Introduction

This report provides a snap-shot of the condition of the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 2014. It does this by presenting information about a range of elements, or attributes, which are deemed to be characteristic of the area.

Where possible, comparisons are made between new data and those presented in the State of the Malvern Hills AONB report for 2009. In this way the reader can begin to understand how the condition of the AONB is changing. This comparison can also be seen as a gauge of the effectiveness of the AONB Partnership in conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the area.

Whilst the text does make brief references to methodology and sources of information, this report focuses on the presentation of data rather than on why or how it has been collected. Information on the justification and rationale for this work can be found in a report entitled ‘A methodology for monitoring the changing condition of the Malvern Hills AONB’ available at www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk

Acknowledgements

The Centre for Rural Research at the University of Worcester has played a major role in the preparation of this report. Thanks are due to Nick Evans, Professor of Rural Geography, for his many hours both in the field and in the office poring over statistics, and for his patience in responding to numerous questions and points of clarification. Thanks are also due to all landowners and property owners who have allowed survey work for the purposes of compiling this report.

Paul Esrich
Manager, Malvern Hills AONB Partnership

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Landscape: Fixed Point Photography

Overview

Landscape Character Assessment is a key tool for identifying and describing variations in landscape character. Drawing upon the work of local authorities in the area, 30 detailed Landscape Description Units (LDUs) can be identified within the Malvern Hills AONB (Figure 1). LDUs are distinct, relatively small areas in which the historical, physical and biological features are similar in their appearance and purpose. Hence, LDUs can be regarded as the individual building blocks of the landscape.

For monitoring purposes, one fixed-point photographic location has been identified for each LDU in the AONB. A mathematically calculated central point, known as a ‘centroid’, has informed the selection of each monitoring point. Photographs and assessments taken from these points provide an indication of the appearance and condition of each LDU.

Unless stated otherwise all images depicted over the subsequent pages were recorded either in late January/February 2009 (thumbnail photos) or in February/March 2014. The images are organised according to the general appearance of the landscape, known as Landscape Character Type (Figure 1). The LDU number is included simply by way of cross-reference to its geographic location, also shown in Figure 1.

Key to subsequent pages

Condition Trend – the arrow presented alongside each LDU indicates whether the condition of the landscape view in the fixed point image has shown some improvement ▲, decline ▼ or stayed the same ◀ since 2009.

Changes since 2009 – changes in the condition of landscapes are often only evident over long periods of time but this section summarises any discernable changes in the view since 2009.

Additional points of interest – this section summarises any additional points of interest with reference to supplementary photos of the surrounding area taken close to the monitoring point (some LDUs only).
**Principal Wooded Hills**

**Alfrick (LDU 1)**

Condition trend: 📉 📉

Changes since 2009:
- 1a Increase in bracken cover
- 1b Increase in size of gorse bushes

**Suckley Hills (LDU 2)**

Condition trend: ▲

Changes since 2009:
- 2a New fruit trees planted in traditional orchard

**Storridge (LDU 4)**

Condition trend: 🔻 🔻

Changes since 2009:
- 4a Hedgerow tree growing against utility pole
Landscape

Alfrick (LDU 1)

1a

1b

Suckley Hills (LDU 2)

2a

Storridge (LDU 4)

4a
Principal Wooded Hills

West Malvern and Upper Colwall (LDU 5)

Condition trend: ▲

Changes since 2009:
- 5a Removal of extraneous conifers
- 5b Loss of tree from ancient woodland

Ockeridge (LDU 14)

Condition trend: ●●

Changes since 2009:
- None evident

Bradlow Hills (LDU 17)

Condition trend: ●●

Changes since 2009:
- None evident
West Malvern and Upper Colwall (LDU 5)

Additional points of interest:
- 14a Hedgerows becoming more gappy
- 14b Deterioration in field tree

Ockeridge (LDU 14)

Additional points of interest:
- 14a Hedgerows becoming more gappy
- 14b Deterioration in field tree

Bradlow Hills (LDU 17)

Additional points of interest:
- 17a Evidence of new tree planting but these are coniferous rather than broadleaved which would be more typical for the area
Principal Timbered Farmlands

**Stichin’s Hill, Alfrick** (LDU 3)
Condition trend: ◀▶
Changes since 2009:
- None evident

**Mathon Village** (LDU 6)
Condition trend: ◀▶
Changes since 2009:
- None evident

**Colwall** (LDU 8)
Condition trend: ◀▶
Changes since 2009:
- None evident
Additional points of interest:
- 3a and 3b Traditional orchards are characteristic in this landscape, with many suffering from neglect

Stichin’s Hill, Alfrick (LDU 3)

Additional points of interest:
- 6a New commercial orchard planted

Mathon Village (LDU 6)

Additional points of interest:
- 8a Traditional scale farm complex, well integrated in the landscape

Colwall (LDU 8)
Principal Timbered Farmlands

Colwall Stone (LDU 9)

Condition trend: ▲▲

Changes since 2009:
- 9a Removal of conifer and erection of new building
- 9b New commercial orchard planted on hillside
- 9c Dead field tree

---

Fairoaks Farm (LDU 24)

Condition trend: ▲▲

Changes since 2009:
- None evident

---

Whitehouse Farm (LDU 25)

Condition trend: ▲▲

Changes since 2009:
- 25a Restoration/decoration of farmhouse
Additional points of interest:

- 24a Rough margin beneficial to conservation
- 24b Detached property, recently constructed in appropriate materials

Additional points of interest:

- 25b Native hedgerow removed then replanted
Enclosed Commons

Three Counties Showground (LDU 10)
Condition trend: ◀◀
Changes since 2009:
- 10a New farm building added
- 10b Loss of limb to veteran field tree

Marlbank (LDU 11)
Condition trend: ◀
Changes since 2009:
- None evident

Little Malvern (LDU 12)
Condition trend: ▼
Changes since 2009:
- 12a Veteran field tree on the ground
- 12b Damage to limbs of field tree
Three Counties Showground (LDU 10)

Marlbank (LDU 11)

Little Malvern (LDU 12)

Additional points of interest:

- 11a Intensively managed large arable fields are now common
- 11b Evidence of streamside tree management
Malvern Wells (LDU 30)
Condition trend: ◄►
Changes since 2009:
- None evident

Settled Farmlands with Pastoral land use

Newlands, West Castlemorton (LDU 22)
Condition trend: ◄►
Changes since 2009:
- None evident

King’s Green (LDU 26)
Condition trend: ◄►
Changes since 2009:
- None evident
Malvern Wells (LDU 30)

Additional points of interest:
- 30a Growth in small woodland plantation
- 30b Presence of golf course likely to limit future change

Newlands, West Castlemorton (LDU 22)

Additional points of interest:
- 22a Closely managed, uniform hedgerows becoming gappy
- 22b Fallen veteran hedgerow tree

King’s Green (LDU 26)

Additional points of interest
- 26a Young trees being allowed to grow through the hedgerow. Hedgerow trees are characteristic in this landscape unit
- 26b Uncultivated field margin – a sign of positive land management
Wooded Hills and Farlands

**Eastnor (LDU 18)**
Condition trend: ▼▼
Changes since 2009:
- 18a Track side trees have been thinned out
- 18b New structure has been established

**Bronsil (LDU 19)**
Condition trend: ▼▼
Changes since 2009:
- 19a Growth in scrub in the foreground

Unenclosed Commons

**Castlemorton Common (LDU 21)**
Condition trend: ▼
Changes since 2009:
- 21a and 21b Scrub growth is slowly leading to a reduction in openness on the common
**Eastnor (LDU 18)**

Additional points of interest
- 18c This landscape unit is dominated by Eastnor Castle and Deer Park. Note evidence of succession planting of parkland trees.

**Bronsil (LDU 19)**

Additional points of interest
- 19b Evidence of some areas of thick bracken on the slopes of the wooded hills in this landscape unit.

**Castlemorton Common (LDU 21)**
Unenclosed Commons

Hollybed Common (LDU 23)
Condition trend: ▲ ▲
Changes since 2009:
- 23a Some evidence of increase in scrub in parts of this landscape unit

Malvern Common East (LDU 28)
Condition trend: ▲ ▲
Changes since 2009:
- None evident

Malvern Common West (LDU 29)
Condition trend: ▲ ▲
Changes since 2009:
- Increase in growth of unimproved grass
Additional points of interest:

- **28a** Urban-rural fringe character is strongly evident
- **28a** Tree growth needs to be monitored
- **28b** The Common is important for its botanical interest

**Hollybed Common (LDU 23)**

**Malvern Common East (LDU 28)**

Additional points of interest:

- **28b** and **28c** This is a well-used recreational landscape in which informal path ‘desire lines’ intersect with formalised paths

**Malvern Common West (LDU 29)**
Forest Smallholdings and Dwellings

Wellington Heath (LDU 15)

Condition trend: ▲▲

Changes since 2009:
- 15a Tree growth in foreground
- 15b Open area (characteristic feature) remains undeveloped

Sandstone Estatelands

Bromsberrow (LDU 27)

Condition trend: ▲▲

Changes since 2009:
- None evident

Settled Farmlands on River Terraces

Beggars Ash (LDU 16)

Condition trend: ▲▲

Changes since 2009:
- None evident
Wellington Heath (LDU 15)

Additional points of interest:
- 27a Increase in area of polytunnels for soft fruit growing in this landscape unit

Bromsberrow (LDU 27)

Additional points of interest:
- 27a Intensively managed commercial orchards dominate this landscape unit

Beggars Ash (LDU 16)

Additional points of interest:
- 16a Intensively managed commercial orchards dominate this landscape unit
High Hills & Slopes

Malvern Hills North (LDU 7)
Condition trend: ▲
Changes since 2009:
- 7a Bracken cover decreasing and being replaced by grass
- 7b Some evidence of increasing gorse cover

Malvern Hills Central (LDU 13)
Condition trend: ▼
Changes since 2009:
- 13a Increase in gorse and scrub cover

Malvern Hills South (LDU 20)
Condition trend: ◀▶
Changes since 2009:
- None evident
Additional points of interest:

- 20a Evidence of extensive mechanical bracken control
- 20b Grazing management in evidence
Overview

The condition reported here is made in comparison to the benchmark established in the 2009 State of the AONB report. Data are derived from three sources: first, from Defra’s June Survey of Agriculture for 2010 (the 2009 report used data from the 2007 survey); second from the ‘Framework for monitoring environmental outcomes in protected landscapes’ database (2013); and third, from Forestry Commission England’s ‘Managed woodland headline performance indicator 2013.’

Current condition

i) Farm type - There were 113 farms in the AONB in 2010. Farms devoted to lowland livestock dominate the agricultural landscape at 58.4% of holdings (Figure 2). Horticultural farms remain the second most prominent farm type (15.0%). In terms of farm size, very small (<5ha) and small farms (5-20ha) account for the majority of holdings (61.9%). 23.7% of farmers are full time. For land tenure, the amount of land rented (27.8%) remains below the average for all AONBS which stands at 37.1%.

ii) Land use – Permanent pasture remains the dominant land use in the AONB (51.3%) (Figure 3). Crops and bare fallow occupy 27.6% of the farmed area within the AONB. The area of farm woodland is 5.0% and rough grazing within farm holdings is 0.3% of total area (Figure 3). Note that the latter figure excludes the 1214ha of hill and common land that is under the jurisdiction of the Malvern Hills Conservators.

Table 1: Environmental Stewardship in the Malvern Hills AONB - agreement details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area type</th>
<th>Area (ha.)</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Cost (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entry Level Stewardship</td>
<td>2056</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>67,651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry Level Stewardship and Higher Level Stewardship</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>227,647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Level Stewardship</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>154,644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic Entry Level Stewardship</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic Entry Level Stewardship and Higher Level Stewardship</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5923</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>452,369</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. ‘Active management’ includes woodland supported by a range of grants and incentives offered by the Forestry Commission (FC), woodland under a felling licence and that which is part of the Public Forest Estate Land owned and/or managed by the FC. For more information see http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FC-England-Indicators-Report-2013.pdf/$FILE/FC-England-Indicators-Report-2013.pdf

iii) Area under agri-environmental schemes - Environmental Stewardship agreements now apply to 82% of the farmed area of the AONB. Table 1 shows that there are 62 Environmental Stewardship agreements, of which 65.3% are in some way entered for Higher Level Stewardship – the most demanding category of agri-environmental management. Almost half a million pounds per annum is therefore now committed to conservation land management in the AONB through Environmental Stewardship. There are 24 remaining ‘classic’ Countryside Stewardship agreements which are in the process of being phased out – many agreement holders ‘transfer’ to Higher Level Stewardship.

iv) Area of woodland managed under schemes - In 2013, there were 20 Environmental Stewardship woodland/tree agreements covering 86ha. Some 268 in-field and hedgerow trees were being managed under agreement. In total, 1305ha (53%) of AONB woodlands were considered to be under ‘active management’ in 2013.
Trend in Condition

It should be observed that the trends reported from the data above vary in accordance with their publication dates, so comparisons are drawn between 2007/2010 and 2007/2013. Categories for data collection are also redefined on a regular basis, making comparisons over time problematic. Nevertheless, on the basis of the evidence available over this relatively short period, some important shifts in the land use structure of the AONB are taking place.

- A 54.1% loss of farm holdings appears to have occurred since 2007, but this is mainly a result of a change in the methodology used by Defra whereby only 'commercial' holdings are sampled. A reduction in farms under 50ha in the AONB is a notable consequence of this methodological revision. The number of farms exceeding 50ha has declined from 26 to 23. Thus, an increase in farm size as economies of scale are sought does not appear to be a contemporary trend.

- With the methodological limitation above still in mind, the percentage of livestock farms is identical to that in 2007, but a very small percentage decline in horticulture farms is detectable. The amount of rented land has increased modestly from 21.5% in 2007 to 27.8% in 2010.

- A decline in permanent pasture is evident, with 435ha lost since 2007. By contrast, cropping has increased to over 2000ha, from 26.0% in 2007 to 36.4% in 2010. Further evidence of this trend of 'arabalisation' and agricultural intensification exists in the decline of farm woodland from 7.3% to 5.0% and in rough grazing from 0.8% to just 0.3% of total area.

- Environmental Stewardship agreements have increased so that 82% of the AONB farmed area is now within the scheme, up from 51% covered by this scheme and one of its predecessors (Countryside Stewardship) in 2007. This means that an additional 1751ha are being managed under the England agri-environmental programme in 2013. Despite the increase, the effectiveness of Environmental Stewardship at limiting dominant postwar trends in agricultural change within the AONB, based on the evidence above, remains questionable. A critical interpretation is that the Entry Level Stewardship option of the Environmental Stewardship scheme has been successful in enrolling more farmers into conservation practice, but that it is simply not effective at preventing long-established and powerful forces of landscape change, at least in this AONB.

- New data sets mean that direct comparisons with 2007 are not possible for woodland.
Biodiversity

Overview

There are 15 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) either completely or partially within the boundary of the AONB, representing 10.9% of its total area. There are six habitat types that the SSSI designation seeks to protect (Table 2). Monitoring information is collected by Natural England.

Current condition

SSSIs of the Malvern Hills AONB are predominantly either in favourable condition (45%), demonstrating protection of interest is currently secure for the future, or unfavourable recovering condition (55%), where improvement in the value of a Site is ongoing and heading for favourable condition (Figure 4). A tiny percentage (0.3%) of neutral grassland is declining in condition (Table 2).

Trend in condition

There has been a significant improvement in SSSI condition with 99.7% now in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition compared with 89% reported in 2009. The area in favourable condition has increased significantly from 39% to 45%. The 9% area of SSSI reported in 2009 as undergoing ‘no change’ (104.06ha) has moved entirely into more favourable categories. The unfavourable area has declined from 24.04ha to just 3ha in 2013. In terms of habitat type, improvement is apparent across the board. For example, all calcareous grassland was declining in 2006 but is now split between favourable and unfavourable recovering. Instrumental in achieving this improvement has been the application to SSSIs of the Higher Level Stewardship option of the Environmental Stewardship Scheme.

Figure 4: The condition of SSSIs in the Malvern Hills AONB

Table 2: The condition of SSSIs in the Malvern Hills in 2013 according to habitat type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Habitat Type</th>
<th>Area (ha.)</th>
<th>% of AONB SSSI area</th>
<th>Favourable ha (%)</th>
<th>Unfavourable recovering ha (%)</th>
<th>Unfavourable no change ha (%)</th>
<th>Unfavourable declining ha (%)</th>
<th>Destroyed/part destroyed ha (%)</th>
<th>Grand total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acid grassland – lowland</td>
<td>535.28</td>
<td>46.01</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>534 (100)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland – lowland</td>
<td>409.07</td>
<td>35.16</td>
<td>319 (78.0)</td>
<td>87 (21.4)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth heritage</td>
<td>110.53</td>
<td>9.50</td>
<td>110 (100)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral grassland – lowland</td>
<td>101.64</td>
<td>8.76</td>
<td>86 (85.1)</td>
<td>12 (11.9)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (0.3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcareous grassland – lowland</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>3 (37.5)</td>
<td>5 (62.5)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built up areas and gardens</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>1 (100)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1163.02</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>519 (44.7)</strong></td>
<td><strong>638 (55.0)</strong></td>
<td><strong>3 (0.3)</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,160</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*slightly greater due to cumulative rounding error
Overview

All 47 Local Geological Sites (LGS) within the AONB were investigated for condition in 2008 and this information forms the monitoring benchmark. In 2013 a resurvey of 13 (25%) randomly selected sites took place. The data have been separated into the three basic types previously used: bedrock, superficial deposit feature and geomorphology feature. For each, the data were further sorted according to ‘good’ and ‘poor’ management status to ensure that each condition was satisfactorily represented and then random selection applied.

Current condition

Table 3 shows that a majority of resurveyed sites (61.5%) are in a desirable condition. The geomorphological site investigated from the small total number of 4 is in a desirable condition. Similarly, sampled LGS of superficial deposits are all in desirable condition, but again the sampled and total numbers are small (2 sampled from 5). Only one half of the larger sampled number of bedrock LGS are in desirable condition.

Table 3: Condition of sampled LGS in the Malvern Hills AONB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of site</th>
<th>No. of sites</th>
<th>Condition of Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Desirable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedrock</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5 (50.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superficial Deposit</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geomorphological Feature</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8 (61.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Components of change in the management status of sample survey AONB LGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of site</th>
<th>No. of sites</th>
<th>Management Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Poor declining/lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedrock</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superficial Deposit</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geomorphological Feature</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Historic And Built Environment: Condition of Scheduled Monuments

Overview

Within the Malvern Hills AONB, there are eight Scheduled Monuments (SMs). In 2013, all Scheduled Monuments were assessed to establish their overall condition, the direction in which that condition was moving (condition trend) and risk assessment. This repeats the exercise conducted in 2008 which established a benchmark.

Current Condition

In 2013, all eight Scheduled Monuments were deemed to be in satisfactory condition (Table 5), of which two were near optimal, three had minor localised problems and three significant localised problems. Only one monument, a fortified house, was classified as being at high risk, with four at medium risk and three as low risk (Table 5). The monument at high risk has had significant work carried out on the masonry of its built structure within the last five years. However, the grounds associated with the building (a moat) remain vulnerable to a deterioration in condition and this influences the overall outcome. The survey concludes that three Scheduled Monuments are improving in their condition status, two are stable and three are declining. It should be remembered that these assessments start from different conditions, so that those in optimal condition, for example, showing ‘no change’ represent monuments in a good state.

Trend in Condition

Compared with the data for 2008, the general picture is one of an improvement in condition. Three of the eight SMs were in an unsatisfactory state at that time, but no monuments are now classified in this way (Table 5). Three SMs, including one Iron Age hill fort, Bronze Age barrows and a Medieval/post-Medieval moated house have moved from ‘declining’ to ‘improving’ condition reflecting the investment that has been made through commissioning specific intervention projects. Of the three monuments in declining condition, all have been identified for action to improve in various management plans, so that it is ongoing difficulties with implementation of those plans that explain their classification.

Table: 5: Condition and trends of Scheduled Monuments within the Malvern Hills AONB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Condition 2009</th>
<th>Condition 2013</th>
<th>Trend 2009</th>
<th>Trend 2013</th>
<th>Risk 2009</th>
<th>Risk 2013</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Boundary feature</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>↔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Iron Age hill fort</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Iron Age hill fort</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>↔</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Fortified House</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>↓↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Bronze Age round barrows</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Monastery</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>↔</td>
<td>↔</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>↔↔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Medieval and later building</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>↔</td>
<td>↔</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>↔↔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Medieval &amp; post-Medieval feature</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Historic And Built Environment:
Condition of Listed Buildings, Parks and Gardens

Overview
Listed buildings and registered parks and gardens are designated by English Heritage as being of special architectural, historical or cultural significance. In 2008 a survey recorded the condition of almost all of the 344 listed buildings in the AONB. Late in 2013, a randomly selected sample of 88 (25%) of these buildings was resurveyed to effect a comparison. Both of the registered parks and gardens in the AONB were also visited in 2013 to assess their condition.

Current Condition
i) Listed buildings
Overall, listed buildings within the AONB are in good condition (Table 6). Only 7 structures were in the poor/very bad categories which indicate a risk of structural failure. These were overwhelmingly situated in rural areas and are essentially those that people are not using and not living in; for example, way markers.

ii) Parks and Gardens
Of the three registered parks and gardens in the AONB, one is described as ‘not at risk’ and under a good management regime. There is evidence of active repairs being undertaken, including to water features, and succession planting of trees to retain the parkland quality of the landscape. The second registered park is assessed as ‘vulnerable’ due to fragmented ownership and an incoherent approach to management. There is no current condition data relating to the third park but it is not on the Heritage at Risk Register.

Trend in Condition
Comparisons from the 2008 benchmark reveal a picture of very little overall change in the condition of listed buildings (Table 7). The most discernible trend is one of slight improvement, with more buildings rated as ‘good’ and less as ‘very poor’. There was strong evidence of buildings having undergone repair and refurbishment within the period monitored, with more in the process of renovation. This can be regarded as a healthy situation given the tough economic conditions between 2008 and 2013.

No data are available on the condition of the registered parks and gardens in 2008, so a condition trend cannot yet be established.

Table 6: Condition of buildings in the Malvern Hills AONB by administrative authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Authority</th>
<th>Number of buildings (by condition status)</th>
<th>Total assessed sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1: Very Bad</td>
<td>2: Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herefordshire</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malvern Hills District</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest of Dean District</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AONB Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AONB Percent Total (%)</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: The changing condition of sampled buildings at risk in the Malvern Hills AONB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% of buildings (by condition status)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overview

In 2006, the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) initiated its tranquillity mapping exercise. According to this project, ‘each 500m x 500m of England was given a tranquillity score, based on 44 different factors which add or detract from people’s feelings of tranquillity. Positive factors included seeing a ‘natural’ landscape and the stars at night; and detracting factors included hearing constant traffic noise and, ‘seeing lots of people’. Natural England has since reworked the data within the project to provide a more nuanced interpretation. The results of this are shown for the Malvern Hills AONB. It should be noted that no resurvey has been conducted so that it is not possible to report a condition trend.

Condition (as at 2006)

Table 9 shows the range of tranquillity scores recorded for the Malvern Hills AONB. The national highest tranquillity (most tranquil) score noted is 148.699 and the national lowest is -140.517. The Malvern Hills AONB highest score is 32.5 and the lowest is -46.6, meaning that the Malvern Hills are neither tranquil nor ‘noisy’ in national terms. Nevertheless, in relative terms, the areas in the ‘very high’ banding are important to protect. Such areas account for 11.2% of the AONB. At the least tranquil end of the spectrum, there are very few (7) 500m squares assigned a score of below -22.9, demonstrating the limited extent of low tranquillity. Figure 6 provides a graphical representation of cell counts within each band and demonstrates a notable skew towards the positive part of the tranquillity spectrum.

Figure 5: The national tranquillity context of the Malvern Hills AONB.

Figure 6: The distribution of cells within 10% band widths divided between lowest (0) and highest (100) tranquillity for the Malvern Hills AONB.

Table 9: Relative tranquillity within the Malvern Hills AONB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10% Percentile of value range</th>
<th>cell count</th>
<th>total cell count in ‘Band’</th>
<th>Band description: Relative tranquillity for its area</th>
<th>% area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>% Range</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-46.6</td>
<td>lowest 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Very low</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-38.7</td>
<td>0-10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-30.8</td>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-22.9</td>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-15.0</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-7.1</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>162</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>61-70</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>71-80</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>81-90</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>91-100</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total count of cells</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tranquillity: Tranquillity Index

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Enjoyment: Condition of Rights of Way

Overview
In the autumn of 2013, a random sample of 5.4% of the total public rights of way network in the Malvern Hills AONB was selected for inspection of condition. This used an identical Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI 178) methodology to that used in autumn 2008 when 5.6% of rights of way in the AONB were inspected. The results are therefore directly comparable.

Current Condition
The total pass rate for rights of way within the AONB was 77.4%, indicative of paths that are easy to use (Table 8). According to individual counties, Worcestershire recorded the highest pass rate of 83.2%, with Gloucestershire at 70.5% and Herefordshire at 66.7%. The pass rate is approximately 10% above that for Worcestershire and Herefordshire as a whole. It should be noted that some statistical effects are at work in the results. Herefordshire has a lower pass rate because footpaths are numbered in longer lengths, increasing the probability of failure being encountered along any one route. In Gloucestershire only 3 paths were surveyed, decreasing the reliability of percentage results.

Trend in Condition
Table 9 shows that the condition of rights of way has improved marginally by 4.2% since 2008. When disaggregated according to county constituents of the AONB Worcestershire rights of way improved by 4.5% and those in Herefordshire by 8.5%. That for Gloucestershire has decreased from the 2008 high of 100%, although there are statistical effects influencing outcomes for this county. In terms of longer trends within the AONB as a whole, an improvement of 28.6% is apparent since 2002/3 (Table 9).

Table 8: Condition of rights of way in the Malvern Hills AONB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Length of path surveyed (m)</th>
<th>Rights of way easy to use (m)</th>
<th>Rights of way easy to use (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worcestershire</td>
<td>11031</td>
<td>9182</td>
<td>83.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herefordshire</td>
<td>5360</td>
<td>3576</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucestershire</td>
<td>1089</td>
<td>768</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malvern Hills AONB</td>
<td>17480</td>
<td>13526</td>
<td>77.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: BVPI 178 trend results for % of rights of way that are easy to use within the Malvern Hills AONB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% path length easy to use</th>
<th>2002/3</th>
<th>2005/6</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malvern Hills AONB</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>77.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2: Figures for 2002/3 and 2005/6 are estimates derived from total county statistics and extrapolated for the AONB. This is a minimum figure and subsequent survey work suggests that the totals should be up to 10% greater for the AONB in both time periods. Even if adjusted accordingly, the picture remains one of consistent improvement in the condition of rights of way in the Malvern Hills.