

Designation History Series

Malvern Hills AONB

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MALVERN HILLS AONB

Origin of proposal

1. One of the proposals considered by the National Park Committee established in 1929 by Ramsay MacDonald's Government, and chaired by the Rt Hon Christopher Addison MP, MD, was for the Malvern Hills to become a National Park. In the evidence put forward to the Committee¹ Mr John Bailey and Mr S H Hamer for the National Trust placed the Malvern Hills among twelve areas which had "great claims" to become National Parks. The Report of the National Park Committee¹ (the Addison Report) was published in April 1931 by HMSO for the Treasury. Nothing happened as a result of the Addison Report and no National Authority was set up to implement the Report's proposal. The lack of Government action did lead, however, to the setting up by the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE) of the Standing Committee on National Parks (SCNP), which put forward well argued proposals to Government on future National Parks, though these did not mention the Malvern Hills.

2. During the 2nd World War, John Dower the architect/planner, and the Drafting Secretary of SCNP's "case for National Parks", was requested by Government to study the problems relating to the establishment of National Parks in England and Wales and his report² (May 1945) included the Malvern Hills in list (Division C) 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. Many of these "Other Amenity Areas" became the basis of the 52 conservation areas of high landscape quality, scientific interest and recreational value, listed in the July 1947 Report of the National Parks Committee³, set up by Government following on from the Dower Report, and chaired by Sir Arthur Hobhouse. The 23 square miles/62 square kilometres area of the Malvern Hills (Map 1) was included in Hobhouse's list of conservation areas. Although lacking the extent to become a National Park, the Malvern Hills Range, based on a Pre-Cambrian rocks intruding above the sandstones and marls of the Midland Plain, contained much open hill country of considerable natural beauty, managed by the Malvern Hills Conservators (established under the Malvern Hills Acts from 1884 onwards). The highest part of the narrow range formed the boundary between the counties of Herefordshire to the west, and Worcestershire to the east, and included such well-known features as the Worcestershire Beacon 1,394 feet and the Herefordshire Beacon, 1,114 feet. Though the attractive towns of Great Malvern, and Malvern Wells, popular Spa towns to the east of the Hills were largely excluded from the area, to the west, the area extended nearly to Ledbury, including the attractive hilly parkland of Eastnor. At its southern tip, the area included Brompton in the County of Gloucestershire.

Designation History

3. Though members of the Malvern Hills Conservators were expressing views that the Malvern Hills should become a National Park as early as September 1952, it was not until 1955 that the Conservators requested the National Parks Commission (NPC) to consider whether the area could be designated an AONB under the National Parks and Countryside Act, 1949 (the 1949 Act). At an informal meeting with the Secretary of the National Parks Commission, Harold Abrahams, on 16 May 1955, the Conservators were told that if they wished formally to request the NPC to designate the area as an AONB then they should seek the co-operation of the three County Councils, to whom, as local planning authorities, 75% grants could become available for projects and land acquisition. on designation of the area.

4. In January 1956, officers of Herefordshire County Council took the lead for the three counties concerned and the Conservators, and met with the NPC's Secretary to discuss the way forward for the designation of the Malvern Hills as an AONB. The Secretary explained that while the NPC's first task of designating ten national parks was now virtually complete, it already had a programme for the first tranche of AONBs which would keep it busy for some time. However, the proposed AONB could be favourably considered for early inclusion in the programme if possible boundaries were agreed by the three counties and conservators, if a programme of project work for the AONB could be drawn up, and finally if there was agreement in principle to the formation of an advisory committee for the whole area. The County Planning Officer of Herefordshire, Mr Duncan, continued to take the lead on the designation, and by early 1957, maps had been prepared by Mr Duncan (on behalf of the three Counties) and by the Conservators showing the boundary tentatively agreed. Progress was such that at their February 1957 meeting⁴ the NPC decided to give the Malvern Hills much higher priority in their AONB designation programme.

7. Following broad agreement on the boundaries between the three Counties concerned, and a tentative agreement by them on an advisory committee, the NPC considered the designation proposal at its meeting in June 1957⁵, together with the proposed boundaries put forward by the Conservators. The NPC agreed to proceed towards the designation of the Malvern Hills as a single unit, rather than on a county by county basis (as had been done with some earlier AONB proposals in Surrey and Sussex). They also agreed that the NPC party inspecting the proposed boundaries should comprise Sir Herbert Griffin, Mr Ritchie and Mr Yapp, with their landscape adviser, Mr Watkin, and that the County Planning Officers concerned, and a representative of the Conservators should join the visit and the subsequent discussion. Some small differences of opinion between the County Councils and the Conservators emerged prior to the inspection - concerning the Conservators' view that in Herefordshire the designated area should

have been extended as far as Wellington Heath, (north of Eastnor) to take in Old Colwall, Hope End and Frith Wood, and in Worcestershire, should have included Poolbrook, parts of Castlemorton Common and land to the east of Malvern Wells.

8. At the NPC's inspection of the area on 15 October 1957, both the Counties and Conservators had good opportunities to discuss their differing views with the Commissioners. The Conservators case for eastward and westward extensions, and, indeed, for a small extension at the southern tip, rested on their views that the extensions would help safeguard the foreground of the views afforded from the heights of the Malvern Hills. Despite the views of Worcestershire and Malvern Urban District Council that they continued to disagree with Conservators' eastward extension (ie the land south of great Malvern), the NPC inspecting party believed that all the extensions proposed by the Conservators should be incorporated in the proposed designation. At the meeting of their Committee A on 22 October 1957 the NPC received the report of their inspecting party, written by Mr Yapp, and decided that the formal consultation with the local authorities required under Section 87 of the 1949 Act should begin on this basis.

9. Formal consultation with the local authorities on the basis of the boundaries approved by the NPC, at their Committee A meeting on 22 November 1957 did not commence until 22 May 1958, and involved Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire County Councils, Ledbury and Malvern Urban District Councils, and Newent, Bromyard, Ledbury, Martley and Upton-on-Severn District Councils. At the same time, informal consultations took place with the Malvern Hills Conservators, and, as was common practice for all designations at this stage, with the Crown Estate Commissioners, the Forestry Commission, the Nature Conservancy, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHLG), the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF), the National Trust and CPRE.

10. For the local authorities the only formal objections received came from Newent RDC which suggested the exclusion of an area at the southern end of the proposed designation. For the informal consultees the Nature Conservancy suggested the inclusion in the designation of the wild daffodil meadows near Dymock (several miles away). These representations were considered by the NPC at their meeting on September 1958⁷, when following the recommendation of their Committee A, the NPC decided not to alter the boundary in response to the representations.

11. In December 1958 the NPC decided to put the designation map, unaltered from that considered at their September 1958 meeting, on public deposit, with a closing date for representations of 24 January 1959. No representations were made in relation to the boundary, but the Malvern Hills Conservators made two requests relating to the future administration of the AONB ie that an order should be made

"permitting them to have the right to apply directly for grants-in-aid with particular reference to the acquisition of land" and that "any proposal for development within the designated area, or at least that part of it where they levy a rate, should be submitted for their comment before any decision of a planning authority had been made final". The NPC considered these two requests at their meeting in February 1959, and decided that they were not relevant to the designation of the area as an AONB, though the representations would be forwarded to the Minister (as the Conservators requested) along with the Designation Order. Finally the NPC resolved at the same meeting⁸ to "approve the making of the Malvern Hills AONB (Designation) Order and authorise the affixing of the Commission's seal thereto". The Order was submitted to the Minister of Housing and Local Government in March 1959.

12. On 22 October 1959⁹ the Minister, confirmed, without modification, the Designation Order for the Malvern Hills AONB. The designated area, as confirmed, covering 40 square miles/105 square kilometres, is shown as Map 2¹⁰ to this Report. It was considerably larger than the original Hobhouse conservation area, mainly due to the success of the Malvern Hills Conservators in persuading the local authorities and the NPC of their case for including extensive areas of land to the south of Great Malvern and to the north of Eastnor within the designation.

13. In December 1959 the Clerk of Herefordshire County Council took the lead in convening a meeting of all bodies concerned or interested in the planning of the area ie the local authorities and the Conservators. Following from this an Advisory Committee was established with representation from local authorities, the Conservators and other organisations like the NPC¹¹ and the CPRE. Unfortunately the Advisory Committee only lasted a few years, and was not re-established until 1991.

References

1. The National Park Committee (Chairman Rt Hon Christopher Addison), "Report of the National Park Committee" Cmd 3851, HMSO, London, April 1931.
2. John Dower for Ministry of Town and Country Planning, "National Parks in England and Wales", Cmd 6628, HMSO, London, May 1945.
3. Ministry of Town and Country Planning (Chairman Sir Arthur Hobhouse), "Report of the National Parks Committee (England and Wales)", Cmd 7121, HMSO, London, July 1947.
4. Minutes of the meeting of the National Parks Commission (1090) held on 27 February, 1957.
5. Minutes of the meeting of the National Parks Commission (1144) held on 26 June, 1957.
6. Minutes of the meeting of Committee A of the National Parks Commission (1163) held on 22 October, 1958.
7. Minutes of the meeting of the National Parks Commission (1406) held on 24 September 1958.
8. Minutes of the meeting of the National Parks Commission (1527) held on 25 February 1959.
9. Tenth Report of the National Parks Commission for the year ending 30 September 1959 (Pages 4 and 16), HMSO, London, December, 1959.
10. Eleventh Report of the National Parks Commission for the year ended 30 September, 1960 (Map following page 34), HMSO, London, December 1960.
11. Minutes of the meeting of the National Parks Commission (1810) held on 25 May, 1960.

Folios

All the references above are included as FOLIOS and are numbered as the references.

Maps

Map 1 - Hobhouse Conservation Areas, Malvern Hills.

Map 2 - Malvern Hills AONB (following page 34 Eleventh Annual Report of the National Parks Commission).

Files

The following files have been consulted.

<u>Title</u>	<u>National Parks Commission Number</u>	<u>Public Record Office Number</u>
Malvern Hills	AB/6/2	COU1/947
Malvern Hills Formal Consultations with Local Authorities	AB/6/2/A	COU1/325
Malvern Hills AONB Representations by Malvern Hills Conservators	AB/6/2/B/1	COU1/1244

MAP 1

Hobhouse Conservation Areas, Malvern Hills

- 8
 ① Ludlow 8m.
 ② Knighton 24m.
 ③ Watnastow 17m.

- 20'
 ① 7

- ②
 ① Ludlow 11m.
 ② Leominster 14m.

- 6
 Leominster 10m.

- 10'
 5
 Hereford 11m.

- HEREFORDSHIRE
 Hereford 9m.

- Hereford 14m.
 4

- 52°
 3

- ③ ①
 ④ ②
 ① Ross-on-Wye 2m.
 ② Monmouth 13m.
 ③ Hereford 17m.
 ④ Abergavenny 26m.

- 2
 50°
 Monmouth 5m.



MAP 2

Malvern Hills AONB (following page 34 Eleventh Report
of the National Park Commission)



MALVERN HILLS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

Scale: 2 miles to 1 inch