

Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty State of the Malvern Hills AONB 2014



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

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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.

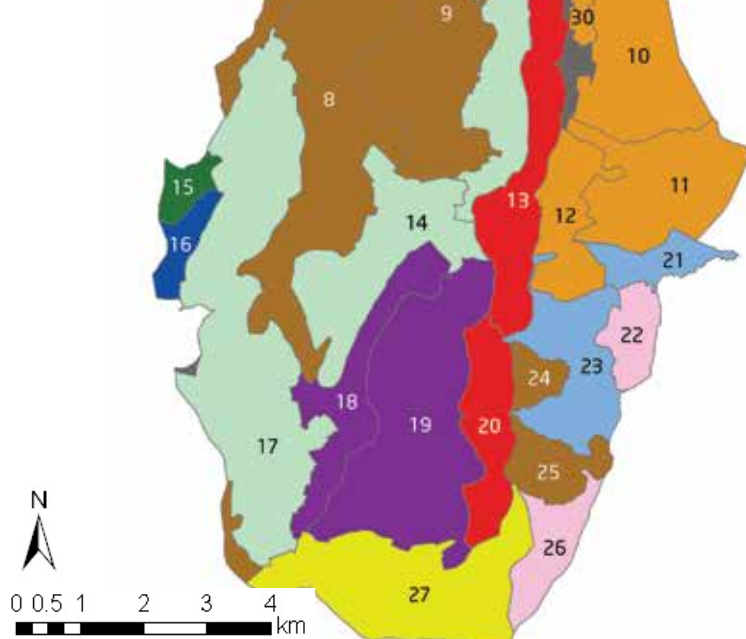
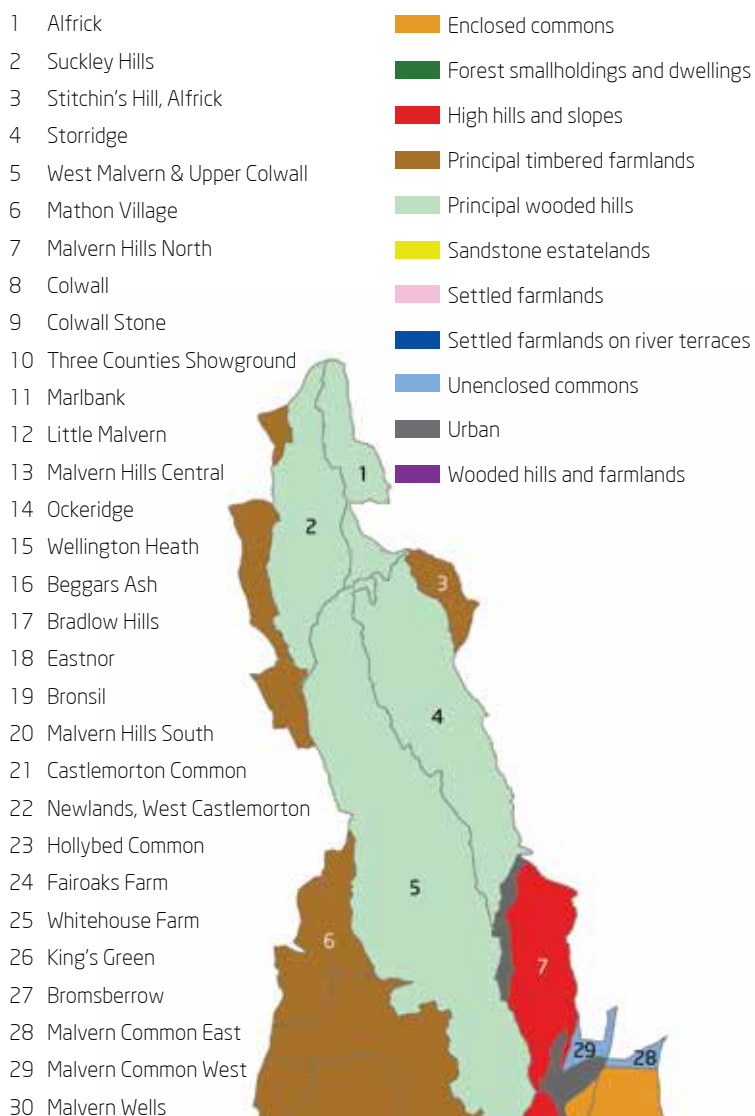
Key to subsequent pages

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).

Figure 1: Landscape Description Units (LDUs) and Landscape Character Types



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



Storrige (LDU 4)

Condition trend: ◀▶

Changes since 2009:

- 4a Hedgerow tree growing against utility pole



Alfrick (LDU 1)



Suckley Hills (LDU 2)



Storrige (LDU 4)



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)**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



Stichin's Hill, Alfrick (LDU 3)

Additional points of interest:

- 3a and 3b Traditional orchards are characteristic in this landscape, with many suffering from neglect



Mathon Village (LDU 6)

Additional points of interest:

- 6a New commercial orchard planted



Colwall (LDU 8)

Additional points of interest:

- 8a Traditional scale farm complex, well integrated in the landscape



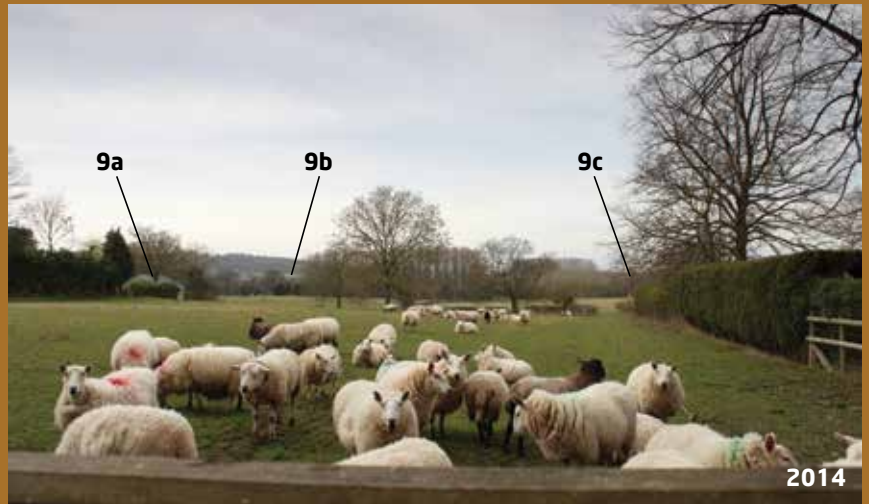
Principal Timbered Farmlands

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



Colwall Stone (LDU 9)

9a



9b



9c

Fairoaks Farm (LDU 24)**Additional points of interest:**

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



24a



24b

Whitehouse Farm (LDU 25)**Additional points of interest:**

- 25b Native hedgerow removed then replanted



25a



25b

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)



10a



10b

Marlbank (LDU 11)

Additional points of interest:

- 11a Intensively managed large arable fields are now common
- 11b Evidence of streamside tree management



11a



11b

Little Malvern (LDU 12)



12a



12b

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 Farmlands

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



18c



18c

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



19b

Castlemorton Common (LDU 21)

21a



21b

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



Hollybed Common (LDU 23)



23a

Malvern Common East (LDU 28)

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



28a



28b

Malvern Common West (LDU 29)

Additional points of interest:

- 29b and 29c This is a well-used recreational landscape in which informal path 'desire lines' intersect with formalised paths



29b



29c

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)**Bromsberrow (LDU 27)****Additional points of interest:**

- 27a Increase in area of polytunnels for soft fruit growing in this landscape unit

**Beggars Ash (LDU 16)****Additional points of interest:**

- 16a Intensively managed commercial orchards dominate this landscape unit



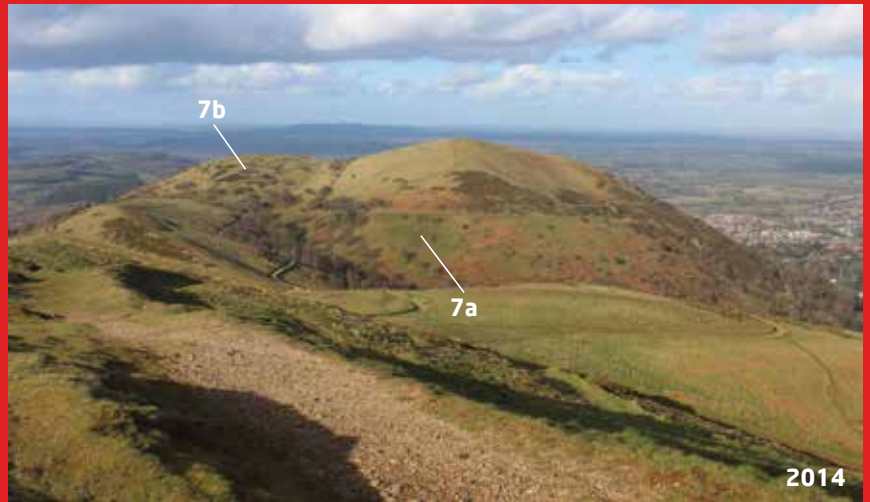
High Hills & Slopes

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:

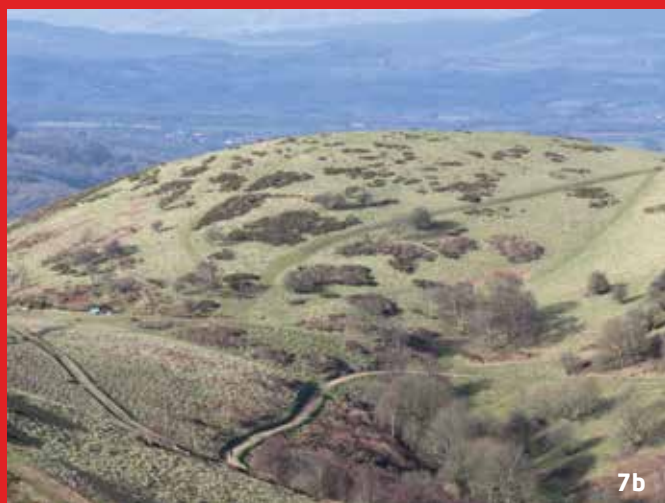
- None evident



Malvern Hills North (LDU 7)



7a



7b

Malvern Hills Central (LDU 13)



13a



13a

Malvern Hills South (LDU 20)

Additional points of interest:

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



20a



20b

Landscape: Agricultural change

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.

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'¹ in 2013.

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

	Area (ha.)	Number	Cost (£)
Entry Level Stewardship	2056	33	67,651
Entry Level Stewardship and Higher Level Stewardship	1936	21	227,647
Higher Level Stewardship	1922	7	154,644
Organic Entry Level Stewardship	0	0	0
Organic Entry Level Stewardship and Higher Level Stewardship	9	1	2427s
Total	5923	62	452,369

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](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FC-England-Indicators-Report-2013.pdf/$FILE/FC-England-Indicators-Report-2013.pdf)

Figure 2:
Farm types in the Malvern Hills AONB, 2010

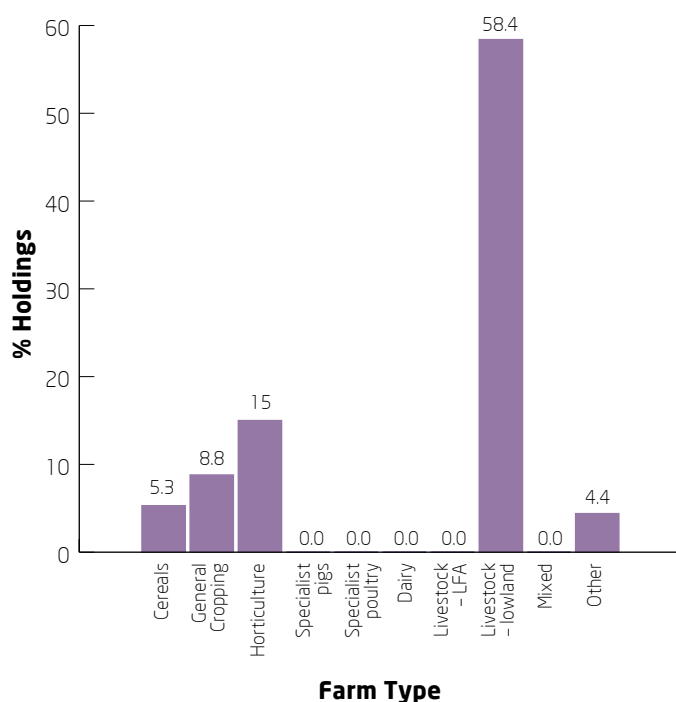
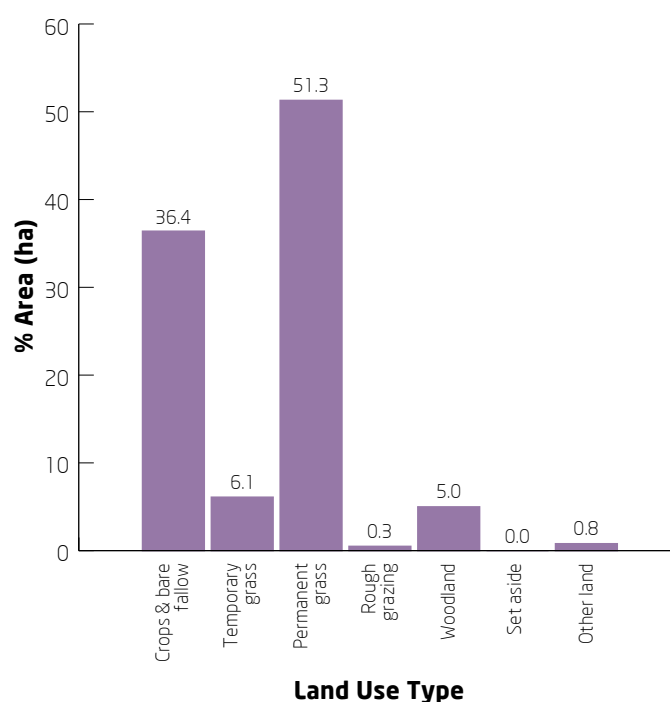


Figure 3:
Land Use in the Malvern Hills AONB, 2010



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 1751 ha 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: Condition of SSSIs

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

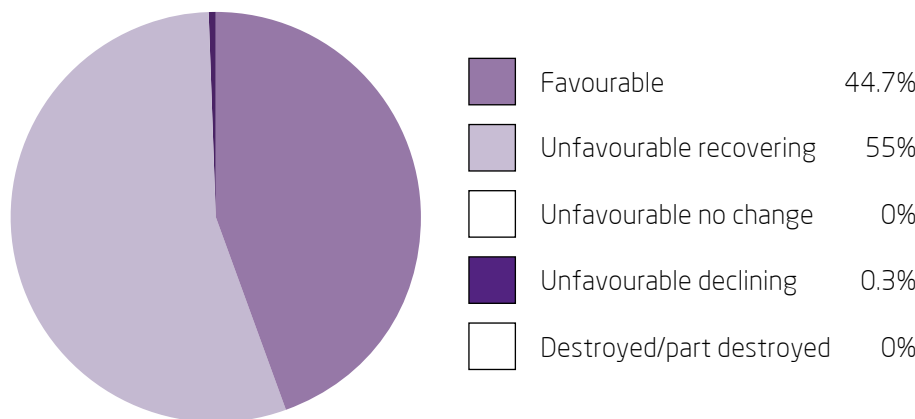


Table 2: The condition of SSSIs in the Malvern Hills in 2013 according to habitat type

	Area (ha.)	% of AONB SSSI area	Condition of SSSI (2013)					Grand total
			Favourable ha (%)	Unfavourable recovering ha (%)	Unfavourable no change ha (%)	Unfavourable declining ha (%)	Destroyed/part destroyed ha (%)	
Acid grassland – lowland	535.28	46.01	0	534 (100)	0	0	0	534
Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland – lowland	409.07	35.16	319 (78.0)	87 (21.4)	0	0	0	406
Earth heritage	110.53	9.50	110 (100)	0	0	0	0	110
Neutral grassland – lowland	101.64	8.76	86 (85.1)	12 (11.9)	0	3 (0.3)	0	101
Calcareous grassland – lowland	5.74	0.49	3 (37.5)	5 (62.5)	0	0	0	8
Built up areas and gardens	0.76	0.07	1 (100)	0	0	0	0	1
Grand Total	1163.02*	100	519 (44.7)	638 (55.0)	0	3 (0.3)	0	1,160

*slightly greater due to cumulative rounding error

Geodiversity: Condition of Local Geological Sites

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.

Trend in condition

The sample is most useful for assessing the trend in changing condition from the benchmark established in the last survey. It was reported in 2008 that 75.6% of LGS were in 'desirable' condition as against 15.5% in 'undesirable' condition. From the 2013 resurvey data, there appears to have been some deterioration in the condition of LGS within the AONB, with only 61.5% of sampled sites in desirable condition and 38.5% which are undesirable. The most significant component of change appears to be in bedrock LGS where 28.6% were recorded in poor/declining management condition in 2008, yet the sample indicates 50% of such sites have moved into this category by 2013 (Table 4). This is offset by the movement of one sampled superficial deposit classified as 'poor' in 2008 into the 'good' category, thereby giving a 100% desirable sampled outcome for this type. The reasons for these trends are unclear.

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

Type of site	No. of sites	Condition of Site		
		Desirable	Undesirable	Uncertain
<i>Bedrock</i>	10	5 (50.0%)	5 (50.0%)	0 (0%)
<i>Superficial Deposit</i>	2	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>Geomorphological Feature</i>	1	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	13	8 (61.5%)	5 (38.5%)	0 (0%)

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

Type of site	No. of sites	Management Status							
		Poor declining/lost	Poor declining	Poor steady	Poor improving	Good declining	Good steady	Good improving	Good
<i>Bedrock</i>	10	0 (0%)	5 (50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	3 (30%)
<i>Superficial Deposit</i>	2	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)
<i>Geomorphological Feature</i>	1	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	13	0 (0%)	5 (38.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (15%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)	5 (38.5%)

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

Type	Condition 2009	Condition 2013	Trend 2009	Trend 2013	Risk 2009	Risk 2013	Change
A Boundary feature	✘	✓	↓	↓	High	Medium	←→
B Iron Age hill fort	✓	✓	↓	↑	Medium	Medium	↑↑
C Iron Age hill fort	✓	✓	←→	↓	Medium	Medium	↓
D Fortified House	✓	✓	↑	↓	Medium	High	↓↓
E Bronze Age round barrows	✘	✓	↓	↑	Medium	Low	↑↑
F Monastery	✓	✓	←→	←→	Medium	Medium	←→
G Medieval and later building	✓	✓	←→	←→	Low	Low	←→
H Medieval & post-Medieval feature	✘	✓	↓	↑	High	Low	↑↑

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

Local Authority	Number of buildings (by condition status)					Total assessed sample
	1: Very Bad	2: Poor	3: Fair	4: Good	N/A	
Herefordshire	1	5	18	30	1	55
Malvern Hills District	0	0	7	21	0	28
Forest of Dean District	0	1	2	2	0	5
AONB Total	1	6	27	53	1	88
AONB Percent Total (%)	1.1	6.8	30.7	60.2	1.1	100

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

Year	% of buildings (by condition status)			
	Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good
2008	1.5%	6.7%	33.4%	58.4%
2013	1.1%	6.9%	31.0%	60.9%

Tranquillity: Tranquillity Index

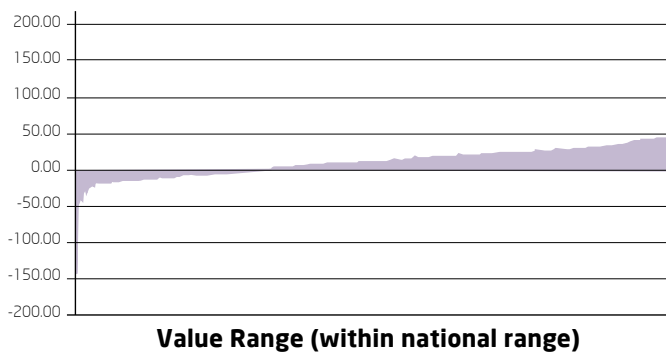
Overview

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.

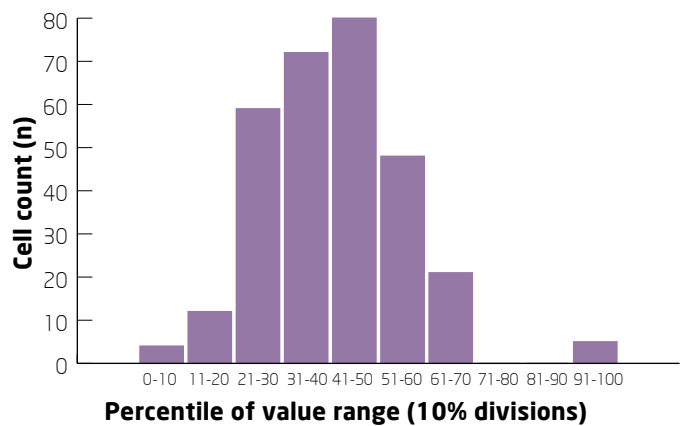


Note: the bars to the side of the graph show the national maximum and minimum tranquillity score.

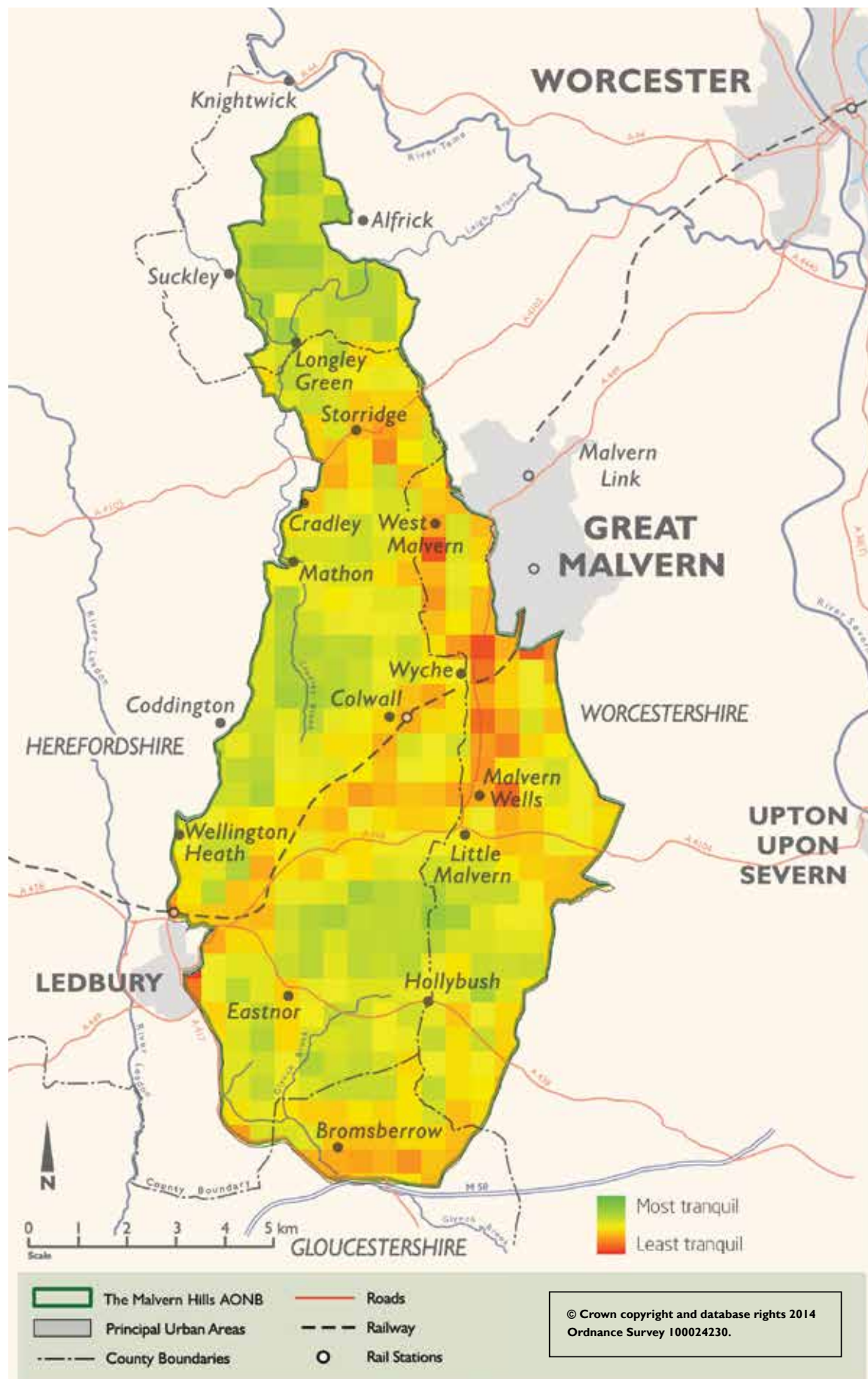
Table 9: Relative tranquillity within the Malvern Hills AONB

10% Percentile of value range		cell count	total cell count in 'Band'	Band description: Relative tranquillity for its area	% area
Value	% Range				
-46.6	lowest	1			
-38.7	0-10	3	6	Very low	1.4%
-30.8	11-20	3			
-22.9	21-30	12	51	Low	11.9%
-15.0	31-40	39			
-7.1	41-50	67	160	Moderate	37.5%
0.8	51-60	93			
8.8	61-70	96	162	High	37.9%
16.7	71-80	66			
24.6	81-90	36	48	Very high	11.2%
32.5	91-100	12			
Total count of cells		427	427		100.00%

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



Tranquillity: Tranquillity Index



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

County	Length of path surveyed (m)	Rights of way easy to use (m)	Rights of way easy to use (%)
Worcestershire	11031	9182	83.2
Herefordshire	5360	3576	66.7
Gloucestershire	1089	768	70.5
Malvern Hills AONB	17480	13526	77.4

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

% path length easy to use	2002/3 ²	2005/6 ²	2008	2013
Malvern Hills AONB	48.8	57.3	73.2	77.4

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.





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