

**Minutes of Isle of Wight AONB Partnership Steering Committee Meeting
Thursday 11 December 2008 - Kings Head, Yarmouth**

Present:

Tony Tutton	Chairman
Denis Russell	Vice-Chair/Community and Parish Portfolio Holder
Steve Blamire	Tourism Portfolio Holder
David Court	Coastal Portfolio Holder
Geoffrey Case	Farming and Landowning Portfolio Holder
Vicky Basford	Historic Environment Portfolio Holder
Jill Green	Recreation Portfolio Holder
David Meeks	Natural England
Councillor Vanessa Churchman	Isle of Wight Council
Bill Murphy	Isle of Wight Council
Fiona Hanna	AONB Lead Officer
Nicky Downer	AONB Planning Officer
Joel Bateman	AONB Communication Officer
Carrie McDowell	AONB Assistant

The Chairman welcomed David Meeks to the meeting representing Natural England, and also Joel Bateman who has been appointed as the new AONB Communication Officer.

1) Apologies

Wendy Perera	Isle of Wight Council
Councillor John Hobart	Isle of Wight Council
David Groves	Rural Business Portfolio Holder
Richard Grogan	Nature Conservation 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.

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

This bid in conjunction with SEEDA is now in its final stage prior to submission, and will be review by their Panel in January. When we receive a copy of this final document, FH will provide a précis of the salient points to the Committee.

Shoreline Management Plan Questions

FH and DC have responded to the questions with regard to this Plan, and should any members of the Steering Committee require a copy, please contact the AONB Unit.

Photographic contract

This project will be commenced in the New Year.

Open Forum

Feedback from attendees at the Forum has been very positive, although concern was expressed regarding falling numbers, despite the fact that a survey was conducted around the Partnership on timing and format. FH has had discussions with Natural England, who have advised that our engagement with both Partnership and the general public, does not necessarily have to be in the form of an annual event of this type. Discussions will be held at the AONB Unit Planning Meeting in January for ideas on what type of event(s) we should hold in 2009, and these will be brought to the next Steering Committee for a decision.

3) **Financial Report**

A copy of the latest financial report was circulated to attendees. There are no areas of concern, and the salary savings from the Lead Officer post have been used to order new computers for the department, which have not yet arrived. All SDF projects are going to plan, except for one, but this will not have any serious impact on payments. A balance of some £6K is still available, and new applications received recently will be brought to the next SDF Panel meeting due to be held in January 2009, and FH is confident all monies will be allocated.

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

The public consultation has now commenced, and will continue until 14 January 2009. The draft Plan is available on the AONB website, and paper copies can be requested from the AONB Unit. We have already received some very positive feedback saying that the policies and objectives are clearly stated and easy to understand. The Strategic Environmental Assessment has also been sent to our statutory consultees, Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency for their comments. Formal observations are required by 23 January 2009. A Management Plan Review Work Group meeting will be held on 27 January to review the responses so the document can go forward for formal adoption by the Isle of Wight Council. WM advised that from their experience with the Core Strategy, we may find it helpful as part of our recommendation to Cabinet, to include an authority to delegate to the Chairman of the Steering Committee any minor editing or factual changes that may be required.

Concern was expressed that the idea of a yearly theme has not been included in the final Draft Plan. It was advised that although this could be an ambition for the future, it was proving too complicated at this stage. We may well trial annual themes as part of reporting and public relations.

5) **Funding Bid for 2009-2010**

Copies of the proposed Work Plan for the AONB Unit in respect of our bid for 2009-2010 were distributed to the meeting. Natural England have made a commitment to AONBs to guarantee funding at a level at least 95% of this year's total. Given their own budgets have been severely curtailed, this is a brave move on their part, and all AONBs will benefit from this commitment. Historically our funding bids have been primarily for core work and the Sustainable Development Fund. There was less available for Projects, as previous advice from Natural England was not to bid for project money unless it impacted on jobs. Project funding, therefore, had not been included in 2008/2009 offers.

There are two areas potentially impacted by a lack of project funding; the development of AONB Management Zones and potential for acquiring outside help with the detailed research required to update Landscape Character Assessments; and the matched funding contribution to the West Wight Landscape Partnership. As we are due to provide details to Natural England by the end of December, FH requested approval from the Steering Committee to forward our bid based on the work programme of what is achievable based on 95%, with the proviso that we can apply at a later date for funding for specific Projects. This approach was approved.

6) **Steering Committee Member Updates**

Community and Parish - the whole Island is now emparished, and one of the major issues from the viewpoint of Town and Parish Councils relates to planning issues, and this will be discussed at a meeting in January/February next year. If an Enforcement Officer could attend a local policy meeting this area would improve, and Planning see no problem with organising

such attendance. WM advised that we now have a dedicated Team Leader and Enforcement Team, who are currently dealing with a five year backlog of cases, and a professional and clear approach is already showing signs of improvement. In addition to the backlog, cases reported over the last six months are 65% higher than last year, which seems to reflect the view that the current set up is getting results. It is also important for Town and Parish Councils to prioritise the areas in which they have greater concern.

Farming and Landowning - attended a meeting on Fallen Stock, and a Feasibility Study on the provision of an incinerator to cater for the needs of agriculture and other waste disposal has now been produced. The initial investment is some half a million pounds, and the farming community are unlikely to be able to make this level of investment. There will also be huge problems when DEFRA remove testing of animals over 30 months. There are also worries about set aside no longer being available, and although DEFRA would like to implement a new scheme, there are concerns about any impact this may have on the farming industry.

IW Council - The Core Strategy was formally approved by Cabinet on 02 December, and is now out for an eight week formal consultation process. It is not the same as the old style planning system, and concentrates on the significance of our approach, vision, key areas, policies and objectives. When the consultation is complete, the plan will be sent to the Government Office, with an Examination in Public in April/May 2009. At this Examination, various themes of the Strategy will be selected for review e.g. vision, housing, employment etc. If the document is approved then depending on the cycle of Council meetings should be approved 2009/2010. It will also include Habitat Regulations and a Strategic Environmental Assessment with links to cross reference other plans such as the Historic Environment Action Plan (HEAP), Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and the AONB Management Plan. It will also include details on how we monitor the delivery of Plan policies, and underlying detail will be covered by Supplementary Planning Documents. The Core Strategy will now be a material consideration in the Development Control process.

Coastal - will be unable to attend the meeting of SCOPAC on 12 December, and apologies have been sent. SCOPAC are trying to pick up the pieces from the changes earlier in the year, with Coastal groups now being reduced to seven. It is important that AONBs retain a high profile with regard to Shoreline Management Plans. DC also announced that he will be standing down from his position as Coastal Portfolio Holder, and the Chairman offered a vote of thanks on behalf of the Steering Committee for all his hard work and wisdom.

Natural England - Lorraine Huggett and Andy Gordon have now been promoted. DM is now in post, and our contact until May, and will endeavour to provide continuity. The Committee expressed the opinion that it is vital we have some stability with regard to our relationship with Natural England. DM is happy to answer any questions members of the Committee may wish to address.

Historic Environment - the Historic Environment Action Plan has now been launched, and a suite of documents are now available on the IW Council website, with clear links to the Core Strategy and Island Plan.

Recreation - have been involved in work on the 2009 Isle of Wight Walking Festival with the Council Events Team, to ensure no walks are repeated within the programme.

Tourism - figures for tourism on the Island are down 4%, but nationally the drop is 10%, and they are currently awaiting up to date information on the last quarter. It is felt we have significant opportunities to position ourselves to take advantage of different groups not travelling abroad. Family holidays will grow in importance over next 12 months, and we need to focus on how we persuade them to visit the Isle of Wight. The Isle of Wight Council have provided a

further £80K to the Tourism budget to concentrate on sustainable tourism. Work is underway to plan what we have and where we are going, and full details should be available at the next meeting. Concern was expressed about ensuring continuity with regard to Tourism, as we have already have four different straplines to promote the Council and this area needs some stability.

7) **Any Other Business**

Ventnor Golf Club: Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening

An application has been received from Ventnor Golf Club, for the erection of three 30 metre high wind turbines. The application has not been registered, as there are deficiencies in the information provided. Such applications could require an Environmental Impact Assessment, but the Planning Authority advise this application does not meet the criteria for such an assessment. However, a visual impact assessment is regarded as a vital part of the application, and the AONB Planning Officer concurs with this view, with one due to be submitted. It has been suggested the AONB Unit should make a legal challenge that the IW Council has failed in its Duty of Regard, by not insisting on an Environmental Impact Assessment. The opinion of the AONB Unit is that this is unnecessary, and has requested approval of this decision from the Steering Committee. Following a vote the opinion of the AONB Unit was given unanimous approval.

Dates of Future Steering Committee Meetings

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 10.00 a.m. unless otherwise advised

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1.28 p.m.

cdm/15 December 2008