

**Minutes of Isle of Wight AONB Partnership Steering Committee Meeting  
Thursday 16 February - Quay Arts 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
Councillor Anne Bishop	Isle of Wight Council
Councillor Vanessa Churchman	Isle of Wight Council
Ashley Curzon	Isle of Wight Council
John Brownscombe	AONB Lead Officer
Nicky Rogers	AONB Planning Officer
Fiona Hanna	AONB Communications Officer
Carrie McDowell	AONB Assistant

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, Ashley Curzon, Planning Policy Manager, IW Council updated the Committee on the Island Plan Core Strategy at the start of its next consultation round. If any member would like a copy of the presentation, please contact the AONB Unit. Alternatively the Island Plan Core Strategy can be viewed on line at [www.iwight.com/Islandplan/corestrategy](http://www.iwight.com/Islandplan/corestrategy), or by contacting Planning Policy on 823851.

**1) Apologies**

Cat Carkeet	Tourism Portfolio Holder
Vicky Basford	Historic Environment Portfolio Holder
Jill Green	Recreation Portfolio Holder
Richard Grogan	Nature Conservation Portfolio Holder
David Groves	Rural Business Portfolio Holder
Nicola Davies	Countryside Agency
Adam Wallace	Countryside Agency
Andrew Ashcroft	Isle of Wight Council

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Churchman to her first meeting of the Steering Committee, as a replacement for Councillor Arnold.

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

The minutes were accepted as a true record of the proceedings of the last meeting, and signed by the Chairman.

DEFRA consultation document "Making Space for Water": Comment on this paper has yet to be formulated, but will be done within the consultation period.

Forwarding of e-mail regarding SE Tourism website: This action was brought forward from a previous meeting, and has still not been completed.

Countryside Quality Counts: Meeting between JB and VB has now taken place, and comments on the historic environment in the context of the AONB have been submitted.

Dead Elms: Contact has been made via the NAAONB with other AONB's, in relation to their management of dead elms. We will be following up on the replies received from Dedham Vale, Chichester Harbour, South Downs and Shropshire Hills.

Reclaiming our Rural Highways: JG's report was enclosed with the previous minutes.

Funding Bid: There were no comments or questions received by the Unit regarding funding for 2006-2007, therefore, the final bid has been sent to the Countryside Agency. Further information will be provided in the Financial Update.

Finest Landscapes Newsletter: A detailed report was been enclosed with the Agenda, and will be reported on later in the meeting.

### 3) **AONB Unit Update**

#### 3.1 **Activity Update and Financial Report**

The quarterly report for October to December was circulated to the meeting. JB gave a brief overview of the main areas of work undertaken by the Unit in the third quarter:-

- It will be fifty years this year, since the designation of the first AONB in the Gower. The NAAONB are planning several events to celebrate this anniversary, with a new logo for us to display. A fifty-mile walk has been planned on the Island, which will be led by Jill Green on 12 and 13 August 2006.
- The photographic database sponsored by the Countryside Agency has now been completed, with images of each slide and key words to make picture choice much easier. It is now planned to provide the same information for photographs taken by the AONB Unit.
- A map of the AONB will be included in the "Island Visitor".
- The Discovery project with Brighstone School, which was extremely successful, has now been completed.
- An Island Food and Craft Association was launched last week with an event at the Roman Villa. The initial stages have been funded via the Sustainable Development Fund, and the AONB Unit has a seat on their Steering Committee.
- Following a request from the Local Access Forum, an Open Access Land Audit has been undertaken by the AONB and the Ramblers Association. It covers new open access areas, and endeavours to increase responsibility and awareness.
- A large amount of work has been done on planning applications, consultation on the Island Plan, and heavy involvement in pre-application discussions. We have also provided comments on the Local Transport Plan and Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
- We have undertaken work in conjunction with IW Council's Events Team for this year's Walking Festival, and it is intended that we will be plotting all the walk routes on GIS, then producing route maps on the Walking Festival website.
- We have assisted with the Around the Solent HLF bid; attended seminars on Climate Change and Protected Landscapes, the latter including excellent information on wind farms, the notes from which will be circulated when available;

A question was asked about whether during "Walk the Wight" access could be easier at West High Down, as navigating some of the stiles can be very difficult. It was agreed that contact would be made with the relevant organisations to see if this could be done.

**Action:** *JB to contact IWC Events Team/Earl Mountbatten Hospice and the National Trust*

The Financial Report was circulated with the Agenda and 83% of the way through the financial year we have spent 83% of the budget, although there are some areas of both overspend and underspend.

The Sustainable Development Fund has been very well supported, with an excellent variety of projects. It is possible to utilise up to 10% of the grant monies to assist with the cost of administration, and this year the balance of funding, approximately £3,400, will be taken into the Core Budget for this purpose.

A question was asked about the project for Island 2000, and it was advised the monies were granted to secure archaeological finds at Alverstone, following work by the Environment Agency and Island 2000 on the Yar Water Catchment Works. The work was all undertaken in accord with IW Council Archaeology Service.

The Small Grant Fund has not attracted so much interest this year, and there are monies remaining from the original £15K grant. It has been agreed with the Countryside Agency that this will be used to re-issue the AONB pocket map in conjunction with IW Tourism, which was very successful when first issued.

Regarding our bids for funding for 2006/2007, these have all been approved and offer letters received. However, under new rules from DEFRA the Countryside Agency are unable to commit more than 80% of next year's funds in this financial year. It is expected that we will have confirmation of the additional 20% early in 2005/2006.

#### **4) Updates**

##### **4.1 Portfolio Holders, Core Funders, Chairman**

**Coastal** - DC was unable to attend the SCOPAC full conference meeting, but drew the meeting's attention to DEFRA's consultation document "Making Space for Water". Concern was expressed about the management of coastal protection being moved from local to regional level, particularly as the regional offices will be based in York. It was also felt the existence of SCOPAC should be retained, to continue its important work on areas of the south coast. As the timescale for consultation is fairly short, JB agreed to contact Robin McInnes regarding the closing date, and suggested our response be discussed at the next meeting of the Development Control and Planning Work Group.

**Action:** *JB to contact R McInnes and a DCPWG meeting to be arranged*

**Tourism** - The portfolio holder's update was read to the meeting. IW Tourism have now launched their new website, which profiles the AONB and has links to our own website. Copies of the 2006 guide were made available to the meeting. They are also running a series of E-business workshops for the tourism industry, to advise how to make better use of the Internet. The "Brown Sign" issue is moving forward with old signs in Brading being replaced by new ones. IW Tourism, in conjunction with Brading Town Council, will be

consulting with businesses in Brading on a new signage scheme. The Highways Department have drawn up a schedule identifying signs in an unacceptable condition, and will be contacting the relevant establishments to arrange any maintenance or replacement work that needs to be undertaken. A Walkers and Cyclists workshop held at Brading Roman Villa proved very successful.

**Farming and Landowning** - The biofuel production project through IW Grain has been shelved due to costing difficulties. Farming activities with regard to the disposal of plastics are now classified as industrial waste, and although disposal can currently be made at Lyn Bottom this may not always be the case. Methods of disposal need to be clarified for the future, which will, of course, have cost implications. The temporary exemption regarding fallen stock is still in place, but is finite and may only last for two years. A small incinerator for sheep and calves is in the planning stages, and it is hoped to obtain some funding from the SDF. Regarding a larger incinerator, it had been hoped to link the disposal of fallen stock to that of clinical waste, and although discussions have taken place with Councillor Hunter-Henderson, a way forward could not be found. Councillors Bishop and Churchman advised they would make further contact with Councillor Hunter-Henderson to re-visit this proposal.

**Action:** ***Councillors Bishops and Churchman to make further contact with Councillor Hunter-Henderson***

**Community and Parish** - Nothing to report on this occasion.

**IW Council** - Consultation is required on a new document from the ODPM (Housing PPS3). This will include discussion on sustainable communities, which is likely to impact on rural areas. Any new development will need to consider a contribution to local affordable housing, with Local Authorities making any changes they feel are necessary for their particular area. The IW Council are putting together their final response for the closing date of end February 2006, and it was suggested we look at the emphasis of PPS3 from an AONB perspective,

**Chairman** - A Coastal Risk Assessment is being produced on how much land will be lost over the next fifty years due to coastal change, and looking at economic loss and planning how to provide the same facilities over a long period. The National Trust have received a Heritage Lottery Grant to purchase a small piece of land adjacent to Bembridge Fort.

**Bembridge Fort:** It is intended that volunteers will operate tours around the Fort for the summer season, as there are several areas of interest.

Interpretation panels have also been set up on Tennyson Down, West High Down, the Needles, Brook and the Duver.

#### **5) Honours Recommendations - New Year 2007 Round**

If anyone has any suggestions for nominations regarding the above, please could they provide these to JB by 06 March 2006.

#### **6) Tennyson Trail**

Following discussion of the paper on the Tennyson Trail, the meeting agreed to support the principle of the use of TRO's as a means of control, positive management and protection of the sensitive landscapes, natural and historic environments within the designated area. It was also agreed to write formally to the Highway Authority with our recommendation.

The application of a TRO is supported by the Police, which will provide them with more flexibility to stop and prosecute offenders.

**Action:** ***JB to write to the Highway Authority informing them of our recommendation***

**7) 'Finest Landscapes' Newsletter**

Following the action item from the previous minutes, a survey has been undertaken with other AONB's, to obtain information on their protocols with regard to newsletters and publications. One of the major results of the survey was that it established the excellent value of our own newsletter; which was the cheapest of those surveyed at just 9p per copy. The next cheapest was 30p per copy, and the most expensive £1.30 per copy. Other areas generally have two issues per year rather than three, with no advertisements.

The general view of the meeting was that the Newsletter was an excellent publication, well produced containing interesting articles and good pictures. Concern was expressed that if the size was increased from the current eight pages, it would lose its impact and people would not take the time to read it. Following further discussion it was agreed to take forward Recommendation 1 with a view to further research regarding sponsorship, and continuing with three issues for 2006 with a possible change to two issues for 2007.

**8) Any Other Business**

Councillor Churchman expressed concern about future water supplies on the Island, although Southern Water have stated there will be no problem supplying all our needs. An application has been put forward to the SDF for a project called "Waterworks", the aim of which is to raise awareness of water usage. Its remit is to undertake community audits to encourage recycling of water, expand the use of drought tolerant garden plants. Councillor Churchman also mentioned the importance of reed beds.

The SDF is also to consider a feasibility study on the subject of biomass. A seminar is due to be held next month for producers and end users, and it is hoped further seminars will take place during the year.

The AONB Unit will be sponsoring the Fort Victoria Foray, the Environment tent at the Wolverton show and, for the first time, a marquee at the Chale Show.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1.25 p.m.

**9) Dates of future meetings**

Details of these were listed on the agenda. Venues will be confirmed.