

**HOWARDIAN HILLS  
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY  
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
30 OCTOBER 2008**

**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 JAC meeting in April 2008.

**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 Manager, AONB Officer and AONB Assistant in the period April 2008 to October 2008. Appendix 2 gives full details of the projects that have been supported so far this year by the AONB Project Fund and the Sustainable Development Fund. Appendix 3 gives details of the Consultations that the JAC has received to date.
- 2.2 The final budget outturn for 2007/08 is detailed in a separate report on the Agenda. Natural England has carried out its tour of work completed in 2007/08 and the final grant settlement has been received.
- 2.3 The JAC's Annual Report was produced in June and circulated in July to the wide range of organisations who work with the JAC to deliver our shared objectives.
- 2.4 The process of revising the AONB Management Plan has been one of the main tasks during this time period. A full report on progress to date, together with the revised forward timetable, is included as a separate item on this Agenda.
- 2.5 A new AONB Assistant has been recruited to replace Sue Wright, who left us at the end of April. Maggie Cochrane started in mid-July and is settling in well.
- 2.6 Work on countryside management has been proceeding at a slow pace during the summer, principally due to uncertainty over the budget that would be available. Work for the winter months is however mapped-out and we will soon be issuing grant offer letters to land managers to carry out hedge planting and other work. Full details of the grants offered and projects initiated are included in Appendix 2.
- 2.7 The Sustainable Development Fund has also got off to a slow start, again due to budget uncertainties. A number of projects have however been approved and a publicity 'flier' distributed in late August has resulted in a number of potential ideas coming forward. Part of the budget will also be used to fund specifically environmental projects, which in the past might have received

assistance from the AONB Project Fund. Full details of the grants offered are contained in Appendix 2.

- 2.8 The AONB Discovery Project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, is in its final year. The annual programme of 6 school Activity Days was successfully delivered, as well as a trial ‘twinning’ visit between Welburn Primary School and Neasden Primary School in Hull. Twelve Ranger Club sessions have been divided into three batches this year – May half-term, October half-term and the Christmas holidays. An additional two-part event at Filey and Hovingham was also arranged in August. The May and August sessions were very successful and bookings are going well for the October sessions. Details of the attendance at the school Activity Days and Ranger Club events already held is shown in Appendix 4.
- 2.9 The Ryedale Show was back in force this year, following last year’s cancellation. We again organised a quiz, based on animal homes, signs, tracks and collective names. A Guided walk was held at Castle Howard (on European Bat Night) and an evening talk given to a local gardening club.
- 2.10 The CAN DO Partnership’s Lime and Ice Project received approval from the Heritage Lottery Fund in March and work over the summer has concentrated on getting the administrative agreements in place. A Project Manager has just been appointed, with interviews for a Project Officer due to be held in November/December. Project delivery is due to start shortly afterwards, with the first major AONB scheme scheduled for summer 2009.
- 2.11 Work has also been continuing to develop a LEADER programme for the eastern part of North Yorkshire, following approval by Yorkshire Forward of the North York Moors, Coast and Hills partnership’s initial Stage 1 bid. Stage 2 approval was received in September, for a £3.2 million programme covering the next 5 years. The next steps will be to formally initiate the Local Action Group and then recruit project staff to deliver the programme.
- 2.12 The AONB and the work of the JAC has received publicity from a number of press releases, although this activity is at a decreased level from last year. The AONB website continues to be popular, with a sustained number of visitors. The updating of the site is very simple, allowing new pieces to be uploaded by any member of the AONB Team.
- 2.13 Activity on Planning and Woodland Grant Scheme consultations has been about average over the summer. A number of the planning applications have been for new farm buildings, which can be difficult to successfully incorporate into the AONB landscape. The largest development was that proposed at the Musley Bank racing stables, but due to its location the landscape impact was considered to be negligible.
- 2.14 The latest edition of the AONB Newsletter was prepared in September and distributed in the week commencing 20<sup>th</sup> October. Copies will be available at the JAC meeting for Members who have not received one through their letterboxes.

- 2.15 A full programme of grazing with Exmoor ponies has again been carried out this year, at Coulton Fen SINC, Bull Ings SINC, Grange Bogs SINC, Bulmer Beck Mire SINC, Terrington Moor SINC, Cawton Fen SINC and Cawton Bank. Reimbursement of costs will be received from those owners whose sites are in Higher Level Stewardship, in order to avoid double-funding.
- 2.16 The analysis of the grant recipients questionnaire returns for the year 2007/08 is included as Appendix 5. In comparison with the previous year the overall level of Satisfaction has increased considerably. Although the Speed of Response and Ease of Use of Grant Schemes ratings were lower than last year, the Information and Guidance rating was much higher.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the report be noted.