

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

AONB UNIT ACTIVITY

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To receive details of the work areas and progress achieved by the AONB Unit since the last meeting of the JAC.

2.0 SUMMARY OF PROGRESS ACHIEVED

- 2.1 Appendix 1 gives separate details of the meetings and site visits that have been carried out by the AONB Officer, Assistant AONB Officer and AONB Administrative Assistant in the period October 2005 to 20th March 2006. Appendix 2 gives full details of the wide range of projects that the AONB Project Fund has assisted so far during the year. Appendix 3 gives details of the Consultations that the JAC has received during the year.
- 2.2 The Annual Report was prepared and distributed in December, being well-received by the many partner organisations to which it was sent.
- 2.3 Countryside management work has been continuing, through the AONB Project Fund. Practical work has focused on a number of quite large hedge planting schemes and we are now tackling some sections of stone wall that we have had an eye on for several years.
- 2.4 Following a tour of several Listed Buildings at Risk in the AONB with Building Conservation Officers from Ryedale District Council and the County Council, a Structural Engineer was contracted to provide detailed surveys of the issues found at three sites. The first phase of major work on one of these sites is now being completed, whilst work has also been carried out on two more structures. Further work identified in the surveys is planned for next year.
- 2.5 Work has continued with assessing and allocating grants from the Sustainable Development Fund, with the bulk of the grant offers being made in the period October to January. A total of £74,800 has been allocated, including expenditure of £4,500 on technical assistance provided by the North York Moors National Park. It is hoped that claims for the full amounts will be submitted by the applicants, although recent information indicates that two projects may underspend, to a total of approximately £13,000. The balance of these grant offers will be re-allocated from the 2006/07 budget.
- 2.6 Following the announcement of funds to underground electricity cables in AONBs and National Parks, all villages and some open-countryside sites in the AONB were surveyed in October and November.
- 2.7 The paperwork for the registration of volunteers has been finalised and the Basics Plus group from Scarborough has carried out a number of practical conservation tasks for us.

- 2.8 We have investigated possible different delivery mechanisms for the AONB Discovery Project. Whilst the Ranger Club days ran successfully, the School days encountered a few problems. Having looked at various options, we have decided to continue using the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to deliver the whole programme, but hope to have tightened-up on issues we were not happy with last year.
- 2.9 The CAN DO Partnership continues to offer a good mechanism for delivering Management Plan objectives. A heathland survey carried out across the area has identified potential areas for restoration and we hope to carry out some experimental work next year. Of more potential significance is the Heritage Lottery Fund bid that has recently been submitted, which could release resources of up to £2m over the next 6 years. A meeting of all Parishes in the CAN DO area was held in early March, to involve local communities and gather information. This was particularly well attended by AONB Parish Councils.
- 2.10 It is hoped that the Joint Advisory Committee's budget will again be fully spent this year. Additional resources have been received from the Environment Agency for a project at Brandsby and from North Yorkshire County Council for additional hours for the AONB Administrative Assistant. Whilst the budget for countryside management work has been over-committed this year, there is the possibility of an under-spend at the end of the year. This is due to the adverse weather conditions during mid-March, which have delayed work on two large 'flagship' projects.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the report be received.