



**Shropshire
Hills
National
Landscape**

SHROPSHIRE HILLS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

2.00pm 23rd June 2026
Bishop's Castle Town Hall

AGENDA

Main roles of the committee - scrutiny and advisory oversight of:

- *Work of the Team, including strategic direction and monitoring progress*
- *Team budgets, accounts and the deployment of resources*
- *Implementation by all parties of the National Landscape Management Plan*
- *Fulfilment by relevant authorities of duty to seek to further the purpose of designation*

- 1 Welcome and apologies
- 2 Quick round the table - Committee member contribution (topic as advised)
- 3 Appointment of Chair and Vice Chairs (verbal)
- 4 Report on Team activity 2025-26 (see attached paper)
- 5 Forward planning for 2026-27 and beyond (see attached paper)
- 6 National Landscape Team budgets update (see attached paper)
- 7 Government & policy update (verbal)
- 8 Developing the new partnership and engagement structures (see attached paper)
- 9 Any other Business
- 10 Quick round the table - Committee member contribution (topic as advised)
- 11 Date of next meeting: Weds 18th November 2026, 2pm Church Stretton Library

Item 4. Report on Team activity 2025 - 26

Year end reporting for the team's activity in 2025-26 has been compiled for this Committee meeting and is also provided to Defra as reporting against the core grant funding.

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to note and comment on the reported information.

This paper has been prepared by Phil Holden, Team Manager and members of the Team. For further details contact 01743 254741/ phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk.

Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team - Work Programme 2025-26 Summary Update at year end

Area of work	Key actions	Progress Update
TAKING ACTION - on the ground and in our communities - to conserve and enhance natural beauty and to promote enjoyment and understanding.		
<u>Farming in Protected Landscapes</u>	Implement Year 5 of FiPL programme offering grants for farmers and landowners, with advice and support. Prepare for legacy/follow up.	62 live projects this Financial year and full spend of grant allocation of £1,010,060. A variety of farmer events held in conjunction with partner organisations.
Defra capital work	Implement eligible projects working with partners, mostly delivering 30 by 30 target of land protected and managed for nature. Also 'invest to save' activity.	17 projects achieving 94% spend of allocation of £234,181 and working on 47ha of habitat for 30 by 30 target. Including river re-meandering at Walcot, grassland, wetland, orchard, hedgelaying and woodland projects
Access for All capital work	Implement eligible projects working with partners.	8 projects completed achieving 92% spend of allocation of £114,054. Including Changing Places accessible toilet at the Discovery Centre, project on accessible viewpoints, and accessible path work at the Bog.
<u>Ancient Woodland Restoration project</u>	Implement year 3 of extended project for advice and restoration of ancient woodlands, in partnership with Woodland Trust.	Project continuing as planned with new legacy funding. Advice provided to site owners. Sites included Lodge Coppice, The Hollow, Hobarris and Brineddin Woods, Oaks Wood, Llanfairhall Wood and Gatten Wood.
<u>Young Rangers</u> and new outreach work	Continue programme of Young Rangers activities for 12-18 year olds. Identify and work with new audiences from underserved communities.	Young Rangers – 19 activities with a total of 139 attendances, including nestbox surveying, scything, bushcraft, hedgelaying and scrub clearing. Outreach activities included Nature Calling arts project, visits with Parkinson's, dementia and refugee groups as well as presentations to a number of groups.
<u>'Whispers of the Hills' arts project</u>	Local delivery of national 'Nature Calling' arts project in National Landscapes, working with young people with special needs from the Telford area	3 field trips and 6 workshops held, creating nature-inspired ceramic pieces, now installed in Telford Town Park.
<u>Stepping Stones project</u>	Support transition of Upper Onny Farmers group to an independent CIC.	Support from the Team has tapered following forming of the CIC and appointment of a Co-ordinator. Support to at least 7 events for farmers and public.
<u>Sustainable tourism delivery</u>	Manage 2025 Shuttle bus service and plan 2026 service. Implement Sustainable Tourism Strategy actions.	Shuttle bus had a very good 2025 season over 22 weekends, carrying 1,611 passengers.
Clun Headwaters	Disseminate results of eco-hydrological surveys of headwaters in the Upper Clun and work with partners and landowners to deliver recommendations.	Public-facing document on hydrology has been prepared by consultants and being finalised.

Develop new projects	Maintain close involvement with Landscape Connections bid (led by National Trust) and with area project proposals for the Upper Teme.	Full Stage 1 Bid completed for Landscape Connections and submitted February 2026 Collaboration ongoing for Upper Teme including events.
INFLUENCING OTHERS - lead and champion the delivery of public benefits from the National Landscape, working strategically and collaboratively from policy to grassroots level		
Climate & Ecological Emergency	Implement Climate Change Action Plan & support local climate partnerships. Build nature and ecosystem recovery into projects and strategic work.	Initial work on Climate adaptation completed for Management Plan. Climate and nature recovery is prominent across all of the team's work. Several team members have undertaken Carbon Literacy training.
<u>Management Plan</u>	Undertake public consultation with broad engagement, make refinements and secure Plan approval by both Councils at Cabinet level.	Plan completed and approved Jan and Feb 2026
Sustainable tourism	Support delivery of Shropshire Hills Sustainable Tourism Strategy by others.	Progress with many strands of Strategy, support In Shropshire Great Days Out, Visit Shropshire Hills, town tourism groups and county level Destination Management Plan.
Planning	Comment on relevant policy documents and key planning applications . Maintain and improve links with local authority planning staff and members.	Detailed discussions with Planning Policy team over Management Plan content. Objection to Snatchfields housing application at Church Stretton.
Input to other strategies & schemes	Provide input to strategic consultations (non-planning). Input to work on Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Clun catchment . Comment on non-planning casework such as EIAs and watercourses.	Comments on 35 woodland consultations and 34 watercourse consultations. Strong input to LNRS from a number of the Team, including technical input, promotion and consultation events.
Communications on special qualities and team activity	Maintain and update website and regular social media output. Publish E-newsletters and Annual Review , give talks .	Regular output on website, social media, e-newsletter and communications with Friends and farmer mailing lists. Attended Burwarton Show.
Local authorities and partnerships	Maintain/strengthen links with relevant departments of each local authority. Input to Marches Nature Partnership, Teme Partnership and other groups. Facilitate the Clun Catchment Partnership.	Good links forged through Management Plan review, and to be reinforced through Key Delivery partner Group. Clun Catchment Partnership has been restarted.
<u>Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust</u>	Support the Trust to develop charitable and business fund-raising. Support to administer Conservation Fund grants, and advice to projects.	The Trust has updated its constitution and business plan and is integral to the new partner structure. 9 projects received grants in 2025-26.
<u>Friends of Shropshire Hills</u>	Administer Friends scheme and work with the Trust to expand membership.	95 people are signed up as Friends, generating £4,263 of income.

Support initiatives led by others	Support projects and initiatives and respond to requests for information.	Support and advice provided to many projects, including Bishp's Castle Walking Festival, parish Nature Recovery plans, Clun Castle, Stapeley Common, Stiperstones Landscape NNR, farming workshops for families.
MANAGING OUR BUSINESS - develop a robust, effective and financially sustainable Team and partnership structure		
National Landscapes and broader collaboration	Work with National Landscapes Association, Defra, National Parks and EUROPARC Federation to share ideas and good practice.	Strong participation in National Landscapes Association – Board, Conference, Lead Officers and other groups. Involvement in EUROPARC through Sustainable Tourism and Young Rangers networks.
Partnership working	Consult on and implement updated structures and ways of working – Advisory Committee, Key Delivery Partner Group and Forum.	New structures approved with Management Plan. Recruitment to new Advisory Committee under way and publicity for April Forum event. Building contact with Key Delivery Partner Group.
Team development	Hold team meetings, performance reviews, training and development	Regular team meetings and development activities
Finance, office, IT, Health & Safety, legal requirements	Manage and administer team finances, develop income streams, continue to modernise working practices, ensure compliance in all areas.	Regular Finance reviews. Health & Safety review undertaken.
Evidence base and GIS	Collect data to support Management Plan review.	State of the Shropshire Hills report completed
Training and volunteering	Involve trainees, students and volunteers where appropriate.	1 year part time placement through Birmingham University Tourism Dept just completed. A school placement is set up for a week in the summer.

Item 5. Forward planning for 2026 – 27 and beyond

The one page Team Work Plan Summary for 2026-27 forms part of this paper.

Many strands of the team's work are fairly consistent from year to year. The current Financial Year is unusual for a number of reasons:

- Considerable allocations of Defra capital – 'core' capital (for 'invest to save' and 30x30 projects) £234,181, Access capital £114,054, and the new strand for creation of wildlife-rich habitat £494,438.
- We have a (foreseen) change of staffing in Farming in Protected Landscapes due to the retirement of Alison Jones. Recruitment has been successfully undertaken during May and we hope to have a start date for the new Adviser soon.
- Uplift of Defra core revenue funding for this Financial Year only. The team have worked hard in recent weeks to identify ideas for effective use of this funding to ease pressure on future years' budgets, and there should be no problem making full use of the uplift.

Due to increased capital funding, there is an element of competition for the team's capacity between direct delivery (e.g. of capital) and more pro-active work to support Management Plan delivery by all partners. While capital funding does open up opportunities for good new projects, there is undoubtedly an opportunity cost of other work the team are not able to do. Indeed there appears to be a drift of Defra ambition and funding towards delivery of capital projects, at the expense of the defined team 'core functions'. The top priority always has to go to delivering existing committed or contracted areas of work, and the team are not in a position to take on significant new projects, unless they fit into the committed programmes. Embedding the new structures and working with partners on delivery of the Management Plan nevertheless remains an important area of work.

One new project in development to which considerable effort has been committed is the bid for Shropshire Hills Landscape Connections to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (led by National Trust). We will find out on 25th June whether the bid was successful. If it goes ahead there will be a two year Development Phase, followed by 8 years of delivery. Effective integration of the project's activity with that of the Team will be very important.

Beyond the current Financial Year, forward planning is difficult, although the flat 3 year revenue settlement from Defra means this period looks challenging. Recent experience suggests however that further Defra funding could be forthcoming. The Team will undertake further forward budget and scenario planning.

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to comment on the factors and priorities identified.

This paper has been prepared by Phil Holden, Team Manager and members of the Team. For further details contact 01743 254741/ phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk.

Area of work	Key actions
CONVENE, INSPIRE AND CO-CREATE – engage and bring people together to build a shared vision for the Shropshire Hills, especially through the Management Plan, and foster support and commitment for this.	
Implement new partnership working structures	Hold meetings and develop communications with Forum, Advisory Committee, and Key Delivery Partner Group. Facilitate the Clun Catchment Partnership.
Management Plan	Continue to disseminate and promote the Plan, produce year 1 progress report
Climate & Ecological Emergency	Implement and update Climate Change Action Plan including adaptation plan. Build nature and ecosystem recovery into projects and strategic work.
Young Rangers and outreach work	Continue programme of Young Rangers activities for 12-18 year olds. Identify and work with new audiences from underserved communities.
Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust	Support to administer Conservation Fund grants, and advice to projects. Administer Friends scheme and work with the Trust to expand membership.
ENABLE AND INFLUENCE: Support partners and stakeholders to take action, building their capacity and understanding; influence relevant strategy and policy; support enjoyment and understanding of the area.	
Farming in Protected Landscapes programme	Implement Year 6 of FiPL programme offering grants for farmers and landowners, with advice and support to applicants and farmer groups.
Communications on special qualities of the landscape and on team activity	Maintain and update website and regular social media output. Publish E-newsletters and Annual Review , give talks . Targeted improvements to visitor facing information and interpretation.
Sustainable tourism	Support partner delivery of Shropshire Hills Sustainable Tourism Strategy .
Clun Headwaters	Disseminate results of eco-hydrological surveys of headwaters in the Upper Clun and work with partners and landowners to deliver recommendations.
Develop new projects	Subject to successful bid, start to implement Landscape Connections project (led by National Trust). With partners, develop area project proposals for the Upper Teme.
Planning	Comment on relevant policy documents and key planning applications . Maintain and improve links with local authority planning staff and members.
Input to other strategies, schemes and partnerships	Provide input to strategic consultations (non-planning). Input to delivery work on Local Nature Recovery Strategy . Input to Local Visitor Economy Partnership, Teme Partnership and others. Comment on non-planning casework such as EIAs and watercourses.
Support initiatives led by others	Support partner initiatives and community projects as possible, and respond to requests for information.
Training and volunteering	Involve trainees, students and volunteers where possible and appropriate.
DELIVER IN PARTNERSHIP: Lead the implementation of defined actions and projects, working with partners	
Defra capital work	Implement eligible projects especially on 30by30, working with partners.
Access capital work	Implement eligible access projects working with partners.
Ancient Woodland Restoration project	Implement year 2 of extended project for advice and restoration of ancient woodlands, in partnership with Woodland Trust.
Sustainable tourism delivery	Manage 2026 Shuttle bus service and plan 2027 service. Implement other Sustainable Tourism Strategy actions.
EVOLVE AND COLLABORATE: Develop the team, working processes and financial robustness, and play an active part in wider networks	
Team development	Hold team meetings, support staff training and development
Finance, office, IT, Health & Safety, legal requirements	Manage and administer team finances, achieve earned income, continue to modernise working practices and equipment, ensure compliance in all areas.
National Landscapes network and broader collaboration	Work with National Landscapes Association, Defra, National Parks and EUROPARC Federation to share ideas and best principles for areas of work.

Item 6. Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team budgets update

The 2026-27 Team overall budget is higher than previous years due to the addition of a new strand of capital funding from Defra for habitat creation, and a one year temporary uplift of Defra revenue funding. The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme remains the biggest single activity of the Team in budget terms. Forward planning beyond this Financial Year is made more difficult by the late confirmation of Defra funds, but a 3 year flat settlement of Defra core revenue to 2028-29 means that the current team capacity represents an over-commitment of budget, unless further uplift or income is forthcoming.

Core budget

The amount of Defra core revenue funding £228,109 is the same as in 2022-23 and is going to be the same until 2028-29, which is a substantial real terms cut over time due to rising costs over a period of considerable inflation. This Financial Year Defra have provided a one-off revenue uplift of £90,987, for which the priority is expenditure that will take pressure off the tighter budgets in years to come and lots of opportunities have been identified for this. Sources of earned income have declined – previous work on Stepping Stones has come to an end and contributions to core staff time on Farming in Protected Landscapes have declined. A number of staff continue to do occasional days of earned income work for other partners. The local authority contributions remain around 50% down on the amounts expected. The reserves of previously earned income provide an important means to manage cash flow of grants and ups and downs of Defra funding and other income.

Two of the Defra capital strands are included within the 'core' grant offer:

Core capital (including for 30 by 30 nature targets) £234,181

Access capital £114,054

Farming in Protected Landscapes

The 2026-27 allocation is £1,169,688, of which £1,005,615 is available for delivery (grants). This is a significant amount, but similar to levels we have spent effectively in previous years.

Other projects

- The Ancient Woodland restoration project includes costs of the part time project officer, with funding secured to the end of March 2027 from the Woodland Trust. Continuation beyond this Financial Year is uncertain but would be desirable if possible.
- The Shuttles have a break-even budget for the 2026 season just started, including partner contributions.

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to comment on the budget analysis provided.

This paper has been prepared by Phil Holden, Team Manager and members of the Team. For further details contact 01743 254741/ phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk.

Expenditure	2025-26 year end outturn	2026-27 current budget
Core budget		
Staff costs (inclusive of all on costs)	£336,127	£346,349
Office costs	£13,791	£34,065
Promotional Activity	£445	£11,500
Partnership costs and development work	£3,196	£12,165
Strategic & development work	£16,800	£4,500
Community engagement activities	£4,516	£4,300
Core capital (30 x 30 etc)	£220,778	£234,181
Access capital	-	£114,054
Core total	£609,056	£761,114
Projects		
Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (2026-27 including wildlife-rich habitat creation)	£1,151,717	£1,664,126
Access for All capital	£104,934	-
Ancient Woodland Restoration project	£32,344	£47,685
Clun Catchment	£12,608	£2,743
Shuttles	£17,030	£6,520
GRAND TOTAL	£1,927,690	£2,482,188
Income	2025-26 year end outturn	2026-27 current budget
Core budget		
Defra single pot core revenue funding	£228,109	£319,096
Shropshire Council core contribution	£36,100	£36,100
Telford & Wrekin Council core contribution	£3,000	£3,000
Defra capital funding	£220,778	£348,235
Other income	£121,070	£41,683
Core total	£609,056	£761,114
Farming in Protected Landscapes (100% Defra)	£1,151,717	£1,664,126
Other project funding, various sources	£166,917	£57,948
GRAND TOTAL	£1,927,690	£2,482,188

Item 8. Developing the new partnership and engagement structures

A modernisation of the partnership groups for the National Landscape was developed and agreed through the Partnership during 2025, linked to the needs of the new Management Plan. The Advisory Committee's Terms of Reference were approved along with the new Plan by both Councils at Cabinet level in January and February 2026. This year so far has seen a good start to putting the new structures into action, including use of more participative formats and methods. Information has been made available on each group in a new section on the website <https://www.shropshirehills-nl.org.uk/our-work/structure>.

Forum

The Forum is now the 'umbrella' group for the National Landscape, seeking to engage as wide a range of people as possible. Developing a format proven over recent years, the Forum event was held at Clun on 29th April and attended by 85 people, with good feedback. Membership of the Forum was launched this spring and is currently 54 people. The event was given a bit more depth to previous Forum events by the production of pre-event written information including on the theme topics, and a [post-event report](#). The number of stalls and stands was up on previous years, and there was an emphasis on participation in the plenary session. Early stages of planning are starting for an autumn/winter Forum event in a slightly different format, and potential themes for events in future years.

Advisory Committee

Recruitment to the new Committee was successfully completed in the spring, and a half-day induction event held with the Team on 22nd April. Two meeting dates for the rest of 2026 have been set, and at the first of these a Chair and two Vice Chairs will be appointed.

Key Partner Delivery Group

The approach with this group so far has been deliberately low key, but the need is apparent to formalise the group further and develop engagement among its members. The collective implementation by partners of the Management Plan will be a main theme for the group, identifying opportunities for co-ordination and collaboration, and ways the Team can support.

Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust

The Trust is an independent charitable entity, but part of the composite structure of groups and aiming to be as complementary as possible. The Trust is currently in the process of appointing a number of new trustees, which should help to raise its capacity. The Trust receives donations from Friends of the Shropshire Hills, who currently number 94.

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to support the further development of the connected and complementary groups making up the National Landscape structure.

This paper has been prepared by Phil Holden, Team Manager. For further details contact 01743 254741/ phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk.