

**Minutes of Isle of Wight AONB Partnership Steering Committee Meeting  
Thursday 05 October 2006 - Innovation Centre**

**Present:**

Tony Tutton	Chairman
Denis Russell	Vice-Chair/Community & Parish Portfolio Holder
David Court	Coastal Portfolio Holder
Geoffrey Case	Farming and Landowning Portfolio Holder
Vicky Basford	Historic Environment Portfolio Holder
Richard Grogan	Nature Conservation Portfolio Holder
Nicola Davies	Countryside Agency
Councillor Vanessa Churchman	Isle of Wight Council
Nicky Rogers	AONB Planning Officer
Fiona Hanna	AONB Communications Officer
Carrie McDowell	AONB Assistant

**1) Apologies**

Adam Wallace	Countryside Agency
David Groves	Rural Business Portfolio Holder
Jill Green	Recreation Portfolio Holder
Ashley Curzon	Isle of Wight Council
Councillor Anne Bishop	Isle of Wight Council
John Brownscombe	AONB Lead Officer

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

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

Tennyson Trail: We did not write to Steve Matthews, as the current situation is that the second round of consultation is now complete, and the Highways Department are collating all the objections. The Cabinet of the Isle of Wight Council will make the final decision, and it is possible that there may be a Public Enquiry.

GIS information: As we do not yet have information from Electoral Services regarding boundaries, no details have yet been sent to the new Management Committees.

Tourism Portfolio: We have not yet written to Cat Carkeet, as it was felt this would be more appropriate when JB has returned from annual leave.

Steering Committee Elections: Portfolio Holders standing for re-election were contacted prior to the Annual General Meeting, and all were elected unopposed. In the case of the portfolio for Community and Parish, D Russell was put forward again by the Association of Town and Parish Councils; with regard to Farming and Landowning, G Case was asked by the National Farmers Union if he would carry on in this position.

It was suggested that perhaps in a future issue of our Finest Landscapes Newsletter, we provide some basic information on the format of the Advisory Group and its role within the Isle of Wight AONB Partnership.

### 3) AONB Unit

#### 3.1 Financial Report

A copy of the latest Financial Report was circulated to the meeting. The current situation is that we are still on track, although showing slight overspend through our Newsletter and salaries. This is because payment of the Sustainable Development Fund administration charges, have not yet been transferred to our core budget.

A question was asked about whether there have been any financial implications resulting from the additional duties undertaken by staff in the absence of John Brownscombe, and the meeting was advised that there were none.

#### Note

Following discussions between AC, JB and the Isle of Wight Council's Human Resources Section, it was agreed that as a gesture of thanks and appreciation of the extra work undertaken by the AONB Unit during the long-term sickness absence of the Lead Officer, a one off additional work payment would be given to each team Member. This payment has been made from the Regeneration Service budget, and has no implication on the AONB budget heading.

#### 3.2 Quarterly Report

The second quarter report covering July-September 2006 was circulated to the meeting. We are behind in some areas, but we are still only halfway through the year, and it is hoped that J Brownscombe's return to full time working will enable us to make progress.

The budget action regarding Woodland Products was queries, and there was concern that it had gone quiet in this area, although there has been some work on encouraging biomass. Meetings of the Woodland Forum are initiated by the Countryside Section of the IW Council, but are not held on a regular basis, only when there is a suitable subject for discussion. FH agreed to contact Matthew Chatfield and Jim Fawcett to ascertain the current position.

#### **Action:**

***FH to contact M Chatfield/J Fawcett***

The AONB Character Building Fund has had its official launch as the recent meeting of the Association of Town and Parish Councils, and one application has already been received.

### 4) Review of AGM/Open Forum

The Unit have received excellent feedback from the attendees at the Open Forum, with the presentations showing the breadth of projects supported by the Sustainable Development Fund. The questions raised by Dr Hatchwell will be answered in the near future, and circulated to interested Partnership members on request. A copy will be forwarded to all Steering Committee Members.

### 5) Natural England update

N Davies provided an overview to the meeting of the current situation regarding Natural England. The Isle of Wight will be included in the Western Area team and New Forest, Isle of Wight, Avon

Valley and South Coast local team. The local area team are currently based in Lyndhurst, although this office location is very likely to change in the future. Graham Bryant is the Team Leader, although individual team members have not yet been assigned to their new roles.

Concern was expressed about future funding for the Isle of Wight AONB, but it was stated that indicative figures were in place for 2007/2008. The signed Memorandum of Agreement is in also in place although no more information is known regarding Natural England and AONB core, project and SDF funding at this stage. New funding bids will need to incorporate Natural England objectives, and more information will be available on this nearer to the time when bids are due to be submitted.

ND will be transferred to the Eastern Area team and the Kent and Surrey Hills local team, however, there will be an extensive handover period during which time she will be available to provide assistance to Graham Bryant's team. ND has asked that all information (including planning information), continues to be sent to her in the first instance, so that she can filter to other relevant colleagues as necessary. A Wallace will be the Partnerships team leader in the Regional, Advocacy and Partnerships team. His new role will initially remain as 50% of his time being spent on national AONB policy and 50% on regional work.

## 6) **Update Portfolio holders/Core funders**

**Coastal** - following the recent SCOPAC Officers meeting, there is little change to DEFRA's plan to draw together in one place flood risk management for both rivers and coastal areas under "Making Space for Water". The Local Government Association and other groups including SCOPAC are concerned about losing responsibility in coastal areas, and the deadline for the next consultation is 31 October 2006. The Island is an excellent example of a microcosm of the types of problems concerned with coastal erosion. The draft Marine Mineral Dredging Regulations have raised concerns, however, the extent to which we can exert influence in such matters is limited. The next full Conference will be held on 10 November, and the next Officers meeting 26 January 2007.

**Community and Parish** - the recent meeting of the Association of Town and Parish Councils, highlighted the problem of speeding through villages, but contact with Highways has not resolved the problem.

NR advised she had recently attended a Rural Highways Conference, intended to encourage the removal of signage in favour of more natural ways of reducing speed, and she intends to make contact with Highways to discuss these practices. The Corporate Manslaughter laws cause difficulty, and the Council can be held liable if an accident occurs and they are found to have not provided appropriate signage. She hopes to look at these issues with the Council's Highway Engineers, to try and find a balance.

**Nature Conservation** - is any information available on the new application for Undercliff Drive, and NR advised nothing had been registered as yet. It would be helpful if either the Small Grant

Fund or a similar funding scheme could be re-instated, to fill the funding gap between ELS and HLS. FH advised that the AONB Unit intends to review and monitor the current funding streams.

**Historic Environment** - VB distributed copies of her comments on the Countryside Quality Counts Assessment of the Isle of Wight JCA second round, and gave a brief overview of the contents. The comments were required online and the contents of the document proved to be very time consuming and complex. VB felt that as there were some serious discrepancies in the

information held about the Isle of Wight, it was important that these were addressed, and there were also concerns that the IW Council's Countryside Section had not been invited to comment. It will be possible to address this issue, as the deadline for comments has now been extended.

The information is required as part of the monitoring assessment to be sent to DEFRA, as part of the funding and review of various schemes.

**IW Council** - Councillor Churchman raised the topic of hedgerows and hedgerow management within the AONB with regard to farming and conservation management. It was pointed out that under the Entry Level Stewardship Scheme hedgerows are now cut every two years, but this does not apply to hedgerows fronting the highway. In addition there has for many years been a rule that hedgerows are not cut between April and the end of July, as it is against the law to damage nests, eggs and birds.

A question was asked about schemes regarding the removal of Dutch elm. FH agreed to contact Island 2000 for up to date information, and will report back at the next Steering Committee meeting in December.

**Action**

***F Hanna to contact Island 2000 regarding Dutch elm***

**Natural England** - information on performance indicators and new monitoring structure will be in place for the last six months of this current financial year.

**Chairman** - visitor numbers have been down at National Trust properties this year. A question was asked about the input of the National Trust into the Tourist Board, and TT advised that as a body the National Trust are members of Isle of Wight Tourism and attended meetings with other organisations.

**7) Any Other Business**

FH advised the next meeting is due to be held on 15 December, and suggested that we have a fairly short meeting followed by lunch and perhaps a walk to make it a more social occasion. This suggestion was endorsed by the meeting.

It was also advised the recent meeting with the IW Council Communications Section was very productive, and in future the AONB Unit will have closer links in this area.

**8) Dates of future meetings**

Dates of future meetings were detailed on the agenda, but the meeting scheduled for 15 February may not be convenient for some members as it is half term. **This date has now been changed to Thursday 22 February 2007**

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1.33 p.m.