The Cannock Chase AONB
Management Plan
2019-2024
‘Special and Connected’

Consultation Draft
Deadline for comments:
11th January 2019

Graphics updated 14 November 2018
Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2019-2024 Consultation

‘Special and Connected’

Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural beauty is a nationally and internationally important landscape. It was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1958 under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, one of only 46 areas to be given this recognition in the UK. It is designated primarily for its natural beauty, while its wildlife, and historic and cultural significance underpin the beauty of the landscape.

The AONB’s Joint Committee has responsibility to produce a Management Plan as required by Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000 and to ensure it is reviewed every five years. A new Management Plan is being prepared by the Cannock Chase AONB Partnership, working on behalf of the area’s 5 local authorities. The Plan will be in place from April 2019 to March 2024.

The drafting of the Plan has been informed by discussions and workshops held with many stakeholders and partners during 2017 and 2018.

In line with the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive and Habitat Regulations a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Report and Habitats Regulations Assessment have been carried out to support the Management Plan Review.

The State of the AONB Report provides the evidence base to underpin the new AONB Management Plan. The Story Map of the Report is accessible here: Story Map Cascade
Now we want to know what you think of the draft Plan.

Between 9 November 2018 and 11 January 2019, we will be collecting your feedback on the Draft Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2019-2024.

We would particularly welcome your views on:

- The area’s character, ‘Special Qualities’ - have we identified what makes the area distinctive and special to you?
- What needs to be done – have we identified the right policies and actions that would most benefit the landscape and its communities over the coming five years?

How to provide feedback

The easiest way to provide feedback is to view or download an electronic copy of the Draft Management Plan and supporting statutory assessments at Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 Consultation, and submit your comments using the questionnaire.

Paper copies of the consultation documents will be available to view at the following Libraries around the AONB: Stafford, Rugeley, Cannock, Lichfield, Penkridge, and Community Libraries at Baswich, Brereton, Cheslyn Hay, Great Wyrley, Heath Hayes, Hednesford, Holmcroft, Rising Brook, Norton Canes. There you may either be able to submit your responses online, or alternatively complete a paper questionnaire to post to us at:

Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
c/o Staffordshire County Council
Staffordshire Place 2
Tipping Street
Stafford
ST16 2DH

If you are unable to download the Plan or you need the help accessing the document then please get in touch with Sue Glen: susan.glen@staffordshire.gov.uk

What happens next

A report will be produced outlining the responses received and how these will be addressed, and a revised Management Plan for 2019–2024 will be prepared. Both will be put forward for approval at the Cannock Chase Joint Committee meeting in early 2019.

Following adoption of the Plan by the area’s 5 local authorities the new Plan will be published in April 2019.
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14th November 2018

Prepared by [Rural Focus]
Introduction to this Draft Management Plan

This is the Consultation Draft of the Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2019-2024, prepared for the AONB Joint Committee to fulfil the Statutory Requirements of Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000.

This will be the fourth statutory Management Plan for Cannock Chase AONB. It draws on recent reports and other evidence including the revised Landscape Character Assessment for the AONB (2017), the State of the AONB Report (2018) and Visitor Management Strategy (2014). It has been guided by a report prepared by the Officer’s Working Group (June 2018) which reviewed the delivery of the 2014-2019 Management Plan, drawing on analysis by the Task and Finish Groups. It has taken account of an independent Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Management Plan.

Development of this draft has involved a process of consultation and review at a workshop with the Task and Finish Groups (10th August), sessions at the Annual Conference (14th September) which examined the special qualities of the AONB and the draft policies, as well as individual discussions with key partners, all overseen by the Officers Working Group.

This Draft Management Plan is published in November 2018, allowing a two-month period for public consultation. Comments on this plan are invited, with a deadline of 11th January 2019. The easiest way to provide feedback is to view or download an electronic copy of the Draft Management Plan and supporting statutory assessments at Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 Consultation, and submit your comments using the questionnaire. Alternatively, you may email comments to Cannock Chase: cannockchase@staffordshire.gov.uk.

A revised Management Plan will be presented to the AONB Joint Committee early in 2019, with a view to it being adopted prior to March 2019.
1. **About the Plan**

**Purpose of the Management Plan**

1.1. This draft Plan sets out the agenda for the management of Cannock Chase between 2019 – 2024. When confirmed following public consultation it will be a locally prepared and agreed statement of public policy for managing this nationally important landscape. Now in its fourth edition, this management plan builds on previous iterations. Its focus is on delivering the statutory purpose of AONB designation: conserving and enhancing natural beauty, with considerations relating to wider environmental issues, the rural economy, communities and recreation dealt with in the context of delivering this purpose. The Plan also sets out the Special Qualities of the AONB which provide a character-based criterion to judge the impact on the AONB that may take place from development or other activities.

1.2. The AONB is governed by the Joint Committee (JC) which has devolved authority from the five local authorities that cover the Chase (Staffordshire County Council, Stafford District, Cannock Chase District, South Staffordshire District and Lichfield District). It is the Joint Committee’s responsibility to produce this Plan as required by Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000 and to ensure it is reviewed every five years.

1.3. This Plan aims to meet and then go beyond this statutory requirement. Through telling the story of this special, nationally important landscape it aims to galvanise, prioritise and inspire action; bring partners together and promote collaboration; and prioritise public investment in order to secure a future for the AONB where its natural beauty is conserved, enhanced and celebrated for the good of the nation and local communities.

**Who the Plan is for**

1.4. This draft Plan incorporates the views of the Joint Committee and a wide range of public, private and voluntary bodies and individuals and is derived through consensus. It is for the landscape of Cannock Chase AONB, not for one organisation or partnership, and it provides a guide for **everyone** involved with the AONB and engaged in activities which have implications for the areas natural beauty the actions they can take to help care for and improve the area.

1.5. Audiences that might have a specific interest include:

- **AONB Partnership Organisations**: These organisations will have a key role in delivering and championing the Management Plan.
- **Public Bodies**: All public bodies have a duty to have regard to the purposes of designation of the AONB under the CROW Act (Section 85). This Plan provides a transparent and accessible framework by which public bodies can ensure they are exercising their duty.
- **Planning Authorities**: It provides planning authorities with policy direction for the AONB and is a material consideration that should be taken into account when preparing Development Plans and Neighbourhood Plans as well as determining planning applications.
- **Landowners and Managers**: Those who own and manage land in the AONB will play a vital role in its future and the Plan aims to guide, support and attract resources for sensitive management of the AONB.
- **Communities**: Everyone who uses, enjoys and experiences the AONB can play an active role in caring for it, and the Plan identifies ways for everyone, including local businesses and voluntary bodies, to get involved and make a difference.
Relationship to other plans, strategies and processes.

1.6. This Plan should be used to guide and inform all other plans and activities developed by public bodies and statutory undertakers that may affect the AONB, in line with the CROW Act requirement for them to have a duty of regards for the primary purpose of the AONB. It should also be used as a guide for other people and organisations in and around the AONB. In turn when drawing up this Plan numerous other existing plans and strategies were considered and where appropriate and goals aligned this Plan will help their delivery. For example, this Plan will help promote and support local delivery of the Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan.

How the Plan has been developed

1.7. The progress achieved through the previous Management Plan (2014-2019) was reviewed and recommendations for this fourth edition of this Plan were made by Stakeholders attending the 2016 and 2017 Annual Conferences and by detailed work carried out by the four AONB Task and Finish Groups\(^1\). This culminated in a Management Plan Review Report which was produced in June 2018. A report on the State of the AONB (2018) has drawn together evidence on the condition of the AONB. Consultants (Rural Focus) were employed in July 2018 to work closely with the Joint Committee to consider the recommendations within the Management Plan Review Report and develop and produce this draft Plan. The AONB’s Annual Conference in September 2018 reviewed and refined the special qualities and policies contained in this Plan. Further consultation was undertaken with members of the Task and Finish Groups, and with the AONB Joint Committee. A two-month period of public consultation will take place from November 2018.

1.8. A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) are also being undertaken alongside the preparation and consultation of this Plan.

Format of the Plan

1.9. The Plan takes a landscape-based approach to describe the special qualities of the AONB. Collectively the special qualities provide a statement of the significance of the natural beauty of AONB, justifying its designation and providing a framework for policy and practice to conserve, enhance, celebrate and enjoy the AONB. A Vision sets out the future direction of the AONB.

1.10. The Plan is structured around five themes (see Chapters 3 – 7), with text providing details of the priority objectives that have been identified for that theme. Under each priority objective sits one or more policies, each introduced with a contextual paragraph. Reference is made to the actions that will help deliver each policy. These actions are also set out in full in Chapter 7 of the Plan along with a monitoring framework.

\(^{1}\) The four Task and Finish Groups form a key part of the AONBs organisational structure and are made up of elected members and officers from the five Local Authorities that cover the AONB and key partners.
The Structure of the Management Plan, split between the following chapters, is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Special Qualities of the AONB</th>
<th>The Vision for 2019-2038</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Landscape Character and Planning
- **Maintain quality & distinctiveness**
  - High standards of design in the built environment
  - The impacts of traffic in the AONB
  - Woodland management
  - Agri-environment incentives
  - Non-farming land uses
  - High quality recreational infrastructure
- **Enhance the landscape setting**
  - Protecting views
  - Softening the boundary
  - Strategic landscape links

### Wildlife and Nature
- **Improve conditions for nature**
  - Recognition of the importance of the SAC
  - Effective management of heathland
  - Key species
  - Invasive weeds, pests and diseases
  - Ground water levels and the valley mires
- **Enlarge and connect habitats**
  - Restoration of heathland
  - Bridges for nature outside the AONB
  - National leadership for biodiversity gain

### Historic Environment and Culture
- **Conserve the Chase’s heritage assets**
  - Improving knowledge of heritage
  - Improving the condition of heritage
- **Connect communities with the Chase’s history & culture**
  - Inspire through the Chase’s history and culture

### Experience and Enjoyment
- **Treading lightly in the Chase**
  - Recreation management
  - Alternative recreation resources
  - Group visits
- **A greener experience**
  - Creating a green identity
  - Relationship between visitors & the environment
  - Sustainable travel
  - A clear message

### Communities and Business
- **Natural benefits for the community**
  - Meeting community needs
  - Giving communities a voice
- **Supporting the special qualities**
  - Coordination of volunteering
  - Harnessing enterprise

### Action Implementation Plan 2019-2024
### Monitoring Framework 2019-2024
2. About the AONB

2.1. Cannock Chase is a nationally and internationally important landscape. It was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1958 under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, one of only 46 areas to be given this recognition in the UK.

2.2. Whilst it is the smallest inland AONB in the UK, its influence and reach stretch far beyond the boundary. Sitting in the densely populated West Midlands, the natural beauty of the AONB sits at the heart of the area connecting landscapes, natural processes, habitats, history, culture and communities to it.

2.3. Cannock Chase AONB is a member of the National Association of AONBs – a charitable company that has been set up to work for and on behalf of the family of AONBs, influencing policy and decision makers and sharing good practice. As part of this group Cannock Chase AONB will be able to learn form and inspire other AONBs in the family.

A Special Place

2.4. Understanding why the Chase is so special, and why it was designated, is central to ensuring it is looked after and continues to be special for generations to come.

2.5. There are many special sites within the AONB that are recognised as being important internationally, nationally and locally including; 1,237 ha of the heathland is designated as a Special Area for Conservation under the European Habitats Directive, five Sites of Special Scientific Interest, six Scheduled Monuments and three Local Nature Reserves. Beyond these individual elements, most of the AONB lies in the Greenbelt.

2.6. The AONB designation recognises the importance of the landscape as a whole and in July 2013 the World Conservation Union (IUCN) confirmed Cannock Chase AONB as meeting its Category V Protected Landscapes Status.

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2 The AONB is classified as a Category V Protected Landscape by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
2.7. The Chase was designated as an AONB as it was considered to meet the required level of natural beauty and also to be desirable to designate it in order to conserve and enhance it. The Purpose of the AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. This Primary Purpose is qualified by two subsidiary purposes which state that in pursuing this other economic and social roles should be considered.

**The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty**

- In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, 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.

*Countryside Commission statement 1991, restated in 2006*

2.8. There is no formal definition of what is meant by natural beauty, but various judgements and guidance have helped to clarify the meaning and intent of the Purpose. Natural England’s 2011 Guidance for Assessing Landscapes for Designation gives clear advice on the approach taken to determining if an area should be designated as an AONB. Appendix 1 helpfully sets out Criterion for Natural Beauty along with an evaluation framework to help determine its presence.

2.9. Six contributing factors to Natural Beauty are identified (Landscape quality, Scenic quality, Relative wildness, Relative tranquillity, Natural heritage features, Cultural heritage) with example sub-

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4 The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 set out that AONBs purpose would be similar to National Parks in that they would conserve and enhance natural beauty although National Parks would have an additional purpose to provide opportunities for open-air recreation and be close to centres of population. The basis for the wording of the subsidiary purposes can be found in the Countryside Act 1968, section 37. The wording of the AONB purpose and subsidiary purpose was set out in the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A Policy Statement 1991. CEP 356 (Countryside Commission) and later restated in the Guidance for the review of AONB Management Plans (Countryside Agency, CA 221, 2006, p.6). The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000 reaffirms the primary purpose of AONBs.
factors and indicators. There is no scoring system, thresholds or requirement for all factors or sub-factors to be present or unique, but it is a framework to help provide a degree of transparency and consistency to applying a value judgement as to whether people are likely to perceive a landscape as having sufficient Natural Beauty in order to be designated\(^6\).

2.10. By working through this framework in conjunction with the recently updated Landscape Character Assessment\(^6\) it is possible to understand the factors and sub-factors that combine to form Natural Beauty on Cannock Chase in a consistent and robust way.

2.11. Defra guidance states that “The Management Plan should include an assessment of the special quality of the AONB\(^6\).” This understanding of Natural Beauty, the factors and sub-factors that contribute to it, along with a consideration of distinguishing features related to the sub-purposes forms the basis of the special qualities of Cannock Chase.

The Special Qualities of Cannock Chase – Statement of Significance

2.12. The special qualities of the AONB should define the characteristics (of landscape, wildlife, cultural heritage and natural resources) that give the area its sense of place. Collectively they can provide a statement of the significance of the natural beauty of AONB, justifying its designation and providing a framework for policy and practice to conserve, enhance, celebrate and enjoy the AONB.

2.13. The special qualities of Cannock Chase are listed below. They are shown beside the factors of natural beauty that are set out in Natural England’s Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England\(^7\).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors of Natural Beauty</th>
<th>The Special Qualities of Cannock Chase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Landscape Quality</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A measure of the physical state or condition of the landscape</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scenic Quality</strong></td>
<td>A varied landscape of heathland, woodland, wood pasture, parkland and mixed pastoral and arable farmland. The large blocks of heathland and woodland in the centre of the AONB contrast with the smaller scale farmed countryside, bisected by thick hedgerows and narrow lanes, around its fringes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The extent to which the landscape appeals to the senses (primarily, but not only, the visual senses)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relative wildness and tranquillity</strong></td>
<td>A haven of tranquillity and wildness, compared to the busy towns and roads that surround it, providing popular spaces for informal recreation such as Marquis Drive and Birches Valley, as well as less visited spots for contemplation and watching nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The degree to which relatively wild character and tranquillity can be perceived in the landscape</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^6\) Cannock Chase AONB Review of AONB Landscape Character Framework (2017) (Ashmead Price)

### Natural Heritage Features

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 formed 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.

Wetlands, including the spring-fed mires and wet heaths of the Sherbrook and Oldacre Valleys, which are nationally rare habitats and support characteristic boggy vegetation, amphibians and insects.

Ancient broadleaved woodland and wood pastures such as Brocton Coppice, containing veteran oak trees, woodland flowers, birds, bats and insects.

Wildlife species which are nationally rare and/or strongly associated with the Chase. These include birds such as the nightjar and woodlark, plants such as Cannock Chase berry (a rare hybrid between bilberry and cowberry), insects such as the small pearl-bordered fritillary and bog bush-cricket, and the herds of deer which are recognised as the emblem of the Chase.

### 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 at the Iron Age Hill Fort at Castle Ring; the heathland remnants of the Norman hunting chase of Cank Forest; historic houses and parkland; the rich heritage of iron working and coal mining; and military camps and cemeteries from the two World Wars.

Historic parkland and ornamental landscapes, sometimes 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.

An extensive network of well-maintained rides and paths through woodland and heathland providing opportunities for stimulating exercise and exploration.

2.14. The loss, damage or deterioration of any of these special qualities would fundamentally alter the character and quality of the natural beauty of Cannock Chase.
A connected landscape delivering public benefits

2.15. The benefit of the natural beauty of the Chase is not purely its aesthetic quality. Along with the wider environment the special qualities deliver a wide range of benefits to people. These are derived from the area’s ‘natural capital’ (which is defined as “the parts of the natural environment that produce value to people”). The concept of natural capital lies at the heart of the Government’s recently published 25 Year Environment Plan and is set to play an increasingly influential role in how public policy develops, especially in special areas such as AONBs.

2.16. Cannock Chase AONB lies in southern Staffordshire in the heart of the densely populated West Midlands. A relatively small number (around 10,000 people) live within the AONB boundary, the large majority in the villages of Cannock Wood, Gentleshaw, Upper Longdon and Brocton or on the edges of Rugeley, Hazelslade, Huntingdon and Pye Green. A much large number of people live on the doorstep of the AONB. A 30 minute walk or 15 minute cycle could bring 135,000 people to the AONB (including the residents of Cannock, Rugeley and Walton-on-the-Hill). A drive of less than an hour extends the population catchment of the AONB to 3.2 million people, including Stafford, Lichfield, Burton, Tamworth, Walsall, Wolverhampton, much of Birmingham, Telford and Stoke-on-Trent.

2.17. The contrast between the largely intact sparsely populated landscape of the Chase and the dense settlement patterns and fragmented character of the wider countryside is significant. Despite this contrast in the quality of the landscape the AONB does not sit in isolation. The connections between the AONB and its surrounds are complex, multi-layered and two-way; spanning geology, natural process (such as hydrology), ecology, history, culture, identity, communities and economics.

2.18. These connections, relationships and public benefits are not static and ensuring that the ongoing influence that the surrounding landscape and communities have on the AONB, and in turn the relationship that the AONB has on its surrounding landscape and communities, is positive and beneficial is central to this Plan.
3. **Vision for the AONB**

3.1. The special qualities of the AONB articulate what constitutes the natural beauty of Cannock Chase and what needs to be conserved and enhanced, in order to meet the statutory purpose of the designation. The Objectives, Policies and Action presented in the following Chapters (4 – 8) identify how the Joint Committee and its partners will go about ensuring that these special qualities are conserved and enhanced.

3.2. In addition to this, a Vision for the AONB in 20 years-time (2039) is presented to inspire and identify the goal that everyone is working towards.

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**By 2039, the landscapes, habitats and heritage of Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be in good condition through positive management, with standards and facilities befitting their national and international importance. There will be high levels of connectivity between the AONB and its surrounds through its landscapes, habitats, heritage and cultural landscapes and communities. The natural benefits of the AONB will have a positive impact on those who experience and enjoy the Chase whether from local communities or further afield and these communities will in turn care for, feel pride in and celebrate the AONB.**

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3.3. The rest of this Management Plan shows how the AONB Partnership will work towards this vision over the period 2019 to 2024.
4. **Landscape Character and Planning**

4.1. Cannock Chase holds the AONB designation because of its outstanding and nationally important landscape character and quality. Its Special Qualities, which have been informed by the recently revised Landscape Character Assessment (see map below), emphasise the contrast between the relatively wild and tranquil character of the Chase and the increasingly busy towns, conurbations and countryside that surround it.

4.2. The landscape of the Chase is varied and there are different elements that are distinctive in different parts of the AONB, including the inspiring views and open prospect to and from parts of the high heathland plateau; the secluded and ‘secret’ valleys and tracks in the forested areas; and the patterns of small fields, farmsteads and parkland along the northern and eastern edge of the Chase.

4.3. Economic development around the Chase, including new housing and improved transport infrastructure, is to be welcomed because it should improve the lives of local people and provide additional resources for conserving and enhancing the Chase. Nevertheless, it is important that development does not harm or intrude on the special qualities and characteristic features of the Chase’s landscapes. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (para. 172) strengthens the protection for AONB’s against development, stating that the scale and extent of development should be limited in protected areas. It is also important that the contrasts between the Chase’s natural beauty and the busy towns and countryside around it are not seen as creating a sharp boundary or barrier.

4.4. The policies in this theme are split between two overall objectives to:

- Maintain the quality and distinctiveness of the AONB’s landscape character; and
- Enhance the setting of the Chase within its wider urban and rural landscape.
Maintain quality and distinctiveness

4.5. **High standards of design in the built environment.** 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.

**Policy LCP1:** Development proposals within the AONB 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\(^8\) and minimise their carbon footprint and negative impacts on the local environment.

**Associated action**

A.1: Prepare guidance note on ‘Building and Infrastructure Design in Cannock Chase AONB’ which Local Planning Authorities which will be invited to adopt.

4.6. **The impacts of traffic in the AONB.** There are several busy roads with pass through the AONB and traffic, particularly heavy goods vehicles and speeding cars can significantly detract from the tranquillity and high quality of the landscape.

**Policy LCP2:** The impact of traffic travelling through the Chase on its tranquillity and other special qualities should be reduced where possible by encouraging alternative routes and by reducing speed, noise and air pollution.

**Associated action**

B.1: Explore with SCC Highways Department the practical steps that can be taken to reduce traffic impacts through the AONB.

4.7. **Woodland management.** The 2,684 ha of woodland, rides and glades that are managed by the Forestry Commission in the Chase, along with the other areas of privately-owned woodland, contribute greatly to the landscape of the AONB and the public goods it provides. The Commission’s Cannock Forest Plan describes the objectives and programme of actions that will guide its management over the period 2015-2025, including felling and restocking, ride and open space management and provision of recreational routes. Over the period to 2025, this Plan will improve diversity of tree species including broadleaves, enlarge the area of open space and increase the area under continuous cover forestry.

**Policy LCP3:** LCP3: Opportunities will be taken to enhance the contribution that woodland makes to the character of the AONB

**Associated action**

B.2: Support the work of the Forestry Commission and other woodland owners and managers to deliver both long term forestry/woodland design plans and short term woodland management operations in ways which enhance the AONB’s special qualities.

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\(^8\) Guidance from Historic England in relation to heritage assets (The Setting of Heritage Assets, 2011) helps to define what is meant by setting: “The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration; by spatial associations; and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places”.
4.8. **Agri-environment incentives.** Pasture and arable farming has shaped, and helps maintain, the landscape in parts of the Chase. Brexit is likely to bring a period of uncertainty to farming as the UK decides how to replace the EU subsidies and schemes that have supported farming. Appropriate targeting of incentives available from the Countryside Stewardship scheme and its successor(s) will be needed to encourage a smooth transition for farming businesses and management practices.

**Policy LCP4:** Agri-environment scheme measures should be aligned to deliver the outcomes and objectives of this Plan.

**Associated action**

A.12: Work with local partners to ensure suitable agri-environment scheme incentives are available and suitably targeted to farms and smallholdings in the AONB.

4.9. **Non-farming land uses.** 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.

**Policy LCP5:** Advice and practical guidance should be made available to new landowners and those planning changes of use of their land, such as the of keeping horses, to conserve and enhance the Chase’s special qualities.

**Associated actions**

A.5: Re-engage and draw up a new updated database of interested parties in the AONB and maintain regular contact with them on matters of interest.

B.3: Prepare and publicise leaflets, and offer advisory events, for rural non-farming landowners in the AONB on how they can help conserve and enhance the special qualities of the Chase.

4.10. **High quality recreation infrastructure.** The way in which recreation is provided by the different landowners on the Chase, and the condition and style of infrastructure (such as signage, path surfacing and car parking), has a strong impact on the integrity of the landscape.

**Policy LCP6:** The quality, location and usage of recreation infrastructure maintained by all major landowners in the Chase should be consistent and appropriate to landscape character.

**Associated action**

A.8: Develop a shared design protocol for recreation and leisure facilities, signage and promotional material, aimed at producing consistent high standards for use by all providers in the Chase.
Enhance the landscape setting

4.11. **Protecting views.** The elevated plateau of the Chase gives long vistas over the farmed vales and countryside of the Midlands from public view points within the AONB. At the same time, the Chase is present as a prominent wooded skyline from many surrounding settlements and roads. It is important that large developments outside the AONB do not detract from these views into and out of the Chase.

**Policy LCP7:** Development that detracts from landscape character or impacts on the natural beauty of the Chase, by obscuring or intruding on significant public views into and out of the AONB, should be resisted.

**Associated action**

*B.4: Map and describe the significant view points and views accessible to the public into and out of the AONB.*

4.12. **Softening the boundary.** 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.

**Policy LCP8:** In the immediate vicinity of the AONB, the character of the public realm (e.g. landscaping around roads and buildings, public lighting and signage) should be designed and maintained so that it reinforces and complements the landscape character and quality of the Chase and provides a welcoming experience for those entering the AONB.

**Associated action**

*A.1: Prepare guidance note on ‘Building and Infrastructure Design in Cannock Chase AONB’ which Local Planning Authorities will be invited to adopt.*

4.13. **Strategic landscape links:** There is great potential to strengthen the connectivity and integrity of landscape character with areas of countryside around the AONB, particularly through heathland, hedges and woodland to the west and east and along the rivers valleys to the north. The construction of the High Speed 2 rail line (Phase 2a from the West Midlands to Crewe) will have impacts on biodiversity and landscape to the east and north of the AONB, affecting some of its special qualities. These environmental connections are also highlighted in the Nature and Wildlife chapter (Policy WN7).

**Policy LCP9:** Opportunities should be promoted to enhance the character and quality of the countryside and public open spaces surrounding the AONB so as to reduce its isolation and create strong visual and aesthetic links with surrounding landscapes.

**Associated action**

*A.13: Identify and promote projects that enhance the landscape connectivity, biodiversity resilience and heritage value of countryside and public open space around the Chase.*

*B.9: Through the Sow Parklands and Cannock Chase AONB HS2 Group, develop design principles and environmental enhancement measures for HS2 that conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB.*

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9 The following guidance may be appropriate for this task: England Heritage (2011) *Seeing the history in the view: A method for assessing heritage significance within views.* May 2011
5. **Wildlife and Nature**

5.1. The heathland and associated habitats of the Chase are of international importance. The Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation extends to 1,244 ha and is one of the largest areas of lowland heathland in England as well as rare valley mires in the Sherbrook Valley and ancient wood pasture at Brocton Coppice. Examples of other important wildlife habitats are at Hednesford Hills, Gentleshaw Common and Rawbones Meadow, (all designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest or SSSI) and Shugborough, Shoal Hill and Hatherton Hall (classified as Local Wildlife Sites). Outside these areas there are important populations of protected species such as nightjars and woodlarks.

5.2. The underlying geology and geomorphology are preserved at the Milford Quarry SSSI, where the disused gravel pit provides excellent three-dimensional exposures of the Lower Triassic Bunter Pebble Beds that form the elevated plateau of the Chase. Areas classified as Local Geological Sites (LoGS) occur at Brocton Quarry West, Cliff Caves at Great Haywood, Dark Slade Wood, Etching Hill and Satnall Hills Quarry.

5.3. The wildlife of the Chase is highly cherished by the many local people who come spot or hear rare birds, catch glimpses of the deer, study the geology or simply get close to nature.

5.4. Although the large size of the habitats on the Chase compared to surrounding areas of countryside provides a degree of protection and resilience to wildlife, the corridors of habitats outside the AONB which connect to other wildlife populations are narrow and fragmented and increasingly under threat. Wildlife in the Chase faces a number of threats, including disturbance by people and dogs, the changing climate and increased wildfires and new pests and diseases associated with this, and a decline in traditional management techniques. There is a responsibility for all bodies to take action to mitigate and anticipate the impacts from climate change.

5.5. The policies in this section are split between two overall objectives to:

- Improve conditions for nature in the Chase
- Enlarge and connect habitats

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10 These and other internationally importance bird species are listed under Annex 1 of the EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC).
**Improve conditions for nature in the Chase**

5.6. **Recognition of the importance of the SAC.** The five areas in the AONB which are designated as a Special Area of Conservation of European importance are the most extensive areas of lowland heathland in the Midlands, with characteristics of both the northern moorland heaths of England and Wales and those of southern counties. They include both dry heathland communities (*Calluna vulgaris* – *Ulex gallii* and *Calluna vulgaris* – *Deschampsia flexuosa* communities) and Northern Atlantic wet heaths. Within the heathland, species of northern latitudes occur, such as cowberry and crowberry. Cannock Chase has the main British population of the hybrid bilberry *Vaccinium intermedium*, a plant of restricted occurrence. There are important populations of butterflies and beetles, as well as European nightjar and five species of bats. The importance, and fragility, of the biodiversity of these areas deserves to be better recognised and given a higher priority by all organisations and individuals whose actions influence the condition of the SAC.

**Policy WN1:** The international significance of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and the fragility and needs of its biodiversity, should be fully taken into account in all forms of public policy and private practice that will affect the condition of the SAC.

**Associated actions**

A.9: Draw-up and co-ordinate dissemination of consistent messages about the significance and conservation requirements of priority sites in the AONB to key decision-making bodies and networks.

A.10: Review and influence the content and delivery of visitor management plans and open space strategies surrounding the AONB to ensure they identify and promote sites, facilities and activities inside and outside the AONB boundary that will reduce the negative impacts of recreation on sensitive sites in the Chase.

5.7. **Effective management of heathland.** Traditionally, the Chase’s heathland vegetation was grazed by cattle which provide an efficient and nature-friendly way of keeping a varied and open structure to the vegetation and preventing dominance of bracken and scrub. The use of grazing livestock in public open spaces requires careful management for the good of the animals and for people and it has been successfully reintroduced to many other similar heathland sites in the region. The alternative of mechanical vegetation cutting is less environmentally sustainable, less beneficial for wildlife and more expensive.

**Policy WN2:** The preferred form of management for most areas of heathland and associated habitats (potentially including wood pasture) should be grazing by livestock. Steps will be taken to build consensus and introduce the necessary sensitive infrastructure to enable this to happen gradually.

**Associated action**

B.5: Work with stakeholders and local communities to develop a phased reintroduction of livestock grazing to key sites to support sustainable management.

5.8. **Key species.** The Chase is home to many rare and/or iconic species, including plants such as the Cannock Chase berry, birds such as woodlark and mammals such as deer. Each species has its own habitat needs and management requirements.

**Policy WN3:** A coordinated approach across landholdings will be taken to monitor and manage populations of key species living in the Chase.
Associated actions

A.2: Monitor and report on the conservation status and needs of key species and groups in the AONB, including separate monitoring/audit reports on the flora, invertebrates, birds and bats, and on specific species such as small pearl bordered fritillary and white-clawed crayfish.

B.6: Draw up a strategy and action plan for monitoring and managing the deer population in the Chase and engaging and informing the public about the need to manage the deer population.

5.9. Invasive weeds, pests and diseases. Climate change may have many impacts on the AONB over the next 20 years. The warming climate and past introductions from other countries are leading to a growing numbers and populations of invasive species which are threatening native plants and animals. Invasive species requiring monitoring and action include the water mould *Phytophthora ramorum* (threatening the hybrid Bilberry on heathland and larch in the forestry), the fungus *Hymenoscyphus 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 of the native white-clawed crayfish) populations. The native red squirrel survived in the Chase until the 1990s but has been ousted by the grey squirrel.

**Policy WN4:** The incidence, spread and impacts of invasive species in the AONB must be better understood, and where information is available, it should be used to inform land management decisions.

Associated action

**B.7:** Monitor invasive species (summarised in a short annual report to the JC) and support collaborative and targeted management to address them where required.

5.10. Ground water levels and the valley mires. The internationally important valley mire habitats in the Chase rely on seasonally high water tables. However, there is concern that the level of the groundwater is dropping, resulting in the habitats are becoming drier and shrinking in size. The causes of this are not yet fully understood.

**Policy WN5:** Investigate and address factors impacting on valley mires and wetlands to bring them into favourable condition.

Associated action

**B.16:** Develop a project to research and monitor long term changes in ground water levels in the Sherbrook and Oldacre Valleys, investigate causes and determine any necessary action.

Enlarge and connect habitats

5.11. Along with the privilege of hosting such large areas of internationally important habitats, comes a responsibility to help nature recover and spread, both inside the AONB and into surrounding areas where it has been lost.

5.12. Restoration of heathland: Most of the commercial forestry in the AONB was established on heathland during the 20th century. Public ownership of this land, through the Forestry Commission, may provide a means of returning areas of forestry to heathland and an opportunity may now be available, provided an equivalent area of ‘compensation planting’ can be done on farmland outside the AONB to replace areas of forestry that are restored to heathland. The new area of compensation planting could provide new public benefits such as access for quiet recreation, reducing pressure on the Chase.
Policy WN6: Explore and develop opportunities to restore heathland from forestry plantations in the Chase.

Associated action

B.8: Develop a project to identify suitable heathland restoration areas on conifer plantations acquiring land for compensation planting and planning a phased approach to delivery.

5.13. Bridges for nature outside the AONB. Outside the AONB there are a range of core habitat areas and networks that are permeable to wildlife. These include patches of heathland to the south (across the Chasewater Heaths towards Sutton Park in Birmingham), woodland and parkland to the south west (towards Codsall and Albrighton) and flood plain grassland to the north and east (long the Trent and Sow valleys). These areas are shown on the map below.

Policy WN7: The AONB Partnership will actively support opportunities to build connected networks of wildlife sites extending beyond the AONB, as a means of enhancing the resilience and viability of wildlife populations currently concentrated in the Chase.

Associated actions

A.13: Identify and promote projects that enhance the landscape connectivity, biodiversity resilience and heritage value of countryside and public open space around the Chase.

5.14. National leadership in biodiversity net gain. The measures already being taken using developer funding to protect the Cannock Chase SAC from the negative impacts of new housing development, and the pioneering role being taken by Lichfield District Council in planning policy, provide a launch pad for the AONB Partnership to respond proactively to the development that will take place
around the Chase. This will enable the Partnership to relieve pressure on the nature and natural beauty in the Chase, becoming a pathfinder amongst other protected landscapes.

**Policy WN8:** The AONB Partnership will take a leading role in supporting and facilitating practical delivery of biodiversity net gain, through the identification of suitable areas of new habitat that enhance the resilience and recovery of wildlife living in the AONB.

**Associated action**

A.13: Identify and promote projects that enhance the landscape connectivity, biodiversity resilience and heritage value of countryside and public open space around the Chase.
6. Historic Environment and Culture

6.1. The Chase has a rich history (see map below) that has shaped its landscape and communities and this history is at the heart of many of the qualities that make it special. Whilst there is a feeling that this history has been somewhat overlooked, recent technological advancements have revealed the sheer extent of the heritage assets that exist on the Chase extending into surrounding communities. There is also, more widely, a renewed recognition of the important role that history and culture have in providing communities with their sense of place, memory and knowledge and fostering cultural traditions.

6.2. The policies in this theme are split between two overall objectives to:

- Conserve the Chase’s heritage assets; and
- Connect communities with the Chase’s history and culture

Conserve the Chase’s heritage assets

6.3. A Special Quality of the Chase is the depth and diversity of its historic environment and how this has influenced the land use and landscape that is evident today; from the Iron Age Hill Fort at Castle Ring, the Norman hunting chase, historic parkland, ornamental landscapes, common land, iron workings and coal mines, military camps and cemeteries from the two World Wars. In 2015 600 heritage assets (including buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas and landscapes) were recorded on Staffordshire’s Historic Environment Record for the AONB11, the recent LIDAR survey has uncovered hundreds more and survey data is still being analysed to interpret everything that has

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been found. This has resulted in the designated assets\(^\text{12}\) forming a tiny proportion of what is of historic interest. Some of the best known assets on the Chase, including the military camps from the First World, are currently not protected\(^\text{13}\) as Scheduled Monuments.

### 6.4. Improving knowledge of heritage

In addition to ensuring that designated historic 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 AONB. 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.

**Policy HC1: Improve understanding of the significance and condition of heritage assets within the AONB.**

**Associated action**

**A.14:** Assess updated historic environment information and through this develop and implement interpretation and management strategies, prioritising key sites for survey, condition assessment and management.

### 6.5. Improving the condition of heritage

In order to improve the condition of all heritage assets in the AONB it is important that knowledge reaches those whose actions have a direct impact on them. It is important that measures are also put in place to ensure that land owners, managers and decision makers appreciate the scale of historic interest within the AONB and the potential for significant historic 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.

**Policy HC2: Work with landowners, managers, decision makers and local communities to positively manage the historic environment to ensure its successful conservation and enhancement.**

**Associated Action**

**B.17:** Monitor the condition of all designated heritage assets within the AONB and take action where necessary to address risks and harm.

**B.18:** Raise awareness of the historic environment and its significance with land owners, managers, decision makers and local communities and provide support and guidance to help them develop and deliver sustainable management regimes.

**Connect communities with the Chase’s history and culture**

### 6.6. The long history of the Chase and its landscapes are closely intertwined with the communities that surround it. This rich history doesn’t stop at the boundary of the AONB but extends into its surrounding communities. Whilst there is an understanding amongst the public and decision makers about certain aspects of the Chase’s history other parts of its diverse history and its wider cultural landscapes are less well known and understood. Particularly the many intangible aspects of this history and these cultural landscapes; its role in sense of place, memory and knowledge and fostering cultural traditions that help make it the special place it is today.

\(^{12}\) currently including six Scheduled Monuments, 68 nationally Listed Buildings, two Registered Parks and Gardens and five Conservation Areas

\(^{13}\) A statutory duty exists for Local Authorities to protect and enhance Conservation Areas and designated heritage assets.
Inspire through the Chase’s history and culture. 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 AONB and its communities, reinforcing the importance and ‘specialness’ of the Chase 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 Chase and foster this connection with communities becomes even more important.

**Policy HC3:** Engage and inspire local communities and visitors to enjoy and appreciate the AONB’s historic environment through education, interpretation and events.

**Associated Action**

**B.10:** Develop a project building on the success of the Chase through Time to engage local communities in historic environment research, field survey and management and in the celebration of the AONB’s cultural heritage.
7. Experience and Enjoyment

7.1. Central to the appeal of the AONB is the ability for people to experience and enjoy it. One of its key special qualities is the opportunity it provides for stimulating exercise and exploration, made possible not only by the areas extensive network of rides and paths but also the 4,000 hectares of land that is publicly accessible (see map below). The varied landscape is full of interest, including a rich history and inspiring views and it is a haven of tranquillity and wildness compared to the busy towns and roads that surround it.

7.2. Ensuring that the special qualities that attract people to the Chase are conserved and enhanced should be central to guiding activities that impact and have influence on the AONB.

7.3. The policies in this theme are split between two overall objectives:

- Treading lightly in the Chase
- A greener experience

Treading lightly in the Chase

7.4. **Recreation Management:** The AONB is a popular destination and received an estimated 2.3 million visitors in 2010/11, up from an estimated 1.3 million in 2000.\(^{14}\) The number of visitors is expected to carry on rising as a result of the significant increases in new housing being proposed nearby. The current volume of visitors, their clustering in particular areas of the AONB and the activities they undertake puts significant pressure on and threatens the Special Qualities that draws people to the area in the first place.

\(^{14}\) Lepus Consulting (October 2012), 2010-11 Cannock Chase AONB Visitor Survey Analysis: Final Report
7.5. Although the AONB covers a relatively small area, over 4,000 hectares of it (58% of the AONB) is publicly accessible through a combination of statutory and permissive access. However, visitors are not spread evenly throughout the AONB with six main hotspots accounting for over 50% of visitors namely; Marquis Drive, Birches Valley, Milford Common, Moor’s Gorse, Seven Springs and Brocton Coppice Car Park. Clustering of visitors causes pressure on some of the most sensitive parts of the AONB. The SAC is particularly vulnerable to visitor pressure and yet this is also one of the areas that has the highest density of footpaths, rides and car parks. This results in soil erosion, eutrophication, disturbance to wildlife and a loss of tranquillity.

7.6. In order to protect the Special Qualities of the AONB from recreational pressure there is a need to direct visitors and the disruptive activities away from the most sensitive areas of the Chase, both within the AONB boundary and where appropriate outside of it.

**Policy EE1:** Wherever possible, recreational activity should be moved away from the most sensitive parts of the AONB, ensuring that suitable measures are in place to reduce the negative impacts of an increase in visitors (both within and outside the AONB boundary).

**Associated action**

A.10: Review and influence the content and delivery of visitor management plans and open space strategies surrounding the AONB to ensure they identify and promote sites, facilities and activities inside and outside the AONB boundary that will reduce the negative impacts of recreation on sensitive sites in the Chase.

7.7. **Creation of Alternative Recreational Resources:** Those experiencing the AONB have a distinct profile compared to many protected areas, influenced by the geographical relationship between the AONB and areas of local population. A relatively small population live within the AONB boundary, but there are significant built up areas surrounding, in many cases directly adjoining, it. The majority of those who directly experience the AONB are local residents who visit to undertake recreational activities or who drive through the area on one of the locally important roads that bisect the AONB. 52% of those visiting came on a weekly basis and 85% visits were less than 3 hours long. 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 mountain biking with good off road tracks and trails.

7.8. 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 AONB as well as local communities and help accommodate future increases in visitor numbers.

**Policy EE2:** Improvements to the quality and connectivity of existing, and development of new, Green Infrastructure and Open Space outside of the AONB boundary should be supported. This should involve working with Partners to help reduce recreational and visitor pressure within the AONB.

**Associated action**

A.10: Review and influence the content and delivery of visitor management plans and open space strategies surrounding the AONB to ensure they identify and promote sites, facilities and activities inside and outside the AONB boundary that will reduce the negative impacts of recreation on sensitive sites in the Chase.

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15 Cannock Chase AONB Partnership (2014) Visitor Management Strategy
16 88% of those survey in the 2010-11 AONB visitor survey had travelled from within 15km, few staying overnight or on holiday
7.9. **Group visits.** Mainly as a result of lack of awareness of the requirements of wildlife, there is a danger that unsuitable public access and activities on the most wildlife-rich areas of the Chase, such as the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation, will harm wildlife and damage its international conservation importance. Whilst landowners can seek to direct and, where necessary, limit organised group activities an increase in groups using the Chase for visits and events without seeking permission is much more difficult to manage. These unofficial visits by groups range from school outings, large social events to sporting events.

**Policy EE3:** Visitors and organisers of groups coming to the AONB, and in particular the SAC, should be made more aware of the wealth of wildlife and sensitive habitats in the area, their role in conserving it and the need to seek permission before organising events.

**Associated action**

A.11: Develop the on-line/social media presence and other visitor information for the Chase, using this to promote its special qualities, co-ordinate information from partners and signpost to appropriate websites and other sources.

## A greener experience

### 7.10. Creating a Green Identity:

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 they receive, the approach to the AONB, 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 AONB. 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 they have come to visit.

**Policy EE4:** High qualities of visitor infrastructure and provision, using best practice environmental design standards, should be adopted throughout the AONB, including a common approach to branding and interpretation.

**Associated actions**

A.8: Develop a shared design protocol for recreation and leisure facilities, signage and promotional material, aimed at producing consistent high standards for use by all providers in the Chase.

B.11. Improve facilities at key visitor sites such as Marquis Drive to develop an enhanced visitor experience appropriate to a nationally important protected landscape.

### 7.11. Relationship between Visitors and the Environment:

It is also vital that visitors understand their responsibility to the AONB 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. AONBs have an amazing opportunity to help educate and bring to life understanding of how individuals can play their part in the big environmental challenges that face us.

### 7.12. A unity in environmental message needs to be present in the first interactions that visitors have with the AONB, in information presented by both the AONB and partner organisations to the public.

### 7.13. The work started by Love Cannock Chase on codes of conduct for visitors should be extended and enhanced to incorporate this environmental message, for example, impacts of recreational activities, heathland management, risks to heritage assets, travel into the Chase and Climate Change mitigation.
Policy EE5: Increase awareness and encourage visitors to play a positive role in conserving and enhancing the AONB and to be ‘good environmental ambassadors’.

Associated actions

A.11: Develop the on-line/social media presence for the Chase, using this to promote its special qualities, co-ordinate information from partners and signpost to appropriate websites and other sources.

B.12: Develop the ‘Love Cannock Chase’ project to promote the ways in which visitors and local businesses can protect and enhance the AONB’s special qualities.

7.14. **Sustainable Travel:** Despite the majority of visitors to the Chase being local residents almost 77% travel to AONB by private car and only 1% by public transport. This causes a high demand for car parking on the Chase, congestion on roads as well as associated climate change impacts. The short distance and regular nature of many visitors’ journeys to the AONB mean that there is significant potential to encourage visitors to arrive for their visit to the AONB by more sustainable means. Safe, joined up walking and cycling routes from the centres of population closest to the AONB are needed, along with information about these routes, facilities (such as safe bicycle parking) and incentives (such as reduced entry to visitor attractions when arriving by sustainable mode of transport).

Policy EE6: The use of alternative means of transport by visitors to the Chase should be explored and actively promoted.

Associated actions

A.3: Work with local authority transport and green infrastructure teams to design and provide safe, connected cycle and pedestrian routes into the AONB.

B.13: Work with facility providers and attractions within the AONB to encourage visitors to arrive by sustainable means of transport through provision of information, incentives such as discounts and the provision of facilities such as secure bicycle parking.

7.15. **A Clear Message:** Being able to achieve a greener visitor experience and delivering each of the previous policies under this objective relies on getting a clear consistent message out to the public. Currently there is little coordination between different AONB programmes and the different media used for communicating with the public. Ensuring a streamlined coordinated approach to all social media, websites and printed materials that are related to the AONB as well as information at the six visitors centres and at the Cannock Chase Museum is central to this and will avoid confusion and conflicting messages.

Policy EE7: Communication with the public about the AONB, activities and events should be consistent, coordinated and streamlined.

Associated actions

A.11: Develop the on-line/social media presence for the Chase, using this to promote its special qualities, co-ordinate information from partners and signpost to appropriate websites and other sources.

A.9: Draw-up and co-ordinate dissemination of consistent messages about the significance and conservation requirements of priority sites in the AONB to key decision-making bodies and networks.
8. Communities and Business

8.1. The Communities that surround the Chase have a strong connection to it and it plays a central part in their sense of place and identity. There are also numerous businesses, both land and recreation based, within the AONB and in the wider local economy that both rely on and support the special qualities and these businesses should be supported and encouraged.

8.2. The need to further engage with the public appears in many places throughout the Management Plan in addition to this Chapter, notably: Policies LCP5, HC2, HC3, EE3, EE5, EE6, EE7 and Actions A5, A8, A10, B3, B5, B6, B11, B13, B14, B19.

8.3. The policies in this theme are split between two overall objectives:

- Natural Benefits for the Community
- Businesses supporting the Special Qualities

Natural benefits for the community

8.4. Meeting Community Needs: 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 AONB can help to address, such as long-term ill-health and limited access to adjacent green space.

8.5. Further work and engagement are needed by the AONB partnership to link with these communities, to understand how the full range of natural benefits provided by the Chase can serve its community and to widen access to these natural benefits. This might be achieved through social prescribing by the health and social care services, outdoor or classroom learning by schools and colleges, or vocational and skills development by training providers and businesses.

Policy CB1: Ways should be developed to ensure that the natural benefits that the AONB delivers are fully taken advantage of by local communities and help meet the needs of those communities, whilst conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the AONB.

Associated action

A.4: Support the establishment of the Cannock Chase Landscape Trust (CIO) and, through its business plan, develop ways of proactively engaging local businesses and community groups with delivery of this Management Plan.

B.14: Work with healthcare providers to develop and promote activity and wellbeing programmes suitable for different groups, based on key visitor sites.

8.6. Giving Communities a Voice: This revised Management Plan provides a timely opportunity to reconnect with both existing and new stakeholders and to refocus efforts on working together to both conserve and enhance the AONB and ensure the benefits that the AONB offers reach the widest range of people.

Policy CB2: Efforts should be made to fully engage stakeholders, businesses, community and other interested groups with the work going on in the AONB, helping them to shape and influence it.

Associated Actions
A.4: Support the establishment of the Cannock Chase Landscape Trust (CIO) and, through its business plan, develop ways of proactively engaging local businesses and community groups with delivery of this Management Plan.

A.5: Re-engage with, and draw up an updated database of, interested parties in the AONB and maintain regular contact with them on matters of interest.

A.7: Use the Annual Conference to report to partners and the local community on the progress of actions contained within this Management Plan. Use this platform to fully engage with these groups and take account of their views.

B.12: Develop the ‘Love Cannock Chase’ project to promote the ways in which visitors and local businesses can protect and enhance the AONB’s special qualities.

8.7. Coordination of Volunteering: Many organisations within the AONB provide volunteering opportunities to the local communities and have successfully developed specialisms (for example land management or education) in their use of volunteers. However, there is currently a lack of coordination resulting in sources of potential volunteers remaining untapped and inputs from volunteers not being made best use of.

Policy CB3: Coordinate volunteer activities throughout the AONB and draw on the skills developed by different organisations; Increase involvement by local communities and businesses in activities that support the special qualities of the AONB.

Associated action

A.6: Work in Partnership with organisations currently using volunteers in the AONB and local area to identify ways that the promotion and recruitment of volunteers can be coordinated, and their inputs made best use of for different activities on the Chase.

Businesses Supporting the Special Qualities

8.8. Harnessing Enterprise: The natural capital, services and benefits that the AONB and its Special Qualities provide local businesses needs recognition and protection. It is important that local businesses understand the integral role the AONB often plays in their business and the opportunities and potential that exists from further strengthening this mutually beneficial link.

8.9. The Chase is a nationally important landscape with internationally important heathland at its heart. This recognition of how special the Chase is, is an important part of the AONB’s brand and holds significant opportunities for local businesses which have not been fully explored to date. Opportunities should be sought to support businesses both within the AONB and the wider local economy to benefit from the AONB brand where their values and operations support and enhance the vision and special qualities of the AONB

Policy CB4: Local businesses should be encouraged and supported to develop high quality products and services, and growth and innovation, that support the special qualities and the AONB brand.

Associated action

A.4: Support the establishment of the Cannock Chase Landscape Trust (CIO) and, through its business plan, develop ways of proactively engaging local businesses and community groups with delivery of this Management Plan.
B.15: Explore the development of an AONB quality mark for businesses within the AONB and wider local economy that support and help deliver the special qualities of the AONB.
9. Implementation Action Plan

This Chapter describes the actions that will be taken to deliver the policies that were set out in Chapters 4 to 8. The actions are split into two parts. The first table describes the priority actions that will be started in 2019/2020, whereas the second table describes other actions that may be started from 2020/2021 onwards. In each table, the actions are grouped according to the bodies that will take the lead in their delivery.

Priority actions to be started in 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Lead and Key Partners</th>
<th>Policies delivered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actions to be led by the AONB Unit</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.1: Prepare guidance note on ‘Building and Infrastructure Design in Cannock Chase AONB’ which Local Planning Authorities which will be invited to adopt.</td>
<td>Lead: AONB Unit.</td>
<td>LCP: 1, WN: 1, HC: 8, EE: 8, CB: 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.2: Monitor and report on the conservation status and needs of key species and groups, including separate monitoring/audit reports on the flora, invertebrates, birds and bats, and on specific species such as small pearl bordered fritillary and white-clawed crayfish.</td>
<td>Lead: AONB Unit.</td>
<td>LCP: 3, WN: 3, HC: 3, EE: 3, CB: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.3: Work with local authority transport and green infrastructure teams to design and provide safe, connected cycle and pedestrian routes into the AONB.</td>
<td>Lead: AONB Unit. Key partners: Local authorities / Highway authority, SCC Active Travel</td>
<td>LCP: 6, WN: 6, HC: 6, EE: 6, CB: 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.4: Support the establishment of the Cannock Chase Landscape Trust (CIO) and, through its business plan, develop ways of proactively engaging local businesses and community groups with delivery of this Management Plan.</td>
<td>Lead: AONB Unit, Key partner Officers Working Group</td>
<td>LCP: 1, WN: 1, HC: 2, EE: 4, CB: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.5: Re-engage with, and draw up an updated database of, interested parties in the AONB and maintain regular contact with them on matters of interest.</td>
<td>Lead: AONB Unit.</td>
<td>LCP: 5, WN: 5, HC: 2, EE: 2, CB: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Lead</td>
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<tr>
<td>A.6</td>
<td>Work in Partnership with organisations currently using volunteers in the AONB and local area to identify ways that the promotion and recruitment of volunteers can be coordinated, and their inputs made best use of for different activities on the Chase.</td>
<td>AONB Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.7</td>
<td>Use the Annual Conference to report to partners and the local community on the progress of actions contained within this Management Plan. Use this platform to fully engage with these groups and take account of their views.</td>
<td>AONB Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actions to the led by the SAC team (Actions already form part of the SAC Action Plan)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.8</td>
<td>Develop a shared design protocol for recreation and leisure facilities, signage and promotional material, aimed at producing consistent high standards for use by all providers in the Chase.</td>
<td>SAC team. Key partner: AONB Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>A.9</td>
<td>Draw-up and co-ordinate dissemination of consistent messages about the significance and conservation requirements of priority sites in the AONB to key decision-making bodies and networks.</td>
<td>SAC team. Key Partners: AONB Unit, SCC CP, FC, NT. Key decision-making bodies and networks include Friends of Cannock Chase, Visitor Centres, Destination Management Partnership and Staffordshire Parish Councils Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>A.10</td>
<td>Review and influence the content and delivery of visitor management plans and open space strategies surrounding the AONB to ensure they identify and promote sites, facilities and activities inside and outside the AONB boundary that will reduce the negative impacts of recreation on sensitive sites in the Chase.</td>
<td>SAC team</td>
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<tr>
<td>A.11</td>
<td>Develop the on-line/social media presence for the Chase, using this to promote its special qualities, co-ordinate information from partners and signpost to appropriate websites and other sources.</td>
<td>SAC Team</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Actions to the led by other partners</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.12</td>
<td>Work with local partners to ensure suitable agri-environment scheme incentives are available and suitably targeted to farms and smallholdings in the AONB.</td>
<td>Natural England</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A.13: Identify and promote projects that enhance the landscape connectivity, biodiversity resilience and heritage value of countryside and public open space around the Chase.


A.14: Assess updated historic environment information and through this develop and implement interpretation and management strategies, prioritising key sites for survey, condition assessment and management.

Lead: SCC Historic Environment Team

### Other actions, which may be started from 2020 onwards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Lead and Key Partners</th>
<th>Policies delivered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actions to be led by the AONB Unit</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B.1:</strong> Explore with SCC Highways Department the practical steps that can be taken to reduce traffic impacts through the AONB.</td>
<td>Lead: AONB Unit.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B.2:</strong> Support the work of the Forestry Commission and other woodland owners and managers to deliver both long term forestry/woodland design plans and short term woodland management operations in ways which enhance the AONB’s special qualities</td>
<td>Lead: AONB Unit. Key partners: Forestry Commission.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B.3:</strong> Prepare and publicise leaflets, and offer advisory events, for rural non-farming landowners in the AONB on how they can help conserve and enhance the special qualities of the Chase.</td>
<td>Lead: AONB Unit.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B.4:</strong> Map and describe the significant view points and views accessible to the public into and out of the AONB.</td>
<td>Lead: AONB Unit.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B.5:</strong> Work with stakeholders and local communities to develop a phased reintroduction of livestock grazing to key sites to support sustainable management.</td>
<td>Lead: AONB Unit. Key partners: Site owners</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.6: Draw up a strategy and action plan for monitoring and managing the deer population in the Chase and engaging and informing the public about the need to manage the deer population.</td>
<td>Lead: AONB Unit. Key partners: Forestry Commission and SCC</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>B.7: Monitor invasive species (summarised in a short annual report to the JC) and support collaborative and targeted management to address them where required.</td>
<td>Lead: AONB Unit.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.8: Develop a project to identify suitable heathland restoration areas on conifer plantations, acquiring land for compensation planting and planning a phased approach to delivery.</td>
<td>Lead: AONB Unit.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.9: Through the Sow Parklands and Cannock Chase AONB HS2 Group, develop design principles and environmental enhancement measures for HS2 that conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB.</td>
<td>Lead: AONB Unit. Key partners: Natural England, Historic England, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and National Trust</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.10: Develop a project building on the success of the Chase through Time to engage local communities in historic environment research, field survey and management and in the celebration of the AONB’s cultural heritage.</td>
<td>Lead: AONB Unit. Key partners: SCC Historic Environment Team &amp; Historic England</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.11: Improve facilities at key visitor sites such as Marquis Drive to develop an enhanced visitor experience appropriate to a nationally important protected landscape.</td>
<td>Lead: Site Owners. Key partners: AONB Unit &amp; SAC team.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.12: Develop the ‘Love Cannock Chase’ project to promote the ways in which visitors and local businesses can protect and enhance the AONB’s special qualities.</td>
<td>Lead: AONB Unit. Key partner: Community Foundation for Staffordshire</td>
<td>5 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.13: Work with facility providers and attractions within the AONB to encourage visitors to arrive by sustainable means of transport through provision of information, incentives such as discounts and the provision of facilities such as secure bicycle parking.</td>
<td>Lead: AONB Unit.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.14: Work with healthcare providers to develop and promote activity and wellbeing programmes suitable for different groups, based on key visitor sites.</td>
<td>Lead: AONB Unit. Key partner: Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles, Cannock Chase</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B.15: Explore the development of an AONB quality mark for businesses within the AONB and wider local economy that support and help deliver the special qualities of the AONB.

**Lead:** AONB Unit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions to the led by other partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>B.16: Develop a project to research and monitor long term changes in ground water levels in the Sherbrook and Oldacre Valleys, investigate causes and determine any necessary action.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B.17: Monitor the condition of all designated heritage assets within the AONB and take action where necessary to address risks and harm.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B.18: Raise awareness of the historic environment and its significance with land owners, managers, decision makers and local communities and provide support and guidance to help them develop and deliver sustainable management regimes.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Monitoring Framework

10.1. A monitoring framework for the Management Plan is required to answer three questions:

- Is the Management Plan being **delivered**?
- How **effective** is the management of the AONB?
- What is the **condition** of the AONB, is its natural beauty being conserved and enhanced?

10.2. It is important that the monitoring framework does not increase the reporting burden on the AONB Unit and the indicators selected below are not intended to provide an in depth understanding of the outputs and outcomes of every policy in the Management Plan. The monitoring framework is intended to be proportionate and the indicators hope to provide a useful insight and understanding of the direction of travel of the Management Plan using readily accessible source of data that, where possible, are already being collected.

Monitoring delivery

10.3. It is important for the AONB Unit and its partners to track progress on the delivery of the Management Plan, the outputs as opposed to the outcomes of the process, enabling them to identify where areas of weakness are and celebrate success. The simplest method to do this is for the AONB Unit to track the delivery of actions and then feed these results into their Annual Reporting to Defra. In order to do this the AONB Unit along with Task and Finish Groups will need to set parameters for each of the actions to define what successful implementation will look like.

Monitoring effectiveness and condition

10.4. In addition to understanding how well the delivery of the Management Plan is progressing it is also important to understand how effective the policies and actions have been at addressing the issues that they were designed to address, what the overall condition of the AONB is and whether the special qualities are being conserved or enhanced. Indicators that focus on how effective the Management Plan is and the condition of the AONB will feed into the State of the AONB Report to help inform the development of the next Management Plan.

10.5. Whilst the monitoring of the delivery and effectiveness of the Management Plan are very much focussed on the five-year horizon until it is next reviewed there is also benefit in undertaking some longer-term monitoring of the condition of AONB the special qualities. With longer term monitoring that is not directly tied to Management Plan policies there is also an opportunity to compare the progress of Cannock Chase against other protected areas in the Country.

10.6. Natural England’s **Framework for Monitoring Environmental Outcomes in Protected Landscapes** (2014) provides a consistent framework for monitoring and was developed by a partnership of protected landscape management bodies and statutory bodies. It aims to provide evidence for a variety of purposes, including assessing how effectively the protected landscapes’ statutory purposes and management plan objectives have been delivered, and better demonstration of the benefits of protected landscape designation. Based on the Evaluation Framework for Natural Beauty Criterion the framework presents the best available set of existing national statistics (and the frequency of their provision) that sheds light on a range of environmental outcomes or benefits in each AONB and National Park and is split into four themes (natural beauty, recreation, ecosystem services and sustainable communities).

10.7. The AONB Partnership should consider adopting and integrating this framework into its reporting mechanisms in the future; for example, framing its State of the AONB reporting around it.

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17 Defra. **Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as a National Park or AONB**
For the purposes of monitoring this plan, 14 key indicators have been selected that provide both an insight into the effectiveness of the Plan as well as the condition of the AONB.

### Table of Monitoring Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Notes – data source etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Character and Planning</td>
<td>Number of Planning Applications where AONB has made a formal comment and raised an objection.</td>
<td>New. Data source - Cannock Chase AONB Partnership Planning Protocol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change in % of AONB recorded as ‘most tranquil’</td>
<td>MP 2014-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fixed point photography landscape monitoring</td>
<td>MP 2014-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife and Nature</td>
<td>% of SAC in favourable condition</td>
<td>MP 2014-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% change in ground water levels</td>
<td>New: is any ground water monitoring already being undertaken? SAC team?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% increase in different habitats (heathland, woodland etc)</td>
<td>Need to extend outside AONB in order to effectively monitor policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History and Culture</td>
<td>% of heritage assets that are ‘at risk’ including buildings at risk, monuments, registered parks and gardens and scheduled ancient monuments</td>
<td>Indicators listed in the State of the AONB Report: Number, condition of, and area covered by scheduled monuments; Number, Grade and condition of listed buildings; Number and condition of registered parks and gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of archaeological/historic features managed through agri-environment schemes</td>
<td>State of the AONB report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience and Enjoyment</td>
<td>Change in the number of sites receiving greatest proportion (over 5%) of visitors</td>
<td>State of the AONB report (popular visitor locations indicator)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% change in all activity levels (mapped on Strava) within the AONB occurring outside of the SAC area</td>
<td>New: Strava heat mapping used in State of AONB report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% change in visitors arriving in the AONB by private car.</td>
<td>New: new visitor surveys needed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities and Business</td>
<td>Number of people taking part in awareness days and community work</td>
<td>State of the AONB Report: Education and involvement in the AONB indicator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Volunteers</td>
<td>MP 2014-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of business engaged</td>
<td>MP 2014-19</td>
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</tbody>
</table>