



# Borough of Telford and Wrekin

## Cabinet

Thursday 12 February 2026

### Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030

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**Cabinet Member:** Cllr Carolyn Healy - Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability

**Lead Director:** James Dunn - Director: Prosperity & Investment

**Service Area:** Prosperity & Investment

**Report Author:** Ben Holloway – Ecology & Green Infrastructure Officer

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**Wards Affected:** Wrockwardine

**Key Decision:** Not Key Decision

**Forward Plan:** Not Applicable

**Report considered by:** SMT - 13 January 2026  
Business Briefing – 22 January 2026  
Cabinet – 12 February 2026

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#### 1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1.1 Approves the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030.
- 1.2 Approves the Terms of Reference for the new Shropshire Hills National Landscape Advisory Committee.

#### 2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The statutory Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030 is put forward for formal approval. Also presented for approval are new Terms of Reference for a re-formed Joint Advisory Committee for the National Landscape.

### 3.0 Background

- 3.1 In November 2024 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) were renamed National Landscapes. Legally the designated areas are still AONBs but in all other contexts are known as National Landscapes.
- 3.2 Local authorities must jointly produce a National Landscape management plan every five years under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act (2000). The National Landscape Team and wider Partnership have prepared the new Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan over the last two years, and a public consultation on the draft Plan took place between May and July 2025. Around 0.6% of the National Landscape extends into Telford & Wrekin, as a responsible authority for the designated area Telford & Wrekin Council must approve the management plan in addition to Shropshire Council approval.
- 3.3 Since 1993 the Shropshire Hills National Landscape partnership structure has existed in the legal form of a Joint Advisory Committee. From 2002 this has been known as ‘the Partnership’ and has enabled Shropshire Council to fulfil its legal duty to prepare and review the Management Plan jointly with Telford & Wrekin Council. The current Partnership also involves a variety of other stakeholders with 36 members in total.

### 4.0 Summary of main proposals

- 4.1 An important point to understand with the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan is that it sets a broad strategic vision for the designated area. It sets out policies, recommendations and aspirations to guide a wide variety of stakeholder organisations and individuals present within or having influence upon the National Landscape. Policies within the plan carry some weight where referenced via formal planning policy (i.e. through policy NE7 of the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan 2011-2031 and policy NE6 of the emerging Telford & Wrekin Local Plan 2020-2040) or when connected to wider national policy, but outside of these situations have very limited weight directly upon activities taking place. Instead they provide guidance on what practice is expected within the designated area.
- 4.2 Implementation of the plan is through a large range of people, organisations, funding bodies and other mechanisms, there is no single budget or programme of delivery. The Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team is hosted by Shropshire Council, but majority funded by DEFRA. The Team have an important role to support delivery of the Plan, they animate, facilitate and co-ordinate stakeholders in addition to direct delivery.
- 4.3 The Plan’s Vision is that:
- **Nature** is restored and natural processes regenerated;
  - **Climate** is stabilised through decarbonising, and we are resilient to change;
  - **Land** is nurtured so it can sustain us;
  - **Water** is clean, and its flows and cycles support our lives, and all life;
  - **People** are healthy and connected to nature – in vibrant communities and as welcome visitors; and
  - The Shropshire Hills are valued and cared for as a special **Place**.

- 4.4 Natural England approved the revised Management Plan through the formal observation process in November 2025. Appendix A contains the final draft plan.
- 4.5 The Shropshire Hills National Landscape is a cornerstone of Telford & Wrekin's visitor economy and a critical asset within the broader Place strategy. The National Landscape directly contributes to the ability to attract, retain and grow communities; from residents and students to investors, businesses, visitors and event organisers. The Telford & Wrekin Destination Management Plan (2024-2029) identified that the National Landscape designation covers a key element of Telford's 'golden tourism triangle', The Wrekin; joining with the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site, Telford Town Park and the town centre. Telford provides a gateway into the National Landscape for the borough and residents further to the east. The protected landscape contributes to the attraction of an estimated 3.2 million annual visitors to the borough, bringing with them economic benefits of around £220 million. A robust and up to date management plan provides strategic guidance to maintain valuable assets for tourism and residents while also ensuring their protection and enhancement as natural landscape features.
- 4.6 Through 2025 a review was undertaken with the aim of modernising partnership structures and re-engaging with important stakeholders. Following the review, terms of reference have been drawn up for a new Joint Advisory Committee. The revised committee structure has been developed through the current Strategy and Performance Committee, consulted upon and approved by the existing Partnership. An officer and councillor representative from Telford & Wrekin sat on both the Strategy and Performance Committee and the existing Partnership, feedback from the authority was continually fed into discussions and the decision making process. The proposed terms of reference for approval are provided as Appendix B.
- 4.7 The new Advisory Committee will include representatives appointed by Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council, as well as open seats where members can be appointed through an application process. The Committee will provide scrutiny and advisory oversight of work of the National Landscape Team and provide advice to the two local authorities in relation to the National Landscape as necessary. Committee operations will take place in close co-ordination with other elements of the new National Landscape structure, including with key delivery partner organisations (including those with a statutory duty) and a new Shropshire Hills Forum. The Forum will engage a wide and inclusive range of stakeholders, including all Ward Councillors, Parish & Town Councils, community groups and individuals, in a flexible and informal format.
- 4.8 A smaller, more focussed Joint Advisory Committee will provide stronger governance for the National Landscape, the new wider structure will enable more effective, targeted collaboration and general engagement with this valuable designated area. Strengthened partnership working, enhanced visitor experience development, a clear focus on sustainable access, skills and community stewardship are essential to securing long-term economic, social and environmental value from the National Landscape.

## **5.0 Alternative Options**

- 5.1 Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030 is not approved by Telford & Wrekin Council but may still be adopted by Shropshire Council. This would leave the authority without the ability to help inform and shape the management of the National Landscape during the next five years.
- 5.2 Revised terms of reference for the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Advisory Committee are not approved by Telford & Wrekin Council but may still be adopted by Shropshire Council. This would disrupt the changeover of governance within the National Landscape and leave the authority with limited scope for contribution to decision making.

## **6.0 Key Risks**

- 6.1 An up to date management plan for the Shropshire Hills National Landscape is a statutory duty upon both local authorities. However, with its limited delivery mechanisms the plan presents a low level of risk for the Council. Some reputational risk is tied to the stewardship of the Council over the nationally important designated area, especially following revisions to the duties on public bodies. Since December 2023 the legal duty on all public bodies in relation to National Landscapes has been strengthened from 'having regard' to the purpose of designation ('to conserve and enhance natural beauty') to 'seeking to further' the purpose of designation. For the Council, this applies to any service or function which may have relevance to, or impact upon, the National Landscape. The Management Plan will provide significant assistance in enabling any Council department to understand how to fulfil their legal duty, and Joint Advisory Committee be able to provide advice to the authority.

## **7.0 Council Priorities**

- 7.1 Approval of the Management Plan and reorganisation of the governance structure will support the effective delivery of council priorities for the natural environment, supporting communities and the local economy. The Wrekin and Ercall are main features of the national landscape within Telford & Wrekin, both key green spaces for local communities and landmarks bringing tourists into the borough.

## **8.0 Financial Implications**

- 8.1 No direct costs or financial implications will result from the approval of the Management Plan or changes to the formal structure of the national landscape including support for the The new Advisory Committee.
- 8.2 The Shropshire Hills National Landscape supports the local economy and wellbeing of residents. Care and stewardship of the landscape, guided and supported by the Management Plan, provides benefits for the prosperity of the area. A focal point for tourism in the borough, The Wrekin brings in visitors from all around and boosts the local visitor economy. The National Landscape also contributes positively to the physical and mental health of residents, acting as a preventative measure to improve quality of life and having the potential to reduce demand for health services.

## **9.0 Legal and HR Implications**

- 9.1 The production and approval of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030 fulfills legal duties upon responsible authorities under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000).
- 9.2 Reorganisation of governance structure of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape moves formal Joint Advisory Committee status from the current partnership to the new Advisory Committee. It is understood that this change will not have any legal or HR implications beyond a renaming of the decision making entity of the national landscape.

## **10.0 Ward Implications**

- 10.1 Only one ward intersects the Shropshire Hills National Landscape designation, Wrockwardine. The updated management plan provides strategic guidance for landowners within the ward, and may have implications upon planning applications within the designated area. However, there is little developable land inside the national landscape area that falls within Telford & Wrekin, developments would likely be of a small scale and able to satisfy policies of the Management Plan.

## **11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications**

- 11.1 The Shropshire Hills National Landscape is a rich natural resource which provides benefits to health, communities and the local economy. A landmark green space, the Wrekin and surrounding areas are often teeming with visitors no matter the weather. The Telford & Wrekin Destination Management Plan (2024-2029) identified the Shropshire Hills National Landscape as an important attraction in the borough to support the visitor economy. The updated Management Plan provides a strategic framework for the sustainable management of these valuable natural resources, with the aim of keeping them healthy ecologically and accessible for the public. With an estimated 3.2 million visitors to the borough annually, footfall at attractions such the Wrekin is high, creating economic opportunities for local businesses. Areas of the National Landscape in Telford & Wrekin are key tourist attractions, bringing economic benefit to the local area. With an estimated £220 million brought into the local economy through tourism, the Wrekin and other locations within the National Landscape play an important part. As well as tourists, 66% of residents visit the Wrekin in their leisure time, demonstrating that the landscape benefits the health and wellbeing of all visitors; with steep hills and rich ancient woodlands. A social resource for organisations and the public in general, the landscape provides an excellent environment for meeting and exploring together.

## **12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 12.1 One of the six key themes of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030 is 'People'. Priorities of this theme involve ensuring the Shropshire Hills National Landscape is an open, welcoming and accessible resource for all. Reorganisation of the current partnership into the new Shropshire Hills Forum will open up membership and allow more individuals and organisations to get involved.

Part of the reasoning behind the restructure is to broaden the scope of those engaged in the National Landscape, to reach out and encourage previously more marginalised groups to get involved. Already the National Landscape team work closely with organisations such as Telford Visually Impaired Group, Telford Together with Refugees and Telford & Wrekin CVS, this work will continue and expand through the new plan period.

### **13.0 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications**

13.1 A core element of the Management Plan review, the title ‘Thriving in balance with nature’ was chosen early in the writing process to outline the overarching objective of the new plan. With themes of nature, climate, water and land, the plan covers many aspects of the environment. Running throughout are priorities for nature recovery, sustainable land uses, mitigation and adaptation to climate changes. With agriculture forming the largest land use type within the National Landscape, supporting farm businesses to produce food, run sustainably and enable recovery of the landscape formed an important part in the plan development. Aligned with national policies such as Biodiversity Net Gain, the Management Plan provides a strategic framework to support land management within the designated area. Including policies on light pollution, noise and landscape quality, the plan seeks to maintain the tranquillity of the Shropshire Hills and minimise further disturbance to nature. Areas of the National Landscape within Telford & Wrekin host important habitats and link with the wider countryside and Green Network which runs through the urban area of Telford. Also, important for their geological significance, the Management Plan includes policies to protect geo-diversity and designated geological features such as the Wrekin and the Ercall.

### **14.0 Appendices**

- A Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030
- B Terms of Reference – Shropshire Hills National Landscape Advisory Committee

### **15.0 Report Sign Off**

| <b>Signed off by</b> | <b>Date sent</b> | <b>Date signed off</b> | <b>Initials</b> |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Finance              | 16/12/2025       | 14/01/2026             | AEM             |
| Legal                | 16/12/2025       | 04/02/2026             | RP              |
| Director             | 17/12/2025       | 19/12/2025             | JD              |