

**Minutes of Isle of Wight AONB Partnership Steering Committee Meeting
Thursday 20 July 2006 - Innovation Centre**

Present:

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

1) Apologies

Adam Wallace	Countryside Agency
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: It was advised that the temporary order closing the Tennyson Trail would expire on 27 July 2006. We do not have any further information about a renewal of the temporary closure, so the Trail will re-open on that day. Consultation on total closure is continuing, but Hampshire Police are not in favour as they foresee problems policing the Trail. It was agreed that the AONB Unit would write to Steve Matthews in Highways to express the strong concern of the Steering Committee, and offer help with overcoming any logistical difficulties such as gate keys.

Action: AONB Unit to write to S Matthews

GIS information: FH has made contact with Anne Marston of Countryside to pursue the possibility of joint working. Contact details have recently been received for Management Committees, but have not yet been followed up.

Action AONB Unit to provide details of the AONB to the new Management Committees

IW Council Structure: Following the appointment of the new Chief Executive Officer, the Economic Development and Regeneration Directorate has been divided into two parts - Environment and Neighbourhoods and Regeneration and Development. The current proposal is to include the AONB Unit within the former, but AC advised that discussions will be held with the new Chief Executive and the Countryside Agency, to decide which Directorate best fits the objectives of the AONB Management Plan. Until a final decision is made, the AONB Unit will continue to be line managed by AC.

John Brownscombe: AC has been in regular contact with John regarding his future, and the intention is to draw up a return to work plan for John, with his long-term welfare as a prime concern. The plan will then be discussed with his GP and if he is happy the plan can be implemented, it will be put in place. If any individual members wish to send John their good wishes, these can be sent via the AONB Unit.

Tourism Portfolio: Cat Carkeet has resigned as Tourism Portfolio Holder, as she has accepted a job with Tourism South East and is moving to the mainland. It was agreed that a letter should be sent on behalf of the Steering Committee thanking her for her valuable contribution, and wishing her well for the future. The meeting felt that it was very important to find a replacement, and it was agreed that contact would be made with Isle of Wight Tourism and other tourism providers, to see if a suitable candidate can be found.

Action: **AONB Unit to write to Cat Carkeet**

3) **AONB Unit**

3.1 **Financial Report**

A copy of the latest Financial Report was circulated to the meeting. The current situation is good, with the only overspend being on Publicity and Promotions, which tends to be in phases, but our overall forecast for year-end is on target.

The £80K currently available under the SDF Fund has been allocated to several projects, and if the additional £20K is received via the Countryside Agency from DEFRA, we already have projects approved for funding. ND advised there was no further information from DEFRA about these additional funds, although they are currently looking for budget savings.

We have received notification from Land Use Consultants, the AONB Discovery project has been chosen as a case study to be included in the review they are producing on last year's Sustainable Development Fund.

3.2 **Quarterly Report**

The first quarter report covering April-June 2006 was circulated to the meeting. The Steering Committee felt that the AONB team had worked very hard, to ensure the activities listed on the Countryside Agency's Core Bid were on target in the absence of JB.

4) **Ratification of AONB Partnership response to Wellow Wind Farm application**

The Development Control and Planning Work Group held a meeting on 23 June 2006, to draw up a draft response for ratification by the Steering Committee. Following that meeting, NR circulated a draft to all members of the Work Group and has incorporated their comments into the draft.

There has been a recent wind farm application at Whinash which was refused by the Inspector on appeal and, like the Wellow application, is not actually in an AONB but between two protected areas (National Parks). As the CRoW Act gives AONBs equal protection as National Parks, it was felt reference to this appeal should be included in our response.

Concern was expressed about the extant permission at Cheverton Down, which is in the AONB. This application was approved prior to the CRoW Act under different rules e.g. no Environmental Impact Assessment was required. It is unlikely that should the Wellow application go to appeal, the Inspector would see this as setting a precedent for wind farms on the Island.

ND advised that the Countryside Agency have lodged a formal objection against the wind farm, as it is an application of major significance. They have objected on the grounds that it is between two nationally protected landscapes i.e. the New Forest National Park and the Isle of Wight AONB.

AC advised that the Isle of Wight Council were investigating other sources of renewable energy, such as tidal power, which is more sustainable environmentally friendly and has less impact on the landscape.

5) **Steering Committee Elections - AGM**

In line with the Isle of Wight AONB Partnership constitution, decisions are required on portfolio elections and the post of Chairman. It was proposed that due to the current re-organisation in both the Isle of Wight Council and the Countryside Agency, together with the absence of the AONB Lead Officer, the Steering Committee required a strong Chairman. TT was happy to continue in the post of Chairman, and the meeting agreed unanimously to extend his Chairmanship for a further two years. This proposal will need to be ratified at the Annual General Meeting in September.

After much discussion, the meeting agreed that the posts of Tourism (currently vacant), Farming and Landowning, Coastal and Community and Parish would be put forward for re-election at the AGM. The current holders of these portfolios agreed to stand for re-election, and will receive letters requesting their written confirmation. The meeting also agreed that the two portfolio posts of Rural Business and Nature Conservation, the holders of which were elected in 2004, be extended, and RG and DG were happy to continue for a further two years. It was also agreed that contact would be made with Advisory Group members, to explain the Committee's decisions regarding the current exceptional circumstances. If there are any objections, these will be addressed at the AGM.

Action: ***AONB Unit to write to portfolio holders standing for re-election and Advisory Group members regarding elections and extension of the Chairmanship.***

6) **Theme/Topics for Open Forum**

FH provided a brief overview of the subjects covered in previous Open Forums:-

2002 - What Price Natural Beauty - Tourism and Local Distinctiveness/Branding and Marketing of Local Produce plus workshops

2003 - Living with Landscapes Making Sense of Place celebrating the 40th anniversary of the AONB - Landscape Character/Local Distinctiveness plus workshops

2004 - 30th Anniversary of the Heritage Coast - Island coastline as a source of inspiration for artists through the ages/Geological and Nature Conservation importance of these special seascapes/ Archaeological Importance of the Tennyson and Hamstead Heritage Coasts

2005 - Profiling a Protected Landscape - Environmental Importance of the Isle of Wight AONB/Socio-Economic profile of the Isle of Wight AONB/Protecting a Living and Working AONB Landscape/ The Island Plan

It was agreed that the theme should be "Policy into Practice" showing how words are translated into what is happening on the ground, using examples from SGF and SDF, and including a progress report in direct relation to the Management Plan. VB has offered to provide a presentation on the Historical Environmental Action Plan Project, funded under the Sustainable Development Fund.

7) Inclusion of regular BAP page in Finest Landscapes Newsletter

Following the discontinuation of the Wight Insight magazine, there is now no forum for the regular news information on BAP provided by the Countryside Section. We have been approached by Anne Marston to see if it is possible for them to have a regular page in our Finest Landscapes Newsletter. They are prepared to make a financial contribution for this, which will help to mitigate the future cost of producing the newsletter, and BAP is of great importance to the AONB designation. The meeting agreed that providing editorial control remains with the AONB Partnership, and the content is relevant to the AONB, this proposal should be accepted.

8) Update Portfolio holders/Core funders

Coastal - coastal protection is still in turmoil, following DEFRA's plan to draw together in one place flood risk management for both rivers and coastal areas. There has been much argument and discussion on the proposed Marine Bill, and the Local Government Association are keen to ensure that management remains under the close control of Local Authorities.

Rural Business - IFCA has now appointed a new Head of Operations, and membership is continuing to increase.

Recreation - five sites in the AONB have been subject to fly tipping, but no action has been taken as they are on private land. Regarding the Local Access Forum, Mike Jordan has had to stand down as Chairman following the rules of rotation, and JB was under consideration to take his place - this has not yet been resolved. Attended the 141st AGM of the Open Space Society, and expressed a personal opinion on the wind farm as the Recreation Portfolio holder on the Steering Committee.

Farming and Landowning - there are still problems with payments to farmers from DEFRA, and budget cuts from the Countryside Agency are of great concern. There has been no movement regarding waste management, although lots of ideas have been put forward. The problem of fallen stock has still not been resolved, and another feasibility study is to be undertaken.

Community and Parish - Nothing to report on this occasion.

Nature Conservation – The Heritage Lottery Fund returned the West Wight Landscape Partnership's bid, as changes were required. There have been problems with matched funding, but they anticipate commencing to spend the £2.5m bid in 2007. Leader+ funding ends in 2007, and a bid will need to be constructed in April 2008 for further funding, which may include an approach to the AONB Partnership. Kent Downs will be able to provide details regarding Intereg4, as they have been receiving Intereg funding for some years.

Historic Environment - Nothing to report

Countryside Agency - Natural England's vesting day is 02 October 2006, but there is no further information available on the practical arrangements. ND circulated a document to the meeting entitled "Natural England - Strategic Direction 2006-2009" which outlines the objectives for Natural England and how these are to be achieved. The appointment of the Regional Director for the South East will not take place until September. The Chief Executive Helen Phillips provided details at the recent NAAONB Conference about how Natural England will work and that AONBs will be key partners.

IW Council - Nothing further to report.

9) Any Other Business

NR thanked members of the Committee on behalf of the AONB team for all their help during the continued absence of JB.

The AONB Unit is sponsoring a marquee at the Chale Show on 05/06 August, and several organisations have expressed an interest in having a stand.

The 50 for 50 walk takes place on 12 August 2006, and advertisements have been placed in the Vine, the County Press Weekender Section and the August issue of the Finest Landscapes newsletter. If anyone can help with marshalling for the walk, it would be much appreciated.

TT expressed the thanks of the Steering Committee for all the hard work done by the team in the AONB Unit, and keeping everything on track during the absence of JB.

10) Dates of future meetings

Details of these were listed on the agenda, with venues to be confirmed. The date of the AGM and Open Forum has now been changed to 19 September 2006 at Northwood House.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1.20 p.m.