

Appendix B to Shropshire Council Cabinet report “Approval of Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-30 and new Shropshire Hills National Landscape Advisory Committee Terms of Reference”

Terms of Reference – Shropshire Hills National Landscape Advisory Committee

Status

The Committee will have formal status of a ‘Joint Advisory Committee’ under Section 102(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to the two local authorities of Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council (“the Councils”).

Purpose of the Committee

To provide advisory oversight and scrutiny of the work of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team and of the local delivery system for the National Landscape designation more generally. The Advisory Committee members will act as advocates for the Shropshire Hills National Landscape, representing its interests at appropriate local and national levels.

Values

The Advisory Committee will support values that reflect and support the purposes of the designation, engage people, promote accountability, reduce fragmentation and reflect the complex relationships and interdependencies of the National Landscape. These include:

- Reflective and reflexive awareness as individuals and a group.
- Developing relationships, respect and active listening.
- Honesty, assertiveness and positive challenge.
- Co-creation, collaboration and building consensus to support holistic outcomes.
- Valuing diversity and being sensitive to cultural differences.
- Considering whose voices are not heard.

Roles and responsibilities of the Committee:

The Committee will provide scrutiny and advisory oversight of:

- Work of the National Landscape Team, including strategic direction and monitoring progress with the annual Team work programme, providing guidance and making recommendations to optimise the effectiveness and performance of the Team.
- Budgets, accounts and the deployment of resources at the disposal of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team.
- Implementation (by all parties) of the National Landscape Management Plan, and monitoring progress in achieving its vision, policies and recommendations.
- Fulfilment by defined relevant authorities of their legal duty to ‘seek to further the purpose’ of designation.

The Committee will champion the interests of, and vision for, the Shropshire Hills National Landscape, as contained in the statutory Management Plan, and promote a coherent and strong identity for the area.

Membership

Membership of the Committee will consist of a maximum of 12 people comprising the following:

- Two elected Members and one officer appointed by Shropshire Council (elected member representatives should be relevant portfolio holders or local ward members);
- One elected member and one officer appointed by Telford and Wrekin Council (the elected member representative should be a relevant portfolio holder, hold a relevant role in the Council, or be a local ward member);
- Seven members appointed based on skills relevant to the work of the Committee. These will be defined in the appointment process for the Committee and may include: understanding of protected landscape issues, strategic planning and financial management appropriate to the scale of work of the National Landscape Team, knowledge of the public sector and multi-sector partnerships, understanding of both delivery and influencing roles, ambassadorial qualities. People appointed to these seven seats could be organisation representatives, individuals, or elected members of parish or town councils.

Though the make-up of the Committee is intended to encompass a range of interests, it is intended that all members 'represent' principally the collective interests of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape rather than representing certain organisations or interest groups.

The Committee may assign certain members to advise on particular topics to provide additional support to the Chair and National Landscape Team Manager. If assigned, the scope and responsibilities for any such roles will be defined in writing.

Members will be encouraged to undergo relevant training and development in the Committee role, which could include public policy awareness, understanding governance and media skills. Participation in the network of the National Landscapes Association is also encouraged.

Appointment process

The two local authorities will appoint to their allocated member and officer seats through their own processes.

The National Landscape Team will operate an application process for the remaining seats. The process will be transparent and non-discriminatory. Appointments will normally be for three years, but at creation two seats will be appointed for one year and two seats for two years to create a stagger to avoid too much turnover at one time in future. Members may apply again but may only serve a maximum of three consecutive terms.

Appointments will be made by a Panel consisting of the appointed Councillors, the current Chair, and the National Landscape Team Manager. (This is in line with the principle that the Committee is not an independent entity, it is a joint advisory committee to the two Councils, who therefore play the principal role in appointing its members).

Appointment of applicants will be based on the following criteria:

- Resident or working in the Shropshire Hills National Landscape or very nearby;

- Proven commitment to National Landscape purposes and relevant areas of interest;
- Relevant knowledge and experience;
- Ability to make a valuable contribution to the Committee based on the skills defined.

Procedure of meetings

All parties recognise that the Committee is likely to be most effective if its recommendations can be reached by consensus rather than by confrontation but, if it is necessary to regulate any debate, then the Chair shall have the power to order that the Council Procedure Rules set out in Part 4 of the Constitution of Shropshire Council shall apply. Consensus will be taken as the majority of the members present, and the Chair will have the casting vote where needed.

The Committee will normally meet three times per year. Additional meetings may be called (or cancelled) as necessary by the Chair.

The Committee will elect its own Chair on a biennial basis, or as necessary. The Chair will be a non-local authority member. The Chair will not serve in this role for more than three consecutive terms (i.e. six years maximum).

Two Vice Chair posts will also be elected biennially by the Committee, or as necessary. One Vice Chair post will be an elected member of Shropshire Council and the other Vice Chair post will be open to any Committee member.

Nominations for Chair and Vice Chairs will be invited in advance of the meeting at which the elections take place. Role Descriptions for the Chair and Vice Chair positions will be made available for guidance.

The Chair will also act as Chair for the wider Forum group, and may on occasions need to make public statements of position on behalf of the Advisory Committee.

Declaration of interests

Members of the Committee shall declare an interest in a meeting where a matter to be discussed may affect:

- their own wellbeing or financial position, or
- the wellbeing or financial position of a family member or close associate, or
- the financial position of an employer/business of the member, their family member or close associate, or
- the financial position of a charitable body, association or other group with which they are closely associated and shall leave the meeting room whilst that matter is being debated and voted upon.

Councillor members of the Committee shall, when acting as a member of the Committee, comply with the code of conduct of their local authority.

Non-Councillor members of the Committee shall, when acting as a member of the Committee, comply with the code of conduct of Shropshire Council.

In the event of conduct or alleged conduct of a member which is not consistent with the Committee's Terms of Reference, every effort will be made to resolve the issue by informal negotiation. The Committee may however resolve to withdraw membership, or, in the case of a Councillor, resolve to ask the relevant Council to provide a different representative.

Relationship to other groups

The Committee will operate in collaboration with the new wider Forum, Key Delivery Partner working arrangements, the Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust (registered charity) and the National Landscape staff team. The Advisory Committee will have the most formal structure and legal status of the groups, and will provide an important advisory governance 'anchor' to the broader combined structure for the National Landscape. All of the groups will have valuable input into the Management Plan review process.

Members of the Committee will automatically be members of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Forum and encouraged to participate actively in the Forum.