

*Extracts from Vision:*

## People

are healthy and connected to nature –  
in vibrant communities and as welcome visitors

- People have sufficient income, housing and services
- All parts of society can enjoy natural beauty

Subsections in this 'People' section of the Plan:

Meeting the **needs of residents** – income, housing, services

**Access and recreation** – walking, cycling, other activities

**Health and wellbeing**

**Equity, Diversity & Inclusion** – young people and other underserved communities

**Education**, learning, skills and training

**Volunteering** and involvement, fund-raising

**Public engagement** and communications, interpretation

*Key link to other Plan themes - **Visitor management and environmental sensitivity***

*"Have you ever beheld freedom through these eyes?  
These tall hills sitting right beneath the skies  
A painful path is gonna teach you how to fly  
In the dirt I think I saw a butterfly."*

Nature's Anthem, Still Shadey (Nature Calling arts project)



## Meeting the needs of residents – income, housing, services

The provision of these services lies beyond the National Landscape purposes, but it is a vital part of the context of the area. It is key to the 'social foundation' inner ring of the Doughnut model.

The population of the National Landscape is now 19,900 and has a relatively high age profile. A number of market towns lie close outside the National Landscape and the population within and in a 5km radius of the designated area is 205,246.

Challenges facing rural communities and businesses in the Shropshire Hills, in common with other upland areas of England:

- Transport – not necessarily 'connectivity', but cost and availability
- Broadband coverage
- Affordable housing – availability is an issue especially in rural towns, though in deeper rural areas available properties can sometimes be harder to let due to transport limitations.
- Mobile phone coverage
- Challenges in delivery of rural services
- Keeping farming viable



## Access and recreation – walking, cycling, other activities

Enjoyment of the landscape in many forms is a key public benefit from the Shropshire Hills and their designation as a National Landscape.

Walking is the most popular activity, enjoyed by a high proportion of visitors.

Many forms of countryside recreation are increasing, and patterns of use continue to change and evolve. New users often have a high reliance on poor quality digital mapping and low awareness of access rights and responsibilities

The area has greater potential for cycling touring and both road and off-road cycling. The Shropshire Way is a valuable resource with potential to attract more people for multi-day walking holidays using local accommodation.

Physical pressure from numbers of visitors can be seen at well-used sites such as at the Long Mynd, the Wrekin and some other hills.



Path widening near the Wrekin summit

## Health and wellbeing

The health and wellbeing benefits of contact with nature and outdoor exercise are well documented, including physical and mental health. Increasing levels of obesity, widening divide in society between those who are physically active and those who aren't.

In addition to this, practical volunteering brings the additional benefits of social connections and building sense of belonging and purpose.

The Shropshire Hills are visited by several million people a year and offers an accessible 'natural health service'. Health sector funding has been accessed in the past for countryside volunteering activities in Shropshire, but this has declined.



## Equity, Diversity & Inclusion – young people and other underserved communities

In March 2023 a study was commissioned on Improving engagement with under-served groups in the Shropshire Hills. The recommendation themes in the report were:

1. Communicating confidently
2. Maximising the health and well-being potential of the landscape
3. Increasing diversity in participation
4. Improving accessibility
5. Developing creative connections to the AONB's urban areas
6. Strengthening the AONB Partnership's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion
7. Aligning strategy and action with national policy and best practice

Engaging with some 'hard to reach' groups in society is usually labour intensive and requires particular techniques such as outreach activities. Examples such as Shropshire Council's 'Wild Teams' volunteers, working with adults with learning disabilities and mental health issues, show how effective this can be. Projects are likely to need a critical mass of resource and activity in order to work. An effective balance needs to be struck between reaching 'new' people, and meeting the demand from those already interested.



Farm visit through Generation Green 2



### Case study - Young Rangers

From 2021-2023 the National Landscape team had project funding from our National Lottery and employed a new officer in our team 3 days/week specifically to run the Young Rangers. South Shropshire Youth Forum were also contracted to run a second group. Each group had an activity roughly every 2 weeks.



*"I have learnt teamwork. I'm more brave and confident than I was. I'm more open and have joined in more activities. I've taken the lead in some of them and I feel myself and I can make new friends."*

*"Young Rangers has been fantastic for our son who is dyslexic and struggles sometimes at school. He also struggles a bit with social interactions so it's good practice to interact with other young people in a safe and caring environment". [parent]*



### Case study - new outreach work by Shropshire Hills Engagement Ranger

Through the new Engagement Ranger post, the National Landscape team worked in 2024 with new audiences including those with sight loss, Parkinson's disease and refugees. 20 organised events involved a total of 185 attendees. Insights from this were added to through our involvement in a EUROPARC study visit in 2024 on social inclusion in tourism. Lessons learned included:

- People face different and sometimes intersecting barriers, including money, knowledge, confidence and social norms.
- A 'pathway' or gradual progression through local visits might be useful for people for whom the barriers are significant.
- Initiatives which help people to connect to greenspace close to where they live are likely to help people to develop confidence and interest, which may encourage them to participate more.
- Outdoor and environmental education programmes for children are a valuable way to give opportunities to underserved groups, including day visits and residential. These may lead to children encouraging their parents to make trips to the countryside.
- Even relatively low cost opportunities for visits may exclude some people, due to cost, access to a car or outdoor equipment.



Visit to the Stiperstones by a Sight Loss group from Telford

## Education, learning, skills and training

Education and learning can connect with and benefit the National Landscape at all levels. For formal education, the Shropshire Hills is a great resource. There are primary schools within the National Landscape and Secondary Schools in the towns around. There are further and higher education colleges which have courses in a range of relevant subjects. Local universities include Harper Adams, Chester and Birmingham.

Adult learning happens through a wide variety of providers. Practical skills include those for nature conservation, heritage such as traditional buildings, and land management. More could be done on career training and pathways in to working in conservation or the land management sector.



Photo from a Generation Green 2 event in the Shropshire Hills

## Volunteering and involvement, including fundraising

Active volunteering brings benefits to the landscape and to people. People's attachment to a place is even stronger as a result of working on the land, and volunteering provides a means for many people to do this.



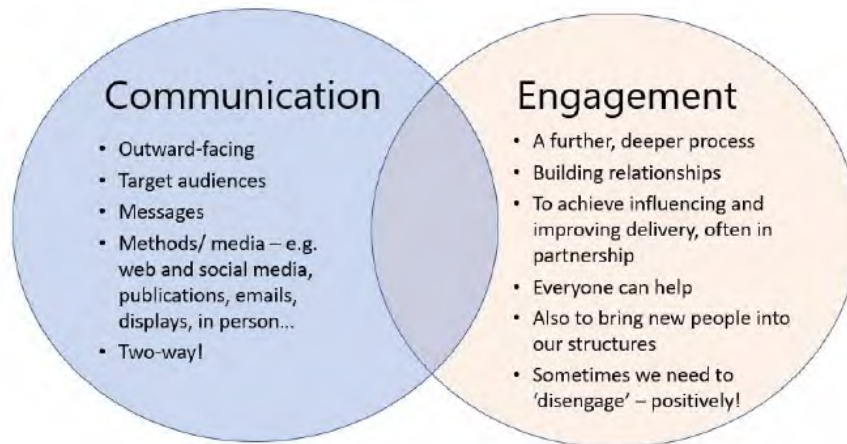
There can be a cross-over of involvement and support to more active donation and fundraising. The Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust is a good vehicle for this as a registered charity, but other organisations also fundraise for activity which contributes to the Management Plan.

There is a need to help communities and businesses within and around the National Landscape identify and celebrate being part of a nationally recognised landscape.



## Public engagement and communications, interpretation

Communication and engagement are seen as complementary and overlapping activities – engagement being more ongoing and done more through direct personal contact:



The National Landscape Team has a Communications Strategy which is periodically reviewed. Its limited resources for direct engagement are focused on 'impact groups' within target audiences. General communications and the newer outreach work aims to reach the general public and new audiences.

Interpretation includes digital and in-person methods as well as on-site panel, literature etc. Ideally, sites within the National Landscape should link interpretation to themes connecting to the wider Shropshire Hills and to mention being in the National Landscape.

## Key link to other Plan themes - Visitor management and environmental sensitivity

In our landscape, some of the most visited sites are hills which are also amongst our most important conservation sites. Physical pressure from numbers of visitors can be seen at well-used sites such as at the Long Mynd, the Wrekin and some other hills. There are disturbance impacts to wildlife from people and dogs, and localised adverse impacts from recreational off-road vehicle use. Negative impacts of tourism on natural and cultural resources are not as severe as in some more heavily visited places, but the resources available here to manage these problems are also quite limited.

A set of strategies for managing visitors and encouraging environmental sensitivity developed in the post Covid peaks of visitor numbers have ongoing relevance:

- **Good public information to prevent problems at source**  
Using key on-line platforms and sites, alignment of messages, listing of sites and locations
- **Managing popular sites and encouraging dispersal**  
Better public information about parking places
- **Encouraging responsible visitor behaviour**  
Using lessons from behavioural science – positive messages, connecting with people's motivations
- **Monitoring and understanding visitor use**  
Lessons from visitor surveys and further data collection
- **Support for businesses, farmers and communities impacted by visitor pressure**  
Co-ordinated messaging, ideally a troubleshooting capacity
- **In the longer term, develop and improve visitor infrastructure**  
Walking and cycling routes, small scale parking, sites with facilities.

## Summary of statutory requirements and duties - People (not exhaustive)

### [Statutory levels of service for local authorities](#)

### [Housing targets](#)

### [Public rights of way – guide for farmers and landowners](#)

### [Rights of Way – Council responsibilities](#)

### [Rights of Way – responsibilities of users](#)



## PLAN POLICIES – PEOPLE

(See the [explanation](#) of what the Policies are)

### 22. Housing

i) Development of affordable housing to meet local needs should be prioritised to increase the sustainability of communities within the National Landscape.

ii) Development of affordable housing should be supported where:

- development design is of high design quality, and has regard for local and traditional vernacular styles;
- density of development is sympathetic to existing housing density within the local area; and
- no significant adverse impacts upon the local community, landscape, nature, heritage, natural beauty, and tranquillity can be demonstrated.

### 23. Employment

i) Opportunities for local employment in activities which are sympathetic to the special qualities of the National Landscape should be supported and encouraged. Creation of jobs in activities which are harmful to the special qualities and other key characteristics of the National Landscape should not be used to justify harmful developments.

### 24. Services

i) Priority should be given to maintaining and enhancing local community services and amenities and improving access to these.

ii) Rural services should be delivered in sustainable ways, make the most of health and wellbeing opportunities from the landscape,

and as far as possible support the purpose of designation and the priorities of the Plan.

#### **25. Access and recreation**

i) The access network (including public footpaths, bridleways and roads, and open access areas) should be valued, protected and maintained as the bedrock of recreation, economic value and nature connection.

ii) Responsible access and sustainable recreation activities should be promoted, with a focus on quiet enjoyment and a strong ethic of care for visitors and providers. All recreation facilities, activities and events should be planned and promoted to ensure no significant impacts upon the local community, landscape, nature, heritage, natural beauty, and tranquillity.

iii) Recreational off-road use of motor vehicles should not be encouraged or promoted within the National Landscape. Voluntary measures and pro-active work with users should be used where possible to minimise the impact of legal off-road use of motor vehicles on the landscape and on other people's quiet enjoyment of the countryside. Where local impacts are significant however, measures including traffic regulation orders restricting legal use should be employed. Illegal motorised activities should as far as possible be prevented.

#### **26. Health and wellbeing**

i) Opportunities should be maximised for improving people's health and wellbeing from outdoor exercise and relaxation, and from contact with nature and the landscape.

#### **27. Inclusion and new audiences**

i) The Shropshire Hills should strive to be a more inclusive and welcoming destination, reaching new audiences. Priority should be

given to inclusivity, equity and diversity and to improving provision for under-served groups and those with special needs.

ii) Access for as wide a range of people as possible should be encouraged, through easing physical access barriers where possible, with reasonable adjustments provided where environmental factors may limit access.

#### **28. Promotion and public engagement**

i) Promotion of the Shropshire Hills to visitors should be linked to the special qualities of the National Landscape and should encourage sustainable tourism practices and behaviours, including sustainable and active transport and travel.

ii) Interpretation and a variety of communication and engagement tools should be used to help enhance people's enjoyment, raise understanding of special qualities of the area, and to encourage people to help and participate.

#### **29. Volunteering**

i) Active participation in care for the landscape through volunteering and community groups should be encouraged.

#### **30. Visitor management**

i) Publicity and other management measures should, through promotion of a wide variety of visitor locations, seek to disperse visitors and spread visits across the area, to reduce pressures at heavily used locations and to spread economic benefits.

#### **31. Education and skills**

i) Opportunities should be maximised for outdoor and environmental education, and for skills development linked to caring for the landscape.



## Recommendations – People

(See the [explanation](#) of what the Recommendations are)

- P 1. Foster mutual understanding among different stakeholders and build consensus around management of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape.
- P 2. Manage higher profile staffed visitor sites and visitor centres as gateways to the Shropshire Hills.
- P 3. Promote visitor information services and support visitor facing staff, businesses, and volunteers as ambassadors for the area.
- P 4. Continue good levels of maintenance of public and recreation facilities on sites which are part of the public forest estate.
- P 5. Manage promoted walking routes to a high standard.
- P 6. Continue the successful Shropshire Hills visitor map.
- P 7. Continue and develop the Shropshire Hills Shuttle service.
- P 8. Continue to support volunteers to undertake path maintenance work through the Parish Paths Network.
- P 9. Continue and expand active engagement and outreach to expand opportunities for underserved groups and to help address health and wellbeing inequalities and barriers.
- P 10. Make more use of social prescribing to spread the benefits that the National Landscape provides for the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors.
- P 11. Support countryside site providers to manage pressurised sites through on the ground repairs, information and influencing patterns of use and behaviour.
- P 12. Co-ordinate and maintain high-quality visitor information, including on available parking and facilities highlighting opportunities to suit all abilities and tastes, including on-line, social media, print and interpretation.

- P 13. Continue to develop a network of providers of countryside sites to share ideas and best practice.
- P 14. Expand the range of visitor sites which are accessible to a people with a wider range of abilities.
- P 15. Increase provision and opportunities for children and young people resident in the area and nearby, to experience the Shropshire Hills and have increased contact with nature.
- P 16. Implement projects to encourage walking and cycling as identified in the Shropshire Great Outdoors Development Plan.
- P 17. Continue a varied programme of events for the public through various organisations and community groups.
- P 18. Maintain funding and investment for maintenance of rights of way, including capital programmes for larger items such as bridges.
- P 19. Raise awareness of the links between sustainable management of the landscape and people's health through food, exercise, nature and relaxation.
- P 20. Continue to maintain and promote the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail.
- P 21. Strengthen training opportunities and pathways to employment linked to caring for the landscape.
- P 22. Support continuation and expansion of care farming and social forestry opportunities.
- P 23. Support and promote opportunities for environmentally friendly activities e.g. horse riding, adventure sports.
- P 24. Strengthen and expand mechanisms for visitors and local people to donate to support conservation work.
- P 25. Improve virtual access and use of digital platforms to reinforce nature connection.
- P 26. Continue to monitor visitor use and trends, and attitudes.

## Aspirations – People

(See the [explanation](#) of what the Aspirations are)

P(a) Support opportunities for people to have life-changing experiences of nature which in turn promote pro-environmental behaviours.

P(b) Broaden the National Landscape Partnership structure to encourage greater participation.

P(c) Make greater use of arts projects as an engagement tool to reach new audiences.

P(d) Support and promote specific itineraries and products based on visiting and exploring on foot and by bike.

P(e) Seek to engage new sectors in sustainable tourism principles and

P(f) practices. e.g., creative enterprises, outdoor activity providers and challenge event organisers.

P(g) Develop geological interpretation along the Shropshire Way and update the Shropshire Hills geology trail leaflets.

P(h) Provide more 'changing places' facilities for people with particular needs.

