

Designation History Series

Cannock Chase AONB

Ray Woolmore
Countryside Agency
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CANNOCK CHASE AONB

Origin of proposal

1. One of the proposals considered by the National Park Committee established in 1929 by J Ramsay MacDonald's Government, and chaired by the Rt Hon Christopher Addison MP, MD, was one for Cannock Chase to become a National Park. This proposal emanated from the Cannock Chase National Park Committee¹. The Report of the National Park Committee¹ (the Addison Report) was published in April 1931 by HMSO for the Treasury. Nothing happened as a result of the Addison Report and no National Authority was set up to implement the Report's proposals.

2. During the 2nd World War, John Dower was requested by Government to study the problems relating to the establishment of National Parks in England and Wales and his Report² (May 1945) included Cannock Chase in his list (Division C) of "Other Amenity Areas" not suggested as National Parks, but as areas of landscape beauty which merited some form of national protection in the future. Many of these "Other Amenity Areas" became the basis of the 52 conservation areas of high landscape quality, scientific interest and recreational value, listed in the July 1947 Report of the National Parks Committee, set up by Government following the Dower Report, and chaired by Sir Arthur Hobhouse³. The small 23 square miles/62 square kilometres area of Cannock Chase (Map 1) was included in Hobhouse's list of conservation areas. Lying entirely in Staffordshire, it consisted mainly of extensive heathland and coniferous plantation on an elevated plateau of Triassic sandstones and pebble beds, surrounded by large villages, collieries and historic parkland like Shugborough. Much of the heathland area, presented an unspoilt almost semi-wilderness character, standing in contrast to the surrounding developments.

Designation History

3. Despite considerable pressures by the Staffordshire County Council and the Friends of Cannock Chase (in 1952⁴ and 1955⁵) to persuade the National Parks Commission (NPC) to designate the Cannock Chase conservation area as an AONB, the NPC gave priority to its programme of National Park designations, and did not seriously consider the proposal until January 1956⁶. Following a long discussion with officers of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government on the designation of AONBs, the NPC decided to give priority to the designation of Cannock Chase, and asked their officers to discuss boundaries with Staffordshire County Council. Proposed boundaries, generally wider than those for the Hobhouse conservation area, were prepared by Staffordshire, but the NPC officers were doubtful about Staffordshire's proposals to include two collieries and a large RAF station at Hednesford on the edge of the Chase, and the NPC agreed that two of these areas should be excluded⁷. After further discussion with Staffordshire, the NPC agreed in October 1956⁸ to include the area of the RAF station within the draft boundary. The

County hoped that the Camp would become redundant in the near future and that the site could be restored more easily if it was in the AONB.

4. The NPC commenced formal consultation with the local authorities in early 1957, and at their meeting in October 1957 the Commission considered the local authorities' response. Three minor extensions were agreed, and the NPC⁹ also agreed to publish their intention to make a designation order for the proposed Cannock Chase AONB, inviting representations from other interested organisations and the general public. No further changes were apparently made following advertisement of the designation order and at their meeting in May 1958¹⁰, the NPC approved the making of the Designation Order, which was signed on 4 June 1958, and confirmed by the Minister on 16 September 1958¹¹ (in record time!). A map of the designated area, which covers 26 sq miles/68 sq kilometres, as confirmed is attached as Map 2.

References

1. The National Park Committee (Chairman the Rt Hon Sir Christopher Addison MP, MD) "Report of the National Park Committee", The Treasury Cmd 3851, HMSO, London, 1931.
2. John Dower, "National Parks in England and Wales", Cmd 6628, HMSO, London, May 1945.
3. The National Parks Committee (Chairman Sir Arthur Hobhouse), "Report of the National Parks Committee (England and Wales) Cmd 7121, HMSO, London, July 1947.
4. Minutes of meeting of Northern Committee of National Parks Commission (144) held on 8 September 1952.
5. Minutes of meeting of National Parks Commission (799) 12 July 1955.
6. Minutes of meeting of National Parks Commission (911) 25 January 1955.
7. Minutes of meeting of National Parks Commission (1001) 25 July 1956.
8. Minutes of meeting of National Parks Commission (1029) 24 October 1956.
9. Minutes of meeting of National Parks Commission (1191) 23 October 1957.
10. Minutes of meeting of National Parks Commission (1338).
11. Ninth Report of the National Parks Commission (para 27) for year ending 30 September 1958.

Folios

All the References above are included as FOLIOS and are numbered as the references.

Maps

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| Map 1 | Hobhouse Conservation Area, Cannock Chase |
| Map 2 | Cannock Chase AONB (Page 79 NPC 9 th Annual Report) |

Files

The following files have been consulted

- Cannock Chase AONB - NPC No AB/23 COU1/250
- Cannock Chase AONB - NPC No AB/23A COU1/251
Formal Consultations etc
- Cannock Chase - NPC No AB/23B COU1/1133
Preparation of Notice etc