

DESIGNATION PROCESS

RE: POTENTIAL 'AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY' STATUS

21 September 2019 – the Sandstone Ridge received mention in the Glover Review's Final Report – it was stated *that 'The Sandstone Ridge in Cheshire made a persuasive case and deserves further consideration'*.

23 June 2021 - SRT invited to work collaboratively with Natural England (NE), the Statutory Advisor on Landscapes in England. NE confirmed the SRT would be involved in this ambitious programme for nature and people within and beyond designated landscape boundaries. NE agreed that 2 Trustees be appointed – AH and SP. Other Trustees would attend in their absence.

24 June 2021 – the Sandstone Ridge was shortlisted for status as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); together with the Yorkshire Wolds, as well as extensions to the existing Surrey Hills and Chilterns protected areas.

15 January 2022 – the '*Landscapes Review (National Parks and AONBs): Government Response*' was published. In this Review it was proposed that AONBs be renamed as '*National Landscapes*'.

9 March 2022 – The SRT is invited to talk to Chester Civic Trust (held at the Grosvenor Museum) regarding the potential AONB designation process.

9-10 June 2022 - Marian Spain, Natural England's Chief Executive Officer, together with other Senior Executives from Natural England, our 2 Local Authorities, the National Trust etc. visited the Cheshire Sandstone Ridge on a familiarisation exercise – several Trustees in attendance.

21 June 2022 - SRT AGM held in Tarporley Community Centre – updates given regarding Designation Process.

June 2022 – 'Frequently Asked Questions' updated and placed on the Sandstone Ridge Website.

28 September 2022 – the SRT was invited to become a member of the Management and Technical Advisory Group (MAG). The first MAG meeting held on 28 September (AH & SP in attendance), determined membership, terms of reference, together with an overview of the designation process and initial timeline.

16 November 2022 - MAG Meeting (AH and SP in attendance) – potential Area of Search (AoS) an Agenda item.

8 December 2022 – joint SRT and NE Meeting at the Barbour Institute to provide updates to Key Partner Organisations – NE provided a PowerPoint slide presentation at this meeting.

27 March 2023 – The SRT is invited to speak to Burwardsley Parish Council regarding the potential AONB designation process.

June 2023 - 'Gillespies', Landscape Planning Consultants, supported by Camargue and South Coast GIS, appointed by NE to assess the Sandstone Ridge in Cheshire. The project will recommend whether NE should designate a new Cheshire Sandstone Ridge AONB and if so, which specific areas.

14 June 2023 – Cheshire Sandstone Ridge Potential AONB Designation Inception Meeting (AH and SP in attendance) – confirmed that NCA 62 would be taken as the starting point for the AoS.

June 2023 – ‘*The Cheshire Sandstone Ridge – Proposed Area of Search*’ paper submitted to NE by Trustees of the Sandstone Ridge.

19 July 2023 – MAG Meeting (SP and NH in attendance)

July 2023 - Gillespies publish the ‘*Cheshire Sandstone Ridge Designation Project Method Statement*’.

6 September 2023 - MAG Meeting (AH and NH in attendance) – to discuss the refined AoS published by Gillespies. There was emphasis that areas which did not meet the national criteria in evaluating natural beauty would be removed from any refined boundary. At this meeting 2 new criteria were added i.e. ‘connectivity’ and ‘rarity/typicality’. The criteria now comprise 8 components:

Landscape Quality, Scenic Quality, Relative Wildness, Relative Tranquillity, Natural Heritage features, Cultural Heritage, Connectivity and Rarity/Typicality.

Gillespies First Draft ‘*Area of Search Boundary Refinement*’ received.

14 September 2023 - SRT AGM held in Tarporley Community Hall – James Cooper NE in attendance and available to answer questions

20 September 2023 – Tattenhall and District Parish Meeting – SRT (AH) invited to provide an update regarding the potential Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation process.

12 October 2023 – SRT (AH) invited to attend Annual Meeting of ChALC (the Cheshire Association of Local Councils) regarding the potential AONB designation process – held in Helsby

7 November 2023 - Gillespie’s ‘*Evaluation Report*’ circulated 24 hours before the MAG Meeting

8 November 2023 – MAG Meeting – Agenda Item, to discuss Evaluation Report (AH, SP and NH in attendance)

14 November 2023 – MAG Site Visit to the Ridge 09.00hrs (AH, SP and NH in attendance) – Gillespies, NE etc.

9 February 2024 – Sub Group Meeting with James Cooper and Petula Neilson at Village Hall, Cuddington – (AH, SP, PW, NH, GC and TH in attendance)

11 April 2024 – SRT invited to attend Huxley and Hargrave Parish Council Meeting to discuss the potential AONB designation process (AH)

April 2024 – Gillespies publish final report – ‘*Cheshire Sandstone Ridge AONB Designation Project – Evaluation of Natural Beauty*’

15 May 2024 – SRT invited to attend Burwardsley Parish Council regarding any updates on potential AONB designation process

21 May 2024 – MAG Meeting in person at Barbour Institute, Tattenhall

3-4 July 2024 – National Landscapes Conference at Harper Adams University and Delegate Field Visit to the Cheshire Sandstone Ridge (16 delegates attended the field visit on 4 July which was preceded with a short breakfast meeting at the BI to offer contextualisation) – James Cooper, NE, in attendance at both – several Trustees attended field visit

14 August 2024 – Informal Engagement/Workshop Event of some key stakeholders held at Barbour Institute, Tattenhall, together with NE and Gillespies (NH and PW represented SRT – AH on Jury Service).

25 October 2024 - SRT submit final revisions to NE i.e. ‘*Response from the Sandstone Ridge Trust to the ‘informal engagement’ Meeting held with some technical stakeholders on 14 August 2024*’.

Next Steps - Following informal engagement with technical stakeholders a Desirability Assessment and a Draft Boundary Report will be prepared by Natural England. If evidence is found that it is desirable to designate this area as an AONB, there will opportunities for the public, local organisations, businesses and visitors to the area to have their say and inform the potential designation during a three-month statutory public consultation in Summer 2025.

14 November 2024 - SRT AGM held in Tarporley Community Room – NE not in attendance – we were advised that they would not attend since we are at a delicate point in the project timeline. Additionally, it would be a breach of the Terms of Reference. We were encouraged to exclude an AONB update at the AGM – updates of the project remain confidential.