

**Minutes of Isle of Wight AONB Partnership Steering Committee Meeting  
Tuesday 10 February 2009 - Innovation Centre, Newport**

**Present:**

Tony Tutton	Chairman
Denis Russell	Vice-Chair/Community and Parish Portfolio Holder
Geoffrey Case	Farming and Landowning Portfolio Holder
Vicky Basford	Historic Environment Portfolio Holder
Richard Grogan	Nature Conservation Portfolio Holder
David Meeks	Natural England
Wendy Perera	Isle of Wight Council
Councillor John Hobart	Isle of Wight Council
Fiona Hanna	AONB Lead Officer
Joel Bateman	AONB Communication Officer
Carrie McDowell	AONB Assistant

**1) Apologies**

Jill Green	Recreation Portfolio Holder
Steve Blamire	Tourism Portfolio Holder
David Groves	Rural Business Portfolio Holder
Nicky Downer	AONB Planning Officer
Councillor Vanessa Churchman	Isle of Wight Council

**2) Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising**

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

Regional Tourism Bid to RDPE (Rural Development Programme for England)

FH provided a précis of the above report, which has a possible approval date of April 2009. The Leader LAG Group were very supportive in terms of linking the project with different organisations within the Tourism and Rural sectors, so we can ensure we get the right benefits. We have also had good support from Kevin Smith of the Chamber of Commerce, and hope to discuss environmental issues within the Tourism Development Plan. We need to focus on what we can do in terms of supporting rural business and biodiversity, perhaps linking with wildlife initiatives and local food.

Update of Funding

We have now received an update from Natural England with regard to next year's funding. We can now bid for 100% of this year's funding amounting to a total of £155,570 for next year, plus £58,500 for SDF and a further £5,000 for project funding. This means we can now look at some of the other delivery actions we would like to pursue, which will make it easier to plan ahead.

Ventnor Golf Club

The planning application from the Golf Club has still not been registered, pending a landscape and visual impact assessment.

**3) AONB Unit update**

**a) Financial Report - Core and SDF**

Although the figures indicate a possible underspend, this will be used ahead of next year's Plan, to cover the design and printing costs of the Management Plan and some consultancy work by John Brownscombe on Management Zones. Once this initial work

on Management Zones is complete, we can then look at each different zone to see how we can engage with communities, incorporate Landscape Character Assessments and planning considerations. In principle discussions have taken place with WP on how these can be included as Supplementary Planning Documents, but further work is required. SDF is proceeding well, but rather than a small potential underspend at year end, it was agreed at the last SDF Panel meeting, this money would be used to provide some promotional literature highlighting previous projects to generate further interest.

**b) Quarterly Report**

This was circulated with the Agenda, and a query was raised about the first activity point on Page 1 which quoted the "new LCA guidance". It was advised this applied to the report issued in 1994 by the Countryside Commission, which was used in the 2004-2009 Management Plan and is the most current information available. For clarification, the Quarterly Report applies to the areas in the Management Plan's Action Plan, and how we incorporate these in our grant bid. Reports are provided to Natural England on a quarterly basis as to how we are performing in relation to our bid so by the end of the year, there should be completed actions in each Output section.

**4) AONB Management Plan Review Update and Launch**

The public consultation is complete, with the majority of comments concentrating on renewables (wind turbines). All responses were discussed at the recent meeting of the Management Plan Work Group, and agreed amendments included in the Plan that has been taken forward to Council. This was initially due to be approved by Cabinet but when the process commenced at 'Call Over', the question was asked if it could be approved through delegated powers. The Plan will be advertised on 10 February and providing there are no further comments, it will be signed off by Councillor Hunter Henderson on 16 February and come into force at 5.00 p.m. on 23 February 2009. The tender for designing the Plan has been awarded to Pepper Creative, some of whose employees previously worked for Marriott Design, who produced the 2004-2009 Plan, so hopefully this will help in the final print.

The format of the official launch was discussed, with the following suggestions:-

- Natural England will have a link on their website to each individual AONB's Management Plan.
- We need to think carefully about how we launch the Plan, as there are other events happening this year such as Darwin celebrations, BAP anniversary and local elections.
- It is important to celebrate this document, so as not to miss an opportunity to promote the work of the AONB Partnership.
- Link the launch with promotion of the Sustainable Development Fund, by looking at projects undertaken and highlight their breadth and variety.
- Need to celebrate what Partnership organisations are doing.
- Link an SDF project outdoors with an indoor talk.
- Put a big spread in the County Press.
- Liaise with the IW Council Communications PR Team to promote the Plan in the media.

- The launch should be at an Island venue perhaps in a large barn, and some suggestions were Appuldurcombe, Michael Poland's land at Wroxall, New Barn at Calbourne and Dunsbury.

It was agreed the AONB team would discuss these suggestions at their forthcoming Planning Meeting, and provide an update to Steering Committee members. If, in the meantime, members have any other ideas, please let us know.

**Action: AONB team to provide update to Steering Committee**

## 5) Steering Committee Member Updates

**Community and Parish** - the major concern in this area is the current state of the Island roads. A representative from the Highways Department will be attending a meeting of Town and Parish Councils, where they hope to obtain an update on the proposed PFI. There is also concern about over-engineering on rural roads, such as kerbs at every road entrance on the stretch from Leechmore to the Chequers.

The meeting felt it was important for the Partnership as a group, to push the issue with Highways that excessive engineering of rural roads such as kerbs, is not always necessary. There was also a query about whether Highways are aware of the document on rural roads produced by the Dorset AONB, and it was advised they do have access to this information.

Recent Council appointments include a Head of Engineering in Highways and a Project Manager for the PFI, so the meeting felt it was vital the AONB get involved in discussions to emphasise the impact excessive engineering can have on the AONB. We also need to be involved at an early stage, preferably prior to tenders being submitted, so the AONB, wildlife, biodiversity, historic environment etc. are taken into account. This is where Management Zones are important by getting individuals, communities and planners involved in terms of landscape character assessment and what makes an area distinctive.

**Councillor Update** - it was felt to be important to be involved at an early stage with regard to upgrading footpaths in non-coastal areas to improve access for cyclists, horse riders and especially the disabled. Would it be possible to get a representative from the Island on the Southern Regional Defence Committee. A question was asked about the availability of the Coastal Defence Survey produced by Atkins, and it was advised the Coastal Centre in Ventnor would have a copy.

**Nature Conservation** - The Marine Bill refers to coastal access, whether a footpath is there or not. This has the potential to cause similar problems to those occurring with open access land, on whether access and funding for upgrading footpaths will be available, or will the burden be placed on individual landowners. In some areas there is no designated footpath just a strip of land, and footpaths do not get re-negotiated when the cliff falls away.

The University of Southampton have recently produced a report on the Geomorphology of Isle of Wight Chines, with the most important controlling factor identified as the rise in sea level as a result of climate change. At the current rate of change by 2100, the stability of Island chines will be severely threatened. This could have huge implications for Military Road as the chines move back inland, with bridges becoming more common; alternatively if the movement of chines is arrested, this could lead to them being irrevocably lost. Perhaps this could be a future news item for an issue of Finest Landscapes. Funding has been made available from the Environment Agency for a biological study of chines, with possible additional funding from the Sustainable Development Fund.

There were three conflicting reports in one week's County Press - not enough management at Mersley Down; too much management at Cranmore; and landscape work for health connected with the Green Gym. It is apparent from these reports, there is a fundamental misunderstanding among the public regarding landscape management. Again an item in *Finest Landscapes* could highlight the message of how land needs to be managed, to keep its character and biodiversity.

**Farming and Landowning** - Nitrate Vulnerable Zones have been established, in areas where nitrate from agricultural land is causing pollution of the water environment. These measures include a requirement for farmers to limit their applications of livestock manure, which means yet another raft of paperwork, and non-compliance can lead to a removal of farm subsidies. It is not clear whether this will affect the keeping of livestock, which was probably more affected by the outbreak of blue tongue.

Electronic Identification of sheep is due to come into force in December 2009, and as the United Kingdom has the largest population of sheep in Europe this could create severe problems, especially among hill farmers.

There was a query about what is happening with dead elms, as the Island seems to be losing vast numbers. It was advised Island 2000 did have a scheme for replanting, and we will endeavour to obtain current information on this from Ian Boyd. The situation is complex, and we may have to either plant disease resistant elms or replace them with other species, which may have an impact on wildlife and biodiversity.

**Action:** **AONB Unit to obtain information on disease resistant elms from Island 2000 and any projects**

**IW Council** - a new Head of Highways has now been appointed, so we are hopeful of some direct liaison to get in at the right level and make some headway, especially in areas such as the impact of street furniture on the AONB. There is also a new Head of Environment and Waste, Kathy Bennett, who will be re-negotiating a new waste contract, and looking at issues of how we deal with waste on the Island in future, which may involve moving away from landfill towards anaerobic digestion and the incinerator. Additional resources are now being put into Enforcement, and a protocol is being developed which will go to Cabinet shortly. The Core Strategy, in which the AONB has been involved to ensure it complements the Management Plan, is now complete and formal submission will be made to Government in March. The work on Management Zones will be particularly helpful in planning terms, as they will provide a degree of understanding that would not otherwise be picked up.

**Coastal** - there has been no progress to date on the Shoreline Management Plan and no replacement for Robin McInnes, so Peter Marsden is the senior contact at the Coastal Centre. It is important any deadlines with regard to sea walls and coastal defence should be met, and Natural England and the Environment Agency agree a way forward. It was advised the Local Transport Plan has bid for funding from the Isle of Wight Council for specific projects.

**Natural England** - single pot funding will commence from 2009/2010 for core work, SDF and project funding, using one application form to simplify the process. This year there was some additional monies available for projects, of which £3K was made available to the IW AONB. In collaboration with Planning Policy, this will be used to purchase a dataset and software for 3D modelling together with training. This will help us facilitate a project planned for delivery next year, to provide baseline information enabling us to monitor changes in the environment, provide a resource for other Partnership projects, and reduce our reliance on consultants.

**Historic Environment** - work is well underway on the last of the HEAPs on urban and rural

historical routeways, which focuses on the idea of retaining historic character, discouraging excessive street furniture and over-engineering such as the bridge in Highwood Lane. The Heritage Protection Bill was unfortunately not on the list of bills to go through Parliament this year, which is a setback for protection of the historical environment.

**Recreation** - JG apologised for being unable to attend the meeting, but has provided an update on Recreation. An article has been written for the Isle of Wight Holiday Guide, which can be found on Page 37. The Local Access Forum are also reviewing access to our rights of way by the disabled to see if and when any improvements can be made, and the Ramblers have been very helpful in erecting different types of stiles.

**Tourism** - see attached note from S Blamire, who was unable to attend the meeting.

## 6) Any Other Business

### a) Newsletter feature - "Landscapes without Livestock"

There is an action in the Delivery Plan about the whole issue of livestock in respect of fallen stock, the abattoir and the difficulties these create for farmers. Part of the problem is the public perception of the role farmers have in protecting and managing the landscape, while accepting that farmers still need to make a living. It was proposed we do a feature in our Newsletter on the importance of livestock in the landscape and its effect on wildlife, the environment and archaeological monuments. A question was asked if either the National Trust or Michael Poland may have some photographs showing the impact on the landscape from the last decline in livestock. It was agreed a small working party comprising JH/DR/GC and RG would assist in producing this feature.

### b) Partnership Review

With the establishment of a new Management Plan, and the new Memorandum of Understanding with Natural England and the Isle of Wight Council, is this the time to review the construction of the Partnership with regard to the Advisory Group and Open Forum. The suggestion is to keep the Advisory Group as it is with its voting rights, but instead of the Open Forum look at incorporating this with a "Friends of the AONB". It was agreed the AONB Unit would undertake some research on a cross section of Partnership Members to see if they feel we are fulfilling our role, and bring a paper to the next Steering Committee in May. In the meantime, should any members of the Committee have any suggestions please could they let us know.

**Action: AONB Unit to provide paper regarding possible review of the AONB Partnership**

The application for wind turbines on Cheverton Down has now been registered and advertised. The Planning Authority has requested additional information from the applicant, in response to our concerns regarding the proposed building and access. There could also be interesting archaeological remains in the area which need to be assessed prior to building the turbines. It was also pointed out there is no information about how the turbines will be attached to the National Grid, and moving the large blades to the site could be a Highways issue.

This application needs to be discussed by the Development Control and Planning Work Group, the date for which was agreed as 27 February 2009.

**Dates of Future Steering Committee Meetings**

**2009**

12 May	venue tba
14 July	venue tba
06 October	venue tba
08 December	venue tba

All meetings will commence at 10.00 a.m. unless otherwise advised

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 12.30 p.m.

cdm/13 February 2009