

Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee

19 September 2008

13. INFORMATION ITEMS

(a) Malvern Heritage Project

1. This project aims to improve two aspects of Malvern's distinctive heritage – the bare, grazed hills and the water features. There is a 75% grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund towards the project costs.

Cattle Grids: following a successful Public Inquiry into the installation of cattle grids at Chase End Hill, the project is facing further delays because of a dogged individual launching a legal challenge. Though the challenge is thought to be insubstantial, it is prudent to hear it out before proceeding. The Project is indebted to Worcestershire County Council's Legal Services for their help.

Castlemorton Common: with the help of the 4C's (Castlemorton Commons Coordinating Committee) the Castlemorton Commons booklet is now complete. This tells of the history and management of the common. It will be distributed to residents of the commons in the hopes of informing their appreciation of the place.

Spouts: the restoration of Holywell in Malvern Wells has been delayed by the discovery of Lesser Horse Shoe bats. The project awaits a licence to proceed from Natural England. Meanwhile the West Malvern Tap flows again, having been dry for decades; in contrast the water flow at the Clock Tower stopped after heavy rain and we are investigating why.

Water Trail Leaflets: 2 leaflets, one for the Northern Hills and one for the Middle Hills are being produced.

Project Officer: Sadly, Victoria Oaten's contract has come to an end. Because of the delays mentioned above, David Armitage will see to the delivery of the final stages of the project with support from Emma Hiller (the Unit's Team Support Officer).

(b) Partnership Projects supported by Natural England

2. Unexpectedly, £11,000 of grant has been made available for project work this year from Natural England's European Landscape Convention pot. This funding will support the following two projects at a maximum of 50% of project cost:

1. Small scale landscape and biodiversity enhancement grants to local landowners/managers.
2. A continuation of Herefordshire Council's Miles without Stiles work.



(c) Other Areas of Work

Strategy/Planning Advisor – Colin Blundel from ‘The Planning Company’ (based in Worcester) has been drafting AONB responses to selected Development Control applications and to a range of strategic consultation papers including the following: Herefordshire Council Core Strategy. Herefordshire Council Polytunnels draft SPG, Forest of Dean Affordable Housing etc.

Management Plan Review – on the agenda.

Microgeneration Guidance – draft guidance on the siting and design of microgeneration technologies (with a particular focus on avoiding impacts on the special qualities of the AONB) is being researched

Regionally Important Geological Sites – the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust has developed a methodology for monitoring the condition of RIGS. 10 sites within the AONB have been assessed and the results will be used within the 2009 State of the AONB report.

Views – a draft project brief for a study to identify key views to and from the AONB has been produced. Discussion with key partners on the desirability and application of such a project is on-going. The subject was discussed by the Malvern Hills Conservator’s Land Management Committee in August 2008.

Historic Landscape Characterisation – following discussions with relevant archaeologists and landscape officers a small project to provide some ‘time depth’ to the Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessments for Worcestershire and Herefordshire is underway. Consideration will also be given to how such work could apply in the Forest of Dean.

Sustainable Development Fund Projects – on the agenda.

Rights of Way management and signage - joint discussions have taken place with rights of way officers in Herefordshire Council, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire County Councils and with Ian Rowat about trying to achieve a more joined up approach to signage in the area and one which respects the high quality of the landscape.

Working with Advantage West Midlands – AONBs in the West Midlands and the Peak District National Park Authority have submitted a joint, initial proposal to AWM to act as a strategic partner in helping to deliver its Natural Assets programme.



Further Information on the subject of this report is available from from Paul Esrich
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