

HOWARDIAN HILLS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the meeting held at Brandsby Village Hall on Thursday, 30 March 2006.

PRESENT:-

William Worsley - Chairman (Country Land and Business Association)

County Councillors Clare Wood and Caroline Patmore - North Yorkshire County Council

District Councillors J R Bailey and C R Wainwright - Ryedale District Council

J Pilgrim (Officer) – Ryedale District Council

District Councillors P Featherstone and C Cookman - Hambleton District Council

I Read - Parish Councils (Ryedale)

M Hoban - Forestry Commission

Officers: P B Jackson, E Bassindale and S Wright - Howardian Hills AONB
J Edwards, G Megson and J Wilkinson - North Yorkshire County Council

Apologies for absence were received from G Robinson (Hambleton District Council), A V Cowan (Parish Council - Hambleton), S Prest (National Farmers' Union), G R Eastwood (Ramblers' Association), N Blackburn, S Schultz (Countryside Agency) and A Windrum (English Nature).

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

366. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2005, having been previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

367. MATTERS ARISING

Minute 358 – Footpath - Coxwold to Newburgh Priory Lake

The Committee was advised that the footpath verges had recently been cut back and that all outstanding works had been completed by the County Council.

Minute 362 - AONB Budget

The AONB Officer reported that since the last meeting additional funding in the sum of £2,500 had been received from the Environment Agency and the project identified for receipt of the monies was progressing.

368. AONB UNIT ACTIVITY

CONSIDERED –

The report of the AONB Officer detailing work areas and progress achieved by the AONB Unit since the Committee last met. He referred to paragraph 2.4 of the report

and confirmed that major work had been identified as being necessary to the Dove Cote at Oswaldkirk Hall and that these works would be carried out over a 2 year period. In response to a question from County Councillor Caroline Patmore the AONB Officer advised the Committee that the new major projects referred to in paragraph 2.10 of the report were repairs to the dam at Dale Pond, Brandsby and to the Dove Cote at Oswaldkirk Hall. Since the report had been written contractors had started work and he was optimistic that there would be no budget underspend.

A number of slides showing the projects completed during the current year, ongoing countryside management works and the restoration of historic buildings in the AONB area were shown at the meeting. Members commended officers on the quality of the presentation. The presentation provided Members with a valuable insight into the activities of AONB staff and demonstrated the benefits of keeping overheads to a minimum in order to maximise monies spent on the ground.

Members agreed that the activities and projects highlighted in the presentation deserved greater publicity and that accordingly a press release be issued. Members considered that the use of a press release could also generate further future project applications and inquiries. Members suggested that a press article was also submitted to the County Council's Reporter Magazine.

The Chairman referred to the restoration of dry stone walls taking place within the AONB area and suggested that investigations be undertaken to identify a local stone supplier. Members were advised that local stone was in short supply as many of the local quarries were now closed. Stone was however still available underground locally but planning permission was required if it was to be extracted for commercial activity. The Chairman suggested as there were potential sources of stone available within the AONB area itself, that the County Council be approached to ascertain if its extraction for the restoration of walls within the AONB area constituted commercial activity.

The Chairman made the following suggestions for future areas of work:-

1. Traditional hedge laying and associated training opportunities.
2. The replacement of iron railings that were removed throughout the AONB area during the Second World War.

The Chairman suggested that as the Committee had in recent years funded various hedge planting schemes, and as young hedges were the most suitable for hedge laying then the Committee should be proactive and take steps to promote this traditional skill.

Mick Hoban advised that the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group hosted an annual hedge laying competition and suggested that the Committee consider offering a site within the AONB area as a suitable venue. He also reported that he was aware that a local hedge laying group were constantly on the look out for suitable locations to work upon.

RESOLVED –

1. That the content of the report be noted.
2. That an article be placed in the County Council's Reporter Magazine promoting the activities of the AONB staff.
3. That the Yorkshire Post be approached and invited to publish a profile of the Howardian Hills AONB in the Country Week section of the newspaper.

369. AONB BUSINESS PLAN AND ACTION PROGRAM 2006/07

CONSIDERED –

The report of the AONB Officer on progress implementing the AONB Management Plan and progress against work targets for 2005/06. The AONB Officer commented that the Unit had assisted in the preparation of 3 Farm Environment Plans. These three farms were the only ones in the AONB area that had entered into the DEFRA Higher Level Stewardship Scheme in its first year.

The AONB Officer clarified that the establishment of "Friends of the Howardian Hills AONB" group was not being actively pursued at the present. Since writing the management plan he had come to realise that what was needed was a small flexible group of volunteers as opposed to larger groups.

The Committee supported the future use of volunteers and commended the volunteers for the work they had done to date. Members suggested that it was appropriate in the circumstances for volunteers to receive a token of appreciation for all their hard work. Elizabeth Bassindale confirmed that she was in negotiation with the Volunteer Coordinator at the County Council to provide an annual social event for all volunteers to attend at which lunch would be provided.

Other initiatives mentioned included the Sustainable Development Fund, undergrounding of overhead electricity lines in AONB villages, work on Listed Buildings at Risk and the National Association for AONBs Conference held in Durham in summer 2005.

RESOLVED –

1. That the progress made to date in implementing the Management Plan be noted.
2. That the achievements against targets for 2005/06 be noted.
3. That an annual social event and Christmas 'do' are organised for all volunteers in the Howardian Hills AONB area.

370. AONB BUSINESS PLAN AND ACTION PLAN PROGRAMME 2006/07

CONSIDERED –

The report of the AONB Officer seeking agreement to implement the AONB Management Plan during 2006-2007.

Members suggested that the report be referred to the County Council's Area Committees for Ryedale and Hambleton for information.

Members supported the administrative arrangements proposed for the Sustainable Development Fund and agreed that the term of office for the appointments should coincide with the appointment of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Advisory Committee.

Members were advised that the Sustainable Development Fund Panel was an advisory panel that met every 2 months on a Thursday.

Mick Hoban on behalf of the Forestry Commission thanked the Committee for the contribution it was about to make towards the funding of the post of a Native Woodland Development Officer which whilst modest was nevertheless crucial.

RESOLVED –

1. That the administrative arrangements with the North York Moors National Park Authority for the Sustainable Development Fund as outlined in the report be approved.
2. That District Councillor Robert Wainwright and Dr Tony Cowan are nominated to represent the Howardian Hills AONB on the SDF Panel until October 2007 and that thereafter appointments to the SDF Panel are made for a minimum of 2 years and a maximum of 3 years.
3. That the Howardian Hills JAC Committee contributes the sum of £2,500 to the Forestry Commission towards the funding of a post of a Native Woodland Development Officer.
4. That the targets for 2006/07 as contained in the Action Plan be approved.
5. That County Councillor Clare Wood and Stephen Prest are appointed as substitutes to the SDF Panel until October 2007 and that thereafter substitutes are appointed to the SDF Panel for a minimum of 2 years and a maximum of 3 years.

371. AONB CONDITION AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

CONSIDERED –

The report of the AONB Officer seeking approval of the list of Condition and Performance Indicators created to monitor the change in condition of the AONB landscape and the performance of the AONB Partnership and to approve reporting cycles.

Members supported in principle the establishment of a range of indicators but suggested that the number of performance indicators was drastically reduced in order to keep the monitoring workload manageable. It was also agreed that the indicators be called activity indicators and not performance indicators as this was a more accurate description. Members expressed concern that many of the suggested indicators were outside the control of the AONB Partnership but acknowledged that they related to objectives contained in AONB Management Plan.

The Chairman suggested that an indicator that monitored the amount of annual JAC budget spent on “on the ground” would be worthwhile.

It was also suggested that the indicators be separated into 2 groups. The results of one set of indicators could be publicised in the annual report to record the performance of the AONB Partnership and the second group used for internal use only.

RESOLVED –

1. That a further report on AONB Indicators that takes account of the comments made by members at the meeting be referred to the next meeting of the Committee.
2. That any further suggestions regarding AONB Indicators be directly referred to the AONB Officer.

372. DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE AONB

CONSIDERED –

The report of the AONB Officer providing details of planning applications within the AONB determined during 2005.

Members supported the comments made by the Chairman on behalf of the Committee in respect of the applications submitted.

RESOLVED –

That the responses and outcomes to planning applications submitted be noted.

373. ENERGY CROPS

CONSIDERED –

The report of the AONB Officer on issues surrounding the growing of energy crops in the AONB.

The Committee thanked the AONB Officer for bringing this matter to their attention and agreed that it was useful for the Committee to be made aware of forthcoming developments in agriculture.

Members discussed in detail the issues raised in the report and requested that similar items be placed on the agenda of future meetings.

RESOLVED –

That the content of the report be noted.

374. 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF DESIGNATION OF FIRST AONB

CONSIDERED –

The report of the AONB Officer outlining celebrations designed to mark the 50th Anniversary of the designation of the first AONB in England and Wales.

RESOLVED –

That the content of the report be noted.

375. ORAL REPORTS FROM PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Forestry Commission

Mick Hoban reported that work with the Castle Howard estate was at an advanced stage in respect of the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme. Work with other projects restoring historic woodland was also on-going.

The Chairman requested that information regarding the percentage of land within the AONB that had reached certification standard under the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme be referred to the next meeting.

Ryedale District Council

Councillor Bailey informed the Committee of networking advantages gained through contact with the National Park on the Sustainable Development Fund.

Councillor Wainwright reported that the examination of the Local Development Framework was due to commence in July 2006.

North Yorkshire County Council

County Councillor Clare Wood reported that the County Council's Countryside Service had been faced with finding significant savings as a result of the budget that had been set for the County Council for 2006/07. She was pleased to confirm, however, that the Council's contribution to the JAC Committee was secure.

John Edwards reported that new funding had been secured for the 2 Volunteer Teams for the next 2 years. The teams were currently engaged in work on the Rights of Way Network but it was hoped to broaden their remit to include Countryside Management Works in the future.

376. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED –

1. That the date of the annual site visit is Friday, 14 July 2006.
2. That the next meeting of the Committee is Thursday, 26 October 2006 at a venue to be determined by the AONB Officer.