

**Minutes of Isle of Wight AONB Partnership Steering Committee Meeting
Thursday 04 May - Innovation Centre**

Present:

Denis Russell (Chairman)	Vice-Chair/Community & Parish Portfolio Holder
David Court	Coastal Portfolio Holder
Geoffrey Case	Farming and Landowning Portfolio Holder
Cat Carkeet	Tourism 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
Fiona Hanna	AONB Communications Officer
Carrie McDowell	AONB Assistant

1) Apologies

Tony Tutton	Chairman
David Groves	Rural Business Portfolio Holder
Adam Wallace	Countryside Agency
Andrew Ashcroft	Isle of Wight Council
Councillor Anne Bishop	Isle of Wight Council
John Brownscombe	AONB Lead Officer
Nicky Rogers	AONB Planning Officer

2) Minutes of Last Meeting & Matters Arising

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

Dead Elms: Follow-up on replies from Dedham Vale, Chichester Harbour, South Downs and Shropshire Hills still to be undertaken.

Action: J Brownscombe

Fallen Stock/Incinerator: Councillor Churchman reported that subsequent to the previous meeting, JB had informed Councillors he would follow this up.

Action: J Brownscombe

Tennyson Trail: A meeting of the Tennyson Trail Task Group was held on 13 April, but unfortunately it was not possible to reach a consensus of opinion. It was suggested we lobby collectively on the issue of BOAT's before the law changes. FH agreed to find out further details on the status of the Traffic Regulation Order.

Action: FH to check current status of TRO

3) Regeneration Service and IW Council Structure

The new Council has now been in place for a year, with the re-organised structure based on the Local Area Agreement and Local Strategic Partnership. The new Economic Development and Regeneration Directorate contains four services - Planning, Engineering, Regeneration and

Tourism. AC advised he is currently Acting Head of Regeneration for a temporary period. Regeneration now includes Coastal Management Group, Property Management Group and Environment Management Group, the latter consisting of parts of Planning Policy, AONB, Countryside, Parks and Gardens and Agenda 21.

The AONB reporting line will still be via A Curzon, and there will be little difference on a day to day basis. It is intended to establish links and protocols about how we work together, in order to give the AONB a higher profile.

4) **AONB Unit Updates**

4.1 **Financial Update**

The update was distributed to the meeting, and FH confirmed the details will form the basis of the final grant claim to be sent to the Countryside Agency. We have slightly exceeded the IW Council core budget, due to data link charges covering the cost of connecting the AONB Unit to the networks following our move to the Innovation Centre.

Regarding the Small Grant Fund, we have not used the total amount of the fund granted, as Brighstone Parish Council were unable to complete their project by the due date. Their failure to comply with the deadlines on this occasion, had prevented these monies being allocated to another project. It was agreed the AONB would write a letter advising these monies could have been re-allocated, and that this might be taken into account in assessing future schemes.

Regarding the Sustainable Development Fund, one project was unable to be completed but the monies were re-allocated. The Fund has been incredibly successful not just on the Island, but in other AONBs across the country. We have committed £80K for next year, which should be increased to £100K once this has been approved by DEFRA.

4.2 **Quarterly Activities Update**

The report was circulated to the meeting, who were advised it was still in draft form until final approval by JB and NR. The increase in pre-application meetings for this quarter has demonstrated the rapport that NR has built up with the Planning Department. CC wished to express her thanks to NR at how brilliant and helpful she has been with Tourism. AC pointed out the implementation and interpretation of policy is an important part of the AONB planning role, as it raises the profile of the AONB. Enquiries to the Unit are increasing, and the relationships being built with planners and applicants are showing benefits to the AONB.

Councillor Churchman asked if any part of the newly formed Ryde parish was part of the AONB, and FH suggested she provide details of parish and AONB boundaries, together with other conservation designations, to the newly formed Management Committees. Concern was expressed about whether it was appropriate for the AONB to provide this information and whether the Unit had sufficient time, and FH agreed to liaise with other Council colleagues.

AC advised that the process of updating the GIS system will be brought forward, to include any updates and changes that have taken place.

Action:

F Hanna to liaise re the provision of GIS information to Management Committees

5) Updates - Portfolio Holders, Core Funders, Chairman

Coastal - DC was unable to attend the SCOPAC full conference meeting due to the fact that it clashed with the emergency meeting of the DCPWG, but did attend the Officers Meeting. DEFRA is continuing on its course to draw flood risk management for both rivers and coastal areas under one umbrella, and discussions on this subject will continue. Some Local Authorities, notably those with a coastline, have expressed their concerns about local issues being dealt with at national level. It was pointed out, however, that as DEFRA funding is raised from national taxation, it should be their decision as to where the monies are spent.

Recreation - It was advised that parts of the coastal path at Bouldnor were impassable, following two fairly large landslips. Due to the absence of JB, JG will be representing the AONB at the next meeting of the Local Access Forum. A Walking Event to celebrate 50 years of AONB's will take place on 12/13 August, and the content will be completely within the AONB. A press release has just gone out to publicise the event, and FH will be contacting Partnership members regarding the provision of marshals. ND agreed to check to see if the Countryside Agency would be taking part.

Tourism - Tourism South East have confirmed funding to develop more Awareness Workshops such as those recently undertaken with local taxi drivers. The Brown Sign policy has made some progress in Brading and Nunwell, and further discussions will be taking place with Highways. IFCA, whose membership has now increased to 100 members, have secured £68K funding from DEFRA, which will help to provide resources to manage their group and obtain accreditation. It is also intended to re-vamp the Town Guide, which will contain information complementary to that in the AONB Pocket Map.

Farming and Landowning - A feasibility study is being undertaken in respect of the incinerator, which will be extended to a wider group once the results have been collated. No further information has been received from the IW Council. Concern was expressed about the lack of police representation at the recent meeting to discuss the Tennyson Trail. Farmers are still experiencing problems regarding the payment of farm subsidies.

Community and Parish - Nothing to report on this occasion.

Nature Conservation - No major problems to report. Visited 80 farms under the Entry Level Stewardship scheme. Problems with DEFRA not making single farm payments, with some farmers having put in requests for payment next year, without having received payments for this year. Concern was expressed that strategic documents, such as the Island Plan, were not addressing issues regarding the rural economy.

Historic Environment - The IW Council has cut £50K from the Archaeology budget, which is to be made up by generating income. It may be possible to generate income in the form of project funding, but this is unlikely to exceed £10K. The Archaeology Unit have asked for this extensive budget cut to be reconsidered. It was pointed out that the Historic Environment is very important to the AONB, being an integral part of the delivery of the Management Plan.

Countryside Agency - Natural England will be vested on 01 October 2006 following an Act of Parliament. The Headquarters will be in Sheffield where the Chairman, Chief Executive, Senior Directors and Board Members will be based. The structure of the South East regions still require a lot of shaping, with decisions about who does what taking place next year. There will be three or four area teams, with the South East team split into East and West. It is intended to produce a joint business and corporate plan for Natural England to work with English Nature and the Rural Delivery Service, and we will be kept up to date with progress. A Regional

Co-ordinator for protected areas will be starting in early July, who will be attending conferences, training research seminars, analysis for AONBs and strategic input into the SE Plan.

IW Council - It was advised that the Core Strategy for the Island is due to be submitted on 29 May 2006. This is part of the formal process, and objections will be considered at a public examination in January 2007. Any objections the Inspector feels are relevant will have to be incorporated into the Strategy by the IoW Council. It is intended the document will be available for viewing on the Council's website.

6) Presentation of material by the AONB Partnership

A paper was tabled for discussion to obtain the views of the Steering Committee, prior to any discussions with J Lawson. ND advised the Countryside Agency were very happy with the material issued by the AONB and, as core funders, would normally only expect recognition of their contribution by use of their logo on any literature. They see the AONB Partnership as an independent body, with the Steering Committee as the Management Group. It was felt the nub of the matter was whether the AONB Partnership should be seen as a separate and independent body. Comment was also made that in business, the majority shareholder usually has the final say in any course of action. It may also be possible to find ways of highlighting partnership working with the Council, while still retaining the independence of the AONB Partnership. It is important that the AONB remains in a position to reflect the objectives of the AONB designation. In addition, it would be good for the Council to have involvement with the AONB as part of a high profile family.

It was agreed JB should discuss the issue of communication with JL, but the position of the meeting to be communicated back to the Council, was that the AONB Partnership should remain as an independent Partnership, whilst still retaining its close links with the Isle of Wight Council and other partnership members.

7) Any Other Business

The question was asked if anyone had influence regarding the West Wight Landscape Partnership. It was advised that J Brownscombe was a member of their Steering Committee, and may be able to help with any queries.

A query was raised about whether the AONB Partnership should be looking into the future, regarding a vision for the whole Island. It was felt perhaps this could be put on the agenda for discussion at a future meeting.

8) 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 1.26 p.m.