

LEADER in the Shropshire Hills goes live!

After much preparatory work, **a contract that will bring £1.2 million of rural development funding to the Shropshire Hills has just been signed** between Advantage West Midlands and Shropshire Council. The AONB Partnership led the lengthy process of bidding and preparing a Local Development Strategy and Business Plan, with support from Shropshire Council who are acting as the accountable body. The regional LEADER priorities on social and community aspects have been combined with the AONB's priorities in a programme aiming to improve people's wellbeing, building on sense of place and attachment to the landscape. Grants (min £5,000) are available for projects meeting the programme's objectives, see <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/leader/Leader.htm>

Invitation to apply for AONB Partnership membership

The AONB Partnership is the body responsible for overseeing the management of the AONB, and has currently 38 members, with a wide variety of organisations and strong community representation. We currently have **vacancies for seven individual member seats and three organisation seats**. Applicants in both categories must demonstrate an interest related to the purposes of the AONB and a willingness to participate constructively in its management. We would particularly welcome applications from organisations with business or land management interests. The closing date is 13 October 2009. For further information contact Phil Holden or see http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/partnership/partner_members.htm#membership_review

Woodlands Project under way

The Shropshire Hills Woodlands Project aims to improve the management of woods in the AONB for biodiversity, landscape and heritage, focussing on ancient woodland sites which have in the past been converted to plantations. With funding secured for two years, Brian Barker has joined the AONB Partnership's staff team as Woodlands Officer with a wealth of experience. The project will offer advice and support to landowners at priority sites, aiming to optimise the uptake of national grants, and supporting woodfuel and wood products supply chains as a stimulus to improving woodland condition. For more information, contact Brian on 01588 674086.

Farm advice

Our pilot project earlier in the year providing one to one contacts with 35 farmers showed that conservation and business advice schemes are not always reaching those who need them most. An outreach approach to establish contact and dialogue, and signpost to other sources of help, works well and is cost effective. Further funding from Natural England, Business Link, Shropshire Council and the Southern Shropshire Partnership is enabling a follow-up with these farmers, plus 20 more contacts to be made in the Clee Hills area. See the Case Study at <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/publications/documents/FarmerengagementCaseStudy.pdf>

Water Friendly Farming

Our Rivers Project continues to work with landowners and other organisations to improve the habitat and water quality of our rivers, especially in the Teme catchment. Our recent guidance leaflet 'Teme Rivers Water Friendly Farming Guide' is being widely circulated, and can be seen electronically at <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/publications/documents/TemeRiversWaterFriendlyFarmingGuide.pdf>. For further details contact Mike Kelly on 01588 674091.

Sustainable Development Fund projects

The 21 projects supported so far this year with a total of £59,500 from the Fund are doing great things. From farm energy audits to school outdoor classrooms and food and farming events, see the

summary at <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/partnership/documents/2009-10SDFprojectsummary.pdf>.

Less than a year after launching, **Friends of the Shropshire Hills** now has over 90 members and membership fees have raised over £800 for the Sustainable Development Fund. For more information see <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/friends.htm>.

Planning Officer part-time vacancy

We will shortly be advertising our 3 days/week Planning Officer post. If you are interested, please keep an eye on the home page of our website, Shropshire Council's job vacancies or contact Phil Holden.

More about our work

The priorities for the Shropshire Hills AONB are set out in the **AONB Management Plan 2009-14** approved earlier this year. See <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/partnership/Mgtplan09-14.htm>. For a short summary progress update on the work programme of the AONB Partnership's own staff team, see <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/partnership/documents/WorkprogrammesummaryupdateSep09.pdf>

As ever, your comments and views on these or any issues relating to the Shropshire Hill AONB are always welcome.

Phil Holden, Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Manager
Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, The Old Post Office, Shrewsbury Road, CRAVEN ARMS, SY7 9NZ
Tel: 01588 674088 (direct line) 01588 674080 (office number) Fax: 01588 674099
<http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk>