

**HOWARDIAN HILLS
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
30 MARCH 2006**

AONB BUSINESS PLAN AND ACTION PROGRAMME 2006/07

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To agree details of proposed activity to implement the AONB Management Plan during 2006/07.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The AONB Management Plan contains a detailed Action Programme that is intended to form the basis for a rolling annual programme of work. It lists each objective and action point and identifies a suggested lead agency and partner organisations for implementation.
- 2.2 In addition to setting targets for 2006/07 this report also details some of the mechanisms for achieving the proposed targets, as well as indications of some of the individual projects that may be implemented.
- 2.3 Appendix 1 contains the Action Programme and Targets for 2005/06, together with an indicative timetabling of tasks.

3.0 BIODIVERSITY

- 3.1 The proposed budget for biodiversity works is £6,500, including a contribution of £1,000 from English Nature. Potential projects to be funded from this include restoration of a length of beck at Brandsby (c.£2,000), replanting and management work at Scar Wood near Gilling (c.£2,500) and management of SINC's by the Basics Plus group.
- 3.2 In addition to the above work, it is hoped to secure some funding from the CAN DO Partnership to carry out experimental heathland restoration work on Grimston and Yearsley Moors. This work follows a survey carried out in 2005/06, which assessed areas where restoration might be feasible and then produced targeted recommendations.
- 3.3 The North and East Yorkshire Geology Trust is hoping to carry out a Geodiversity Audit of the AONB this year, for which we have indicated a nominal contribution of £1,000.
- 3.4 A target of preparing 5 Farm Environment Plans, to assist farmers and landowners to get into the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme, has also been set.

4.0 CULTURAL HERITAGE

- 4.1 The anticipated budget for works to conserve and enhance cultural heritage features is £9,486. Potential projects to be funded from this include repairs to iron railings at Oulston Lodge (c.£2,000), repairs to the Newburgh Park wall near Ampleforth (phase 2, c. £2,600), an inventory of traditional roadside furniture (c.£750) and repairs to at least 1 traditional direction sign (c.£2,000 ea.).
- 4.2 A separate budget of £7,000 is available for work to repair Listed Buildings at Risk. It is also hoped that North Yorkshire County Council will be able to contribute a further £7,250 towards this work, thereby substantially increasing the amount that can be achieved. Projects likely to be tackled include the Dove Cote at Oswaldkirk Hall (phase 2, £5,200), Howsham Hall Gates and Lodges (c.£4,000) and phase 1 of works to the threshing barn at Moor House Farm, Hovingham (c.£8,000).
- 4.3 A Historic Landscape Character assessment of the AONB is due to be carried out this year. It is part of a project to survey the whole of North Yorkshire and the information will be very useful in guiding the revision of the AONB Management Plan and hence practical conservation work on the ground. It is proposed to make a contribution of £1,000 to the cost of this work, which is primarily funded by English Heritage and North Yorkshire County Council.
- 4.4 It is also hoped that English Heritage will be able to conduct a survey of earthwork features on Yearsley Moor, involving local residents where possible. This may lead to the production of an informal guided trail leaflet, highlighting these historical features.

5.0 LOCAL COMMUNITIES

- 5.1 The anticipated budget for the Sustainable Development Fund is £100,000, of which up to 10% can be spent on administration and promotion. Approximately 40% of this is likely to be allocated to community buildings and facilities in the AONB. Following design work in 2005/06, Welburn Village Hall is likely to be seeking a grant of approximately £25,000 towards the installation of eco-friendly heating and ventilation systems in the new hall. A free eco-renovation audit is being offered to all community halls in the AONB and the initial indication is that uptake of this offer will be good. It is expected that a number of halls will seek further funding to implement some of the recommendations contained in the audits.
- 5.2 Following the success of the administrative arrangement with the North York Moors National Park Authority in delivering our SDF scheme in 2005/06, it is proposed to continue the same arrangement for 2006/07. A sum of £7,000 has been agreed for the provision of professional advice and SDF Panel services, with a further £1,000 earmarked for a promotional leaflet. Cllr Robert Wainwright and Dr Tony Cowan are currently on the SDF Panel, representing a combination of AONB, area and community interests. These representatives were agreed and nominated by the JAC Chairman and AONB Officer last year when the joint NP/AONB SDF Panel was set-up at short notice. It would be appropriate to confirm these nominations for the 2006/07 Panel, as well as agreeing a third representative to act as a Substitute. It is suggested that nominees serve a minimum of 2 years and a maximum of 3 years, in line with the current arrangements for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, but members' views are requested.

- 5.3 Building on the contacts we have established with local communities via the village halls and CAN DO Partnership, we will consider holding a Village Forum for all Parish Councils in the AONB. This was tried a few years ago, but with limited success, and will depend upon identifying a theme that will enthuse attendees (progress with implementing the Management Plan and looking towards Review in 2 years time?).

6.0 AGRICULTURE

- 6.1 The anticipated budget for landscape improvement works is £7,500. Potential projects to be funded from this include hedge planting schemes at Dalby (c.£1,600), Westow (c.£2,600), Skewsby and Yearsley. Wall repair schemes at Brandsby, Coulton, East Newton and Grimston are also anticipated.
- 6.2 A target of preparing 5 Farm Environment Plans, to assist farmers and landowners to get into the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme, has also been set.
- 6.3 An advisory leaflet for farmers and land managers on hedge planting and maintenance will be prepared and distributed with all grant-assisted works as well as to general enquirers.

7.0 FORESTRY AND WOODLAND

- 7.1 For the last 3 years, the AONB has benefited from the service provided by a Native Woodland Development Officer (NWDO) based at the North York Moors National Park. Forestry Commission funding allowed the Officer to work in both the National Park and the AONB, but that funding package has now come to an end. The NWDO helped significantly within the AONB, providing woodland advice and ecological site assessments to help owners plant new woodland and restore Ancient Woodland. Substantial new areas of native woodland have been planted, together with several projects to restore Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites – all ultimately funded using Forestry Commission grants. A new partnership between the North York Moors National Park, the AONB and the Forestry Commission proposes to extend the NWDO post for a further 2 years. Having benefited significantly over the last 3 years, and with only very limited potential to offer a service using existing staff resources, the AONB Officer, in discussion with the JAC Chairman, has indicated that the AONB would be prepared to contribute £2,500 per year to the post.
- 7.2 The AONB Officer will continue to respond to consultations received from the Forestry Commission on woodland planting and management proposals.

8.0 DEVELOPMENT

- 8.1 The AONB Officer will continue to respond to consultations received from the Local Planning Authorities on development proposals, to ensure that the interests of natural beauty in the AONB are fully taken into account.
- 8.2 Work will continue on the issue of undergrounding electricity cables within the AONB. Detailed maps of the remainder of the villages in the AONB will be passed to CE Electric, for technical assessment.

- 8.3 Yorkshire Water will be approached with a view to implementing screening landscaping around its installations within the AONB. Any financial contribution towards such works would need to come from the £7,500 budget earmarked for landscape improvement works.

9.0 ROADS, TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

- 9.1 The AONB Officer will continue to respond to consultations received from the Highway Authority on works within the carriageway that might have biodiversity, cultural heritage or landscape implications.
- 9.2 An Inventory of traditional roadside furniture will be undertaken, to record the extent and condition of surviving features (see above).
- 9.3 It is hoped to repair and restore at least 2 traditional direction signs (see above).

10.0 RECREATION, ACCESS AND TOURISM

- 10.1 The anticipated budget for improvement works to Public Rights of Way is £5,000. This will be used to address works left over from the main programme and also those arising as a result of route re-alignments, of which there are several in the AONB that the County Council hopes to tackle.
- 10.2 A budget of £2,000 is available to design and print two circular walks leaflets. The preparation work for the Hovingham leaflet has been completed and production and distribution are scheduled for April/May 2006. A second leaflet, possibly based on Terrington, will be prepared, printed and distributed. It is also proposed to identify possible circular cycle touring routes for which leaflets could be prepared.
- 10.3 A budget of £750 is available for recreation management work. This will primarily consist of a programme of litter clearance at selected 'hot-spots' and grass cutting around the Gateway Signs, although there will be scope to fund other small projects that may arise.
- 10.4 One of the main car parking issues in the AONB is at Kirkham Priory. Discussions will continue with English Heritage and the County Council, to see whether a more efficient parking arrangement can be put in place on the existing parking area.

11.0 AWARENESS AND PROMOTION

- 11.1 The anticipated budget for awareness-raising and promotional work is £11,700. Items to be funded from this sum include the Annual Report (c.£1,000) and the AONB Newsletter (c.£2,700).
- 11.2 The main item to be completed this year is the design of a new AONB website, for which £6,500 has been budgeted. It is hoped that the project can be completed at a lower cost than this, which was the initial estimate when the budget was prepared in December.
- 11.3 We will again be attending Ryedale Show, with the display boards and activities for children and adults. The display boards will also be taken to at least 3 venues where the work of the AONB Unit can be publicised.

- 11.4 It is planned to hold 3 guided walks during the year, in spring, summer and autumn. These will also be publicised on the National Association for AONBs website, tying into the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the AONB designation nationally.
- 11.5 The AONB Discovery Project will be moving into its third year. School days will be held at the six primary schools visited in Year 1, with the Young Ranger Club doubling the number of activity sessions this year from 5 to 10. This project continues to be funded almost entirely by the Heritage Lottery Fund, with a nominal cash input from the AONB. Following a review of the delivery mechanism for the project over the winter, it has been decided to continue using the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust for 2006/07.
- 11.6 It had been hoped to review the AONB Interpretation Strategy during 2005/06 but this has not been completed. Given that the AONB Recreation and Access Forum has not held a meeting for several years, it is proposed to expand the membership of this group and use it to help revise the Interpretation Strategy over the summer.

12.0 IMPLEMENTATION

- 12.1 Between 1st October 2005 and 31st March 2006 the AONB Administrative Assistant worked an additional 10 hours per week (25 rather than 15). This temporary increase was funded by North Yorkshire County Council. At its meeting in October 2005, the JAC set a budget that allowed for a permanent increase to 20 hours per week. Sue Wright feels unable to do the 20 hours per week, due to family commitments, but will instead work 18.5 hours, with additional hours as necessary during busy periods.
- 12.2 The AONB's Sustainable Development Fund will again be delivered in partnership with the North York Moors National Park Authority, as outlined in para. 5.2 above.
- 12.3 A new partnership with the National Park Authority and Forestry Commission will be established to employ a Native Woodland Development Officer, as outlined in para. 7.1 above.
- 12.4 The CAN DO Partnership has recently submitted a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a Landscape Partnership Scheme. Stage 1, if approved, will release funding of £150,000 for projects to be implemented in 2007/08. Stage 2, again if approved, would release £1.8m to be spent in the period 2009 – 2012. The theme of the bid is landscape and habitat improvement, based upon the exceptional woodland and cultural heritage value of the CAN DO area.

13.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- a) The administrative arrangements with the North York Moors National Park Authority for the Sustainable Development Fund scheme be approved.
- b) The nominations to the SDF Panel be confirmed.
- c) The contribution to the Native Woodland Development Officer post be approved.
- d) The Targets for 2006/07, as contained in the Action Programme, be approved.