Place

The Shropshire Hills are valued and cared for as a special Place

- The working landscape supports livelihoods
- Heritage assets are looked after
- Cultural heritage is celebrated
- The economy is regenerative and circular

Subsections in this 'Place' section of the Plan:

Landscape including landscaping, tranquillity, dark skies

Heritage and historic environment

Sustainable, circular and regenerative economies:

    Tourism and visitor economy

    Sustainable transport

The National Landscape **boundary, setting and connections to surrounding area**

*Key link to other Plan themes – **Communities, cultural heritage, connection to place***

"When we work in place we can see the impact and respond. Place is the one unit of measurement that allows us to change our behaviour. If we save the places of the world, we save the planet."

Bill Read, Regenesis Institute.

Landscape

The [European Landscape Convention](#) defines landscape as *'An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and human factors'*. This view sees people at the heart of all landscapes, each of which has its own distinctive character and meaning.

The Convention is unaffected by Brexit and the UK remains a signatory. The Convention defines three principles of landscape action:

Protect: action to conserve and maintain the significant characteristic features of a landscape, justified by their natural or cultural value;

Manage: action to ensure the sustainable development and ongoing upkeep of a landscape, guiding changes arising from social, economic or environmental necessity;

Plan: strong forward-looking action to enhance, restore or create landscape.

Landscapes comprise a range of components:
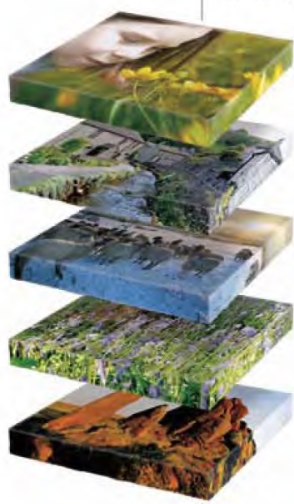
Experience – landscapes are all around us and we perceive and value them in many different ways. This can often influence how we manage and care for landscapes.

History – landscapes illustrate time depth. Patterns established in the past, such as field shapes and boundaries, can help to illustrate how landscapes used to be managed and how humans have shaped the landscape.

Land use – current and past land uses help to shape and maintain landscapes, they include all human led processes such as farming, forestry, recreation and settlement.

Wildlife – the natural form of a landscape will affect the types of plants and animals it can support and these, in turn will help to shape the landscape.

Natural form – this includes geology, land form, soils and vegetation. The combination of these can influence how a landscape is used.

## Landscaping - good practice for landscaping of new developments would include:

• Careful location, form and design of development (simple 'screening' of poorly considered development is not a substitute for good design, taking into account the character of the local landscape)

• Good landscaping plans which can be understood and commented upon

• Adopting sustainability principles such as use of local materials, low energy consumption, water conservation, decreasing run-off, etc

• Retaining and incorporating existing landscape features, including mature trees, old boundary features such as walls and hedges

• Landscaping which reflects the rural character of the location

• Minimising use of earth bunding with un-natural form

• Avoidance of industrial style fencing and especially fencing on top of banks

• Use of appropriate materials in hard landscaping reflecting rural character, including suitable timber, stone and appropriate bricks where used

• Well-designed mixed planting of trees and shrubs suitable for the soil type and location. Tree and shrub planting should be predominantly native especially in open countryside locations, but non-native species in character with the area are also acceptable close to clusters of domestic buildings. Native species common in the area include pedunculate and sessile oak, birch, alder, hazel, holly, field maple and various species of willow. Seek advice and see what grows near your site. Avoid conifers such as Leylandii.

• Grasslands of higher species diversity, which will often thrive on poorer soils

• Good maintenance of tree and shrub planting to ensure establishment and growth, including weed control and mulching, protection from browsing animals, and replacement planting where necessary

Tranquillity, Dark Skies & Light pollution

Tranquillity is one of the less tangible and measurable assets of the National Landscape, but is nevertheless very significant in the way people value the area. CPRE undertook mapping work on this in 2007 and their methodology included assessing a range of objective factors such as levels of noise, light pollution and visual presence of man-made structures, as well as more subjective factors of people's perception, including apparent naturalness and encounters with other people. The Shropshire Hills area is very significant in a regional and local context, and at a national scale, the Shropshire Hills and Marches area generally are significant, along with larger areas of the north and south-west of England.

The key sources of intrusive noise identified in the Shropshire Hills of road and air traffic which are continuing to increase.

Awareness of light pollution issue has risen, and technology and design has enabled steps to be taken (e.g. street lights which allow much less upward escape of light) and more sensitive security lighting.
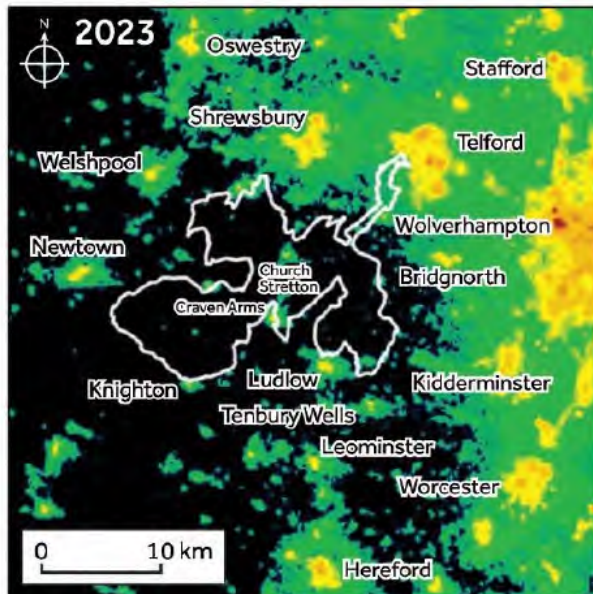
Map of artificial light at night clearly shows the value of the Shropshire Hills for dark skies

Heritage and historic environment

The historic environment covers a wide range of heritage assets including buildings and features with statutory protection and those which are locally valued, and also the historic character of the wider landscape and settlements. The character of the landscape, such as the small fields around squatter settlements and different enclosure patterns, has important cultural influences. The physical remains of people interacting with places over time also include features which are currently unrecorded or unknown.

The historic environment is a finite resource and is continuing to decline and be lost due to development, changes in land management and a lack of understanding and management. This is particularly true of the wider historic landscape and the less visible and undesignated sites which have no protection. Conserving heritage features involves understanding their significance and seeking to manage change to them. There is a need to understand and promote the connectivity of historic sites and their settings as part of the wider landscape in order to effectively conserve and manage historic landscape character. Historic and natural aspects of the environment are closely inter-related – for example hedgerows, veteran trees, parkland and ancient woodland.

Archaeological work on Nordy Bank, Clee Liberty Common

Setting of heritage assets

With better information available, development proposals which would directly damage defined archaeological features are thankfully rare, but the setting is more often overlooked. Setting is the surroundings in which an asset is experienced, and may be more extensive than its curtilage. All heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not. Setting is often considered mainly in relation to views, but other factors such as quiet and tranquillity can be an important part of a setting. The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on people's current ability to access or experience the setting. Extensive heritage assets, such as historic parks and gardens, landscapes and townscapes, can include many heritage assets, historic associations between them and their nested and overlapping settings, as well as having a setting of their own.

Case study - Offa's Dyke Conservation project

The Offa's Dyke Conservation Project is a cross-border initiative with Historic England and CADW, Shropshire Council, the Offa's Dyke Association and the Offa's Dyke National Trail. The project aims to showcase the benefits of integrating people, nature and place around the focus of a monument conservation programme. Focussing on the Dyke corridor has delivered benefits throughout a landscape that we today value for its scenic, historic and nature conservation importance. The project is also being identified in collaborative nature recovery initiatives such as Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and the Welsh Integrated Natural Resources Scheme.

Removal of conifers from Offa's Dyke

Case – study - Fix the Fort

The public appeal to raise money to fix Caer Caradoc's worn-down ramparts generated £4,000. This was boosted in autumn 2022 with additional funding from HF Holidays (£10,000) and Farming in Protected Landscapes (£13,000), enabling the Fix the Fort project to start. After preparatory archaeological and ground work, 50 bags of stone and soil were airlifted onto the hillside by helicopter. Repairs to the ramparts were made over the winter of 2022-23 with support from some Young Rangers and volunteers. The work has created steps at key points where the footpath crosses the earthworks, and repaired other erosion scars.

## Sustainable, circular and regenerative economies

Regenerative concepts have become more prominent in farming and in tourism, but can be applicable to economies and places as a whole. This is where there is an emphasis on economic activity actually *improving* the environment and society rather than just avoiding harm. It means looking beyond sustainability and seeing how we can create the right conditions in which living systems are able to regenerate themselves. This approach will focus on 'upstream' interventions and is in contrast to a linear or extractive economy, which is not only less sustainable but will also be less resilient.

> *"A regenerative economy means moving away from extractive business models and unlocking the potential for positive contributions for nature and society. Businesses have the potential to be climate positive, socially positive and economically positive by moving beyond a solitary focus on limiting emissions into the environment".*
>
> Smith School of Enterprise and Environment, University of Oxford

> *"The circular economy is a system where materials never become waste and nature is regenerated. In a circular economy, products and materials are kept in circulation through processes like maintenance, reuse, refurbishment, remanufacture, recycling and composting. The circular economy tackles climate change and other global challenges, like biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution, by decoupling economic activity from the consumption of finite resources".*
>
> Ellen MacArthur Foundation
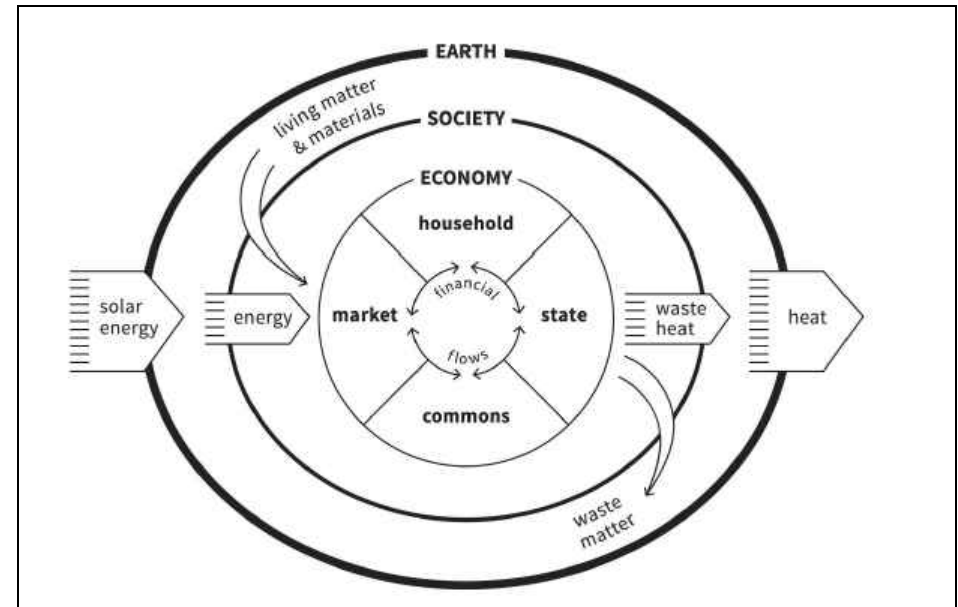
Economy embedded within society and dependent on the living world

(Credit: Kate Raworth and Marcia Mihotich CC-BY-SA 4.0)

These concepts are also similar to the 'Wellbeing economy' and to the Doughnut Economics model we have used in our Vision and data portrait profiling.

> *"Economic change that is sourced from place, is a foundational pillar in designing regenerative economies. It deals with the varying aspects of bringing our economies back towards a localised, place-sourced design that derives its thrivability from the five key 'capitals' that surround it – ecological, social, human, production, financial – whilst still operating inside our existing global economy as it slowly transforms."*
>
> Really Regenerative Centre

Sustainable or regenerative tourism and visitor economy

As in other fields there is a move from sustainable towards regenerative tourism – looking beyond just minimising impacts, and towards an overall philosophy of how tourism can positively benefit the environment as well as economies and society. This might include businesses contributing and visitors doing volunteer work, but also things such as structures and ownership that build local communities.

The Shropshire Hills holds the [Europarc Federation's Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas](#). [The Shropshire Hills Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2024-29](#) has the following strategic themes:

i. Setting an ambitious sustainable vision for tourism and engaging people with this.

ii. Improving provision of sustainable tourism services which draw on the area's special qualities.

iii. Supporting and encouraging environmental practices and behaviours by businesses and visitors.

iv. Managing the effects of localised visitor pressure, mitigating impacts, and sharing economic benefit by promoting visitor activity across the area.

v. Co-ordinating and adding value to sustainable tourism delivery.

Roads and Highways

The design and management of the rural road network should reinforce the local character and distinctiveness of the National Landscape. The distinctive character of minor roads contributes to the character of the wider Shropshire Hills landscape and they are an important means for people to experience the National Landscape. Insensitive, over-engineered changes to these roads can have a detrimental impact. The increasing use of larger heavy goods vehicles is having damaging impacts. The availability of electric vehicle charging points is expanding but still fairly low.

Sustainable transport

Transport and accessibility are important in the rural area and 8% of households in the Shropshire Hills have no car. Public transport is limited and most people are reliant on private cars. An increase in home-working has reduced the need to travel for some people.

Case study - Shuttles

The Long Mynd & Stiperstones Shuttle bus in 2024 carried over 950 passengers and travelled over 4,600 miles. The Shuttle service continues to be very popular.

The National Landscape boundary, setting and connections to surrounding area

The Shropshire Hills National Landscape boundary has not been changed since it was drawn up in 1957 prior to the designation as AONB. The conclusion from a study of the boundary commissioned in 2006 was that the boundary was fit for purpose, and the Partnership and the local authorities have since then had a clear policy against seeking to change the National Landscape boundary.

The 'setting' of the National Landscape is the area around it, which adds value to the qualities of the designated area. This is not precisely defined geographically, but it should be considered in planning decisions for developments close outside the boundary.

The National Landscape is an asset to Shropshire and to Telford & Wrekin, and has links across the border to Wales. It is connected to the surrounding area and is not and should not be an 'island'. It can provide benefits economically, environmentally and socially to the wider area. Most Parishes cross the boundary, and potential new audiences lie in the nearby urban areas. These positive connections can be built as part of the National Landscape model.
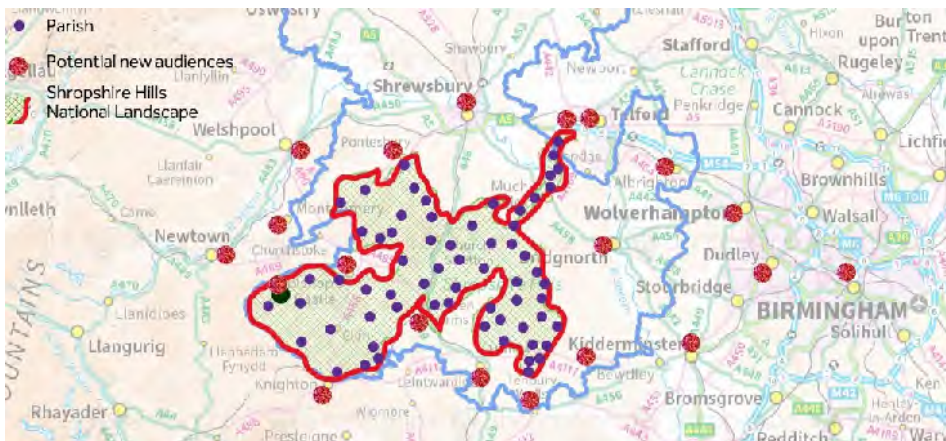
Key link to other Plan themes - Communities, cultural heritage, connection to place

The Rural Coalition in 2010 described sustainable rural communities as those *"in which people enjoy living and working; which are vibrant, distinctive and in keeping with the character of their surroundings, with a full range of good-quality local services; and which enhance local landscapes, heritage and biodiversity while meeting the challenges of climate and economic change."*

The Shropshire Hills National Landscape is 23% of Shropshire by area but contains only 6% of the county's population. Its sparse population means its economy is therefore different from much of the county, with more small, dispersed rural businesses.

Social balance and cohesion are key to successful communities and this relies on sharing spaces where people can mix. Public spaces whether green or built can have an important role in social cohesion, culture and sense of community. In the Church Stretton Neighbourhood Plan, comments were made about community, integration, social issues, the role of voluntary groups, meeting the needs of everyone etc along with comments relating to the need to make changes to the old market square – it was seen by many as having a role as a meeting place, rather than a car park - the need to maintain shops and services in the town centre etc.

Market at Church Stretton
(Church Stretton Town Council)

Cultural heritage includes both physical artefacts and intangible aspects. Though interpretations of history can be contested, there are often aspects of cultural heritage which can unite people from a locality.

A sense of place is key to people's connection to where they live, work and visit. Heritage contributes to people's sense of place and belonging and there are lessons from past ways of living which are relevant to some of our modern day problems.

A place-based approach is about understanding the issues, interconnections and relationships in a place and coordinating action and investment to improve the quality of life for that community.

Thinking about the 'potential' of a place to be an even better version of what it is now can open up new ways of thinking, and can be more energising than conventional focus on problem solving. Here are some ideas which we are interested to explore further, around future potential for the Shropshire Hills based on its unique qualities:

Potential of the Shropshire Hills?

The Place

Headwater sponge

Carbon sink

Nature powerhouse

Tranquil haven

Vibrant rural area

Basis of livelihoods

A 'source' area for its surrounding areas

The People/ Community/ Culture/ Protected Landscape

Connected sharer

Applicable example

Inspiring beacon

Welcoming community

Model of balance

Relevant hub

PLAN POLICIES - PLACE
(See the explanation of what the Policies are)

32. Landscape

   i)   A holistic view of landscape should be adopted in decision making, respecting the principles of the European Landscape Convention to protect, manage and plan for landscapes, and safeguarding the integrity of the sympathetic interaction between people and landscape.

   ii)   Local distinctiveness should be celebrated, linked to the natural and cultural heritage of the landscape.   All development should consider local character and distinctiveness.

   iii)   Tranquillity should be protected in all aspects – peace and quiet, views, visual harmony, absence of intrusive influences.

   iv)   Dark skies should be valued, and planning policy and decisions on public lighting should be used to minimise and reduce light pollution.

   v)   In remoter locations and on hilltops a perceived sense of wildness should be retained and built structures minimised.

33. Heritage

   i)   Designated heritage sites and assets should be protected, and development should seek to protect and enhance the significance of all heritage assets (including undesignated assets), including their setting.

   ii)   Measures should be supported to ensure cultural heritage is better understood and celebrated.

34. Regenerative and circular economies

i)   A regenerative economy should be fostered, focussing on wise management and wellbeing – an economy which is nature and climate positive, and good for people.

ii)   Waste and resource use should be reduced by supporting a circular economy.

35. Tourism and visitor economy

i)   New development for tourism and recreation should be of suitable scale and siting, of the highest standards of design and sustainability and avoid harm to the special qualities and other key characteristics of the National Landscape. Tourism businesses, facilities, activities, and events should adopt high standards of sustainability.

ii)   Tourism activities based on nature and heritage should be prioritised, to increase people's connection to nature and better reveal the significance of heritage assets and their story within the context of the Shropshire Hills.

iii) Development of permanent caravans and chalets should be on a small scale only (e.g. less than 10 units), in suitable locations and following high standards of landscaping of natural and rural character.

36. Sustainable transport

i)   Development of infrastructure such as transport and utilities should be sensitive to the special qualities and other key characteristics of the National Landscape and seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing it. The rural character of roads and highway network should be maintained, with design and structures in keeping with the high quality landscape

ii)   The use of excessively large vehicles on small rural lanes should be discouraged, including to protect verges and minimise soil loss to rivers.

iii) Maintaining, and extending public transport provision within the National Landscape should be prioritised over the further development of car-based infrastructure.

37. The boundary and setting of the National Landscape

i)   The National Landscape boundary should not be formally amended In the foreseeable future, as any benefits would not be justified against the considerable costs and resources this would entail. Partners should work in ways which strengthen the integrity and identity of the Shropshire Hills as an area of exceptional landscape value. The National Landscape Team will work in a flexible and pragmatic way in relation to the boundary while seeking the best outcomes and delivery for the designated area.

ii)   Development in the setting of the National Landscape should be assessed for its impacts on the designated area itself, and also take account of the landscape quality of the setting. Mitigation measures should consider impacts on the special qualities and other key characteristics of the National Landscape.

38. Communities, cultural heritage, connection to place

i)   Local councils, including town and parish councils, should support and enable the development of sustainable communities within the National Landscape.

ii)   Better use of built and green public spaces in villages and towns should be encouraged for better social connection and mixing, and to enhance vitality in communities.

iii) The Shropshire Hills identity and the combined elements of the National Landscape model (Plan, Partnership, Team, etc) should be strengthened to help support people's motivation to actively care for the area's special qualities.

Recommendations – Place

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

PL 1.   Support the development of mixed, balanced and sustainable communities, that are good places for people to live in, and are socially cohesive.

PL 2.   Support Parishes and community groups to care for their local landscape. Continue events to link and support community groups taking action for the local landscape.

PL 3.   Foster positive economic, social and environmental connections of the Shropshire Hills with its surrounding areas.

PL 4.   Promote suitable heritage sites for visitors and encourage greater understanding of heritage.

PL 5.   Complete an inventory of public car parking areas in the Shropshire Hills and use this to improve public information for people of all abilities and to aid dispersal of visitors.

PL 6.   Take action to bring all Scheduled heritage sites in favourable condition and management, prioritised at sites which are 'At Risk' and 'Vulnerable'.

PL 7.   Keep sustainable tourism prominent within the area's tourism sector and foster a sense of shared environmental responsibility among both businesses and visitors.

PL 8.   Continue targeted conservation action on Offa's Dyke.

PL 9.   Continue with the EUROPARC Sustainable Tourism Charter, providing a structured framework for sustainable tourism management, optimise learning from the network and promote appropriately.

PL 10. Make sensitive use of improved signage to encourage sense of place and aid orientation of visitors.

PL 11. Promote and improve existing channels for people to give back to the area, e.g., through membership organisations, through the

Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust's Conservation Fund and potential other specific appeals.

PL 12. Give greater recognition to the Shropshire Hills National Landscape as an asset in the strategies and plans of Councils and public bodies.

PL 13. Maintain the profile of the Shropshire Hills and sustainable tourism in the new Local Visitor Economic Partnership.

PL 14. Strengthen links between Management Plan topics and priorities and Local Transport Planning.

PL 15. Continue to monitor economic trends and patterns in tourism to inform future strategies.

PL 16. Foster local area identities within the Shropshire Hills that support the connection of people to places.

PL 17. Encourage the development of heritage-based tourism activities that draw on the rich cultural heritage of the area and help generate support to maintain heritage assets.

PL 18. Make alterations to flight path corridors to decrease the volume and noise impacts of air traffic over the National Landscape.

PL 19. Give priority to community consultation ahead of major development and other significant changes to the landscape, and carry this out early in the design and decision making process.

PL 20. Communities and businesses are encouraged to value and celebrate being part of the National Landscape.

PL 21. Encourage use of the Shropshire Hills name and the new National Landscape branding, to reinforce identity and sense of place. Discourage the forming of acronyms such as NL, SHNL which are a barrier to understanding and engagement.

Aspirations - Place

(See the explanation of what the Aspirations are)

PL(a)   Build shared knowledge of regenerative economies and examples which could be applied.

PL(b)   Use local food to enhance sense of place, distinctiveness and connection to the area.

PL(c)   Prioritise and seek a new generation of strategic investment in infrastructure for active travel and recreational walking and cycling including development of multi-user routes along suitable disused former railway lines.

PL(d)   Increase promotion of dark skies as a powerful nature experience and as a motivator for improved sustainability on lighting.

PL(e)   Increase celebration of cultural heritage to encourage connection and pride of place.

PL(f)   Give greater profile of the National Landscape status for the Wrekin area as an engagement tool for the wider Shropshire Hills landscape.

PL(g)   Develop material to raise awareness of geology along the Shropshire Way.

PL(h)   Create a scheme for volunteers to participate in caring for monuments and heritage features.

PL(i)   Improve provision of training for heritage skills.

PL(j)   Help tourism businesses to access good sustainability advice and to promote their good practices and gain recognition for these.

PL(k)   Use the qualities of the area and its culture to associate the Shropshire Hills as somewhere to have a sustainable holiday/visit e.g. a change of pace, physically active, healthy, and low car miles with a locally distinctive, authentic experience.