

## Executive Summary

Special places matter to us. They give us a sense of belonging and peace. The Shropshire Hills have evolved through the interaction of people and nature over a long time to produce a character and quality which we value.

The landscape contributes greatly to the economy and to our health and culture. Food production needs soils and water, while our hills and woods help to manage flood risk. Nature and beautiful landscapes are good for our mental wellbeing and quality of life, provide a sense of identity, and attract business investment. To do this, they need actively looking after.

'Natural beauty' includes the influence of people. Nature provides the bones and the processes of our landscape, which is shaped by farmers and land managers, and enjoyed by many. Safeguarding the positive interaction between people and nature is vital to protecting and sustaining the AONB and its value.



### The Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

was designated in 1958 recognising the national value of its landscape.

The AONB covers a quarter of Shropshire, including the Long Mynd, Stiperstones, The Wrekin and Wenlock Edge, as well as the Clee Hills and Clun Forest. The landscape is rich in wildlife and heritage, along with scenic quality and views, tranquillity, culture and opportunities for enjoyment.

The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. AONBs have protection in planning policy, and the statutory Management Plan for the AONB is reviewed every five years. This Plan is about the future of our special place and is based on local partnership and consensus. It seeks to apply local solutions to local challenges that also respect the national and international importance of the AONB. The Plan seeks to guide and inspire action to meet the purposes of designation. The Plan is prepared by the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership on behalf of Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council.

The character and quality of the Shropshire Hills landscape are of high importance but under increasing pressure. The condition of some of the special qualities of the AONB is declining. Conservation activity through many schemes and projects is not enough to prevent some declines in wildlife. Not enough progress is being made with some water quality and catchment management targets. Farming, especially in the uplands, is at an important crossroads as we head towards new UK policy and funding regimes [1]. Economic forces are increasing development pressure and reducing resources for positive management, leading to more deterioration of valuable features by neglect.

The Plan sets out policies of the local authorities, and proposed actions for a wider variety of partners, under three main aims:

- Land management supporting natural beauty and landscape
- Planning for a sustainable economy and communities
- People enjoying and caring about the landscape

The Plan will help deliver many of the priorities of Defra's 25 Environment Plan [2] - clean air and water, thriving plants and wildlife, reduced risk from flooding and drought, using natural resources more sustainably and efficiently, enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.

Some of the Plan's top priority actions include:

- Working with Defra and other partners to ensure new Environmental Land Management Schemes deliver AONB priorities.
- Establishing a large programme of planting of trees outside woodlands, partly to offset losses from Ash dieback disease.
- Developing the Stepping Stones project into a long-term delivery initiative for the long Mynd – Stiperstones area.
- Developing Landscape guidance and Design guidance for planning.
- Developing a youth engagement project incorporating the John Muir Award, Young Rangers and traineeships.
- Supporting activities which will contribute to a low carbon Shropshire Hills area, compatible with the AONB's special qualities.

