

**Minutes of Isle of Wight AONB Partnership Steering Committee Meeting  
Thursday 23 June 2005 - Captain's Cabin, Bargeman's Rest, Newport**

**Present:**

Tony Tutton	Chairman
Denis Russell	Vice-Chair/Community & Parish Portfolio Holder
David Court	Coastal Portfolio Holder
Cat Carkeet	Tourism Portfolio Holder
Vicky Basford	Historic Environment Portfolio Holder
Jill Green	Recreation Portfolio Holder
Nicola Davies	Countryside Agency
Councillor Wendy Arnold	Isle of Wight Council
Ashley Curzon	Isle of Wight Council
John Brownscombe	AONB Officer
Marijke Ransom	AONB Planning & Information Officer
Fiona Hanna	AONB Assistant
Carrie McDowell	AONB Admin

**1) Apologies**

David Groves	Rural Business Portfolio Holder
Geoffrey Case	Farming and Landowning Portfolio Holder
Richard Grogan	Nature Conservation Portfolio Holder
Adam Wallace	Countryside Agency
Councillor Anne Bishop	Isle of Wight Council
Andrew Ashcroft	Isle of Wight Council

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

Memorandum of Agreement: changes will be made to this document following the re-structuring of the AONB Unit

Funding regarding public access to the countryside: JB has discussed with LAF (Local Access Forum), and has had a meeting with TS looking at new open access legislation and how funds can be drawn down from the Countryside Agency, to deliver better access promotion and way marking. These issues were raised and although landowners felt it was not a major problem, there were some isolated incidents. It was felt the LAF should take control of this and develop some approach to deal with management issues. JB had meeting with TS on the possibility of joint working with the LAF to obtain monies, but TS had strong reservations. The costs of administering LAF and ROWIP were £22.5K per annum for which Rights of Way have not received additional funding. Gershon, a new Government initiative for efficient savings, requires all local authorities to identify ways in which they can provide more effective/efficient services for the same or less money. The additional £22.5K cost now absorbed into the Rights of Way budget has been identified as such a Gershon saving. TS is happy to receive the results of survey work in relation to open access, but does not wish this to falsely raise expectations regarding changes on the ground. The Access Management Grant scheme only provides for 75% of the required funding for changes and is discretionary. The Ramblers Association have agreed to help to map the entry and exit points, desire lines, internal fencing/division issues and identify where interpretation may be needed. As all the new access areas except one are in the AONB, the AONB Unit have agreed to assist in providing maps, collating information and assisting with publicity about open access areas by providing information on their website. DR said that as landowners have certain responsibilities, perhaps they could help with putting up signs.

Brown sign policy: copies of this were distributed to the meeting.

Paper on charity events: RG is still to progress production of this paper.

Discussion regarding rural business portfolio: JB and DG have had an excellent meeting, with details provided by DG about particular issues he would like to progress within the rural business community. Has provided feedback on Equestrian Guidance Note based on the views of some of his customers.

Letters of thanks: these were sent to Terry Butchers and Peggy Jarman. The new Council nominations for membership of the Steering Committee are Councillor Wendy Arnold and Councillor Anne Bishop.

### 3) **AONB Unit**

#### 3.1 **Update on re-structuring/recruitment**

The meeting expressed their thanks to MR for all her hard work over the last 2.5 years.

Interviews were held over two days for the AONB Planning officer and AONB Communications Officer. Twenty-four applications were received for the role of AONB Communications Officer, with six applicants shortlisted, who met the essential criteria. The meeting was advised that FH was successful in obtaining the post. Four applications were received for the role of AONB Planning Officer, with two applicants shortlisted who met the essential criteria, although on the day of interview one candidate withdrew due to illness. The successful applicant was Nicky Rogers, who is currently working in the DC section at Brentwood Council, and will be taking up her post on 15 August 2005. Until that time, FH will continue with her current upgraded temporary role to cover the six week gap from MR leaving. Consideration will now be given to the role of AONB Assistant, and it is hoped the complete new structure will be in place by 15 August 2005.

#### 3.2 **Activity Update**

JB provided a verbal overview of the work of the Unit since the last Steering Committee meeting. The Unit is making good progress, although the time spent on recruitment has been considerable. We have made a good start on educational materials, and are working with Brighstone Primary School on a project, which it is hoped will be extended to other schools, particularly within the AONB. This year we have undertaken the analysis of the feedback forms from the Walking Festival, with the comments linked into the database of Cultural & Leisure Services. We have also been making strong strides forward with Highways regarding sympathetic design criteria in certain areas, such as the work on 'Jockey Stocks' bridge in Highwood Lane.

JG asked if any information was available on the National Environment and Rural Communities Bill. JB will look into this and report back.

**Action:** *JB to seek information on the Rural Communities Bill*

**Update:** **As thought at the meeting, this Bill sets out the proposals for the Commission for Rural Communities and the new integrated agency "Natural England".**

#### 3.3 **Financial Report**

AONB spending is on target, with no concerns over particular budget headings. The cost of recruitment has come in over budget, as advertisement costs are very expensive. However, this will be compensated by the underspend on salaries to cover the six week gap until the new AONB Planning Officer takes up her post.

The claims for last year's expenditure with the Countryside Agency have now been submitted, and are being processed through the Countryside Agency's financial system.

### 3.4 Partnership Membership

Within the Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee, any requests for membership of the Advisory Group have to be ratified by the Steering Committee. We have had a request from the Ramblers Association for an additional member to be added to the Advisory Group. The meeting agreed to this proposal, with the proviso that the Ramblers Association would still have one formal vote, despite having two representatives.

The Unit has also received approaches from several organisations to be included in the Open Forum Group, and as this area is part of the Unit's delegated responsibilities, the following have been accepted:-

The Isle of Wight Society  
Undercliff Defence Society  
Local Access Forum Chairman  
Paragliding and Hangliding Club

Other individuals have asked to be kept informed of our work, and one of the first tasks under the new administration system, will be to contact Partnership members to update all their contact details, including e-mail addresses where applicable.

JB clarified the roles of the Advisory Group and Open Forum to members. It has been suggested the next Newsletter contains an invitation to those who might wish to join the Open Forum to contact the Unit, and the volume of replies will be monitored.

Two further approaches have been received from the Footprint Trust and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, and the meeting was asked for their opinion as to which of the Partnership Groups would be appropriate. VB proposed they join the Advisory Group, and this was agreed by the meeting. A proposal was also made to approach Island Waste to join as an Open Forum member, which was agreed by the meeting, together with a suggestion that an article on the subject of recycling and waste could be included in a future Newsletter.

## 4) Updates

### 4.1 Portfolio Holders, Core Funders, Chairman

**Recreation** - JG asked if it would be possible to have a job description for portfolio holders, and JB agreed to draw up a draft.

**Action:** *JB to produce draft job description for portfolio holders*

**Coastal** - DC asked if he could have an overview of the coastal strategies published by the Council, in order to provide a report as seen through AONB eyes for the next meeting. Also could the Unit provide dates for future meetings of SCOPAC.

**Action:** *FH to provide DC with dates of future SCOPAC meetings  
DC to investigate coastal strategies etc.*

**Update:** Dates of future SCOPAC meetings have been provided to DC.

**IW Council** - Councillor Arnold agreed to provide the meeting with updates if it was possible.

**Tourism** - copies of the new brown sign policy were circulated to the meeting. The project is proceeding well, with some signs having been removed. CC is working closely with Brading to develop all types of signage, and would like to discuss this with JB. CC is also working with the Local Produce Network and mapping out requirements from local businesses regarding the distinctiveness of local produce. TT asked about recent changes of signage in Yarmouth regarding the removal of major destinations, e.g. a previous sign in Yarmouth showed "Ventnor" and now shows "Thorley". It was suggested that there should be a separate policy regarding the signage of arterial routes, which would address the current inconsistencies. CC said she would use her Highways contacts to investigate this and report back.

**Action:** *CC to contact Highways for clarification-*

**Historic Environment** - VB said her role was to keep a watching brief in this area, but will have a specific role next week accompanying members of English Heritage on their Training Day, and will endeavour to obtain more information on the Rural Policy Section. JB is working with Archaeological Services and the landowner to provide temporary fencing around the barrows on Mottistone Down next to the Tennyson Trail, to prevent damage for unauthorised access. Work will then take place to stabilise their condition and interpretation will be placed on site.

**Countryside Agency** - ND said that the date for the vesting of the new organisation 'Natural England' has been announced as 01 October 2006, and until that time the organisation will continue to work as a confederation with the other bodies, which together will form the new agency. The SE & London office of the Countryside Agency's Land Access and Recreation division is moving. ND will provide the new address and contact details.

**Parish** - DR said the Association of Town and Parish Councils will be re-invigorated, as liaison has recently lapsed. A new burial site has been found in Shorwell containing high quality jewellery from the Anglo Saxon era, which has been declared treasure trove. This is a very exciting find, demonstrating significant wealth in an area previously thought to have been largely agricultural at this period.

**IW Council** - AC said it is intended that the Island Plan will herald a new era in Planning and currently the evidence base is being gathered. The public will be informed more about the process from displays at events such as the County Show and the Garlic Festival.

**Chairman** - The problem of ragwort has been tackled by a new weed wipe, which has so far provided excellent results. A team of volunteers from around the Island have been working on a project at the Needles Old Battery, which has won a major award to mark their achievements. An amount of £650K has been received to manage marshes from Brading to Alverstone and the Duver over a period of several years. A group of quite disparate interests including Yacht Club businesses, Parish Councils, National Trust and the RSPB are paving the way for consultation, which it is hoped will tie in with the coastal strategy of the IW Council.

## 5) Sustainable Development Fund

JB updated the Committee on this new grant scheme from DEFRA brokered via the Countryside Agency for all 36 AONB's, and we will bid each year to the Countryside Agency for our own monies to run an Isle of Wight AONB Sustainable Development Fund. It is intended that the criteria for funding will be more flexible, and have a lighter touch than the Small Grant Fund,

giving scope for larger projects. The scheme can provide up to 75% funding for a project, although in exceptional cases 100% may be awarded. Funds will be made available, and must be spent within this financial year. To publicise this new Fund, a launch event was held on 21 June 2005 at the IW College, to which members of the Steering Committee, Advisory Group and other key organisations were invited. This was very successful with 29 attendees from different organisations with a broad influence, which is what the scheme is about, who made several excellent suggestions for new projects. If we earmark all our funds and require further monies, we may re-apply to the Countryside Agency for additional funding. If the Unit has a suitable project we wish to run ourselves, we will need to liaise with another AONB as a 'buddy' to scrutinise and ratify the funding.

We now have two funding streams in-house, the Small Grant Fund which is a total of £15K for small projects, and the SDF. To avoid confusion, we will just advertise that funds are available, with a broad view of the criteria and eligibility, and it will then be decided which funding stream fits the applications received. The meeting then discussed how the Fund would be run, and it was proposed that an SDF Panel be set up comprising TT/DR/JB/FH together with an Officer from the Council (as they host our financial administration). In addition, Portfolio Holders and members of the Advisory Group could be invited to discuss relevant applications either by invitation to the meeting or remote consultation, as and when required. This proposal was agreed.

## 6) **AGM/Open Forum**

### 6.1 **Portfolio Elections**

There were discussions about which portfolio's would be up for re-election, and It was agreed that these should be Recreation and Historic Environment. The Unit will contact the Advisory Group to request nominees for these two portfolios, with 'pen pictures' being required from all nominees. The meeting hoped that the current portfolio holders would agree to stand again if they wished.

**Action: AONB Unit to contact Advisory Group for relevant nominees**

### 6.2 **Theme for Annual General Meeting**

It was suggested that this year's theme should be "AONB People" and if agreeable to the meeting, possible speakers would be contacted to cover the areas "Living and Working in the AONB". The recent socio-economic information for the AONB provided by the letting of a South East Protected Landscapes contract 'Terra Consult', will provide much of the information for the event. The meeting agreed this theme.

**Action: JB to contact relevant speakers for AGM**

## 7) **Any Other Business**

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1.30 p.m.

## 8) **Dates of future meetings**

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