

**HOWARDIAN HILLS  
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY  
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
3 APRIL 2008**

**AONB ACTION PROGRAMME 2007/08**

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To receive details of progress made on implementing the AONB Management Plan during 2007/08. The Action Programme for 2008/09, combined with a Business Plan, is covered under a separate Report on this agenda.

**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 At each Spring meeting the JAC considers a report detailing the progress achieved on the Management Plan objectives. The Action Programme contains details of the progress made against the previous year's targets. The Action Programme covering detailed progress against 2007/08 targets is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.3 Analysis of progress shows that 84% of the specific targets were either exceeded or fully/partly achieved. Progress was also achieved against a further 3 Objectives, for which no Targets had been set.
- 2.4 This is a better performance than that of the previous year, when 71% of targets were achieved. Targets where no action was completed were largely those that were overtaken by events, relied heavily on action from partner organisations or were lower priorities for the AONB Unit. To put the figures in context however, there were a number of targets where anticipated requests for assistance were not received. Had they been, it is probable that we would not have been able to achieve the target...

**3.0 BIODIVERSITY**

- 3.1 Biodiversity enhancement projects completed during the year included habitat management on SINC's, survey work, the programme of Exmoor Pony grazing and an area-wide programme to install barn owl boxes. The Exmoor Pony Trust was assisted in its grazing programme with an SDF grant to buy a pony transporter van, which will be available for use next grazing season.
- 3.2 After 4 years of negotiations and planning, fencing has finally been installed at Littledale SINC near Terrington. This fragment of unimproved grassland and fen can now be brought into the Exmoor Pony grazing scheme and it has also seen a major effort by volunteers to remove invading scrub.

- 3.3 The work done in the AONB has for the first time been systematically entered into the national Biodiversity Action Recording System, to ensure that our efforts are recorded as contributing to the targets contained in the Local and National Biodiversity Action Plans.
- 3.4 As part of North Yorkshire County Council's Local Area Agreement 2 we have been assessing the current Condition of SINC's in the AONB. This information will be used to establish a baseline position against which to measure progress. The results will also be useful for helping with the AONB Management Plan review process.
- 3.5 The Forestry Commission's grant incentives to restore Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites have continued to result in high numbers of applications to comment on this year.
- 3.6 Farm Environment Plans – one Plan was completed.

#### **4.0 CULTURAL HERITAGE**

- 4.1 Due to various circumstances, few of the larger potential projects identified were completed. Work was however completed on clearing vegetation from boundary stones at Grimstone and from a long stretch of the Wiganthorpe Park Wall at Scackleton.
- 4.2 Works to repair two Listed Buildings at Risk have progressed – emergency works were completed to the Mill at Newburgh (although the owners didn't seek the grant aid that had been offered), whilst the specification and funding package for re-roofing the threshing barn at Moor House Farm near Hovingham has now been finalised (with work due to start in mid-April).
- 4.3 The Historic Landscape Character assessment of the AONB, which it had been hoped would be completed in 2007, took another twist and wasn't due to be tackled until 2009. This would obviously have meant that the Management Plan review process would have had to proceed without this vital information, but English Heritage and the County Council have now revised their programme again and the work should be completed by July 2008.

#### **5.0 LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

- 5.1 The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust completed an SDF-funded project to survey and produce management plans for all the churchyards in the AONB, finding some previously unknown pockets of important grassland habitat in the process.
- 5.2 A new partnership to draw-down LEADER funding was formed and we ensured that the AONB area was included in the bid. This will allow local communities to access funds from Yorkshire Forward for projects to improve rural services or management of community heritage features, should the partnership's Stage 2 bid be successful in the summer.

## **6.0 AGRICULTURE**

- 6.1 Landscape improvement works on agricultural land included schemes to plant 3500m of hedging, either as completely new hedges or as gapping-up (this is double to amount planted last year). They also included repairing 117m of gaps in stone walls, as well as the overall refurbishment of a 500m stretch of prominent roadside wall.
- 6.2 As detailed above one Farm Environment Plan was completed, to assist a landowner to get into the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme. We have also been involved in the process of reviewing the targeting for the Higher Level Stewardship scheme, to ensure that opportunities are still available for AONB farmers and landowners to enter the scheme.
- 6.3 A number of planning applications for new farm buildings were scrutinised this year, ranging from general purpose sheds to specialist units such as the goat building at Scackleton and the alpaca farming enterprise currently being considered at Husthwaite.
- 6.4 The Sustainable Development Fund supported a pilot project by the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, to carry out Farm Energy and Carbon Audits on 3 farms in the AONB.

## **7.0 FORESTRY AND WOODLAND**

- 7.1 The Native Woodland Development Officer based at the North York Moors National Park covers both the National Park and the AONB, providing woodland advice and ecological site assessments to help owners plant new woodland and restore Ancient Woodland. £2,500 was contributed towards the cost of this post.
- 7.2 The AONB Officer continued to respond to consultations received from the Forestry Commission on woodland planting and management proposals. No high-profile cases have emerged this year from amongst the 13 proposals that were scrutinised.
- 7.3 The Sustainable Development Fund continued to support the Yorwoods Biomass Development project, which is developing a support network for producers and users of biomass for heating.

## **8.0 DEVELOPMENT**

- 8.1 The AONB Officer continued to respond to consultations received from the Local Planning Authorities on development proposals – full details of Development statistics for the AONB in 2007 are given in a separate Report on this agenda.
- 8.2 Scoping and design works are continuing in the project to underground overhead electricity wires in AONB villages, but no schemes were actually completed this year.

## **9.0 ROADS, TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT**

- 9.1 The AONB Officer continued to respond to consultations received from the Highway Authority on works within the carriageway that might have had biodiversity, cultural heritage or landscape implications – 7 proposals were scrutinised this year.

- 9.2 North Yorkshire County Council has obtained SDF funding to re-furbish five traditional direction signs in the Hovingham/Grimstone area of the AONB and is also hoping to tackle several more using its own resources.
- 9.3 Ryedale District Council put forward a proposal to the Regional Transport Board to create a new roundabout at Musley Bank, to address safety issues at the Huttons Ambo junction and provide full-movement access to the York Road Industrial Estate. AONB comments were submitted on the proposals, but their consideration by the RTB was delayed.

## **10.0 RECREATION, ACCESS AND TOURISM**

- 10.1 Minor improvement works continue to be made to Public Rights of Way throughout the whole AONB – fingerposts, waymarking, gates, bridges and surfacing.
- 10.2 A Local Information and Walks leaflet for Welburn was produced. This has again been well-received and was widely publicised by both us and Castle Howard.
- 10.3 Recreation management work consisted primarily of a programme of litter clearance at selected ‘hot-spots’ throughout the AONB.
- 10.4 Volunteers have again been surveying Rights of Way in the AONB, with a total of 110km (approximately one third of the total network length) being completed.
- 10.5 Discussions have been held with English Heritage, the landowners and Westow Parish Council to try and improve parking arrangements at Kirkham Priory. This was prompted by English Heritage introducing a parking charge, which the Parish Council was strongly opposed to.

## **11.0 AWARENESS AND PROMOTION**

- 11.1 The Annual Report and AONB Newsletter were published to their regular schedule, although distribution of the Newsletter was affected by the postal strikes in October and was therefore delivered over a protracted period between December and February.
- 11.2 The new AONB website has been very well-received, particularly the interactive map and calendar. A total of 72,000 Visits were made to the website last year, which is more than double the number received by the previous website. Updating the text and page content has continued throughout the year.
- 11.3 The Ryedale Show was cancelled, due to the wet ground conditions, so we attended the Green Fair in Helmsley Walled Garden as an alternative.
- 11.4 4 guided walks were held during the year – Howsham Mill, a Bat Walk, Fungi and Apple Day, attended by a total of 80 people. Booking for these events was again through the Wild about Ryedale programme, whilst they were also publicised on the National Association for AONBs website.

- 11.5 The AONB Discovery Project completed its fourth year. School days were held at the six primary schools visited in Year 2, with the Young Ranger Club completing 10 activity sessions. 135 children from 6 schools took part in the School Days in June/July, with 210 children attending the Ranger Club events. This project continues to be funded almost entirely by the Heritage Lottery Fund, with a nominal cash input from the AONB. The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust continues to implement the project on our behalf.
- 11.6 Publicity – A total of 16 press mentions were recorded. Topics receiving publicity included the Junior Ranger Club activities, SDF projects, CAN DO Heritage Lottery Fund bid, the Welburn walks and information leaflet and the planning application for the goat building at Scackleton.
- 11.7 Assistance from Volunteers continued at a high level this year, reflecting the effort allocated to this area of work. 3 specific tasks were arranged, mainly involving habitat management work, with volunteers involved in 6 tasks or projects in total. Individual volunteers also helped with a variety of specialist tasks (Junior Ranger Club, Ryedale Green Day and specialist habitat surveying). In total, 70 man/days of volunteer time were donated to work in the AONB.
- 11.8 The northern AONBs collaborated again to produce a calendar for 2008.

## **12.0 IMPLEMENTATION**

- 12.1 The Sustainable Development Fund received an allocation of £70,000, of which £65,065 was offered to projects. It was again delivered in partnership with the North York Moors National Park Authority, at a cost of £6,300 this year. The Fund was deliberately over-committed, as one project indicated that it was heading for an under-claim and therefore the balance was re-offered to another project.
- 12.2 The partnership with the National Park Authority and Forestry Commission to employ a Native Woodland Development Officer completed its second year, as outlined in para. 7.1 above.
- 12.3 The CAN DO Partnership submitted a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a Heritage Grant project, principally for community archaeology and interpretation work. We have recently learned that this bid has been successful.

## **13.0 RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that:

- a) The progress made to date with implementing the Management Plan be noted;
- b) the achievements against Targets for 2007/08 be noted.