

**Minutes of Isle of Wight AONB Partnership Steering Committee Meeting  
Thursday 07 February 2008 - Innovation Centre, Newport**

**Present:**

Denis Russell	Vice-Chair/Community and Parish Portfolio Holder (Chair)
Jill Green	Recreation Portfolio Holder
Steve Blamire	Tourism Portfolio Holder
Andy Gordon	Natural England
Julie Danby	Natural England
Councillor Vanessa Churchman	Isle of Wight Council
John Brownscombe	AONB Lead Officer
Nicky Rogers	AONB Planning Officer
Fiona Hanna	AONB Communications Officer
Carrie McDowell	AONB Assistant

**1) Apologies**

Tony Tutton	Chairman
David Groves	Rural Business Portfolio Holder
Geoffrey Case	Farming and Landowning Portfolio Holder
David Court	Coastal Portfolio Holder
Vicky Basford	Historic Environment Portfolio Holder
Richard Grogan	Nature Conservation Portfolio Holder
Graham Bryant	Natural England
Bill Murphy	Isle of Wight Council
Councillor John Hobart	Isle of Wight Council

Prior to the meeting, JB provided the committee with an update regarding representation on the Steering Committee. The Chairman has written to Councillor Bishop advising that in line with our constitution, her membership of the Committee has lapsed due to non attendance at more than three consecutive meetings. Following contact with Committee Services, Councillor John Hobart, Champion for Environment and Culture has expressed an interest in joining the Committee, and is hoping to attend today's meeting as an observer. Bill Murphy has nominated two deputies to attend in his absence - Wendy Perera, Planning Policy Manager and Phil Salmon, Development Team Manager.

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

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

Tennyson Trail: Following contact with colleagues in other protected landscapes, it is clear that as each area has different problems, they also have difference approaches to comply with Department of Transport guidelines. The most interesting was from the Quantock Hills, who have an agreement with their Highways Authority to embed a small sign within their waymark posts. The agreement has never been tested, however, as they do not have any TRO's within their area. Contact will be maintained in these areas, especially with the Quantock Hills.

Dredging contract: JB has been unable to locate a copy of the SCOPAC dredging document, but has made contact with Peter Marsden, Chief Engineer Coastal Centre. He advises that research has shown dredging in depths greater than 20 metres has no effect on wave climate which could increase erosion. The dredging grounds are sediment sources from erosion thousands of years ago, and are not replenished from erosion today. Scientifically speaking, the evidence indicates that erosion is not affected by offshore dredging. Applications are dealt

with by the Marine and Fisheries Agency, and have regard to Environmental Impact Assessment and Habitats (Extraction of Minerals by Marine Dredging) Regulations.

Higher Level Stewardship: We have been invited to a meeting on 12 March, which will consider how landscape and access issues are dealt with in the second phase. It is hoped to work locally to identify key target issues based on Joint Character Area Assessments, and there will be sub-group of the AONB Partnership to feed information into this process. This will provide us with an opportunity to refine the data sets to be more meaningful in a local context.

Rural Funding: JB had a meeting with SEEDA and also with the Isle of Wight Economic Partnership, regarding the new Leader programme. When further information is available JB will provide a paper for consideration and if the Local Authority, as the accountable body, make the decision to ask us to host the management of the programme, this will be put to the Committee for their decision.

Communications Strategy: this will be available to view on the new AONB website, and we have been asked by Kent Downs to provide them with a copy of this document as an example of best practice. It is also being used on a similar basis for the development of a Planning Services document.

Committee Development: this will be discussed in more detail at the AONB Team Forward Planning meeting on 08 February. The Committee will be given more information on what we would like to achieve and possible dates.

### **3) Financial Report**

Copies of this report were circulated to the meeting and shows an 88% expenditure 83% through the year. This is based on the original budget, and the IW Council have agreed to cover any overspend with regard to salaries, as a result of the recent pay award. Regarding the Sustainable Development Fund, one project has been withdrawn but this has allowed us to increase funding for other projects. The Character Building Fund is also proceeding well, and we have one project for submission that will use up the balance of the available funding.

### **4) Quarterly Report for Natural England**

This report was circulated prior to the meeting, and it is clear that in some areas the workload is very high, particularly pre-applications. Some projects have not yet been completed but the current Plan runs until 2009, and we have already achieved 80% of our targets. A question was asked about the success of other AONBs in the South East, and it was advised that each one is different with its own problems and set up e.g. Chichester Harbour as a Conservancy has a management function and raises a local precept, but all Protected Landscapes in the South East are high achievers.

### **5) Management Plan Review**

The second Workshop took place on 24 January entitled Policies and Policy Objectives, together with an online survey distributed to partnership members. It is clear from the feedback that this section of the current Management Plan is still seen as relevant. The scoping documents for the Strategic Environment Assessment and Habitat Regulations will be sent out to Natural England, the Environment Agency and English Heritage some time next week with a timetable of how they fit into the process. The next workshop will be held on 18 March 10.30 a.m. - 1.30 p.m. at Northwood House, which will concentrate on the drafting of

the delivery plan and how this will be implemented over the next five years. All our messages are now included in the current Issues and Options Consultation Document for the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework, which is a much stronger document than that previously issued. It was suggested that perhaps the AONB Unit could provide a presentation to a Council meeting, which would help in raising the profile of the AONB.

## 6) Isle of Wight AONB as host

- a) South East Protected Landscapes away day on the Island.

This will take place on the evening of 10 June and all day on 11 June, with an evening meeting of the South East Protected Landscapes Group, being joined the following day by other staff members and officers from the region's Protected Landscapes depending on areas of interest. The itinerary for this event will be discussed at the AONB Forward Planning meeting tomorrow. Although hosted by us, the meeting will be run by all the SE Protected Landscapes, each contributing dependent upon the subjects covered.

- b) Geographical Magazine visit

On 07 March, a journalist from the Geographical Magazine will be visiting the Island as part of their series of articles on AONBs. We will be introducing our Portfolio Holders representing Wildlife, Access, Historic Environment and the Chairman, and again the Itinerary will be discussed at tomorrow's meeting. This is an excellent opportunity to display the special qualities of the AONB, together with the environmental pressures, threats and challenges we are facing.

## 7) Steering Committee member updates

**Recreation** - interviews are currently taking place for those people who wish to take up the challenge of the non-stop round the Island race. This may be the last time JG organises this event as looking after 30 people for 24 hours is a big job, but someone else is interested in taking over this task. New walks are also being created for a walking company. Promotion of walking has raised the profile of the AONB, and this can be seen from the information gathered from the feedback cards received after the Walking Festivals since 2002.

**Community and Parish/Vice Chair** – from a farming perspective, there is little improvement in the current situation, and slow progress with regard to the abattoir. The situation regarding fallen stock disposal is becoming important as the current agreement with DEFRA is coming to an end. The consultation report, for which we have been waiting for eighteen months, has still not been produced. The Island is a special case, although it is not isolated enough for proper derogation, as in the Scilly Isles, and any facility/incinerator may have to be a joint effort with other organisations, as the quantities of animals are may not be of a sufficient capacity for the farming industry to be the sole user.

Concern has been expressed about the Boundary Review, which is suggesting a reduction in the number of local councillors, as it is felt some of the proposed wards will be too large for one Councillor to provide an efficient service.

**Natural England** - No information yet available about budgets, but should be soon; Graham Bryant will be leaving March/April 2008 and interviews will be taking place to provide a replacement. With regard to funding, we will probably get all the Core Bid, a reduced amount for the Sustainable Development Fund, but nothing for projects. HLS targeting teams are

producing spatial plans based on Joint Character Areas to decide how these will be to improve their enjoyment for people. The Isle of Wight is now likely to be a target area, which will provide an excellent opportunity to work together to achieve these targets.

**IW Council** - it is hoped that having had four straplines in two years, we can just settle on one for the foreseeable future.

**Tourism** - SB is now line managed by the Acting Head of Communications and Public Relations, with a possible title of Senior Tourism Development Manager. All the proposed work has been approved, which is a major commitment from the IW Council, together with support for a major project into tourism product development, and monies to support the Green Island project. They are working on a funding bid with the University of West England for food sector research, based on consumer indicators over a three year programme. This will identify issues on how we procure food and what the consumer actually wants, and the Isle of Wight will be used as a case study. There are also plans with Brighton University and others to set up a centre for sustainable tourism in the South East, so everything will be under one umbrella. Taste of Wight opportunities moving forward, and will be highlighting any use of local food at events such as the Bestival.

## 8) Any Other Business

a) JB suggested that the AONB Partnership should consider having a position statement with regard to the current education consultation, to provide a comment to the Local Authority as follows:-

- the importance of primary schools to communities within the AONB
- the facilities provided outside the school curriculum
- linking people with their local area
- educating children at an age where it is important to foster their association with the environment e.g. the Brighstone Discovery project
- effects on the local community in respect of the economy, traffic and transport, of the closure of facilities in rural areas, and access to such facilities outside the local area.

Although this is not part of the AONB's primary purpose, it is seen as an important secondary issue. The meeting agreed a comment should be made.

**Action:** **Comment to Local Authority on AONB Partnership stance regarding education consultation**

b) A paper has been received from the NAAONB regarding Natural England, which requires any comments by the end of today. JB has reviewed the information, and feels that it contains good positive comments reinforcing the national position. It sets out Natural England's position on the importance of protected landscapes, and recognising that landscapes will undergo an evolutionary process, has three key messages:-

- recognising the importance of AONBs and working together with Natural England
- recognising the new designations for Natural England, which may be simplified along similar lines to those of English Heritage

- Natural England will consider their definition of Heritage Coasts, and how these sit within the family of protected landscapes

The meeting were happy to accept JB's view of the document, and for him to reply to the NAAONB.

**Action: JB to reply to NAAONB regarding NE's draft paper on Landscape**

- c) There are plans for the Island to be a World Heritage Site, in conjunction with Portsmouth Harbour and Spithead. This is only in the initial stages, and a full management plan will be required to persuade the Government to include this bid on the tentative list, which currently contains seventeen sites, although this will be the first proposed seascape World Heritage site.
- d) The revamped AONB website is now up and running in its new format, although we are still working on some of the links. We will be happy to receive any comments or feedback from members of the Committee.
- e) The AONB Unit is partnering a project called "Celebrating Islandness" with the Isle of Wight Council's Conservation Design Section. This is not connected with the general landscape, but is looking to record the small important quirky details of our Island environment. The aim is to publish a small booklet in the Spring/Summer, containing a selection of the items sent to us.
- f) Copies of a booklet entitled "Sustainable Tourism for Dummies" was circulated to members of the Committee, and this will also be distributed to the AONB's Tourist Accommodation Businesses list with the next copy of our Finest Landscapes Newsletter. There will only be two issues of our Newsletter this year, the first in May to coincide with the Walking Festival and information from the Management Plan Review, and the second in the late Autumn.

### **Dates of Future Meetings**

#### **2008**

08 May	Steering Committee (venue tba)
17 July	Steering Committee (venue tba)
09 October	Steering Committee (venue tba)
11 December	Steering Committee (venue tba)
14 October	AGM/Open Forum

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 12.17 p.m.