



Annual Review

2021-22

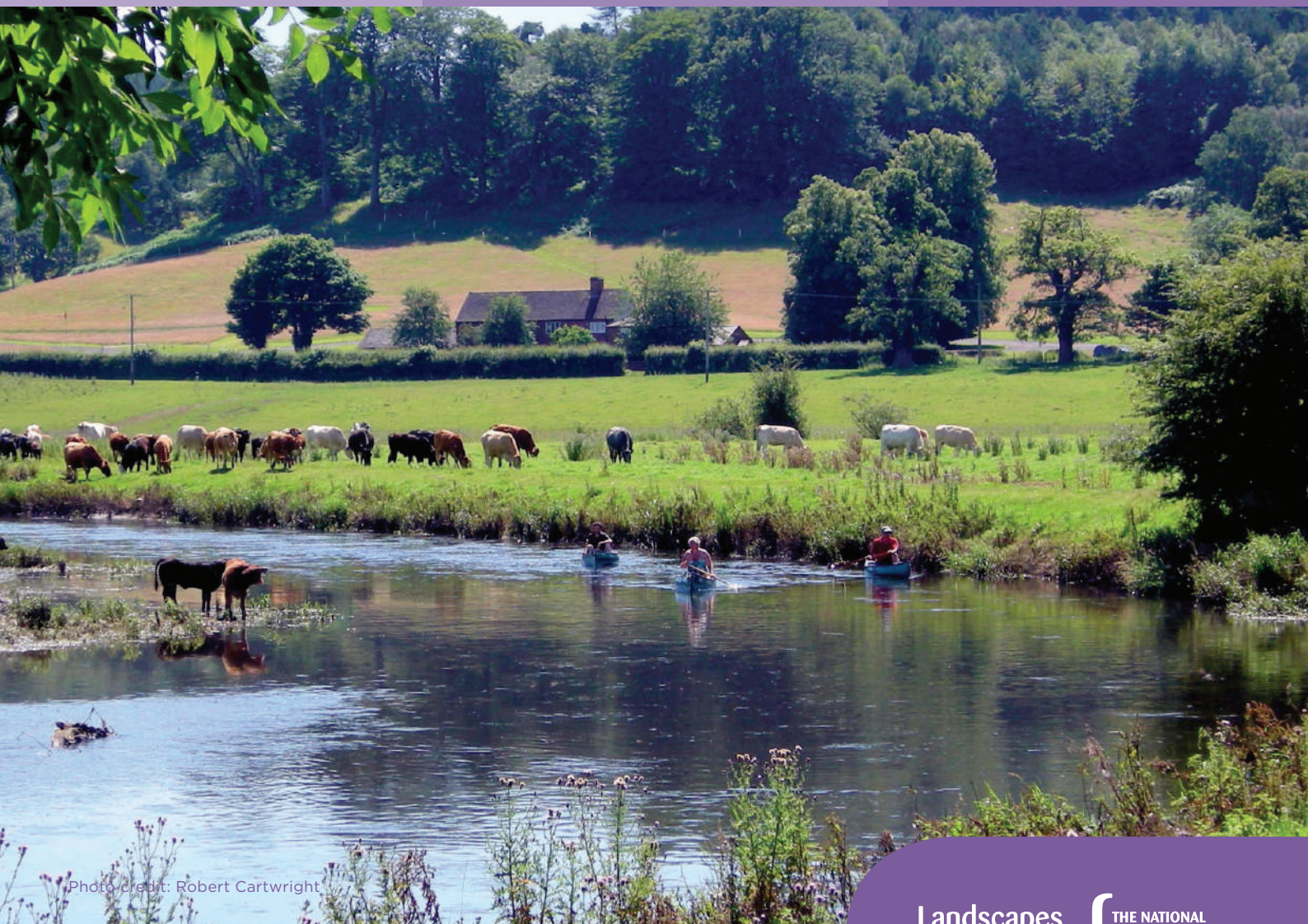


Photo credit: Robert Cartwright

'a landscape for everyone'



Landscapes
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Welcome from our Chair

Welcome to our Annual Review of our achievements for 2021/22. I want to begin by thanking everyone for their continued co-operation and support towards the AONB during the difficult times of the last year. This includes our small AONB Team, my fellow Members on the Joint Committee, and our wider partnership that helps to drive our work. As you will read in our review, despite the challenges we have continued to deliver across all the themes of our AONB Management Plan. I am particularly proud that this year marked the 150th community project we have supported through our Sustainable Development Fund. Over the 16 years we have been running this initiative we have helped local people make a difference to the wildlife, heritage, landscape and communities in their areas

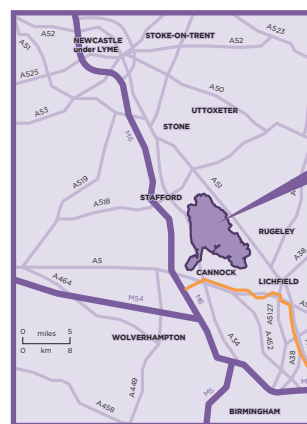
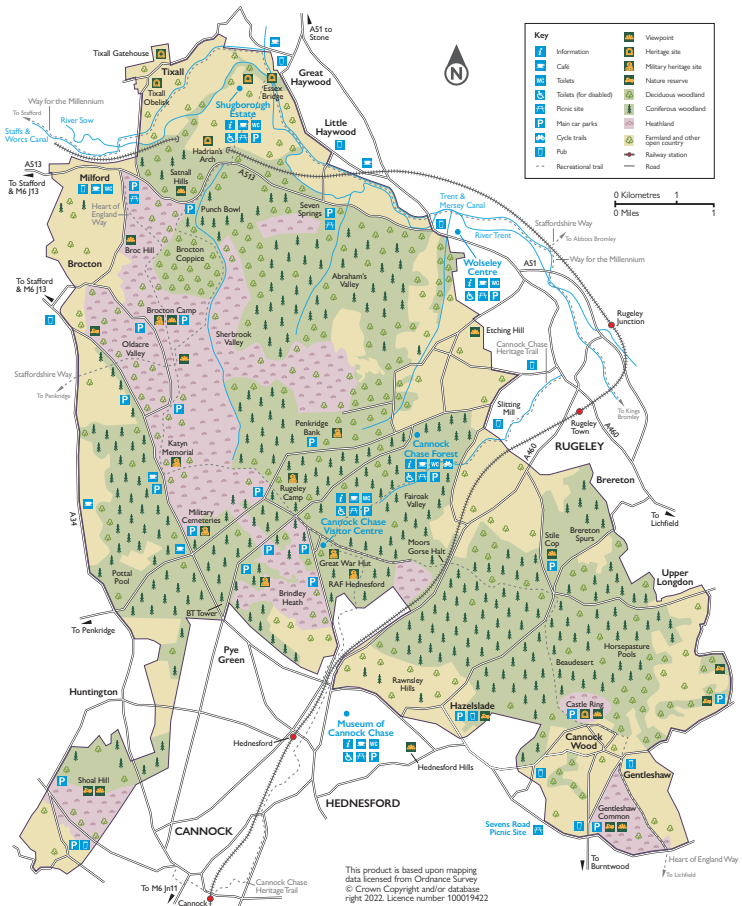
On 15 January 2022 the Government published its response to the Glover Review of Protected Landscapes. We have submitted our own detailed response, welcoming its publication. The Glover Review is the first major review of protected landscapes since they were created over 70 years ago, so it is a once in a lifetime opportunity to ensure that our protected landscapes will deliver benefits for people, nature, heritage and landscape for years to come. We are up for the challenge to do more, but in order to do so the Government needs to ensure that AONBs are properly resourced.

A welcome indication that the Government is increasing its commitment to protected landscapes is the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme that was launched in July 2021. For the first time we can offer financial support to farmers and land managers across the Chase for projects that deliver environmental, access and business outcomes. This beautiful landscape that we want to protect has been shaped by farmers and land managers over thousands of years, so it is wonderful that we have now have funds to work with them to ensure that Cannock Chase stays a special place.

The year ahead promises a number of projects of great significance for our future. For example, we will be exploring how we can contribute to tackling the climate change and biodiversity crises; ensuring that Cannock Chase is relevant and inclusive for all those in society who want to come here; raising awareness of the importance of the Chase with children and young people – our ‘future guardians of the Chase’, and; continuing with our efforts to improve the quality of the visitor welcome and experience and changing people’s perceptions and encouraging positive behaviours – especially important as we lead up to the Commonwealth Games mountain biking event taking place in Cannock Chase Forest on 3 August.



Councillor Frances Beatty MBE
Chair, Cannock Chase AONB
Joint Committee



Cannock Chase

Cannock Chase AONB is situated in the West Midlands within easy access of several large towns.

Wild and Beautiful

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

Cannock Chase AONB Partnership

The AONB Partnership comprises all those bodies and individuals that collaborate to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of Cannock Chase. More information on the Partnership is available at:

www.cannock-chase.co.uk

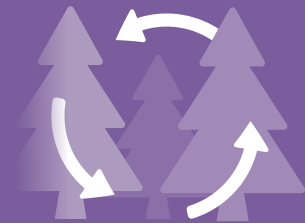
2021/22 in numbers



of habitat conserved at Gentleshaw Common through National Grid funding



including a carbon baseline assessment, inclusion and diversity study, nightjar survey report, local geological sites assessment, deer activity impact study, deer census



£4,250

awarded to 4 local community groups

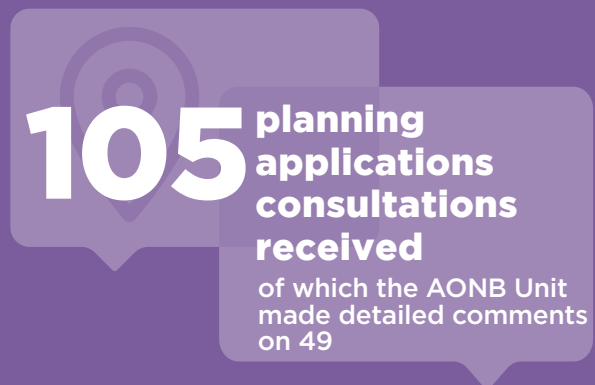
through the AONB Sustainable Development Fund, supporting projects worth £15,946



£32,100

awarded to 3 farmers and land managers

through the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme



of which the AONB Unit made detailed comments on 49



Annual Staffordshire resident cost to support the AONB



Landscape Character and Planning

Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme

In July applications opened for the new Defra-funded Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. This offers support for farmers and land managers to deliver outcomes for nature, climate change, public access and sustainable farming practices across England's 44 National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

On Cannock Chase our Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer, Colin Manning, has been meeting farmers and land managers in the area and encouraging applications. In the first year we have awarded £32,100 to 3 projects. The wide range of funded activities include the installation of fencing and gates to improve stock management, pond construction, crayfish habitat enhancement, winter bird food planting and maintenance, tree and shrub planting, bird and bat boxes and grassland enhancement.



Image: stock management improvements funded through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme

The 3-year programme will run until March 2024. Any farmer or land manager who may be interested in applying to the fund is encouraged to submit an expression of interest through our AONB website www.cannock-chase.co.uk/get-involved/farming-in-protected-landscapes/

HS2 Environmental Enhancements

The Trent Sow Parklands HS2 Group (which includes the AONB Partnership) has announced 6 projects to receive funding from HS2 Ltd for environmental enhancements over the next 2 years. Focussed across an area of just over 3,500 hectares, the projects extend approximately 3km north and south from the line of HS2 and will help to integrate the railway in the landscape. The projects are:

- **Shugborough Woodpasturescape** – creating 40 hectares of new/restored habitat and a block of 220 hectares of contiguous priority habitat that links Shugborough to Brocton Coppice.
- **Trent Sow Washlands Project** – restoring 50 hectares of wet grassland and wetland habitats along the Trent Sow river corridor.
- **Connecting Towpaths** – improving the accessibility of the towpath on the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal.
- **Ingestre Orangery Garden** – restoring key historic features of the garden as well as creating a new seating and viewing area, tree planting, art installation and outdoor learning space.
- **Shugborough Estate Gardens Project** – improving the quality of the garden and the landscape views, resulting in better access and enjoyment for visitors to the gardens.
- **Revealing Tixall's Halls** – improving understanding of the below-ground archaeology and heritage around Tixall Gatehouse to inform appropriate management in the future.

More information about the Trent Sow Parklands and Cannock Chase AONB HS2 Group can be found at

www.cannock-chase.co.uk/what-we-do/trent-sow-parklands-and-cannock-chase-AONB-hs2-group/

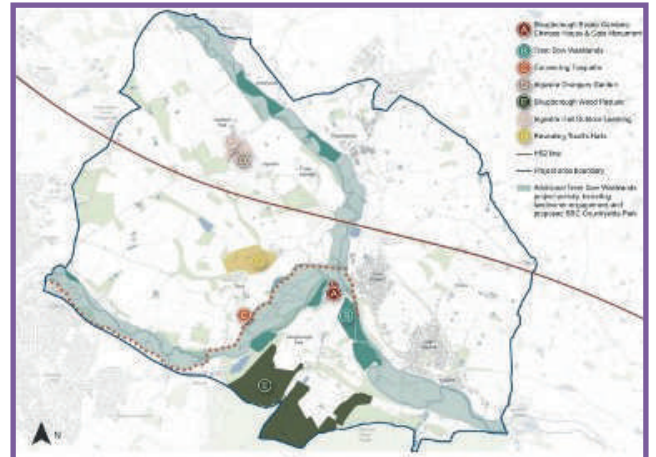


Image: Location of HS2 environmental enhancement projects

Wildlife and Nature

Local geological sites

Cannock Chase AONB includes 5 Local Geological Sites, and in 2021 the AONB Partnership appointed a specialist geologist to re-assess their condition.

The five sites exhibit important geological and geomorphological features ranging from old gravel pits revealing exposures of Lower Triassic Bunter Pebble Beds (Cannock Chase Formation), sandstone beds, and exposed geological faces in a disused quarry. They include the publicly accessible Etching Hill near Rugeley where the red and white sandstones with pebbly beds forms a small prominent escarpment.

The assessment found three of the sites remained in good condition, with one site unchanged in an unfavourable state, and one site requiring further investigation. Local Geological Sites are an important educational, historical and recreational resource and receive protection through the planning process. The findings include recommendations for management which have been passed on to the relevant landowners.



Image: Etchinghill escarpment

Deer management

Cannock Chase’s ancient herd of fallow deer has roamed the area for centuries. Larger, red deer can also be found in the southern parts of the Chase along with the smaller muntjac. Without any natural control of their numbers, the deer can thrive in the forests and heaths and neighbouring farmland and gardens causing pressure on vegetation, woodlands and crops.

To better understand deer numbers and impacts two studies have been carried out during the year with the financial support of the AONB

Partnership. The first has used thermal imagery to estimate deer numbers and distribution across the Chase and surrounding land, whilst the second has assessed the impacts of deer pressure on vegetation. The findings will inform the preparation of a strategy for the sustainable management of the deer population on Cannock Chase to protect biodiversity, trees and farm crops. More information on deer management can be found at

www.cannock-chase.co.uk/what-we-do/deer-management/

Veteran trees

On September 2021 the Woodland Trust in conjunction with Cannock Chase AONB Partnership and National Trust Shugborough Estate held a 1-day training course for landowners and practitioners to improve our understanding of veteran trees and how to manage them for their immense ecological, historical and landscape value. The course helped to identify what a veteran tree is, how to manage them to extend their life, and explained how best to plant new trees to make provision for a future generation of veteran trees.

During 2022 volunteers will be trained to record veteran trees to fill in the gaps in our knowledge of this important resource on Cannock Chase.



Image: Discussing veteran tree management



Historic Environment and Culture

Apples on the Chase

The Chase Through Time volunteer group has been busy locating and recording the apple trees on the Chase, shedding light on why we have so many, what they were used for, and how old they are. As most are found in and around the two former Great War training camps, they were probably planted by trainee soldiers near their barrack huts. Others may have self-set in the area around the kitchen or latrine blocks or germinated where the core was dropped after the apple was eaten. Over 90 fruit trees have been identified, recorded and checked against the National Fruit Collection apple database. A number of apples have been sent to specialists for possible identification, whilst others, which seem to be from trees which pre-date the camps, have been sent for DNA analysis to check if they are a rare variety or perhaps a special Cannock Chase cultivar. The completion of the project will be celebrated by planting some apple trees near the Great War Hut at Marquis Drive.



Image: Volunteers replacing the picket fence surrounding the Great War Hut
Photo credit: Steve Archer

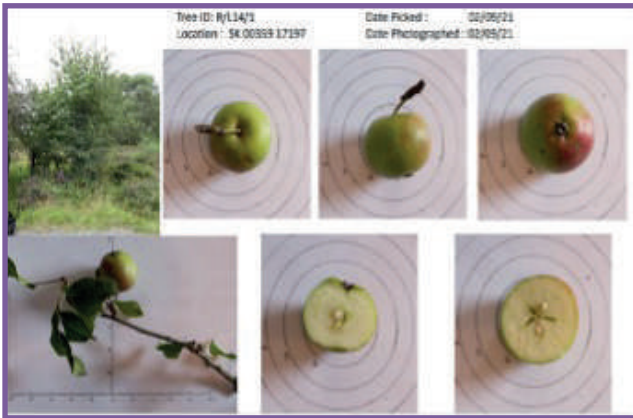


Image - An example of apple photo record sheet developed by the Chase Through Time Volunteers Photo credit: Colin Evans

Great War Hut

The Great War Hut next to Cannock Chase Visitor Centre was re-opened to the public in August 2021, after a prolonged closure due to the pandemic. A huge effort was put in by our volunteers to clean the former barrack hut and its artefacts in readiness for the re-opening. Volunteers have received training in the conservation and handling of artefacts from Staffordshire Museums Services.

Conserving RAF Hednesford

Conservation works have been completed by Staffordshire County Council on a historic brick wall at Moors Gorse. It is believed that the wall formed part of RAF Hednesford's notorious assault course and is located near 'Kitbag Hill' which refers to the steep ascent from Moors Gorse up Marquis Drive to the camp on which new arrivals had to carry their kit. The work, which was carried out by Ian Fisher, a conservation bricklayer, and funded as part of the Council's Cannock Chase Countryside Stewardship Scheme, included repointing and capping works, in addition to targeted brick replacement. This work should ensure that the wall, which is one of the few surviving upstanding remains of RAF Hednesford, will be protected from the elements for many years to come.



Image: The restored wall
Photo credit: Shane Kelleher

Experience and Enjoyment

Follow the code and help to protect Cannock Chase

The Cannock Chase AONB Partnership, SAC Partnership, public and charitable landowners, emergency services and local authorities are calling on local communities and visitors to help care for Cannock Chase by following a new voluntary code. Featuring 12 ways that visitors and residents can help care for Cannock Chase, the Code will start to appear in on-site interpretation panels, promotional materials, in visitor centres and online. The Code is free to use and can be downloaded by visiting www.cannock-chase.co.uk/caring-for-cannock-chase/



Image: The Cannock Chase Code aims to encourage responsible behaviours

Improving our visitor welcome

Two major new publications have been produced to improve our welcome to visitors to Cannock Chase. A welcome leaflet and souvenir brochure have been designed around our key messages ‘a national landscape’, ‘wild and beautiful’ and ‘a landscape for everyone’. They celebrate the

Chase, give visitors an overview of where to go and what to see, and increase awareness of the importance and special character of the area. The outcome hopefully is to change perceptions, build stronger emotional attachments to the Chase and avoid harmful impacts to the environment. We have also started to refresh our AONB website so that the messages across our communication channels are consistent www.cannock-chase.co.uk

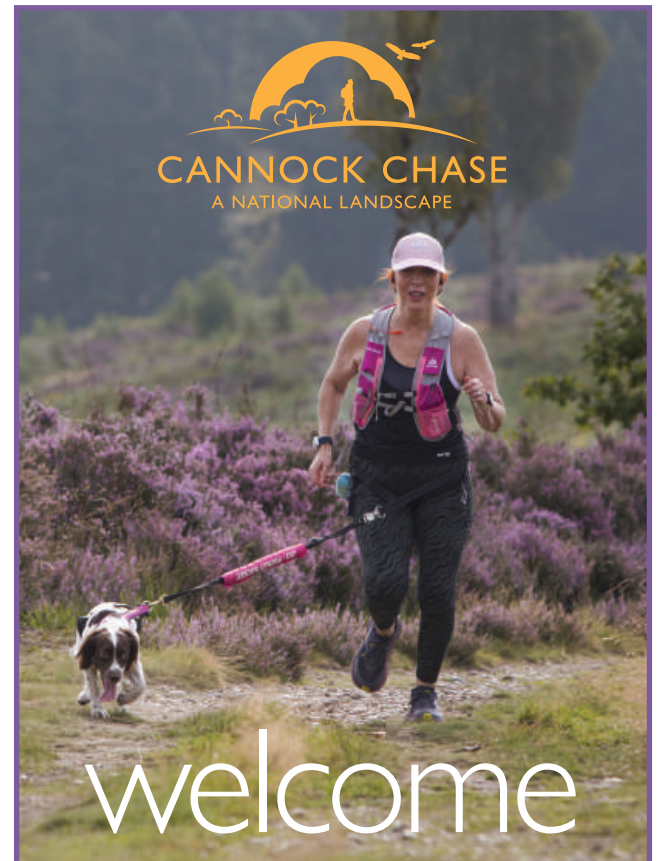


Image: Cannock Chase Welcome leaflet front cover

Walking Cannock Chase

Walking is the most popular recreational activity on Cannock Chase and a range of promoted walk leaflets is available to help visitors explore the area. Volunteers from the Ramblers have been working with the AONB Unit to review these routes, and the outcome is a new series of walks in less well known parts of the Chase to help disperse visitor pressure from the popular hotspots. The accompanying walk leaflets have been designed in the Cannock Chase place brand and include features of local interest as well as the route map and description. Hard copies will be available from the main visitor centres/hubs and other outlets. Digital versions of all our leaflets can be found in the publications section of our website www.cannock-chase.co.uk/publications/leaflets/

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Communities and Business

Future Guardians of Cannock Chase

The Cannock Chase AONB and SAC Partnerships have joined forces to raise children and young people's awareness and appreciation for the wonderful landscape they have on their doorstep and to encourage pro-environmental behaviours. Running over two financial years, the project will produce interactive learning resource materials for libraries, girl guides and scouts and Duke of Edinburgh participants. The content will inform, explain and inspire these 'future guardians of the Chase' about the international importance of the SAC and the wider AONB, the special qualities that define the area and its sense of place, its vulnerabilities, and how we can all get involved to look after it.

Support to community projects

In 2021/22 the AONB Partnership awarded £4,250 to 4 local community groups through the AONB Sustainable Development Fund, supporting projects worth a total of £15,946. The projects included: replacing interpretation panels at Gentleshaw Common (Staffordshire Wildlife Trust), installing bird and bat boxes at Brocton Park as well as holding a 'Wildplay' session (Brocton Parish Council); the 1st phase of the latest quinquennial breeding bird survey of the Chase (West Midland Bird Club), and; Apples on the Chase - a joint Chase Through Time and Friends of Cannock Chase project locating and

recording the apple trees on the Chase, and determining their varieties and origins. You can find details about the Sustainable Development Fund on our website

www.cannock-chase.co.uk/get-involved/funding-for-your-project-2/

Connecting people to nature through arts and culture

The AONB Joint Committee has formally adopted the national Arts in the Landscape Strategy commissioned by the National Association for AONBs. The vision of the strategy is for people to experience a deeper connection to the natural beauty of the landscape through the arts. Cannock Chase AONB's special qualities include a rich legacy of cultural associations - past, present and future - that offer a source of inspiration to us all and may help develop new ways of understanding and managing the AONB. In March 2022 the AONB reached out to over 30 local artists and art producers to discuss how we can work together to develop projects that use the arts to encourage greater understanding and emotional attachment to the AONB.



Image: 'Future Guardians of Cannock Chase' Photo credit: Sam Carpenter

Governance and communication

Government's response to the Landscapes Review

On 15 January 2022 the Government published its response to the Landscapes Review led by Julian Glover that reported in 2019. The Cannock Chase AONB Partnership submitted detailed comments to the consultation paper. We welcomed the Government's response, particularly the opportunity to reinvigorate the status of AONBs with new purposes and powers that will help us to:

- Drive nature recovery within our landscape
- Address the challenges posed by climate change
- Encourage improved access to our protected landscape for all parts of society
- Strengthen our role in the planning system
- Improve governance including strengthened duties for public bodies

We look forward to working with Government to use this opportunity to strengthen AONBs as exemplars of 21st century designated landscapes.

Relevance, diversity and inclusion

One of the recommendations from Julian Glover's Landscapes Review (2019) was that protected landscapes need to do more to be 'landscapes for everyone'.



Photo credit: Sam Carpenter

Image: A major study is underway to ensure that Cannock Chase is a 'landscape for everyone' Photo credit: Sam Carpenter

The AONB Partnership has, therefore, begun a major study to explore and understand who does and doesn't get the opportunity to visit and connect with Cannock Chase. For those who do not use the AONB, we want to know why they don't, what are the barriers, and how can we

make the Chase more welcoming and accessible. The study is also investigating how inclusive and diverse the governance structure and operations of the AONB Partnership are, and whether the culture of the Partnership needs changing and, if so, how.

Pathway to net zero

The AONB Partnership is exploring how Cannock Chase can contribute to the climate change emergency through mitigation and adaptation measures, whilst still delivering its core purpose to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

To inform our understanding of these complex issues Small World Consulting Ltd (SWC), UK leaders in carbon footprinting and net zero planning for the UK's protected landscapes, have prepared a carbon footprint assessment for the AONB and proposed a pathway by which the AONB could get to net zero. This includes some challenging land use targets required to capture and store carbon to offset the emissions from our residents, visitors and businesses.

AONB Annual Conference

On 3rd March around 80 delegates came together for our online annual conference to discuss issues around visitor management on the Chase and how we can change people's perceptions and encourage positive behaviours. Broadcaster and naturalist Mike Dilger gave the conference opening address, making an impassioned plea for protecting the wildlife on the Chase. Tony Watson from the Lake District National Park shared how England's most popular protected landscape is responding to challenging visitor pressures and behaviours, and Ali Clarke from Surrey Hills Arts described how the Surrey Hills AONB is connecting people to nature through arts and culture. Turning to the various local initiatives that are underway, Peter Farmer of FDA Design explained how we are using sense of place to develop emotional connections with the landscape through the Cannock Chase place brand, and Kinga Niedzinska of the Cannock Chase SAC Partnership described the role of education in protecting Cannock Chase including the use of the Cannock Chase Code.

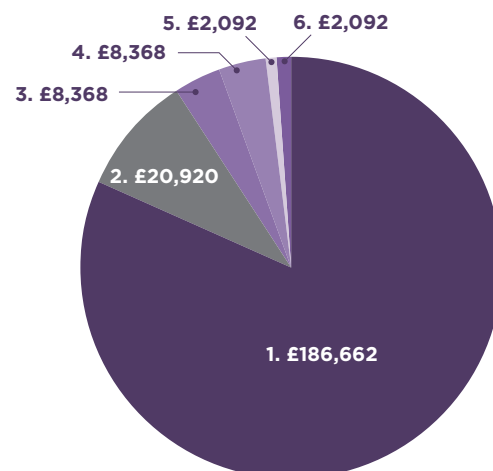
The conference proceedings are available for viewing www.cannock-chase.co.uk/get-involved/aonb-annual-conference/

AONB finances

'Core' Income

1. Defra ¹	£186,662
2. Staffordshire County Council	£20,920
3. Cannock Chase Council	£8,368
4. Stafford Borough Council	£8,368
5. Lichfield District Council	£2,092
6. South Staffordshire Borough Council	£2,092
Total	£228,502

¹ Defra Grant includes additional projects allocation of £35,992



'Core' Expenditure

1. Staff and associated costs ¹	£138,442
2. Other 'core' costs ²	£15,642
3. Partnership running costs ³	£9,000
4. Sustainable Development Fund ⁴	£4,869
5. AONB projects ⁵	£65,130
Total	£233,083

¹ Salaries, training expenses and travel and subsistence for the AONB Team

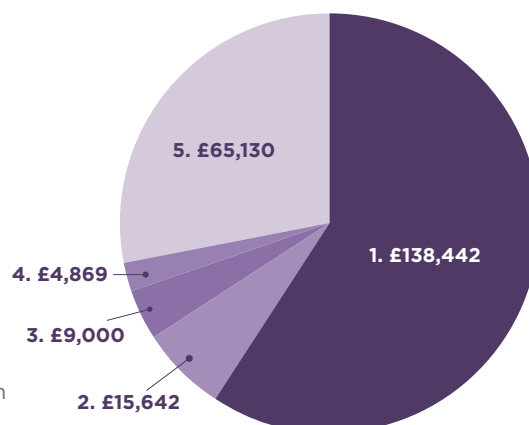
² Other 'core' costs include office equipment, national liaison, print and publicity, Annual Conference, core activities

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

⁴ This fund supports community projects that help to deliver the objectives of the AONB Management Plan

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

⁶ £8,000 of externally funded contributions for 2020/21 projects accounted for in the 2021/22 financial year have left an overall budget balance of £3,418 to be added to AONB Reserves



Additional project income (and expenditure)

Defra – Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (year 1)	£80,000
SAC Partnership – Future Guardians awareness programme for children and young people (external funded contribution)	£10,000
Trent Sow Parkland HS2 Group (officer input)	£5,740
Total	£95,740



Photo credit: Ian Marshall

Cannock Chase AONB Unit

AONB Development Officer: Ian Marshall
AONB Land Management Officer: Richard Harris
AONB Landscape Planning Officer: Julia Banbury (part time)
Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer: Colin Manning

The AONB Partnership



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is supported by:

Defra, Cannock Chase Council, Lichfield District Council, South Staffordshire Council, Stafford Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council, Forestry England, Natural England, Historic England, National Trust, RSPB, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, British Horse Society, Cannock Chase Cycle Centre, Cemex UK Operations Ltd, Country Land and Business Association, CPRE, Friends of Cannock Chase, Hanson Aggregates, National Farmers Union, Ramblers, Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association, Walton Chasers, West Midland Bird Club.



Photo credit: Ron Evans

'wild and beautiful'



**Cannock
Chase**
Area of Outstanding
Natural Beauty