

**Minutes of Isle of Wight AONB Partnership Steering Committee Meeting
Thursday 09 October 2008 - Innovation Centre, Newport**

Present:

Tony Tutton	Chairman
Denis Russell	Vice-Chair/Community and Parish Portfolio Holder
Steve Blamire	Tourism Portfolio Holder
David Court	Coastal Portfolio Holder
Richard Grogan	Nature Conservation Portfolio Holder
Geoffrey Case	Farming and Landowning Portfolio Holder
Lorraine Huggett	Natural England
Councillor Vanessa Churchman	Isle of Wight Council
Bill Murphy	Isle of Wight Council
Nicky Downer	AONB Planning Officer
Fiona Hanna	AONB Communication Officer
Carrie McDowell	AONB Assistant

The Chairman welcomed Lorraine Huggett to the meeting representing Natural England, and offered the Committee's congratulations to Fiona Hanna on her promotion to the role of Lead Officer and to Nicky on her recent marriage.

1) Apologies

Wendy Perera	Isle of Wight Council
Councillor John Hobart	Isle of Wight Council
Jill Green	Recreation Portfolio Holder
David Groves	Rural Business Portfolio Holder
Vicky Basford	Historic Environment Portfolio Holder

2) Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes were accepted as a true record of the proceedings of the last meeting.

Comment to Local Authority by the AONB Partnership regarding education consultation:

This has not yet been done due to work pressures, however, there will be opportunities for us to have more direct input by attending planning liaison meetings. BM advised that the final position is moving constantly, so it could be timely for us to provide our input. It was suggested FH put together a note liaising directly through WP and the LDF to ensure AONB input is taken into account.

Regional Tourism Bid to RDPE (SEEDA)

This is evolving with Surrey County Council making a bid on behalf of nine partners, to minimise the administration involved. With regard to honeypot sites, the Island does not necessarily wish to make big increases to its visitor numbers, but to ensure these visits occur in a more sustainable way. When the final proposal is drafted, copies will be circulated to members of the Steering Committee for their comments.

3) Financial Report

A copy of the latest financial report was circulated to attendees. There are no areas of concern, and it is intended to use the salary savings to update the department computers, and towards a new photographic contract for both change analysis and to update the photographic library. There will also be expenditure on recruitment costs for the post of Communication Officer, printing for the revised Management Plan, and honorariums for NR and CM as thanks for all their support while the Unit has been understaffed.

Regarding the Sustainable Development Fund, the next meeting will be held on 24 September, and there are still monies available for projects amounting to £16,000.

Although not on the agenda, copies of the half yearly Quarterly Report for Natural England were circulated to attendees. A question was asked about whether our GIS system would be updated with information from the current land survey of the Island, and it was advised that the Unit generally obtains information undertaken by other organisations through licences, and we will get the information as it becomes available.

4) **AONB Management Plan Review - Update**

We have received very positive responses and good feedback from the consultations, which has provided a lot of useful information. JB's initial idea was to leave the Management Plan in its original format and provide the review document and Delivery Plan as an additional supplement. However, following consultation, it was considered this would not be a practical idea. It was proposed to amalgamate the documents to form the new Management Plan, highlighting the changes which will include new challenges and key actions for comments, and the preliminary Delivery Plan. This option would probably be cheaper and more workable and was agreed by the Committee. A Management Plan Work Group meeting may be convened in November prior to the public consultation, to discuss the draft Delivery Plan.

Concern was expressed about how the Local Development Framework (Island Plan), would affect the Delivery Plan and vice versa. The Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) will not be in isolation, but worked into the document as a whole. Our Assessment will be based on AONB policies and objectives, not those within the Island Plan. When the HRA and SEA for the Island Plan are produced, they will take into account other emerging plans including the AONB Management Plan.

It was initially proposed that the actions and objectives of the Delivery Plan would be based around a topic or theme e.g. Highways. This idea will now be dropped in favour of working together with the Partnership to highlight what they are doing, and if these can be grouped into a theme this can be done, but it will not be the primary focus.

5) **Shoreline Management Plan Questions** - DC/FH received letter on this which requires comments by 31 October 2009. A general discussion followed, with the following comments:-:-

- piecemeal developments around the AONB coastline and across the Island in general should be resisted.
- some areas of the AONB coast may require more protection, and these should be targetable as part of this process reflecting our thoughts regarding protection versus conservation of the AONB landscape.
- the AONB should not be isolationist, but have regard to needs outside the AONB having a wider vision for the whole of the Island. The European Landscapes Document states "all landscapes matter to all people" and we should encourage natural processes as much as possible and practical.
- Rising sea levels are fundamental to how we construct our Shoreline Management Plans and is something we cannot control. Nature can always overtake whatever plans are drawn up, and this must be reflected.
- concern was expressed that when the Shoreline Management Plans are revised, there should be guidelines to ensure that they are properly implemented. It was

advised that this time the plans will be subject to the full rigour of appropriate assessments relating to emerging policies. The AONB Habitat Regulation Assessment will stress the importance of the AONB as a formal mechanism for reviewing the impact of plan to ensure it contains every single element. Once adopted it should be strictly adhered to, with no ad hoc decisions not conforming with its objectives.

- It was felt that our plans should in parallel to the North Solent SMP, but this would have to be approved by DEFRA.
- The Island Plan contains several key sites on the Island where population, growth for regeneration or overriding public or economic interest for the benefit of the Island identified through Plan highlighted the point about natural processes.
- It is good to highlight these areas, but how are these to be implemented on the basis of the four available options - managed retreat, advance the line, allow natural processes or hold the line. We should reinforce the recommended view subject to the Habitat Regulations, and if any applications do not conform to this view they should not be approved.
- We should endeavour to obtain views from other AONBs along the coastline such as Chichester Harbour and Kent Downs.

6) **Steering Committee Member Updates**

Community and Parish - the whole Island is now emparished, which increase the size of the portfolio and allow the Association of Town and Parish Councils to have a new approach to the work they do. In the past the Association has been reactive, but the new committee structure will allow greater co-operation with the Council and allow them to be more proactive, with new plans for a Parishes Protocol to allow more input into the planning process. The recent Power to Parishes event was very useful, and the presence of the AONB with a stand and information will help to get new people involved.

Farming and Landowning - a shockingly bad harvest, with prices increasing some as much as Double within six months, while commodity prices have dropped back. A blue paper is due regarding an abattoir with support for private individuals, but no expenditure commitment from the Council. It was agreed there would be a discussion at the next Steering Committee meeting as to how we can support this issue. With regard to the fallen stock issue, this hinges on the result of a current court case now being processed.

IW Council - the Island Plan is moving forward, and contains a sub-policy in support of the provision of an abattoir. It was agreed that before the Plan goes to Cabinet TM/WP will provide a paper to the Steering Committee.

No formal application has yet been received regarding the wind turbines on Cheverton Down, but an application has been received for three small scale turbines at Ventnor Golf Club, which has yet to be validated.

Bardon Vectis have provided a screening opinion request on three potential sand and gravel operations within the AONB. At this stage, the Planning Department do not consider that a full Environmental Impact Assessment is required for the applications to be submitted.

Nature Conservation - there was a very poor attendance at the recent Development Control and Planning Work Group, especially when the subject of the discussion was such a vital document for the Island. Thanks were expressed to ND for her invaluable assistance in

reviewing and providing comments for the meeting to approve, and it was confirmed that comments were submitted within the deadline.

The Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group are looking at designating new Local Nature Reserves, and concern has been expressed regarding larger numbers of people having access over a larger acreage of land. There are some notable anniversaries coming up in 2009 such as 150 year since Darwin's Origin of the Species, and perhaps the AONB Partnership could liaise with Colin Pope regarding any planned events.

Natural England - discussions have taken place with DEFRA regarding single funding offers, but no firm decision has yet been made. The amount of funding available will be similar to this year, particularly in light of the current economic climate. The Landscape Review being drawn up will be looking at ways of working and the optimum relationship benefits between AONBs and Natural England. There is a possibility that there will be a dedicated team for the Isle of Wight.

Tourism – the Tourism Development Board Council and Chamber will be helping to oversee the future management of tourism on the Island. Part of process will be a paper to Committee and through the Board outlining key development projects, and work is currently underway. These include - an event in London around Island food "Promoting the Taste of Xmas"; developing green holiday packages using trains and buses where discounts can be obtained and leaving your car at home for the day; promoting carbon neutral holidays and tours of the Isle of Wight. A comment was made that some visitors leaving their car at home had tried to obtain discounts at various local attractions, but were actually charged more, which will not encourage them to return. SB advised that approaches are being made to Southern Vectis to formalise this process and these comments will be taken on board.

7) **Any Other Busines**

a) **Open Forum - Workshop Discussion Section**

We were unable to get a speaker from either Natural England or English Heritage, so Ian Boyd of Island 2000 will be providing a presentation on Climate Care. It was also decided to invite Town and Parish Councils to this year's Open Forum, and we have had a lot of representatives saying they will attend. Unfortunately this has shifted the focus so we will be looking at landscape changes and what is important to people when managing these changes.

It was suggested we could perhaps run special forums on how changes affect the economic climate and local food production, or how parishes and communities can link with the AONB regarding issues of landscape change.

b) **Photographic contract**

Our budget savings will allow us to undertake a new photographic contract showing changes in key areas from the previous one in 2002. We have also identified gaps in the AONB where additional images are required. The Isle of Wight Economic Partnership are keen to get key shots of rural business, and could help us with the Funding which will be approximately £4-5,000. The meeting approved this project.

c) **Format for December Steering Committee meeting**

It was suggested we visit one of the SDF projects, followed by the meeting and then lunch at somewhere which uses local produce. This was agreed.

It was advised that Cornwall Light and Power will be putting up another balloon to provide an idea of how tall the proposed wind turbines on Cheverton Down will be.

Dates of Future Steering Committee Meetings

2008

11 December venue tba

2009

10 February venue tba

12 May venue tba

14 July venue tba

06 October venue tba

08 December venue tba

All meetings will commence at 10.0 a.m. unless otherwise advised

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1.05 p.m.

cdm/17 October 2008