

## Press Release

1st July 2008



### Adding Value in Valuable Landscapes

The West Midlands is hosting the 10th annual conference of the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, from 9 – 11th July, at Harper Adams University College, Newport.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or AONBs are designated for their distinctiveness and quality of their natural landscape. Together with National Parks they make up some of the finest countryside in Britain. There are 40 AONBs in England and Wales, including the Shropshire Hills which was one of the first areas to be designated as an AONB in 1958.

The 3-day Conference is titled 'Adding Value in Valuable Landscapes' and will be looking at the difference that good partnership working has made to the management of protected landscapes and how local organisations, communities and landowners have been involved in various processes.

Key speakers include Mr Jonathan Shaw MP, the Under Secretary of State for the Environment, Ms Sophie Churchill, Chief Executive of the National Forest, Mr Geraint George, Board Member on the Countryside Council for Wales and Mr Andrew Wood, Directory of Policy for Natural England.

The Shropshire Hills AONB covers a quarter of the county, extending from the Wrekin to the Clun Forest and from the Stiperstones to the Clee Hills. It is a diverse and tranquil area, with rugged hills, rolling pastoral fields, woods and meadows, picturesque villages and historic buildings, hillforts and ancient monuments.

Delegates will have the chance to explore the Shropshire Hills on day two of the conference with field trips organised to the remote uplands of the Clun Forest, a walk around the Wrekin and a visit to the The Stiperstones National Nature Reserve, managed by Natural England, and the Long Mynd which is the largest heathland SSSI in the West Midlands and mostly owned by the National Trust. Other trips will visit Cannock Chase and the Malvern Hills AONBs.

To find out more about the Shropshire Hills AONB visit our website [shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk](http://shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk)

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#### Editors Notes:

2008 marks the 50th anniversary of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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The Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is one of 40 AONBs in England & Wales. This designation is recognition of the national value of the area's landscape, and brings duties on local authorities to conserve and enhance its natural beauty. Covering 23% of the county, the Shropshire Hills AONB extends from the Wrekin to the Clun Forest and from the Stiperstones to the Clee Hills. It is a diverse and tranquil area, with rugged hills, rolling pastoral fields, woods and meadows, picturesque villages and historic buildings, hillforts and ancient monuments.

The management of the AONB is guided by a statutory Management Plan produced by the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership which comprises 5 local authorities, 31 other organisations and independent community members. The AONB staff team are funded by Natural England and the local authorities, and work with others to implement the AONB Management Plan. Shropshire County Council acts as host authority for the AONB Partnership. The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership plays three main roles:

- To develop policy and strategy for the area especially through the AONB Management Plan, and influence the policies and strategies of others
  - To take and co-ordinate action to conserve and enhance natural beauty, promote enjoyment and understanding, and further sustainable development
  - To support the involvement of the community in the management of the AONB.
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