

**Minutes of Isle of Wight AONB Partnership Steering Committee Meeting
Tuesday 12 May 2009 - Innovation Centre, Newport**

Present:

Denis Russell	Vice-Chair/Community and Parish Portfolio Holder (Chair)
Geoffrey Case	Farming and Landowning Portfolio Holder
Vicky Basford	Historic Environment Portfolio Holder
Richard Grogan	Nature Conservation Portfolio Holder
David Groves	Rural Business Portfolio Holder
David Meeks	Natural England
Wendy Perera	Isle of Wight Council
Fiona Hanna	AONB Lead Officer
Nicky Downer	AONB Planning Officer
Joel Bateman	AONB Communication Officer
Carrie McDowell	AONB Assistant

1) Apologies

Tony Tutton	Chairman
Jill Green	Recreation Portfolio Holder
Steve Blamire	Tourism Portfolio Holder
Councillor John Hobart	Isle of Wight Council
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)

This went to the SEEDA panel in April, but was not approved. However, SEEDA have encouraged us make some adjustments and re-submit it at the end of May. If it does not go ahead, we will have to look again how we progress with tourism initiatives.

AONB Management Plan Review Update and Launch

This event took place on 01 May 2009, was a great success, and we had many favourable comments. On behalf of the Steering Committee, the Chairman thanked the AONB team for all their hard work in bringing the new Plan to fruition. The Council's Chief Executive attended the launch, and also included some very positive comments in his weekly message in the Vine about the Plan and the importance of the AONB to the Island.

AONB Unit to obtain information on disease resistant elms from Island 2000

This task is still in the pipeline for action.

Finest Landscapes newsletter

A copy of the latest issue was circulated to members of the Committee, and thanks were expressed to those involved in developing the article on Farming in the centre pages.

Partnership Review

Following the workshops held last year, we have contacted those organisations that were put forward for inclusion in either the Advisory Group or Open Forum. We have already had several replies, and Portfolio Holders will receive details of the revised groups. It was felt the workshops were invaluable in terms of communication with our partners, and perhaps this focused approach is the way forward for the future.

3) AONB Unit Update

a) Financial Report - Year End 2008/2009

Copies of the year end report were circulated to the meeting, and there is a slight under spend at the end of this financial year. The following queries were raised about the report:-

- The differences between the two IW Council figures reflect the IW Council allowance for uncontrollable costs in relation to the hosting of the AONB Unit.
- The Consultancy costs referred to work on the Management Zones project, and the Photographic contract.

Once the Photographic contract is complete, these images will be held in the AONB library for use by our partners on request.

Regarding the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) all the claims are not yet fully processed, but they will be completed this week. At year end there is a slight under spend of £2,492.05, and DM agreed to find out if this can be set against our GIS project, or increase the funding for existing projects.

Note: This under spend has been confirmed at £3, 285.09

b) Quarterly Report

This was circulated with the Agenda, and a query was raised about the Model Landscapes project. This was a combined AONB/Planning exercise to purchase 3D modelling analysis capacity for the digital mapping system. It was agreed a demonstration of the system will be undertaken at the next Steering Committee meeting.

Action: Demonstration of new programme for the next meeting

4) 2009-2010 Funding Allocations (Core/Project/Sustainable Development Fund)

Natural England have now moved to single pot funding, which will provide greater flexibility in how we spend the monies. The total figure granted is £175,677, which represents 100% of the figure provided in 2008/2009, and can be divided between Core Budget, Project and Sustainable Development Fund. There will be little flexibility in terms of what is needed for the Core Budget, especially with the implications around providing maternity cover for ND, but more in terms of the other two areas.

With regard to Project Funding and the Sustainable Development Fund, a proposed Budget breakdown 2009/2010 was circulated to the meeting, together with copies of a report from the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust on their Island Farms Project. This has been extremely successful in providing funding for positive management projects, normally falling outside major agri-environment schemes.

The proposal before the Committee is to allocate a proportion of funding towards the West Wight Landscape Partnership Learning Programme and the continuation of the AONB Small Grant Fund, with the balance then available for the Sustainable Development Fund. It was felt this approach would allow the SDF freedom to focus on the delivery of projects that specifically fulfill SDF criteria.

Concern was expressed about possible duplication in terms of the West Wight Landscape Partnership (WWLP) if, in addition to the funding already set aside, they also apply to the Sustainable Development Fund for other projects. It was felt, however, that as the WWLP are administering several projects many of which are in the AONB it would be impractical to withdraw our support for the Learning Programme. The Committee agreed to support the proposal in principle, but it was felt to be important we determine with the WWLP what we would get done with the monies we provide and if the Committee are unhappy with their response, these monies will go back into the Sustainable Development Fund.

The Committee felt it would be useful for the Scheme Manager of the West Wight Landscape Partnership, Peter Fellows, to give a presentation at the next Committee meeting in July, and this was agreed.

Action: Organise presentation by Peter Fellow of WWLP

5) AONB Management Zones

The report from John Brownscombe circulated to the meeting provides a suggested methodology on Management Zones, and how we move this project forward. The benefits for the AONB were discussed as including:-

- helping the Partnership by bringing information together in relation to particular areas, and in terms of ongoing monitoring. For example, illustrations pulling together different series of information from basic Landscape Character habitat, or in terms of the Historic Environment with the Historic Environment Action Plan, and Biodiversity with the Biodiversity Action Plan.
- provide a log of work to co-ordinate the needs and delivery in terms of landscape character enhancement.
- further localised landscape character assessments.
- planners will have more information in relation to the specific zone areas, in terms of what they need to look at with regard to landscape character.
- encourage the involvement and interest of the local community, and get them more in tune with those areas of the Island designated as areas of outstanding natural beauty, to create a greater sense of ownership.

To move the project forward, we initially need to undertake more desktop work on the zones, before getting the wider community involved in Landscape Character Assessment. It was suggested the West Wight Landscape Partnership and projects approved under the Sustainable Development Fund, could be useful vehicles to engage with local communities, with whom we have not previously worked.

6) Maternity Cover

Cover for ND will be required from 14 August for period of one year, with the following options:-

- a) See if there is any interest from within the Local Planning Authority, ideally as a secondment as part of career progression, although they will be a full permanent member of the AONB team for the duration of the contract. This potentially saves costs

on the recruitment process. Concern was expressed there might be difficulties when the person returns to their previous post in terms of any conflicts of interest, but it was pointed out this would give planning officers experience of an independent Partnership, and the chance to obtain a wider perspective on AONB, landscape and rural planning issues.

- b) The IW Council is looking for areas they can re-deploy staff, but it was felt this was an unlikely route due to the post being in such a specialist field.
- c) Endeavour to fill the post with a one year contract, which could pose problems due to the short term of the contract, and the fact it is on the Island. Additionally, this would cost more in terms of advertising and recruitment costs.

The meeting agreed to pursue the first option as the way forward in the first instance.

7) **Steering Committee Member Updates**

Nature Conservation - the Island Strategic Partnership have adopted national indicators for performance to improve local biodiversity. The Local Authority have made choices of 197 from a large list, which compares to 249 in the Unitary Development Plan. Work will be carried out to see whether these sites are being positively managed for wildlife, plants etc, and it is hoped to improve this number each year. Sites can be large or small, and some can be difficult to manage, while others are non-intervention sites i.e. coastal and small woodland.

Together with other partners, the Wildlife Trust have launched a project on soft cliffs and chines, which intends to - increase awareness by possibly producing a revised booklet, undertaking school studies etc; drawing up a strategy on how to protect chines and their wildlife, by managing the land behind the chines; undertaking a cyclical three year study on the effects of climate change, and any rise in sea levels on the chines. A meeting will be held in July to discuss the way forward.

Farming and Landowning - a Fallen Stock meeting will take place shortly to discuss the new regulations from DEFRA which are only for six months, and concerns have already been raised about potential public health problems. Other European Islands use different methods such as anerobic digestion, and the European Union are looking more positively at the difficulties experienced by Island communities, with more information shortly. With regard to an incinerator, the Economic Partnership have advertised for tenders from interested participants to come forward, and SEEDA have also offered funding.

Farmers are currently obtaining good prices for their livestock but this is mostly for export to Europe, as they have a lot of problems with blue tongue, especially in France. DEFRA have a large stock of vaccines they are now selling at a discount, which has proved a disadvantage for those farmers who initially vaccinated their livestock.

With regard to the tagging of sheep there have been derogations to Brussels, as this will be totally impractical within the United Kingdom.

IW Council - local elections will take place on 04 June, and the issue of representation on the Steering Committee needs to be considered as soon as possible. The funding for Green Island and Taste the Wight has been withdrawn by the Council, so our Tourism Portfolio Holder Steve Blamire is no longer employed by the Council. FH will endeavour to make contact with him as if he continues to work in the Tourism industry, this will not affect his ability to be the Tourism Portfolio Holder.

A question was asked about the SE Plan which was adopted on 12 May, as some changes have been made to the Environmental Impact Assessment from last year's original draft consultation. WP agreed to circulate a link to the document around other members of the Steering Committee.

Action **WP to circulate link on SE Plan to Steering Committee**

Natural England - Memorandum of Understanding is with the Natural England Board, who will be looking into any adjustments following queries from other areas relating to redundancy clauses.

Natural England will be objecting to the application for wind turbines at Ventnor Golf Club, on the basis of landscape impact. Their objection to the turbine application for Cheverton Down has already been officially submitted. ND advised that with the launch of the new Management Plan, new commercial turbine sites are likely to be unsuccessful, unless there is no negative landscape impact. ND will e-mail her draft comment on the Ventnor proposal to members of the Development Control and Planning Work Group, and any comments need to be sent to her by Monday 18 May.

The IW AONB will be hosting a meeting for Natural England AONB Account Managers on 16 June 2009, which will discuss wind turbines and other issues affecting the Island, in order to feed this back to other AONBs.

This year marks the 60th Anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, which paved the way for creating AONBs. This Diamond Jubilee gives an opportunity to celebrate these protected landscapes and recognise them as "Diamonds in the Landscape". Further information can be found on www.diamondsinthelandscape.org.uk and one of the AONB walks "Worsleys, Wyverns and Appuldurcombe", has been included on this website.

Historic Environment- the IW Gardens Trust have been invited by English Heritage to the opening of Princess Beatrice's garden at Carisbrooke Castle. FH too has received an invitation, and will also be attending this event.

6) Any Other Business

There were no items under this section.

Dates of Future Steering Committee Meetings

2009

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 12.39 p.m.