

Malvern Hills National Landscape

Notes from Management Plan Review Workshops 23rd May 2024

Nature and Climate

1 What is working well? (Green)

Nice document

Good management plan – passionate. Nice document, management plan is a good document to work with though could link better with other plans and strategies.

Easy to read and good doc.

Like ‘physical standard’ of doc – spiral page stays open.

First half of plan can be confusing with how it links with everyone / everything else.

Being done well already

Public access

Local knowledgeable people

Identity

- Communications
- Availability of staff
- Input of staff
- Good relationship

Partnerships (NL and others) – common approach.

Relationship with landowners.

Special Development Fund – Community Fund.

Consultation by partnership – practical ideas.

Training / landowner group

FiPL

Quality of environment – compared to other areas.

Bats and trees on MHT land.

Traditional orchards management.

Deer management and squirrel management (pest control).

Local action linked to MP – Malvern Wells and Ledbury, local wildlife havens,

Community benefit and involvement steps.

FiPL grants and advice.

Engagement.

Smaller guidance documents do make a difference – localness.

Historic Building Restoration Grant.

Strength of partnerships / estates / local authorities.

Seen an increase in positive management [of land], good uptake of FiPL grants and advice. This is a strength of the partnership – working with landowners and estates and LAs etc. Consultation, training and networking/outreach is good. Grants have been delivered and local action (wildlife projects) i.e. community level changes have been good.

Opportunities

Grants where they support what farmers / owners want.

Parkland management.

Available reversion – multiple benefit.

Habitat enhancement and joined up approach – protection.

Because the MHT is such a large landowner within the NL they help to deliver the MP.

Rural England Property Fund.

Young people engaged.

2 What is not working well? (Red)

Lack of funding

Take up of agri-environment schemes

Requirement to match-fund grants.

Uncertainty around farm payments – difficult to plan.

Need advice – how to access / attract FWAG.

Lack of maintenance payments.

Long-term goals vs. short-term funding.

Maintenance / follow up / continuity.

There are some grants out there but need more. Funding is not good/available for ongoing maintenance. Need more access to funding.

Management plan comments

Lack of agricultural value.

Too much information.

Lack of accessibility for certain sectors, eg. Computer literate – lots of grants.

Objectives / targets need to be more specific – too broad.

Setting – needs to be more defined.

We don't know what we want (NL) – working doc?, PR doc?, etc – will drive what MP becomes.

Biodiversity

Habitat links from outside to inside the AONB.

Hedgerow management – ploughing.

Species lost – grayling.

Mistletoe – traditional orchards.

Loss of tranquillity – nature.

Biodiversity loss

Planning

NIMBY-ism – more energy requirements.

Residential development – lack of G1 and B1. Lack of climate change awareness.

Development plans contradictory – AWOPR – allocations.

Housing developments.

Local authority capacity and funding.

Planning departments – decision making – expediency – enforcement – especially in NL.

Conserve and enhance – (museum mothballed) vs. thriving.

Climate change

Lack of direct action / policy in current MP.

Should have own section in MP or objectives at end of each section.

Access / tourism / recreation

Loss of dark skies.

Lighting.

Traffic management / tranquillity – lack of public transport – seasonality.

Recreational pressures – damaging.

Impacts of visitors at popular hotspots.

More people, feet, pressure, traffic, lighting, pollution, erosion, disturbance.

Increased people pressure affecting access and tourism and recreation pressures on NL.

Users / people

Cycincism – switch off.

Lack of awareness and understanding of new users – what they are doing.

Lack of education / responsibility using the NL – damage to nature.

List of committee members age document (??).

Don't know plan exists unless given directly.

General / broad

Overwhelming! Structure of the management plan needs addressing; combination of too much and too little information.

Overflow sewage Cradley Brook – no investment.

Time!

Health.

3 What are changes in contexts? (Yellow)

Resources / demands

Competing resource demands – water / food / waste / space.

Population growth.

Class Q legislation prior approval.

Change of Govt.

Government policies.

Legislation

Legislation and planning changes.

Agri-environment schemes – new grants.

Subsidies / corporate business interests.

Agricultural policy. Public money for public goods – goalposts are changing.

BNG – not good at present! Onsite preference – biodiversity units.

Biodiversity Action Plans – county / parishes – local nature recovery strategies – aligning.

What will landscape look like.

Climate change

Need to look after trees etc – not just planting.
Climate change targets being downgraded – expediency.
Climate change and biodiversity emergencies.
Changing climate – farming / business diversification.
Climate change – changing crops that can be grown.
What is NL going to do to adapt to climate change?
Net zero – how would we get there?
Flooding.
Land management NFM projects.
Run-off extreme weather events.
Nutrient management – effluent – farmers.
Wildfires as much as flooding. Habitats where? Which habitats more likely at risk of fire?
More rain – run off and erosion.
Solar power – positive and negative reactions – visible in landscape
Resilience to climate change and increased connectivity.
Impact of change on landscape character.

Education

Expectations downgraded – spending power – worrying about future.
Education but worrying about unknowns.
Education of businesses.

Community

Action groups – power.
Community capital.
Volunteer competition.
Communities living in the NL and setting and those working there (and what they can deliver towards the targets)

Other

Solar panels – demand for and visual impact – land use change – positive power (?).
Setting of the NL – responsibility.
Positive statements by the NL.
Future management of change.
Capacity of the landscape to deliver the targets.
Management for change and joined up thinking between different strategies.

4 What needs to change? (Blue)

Communication

Better communication with others.
Education – wider public awareness. Human rights. Responsibility premium.
Media / audiences – what type of messages we need. Data, marketing, promotion.
Need a farmers' version.

Facilitator.

MP relevant to individuals and big owners.

Improving MP to link with others.

Support to local groups – community capital.

Communications with large landowners.

Communication: need to communicate better with visitors and landowners etc. Need facilitators to help spread key messages and communications links.

Measurement – KPIs

Establishing baselines, KPIs – build on it.

More illustrative guidance with examples.

Planning more enabling to allow farmers to continue to farm.

Land management and farming advisers with people on the ground – coordinator.

Land management

Management of land eg. Shade, shelter, grassland – deeper rooting.

Resilience – habitats, landscapes, etc.

The right tree in the right place.

Remove re-wilding but include in more extensive agriculture – intensification is a key issue.

Water management and quality.

Addition of water

- Ponds – abstraction
- Ground sources
- Spring – flooding

Climate change needs to be added.

Identify biodiversity action plan.

Nature Recovery Plan to be included in MP.

Separate farming from forestry.

Need for resilience farming and habitats.

Farming needs to recognise landscape.

Facilitating change more quickly

Focus FiPL on more farming-focused activity – more enabling to diversify.

Ambitious policies.

Better, more streamlined.

Mental health – meeting face to face.

Basic change / improvements across whole landscape.

Positive interventions.

Enacting change more quickly.

Recognise change is inevitable.

Supporting groups and communities.

Projects tend to be hand to mouth – long term visions with short term funding.

Making people more aware of schemes, plans and responsible behaviour.

Enforcing and controlling needs to be better.

Recognise climate change and biodiversity emergency.

Funding

Funding for local conservation groups.

Funding / resources – enforcing / patrolling.

Ease of finding grants – database.
Budget allocation to national landscape and enforcement.

General discussion

Climate change and waste management are really important issues.

People in and around the NL use the MP.

The more ambitious the plan, the better as it has more positive effects.

AONB is a hill, so its effects and impacts are far reaching.

Connections between, within and beyond the plan are important.

Plan should be spatial and prescriptive.

Recommendations should be joined up and long term.

Need to be aware of how to achieve this / these links while keeping it a working document.

Continue to communicate thoughts.

Overwhelmed by plans – so many things going on – too many plans may complicate.

Plans need to be easily readable and useable.

Need to include the new legislation in the management plan.

Need others to USE plans at local and parish level.

People and Place

1 What is working well? (Green)

Access

All abilities have access.

The links with train station – how many can link with London Paddington?

Cyclist potential.

Footpaths – miles without stiles.

Accessibility is good.

Free access to nature and open countryside.

Access to parks, playgrounds and open spaces.

Transport now on demand.

Beginning to spread visitor pressure.

Living in the environment.

Majority of landscape in good condition.

Ecology

Wildlife and birdlife.

Good stunning views from British Camp and Beacon.

Finance (income and resources)

Grant forecasting.

Money and grants.

Ability to spread grant (facilitation).

Grants for historic buildings.

Locally there is good access to grants and partnerships.

Tourism

Route to the Hills Project – good tourism offering.

Disparity – change in age profile. Tourism – good potential.

Sustainable tourism initiatives.

Better historic assets.

Partnership and collaboration

Good partnership team.

Good data available.

Landowner gatherings.

Resourcing, engagement and purposing

Education and young people engagement.

Rich in volunteers.

Good volunteering / local action groups.

Planning

Planning responses clear and consistent.

NDPs

Better historic assets.

Ancient monuments.

Positive input into planning.

Design guidance and guidance more widely.
Seeing changes – well communicated.
Coordinated responses – joined up.
Good range of neighbourhood plans in place; design guidance.

2 What is not working well? (Red)

Affordable housing

Lack of affordable housing.

Education and awareness

Consulting with youth – need creative ways to reach hidden voices.
Lack of education and awareness.
Lack of awareness amongst new land and property owners about the AONB/NL.
Lack of awareness raising in kids.
Telling the story.

Signage and interpretation

Signposted trails, waymarking and interpretation.
Disneyfication of NL with signage.
Not enough signs (but care not too many either).

DM

Loss of character – guidance – control – PD changes
Local interpretation of legislation of ‘protection’ of NL/AONB by LPAs.

Recreation vs erosion

Mountain biking.
Archaeology erosion.
Recreational pressure on hills. Mitigation strategies needed to protect the site.
Dispersing visitors across the AONB, away from tourist hotspots.
Invasion of town activities into countryside – BBQs / ball sports / swimming in wildlife sites.

Visitor pressure

High footfall when providing public access.

Heritage assets, springs and spouts

Malvern water – wells need care and attention. WV filters needed on key wells.

Visitor data

Lack of up to date visitor data and trust.

Tourism and slowdown

Day trippers – not enough overnight accommodation.

Grant deadlines

Grant timings.

Area of population are closer to 'green spaces'. People assume now to be playing fields.

Loss of volunteers

Decline in volunteers since Covid.

Transport and infrastructure

Road conditions, especially Herefordshire.

Road safety.

Active travel routes – using signposting, dedicated surfacing, utilising existing path routes, etc.

Cycle routes – using green infrastructure instead of roads. Creative solutions using, for example, the 2nd railway tunnel, mitigating for bats.

The Hills Hopper – loss of public transport.

Development of batteries – mountain and electric bikes at night.

Public transport – no park and ride, no bike routes.

Big buses cause congestion.

Facilities

Lack of 'public conveniences', eg WCs / waste bins. Brew, view, loo.

Loss of important services and facilities.

Noise / tranquillity

Noise pollution / loss of silence and tranquillity.

Experience

Users enjoy the National Landscape.

Impact of development

Small incremental on planning.

Incremental development affecting special qualities.

Cumulative effect of built development – kerbs, lighting, hedges, creeping urbanisation.

Development management and its impact. Including the impact of small stuff like fences not hedgerows in new developments.

3 What are changes in contexts? (Yellow)

Renewable energy

Alternative energy sources.

Renewable energy / exploiting technology.

New HE guidance on retro-fitting.

Technology

Data in public domain weaponizing it against people.

Growing social media – weather apps, mobile geo-locating data.

Climate change

Climate change – floods stopping access to events.

Historic landscape
HL property settings.

Politics
Legislation.
Political change.
Government changes.

Development
Creeping urbanisation.
Housing pressures.

Finance
Driver – green financing. Ability to encourage people of influence / wealth to buy into local nature-based solutions.

Plans / policies
Local plans.
Localism Act.
How will management plan fit with other plans in place including Malvern Hills Trust's, NPs, Local Plans, LNRS etc etc.
Active travel and sustainable travel: light railway (Malvern-Upton?).

NDPs
Design codes.
New / revised plans – MHT plus.
BNG – what habitats and where?
LNRs.
PD rights.

Communities
Lack of skilled labour.
Decline of volunteers – they want salaries.
People having less time.
Aging population.
Pockets of deprivation are present.

Research best practice
Looking locally for inspiration for appropriate development for tourism / visitors.

Visitor numbers
Controlling visitor numbers.

4 What needs to change? (Blue)

Climate change
Carbon offsetting scheme.
Climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Farming change

Loss of shoots and field margins.

Biodiversity and habitats

Improvements in biodiversity and habitats – the right tree in the right place – more planting needed. Better field margins in farming.

Biodiversity.

Biosecurity – trees and avian (??)

Travel, transport and access

Mountain bike destinations. Mountain biking: needs a balance. Link existing tracks for e-bikes and mountain biking.

Linking together existing tracks for mountain / e-bikes on a flat contour – realistic.

Stronger controls on development in the context of living / working in the NL.

Reduce size of buses – bring the donkeys back!

Bring back the Hills Hopper.

Training and education

Go to schools – Welsh baccalaureate.

More engagement with children and young people – particularly primary schools.

Involve in decision making and improve awareness of where we live

Training for committees and planning officers.

Loss of skills.

Training and education needs to be more proactive.

Mentoring: NL Partnership to mentor other areas/stakeholders?

Communications and visitor experience

Creating new honeypot locations to disperse visitors.

Deflecting people away by car parking charges.

Single day festivals – spread around.

Longer term visitors – increase income of visitors.

Visitor survey – increase understanding.

Branding of National Landscape so you know you are in it – creating a volunteer brand associated with it.

Better communications with visitors.

Messaging.

Green space prescribing.

Joining with local tourism promoters – sustainable messaging.

Encourage businesses to adopt greener practices.

Better liaison between departments and bodies (heritage, etc).

Improve messaging about respecting the area (esp to visitors).

Planning (development)

AONB / NL teams to be statutory consultees.

Standardised text for NDPs.

LPAs respecting landscape sensitivity and capacity studies.

Make targets proportionate but make sure it doesn't come at the cost of new development. Housing targets need to be balanced with the protected landscape status.

Ring fence lighting / dark skies.
Dark skies: is it too late to get this? Esp with new developments.
MH AONB should be statutory consultees.
National park status?

Volunteers

Volunteer capacity – encourage and support / enable younger volunteers to engage with the AONB in national schemes eg. Citizen Science, DoE, apprenticeships, secondary school work experience.
Volunteers – block time. Opportunity for volunteer holidays?
Sharing volunteers – working together.
Explore models to bring in people resource (young vols). Example model – National Corps (US forestry).
Attract younger volunteers.

Misc funding and links to other areas

Mentorship of 'grubby areas' outside of the NL/AONB.
Desire to upgrade to a National Park.
Funding and resources.
Funding.
Make more of hinterland of AONB for events.
AONB has a bigger influence than its boundary.
Connect better: social media, also a "forum" with all stakeholders to update and network with each other and look at outcomes and aims (esp important if asking partners to also deliver the targets).