



**Shropshire
Hills
National
Landscape**

Sustainability Appraisal of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Draft Management Plan 2025 – 2030

Non-technical Summary

28th August 2025

The Shropshire Hills National Landscape is a national designation covering a quarter of Shropshire. The Management Plan is a statutory document outlining priorities for the future of the area. Alongside the review of the Management Plan, a process of Sustainability Appraisal examines the interactions between policies in the draft Plan and a broad range of environmental, economic and social issues. The purpose of this is to look at any potential negative effects arising from the Plan on these wider issues, and see how alternative approaches can reduce any conflicts.

The Management Plan policies are presented in six sections, written as desired outcomes:

- **Nature** is restored and natural processes regenerated
- **Climate** is stabilised through decarbonising, and we are resilient to change
- **Water** is clean, and its flows and cycles support our lives, and all life
- **Land** is nurtured so it can sustain us
- **People** are healthy and connected to nature – in vibrant communities and as welcome visitors
- The Shropshire Hills are valued and cared for as a special **Place**

The full draft Management Plan and Sustainability Appraisal report are available at <https://www.shropshirehills-nl.org.uk/>. This brief non-technical summary outlines some of the principal issues and possible alternatives emerging from the Sustainability Appraisal.

The Appraisal process shows that the approaches of the Management Plan are generally strong for sustainability, and there are many more positive interactions between environmental, economic and social aspects than negative ones. The Plan provides an important means to navigate some of the key issues for the area.

EFFECTS ON OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES, AND ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

- **Nature recovery and landscape character.** Measures to strengthen the nature recovery network may change the current character and appearance of the landscape but will almost always do so in ways which are positive for landscape quality and natural beauty.

We need to be willing to embrace landscape change which is positive ecologically.

- There is rightly an increased **urgency to tackling climate change** and reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero (notably this is now included in Protected Landscape targets). This affects every economic sector and part of society – including land management, transport, tourism, planning and built development. Avoiding the most serious effects of climate change requires changes and compromises now, some of which may be sacrificing short-term benefits but often these changes will bring other benefits. e.g. to people's health from changing diets and more active travel. Measures to reach the net zero target are sometimes perceived as limiting the economy, but there is great potential for sustainable economic progress through these changes, and on the other hand, the costs of not mitigating climate change would be extraordinarily high.

There is a need to plan for 'just transition' where sections of society could be disproportionately affected by changes.

- **Renewable energy** such as solar and wind generation will continue to pose a challenge in terms of what level of impact on the protected landscape is considered acceptable. Impacts on biodiversity, heritage, landscape and resources also need to be considered. Community-based renewable schemes have stronger overall sustainability credentials taking into account social benefits too.

The relative lack of detailed guidance means that decisions will probably continue to turn on case by case merits. All means of reducing carbon emissions need to be actively promoted, including energy conservation, carbon management in soils, biomass and small scale renewables.

- There may be a perceived conflict between **climate change adaptation measures** and measures for climate change mitigation, such as in application of limited resources.

In reality, both are needed. Despite overwhelming scientific evidence there is still work to do to convince some people that the current unprecedented changes to climate are human-induced and that action on emissions by the UK is worthwhile since every country must act if there is to be a global solution.

- There could be a **tension between nature-based solutions for climate mitigation and nature recovery**. For example a narrow view of land management decisions based on carbon alone could lead to actions which are harmful to nature, e.g. tree planting on high ecological value grasslands, tree plantations focussing on fast-growing non-native species.

The climate and ecological crises need to be addressed together by integrated measures.

EFFECTS ON ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OBJECTIVES, AND ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

- The high quality of the **environment of the Shropshire Hills is a huge economic asset** which, if sensitively used and not damaged by inappropriate development, can deliver great long term economic benefits. The environmental assets of the Shropshire Hills support many kinds of sustainable economic activities and possibilities, and the quality and direction of economic progress need to be considered.

It remains important to demonstrate the positive economic effects of the environment and of looking after it.

- The high quality environment of the Shropshire Hills and protection of it as a National Landscape contribute to problems of **affordability of housing**, through both high demand and limits on supply. Policies enable affordable housing to be allowed where other forms of development would not be, but provision is still not adequate. The higher standards, e.g. of design, sought in the National Landscape may add to costs.

A robust system is required to ensure that affordable housing can be provided to meet social needs, but in keeping with the high quality landscape. Potential higher costs may be somewhat overcome by good guidance and economies of scale. Some of the higher costs are more likely to return to the local economy (e.g. through using local materials), with knock-on benefits.

- **There is increased pressure on land** and a risk that a narrow focus on food security creates a falsely polarised apparent choice between food production or nature. Food production is of course important and medium and long-term food security depends on a high quality environment. Maintaining functioning natural systems is important to human needs. To make better land use choices we need to look at the whole food system including eating patterns, food waste, etc as well as land management.

We need to highlight areas of common ground between food production and the environment e.g. soil health. We also need to pursue integrated models and new ideas for land use which improve human health and local food system resilience as well as maintaining nature and functional ecosystems. The simplistic narratives of 'either food or nature' should be challenged with a more positive model.

- As a rural area, many people are very **dependent on transport by private car and some people are very constrained in travel opportunities and choices by cost**. Policies affecting transport and traffic in the area come mostly from national and county policy rather than the National Landscape Management Plan.

Influencing patterns of behaviour will be a long-term process and will require significant investment and commitment to alternatives. There is evidence of the economic and social value of reducing transport, and the level of homeworking is increasing.