

Tennyson Trail: TT pointed out the County Press had reported a comment by the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods that the decision to use a permit system had been supported by Councillor Hunter-Henderson, but VC advised that subsequently the Scrutiny Committee had rejected this idea. It was agreed JB should write again to Head of Engineering Services requesting a resolution of the closure issue, based on Tim Slade's report.

Action: *JB to clarify current the current position on the Tennyson Trail*
Update: *See circulated e-mail plus Tennyson Trail TRO report*

Copy of PRIME leaflet to JG: this action is complete.

One Million Blooms project: FH gave a brief overview of this project which was an Isle of Wight Council initiative, where local community groups applied for funding to bring floral colour to public areas in their towns and villages e.g. Newport Police Station and Whippingham roundabout. The key criteria were local distinctiveness, suitability for planting, long term sustainability. Simon Goodenough is Project Manager, and the AONB Unit is involved as a member of the project's Steering Group.

Tourism representative on Steering Committee: JB has written to both the Head of Tourism and the Head of the local Chamber of Commerce, to see if a tourism industry representative can be found to serve as the Portfolio Holder on our Steering Committee, especially as Tourism is such a high profile part of the Island economy. The Head of Tourism suggested that Steve Blamire, Green Island Awards Officer, should act as interim representative in this area until the elections are held at our AGM. Concern was expressed that portfolio holders should not also be Council officers, but it was felt this would not be a problem because of joint funding for Green Island. In addition, SB has already attended meetings on behalf of the AONB Unit in the area of sustainable tourism initiatives. JB advised that even though the Tourism post was vacant, a lot of work in tourism locally, regionally and nationally is still taking place in recognition of its importance. VC advised that she has a contact in the Chamber of Commerce, and would try to bring some pressure to bear to find an independent person to stand for election to the Tourism Portfolio post.

Copy of "Reclaiming Rural Highways" to be sent to Councillor Churchman: this action is complete.

Enforcement: There was much discussion on this subject, and it was advised the recent Peer Review had identified this as a target area for improvement, although recruiting experienced planning and enforcement staff is a nationwide problem. JB said that now the AONB Unit is back in Seaclose he is attending meetings of the Senior Management Team, and is confident the Improvement Plan which includes issues regarding Enforcement will lead to considerable improvements. It was asked whether lack of enforcement breached the Council's statutory duty of regard, and it was pointed out this has not yet been tested under either the guidance parameters or the law. NR is planning to work through the complaints list on a regular basis, highlight those in the AONB and work with the Enforcement Team to see what can be done. Problems are exacerbated by the fact that no targets for enforcement are laid down by Government. An important part of the planning process is conditioning, and there is a lack of confidence that conditions attached to planning permissions are not implemented or enforced. It was agreed that this item would be included on the agenda for further discussion at the next Development Control and Planning Work Group meeting.

3) **Funding Update - Budget Update 2007/2008**

A copy of the latest Financial Report was circulated to the meeting, and there were no concerns as we were on target with our core budget. We have received confirmation of funding for SDF

and CBF with the amounts being granted as £70K and £12.5K respectively. The amounts were less than requested, but national project support for all AONBs has been reduced. Further to discussions with Natural England, it is hoped that information on the funding amounts for projects will not suffer the same delays next year. Of the total amount of discretionary funding available to Natural England, 20% is allocated to AONBs, which is a large proportion of the total.

4) Quarterly Report - First Quarter 2007/2008

A copy of the first Quarterly Report was distributed to the meeting.

5) National Conference Update

This year's Conference was held in Winchester and jointly hosted by the Isle of Wight, Chichester Harbour, South Downs, Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs and North Wessex Downs AONBs, entitled "Changing Landscapes: a view of landscape management in AONBs". JB was one of the keynote speakers, and the AONB Unit was also involved in organising workshops plus two field trips to the Island, with the latter being attended by 50 delegates. At the Conference five children from Brighstone Primary School together with their teacher talked about the Discovery project at their school, and we received lots of positive comments and interest in how the project was undertaken.

The subject of the workshop was Climate Change and Management Plan Review, and the SEEDA feasibility study on its potential impact on key landscape features. There were 40 attendees, the largest group of the day, from AONBs throughout the UK including Northern Ireland. JB led a field trip entitled Moving Coasts Historic Landscapes, while that led by FN/NR was entitled Diverse Projects, Diverse Landscapes. A joint lunch was held at Shorwell Village Hall with set up and lunch using local produce supplied by Brighstone Tea Rooms by CM assisted by DR. After lunch VB gave a talk on Historic Environment issues and the HEAP project. JB thanked the AONB team and all those who helped make the day a resounding success.

6) AONB Unit Update on current and proposed activities

(i) AGM/Open Forum 2007

The AGM/Open Forum will be held at Northwood House on 18 September 2007. The suggested theme this year is the AONB Management Plan Review, how we approach this and link it into other local agendas specifically the Local Development Framework and Communications Strategy, and this was agreed. Three portfolio posts are due for re-election - Recreation, Historic Environment and Tourism.

(ii) Management Plan Review Update

Paper 5.2 had been distributed to Steering Committee members with the agenda. It set out the background to the Management Plan Review for discussion as to how this should proceed. It is hoped that the delay in taking forward the Core Strategy of the Island Plan, will provide an opportunity to align the Management Plan Review as a core document in the Local Development Framework. This will enable us to share costs and processes and raise the profile of the Management Plan. A question was asked about the spatial element, and it was advised that this will now be included and the whole issue brought to our Open Forum in September. The suggested approach is to have an AONB wide vision and policies with more detail for geographical areas such as 'Back of the Wight' etc. We need to identify key threats, challenges and opportunities to look at detailed target delivery on a spatial area that fits in with protection of the AONB as a whole. There is no conflict with the LDF as PPS7 sets out the importance of AONBs, and

JB is confident the original Core Strategy was nearly right with its approach of urban areas first for growth, followed by brownfield sites then other areas for appropriate change. The infrastructure requires more work, and the right way forward is to provide a strong plan to shape the Island more effectively. The consultation period of July/August coinciding with the holiday period is unfortunate, but it is hoped that over that eight week period organisations will have someone available to provide feedback. The Communications Strategy, to be launched at the forthcoming Open Forum, will set out how we engage partnership members with the Management Plan Review, future consultations and promotion. It was suggested we provide a brief simply worded list of our achievements in relation to the original Management Plan, and it was agreed this was a good idea. There were suggestions that we emphasise both good and bad practice examples in the AONB. It was advised that this is a very sensitive area and could lead to legal action, which is what happened in the Chilterns some time ago and why we have our public liability insurance. December will see the fifth anniversary of the publication of our Finest Landscapes newsletter, and this edition will largely look back on our achievements to date and forward to new challenges.

DR proposed that the meeting approve the way forward recommended in the paper, and this was agreed.

(iii) Rural Issues

Paper 5.3 had also been distributed with the agenda, and set out details of a sub-group of the Rural Social and Community Programme, which is looking at key rural issues in order to develop a Rural Strategy. The details so far have been brought to the Steering Committee for their initial comments prior to a broader consultation process later in the year. As part of the Lead Officer's role, JB is now Chair of the Rural Social Community Programme (RSCP) which is funded through GOSE, and will be involved in the development of both the Rural Access to Services Programme (RASP) bid and the proposed Isle of Wight Leader bid. The work is looking to challenge perceptions of rural issues researching the rural evidence base. In this way, we hope to identify any gaps in meeting the Island's needs in a rural context, or any other specific delivery issues. JB asked members to provide any comments they may have either today or via separate contact outside the meeting.

GB said that NE would be interested in seeing how they could be involved, especially in the environmental priorities, and developing input into the future vision. There are opportunities for NE to discuss with JB and the Partnership their potential role for the Isle of Wight AONB to act as a pilot scheme.

VC raised the issue of waste management recycling, as only 25% of the amount going to landfill was from domestic households and the remainder from the business sector, and that waste delivery mechanisms need to be put in place for the Island.

7) Steering Committee member updates

Coastal - DC gave an overview of the background and work of SCOPAC and highlighted three main issues:-

- a) Dr R McInnes, Chairman of the SCOPAC Officers Working Group, has recently announced his retirement from the IW Council which could be a problem. It was decided that as a temporary measure, he would carry on in a consultancy role.

- b) The initial work of SCOPAC was mainly concerned with coastal protection and research into the way schemes were developed. More recently the emphasis has been on administration matters, discussions on documents such as “Making Space for Water” and the likelihood that the responsibility for coastal protection will now be that of the Environment Agency and lead to a loss of influence by SCOPAC in these areas. It is too early to suggest any precipitate action is required by the Partnership, but the link to these areas is still relevant.
- c) Shoreline Management Plans - the Consultant’s brief was the Isle of Wight in the last 100 years and options to retain new defences as sea levels rise. What happens in the future regarding the Island coastline, where managed retreat is an option and where existing development precludes this as a solution. Coastal groups are a major factor in these decisions, and the AONB needs to keep in touch with any decisions that are made.

There was much discussion in the area of SMPs, and the point was made that in the past, coastal defence works had been carried out with no strategic plans linked to practical issues. Assessment documents in relation to flood risk (PPS25) need to be considered within the LDF. GB also advised that more support would be forthcoming in future from Natural England in this area.

Farming and Landowning - the fallen stock issue has gone quiet, although the Council’s new Chief Executive is keen to see some development in the provision of an Island abattoir and link to an incinerator. The national scheme for dealing with fallen stock is coming up for renewal, and an e-petition is gaining support from farmers to return to the previous system of burying stock. SEEDA has expressed an interest in funding an abattoir, but it needs to be part of a complete system of fallen stock, abattoir, waste etc. There has been mention of a possible bid to the new RDPE for higher level bids for their element of the programme, based around co-operative working rather than lots of small bids. It was pointed out there could be difficulties getting meat cut, if processors on the south coast were to close.

Recreation - JG has led three walks around the IoW this year plus other walks, and has continued with efforts to keep the profile of the AONB as high as possible with both residents and visitors to the Island.

Rural Business - nothing to report on this occasion.

Community and Parish - the Town and Parish Councils Association have been advised if they have anything they wish to raise at our Steering committee, they should make contact with DR.

JB advised that the AONB Unit have been approached by Brighstone, Freshwater and Chale Parish Councils for assistance with regard to Village Design statements. The results of a survey in Chale, has revealed that residents put a high value on the countryside, landscape and AONB.

Nature Conservation - the agri-environment scheme of Isle of Wight Living Landscapes has made contact with 113 landowners, visited 106 with 83 agreements. These cover 5,000 hectares, which is 16% of the Island’s land surface, 70% of which is in the AONB; 12 SSSIs, 19 SAMs and SACs which has made a significant contribution to both the Management Plan and Biodiversity Action Plan. The aspects covered were landscape access, biodiversity and landscape woodland management, with 38 entry level schemes and 18 higher level schemes. A vote of thanks was given for all the excellent work in this area.

GB commented that assisting farmers to access available funds is a good example of working with partners. In order to obtain future funding, it is likely that we will need to look at the way farming under HLS is better for the countryside and set out why funding is required. This is important because of the competition to access any available funding.

Natural England - it has been a very difficult process to incorporate three organisations into one called Natural England, but the processes are coming together so that they can now start to highlight regional core actions and what is required to deliver these. The budget has not progressed as far as was hoped, but this has been due to not fully understanding the scope of their commitments. A national programme delivery review is underway and it is intended that AONBs will be part of this review. It will provide a better opportunity to find out how best to deliver what is required across the local and regional agendas with the limited resources available. The feedback mechanism to NE is critical to identify local issues and priorities and demonstrate how delivery needs to be better to do better things. The agri-environment scheme, joining with the public sector on coastal protection and re-cycling scheme are all local examples of how working together with partners can improve delivery. NE needs to establish best practice in working with partners on countryside quality and conservation, ensure that policies are transparent in order to deliver and shorten the distance between policy and delivery.

VC raised a concern from one of her constituents about a contract to dredge 10m tons of gravel four miles off Culver Point for export to France, and its impact on local fishing grounds. Contact had been made with Dr McInnes, who advised that our coastline would not be affected as the tidal flows are in the direction of Worthing. It was felt that more information would be helpful and JB agreed to see what he could find out.

Action: **JB to find more details on dredging contact**

8) Any Other Business

The DEFRA consultation on Access to the Coast has a deadline for response of 11 September, and AONB draft comments will be circulated to all Committee members.

FH distributed reports on last year's Character Building and Sustainable Development Funds, providing details on the various projects supported by the funding from Natural England for these projects.

A programme for dates of future meetings to the end 2008 was provided to members of the Steering Committee as follows:-

2007

18 September	AGM/Open Forum to be held at Northwood House
11 October	Steering Committee to be held at the Innovation Centre
13 December	Steering Committee (venue tba)

2008

07 February	Steering Committee (venue tba)
08 May	Steering Committee (venue tba)
10 July	Steering Committee (venue tba)
09 October	Steering Committee (venue tba)
11 December	Steering Committee (venue tba)

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1.55 p.m.

cdm/24 July 2007