

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

AONB BUSINESS PLAN AND ACTION PROGRAMME 2008/09

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To agree details of proposed activity to implement the AONB Management Plan during 2008/09.

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 2008/09 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 2008/09, together with an indicative timetabling of tasks.

3.0 BIODIVERSITY

- 3.1 The indicative combined budget for both landscape and biodiversity works is approximately £21,700. Potential projects to be funded from this include the continuation and refinement of the Exmoor Pony grazing scheme for SINC's, the creation of an area of wood pasture near Brandsby and planting individual field/hedgerow and black poplar trees.
- 3.2 Other projects include the removal of conifers from a small area of peat bog near Yearsley, coppicing alders along a stretch of the River Rye SINC and organising awareness/training events on managing land for bumblebees and grey partridge.
- 3.3 Work will continue on establishing the Condition of all SINC's in the AONB, in partnership with the County Council. This work is being carried out as part of the Local Area Agreement process and will be important information for both updating the Management Plan and also targeting sites for action.
- 3.4 The Discovery Project and Junior Ranger Club programme will conclude (in its current form) this year, by including a 2-day event at Hovingham and Filey alongside the usual programme of school day sessions and events during the school holidays.
- 3.5 A target of preparing 1 Farm Environment Plan, to assist farmers and landowners to get into the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme, has also been set.

4.0 CULTURAL HERITAGE

- 4.1 The indicative budget for works to conserve and enhance cultural heritage features is £21,500. Potential projects to be funded from this include repairs to iron railings at Oulston Lodge, repairs to a pair of gate pillars in Newburgh Park, repairs to the Wiganthorpe Park wall (following this year's scrub clearance) and consolidation of the lime kilns in Scar Wood.
- 4.2 It is also hoped to start pro-active work in addressing management issues on 5 Scheduled Ancient Monuments identified in English Heritage's Scheduled Monuments at Risk Survey, now that the detailed information is available. It is hoped to do this in conjunction with the County Council's MARVols volunteers.
- 4.3 Included in the above figure is an element for work on Listed Buildings at Risk. After much negotiation, works to repair the roof of the threshing barn at Moor House Farm, Hovingham should be carried out this year.
- 4.4 A Historic Landscape Character assessment of the AONB is due to be carried out this summer. 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.
- 4.5 Work on the community archaeology project in the Yearsley area should commence this year, following the approval of the CAN DO Partnership's bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for its Lime and Ice Project.

5.0 LOCAL COMMUNITIES

- 5.1 The indicative budget for works with local communities is £1,000. .
- 5.2 A series of four Parish Planning events will be held in the AONB in May and June, to encourage and support community activity (see separate report on the Agenda).
- 5.3 We will continue to be involved in the LEADER partnership. Community launch events are planned for early May, with the bid needing to be submitted by the end of July. Projects will then be initiated under the auspices of a Local Action Group, should this second stage of the bid be successful.
- 5.4 Parish Councils will again be invited to attend the AONB Partnership Group meeting in March 2009.

6.0 AGRICULTURE

- 6.1 The indicative combined budget for both landscape and biodiversity works is approximately £21,700. Potential projects to be funded from this include hedge planting schemes at Yearsley (2), Barton-le-Street, Dalby and Firby. Wall repair schemes at Brandsby and Oulston are also possibilities.

- 6.2 A target of preparing 1 Farm Environment Plan has been set, to assist farmers and landowners to get into the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme. Achievement of this is very much dependent upon demand and the prevailing targeting priorities of the scheme however.
- 6.3 Given the number of planning applications recently to erect new farm buildings, it is proposed to develop some basic guidelines on siting, colour of materials and landscape, which will hopefully be of assistance to the Local Planning Authorities.

7.0 FORESTRY AND WOODLAND

- 7.1 No major targets have been set for work within this category. However, there is considerable forestry activity currently within the AONB and the AONB Officer will continue to respond to consultations received from the Forestry Commission on woodland planting and management proposals. It is now rare to see a scheme that does not contribute to AONB Management Plan Objectives in some way and the new markets becoming available for wood products, such as biomass for fuel, will hopefully continue to provide a boost to the forestry industry in the AONB.

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. The amount of work arising from planning consultations is impossible to predict, as our input is entirely reactive.
- 8.2 Work will continue on the issue of undergrounding electricity cables within the AONB. The flow of information from CE Electric is still very poor but we understand that a number of schemes are being progressed and are therefore hopeful that at least one will be implemented during the year.
- 8.3 Yorkshire Water will be approached with a view to implementing landscape improvement works around its installations within the AONB. Any financial contribution towards such works would need to come from the £21,700 budget earmarked for landscape and biodiversity enhancement 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, historic environment or landscape implications. It is hoped to build better links with the two Area Highways Offices covering the AONB, as part of the Management Plan review process.
- 9.2 It is hoped to repair and restore at least 4 more traditional direction signs, concentrating on the through-route from Newburgh to Hovingham to build on the work started in 2007/08.

10.0 RECREATION, ACCESS AND TOURISM

- 10.1 The anticipated budget for improvement works to Public Rights of Way is £7,300. This will be used to address minor works left over from the main programme and also those arising as a result of any route re-alignments. Consideration may also be given to providing NYCC with funding to purchase machinery that would help in managing the seasonal overgrowth on paths in the AONB, which is now probably the largest issue affecting the Rights of Way network.
- 10.2 A budget of £1,000 has been earmarked for recreation management work and work with communities. This will consist of a programme of litter clearance at selected 'hot-spots', a potential project to repaint a traditional village name sign at Sproxtun and assisting with volunteer activities.
- 10.3 It is hoped to be able to complete a full Condition survey of the Rights of Way network this year, using volunteer resources.
- 10.4 One of the main car parking issues in the AONB is at Kirkham Priory. Discussions will continue with English Heritage and the landowner, 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 £5,950. Items to be funded from this sum include the Annual Report (c.£600) and the AONB Newsletter (c.£2,400).
- 11.2 A Local Information and Walks leaflet for Nunnington will be produced and distributed, with a fourth village also being identified for the next leaflet in the series.
- 11.3 It is planned to hold 3 guided events during the year, in summer and autumn. These will also be publicised via the National Association for AONBs website and the Ryedale and North Yorkshire Council's Events Programmes.
- 11.4 The AONB Discovery Project will be moving into its final year. School days will be held at the six primary schools originally visited in Year 1, with twelve Young Ranger Club activity sessions being held in the May, October and December school holidays. This project continues to be funded almost entirely by the Heritage Lottery Fund, with a nominal cash input from the JAC. The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust will again deliver the programme on our behalf.
- 11.5 2007/08 saw a sustained level of activity involving volunteers and it is anticipated that this momentum will be maintained.

12.0 IMPLEMENTATION

- 12.1 The indicative budget for the Sustainable Development Fund is approximately £60,000, of which up to 10% can be spent on administration and promotion. The SDF will again be delivered in partnership with the North York Moors National Park Authority, with AONB representation remaining as currently until the October 2008 meeting of the JAC.

- 12.2 The partnership with the National Park Authority and Forestry Commission to employ a Native Woodland Development Officer has recently been extended to a third year, with a contribution again of £2,500 requested from the JAC.
- 12.3 The CAN DO Partnership's Lime and Ice Project will commence, with a wide variety of community based activity and interpretation.
- 12.4 Mention has already been made of the LEADER partnership, in paragraph 5.3.
- 12.5 With this being the final year of the AONB Discovery Project, alternative sources of grant aid for a new programme of activities will be explored. Current possibilities include the Heritage Lottery Fund again or Natural England's Access to Nature scheme.

13.0 MONITORING

- 13.1 After a number of years of delay, it is hoped to collect data on a full set of AONB Condition indicators, to provide baseline information in the revised AONB Management Plan.

14.0 AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN

- 14.1 This will be a major piece of work for this year and it will need to take priority over other activities if necessary. The formulation of new Objectives and revised text, together with producing the draft Plan for consultation, will be completed by October 2008. The Strategic Environmental Assessment process will run in parallel with this.
- 14.2 The Plan will be revised following public consultation, prior to adoption by the local authorities in March 2009.

15.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- a) The Targets for 2008/09, as contained in the Action Programme, be approved.
- b) The continuation of the administrative arrangements with the North York Moors National Park Authority for the Sustainable Development Fund scheme be noted.
- c) The continuation of the contribution to the Native Woodland Development Officer post be noted.