

Research Work - Chase Road

Cannock Chase is a highly protected landscape with designations in place for nationally and internationally important species and habitats. The most fragile of the Chase's habitats are its heathlands, a mosaic of low growing shrubs, bare ground, birch and oak home to rare species of reptile, birds and insects. Globally heathland is rarer than rainforest and is widely understood to be irreplaceable once lost.

The Cannock Chase SAC Partnership has appointed consultants to explore the options for the sustainable management of vehicles and parking along Chase Road on Cannock Chase, one of the most sensitive areas of the internationally important, protected landscape.

Councillor Tony Pearce, Chair of the Cannock Chase SAC Partnership said:

“This is a continuation of the work detailed in *The Cannock Chase SAC Strategic Access Management & Monitoring Measures Detailed Implementation Plan: Car Parking* (published in 2019) which stated that Chase Road required a more detailed investigation than the 2019 plan could achieve.

This is crucial work to ensure we are taking steps to safeguard this precious landscape and the species it contains so they can thrive, and the public can continue to enjoy them now, and in the future.”

Proposed changes to the current management of the area will go to public consultation in spring 2026.

Frequently Asked Questions relating to the Chase Road Options Research Project.

Question	Answer
Who are the SAC Partnership?	<p>The SAC Partnership is made up of seven local authorities, with landowners and advisory bodies. It is responsible for reducing the impact of increasing visitor numbers on the protected landscape of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation through public engagement, education and awareness projects as well as capital improvement works.</p> <p>For more information please follow the web-links About the SAC - Cannock Chase or Its Only Heather - Cannock Chase</p>
Why is the Partnership involved in this?	<p>This study is being funded by the Partnership to look at options for how the area around Chase Road can be better managed to allow the habitats and species of the Chase to thrive whilst managing visitors in a sustainable way.</p>
Who owns the land around Chase Road?	<p>Staffordshire County Council. It is managed by the Countryside Service team based on Cannock Chase.</p>
Who is funding this work?	<p>The appraisal of the options around Chase Road is being paid for by the Cannock Chase SAC Partnership, which is funded by developer contributions collected from new housing developments within 15km of Cannock Chase.</p>
When will I get a say?	<p>There will be a series of public consultations on the options as part of this process before any final recommendations are made.</p>
Why are you doing this now?	<p>The heathland on Cannock Chase is significant on a European scale, it is a habitat rarer than tropical rainforest and is widely believed to be irreplaceable once lost.</p> <p>The area around Chase Road is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This is the highest legal environmental protection in the country. It is illegal to harm the SAC in any way; directly or indirectly. Cannock Chase SAC is experiencing a high level of unintentional harm caused by increasing visitor usage.</p> <p>Staffordshire County Council as the landowner has a statutory (legal) obligation to ensure that the Special Area of Conservation is managed appropriately.</p> <p>There will be a point when land managers will be unable to stop the decline in habitats and species so steps need to be taken now to ensure the Chase is here for future generations.</p>
What evidence is there that the habitat around Chase Road is in decline?	<p>A botanical survey carried out in 2024 demonstrated that the areas around car parks show significant disturbance and poor-quality habitats. Chase Road is 1.5 miles long and has 21 opportunities for parking which means the level of disturbance is high right along the length of the road. 2024 Botanical Survey Report</p> <p>Natural England consider the condition of the habitat to be unfavourable (recovering). A key element to be able to aid this recovery is to reduce the pressure from sporadic parking and vehicle movement through multiple access routes within the protected landscape.</p>
Why are you trying to stop people visiting the Chase?	<p>There is no intention to prevent people visiting the Chase. It is expected that visitor numbers will rise in the future.</p> <p>However, for the Chase to remain a special place for future generations there is a need to manage the increasing human pressure on the most sensitive habitats and species whilst still enabling people to visit the Chase. This appraisal of the options will look at the best ways to do this in the Chase Road area.</p>

Why do you need to reduce vehicle movements on Chase Road?	<p>Physical impact - cars are being parked in multiple locations and gateways along Chase Road causing damage to the habitats alongside the road from repeated compaction, litter and disturbance.</p> <p>Disturbance to Wildlife - a botanical survey carried out in 2024 demonstrated the effect of disturbance on plant communities is greater close to car parks. With multiple parking places (both formal and informal) in the Chase Road area the amount of the protected landscape impacted by high levels of disturbance, resulting in poor quality habitat, is extensive. The disturbance to plants and the enriching of the soils from dog mess and urine changes the ecology of the site so the heathland species that should be living there cannot survive.</p> <p>Tranquillity - the movement of vehicles along the road reduces the peace and tranquillity of the area as does the visual intrusion of vehicles parked in multiple locations throughout the Chase Road area.</p> <p>Antisocial Behaviour - The secluded nature of Chase Road means it attracts behaviour that is problematic for other visitors, nearby communities and the wildlife. This includes, but is not limited to, the feeding of the wild deer population, letting off industrial fireworks, reckless driving and vandalism.</p>
My family member can't walk far, where else can we go?	<p>Please visit www.cannockchase.org.uk for information on accessible trails, parking and other facilities for those with access needs. There have been accessibility improvements at visitor centres around the Chase funded by the National Landscape Partnership.</p> <p>Accessible Chase - Cannock Chase</p>
Chase Road has always been public access; you can't stop people using it?	There is no intention to restrict public access on foot, horse, bicycle, mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs. This work should lead to improved non-vehicular access, with the appraisal looking at the options of sustainable vehicle management and car park configuration.
Will the car parks on Chase Road be closed?	The current car parks associated with Chase Road are remnants of Brocton Camp and are not necessarily in the right places for visitor access or the ecological sensitivity of the Chase. This appraisal will look at these issues.
What else is SAC Partnership doing to improve the visitor experience on Cannock Chase?	<p>The SAC Partnership has contributed funding towards the Shaping Shugborough Project which will increase parking capacity and improve the visitor welcome on the historic estate which affects the Milford Common area when it has reached capacity.</p> <p>The SAC Partnership have contributed funding and monitoring information to the project looking at improvements to visitor offer at Cannock Chase Visitor Centre (Marquis Drive).</p> <p>The SAC Partnership has contributed funding to the building of the education hub at Staffordshire Wildlife Trust's Wolseley Centre.</p> <p>The SAC Partnership are planning a programme of works to improve the car parks and visitor welcome around the SAC.</p> <p>More details on the work of the SAC can be found at www.cannockchase.org.uk</p>
Will I have to pay for parking?	This piece of work is not connected to the introduction of parking charges.
Why are you shutting all the car parks on the Chase?	We are not, the SAC Partnership is planning to refurbish 9 car parks on the Chase in addition the visitor centres, which is expected to increase their capacity. The parking locations proposed for closure are mostly where vehicles are parking directly onto the protected landscape (at roadsides and not in car parks) or where the habitats we need to protect are most sensitive