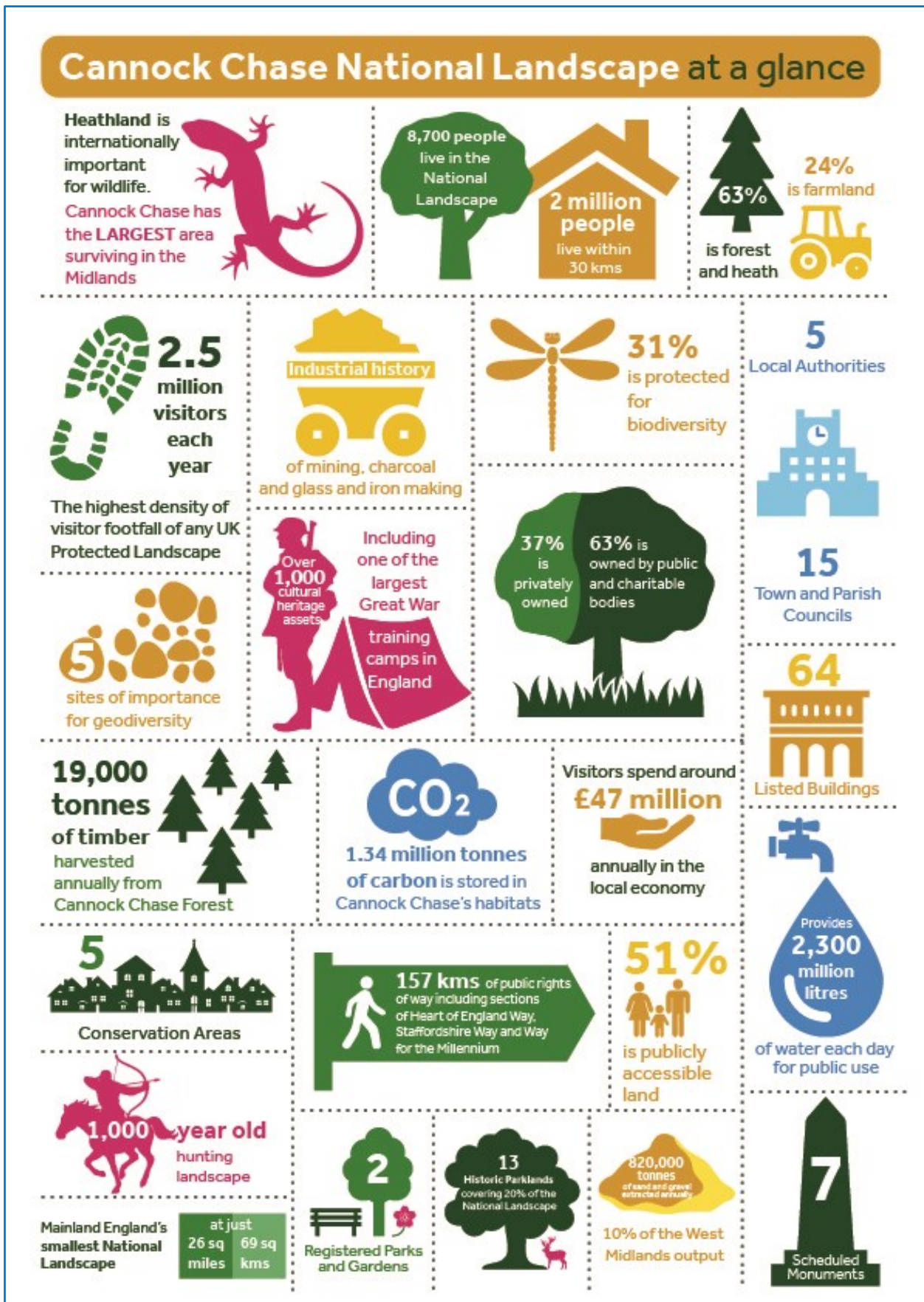
Factors of Natural Beauty	The Special Qualities of Cannock Chase
Landscape quality A measure of the physical state or condition of the landscape	A largely intact landscape, particularly in its heathland and wood pasture, providing a historical and spatial continuity of scale, openness, semi-natural land cover, public ownership and access which is in marked contrast to the more urban and fragmented landscapes that surround it.
Scenic quality 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.
Relative wildness and tranquillity 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 the Shugborough Estate, Marquis Drive and Birches Valley, as well as less visited spots for quiet contemplation and watching nature.
Natural heritage 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 laid down 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.
Cultural heritage 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	A rich history, whose layers in the landscape can be experienced first-hand, including the Iron Age Hillfort at Castle Ring; the remnants of a medieval hunting landscape; historic houses and parklands; 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.
	Historic parklands, 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.
	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.
Additional qualities These apply to public understanding and enjoyment of natural beauty	Local communities and interest groups who cherish and help care for the Chase and its designated status.
	Accessible greenspace and a network of well-maintained rides and paths through woodland and heathland providing opportunities for stimulating exercise and exploration.



Map. Special Qualities of Cannock Chase

4. What Cannock Chase provides for you

Many people benefit from the multiple environmental, social and economic services that Cannock Chase provides. Nowadays, these are called 'ecosystem services', and many of them go unnoticed.



5. The role of the Management Plan

What is it?

All AONBs (National Landscapes) are required by law to produce a Management Plan that sets out a vision for the management of the designated area.⁵ This Plan is for Cannock Chase the place, and not specifically for the National Landscape Partnership or any other organisation.

The Management Plan must focus on the statutory purpose of AONBs to conserve and enhance natural beauty and needs to be updated every five years to ensure it is relevant to current issues and forward looking. Considerations relating to wider environmental issues, the economic and social needs of local communities, as well as the demands for recreation, should be dealt with in the context of delivering the core purpose and not for their own sake.

The Plan provides the direction and framework for all those with interests in the National Landscape to work together to achieve our statutory purpose. It is also the context for a range of supporting technical documents and strategies produced by the National Landscape Partnership (appendix 2). It is the single most important document for the Chase, and no decision affecting the future of the National Landscape should be taken without reference to it. This includes decisions taking place outside the National Landscape that may affect land within it. Appendices to the Plan must be viewed with the same importance as the core body of text.

Delivering for the nation

Following the publication in 2019 of the review of Protected Landscapes in England⁶ the Government has strengthened the role of Protected Landscape Management Plans in legislation and guidance, highlighting their importance in delivering improved environmental and health outcomes for society⁷. New targets have been set to support National Parks and National Landscapes to meet their potential to deliver more for nature, climate change and enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement⁸. These set the ambition for how Government expects Protected Landscapes to achieve outcomes in the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023⁹ as well as the nation's international commitments under the UN Convention on Biodiversity¹⁰. A further new requirement for Management Plans is to have a 'climate change adaptation plan' embedded within them, or linked with them, by 2028¹¹.

How has it been prepared?

In addition to responding to the strengthened policy agenda for Protected Landscapes, the Plan has been informed by what the evidence and insight is telling us about the condition of the special qualities; people's perceptions, concerns and priorities, as well as what has been achieved in the previous edition of

⁵ *Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000*, c. 4, pt. 4, s. 89. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/section/89> [accessed 12 November 2024].

⁶ 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].

⁷ *Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, 2023*, pt. 12, s. 245. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/55/section/245> [accessed 12 November 2024].

⁸ 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].

⁹ 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/64a6d9c1c531eb000c64fffa/environmental-improvement-plan-2023.pdf> [accessed 12 November 2024].

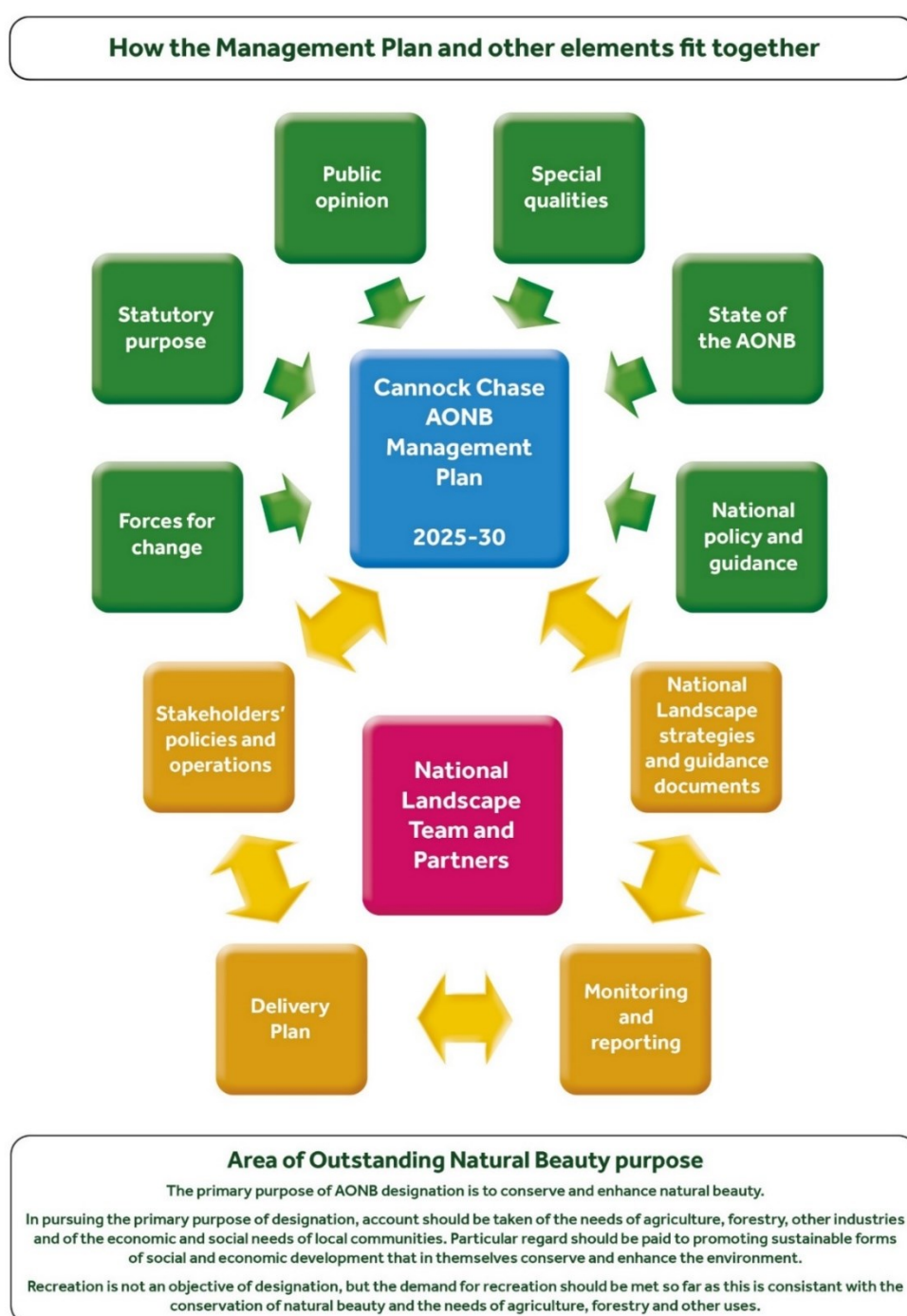
¹⁰ United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, *Decision Adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, 15/4: Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework* (2022). Available at: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-15/cop-15-dec-04-en.pdf> [accessed 12 November 2024].

¹¹ 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].

the Management Plan and any remaining or ongoing tasks and gaps. These documents can be viewed on our [website](#).

Strengthened duties

All relevant authorities, such as local authorities, Government departments and agencies, and utility companies must now *seek to further* the statutory purpose when making decisions or carrying out activities relating to or affecting land within the National Landscape⁷. This requires not just avoiding damaging this special area but actively trying to improve it. Using this Management Plan will help relevant authorities ensure that they are fulfilling their duty. The range of functions undertaken by relevant authorities that may have an influence upon the natural beauty of the National Landscape is broad and includes: planning and development, highways and traffic management, rights of way, timber and food production, conservation management, heritage asset management, recreation management, water supply, libraries and museums, and education.



6. Major issues for the National Landscape

The new Management Plan needs to anticipate and respond positively to a wide range of pressures and forces for change that will affect the area's natural beauty and special qualities. The major issues facing the Chase are summarised here, with fuller accounts included in the latest State of the AONB report¹².

Climate change

The National Landscape can expect to experience warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers along with more unpredictable weather events causing drought, wildfires, flooding and soil erosion. The character of historic and designed landscapes will change, habitats and wildlife will come under pressure, and the fabric of historic buildings will be threatened. 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 landscape character, natural and cultural heritage, as well as soil, air and water quality. In response we need to:

- Improve the National Landscape's resilience to, and mitigation of, climate change.
- Support the management of land to maximise the sequestration and storage of carbon and deliver flood management.
- Encourage efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the way we travel and live.

Nature recovery

The fourth UK State of Nature Report published in 2023¹³ 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. Fortunately, Cannock Chase National Landscape still supports extensive areas of high value for nature. There are concerns, however, about the condition of protected sites, the management of priority habitats, the decline of wildlife in the wider countryside, and the status of some of our plants and animals. In response we need to:

- Improve the protection and management of wildlife sites and habitats and raise awareness of their importance.
- Make nature more ecologically connected and resilient to climate change and other impacts through more, bigger, better and joined up places for wildlife.
- Adopt special conservation measures for priority species as well as for managing non-native invasive species.

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. The quality of these environmental resources is under pressure from a range of factors including urban development, road traffic, land management practices, water abstraction and recreation. In response we need to:

- Tackle atmospheric pollution from road traffic and agricultural operations that threatens our internationally important lowland heathlands.
- Improve the ecological status of our watercourses and ensure that the utilisation of water resources does not adversely affect the hydrological integrity of our wetlands.

¹² Cannock Chase National Landscape Partnership, *State of the AONB report*, 2024

¹³ F.Burns et al., *State of Nature 2023*: www.stateofnature.org.uk [accessed 12 November 2024].

- Protect and manage our soils and minimise their loss and erosion from land use change and management and recreational activities.

Land management

The Chase is a working landscape. Woodland and farmland together cover over 75% of the National Landscape. Forestry and agricultural policies and 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. The new Management Plan coincides with the move to an Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) that centres on rewarding farmers and land managers for sustainable farming practices, as well as delivering Government targets for increasing woodland and tree canopy cover, adopting nature-friendly and regenerative farming, reducing the number of heritage assets at risk, and restoring and creating wildlife-rich habitats. The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme is also part of Defra's Agricultural Transition Plan and offers funding to farmers and land managers within the National Landscape to deliver environmental outcomes. Much of the woodland on Cannock Chase lies within Cannock Chase Forest, and Forestry England has recently reviewed and updated its new [ten-year Forest Plan](#) for the area. Sand and gravel is still extracted on the Chase, and the restoration and subsequent land use of the quarries at the end of their economic life offers opportunities to support and enhance the special qualities of the National Landscape. In response we need to:

- Continue working with farmers and land managers to deliver environmental outcomes that contribute to the Government's priorities for nature, climate, people and place.
- Seek opportunities for the restoration and creation of more wildlife-rich habitats on the public forest estate and farmland as well as other land uses.
- Engage with our partners to explore the potential for expanding woodland cover and tree canopy.

Growth and development

Despite being a Protected 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, heritage and peace and tranquillity. The spread of built-up land around the National Landscape since its designation in 1958 has been extensive (a 365% increase within a 10km radius) and has brought development hard up to the designated boundary in several places. The associated increase in the volume of traffic (combined with alterations to highways infrastructure) compounds the negative impacts on the special qualities of the National Landscape. Significant new areas of housing and employment continue to be built close to the National Landscape, and further areas are being allocated in Local Plans. In response we need to:

- Ensure that new development maintains the quality and distinctiveness of the National Landscape's landscape character and enhances its setting.
- Monitor and respond to the cumulative impacts of the spread of development surrounding the National Landscape (including impacts from traffic) to ensure that its ecological, historic and cultural connections are not weakened and that the sense of place and identity of Cannock Chase are maintained.
- Continue to take action to prevent or mitigate any negative impacts of development on the designated features and species of the Special Area of Conservation.

Tourism and recreation

Cannock Chase is popular with walkers, cyclists and horse riders. It has the highest density of visitor footfall of any Protected Landscape in the UK. The forecast growth in population in surrounding areas over the next 20 years will further increase visitor numbers, adding to the pressures on the special qualities as well as visitor services, facilities and infrastructure. 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, encourage appreciation and respect, and influence their willingness to help look after it. Visitor spend in the National Landscape brings economic benefits to local businesses, heritage attractions and visitor centres/hubs, and increasing numbers of visitors may provide opportunities for the tourism sector, but pressures will need to be managed. In response we need to:

- Set a clear direction for recreation management on the Chase that all partners can follow.
- Improve the quality of the welcome and experience for visitors of all backgrounds and abilities.
- Promote Cannock Chase as a sustainable tourism destination.

Health and wellbeing

The evidence is overwhelming that a thriving, wildlife-rich environment benefits our physical and mental health¹⁴. 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 number 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. In response we need to:

- Continue to involve and empower communities in and around the boundary who suffer from poor health.
- Explore opportunities to improve access for those with disabilities.
- Work with our partners to improve our volunteer offer.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

National Landscapes and National Parks are protected for the nation and are available for everyone to enjoy. Research has highlighted that visitors to Cannock Chase are not representative of the full spectrum of society, however, and that some people and communities experience unintentional barriers to engagement with the protected landscape which leads to their exclusion or feelings of being unwelcome¹⁵. Such groups include lower income households, people with underlying health conditions, young people and ethnic minorities. Barriers to engagement include physical obstructions, lack of knowledge, lack of confidence, fear of abuse, inability to access transport, and underlying socio-economic circumstances. In response we need to:

- Remove the barriers to engagement, improving our welcome and providing greater awareness of the opportunities the National Landscape provides.
- Work with our partners to deliver the recommendations in our accessibility audit to make the National Landscape more inclusive and a space for people of all ages and abilities¹⁶.
- Strengthen Cannock Chase's sense of place and people's emotional attachments with the area.

¹⁴ R. Lamont and C. Hinson, *A Narrative Review of Reviews of Nature Exposure and Human Health and Well-being in the UK*, Natural England Evidence Review NEER030 (2024). Available at: <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5939107801595904> [accessed 12 November 2024].

¹⁵ A. Meredith Associates and The Research Solution, *Cannock Chase AONB Inclusion and Diversity Study*, (2022).

¹⁶ Cannock Chase National Landscape Partnership, *Cannock Chase National Landscape Accessibility Audit Report*, (2 November 2023).

7. Our ambitions for the next five years

Our vision

Our vision for Cannock Chase is simple.

We want Cannock Chase to be ***“a wild and beautiful place, distinctive, thriving, resilient and welcoming”***.

This is a vision for here and now, as well as for the next 20 years.

Our themes and strategic aims

To deliver our vision over the lifetime of this Management Plan we will focus on four integrated strategic aims under the themes of nature, climate, people and place. The themes reinforce the Government’s ambitions for Protected Landscapes in England to be distinctive cultural landscapes that support the nation’s health and wellbeing, tackle climate change and restore nature.

Nature	Strategic aim: A nature-rich, healthy National Landscape, with a thriving and connected network of habitats that is alive with wildlife, both within and beyond its borders.
Climate	Strategic aim: A resilient National Landscape, adapted to cope with the impacts of climate change and net zero.
People	Strategic aim: An inclusive National Landscape, providing a quality experience in which people from all backgrounds and abilities value Cannock Chase as an important part of their lives and are empowered to care for it.
Place	Strategic aim: A welcoming National Landscape, whose local character, distinctiveness and sense of place are sustained and enhanced, providing multiple benefits for all.

The themes should be read as an integrated set, rather than individually in isolation, as they reinforce one another and work across the landscape. In addition, there is no priority in terms of the order of the aims.

It is important for the delivery and implementation of the Plan that the interconnections and holistic nature of the Plan are understood. For instance, actions that seek to move recreational activity away from the most sensitive habitats and species on the Chase should not be implemented in a way that puts other qualities, such as the historic environment at greater risk of harm. Where there is doubt about potential conflict between different policies or actions in this Plan, a precautionary approach should be taken, giving priority to the conservation of the National Landscape’s natural beauty.

The rest of the Plan sets out the objectives, policy areas and associated actions and targets for each theme through which we will deliver our vision.

There are also a number of cross-cutting actions that will run through the Plan: securing the required funding and resources for delivery; collaboration between partners; governance; equality, diversity and inclusion and; embedding the Cannock Chase National Landscape brand in everything that we do.

8. Making it happen

To deliver the level of ambition in the Management Plan requires everyone to share our vision, and to work jointly and creatively in the following ways:

Responding collectively to the challenges we face.	To optimise our impact, the recognition of Cannock Chase the place is put above the recognition of any individual organisation.
Distributing leadership and ownership for target delivery across the National Landscape partners.	Some activities will be led by the National Landscape Team and some by partners.
Co-ordinating the considerable skills, expertise and resources that exist within our Partnership.	Co-ordination is needed to mobilise the people and resources required to address our challenges. By doing so significant value will be added to what each of us can achieve individually.
Bringing together whoever is needed to tackle the challenge at hand.	The challenges we face are often multi-faceted, complex and can involve many stakeholders. The contribution of each individual person is important to deliver our core purpose.
Working beyond our boundaries to ensure that the connections and relationships with our surrounding landscapes and communities are positive and beneficial.	The National Landscape does not exist in isolation and is connected ecologically, culturally, economically and socially within a wider hinterland. Its future depends, therefore, on what happens both inside and outside the designated boundary.
Changing perceptions and behaviours that support individuals to make small and incremental differences.	Raising awareness of the importance of Cannock Chase and the unintended consequences of the way people use and treat the Chase is fundamental to achieving our aims. The universal adoption and use of the Cannock Chase National Landscape brand and its key messages is a core part of creating an identity and sense of place that people will relate to and want to be a part of.
Identifying opportunities available through other relevant plans, policies and programmes that can help deliver shared agendas for the National Landscape.	Our aims cut across a wide-range of sectors (including environment, business, health, agriculture, forestry, water, tourism, land-use planning, education and transport). Many other strategies, policies and programmes exist independently of the Management Plan that have synergies and opportunities to promote shared ambition for the Chase.
Diversifying income from external funding sources, such as voluntary donations, green finance and developer funding.	Achieving the ambitions contained within this Management Plan will require funding additional to current levels of Government support for National Landscapes. The priorities identified within the Plan will provide the springboard for seeking new income streams as well as match funding opportunities. Developer funding is already being used to protect the Cannock Chase SAC from the negative impacts of extra footfall arising from new housing development in the area. Opportunities to enhance the resilience and recovery of wildlife may also arise from the mandatory requirement for development to support and facilitate Biodiversity Net Gain.
Empowering communities.	Individuals, parishes and communities can take action locally to conserve and enhance the special qualities, with direction and support.

Growing volunteering and improving our volunteer offer.	<p>Volunteers already make a significant contribution to enhancing the National Landscape. There remains considerable untapped potential to increase the involvement of individual and corporate volunteering to support our ambitions.</p>
Using the most up-to-date evidence, insight and best practice to inform delivery.	<p>The management needs of the National Landscape should be informed by current evidence and insight. An awareness of best practice will ensure that resources are not wasted reinventing the wheel.</p>
Robust and consistent monitoring to measure our success.	<p>We will need to monitor and report our progress towards delivering the Plan's targets in a way that aligns with Defra reporting requirements in the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan. The strengthened duty to <i>seek to further</i> the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes will require 'relevant authorities' to be more accountable for the targets in this Plan in respect of their own actions, decisions and operations. This will need to be reflected in how we measure progress towards our targets and report to Government, as well as in the ways we share our achievements locally in National Landscape Annual Reviews and Conferences.</p>

9. Priorities for Nature

Strategic aim:

A nature-rich, healthy National Landscape, with a thriving and connected network of habitats that is alive with wildlife, both within and beyond its borders.

Policies for this theme are split between three overall objectives:

- Action for nature recovery
- A better-connected Chase
- Improve environmental quality

Action for nature recovery

POLICY N1 Protected sites: Develop a thriving and better-connected network of protected, well-managed wildlife sites that is at the heart of nature recovery in the National Landscape.

Why is this important?

There are 2,106 hectares of protected areas for biodiversity (SAC, SSSI, LNRs, and Local Wildlife Sites) on Cannock Chase (31% of the National Landscape). The protection and management of these areas forms the cornerstone for nature recovery on the Chase and is a core component of our contribution to delivering the Government's commitment to protecting 30% of our land for nature by 2030 (30by30). 88.7% of the land that is protected for biodiversity is owned by public or charitable bodies. Only 6.25% of the total number of SSSI features are assessed to be in favourable condition. None of the 16 features has actions on track to achieve favourable condition. Grazing by livestock is an important component for the effective management of the Chase's heathlands, alongside other interventions, such as bracken and tree and shrub control.

Associated Actions

- Secure long-term protection for nature conservation and favourable management of protected sites through legal or other effective means (Delivery Plan Action No. 1).
- Re-introduce livestock grazing to key sites to support sustainable management (Delivery Plan Action No. 2).
- Rationalise the path/trail network on the Chase to reduce habitat fragmentation and wildlife disturbance (Delivery Plan Action No. 31).
- Create and promote circular routes from main car parks and gateway train stations to improve the visitor welcome and experience and protect sensitive ecological sites (Delivery Plan Action No. 32).

POLICY N2 Priority habitats: Restore, expand and maintain in favourable condition areas of priority habitat outside nationally-designated wildlife sites.

Why is this important?

Cannock Chase supports 10 priority habitats¹⁷, which combined cover 2,300 hectares, or 34 % of the National Landscape. The majority (1,366 hectares/59% of the total area of priority habitats) lie within protected sites for biodiversity, but some 955 hectares/41% lie outside these areas, and their condition is largely unknown. Expanding the area of priority habitats will help to link and buffer existing protected sites and contribute to delivering the Government's 30by30 target. A number of habitat restoration or creation projects are scheduled to take place across the National Landscape during the plan period and beyond (see map).

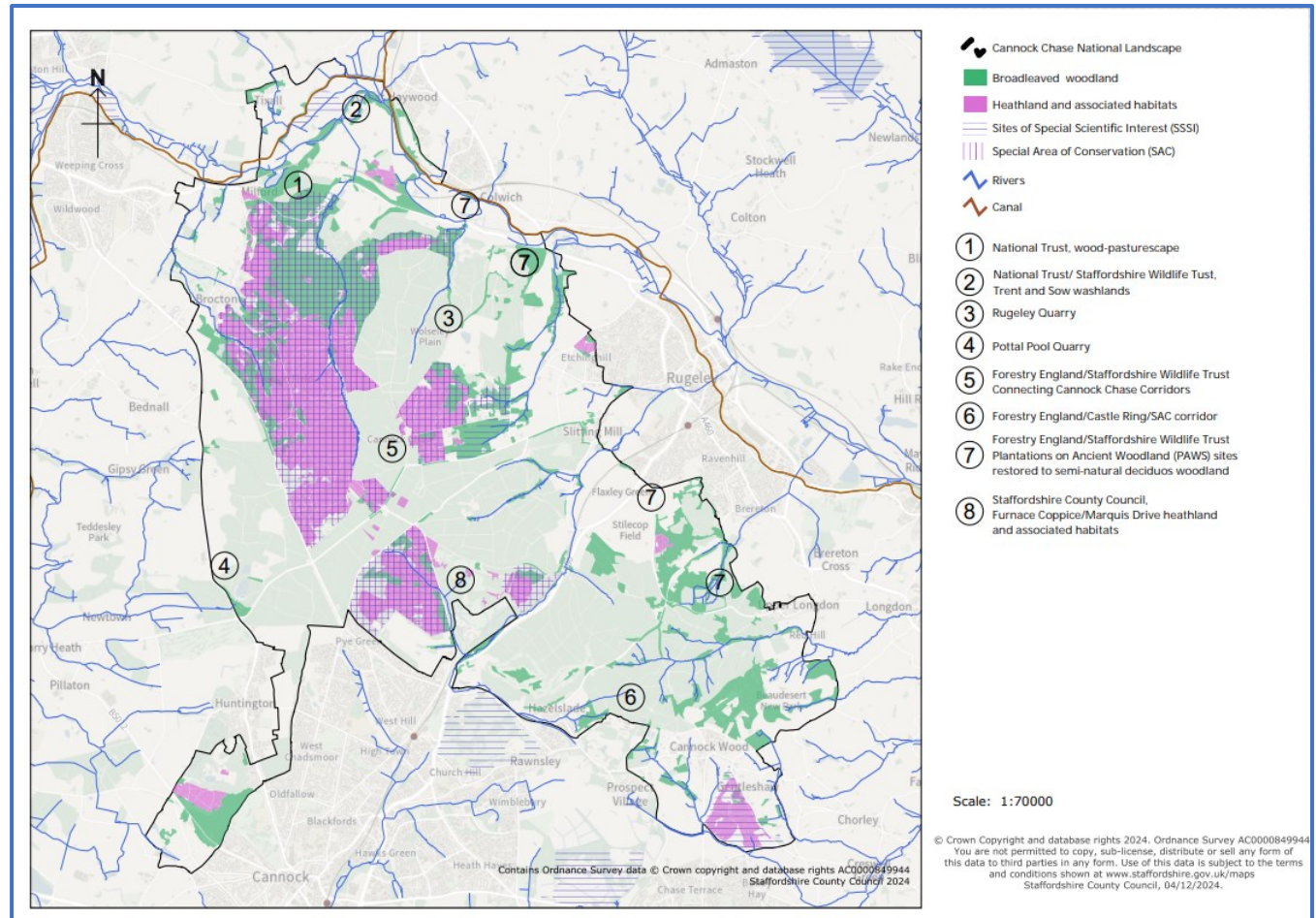
Associated Actions

- Deliver programmes for the restoration and creation of priority and other locally important habitats (Delivery Plan Action No. 3).
- Support the Purple Horizons Nature Recovery Project to connect Cannock Chase with Sutton Park to deliver greater resilience for nature (Delivery Plan Action No. 8).
- Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (Delivery Plan Action No. 17).
- Rationalise the path/trail network on the Chase to reduce habitat fragmentation and wildlife disturbance (Delivery Plan Action No. 31).
- Encourage woodland owners, managers and contractors to manage woodlands in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) for sustainable forest management¹⁸ (Delivery Plan Action No. 44).

¹⁷ The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) Section 41 lists habitats of principal importance. These are deemed to be of principal importance for the purposes of conserving biodiversity in England, with maintenance and restoration of these habitats being promoted through agri-environment schemes and latterly targeted through the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework.

¹⁸ Forestry Commission, *The UK Forestry Standard 5th edition*, (2024)

- Support rural non-farming landowners to help conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Landscape through advice, support and funding (Delivery Plan Action No. 46).



Map. Major planned habitat restoration and creation projects outside protected sites (SSSI)

POLICY N3 Priority species: Conserve and enhance populations of priority species and their habitats, taking particular account of threats, such as disturbance and pollution.

Why is this important?

Cannock Chase is nationally and locally important for a range of wildlife, including a number of priority species of conservation concern. The selection of Champion species will focus our conservation efforts and help drive nature recovery on Cannock Chase. Conservation actions for these species would be delivered through individual Species Action Plans. Champion species are species of conservation concern¹⁹, characteristic / representative of an important habitat on the Chase, flagship (charismatic or popular), actionable, recordable and an indicator of good quality habitat and environmental changes. Some species are vulnerable to persecution and crimes against wildlife.

Associated actions

- Publish Species Action Plans for 10 Champion Species for the National Landscape, and deliver targeted action where required (Delivery Plan Action No. 4):
 - Small pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly
 - Adder
 - Nightjar
 - Solitary wasp species of bare ground (TBC)
 - Ancient oak trees
 - White-clawed crayfish
 - Otter
 - Common redstart
 - Welsh Clearwing
 - Brown hare

¹⁹ The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) Section 41 lists species of principal importance in England. These represent England's rarest and most threatened species, considered to be critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable, or with another conservation status/statuses

- Use appropriate and proportionate responses and enforcement to deter illegal activities on the National Landscape, such as wildlife and heritage crime and anti-social behaviour (Delivery Plan Action No. 27).
- Rationalise the path/trail network on the Chase to reduce habitat fragmentation and wildlife disturbance (Delivery Plan Action No. 31).

POLICY N4 Wildlife-rich countryside: Enhance the biodiversity of the wider countryside around and between protected sites and priority habitats.

Why is this important?

Wildlife needs to be able to move through the landscape freely if it is to adapt to change, which means looking beyond protected sites and priority habitats by supporting sustainable nature friendly farming throughout the rest of the National Landscape.

Associated action

- Promote the benefits of nature-friendly and regenerative farming, and support farmers and smallholders to take-up the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes (Delivery Plan Action No. 45).

POLICY N5 Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS): Prevent, control and eradicate invasive species, pests and diseases in the National Landscape, focusing on those that are most harmful to biodiversity.

Why is this important?

The warming climate and past introductions from other countries are leading to growing numbers and populations of invasive species, pests and diseases which are threatening native plants and animals. Current examples include the water mould *Phytophthora ramorum* (threatening the hybrid Bilberry on heathland and larch in forestry plantations), red-band needle blight *Dothistroma septosporum* impacting on pine trees, the fungus *Hymenoschyphus fraxineus* (which causes ash dieback - previously known as *Chalara*), parrot's feather and New Zealand pigmyweed (water weeds that can choke streams, ponds and lakes) and the signal crayfish (which carries a disease that is lethal for the native white-clawed crayfish). Where practical, reducing and managing the potential impacts of these species through prevention of spread and local eradication should be pursued.

Associated action

- Monitor invasive species and deliver collaborative and targeted management to address them where required (Delivery Plan Action No. 5).

POLICY N6 Deer: Monitor and manage the deer population across the Chase, working collaboratively with land managers and the public to balance the needs of both a healthy deer population and habitats, and to manage conflicts with people, respecting the welfare of the animals at all times.

Why is this important?

The herds of deer that roam the Chase are a well-loved emblem that the public enjoy seeing as part of their experience of the National Landscape. These herds do, however, present management challenges for land managers, impacting on habitats, particularly woodlands and young trees, and also when they come into conflict with other human activity, such as road users. More co-ordinated effort from landowners across the Chase would greatly help to increase the effectiveness of deer management, working closely with the public to ensure that any conflicts are minimised.

Associated action

- Draw up and deliver a strategy and action plan for monitoring and managing the deer population in the Chase as well as engaging and informing the public about the need to manage the deer population (Delivery Plan Action No. 6).

POLICY N7 Geodiversity: Protect and manage Local Geological Sites within the National Landscape to ensure their long-term conservation.

Why is this important?

Rock faces in several places in the National Landscape reveal its geological history, showing the stratigraphy of the red sandstone, pebble beds and coal measures. These help to explain the Chase's landform and its story of mining, quarrying and gravel extraction. The geology and soils of the Chase as a whole are poorly understood and undervalued, and there is a lack of awareness of their importance and fragility.

Associated action

- Increase awareness and appreciation of Local Geological Sites within the National Landscape amongst land managers and the public and identify ways to coordinate their monitoring and management (Delivery Plan Action No.7).

A better-connected Chase

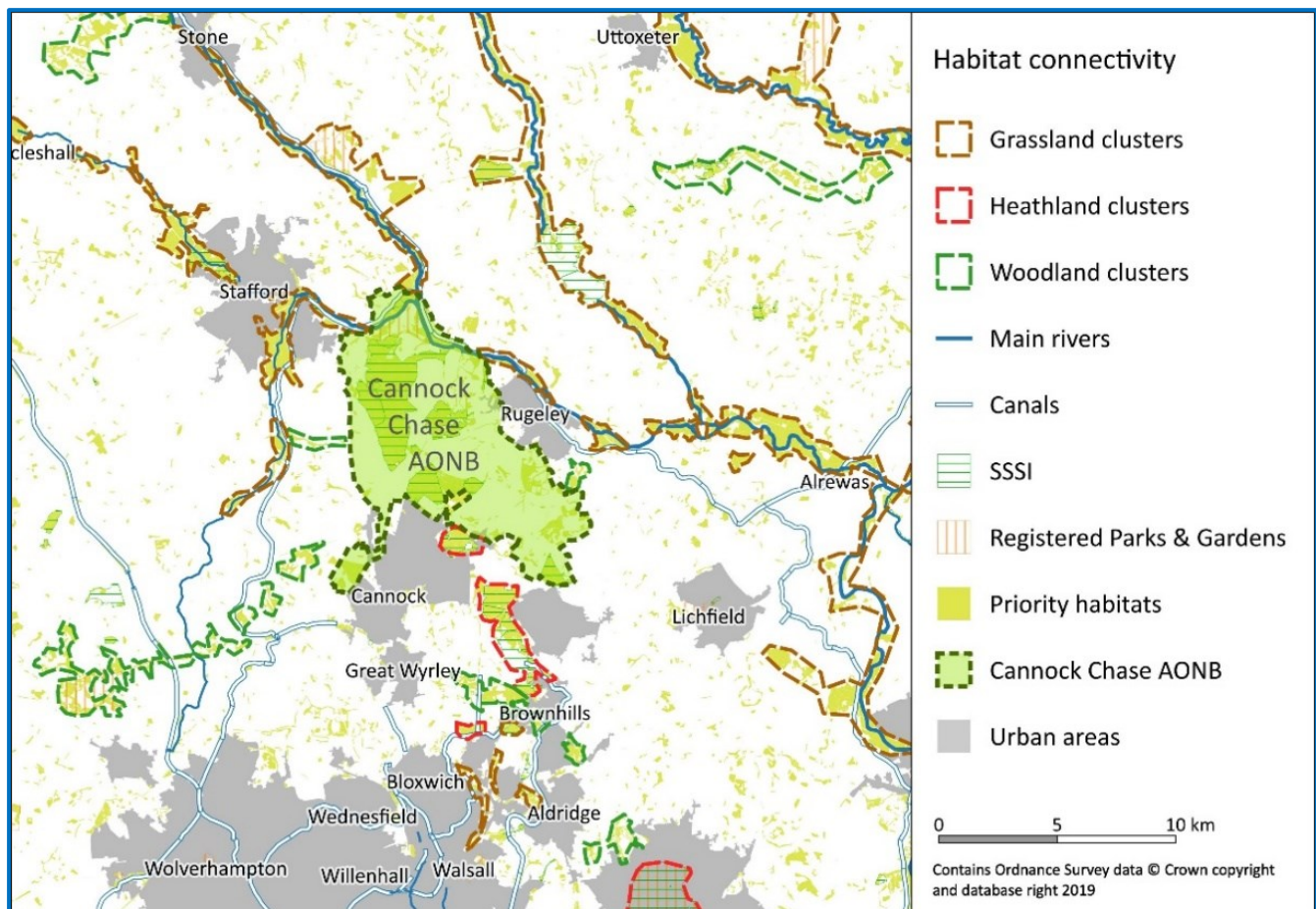
POLICY N8 Ecological networks: Build connected networks of wildlife sites extending beyond the National Landscape and improve landscape permeability, as a means of enhancing the resilience and viability of wildlife populations currently concentrated in the Chase.

Why is this important?

Outside the National Landscape there is a range of core habitat areas and networks that are permeable to wildlife but currently disconnected from each other. To allow wildlife to thrive across the landscape these core habitat areas and networks with wildlife-friendly habitats need to be joined up. These include areas of heathland, wood pasture and Plantations on Ancient Woodland (PAWS) sites to the north west (at Maer Hills, Bishops Wood Loggerheads and Hanchurch), heathland, wetland and PAWS to the south (across the Chasewater and the Southern Staffordshire Coalfield Heaths SSSI complex towards Sutton Park National Nature Reserve in Birmingham and across to Tamworth), flood plain grassland along the north and east (along the Trent and Sow valleys) and the ancient woodlands (the Needwood Forest) and woodland and parkland to the south west (towards Codsall and Albrighton) (see map).

Associated actions

- Deliver programmes for the restoration and creation of priority and other locally important habitats (Delivery Plan Action No. 3)
- Support the Purple Horizons Nature Recovery Project to connect Cannock Chase with Sutton Park to deliver greater resilience for nature (Delivery Plan Action No. 8).
- Identify and promote projects that enhance the landscape connectivity, biodiversity resilience and heritage value of countryside and public open space around the Chase (Delivery Plan Action No. 55).



Map. Connecting Cannock Chase with the wider landscape

POLICY N9 Integrated land management: Develop landscape-scale partnerships and initiatives that deliver better and integrated management of the land and water environment to provide multiple benefits for nature and people as well as increasing resilience to climate change.

Why is this important?

Landscape-scale partnerships deliver better integrated management of the land and water environment providing multiple benefits for nature and people, improved recreational management and increased resilience to climate change.

Associated action

- Explore the potential and feasibility to establish a 'super National Nature Reserve' to protect wildlife and help tackle climate change by restoring and improving priority habitats (Delivery Plan Action No. 9).
- Develop and deliver landscape-scale natural flood management projects in the Trent and Sow catchments (Delivery Plan Action No. 19).

Improve environmental quality

POLICY N10 Water quality: Improve the health of the water environment in the National Landscape, and the sustainability of water resources for people and nature.

Why is this important?

Clean and plentiful water is fundamental to supporting a range of priority wetland habitats on the Chase (such as wet heathland, alder carr woodland, and floodplain grasslands) and a diverse assemblage of aquatic invertebrates, fish, amphibians, mammals and birds in the watercourses that intersect with the National Landscape. Our water system (groundwater and surface water) is under pressure and its use needs to be closely monitored and, where necessary, action taken to address negative impacts.

Associated actions

- Encourage and support programmes to improve water quality in watercourses that feed into and intersect with the National Landscape (Delivery Plan Action No. 10).
- Monitor licences for the abstraction of water from surface waters and aquifers to ensure that volumes of water abstracted are sustainable and do not impact negatively on wetland habitats (Delivery Plan Action No. 11).
- Develop buffer zones around watercourses to protect the water environment and sensitive wetland habitats (Delivery Plan Action No. 12).
- Support woodland owners, managers and contractors to manage woodlands in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) for sustainable forest management (Delivery Plan Action No. 44).

POLICY N11 Air quality: Protect sensitive natural habitats from the effects of air pollution.

Why is this important?

Air pollution from road traffic and agricultural operations is impacting negatively on Cannock Chase SAC, depositing acid or excess nutrients that are toxic to sensitive heathland plant species and altering the composition of the vegetation. Pollution needs to be reduced at source to protect our most important wildlife sites.

Associated actions

- Work with the farming community within and surrounding the National Landscape to adopt practices that reduce ammonia emissions that effect sensitive habitats (Delivery Plan Action No. 13).
- Provide information and additional facilities, such as secure bicycle parking and EV charging points to encourage visitors to arrive by more sustainable means of transport (Delivery Plan Action No. 15).
- Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (Delivery Plan Action No. 17).
- Reduce traffic and highway management impacts through the National Landscape (Delivery Plan Action No. 48).

POLICY N12 Soil health: Encourage practices that protect and regenerate our soils.

Why is this important?

Healthy soil sustains food production, stores carbon, maintains biodiversity and helps to regulate water. The majority of the soils on the Chase are infertile, sandy and free-draining. Land management operations and recreational activities can remove vegetation cover, leading to soil erosion. Nutrient enrichment from the accumulation of organic matter and dog fouling threatens specialised heathland communities.

Associated actions

- Raise awareness of the negative, nutrient-enriching, impacts of dog fouling on sensitive ecological sites, including the SAC (Delivery Plan Action No. 14).
- Improve understanding about the extent, depth and condition of our peatlands, and use that information to improve their protection and restoration (Delivery Plan Action No. 18).
- Promote the benefits of nature friendly and regenerative farming, and support farmers and smallholders to take-up the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes (Delivery Plan Action No.44).

Nature – indicators of success

How we will measure success through the Plan

Priority sites

**Bring 80% of SSSIs within the National Landscape into favourable condition by 2042.*

**For 60% of SSSIs within the National Landscape assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.*

Protect and manage for nature conservation 35% of the National Landscape by 2030, 40% by 2035 and, 45% by 2040.

Priority habitats

***Restore or create 250 hectares of wildlife-rich habitats outside protected sites by 2030.*

Priority species

Publish Species Actions Plans for all Champion species by 2028.

Wildlife-rich countryside

**Ensuring at least 65% to 85% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.*

Water quality

#At least 80% of all watercourses achieve 'good ecological status' by 2030.

* Mandatory national target for Protected Landscapes

** Local contribution to a shared mandatory national target

Target under the Water Framework Directive

10. Priorities for Climate

Strategic aim:

A resilient National Landscape, adapted to cope with the impacts of climate change and net zero.

Policies for this theme are split between three overall objectives:

- Lower greenhouse gas emissions
- Sequester and store more carbon
- Adapting to climate change

Lower greenhouse gas emissions

POLICY C1 Sustainable travel: Promote and encourage the use of sustainable alternative means of transport by visitors to the Chase.

Why is this important?

The total annual CO₂ emissions from residents and visitors travelling to/from and whilst inside the National Landscape, and industry is estimated at 237,254 tCO₂ per year²⁰. The majority of visitors to Cannock Chase travel by private car. Vehicles are a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, as well as causing demand for car parking, road congestion, noise and air pollution, and conflicts with deer and wildlife. The short distance and regular nature of many visitors' journeys means there is significant potential to encourage travel by more sustainable means, delivering multiple benefits.

Associated actions

- Provide information and additional facilities, such as secure bicycle parking and EV charging points to encourage visitors to arrive by more sustainable means of transport (Delivery Plan Action No. 15).
- Work with relevant bodies to improve nearby bus and rail services, and design and provide safe, connected cycle and pedestrian routes into the National Landscape (Delivery Plan Action No. 16).
- Explore with relevant bodies, and put in place, practical steps to reduce traffic and highway management impacts through the National Landscape (Delivery Plan Action No. 47).

Sequester and store more carbon

POLICY C2 Land use change and management: Support land use changes and management practices that increase carbon sequestration and storage and protect our existing carbon stores, respecting and reinforcing local landscape characteristics and distinctiveness. Actions to increase woodland canopy cover should be targeted to ensure that the right tree is planted in the right place.

Why is this important?

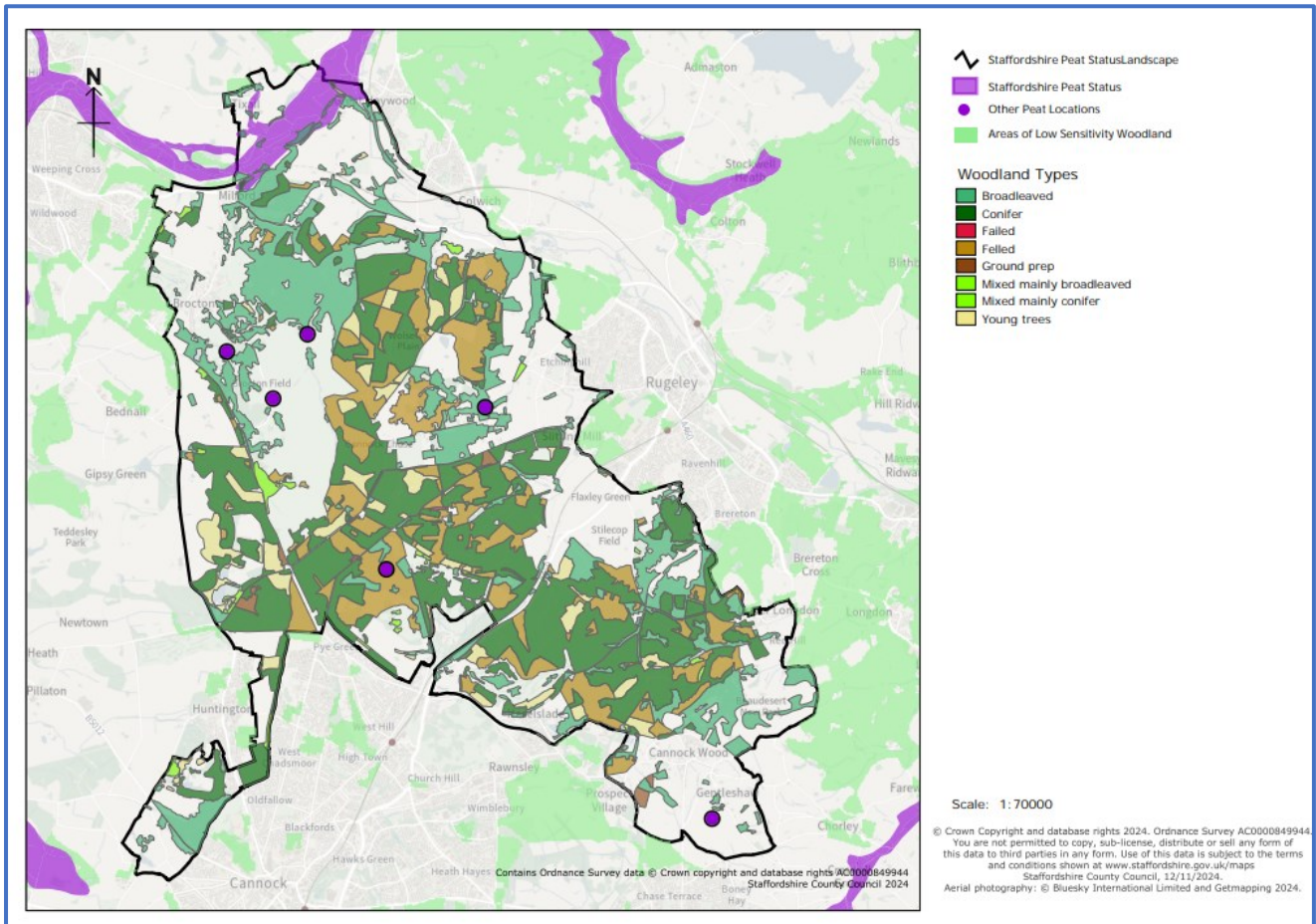
The sequestration of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and storing it as carbon in living biomass, soils and peat is an essential ecosystem service that the National Landscape provides, contributing to reducing the scale and future impacts of climate change. 1.3 million tonnes of carbon is stored in all of the land use types and habitats on Cannock Chase. The National Landscape's pathway to net zero by 2034²⁰ proposes land use targets including planting 10 hectares of new native broadleaved/mixed woodland each year, improving 32 hectares of grassland with legumes, and cover cropping 6.5 hectares of arable land.

Associated actions

- Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (Delivery Plan Action No. 17).
- Improve understanding about the extent, depth and condition of our peatlands, and use that information to improve their protection and restoration (Delivery Plan Action No. 18).
- Encourage woodland owners, managers and contractors to manage woodlands in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) for sustainable forest management²¹ (Delivery Plan Action No. 44).

²⁰ Small World Consulting, *A greenhouse gas emissions assessment and target scenario for the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*, (September 2022).

²¹ Forestry Commission, *The UK Forestry Standard 5th edition*, (2024)



Map. Carbon store – woodlands and peatlands

Adapting to climate change

POLICY C3 Improved resilience: Support and facilitate the delivery of more integrated land use and water management at the landscape-scale to meet climate change challenges and increase the resilience of our landscapes, habitats and heritage.

Why is this important?

The impacts of climate change present challenges to our landscapes, native habitats and wildlife and historic environment. The National Landscape needs to build resilience to adapt to, and mitigate against, the impacts of climate change. This requires collaboration on land use and water management initiatives which capture carbon, reduce flooding and build resilient ecological networks.

Associated actions

- Support the Purple Horizons Nature Recovery Project to connect Cannock Chase with Sutton Park to deliver greater resilience for nature (Delivery Plan Action No. 8).
- Explore the potential and feasibility to establish a 'super National Nature Reserve' to protect wildlife and help tackle climate change by restoring and improving priority habitats (Delivery Plan Action No. 9).
- Develop and deliver landscape-scale natural flood management projects in the Trent and Sow catchments (Delivery Plan Action No. 19).
- Prepare and embed within the Management Plan a climate change adaptation plan by 2028 (Delivery Plan Action No. 20).

Climate – indicators of success

How we will measure success through the Plan

Carbon

***By 2026 assess the potential and opportunities to sequester and store carbon by increasing tree canopy and woodland cover, adopting regenerative agricultural practices on farmland, and restoring peatlands.*

***By 2026 map the extent, depth and condition of our peatlands.*

Nature-based solutions to improve resilience

**By 2028 publish a climate change adaptation plan.*

*Indicates mandatory national target for Protected Landscapes, or **our local contribution to a shared mandatory national target.

11. Priorities for People

Strategic aim:

An inclusive National Landscape, providing a quality experience in which people from all backgrounds and abilities value Cannock Chase as an important part of their lives and are empowered to care for it.

Policies for this theme are split between six overall objectives:

- Recreation management
- Treading lightly on the Chase
- A high-quality visitor experience
- Inclusive and empowering
- Land-based economy
- Place attachment

Recreation management

POLICY PE1 Working together, strategically: Adopt a unified and strategic approach to the management of recreation on the Chase, including creating capacity for the anticipated growth in visitor numbers.

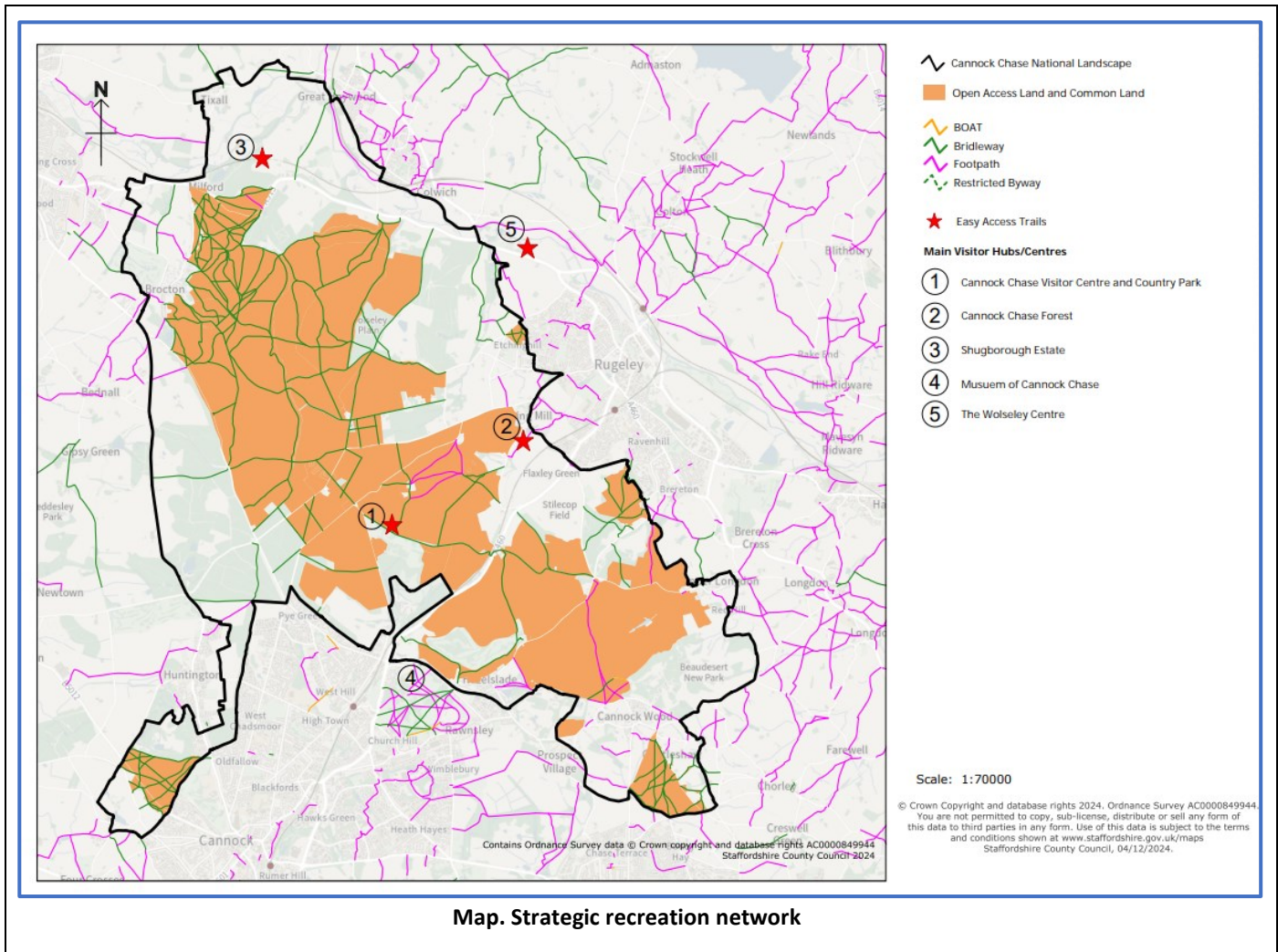
Why is this important?

The National Landscape is a popular destination and receives an estimated 2.5 million visitors each year, with the number expected to rise as a result of the significant increases in new housing being proposed nearby over the next 15 years. Recreation provision is currently fragmented and largely uncoordinated, and delivered by multiple landowners, local authorities, agencies and tourism providers. Long term investment in, and co-ordinated management of visitor sites/attractions, infrastructure and facilities is required if a good quality experience and reduced impacts are to be achieved. Recreation should be planned spatially across the National Landscape, for example, through the identification and provision of signage, gateway points, key sites, car parks and core routes.

Associated action

- Prepare a Recreation Management Strategy for the National Landscape by 2026, building on the foundations set out in the SAC Detailed Implementation Plans²² (Delivery Plan Action No. 22).

²² Footprint Ecology, The Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Strategic Access Management & Monitoring Measures Detailed Implementation Plan: Car Parking, (2020)



Treading lightly on the Chase

POLICY PE2 Avoiding impacts: Direct recreational activity away from the most sensitive parts of the National Landscape, ensuring that suitable measures are in place to reduce the negative impacts of an increase in visitors (both within and beyond the designated boundary).

Why is this important?

Some recreational activities and high footfall can impact negatively on the Chase, threatening the special qualities that draw people to the area. Parking on verges, litter, loose dogs, dog fouling, cycling and horse-riding on undesignated trails are particular causes for concern. In order to protect the National Landscape from recreational pressure there is a need to direct footfall away from the most sensitive parts of the Chase, both within the designated area and where appropriate outside it. The Special Area of Conservation is especially vulnerable and yet is one of the areas that has the highest density of footpaths, rides and car parks. This results in soil erosion, eutrophication, disturbance to wildlife (especially priority species and their habitats) and a loss of tranquillity. Populations of protected species outside of the SAC are also vulnerable to visitor pressures.

Associated actions

- Prepare a Recreation Management Strategy for the National Landscape by 2026, building on the foundations set out in the SAC Detailed Implementation Plans²³ (Delivery Plan Action No. 22).
- Educate organisers of events and group visits to the National Landscape, and in particular the SAC, to be aware of its national importance and the wealth of wildlife and sensitive habitats in the area, their role in conserving it and the need to seek any necessary permissions before visiting (Delivery Plan Action No. 23).

POLICY PE3 Changing perceptions and behaviours: Convey the things that make Cannock Chase National Landscape special to visitors and local people in more consistent and effective ways so that they enjoy it, come to value it, want to care for it, and avoid any negative impacts.

²³ Footprint Ecology, The Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Strategic Access Management & Monitoring Measures Detailed Implementation Plan: Car Parking, (2020)

Why is this important?

It is vital that visitors and local people understand their responsibility to the National Landscape and how their actions, both when they are visiting and at home, impact on the environment and landscape that they have come to experience and enjoy. National Landscapes have an amazing opportunity to help educate and bring to life understanding of how each of us can play our part in the big environmental challenges that face us. From September 2025 a GCSE in Natural History will be available to secondary school students in England.

Associated actions

- Prepare a Recreation Management Strategy for the National Landscape by 2026, building on the foundations set out in the SAC Detailed Implementation Plans²⁴ (Delivery Plan Action No. 22).
- Improve the quality, consistency and availability of information and interpretation about the special qualities of the National Landscape, including their significance and conservation requirements (Delivery Plan Action No. 24).
- Inspire more young people by increasing the uptake of the Future Guardians programme and providing additional supporting resources for local schools (Delivery Plan Action No. 25).
- Continue face-to-face engagement with visitors to help them enjoy and learn about the National Landscape (Delivery Plan Action No. 26).
- Use appropriate and proportionate responses and enforcement to deter illegal activities on the National Landscape such as wildlife and heritage crime and anti-social behaviour (Delivery Plan Action No. 27).
- Promote a unified and distinctive identity for the National Landscape by adopting the Cannock Chase National Landscape brand and key messages (Delivery Plan Action No. 42).

POLICY PE4 Recreation provision beyond the boundaries: Improve the quality and connectivity of existing, and development of new Green Infrastructure and Open Space, as well as the Rights of Way network outside the National Landscape boundary to help reduce recreational and visitor pressure and reduce traffic within the designated area.

Why is this important?

The majority of those who directly experience the National Landscape are local residents who visit to undertake recreational activities or who drive through the area on one of the locally important roads. 52% of those visiting come on a weekly basis and 85% of visits are less than 3 hours long²⁵. The range of recreational activities taking place reflects this with the most common activities being walking, dog walking and cycling. Dog walkers and people visiting to run are particularly local, whereas mountain biking has a large catchment as a well-known regional centre for the activity with good off-road tracks and trails. Many of the shortest but highest frequency visitors are dog walkers and providing alternative open spaces close to where people live will positively benefit the National Landscape as well as local communities and help accommodate future increases in visitor numbers.

Associated action

- Prepare a Recreation Management Strategy for the National Landscape by 2026, building on the foundations set out in the SAC Detailed Implementation Plans²⁶ (Delivery Plan Action No. 22).
- Identify opportunities to improve local access to greenspace for communities around the National Landscape (Delivery Plan Action No. 28).

A high-quality visitor experience

POLICY PE5 Improving access: Provide opportunities for safe access into and within the National Landscape for a range of abilities and users, that is sensitive to the special qualities of the Chase.

Why is this important?

The National Landscape plays an important role in supporting the country's health and wellbeing. It is a significant amenity for large numbers of people who can explore it on foot, horse and bike through its extensive areas of open access land, Public Rights of Way and trails. The provision of well-maintained, easy to use and navigable paths and trails will provide a safe and quality visitor experience, help to protect sensitive wildlife and heritage features and reduce conflicts between different recreation users.

Associated actions

- Prepare a Recreation Management Strategy for the National Landscape by 2026, building on the foundations set out in the SAC Detailed Implementation Plans²⁷ (Delivery Plan Action No. 22).

²⁴ Footprint Ecology, The Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Strategic Access Management & Monitoring Measures Detailed Implementation Plan: Car Parkin, (2020)

²⁵ Lepus Consulting, 2010-11 Cannock Chase AONB Visitor Survey Analysis: Final Report Analysis: Final Report, (October 2012).

²⁶ Footprint Ecology, The Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Strategic Access Management & Monitoring Measures Detailed Implementation Plan: Car Parkin, (2020)

²⁷ Footprint Ecology, The Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Strategic Access Management & Monitoring Measures Detailed Implementation Plan: Car Parkin, (2020)

- Maintain the public rights of way and permissive routes so that they are usable and navigable (Delivery Plan Action No. 29).
- Increase the provision of easy access trails and accessible information, interpretation and signage to maximise inclusivity (Delivery Plan Action No. 30).
- Rationalise the path/trail network on the Chase to reduce habitat fragmentation and wildlife disturbance (Delivery Plan Action No. 31).
- Create and promote circular routes from main car parks and gateway train stations to improve the visitor welcome and experience and protect sensitive ecological sites (Delivery Plan Action No. 32).

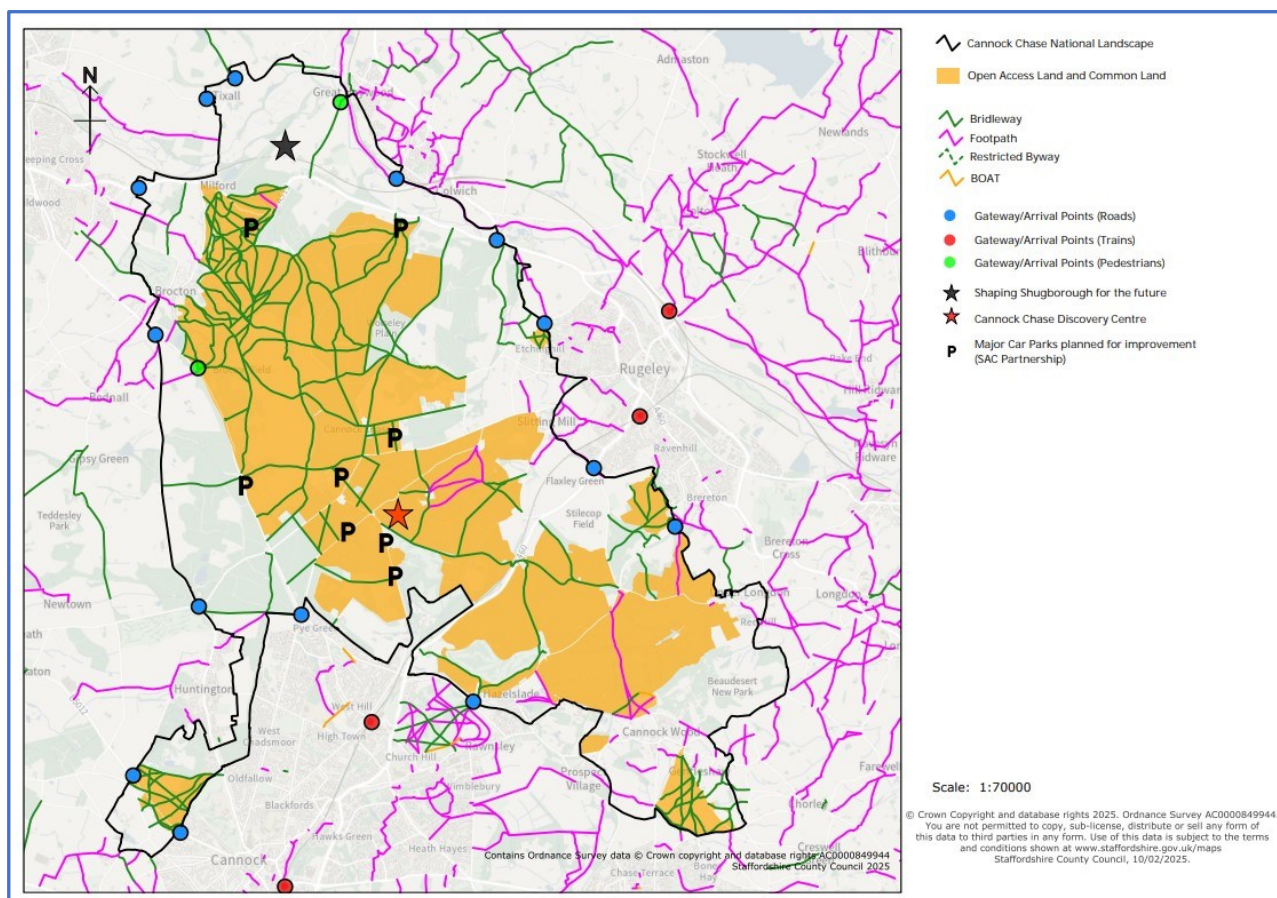
POLICY PE6 Visitor infrastructure: Deliver high-quality visitor infrastructure and provision throughout the National Landscape, using best practice environmental design standards and adopting a common approach to branding, signage, waymarking, interpretation and the reduction of visual clutter on the open Chase.

Why is this important?

As a landscape of national importance there is, or at least should be, an expectation amongst visitors that they will experience a landscape and environment of the highest order. This impression is given not only by the landscape itself but by every aspect of the visitor experience: the information visitors receive, the approach to the National Landscape, the highways they arrive on, the facilities they use, the products they buy – in short, all the interactions they have from the point of planning their visit to the moment they leave the area. High standards of visitor provision appropriate to a nationally important landscape need to be forged that are whole heartedly based on protecting the environment, landscape and special qualities that people have come to visit.

Associated actions

- Prepare a Recreation Management Strategy for the National Landscape by 2026, building on the foundations set out in the SAC Detailed Implementation Plans²⁸ (Delivery Plan Action No. 22).
- Develop and deliver an investment programme of improvements to key infrastructure, for example, the main gateways to the National Landscape, signage and waymarking, key car park improvements and easy access trails (Delivery Plan Action No. 33).
- Develop a new National Landscape discovery centre with enhanced visitor facilities at Cannock Chase Country Park (Delivery Plan Action No. 34).



²⁸ Footprint Ecology, The Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Strategic Access Management & Monitoring Measures Detailed Implementation Plan: Car Parkin, (2020)

Inclusive and empowering

POLICY PE7 A landscape for everyone: Foster greater inclusion and a sense of belonging within the work of the National Landscape that better reflects the diversity of our communities and visitors.	
Why is this important?	The Chase strongly serves the local community as a place to take part in recreation, relax and enjoy. There are areas close to the Chase where people have particular needs that the National Landscape can help to address, such as long-term ill-health and limited access to adjacent green space. More needs to be done to break down barriers and make sure that all residents, as well as visitors from neighbouring areas, have an equal chance to access the National Landscape should they wish to do so.
Associated actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and promote activity and wellbeing programmes suitable for different groups, based on key visitor sites (Delivery Plan Action No. 35). • Commission art experiences that explore and celebrate the National Landscape and help to break down barriers to engagement (Delivery Plan Action No. 36). • Develop closer working relationships with local businesses in and around the National Landscape to support the special qualities of the National Landscape (Delivery Plan Action No. 37).
POLICY PE8 Opportunities for volunteering: Increase and diversify volunteering opportunities that support the special qualities of the National Landscape.	
Why is this important?	The input of volunteers is critical to achieving many of the objectives of the National Landscape Management Plan, and to the work of many local organisations. More could be done to give people from all backgrounds an opportunity to enjoy and contribute to the National Landscape.
Associated action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore ways to promote, recruit and effectively support volunteers, and improve coordination between partner organisations (Delivery Plan Action No. 38).
POLICY PE9 Empower communities: Support and enable communities to develop and deliver high-quality, community-led initiatives that contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the National Landscape.	
Why is this important?	A number of communities and local organisations have established projects to deliver actions which contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape. Further work and engagement are needed to promote awareness and understanding of how the full range of natural benefits provided by the Chase can serve its community, and to widen access to these natural benefits. Opportunities should be sought to support businesses both within the National Landscape and the wider local economy to benefit from the National Landscape brand where their values and operations support and enhance the vision and special qualities.
Associated actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop closer working relationships with local businesses in and around the National Landscape to support the special qualities of the National Landscape. (Delivery Plan Action No. 37). • Enable communities to deliver projects that enhance their local area and the National Landscape through advice, support and funding (Delivery Plan Action No. 39). • Establish a Cannock Chase Charitable Fund for voluntary and business giving, that can then be used to grant-aid community works (Delivery Plan Action No. 40).

Land-based economy

POLICY PE10 Rural skills: Promote and support training schemes and employment opportunities for local people in nature and heritage conservation, recreation, woodland, farming and traditional rural skills that help to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Landscape.	
Why is this important?	The special qualities that give Cannock Chase its distinctive and special character depend on the passion, dedication and skills of people in forestry and farming, heritage conservation, nature conservation, recreation and countryside management. Working age and particularly young people need to have the opportunity to work professionally in the rural sector or develop the skills and knowledge to practice such skills in their leisure time.
Associated action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understand the numbers of people employed in the local rural economy, and any support that they require (Delivery Plan Action No. 41).

Place attachment

<p>POLICY PE11 A greater sense of place: Strengthen people's emotional connections with and attachments to Cannock Chase to generate a greater pride in, and respect for, the area.</p>
<p>Why is this important?</p> <p>So familiar to those who live and work here, it is easy to take Cannock Chase for granted. Yet, it is a precious and fragile resource that needs looking after so that we can all benefit from it environmentally, economically and socially. The way people feel and behave towards the Chase is strongly influenced by the attachments that they have with the area – referred to as 'place attachment'. Sense of place and our attachment to a place contributes to our culture and the identities of local communities and even impacts on people's health and quality of life. It is also fundamental to the protection and conservation of a place – the more that people develop an understanding of their area, the more they will appreciate its qualities, take pride in it, and want to look after it.</p>
<p>Associated action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote a unified and distinctive identity for the National Landscape by adopting the Cannock Chase National Landscape brand and key messages (Delivery Plan Action No. 42).

<p>People – indicators of success</p> <p>How we will measure success through the Plan</p> <p>Recreation management</p> <p><i>By 2026 publish a Recreation Management Strategy for the National Landscape.</i></p>
<p>Avoiding impacts</p> <p><i>Deliver improvements to two formal car parks in accordance with the Cannock Chase SAC Detailed Implementation Plan.</i></p>
<p>Improving access</p> <p><i>**Identify two new easy access trails.</i></p>
<p>Visitor infrastructure</p> <p><i>By 2027 review all key road gateways and signage onto the Chase and begin a programme of improvements by 2028.</i></p> <p><i>By 2030 create a visitor welcome at all train gateway stations onto the Chase.</i></p> <p><i>By 2029 re-develop Cannock Chase Visitor Centre as a discovery centre for the National Landscape.</i></p>
<p>Increase volunteering</p> <p><i>Increase number of volunteer hours by 10% by 2030 from a 2023 baseline.</i></p>
<p>** Local contribution to a mandatory national target.</p>

12. Priorities for Place

Strategic aim:

A welcoming National Landscape, whose local character, distinctiveness and sense of place are sustained and enhanced, providing multiple benefits for all.

Policies for this theme are split between six overall objectives:

- Maintain landscape quality and distinctiveness
- Wildness and tranquillity
- Enhance the setting of the Chase within its wider rural and urban landscape
- Understanding the Chase's historic environment
- Conserving the Chase's historic environment
- Connecting communities with the Chase's history and culture

Maintain landscape quality and distinctiveness

POLICY PL1 High standards of design in the built environment: Development within the National Landscape should be of high quality design and environmental standards, respecting local distinctiveness, be complementary in form and scale with their surroundings, should take opportunities to enhance their setting and minimise their carbon footprint and negative impacts on the local environment.

Why is this important?

There will be a continuing demand for alterations and additions to existing buildings in, and in proximity to, the Chase. Policies in Local Plans make clear that unsuitable new development will be resisted. Beyond that, it is important that development that is allowed is of a high quality based on best practice environmental and design standards so that it does not detract from, and ideally enhances, local landscape character.

Associated action

- Use the National Landscape's 'Building Design Guide' to inform development proposals and decision-making (Delivery Plan Action No. 43).

POLICY PL2 Woodland: Enhance the contribution that diverse and well-managed woodlands make to the character of the National Landscape as well as carbon sequestration and storage, flood alleviation and resilience to climate change.

Why is this important?

Over half (54.1%) of the National Landscape is wooded, contributing greatly to the natural beauty of the area and the public goods it provides. The woodlands contrast significantly in their character ranging from commercial coniferous plantations to semi-natural ancient woodland. The majority (2,684 ha of woodland, rides and glades) is managed by Forestry England as part of Cannock Chase Forest, but there are also areas of privately-owned woodlands, and smaller copses on farms. Most recent figures indicate that 2,787 ha of woodland (73.5% of all the woodland in the National Landscape) is actively managed²⁹. Outside Cannock Chase Forest, woodland is being managed and restored under agri-environment schemes as well as through the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme.

Associated actions

- Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (Delivery Plan Action No. 17).
- Encourage woodland owners, managers and contractors to manage woodlands in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) for sustainable forest management³⁰. (Delivery Plan Action No. 44).

POLICY PL3 Farmland: Encourage and support farming businesses on and around the Chase to implement agricultural land management practices that contribute to the special qualities of the National Landscape, and deliver other public benefits, such as clean air, clean water and healthy soils.

Why is this important?

Around 24% of Cannock Chase is farmland, mainly occupying the fringes of the designated area on more fertile soils surrounding the forest and heath core. Pasture and arable farming have shaped and helped to maintain the landscape in this area. The transition of UK farming away from EU subsidies to the delivery of public goods will create a period of uncertainty for farmers. Advice and support will be needed to encourage a smooth transition for

²⁹ 'Active management' includes all woodland that is in receipt of any national woodland grants, an approved felling licence, or is owned or managed by Forestry England.

³⁰ Forestry Commission, *The UK Forestry Standard 5th edition*, (2024)

farming businesses and ensure that the types of farming that contribute to the National Landscape's special qualities are able to thrive and develop. Funding through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme has delivered a wide range of public benefits for nature, climate, people and place. It has also allowed the National Landscape Team to develop trusted relationships with the farming community which is critical to the survival of many elements of the landscape and its natural beauty.

Associated action

- Promote the benefits of nature friendly and regenerative farming, and support farmers and smallholders to take-up the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes (Delivery Plan Action No. 45).

POLICY PL4 Other land uses: Conserve and enhance the National Landscape's special qualities through the sensitive use and management of rural non-farming land uses.

Why is this important?

The villages and farmsteads of the Chase are popular places to live, and many residents are keen to manage their own piece of the landscape, such as productive smallholdings, pony paddocks and small woodland. The Chase also has two active permitted sand and gravel quarries (Rugeley Quarry and Pottal Pool Quarry) and one restored (Shoal Hill Quarry) that is still within the aftercare and management phase. When these quarries and other working landscapes and land uses come to the end of their economic life, it is important that their restoration and subsequent land use is informed and sympathetic to the landscape character, habitats and special qualities of the National Landscape. Change of use is an opportunity to restore and enhance land for nature recovery, tackle climate change, provide alternative space for public access to reduce pressure on more sensitive parts, and enhance the landscape character of the Chase.

Associated actions

- Support rural non-farming landowners to help conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Landscape through advice, support and funding (Delivery Plan Action No. 46).
- Plan for future land use changes ensuring that opportunities are maximised to support and enhance the special qualities of the National Landscape, for example, on mineral sites (Delivery Plan Action No. 47).

Wildness and tranquillity

POLICY PL5 Road traffic: Minimise the impacts of traffic travelling through the Chase and highway management on tranquillity and other special qualities by encouraging alternative routes and reducing speed, noise and air pollution.

Why is this important?

Several busy roads run alongside or pass through the National Landscape. Traffic, particularly heavy goods vehicles and speeding cars, plus the mechanisms put in place to manage it, can significantly detract from the tranquillity and quality of the landscape. Highway design also impacts on landscape quality.

Associated actions

- Develop and deliver an investment programme of improvements to key infrastructure, for example, the main gateways to the National Landscape, signage and waymarking, key car park improvements and easy access trails (Delivery Plan Action No. 33).
- Explore with relevant bodies, and put in place, practical steps to reduce traffic and highway management impacts through the National Landscape (Delivery Action Plan No. 48).
- Use the National Landscape's 'Highways Design Guide' to inform highway schemes, management and decision-making (Delivery Plan Action No. 49).

POLICY PL6 Overhead powerlines: Reduce the visual impacts of overhead powerlines through undergrounding and landscape enhancement initiatives. All proposals for undergrounding will be rigorously assessed for any potential environmental impacts and will seek to minimise disturbance and avoid harm to natural and cultural heritage.

Why is this important?

Putting intrusive overhead lines underground is an immediate and permanent way to enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape. This objective continues the national Ofgem programme for visual improvement projects, which is implemented and paid for by the electricity distribution companies in consultation with England's Protected Landscapes.

Associated actions

- Work with landowners to identify and deliver opportunities to put existing powerlines underground (Delivery Plan Action No. 50).
- Work with landowners to identify and deliver investment opportunities for the Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) (Delivery Plan Action No. 51).

POLICY PL7 Dark skies: Maintain the National Landscape as a place where dark skies can be enjoyed.

Why is this important?

Natural starry skies are one of the sights which make Cannock Chase special. Night-time darkness is a key characteristic of the area's sense of tranquillity and relative remoteness. However, light pollution has the potential to erode and destroy that tranquillity and sense of remoteness. It diminishes the ability to see and understand the dark night skies and beauty of our galaxy. It also adversely impacts on our health and wellbeing, effects wildlife behaviour, and wastes resources. Artificial lighting also introduces a suburban feel and can detract from the landscape beauty of the National Landscape.

Associated actions

- Promote enjoyment of the National Landscape's night skies (Delivery Plan Action No. 52).
- Use the National Landscape's 'Good Lighting Guide' to inform development proposals and decision-making (Delivery Plan Action No. 53).

Enhance the setting of the Chase within its wider urban and rural landscape

POLICY PL8 Protecting views: Resist development and land management proposals in the area which, by virtue of their nature, size, scale, siting, materials or design, can be considered to have a negative impact on the natural beauty and special qualities of Cannock Chase.

Why is this important?

The elevated plateau landform of the Chase gives long vistas out over the farmed vales and countryside of the Midlands. At the same time, the Chase is present as a prominent wooded skyline from many surrounding settlements and roads. The small size of the designated area and its prominent elevation mean that its setting has an increased significance for the Chase's landscape character. Protecting and enhancing the setting of the National Landscape is important for ensuring the long-term survival of the special qualities. Views, including historic views, are one of the key ways that setting is experienced, and understanding these views into and out of the Chase will help to protect them.

Associated action

- Use the National Landscape's 'Views and Setting Guide' to inform development proposals and decision-making (Delivery Plan Action No. 54).

POLICY PL9 Softening the boundary: Design and maintain the character of the public realm (e.g. landscaping around roads and buildings, public lighting and signage) in the immediate vicinity of the National Landscape so that it reinforces and complements the landscape character and quality of the Chase and provides a welcoming experience for those entering the area.

Why is this important?

The change in character on the edge of the Chase, from natural and open to busy and built-up, is particularly marked around Cannock, Pye Green, Hednesford and Rugeley, emphasising the sense of the Chase's isolation and fragility and reducing the aesthetic experience of people entering the Chase at these points both in the day and at night due to light pollution.

Associated actions

- Use the National Landscape's 'Building Design Guide' to inform development proposals and decision-making (Delivery Plan Action No. 43).
- Use the National Landscape's 'Good Lighting Guide' to inform development proposals and decision-making (Delivery Plan Action No. 53).

POLICY PL10 Strategic landscape links: Encourage and support opportunities to enhance the character and quality of the countryside and public open spaces surrounding the National Landscape so as to enhance its setting, reduce its isolation and create strong visual and aesthetic links with surrounding landscapes.

Why is this important?

The spread of built-up land around the National Landscape since its designation in 1958 has been extensive and has brought development right up to the designated boundary in several places. The connectivity and integrity of landscape character with areas of countryside around the National Landscape needs to be protected and strengthened, particularly through heathland links to Sutton Park in the south, heathland, hedges and woodland to the west and east, and along the river valleys to the north building on the work of the Transforming the Trent Landscape Partnership Scheme. These environmental connections are also highlighted in the Nature Theme.

Associated actions

- Support the Purple Horizons Nature Recovery Project to connect Cannock Chase with Sutton Park to deliver greater resilience for nature (Delivery Plan Action No. 8).
- Identify and promote projects that enhance the landscape connectivity, biodiversity resilience and heritage value of countryside and public open space around the Chase (Delivery Plan Action No. 55).

Understanding the Chase's historic environment

POLICY PL11 Improving knowledge of heritage: Improve understanding of the significance, relative importance and condition of heritage assets within the National Landscape.

Why is this important?

The depth and diversity of the historic environment and how this has influenced the land use and landscape that is evident today is one of the special qualities of Cannock Chase. The Chase is also an historic landscape in its own right. In addition to ensuring that designated heritage assets are fully understood and actively managed in the most appropriate way there is a pressing need to fully understand the significance and survival of all the non-designated heritage assets in the National Landscape. In particular these non-designated heritage assets need to be prioritised, and decisions made on the best way to manage and protect them, for instance if they need to be put forward for designation.

Associated actions

- Improve understanding about the extent, depth and condition of our peatlands, and use that information to improve their protection and restoration (Delivery Action Plan No. 18).
- Monitor the condition of designated heritage features in the National Landscape to identify management actions that will reduce their vulnerabilities (Delivery Plan Action No. 56).
- Assess updated historic environment information on non-designated features to prioritise sites for survey, condition assessment and monitoring to inform future management (Delivery Plan Action No. 57).
- Prepare an Historic Environment Strategy for the National Landscape that will conserve, enhance and celebrate the area's rich and diverse historic environment (Delivery Plan Action No. 60).

Conserving the Chase's historic environment

POLICY PL12 Improving the condition of heritage: Work with landowners, managers, local communities, decision makers and enforcement agencies to protect and positively manage the historic environment.

Why is this important?

Around 6% of the number of heritage assets within the National Landscape have been designated as 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 the natural beauty of the area. In order to improve the condition of all heritage assets in the National Landscape it is important that knowledge reaches those whose actions have a direct impact on them. Measures also need to be put in place to ensure that landowners, managers and decision makers appreciate the scale of historic interest within the area and the potential for significant heritage assets to be unprotected. Easily accessible resources and knowledge need to be available to help them be aware where these assets exist on land they are responsible for and understand how they can contribute to their conservation and successful management.

Associated actions

- Use appropriate and proportionate responses and enforcement to deter illegal activities on the National Landscape including wildlife and heritage crime and anti-social behaviour (Delivery Plan Action No. 27).
- Deliver sustainable management regimes for heritage assets by providing support and guidance and seeking investment (Delivery Plan Action No. 58).
- Prepare an Historic Environment Strategy for the National Landscape that will conserve, enhance and celebrate the area's rich and diverse historic environment (Delivery Plan Action No. 60).

Connecting communities with the Chase's history and culture

POLICY PL13 Inspiring through the Chase's history and culture: Engage and inspire local communities and visitors to enjoy and appreciate Cannock Chase's historic environment through education, interpretation and events.

Why is this important?

Improving understanding and celebrating the history and culture of the Chase will help to engage and inspire the public and further the connection between the designated area and its communities and visitors, reinforcing its importance and 'specialness' and the need to protect it. As new communities spring up adjacent to the Chase the need to appreciate and celebrate the cultural importance of the area and foster this connection with communities becomes even more important.

Associated action

- Develop and deliver projects that celebrate the National Landscape's cultural heritage, connecting the Chase with surrounding towns and villages, and involving local communities in historic environment citizen science activities (Delivery Plan Action No. 59).

- Prepare an Historic Environment Strategy for the National Landscape that will conserve, enhance and celebrate the area's rich and diverse historic environment (Delivery Plan Action No. 60).

Place – indicators of success

How we will measure success through the Plan

Overhead powerlines

By 2030 put another 2km of existing power lines underground.

Condition assessment

Every heritage asset [NB] on the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record within the National Landscape is visited and assessed for their condition once every 5 years.

Designated heritage assets

**No designated heritage assets feature on the national Heritage at Risk Register.*

Historic Environment Strategy

By 2026 publish an Historic Environment Strategy for the National Landscape.

Historic environment projects

Deliver two major projects from the Historic Environment Strategy that celebrate and promote engagement with the historic environment.

* Mandatory national target for Protected Landscapes

[NB]. Excluding sites that are no longer extant, find spots, standing buildings, places or veteran trees.

13. Indicators of success

The National Landscape Team and its partners will track and report progress against a number of indicators of success across the four themes of Nature, Climate, People and Place. This will provide a regular snapshot of progress for the delivery of the Management Plan and will be reported in a number of ways:

- Annual reporting by the National Landscape Team and partners against activities set out in the Business Plan to accompany the Management Plan.
- Annual reporting by the National Landscape Partnership to the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan.
- Annual Review of the National Landscape's achievements.

In addition, the condition of the special qualities of the National Landscape will be monitored in our State of the AONB Report, produced every five years to help inform future editions of the Management Plan.

Theme	Indicator
	<p>* Mandatory national target for Protected Landscapes</p> <p>** Local contribution to a shared mandatory target</p> <p># Target under the Water Framework Directive</p>
Nature	<p>Priority sites</p> <p><i>*Bring 80% of SSSIs within the National Landscape into favourable condition by 2042.</i></p> <p><i>*For 60% of SSSIs within the National Landscape assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.</i></p> <p><i>Protect and manage for nature conservation 35% of the National Landscape by 2030, 40% by 2035, and 45% by 2040.</i></p> <p>Priority habitats</p> <p><i>**Restore or create 250 hectares of wildlife-rich habitats outside protected sites by 2030.</i></p> <p>Priority species</p> <p><i>Publish Species Actions Plans for all Champion species by 2028.</i></p> <p>Wildlife-rich countryside</p> <p><i>*Ensuring at least 65% to 85% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.</i></p> <p>Water quality</p> <p><i># At least 80% of all watercourses achieve 'good ecological status' by 2030.</i></p>
Climate	<p>Carbon</p> <p><i>**By 2026 assess the potential and opportunities to sequester and store carbon by increasing tree canopy and woodland cover, adopting regenerative agricultural practices on farmland, and restoring peatlands.</i></p> <p><i>**By 2026 map the extent, depth and condition of our peatlands.</i></p> <p>Nature-based solutions to improve resilience</p> <p><i>*By 2028 publish a climate change adaptation plan.</i></p>

People	<p>Recreation management <i>By 2026 publish a Recreation Management Strategy for the National Landscape.</i></p> <p>Avoiding impacts <i>Deliver improvements to two formal car parks in accordance with the Cannock Chase SAC Detailed Implementation Plan.</i></p> <p>Improving access <i>**Identify two new easy access trails.</i></p> <p>Visitor infrastructure <i>By 2027 review all key road gateways and signage onto the Chase and begin a programme of improvements by 2028.</i></p> <p><i>By 2030 create a visitor welcome at all train gateway stations onto the Chase.</i></p> <p><i>By 2029 re-develop Cannock Chase Visitor Centre as a discovery centre for the National Landscape.</i></p> <p>Increase volunteering <i>Increase number of volunteer hours by 10% by 2030 from a 2023 baseline.</i></p>
Place	<p>Overhead powerlines <i>By 2030 put another 2km of existing power lines underground.</i></p> <p>Condition assessment <i>Every heritage asset³¹ on the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record within the National Landscape is visited and assessed for their condition once every 5 years.</i></p> <p>Designated heritage assets <i>*No designated heritage assets feature on the national Heritage at Risk Register.</i></p> <p>Historic Environment Strategy <i>By 2026 publish an Historic Environment Strategy for the National Landscape.</i></p> <p>Historic environment projects <i>Deliver two major projects from the Historic Environment Strategy that celebrate and promote engagement with the historic environment.</i></p>

³¹ Excluding sites that are no longer extant, find spots, standing buildings, places or veteran trees

14. Delivery Plan

The Delivery Plan below timetables the actions for Nature, Climate, People and Place across the five-year life of the Management Plan. Implementation of the Plan will require the National Landscape Partnership and its partners to align their resources and activities to reflect the vision and objectives set out here. Not all of what happens can be achieved within existing resources, however, and we will need to work together to attract new investment and funding. We will also continue to recognise and support the huge amount that is achieved through local communities and volunteers and will encourage as many people as possible to get involved. The outcomes of some actions will take many years to be seen, beyond the five-year lifetime of the Plan.

How to read this Delivery Plan

This plan is presented in tabular form. The following example illustrates how the headings should be interpreted.

Action	Themes and policies delivered				Estimated timeframe	Indicative levels of resourcing	Key partners (lead partner in bold)
	N	C	PE	PL			
18. Improve understanding about the extent, depth and condition of our peatlands, and use that information to improve their protection and restoration.	<i>N12</i>	<i>C2</i>		<i>PL11</i>	Short	Low	NL Team , SCC Historic Environment Team, SCC, NT, FE, SWT, landowners

Action

The work required to deliver the policies set out in chapters 9-12.

Themes

The theme and relevant policy the action sits under - Nature, Climate, **PEople**, **PLace**. Some actions may contribute to the delivery of more than one theme, and such instances are italicised.

Timeframe

When the action can be expected to take place during the lifetime of the Plan. Some tasks will be ongoing throughout the five-year period.

Resources

The estimated scale of resources required to deliver the action, expressed as low, medium or high.

Key Partners

The principal partners involved in delivering the action, with the lead partner in bold.

Key to partner acronyms:

NL Team - National Landscape Team	NE – Natural England
SAC Team - Special Area of Conservation Team	NFU - National Farmers' Union
BHS - British Horse Society	NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation
CCC - Cannock Chase District Council	NT - National Trust
CLA - The Country Land and Business Association	SCC - Staffordshire County Council
CPRE - CPRE The Countryside Charity	SR - Staffordshire Ramblers
FC - Forestry Commission	SSC - South Staffordshire District Council
FE - Forestry England	SWT - Staffordshire Wildlife Trust
HE - Historic England	Visitor hubs/centres - (the 6 visitor hubs/centres that serve the National Landscape: Cannock Chase Visitor Centre, The Museum of Cannock Chase, Shugborough Estate, The Wolseley Centre, Cannock Chase Forest, Chasewater Innovation Centre)
MoCC - Museum of Cannock Chase	

Action	Themes and policies delivered				Estimated timeframe	Indicative levels of resourcing	Key partners (lead partner in bold)
	N	C	PE	PL			
					Short (1-2 yrs), Medium (3-4 yrs), Long (by the Plan end), Ongoing	Low (0-25K), Medium (25-100K), High (100k+)	
Actions for Nature							
1. Secure long-term protection for nature conservation and favourable management of protected sites through legal or other effective means.	N1				Long	High	NL Team , SCC, FE, SWT, NT, CCC, SSC, landowners, land managers, NE
2. Re-introduce livestock grazing to key sites to support sustainable management.	N1				Long	High	SCC and NT, SWT, Cemex
3. Deliver programmes for the restoration and creation of priority and other locally important habitats.	N2 N3				Long	High	NL Team , SCC, FE, SWT, NT, CCC, landowners
4. Publish Species Action Plans for 10 Champion Species for the National Landscape, and deliver targeted action where required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly Adder Nightjar Solitary wasp species of bare ground (TBC) Ancient oak trees White-clawed crayfish Otter Common redstart Welsh Clearwing Brown hare 	NL3				Long	High	NL Team , landowners, NGOs, species expert groups
5. Monitor invasive species and deliver collaborative and targeted management to address them where required.	N5				Ongoing	Medium	NL Team , landowners, species expert groups
6. Draw up and deliver a strategy and action plan for monitoring and managing the deer population in the Chase as well as engaging and informing the public about the need to manage the deer population.	N6				Short	Low	NL Team , FE, FC, SCC, NT, landowners, farmers
7. Increase awareness and appreciation of Local Geological Sites within the National Landscape amongst land managers and the public and identify ways to coordinate their monitoring and management.	N7				Long	Low	NL Team , NT, FE, SCC, SWT
8. Support the Purple Horizons Nature Recovery Project to connect Cannock Chase with Sutton Park to deliver greater resilience for nature.	N2 N8	C3		PL10	Long	Low	NE , NL Team, NGOs, landowners
9. Explore the potential and feasibility to establish a 'super National Nature Reserve' to protect wildlife and help tackle climate change by restoring and improving priority habitats.	N9	C3			Medium	Medium	NL Team , SCC, FE, NT, SWT, Cemex, NE
10. Encourage and support programmes to improve water quality in watercourses that feed into and intersect with the National Landscape.	N10				Long	High	Environment Agency , Severn Trent

Action	Themes and policies delivered				Estimated timeframe	Indicative levels of resourcing	Key partners (lead partner in bold)
	N	C	PE	PL			
					Short (1-2 yrs), Medium (3-4 yrs), Long (by the Plan end), Ongoing	Low (0-25K), Medium (25-100K), High (100k+)	
							Water, South Staffordshire Water, NL Team, NFU, landowners, farmers.
11. Monitor licences for the abstraction of water from surface waters and aquifers to ensure that volumes of water abstracted are sustainable and do not impact negatively on wetland habitats.	N10				Ongoing	Low	Environment Agency , Severn Trent Water, South Staffordshire Water, NL Team
12. Develop buffer zones around watercourses to protect the water environment and sensitive wetland habitats.	N10				Long	Medium	NL Team , FE, SCC, NT, landowners
13. Work with the farming community within and surrounding the National Landscape to adopt practices that reduce ammonia emissions that effect sensitive habitats.	N11				Long	Medium	NE , Severn Trent Water, District Councils
14. Raise awareness of the negative, nutrient-enriching, impacts of dog fouling on sensitive ecological sites, including the SAC.	N12				Ongoing	Low	SAC Team , SCC, FE, NT, SWT, CCC, SSC, local authority community and civil enforcement teams
Actions for Climate							
15. Provide information and additional facilities, such as secure bicycle parking and EV charging points to encourage visitors to arrive by more sustainable means of transport	N11	C1			Long	Medium	NL Team , SCC, visitor hubs/centres
16. Work with relevant bodies to improve nearby bus and rail services, and design and provide safe, connected cycle and pedestrian routes into the National Landscape.		C1	PE5		Medium	Medium	NL Team , SCC, local authorities, FE
17. Increase tree canopy and woodland cover.	N2 N11	C2		PL2	Long	High	NL Team , Forestry Commission, Forest of Mercia, Midlands Forest Network, local authorities, landowners, NGOs
18. Improve understanding about the extent, depth and condition of our peatlands, and use that information to improve their protection and restoration.	N12	C2		PL11	Short	Low	NL Team , SCC Historic Environment Team, NT, FE,

Action	Themes and policies delivered				Estimated timeframe	Indicative levels of resourcing	Key partners (lead partner in bold)
	N	C	PE	PL			
					Short (1-2 yrs), Medium (3-4 yrs), Long (by the Plan end), Ongoing	Low (0-25K), Medium (25-100K), High (100k+)	
							SWT, landowners
19. Develop and deliver landscape-scale natural flood management projects in the Trent and Sow catchments.	N9	C3			Long	High	NT and SWT , Environment Agency, landowners
20. Prepare and embed within the Management Plan a climate change adaptation plan.	N9	C3			Medium	Low	NL Team , local authorities, landowners
21. Diversify woodland species and stand structures to help mitigate rapid climate change.		C3			Ongoing	High	FE, woodland managers
Actions for People							
22. Prepare a Recreation Management Strategy for the National Landscape, building on the foundations set out in the SAC Detailed Implementation Plans.			PE1		Short	Low	NL Team , SAC Team, visitor hubs/centres, landowners, SCC, Enjoy Staffordshire, NGOs
23. Educate organisers of events and group visits to the National Landscape, and in particular the SAC, to be aware of its national importance and the wealth of wildlife and sensitive habitats in the area, their role in conserving it, and the need to seek any necessary permissions before visiting.			PE1, PE2		Ongoing	Low	SAC Team and NL Team , SCC, FE, BHS, SR, British Cycling
24. Improve the quality, consistency and availability of information and interpretation about the special qualities of the National Landscape, including their significance and conservation requirements.	All	All	PE1, PE3	All	Ongoing	Low	NL Team and SAC Team , landowners, visitor hubs/centres, Enjoy Staffordshire, NGOs, BHS, SR
25. Inspire more young people by increasing the uptake of the Future Guardians programme and providing additional supporting resources for local schools.			PE1, PE3		Ongoing	Low	NL Team and SAC Team , Staffordshire Scouts, Girlguiding Staffordshire, DofE, local schools, libraries
26. Continue face-to-face engagement with visitors to help them enjoy and learn about the National Landscape.			PE1, PE3		Ongoing	Medium	SAC Team, NL Team, SCC, FE, NT, SWT, CCC, SSC
27. Use appropriate and proportionate responses and enforcement to deter illegal activities on the National Landscape such as wildlife and heritage crime, and anti-social behaviour.	N3		PE1, PE3	PL12	Ongoing	Medium	Staffordshire Police, NE, NE, NL Team, SAC Team , landowners
28. Identify opportunities to improve local access to greenspace for communities around the National Landscape			PE1, PE4		End	Medium - high	Local authorities ,

Action	Themes and policies delivered				Estimated timeframe	Indicative levels of resourcing	Key partners (lead partner in bold)
	N	C	PE	PL			
					Short (1-2 yrs), Medium (3-4 yrs), Long (by the Plan end), Ongoing	Low (0-25K), Medium (25-100K), High (100k+)	
							community groups
29. Maintain the public rights of way and permissive routes so that they are usable and navigable.			PE1, PE5		Ongoing	High	SCC and NL Team , landowners, BHS, SR, volunteers
30. Increase the provision of easy access trails and accessible information, interpretation and signage to maximise inclusivity.			PE1, PE5		Medium	Medium	NL Team , SAC Team, Sustrans, landowners, SR
31. Rationalise the path/trail network on the Chase to reduce habitat fragmentation and wildlife disturbance.	N1, N2, N3		PE1, PE5		Short	Low	SAC Team , SCC, landowners
32. Create and promote circular routes from main car parks and gateway train stations to improve the visitor welcome and experience and protect sensitive ecological sites.	N1		PE1, PE5		Medium	Medium	SAC Team and NL Team , BHS, SR, SCC, train operating companies
33. Develop and deliver an investment programme of improvements to key infrastructure, for example, the main gateways to the National Landscape, signage and waymarking, key car park improvements and easy access trails.			PE1, PE6	PL5	Long	High	SAC Team and NL Team , SCC, landowners, visitor hubs/centres, BHS, SR
34. Develop a new National Landscape discovery centre with enhanced visitor facilities at Cannock Chase Country Park.			PE1, PE6		Long	High	SCC , NL and SAC Teams
35. Develop and promote activity and wellbeing programmes suitable for different groups, based on key visitor sites.			PE7		Ongoing	Low	Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles, Active Forest Programme , British Cycling, healthcare providers
36. Commission art experiences that explore and celebrate the National Landscape and help to break down barriers to engagement through collaboration with artists, art producers and local communities.			PE7		Long	Medium	NL Team , Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles, SCC, landowners
37. Develop closer working relationships with local businesses in and around the National Landscape to support the special qualities of the National Landscape.			PE7, PE9		Medium	Low	NL Team , Chambers of Commerce
38. Explore ways to promote, recruit and effectively support volunteers, and improve coordination between partner organisations.			PE8		Medium	Low	NL Team , SCC, NT, FE, SWT, CCC, Friends of Cannock Chase, SR
39. Enable communities to deliver projects that enhance their local area and the National Landscape through advice, support and funding.			PE9		Ongoing	Low	NL Team

Action	Themes and policies delivered				Estimated timeframe	Indicative levels of resourcing	Key partners (lead partner in bold)
	N	C	PE	PL			
					Short (1-2 yrs), Medium (3-4 yrs), Long (by the Plan end), Ongoing	Low (0-25K), Medium (25-100K), High (100k+)	
40. Establish a Cannock Chase Charitable Fund for voluntary and business giving, that can then be used to grant-aid community works.			PE9		Short	Low	NL Team and , Community Foundation for Staffordshire and Shropshire
41. Better understand the numbers of people employed in the local rural economy, and any support that they require.			PE10				
42. Promote a unified and distinctive identity for the National Landscape by adopting the Cannock Chase National Landscape brand and key messages.			PE11, PE3		Short	Low	NL Team, SAC Team, visitor centres/hubs, SCC, NT, FE, SWT, CCC, SSC
Actions for Place							
43. Use the National Landscape's 'Building Design Guide' to inform development proposals and decision-making.				PL1, PL9	Ongoing	Low	NL Team and local planning authorities
44. Support woodland owners, managers and contractors to manage woodlands in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) for sustainable forest management.	N2, N10	C2		PL2	Long	Low	Forestry Commission and Forestry England
45. Promote the benefits of nature-friendly and regenerative farming, and support farmers and smallholders to take-up the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes.	N4, N12	C2		PL3	Long	Low	NL Team, farmers and land managers, NGOs, NFU, CLA
46. Support rural non-farming and non-woodland landowners to help conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Landscape through advice, support and funding.	N2			PL4	Long	Low	NL Team
47. Plan for future land use changes ensuring that opportunities are maximised to support and enhance the special qualities of the National Landscape, for example, on mineral sites.				PL4	Long	Low	NL Team, SCC Minerals Planning Team, local authorities
48. Explore with relevant bodies, and put in place, practical steps to reduce traffic and highway management impacts through the National Landscape.	N11	C1		PL5	Medium	Low	NL Team and SCC
49. Use the National Landscape's 'Highways Design Guide' to inform highway schemes, management and decision-making.				PL5	Ongoing	Low	NL Team and SCC
50. Work with landowners to identify and deliver opportunities to put existing powerlines underground.				PL6	Short	Low	NL Team, Western Power, NT
51. Work with landowners to identify and deliver investment opportunities for the Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI).	N2		PE5	PL6	Short	Low	NL Team, National Grid, SWT
52. Promote enjoyment of the National Landscape's night skies.				PL7	Ongoing	Low	NL Team, CPRE Staffordshire

Action	Themes and policies delivered				Estimated timeframe	Indicative levels of resourcing	Key partners (lead partner in bold)
	N	C	PE	PL			
					Short (1-2 yrs), Medium (3-4 yrs), Long (by the Plan end), Ongoing	Low (0-25K), Medium (25-100K), High (100k+)	
							and local authorities
53. Use the National Landscape's 'Good Lighting Guide' to inform development proposals and decision-making.				PL7, PL9	Ongoing	Low	NL Team and local planning authorities
54. Use the National Landscape's 'Views and Setting Guide' to inform development proposals and decision-making.				PL8	Ongoing	Low	NL Team and local planning authorities
55. Identify and promote projects that enhance the landscape connectivity, biodiversity resilience and heritage value of countryside and public open space around the Chase.	N8			PL10	Long	Medium	NL Team, SCC, local authorities, landowners, Midlands Forest Network, NGOs
56. Monitor the condition of designated heritage features in the National Landscape to identify management actions that will reduce their vulnerabilities.				PL11	Long	Low	NL Team and SCC Historic Environment Team, HE
57. Assess updated historic environment information on non-designated features to prioritise sites for survey, condition assessment and monitoring to inform future management.				PL11	Short	Low	SCC Historic Environment Team, HE, LPA Conservation Officers
58. Deliver sustainable management regimes for heritage assets by providing support and guidance and seeking investment.				PL12	Long	Medium - high	NL Team and SCC Historic Environment Team, HE, LPA Conservation Officers, owners of heritage assets
59. Develop and deliver projects that celebrate the National Landscape's cultural heritage, connecting the Chase with surrounding towns and villages, and involving local communities in historic environment citizen science activities.				PL13	Short	Low	NL Team, SCC Historic Environment Team, HE, MoCC, Friends of Cannock Chase, NGOs
60. Prepare an Historic Environment Strategy for the National Landscape that will conserve, enhance and celebrate the area's rich and diverse historic environment.				PL11, PL12, PL13	Short	Low	NL Team, SCC Historic Environment Team, HE, MoCC, Friends of Cannock Chase, NGOs

Appendices

Appendix 1. AONB designation, policy and legal framework³²

Purpose of designation

The primary purpose of AONB designation is to ‘conserve and enhance natural beauty’³³ but the architects of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 recognised other underlying principles which were important aspects of the designations’ success. These included the need to maintain a ‘thriving community life’ with particular emphasis on farming and forestry, and the need to promote understanding and enjoyment of the area’s special qualities by people.

These subsidiary purposes – in effect, qualifications of the primary purpose – are those defined in the Countryside Commission statement 1991³⁴, restated in 2006³⁵. The basis for the wording of the subsidiary purposes can be found in the Countryside Act 1968 (section 37):

- In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries, and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.
- 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.

Although AONBs do not currently have the statutory second purpose of National Parks, which is ‘to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities [of the area] by the public’, the 1949 Act assumed that AONBs would also fulfil this function and this intent is reflected in the subsequent duty placed on AONB conservation boards by Section 87 of the CRow Act 2000 which adopts the same language³⁶

Cannock Chase designation history³⁷

The report of the first National Park Committee, set up in 1929, proposed that Cannock Chase became a National Park. Nothing happened as a result of this report. In 1945, the Dower Report included Cannock Chase in a list of ‘Other Amenity Areas’ not suggested as National Parks, but as areas of landscape beauty which merited some form of national protection in the future. The subsequent report by Sir Arthur Hobhouse in 1947 included 23 square miles of the Chase in a list of 52 ‘Conservation Areas’ which, it proposed, should be designated for their high landscape quality, scientific interest and recreational value. The Chase was described as consisting mainly of extensive heathland and coniferous plantation on an elevated plateau of Triassic sandstones and pebble beds, surrounded by large villages, collieries and historic parkland like Shugborough. Much of the heathland area presented an unspoilt almost semi-wilderness character, standing in contrast to the surrounding developments. The Chase was confirmed as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on 16 September 1958, following boundary discussions with Staffordshire County Council which eventually included 26 square miles.

³² Reproduced/adapted with kind permission of High Weald National Landscape.

³³ Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (legislation.gov.uk)

³⁴ Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A policy statement (Countryside Commission, CCP 356), 1991

³⁵ Guidance for the review of AONB Management Plans (Countryside Agency. CA 221, 2006, p6)

³⁶ [ukpga_19490097_en.pdf](#)

³⁷ Woolmer, R (1999). Designation History Series, Cannock Chase AONB. Countryside Agency

Responsibility for conservation and enhancement of AONBs: the legal framework

AONBs exist within a legal framework which has been progressively strengthened since the first AONBs came into existence after the Second World War.

- The **1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act** made provision for the designation of AONBs and National Parks. It provided AONBs with protection, under planning law, against inappropriate development and gave local authorities permissive powers to take action for 'preserving and enhancing natural beauty'.
- The **Countryside Act 1968** (Section 37) placed a responsibility on local authorities, statutory conservation bodies and civil servants, in exercising their functions under the 1949 Act (as amended by subsequent legislation) to 'have due regard to the needs of agriculture and forestry and to the economic and social interests of rural areas.' Within AONBs this means a responsibility to acknowledge and, where appropriate, to promote farming, forestry and the rural economic and social context wherever this can be done without compromising the primary purpose of conserving natural beauty.
- The **Environment Act 1995** confirmed replacement of 'preserve and enhance' with 'conserve and enhance' in relation to the purpose of National Parks and duties of public bodies towards them.
- The **Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW)** subsumed and strengthened the AONB provisions of the 1949 Act. It brought the primary purpose in line with that of National Parks, clarified the procedure for their designation, and created a firm legislative basis for their protection and management giving responsibility for their conservation and enhancement primarily to local authorities. In particular:
 - Section 82 reaffirms the primary purpose of AONBs: to conserve and enhance natural beauty.
 - Section 83 establishes the procedure for designating or revising the boundaries of an AONB, including Natural England's duty to consult with local authorities and to facilitate public engagement.
 - Section 84 confirms the powers of a local authority to take 'all such action as appears to them expedient' to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of an AONB and sets consultation and advice on development planning and on public access on the same basis as National Parks in the 1949 Act.
 - Section 85 places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities '...in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect land [in an AONB] to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty...'. 'Relevant authorities' include all public bodies (county, borough, district, parish and community councils, joint planning boards and other statutory committees); statutory undertakers (such as energy and water utilities, licensed telecommunications companies, nationalised companies such as Network Rail and other bodies established under statute responsible for railways, roads and canals); government ministers and civil servants. Activities and developments outside the boundaries of AONBs that have an impact within the designated area are also covered by the 'duty of regard'.
 - Sections 86 to 88 allow for the establishment in an AONB of a Conservation Board to which the AONB functions of the local authority (including development planning) can be transferred. Conservation boards have the additional but secondary function of seeking to increase public understanding and enjoyment of the AONB's special qualities. They also have an obligation to 'seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities' in cooperation with local authorities and other public bodies.

- Sections 89 and 90 create a statutory duty on all AONB partnerships (local authorities and Conservation Boards) to prepare a management plan ‘which formulates their policy for the management of their area of outstanding natural beauty and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it’, and thereafter to review adopted and published Plans at intervals of not more than five years. Where an AONB involves more than one local authority they are required to do this ‘acting jointly’.
- Section 92 makes clear that the conservation of natural beauty includes the conservation of ‘flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features.’
- **The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC):**
 - Section 99 formally clarifies in law that the fact that an area consists of or includes land used for agriculture or woodlands, or as a park, or ‘any other area whose flora, fauna or physiographical features are partly the product of human intervention in the landscape’ does not prevent it from being treated, for legal purposes, ‘as being an area of natural beauty (or of outstanding natural beauty).’
 - Schedule 7 asserts that an AONB joint committee of two or more local authorities, or a conservation board, can constitute a ‘designated body’ for the performance of functions allocated to Defra.
- **The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023** introduced new powers to ensure that ‘relevant authorities’ who might be undertaking activities or making decisions affecting land within Protected Landscapes must now ‘seek to further’ the purposes of that landscape. This places a duty on a wide range of organisations such as government departments and their agencies, local authorities and road, rail, telecoms and water companies. Now, they must not just avoid damaging these special areas but must actively try to improve them. The legislation also strengthens Management Plans by requiring them to contribute to meeting any targets set out under Chapter 1 of Part 1 of the Environment Act 2021.
- In 2024 Government published a **Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework** which sets out 10 targets to achieve positive changes for nature, climate, people and place, which must be included in Management Plans:
 - *Thriving plants and wildlife targets (5 targets)*
 - *Target 1. Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline).
 - Target 2. Bring 80% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042.
 - Target 3. For 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having ‘actions on track’ to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.
 - Target 4. 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.
 - Target 5. Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.
 - *Mitigating and adapting to climate change targets (3 targets)*
 - Target 6. Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.
 - *Target 7. Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050.
 - * Target 8. Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).

- *Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environmental targets (2 targets)*
Target 9. Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme.
Target 10. Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes

NB. Asterisked targets (1, 7 and 8) need to be apportioned (shared) to reflect the local circumstances of individual Protected Landscapes more accurately.

The international context

AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are part of the international family of protected areas. As cultural landscapes, produced through the interaction of humans with nature over time, they have a special significance (together with UK National Parks) being recognised by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as 'Category V – Protected Landscapes'. These offer a unique contribution to the conservation of biological diversity, particularly where conservation objectives need to be met over a large area with a range of ownership patterns and governance. They can act as models of sustainability, promoting traditional systems of management that support key species.

Category V protected landscapes are defined by IUCN as: 'A protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.'

The Council of Europe Landscape Convention (2000) ratified by the UK government in 2006 provides a definition of landscape as 'An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.' This is a rich concept that puts people at the heart of landscape (the commonplace and 'degraded' as well as the eminent), each of which has its own distinctive character and meaning to those who inhabit or visit it.

Policy documents

Since the 1949 Act there has been continuous development in the policy and legislative context of AONBs, shaped by a number of key policy documents including:

- Countryside Commission & Countryside Council for Wales, *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – A Policy Statement*, CCP 356, (1991)
- Countryside Commission & Countryside Council for Wales, *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – A Guide for Members of Joint Advisory Committees*, CCP 461, (1994)
- Countryside Commission, *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Providing for the future*, CCWP 08, (1998)
- Countryside Commission, *Protecting our finest countryside: Advice to Government*, CCP 532, (1998)
- Countryside Agency, *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans: A Guide*, CA23, (2001)
- Countryside Agency, *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A Guide for AONB partnership members*, CA24, (2001)
- Countryside Agency, *Guidance for the Review of AONB Management Plans*, CA221, (2006)
- Natural England, *Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England*, (2011)

Appendix 2. National Landscape/AONB Partnership strategies and guidance documents informing and supporting the AONB Management Plan

Historic Environment Strategy (in preparation)

State of the AONB Report, 2024

Light Pollution and Dark Skies in the Cannock Chase AONB – A Good Lighting Guide, 2023

Car park improvements: A Guide to Key Landscape Principles, 2021

Invertebrate audit for Cannock Chase AONB, 2021

State of bats within Cannock Chase AONB and surrounds, 2021

Cannock Chase AONB Views and Setting Guide, 2020

Cannock Chase AONB Design Guide, 2020

Review of AONB Landscape Character Framework, 2017

Historic Environment Assessment, 2015

Visitor Management Strategy, 2014

Highways Design Guide, 2005 (revised edition in preparation)

Glossary

Here is a short glossary to help explain some of the terms used in the Plan.

Term	Definition / Explanation
Adaptation and mitigation of climate change effects	Climate change mitigation addresses the root causes, by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, while adaptation seeks to lower the risks posed by the consequences of climatic changes, such as increased flooding.
Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is designed to rebalance any impacts on biodiversity arising from development. This is done by taking measures to minimise impacts and undertaking restoration or offsetting residual impacts to achieve an overall gain of biodiversity. Developers must deliver at least 10% BNG, as measured by a statutory biodiversity metric. BNG is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021).
Buffer zone	A vegetated zone established to protect adjacent ecologically sensitive land from negative impacts, such as pollution.
Carbon sequestration and storage	Our habitats and soils play a vital role in capturing (sequestering) CO ₂ from the atmosphere and storing it in vegetation or underground. Protecting and restoring our habitats and soils will contribute to climate change mitigation.
Ecological network	Connected and resilient network of habitats that allows viable populations of wildlife species to persist and thrive. Key components are core areas, buffer zones and ecological corridors or stepping stones that allow the movement of species across the landscape.
Ecosystem services	An ecosystem is a community of living organisms together with the non-living components of their environment (things like air, water and mineral soil), interacting as a system. Ecosystem services are the processes by which the environment produces natural resources utilised by us all, such as clean air, water, food and raw materials.
Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes	The UK is in the process of moving from the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy to Environmental Land Management schemes ('The Agricultural Transition', 2021-28), designed to deliver more environmental goods alongside food production. There are currently 3 schemes: the Sustainable Farming Incentive (paying farmers to adopt and maintain sustainable farming practices), Countryside Stewardship (paying for more targeted actions relating to specific locations, feature and habitats) and Landscape Recovery (paying for bespoke, longer-term, larger scale projects to enhance the natural environment).
Equality, inclusion and diversity	Equality: ensures everyone has equal access to opportunities and resources, eliminating barriers. Diversity: recognises the variety of differences among people, including race, gender, age and fostering respect. Inclusion: Makes everyone feel accepted and valued, promoting participation and belonging.
Eutrophication	An increase in the concentration of phosphorous, nitrogen and other plant nutrients in the environment that has the potential to change the composition of flora and fauna. An increase in nutrients typically reduces plant diversity – favouring a few vigorous plants that outcompete lower-growing and more specialist species.
Farming in Protected Landscapes programme	A grant scheme for farmers and land managers in National Parks and National Landscapes across England. The programme has been developed by Defra and is being delivered locally through the Cannock Chase National Landscape Team. It is a programme of funding for one-off projects that deliver environmental outcomes, rather than an agri-environment scheme.
Green finance	"Green finance" is considered to be any structured financial activity that generates benefits to the environment. It can play a key role in funding nature-

	based solutions projects by unlocking private investment to accelerate and expand beyond what's possible with public and philanthropic funding alone.
Green infrastructure	Green infrastructure (GI) or green-blue infrastructure is a general term to describe the network of natural and semi-natural features within and between our villages, towns and cities. These features range in scale, from street trees, green roofs and private gardens through to parks, rivers and woodlands.
Greenhouse gas emissions	Greenhouse gases are those gaseous constituents of the atmosphere, both natural and anthropogenic, that absorb and emit radiation at specific wavelengths within the spectrum of terrestrial radiation emitted by the Earth's surface, the atmosphere itself, and clouds. This property causes the greenhouse effect (the warming of the atmosphere). Water vapour (H ₂ O), carbon dioxide (CO ₂), nitrous oxide (N ₂ O), methane (CH ₄), and ozone (O ₃) are the primary greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere.
Habitat creation	The process of creating new habitats on sites that are either bare or have very low wildlife value.
Habitat restoration	The process of improving existing degraded habitats for wildlife by changing its management.
Integrated land management	The long-term collaboration among different groups of land managers and stakeholders to achieve multiple objectives and expectations within the landscape for wildlife, health and well-being, and improving resilience to climate change.
Landscape-scale	Management at a large geographic scale (contiguous or fragmented) that has a holistic approach to achieving multiple benefits for society, the environment and the economy.
Landscape Enhancement Initiative	A grant scheme that aims to reduce the visual impacts of National Grid's existing power transmission lines. Up to £12 million is available to National Landscapes and National Parks in England and Wales for projects that can make a positive contribution to natural beauty, biodiversity, cultural heritage and public enjoyment.
Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	A statutory designation made by local authorities to protect land with both special natural interest and educational value.
Local Wildlife Site (LWS)	Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are areas that are locally important for the conservation of wildlife. In Staffordshire such sites are known as Sites of Biological Importance.
Nature friendly farming	Farming practices that provide space for nature on farmed land. Examples include creating wildflower margins, beetle banks, planting hedgerows, using livestock for conservation grazing, low input use of fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides.
Net Zero	Net zero emissions are achieved when anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere are balanced by anthropogenic greenhouse gas removals over a specified period.
Precautionary approach	The precautionary approach (sometimes also referred to as the precautionary principle), emphasises caution before acting on something that might be harmful. If a given policy or action might cause harm to the environment and there is still no scientific agreement on the issue, the policy or action in question should not be carried out.
Regenerative farming	Farming practices that allow the land, soil, water, nutrients and natural assets to regenerate themselves, as opposed to conventional approaches to farming that can deplete these natural resources. Examples include limiting soil disturbance, maintaining soil cover, fostering agricultural diversity and rotations, keeping living roots in the soil, and integrating livestock and arable systems.
Resilience	Climate resilience is about coping with and managing the impacts of climate change, while preventing those impacts from growing worse. Climate resilience is a key aim for a climate change adaptation plan.

Setting	The setting of Cannock Chase encompasses both its visual relationship with its surroundings (how the views from and to the National Landscape contribute to its character and the way it is perceived and experienced) and its cultural relationships with local communities, landscapes and other heritage assets. Views form one of the key methods how setting is experienced and proposals for change in the setting should, therefore, have regard to the inter-relationship with the designated area, landscape character and special qualities.
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	A statutory designation for sites that are of national importance for their plants, animals and/or geology.
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	European protected wildlife sites designated in the UK under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Cannock Chase SAC covers 18% of the National Landscape.

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