

HOWARDIAN HILLS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the meeting held at Oswaldkirk Village Hall on 1 April 2010.

PRESENT:-

Ryedale District Councillor Robert Wainwright in the Chair.

Hambleton District Council: Councillors Christine Cookman and Percy Featherstone.

North Yorkshire County Council: County Councillors Clare Wood and Caroline Patmore.

Parish Councils: Tony Cowan (Hambleton).

Country Land and Business Association: Dorothy Fairburn.

Natural England: Eifon Jones, Brian Davies and Clare Storey.

Officers:

Paul Jackson and Maggie Cochrane – Howardian Hills AONB.

Jane Wilkinson (Secretary), Graham Megson and Richard Walker – North Yorkshire County Council.

Anne Cooper – Hambleton District Council.

Paula Craddock – Ryedale District Council.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

15. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Were submitted on behalf of Justine Clark (Natural England), Vince Carter (Forestry Commission) and Liz Bassindale (AONB).

16. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2009, having been previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

17. MATTERS ARISING

Minute Number 6 – AONB Unit Activity

It was reported that the payback period on the Castle Howard Ground Source Heat Pump was originally estimated as seven years but this had subsequently been revised to five years. Members noted that during the winter period following installation of the ground source heat pump no oil had been used at Castle Howard.

18. AONB UNIT ACTIVITY

CONSIDERED –

The joint report of AONB Officers detailing their activities and progress achieved by the AONB Unit since the previous meeting.

The Committee received a power-point presentation of photographs of completed and on-going projects referred to in the report, together with on-going countryside management works, community projects, volunteer activity and Junior Ranger Club days.

Members noted that on account of the severe weather experienced during the previous winter the starting date for several projects had been deferred. Assurances were given that in all instances where this had occurred the project monies would be carried forward into the next financial year when the works would commence and the projects be completed as planned. A further update on this would be provided at the November meeting.

In response to questions about the follow up work at Dalby Bush Fen SSSI the AONB Manager said that ideally the site should be grazed. The AONB Manager said that he knew that the local ranger had a spraying ticket and he agreed to provide details of what was planned at the site following the meeting. On behalf of the Country Land and Business Association Dorothy Fairburn said that she would provide the AONB Manager with a copy of advice that had been prepared on the sustainability of clearance works that also included best practice guidance.

The Chairman referred to the restoration of the traditional village sign at Hovingham and said that the self-cleaning paint used on the sign appeared to be working well. Members were informed that the paint developed for use in Boulby Potash Mine had been used on other traditional signs both in the AONB and National Park and was proving to be very robust. It was the intention that the same paint would also be used to restore traditional finger-post signs in the AONB.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

19. AONB ACTION PROGRAMME 2009/10

CONSIDERED –

The report of the AONB Manager on implementation during 2009/10 of the AONB Management Plan. Details of performance against original targets were appended to the report. Analysis of performance revealed that 84% of specific targets had been achieved and/or exceeded.

Members were pleased to see that activity and negotiations surrounding improvements to Kirkham Car Park were progressing and looked forward to completion of the much needed works.

In response to questions about how many SINC sites within the AONB were under active management it was reported that the current figure was somewhere between 60/70%. Most of the grassland SINC sites were being actively managed, the situation was less clear however with regard to woodland sites. Many of the ancient woodland sites were covered by conifer plantations which were not at various stages in their rotations and may not be due for felling for some years.

In response to a request from Claire Storey, the AONB Manager agreed to consult Natural England on the content of advice he was preparing on basic design guidance for farm buildings.

Recent activity and the problems encountered surrounding undergrounding overhead electricity lines were reported and Members asked to be kept informed of progress.

Members asked if it was possible to capture the number of hits to the web-site to see how the information was being used. The AONB Manager reported that data from the previous financial year was available. Hits to the web-site were already routinely monitored to record trends following the publication of new material. This information was not actively reported but he was happy to include it in future reports.

It was suggested that in order to reduce the carbon footprint consideration be given to the timing and venue of future meetings so that they coincided with access to and public transport timetables. In doing so the Committee would demonstrate its commitment and act as a role model. Members debated the proposal and whilst supporting the principle expressed doubts about whether it would be practical or even possible. The AONB Manager agreed to give further thought to the matter.

It was reported that the Walks leaflet for Nunnington was almost complete but would not be available for Easter.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the progress made to date in implementing the Management Plan be noted.
- (ii) That the achievements against Targets for 2009/10 be noted.

20. AONB BUSINESS PLAN AND ACTION PROGRAMME 2010/11

CONSIDERED –

The report of the AONB Manager inviting the Committee to approve a programme of proposed activity to implement the AONB Management Plan during 2010/11. The Action Programme and Targets for 2010/11, together with a timetable for completion of the tasks was appended to the report.

The Committee was informed that following talks with the County Council's GIS team it was hoped that digitisation of all practical countryside management work completed with JAC assistance would be complete by 2012. Further information on this subject would be reported to the next meeting.

A further visitor and user survey was planned. The survey would take place in late summer and be conducted by the volunteers. It was not proposed to employ consultants. The new survey would repeat the questions asked in the previous survey that was carried out in 2004.

At the request of Members the AONB Manager provided an update on the wide area initiative for breeding waders in the Newburgh/Coxwold area.

It was agreed that the production of design advice on farm buildings be included in the activities listed under 'Development' heading in the Management Plan.

Members were advised that publication of information collected under the North Yorkshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project was imminent. The Committee noted that information from the Project would be used to support the content of future Management Plans. With regard to the current Management Plan the AONB Manager said that the document was continually being developed. Information from the Historic Landscape Characterisation Project once available would be utilised with immediate effect although this would not be formally documented until a new Management Plan was printed.

Claire Storey referred to the 5 Farm Environment Plans and asked if maps held by Natural England showing educational access land could be updated as currently there was no educational access recorded within the AONB area. The AONB Manager said that he knew of one site of educational access within the AONB but was not sure if this had lapsed. He gave assurances that all opportunities for educational access within the AONB were fully explored.

Members expressed support for the activities described in the report and for the recommendations attached to the report.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the Targets for 2010/11 as contained in the Action Programme be approved.
- (ii) That the continuation of administrative arrangements with the North York Moors National Park Authority for the Sustainable Development Fund scheme be approved and noted.
- (iii) That the continuation of the contribution to the Native Woodland Development Officer post be approved and noted.

21. NATURAL ENGLAND/LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The AONB Manager gave an oral progress report on finalisation of the new Memorandum of Understanding Natural England had asked constituent local authorities of the AONB to enter into.

It was reported that negotiations surrounding the clauses to be included in the final document had delayed its completion. Following a national-meeting in December 2009 a copy of the final document had been sent to constituent local authorities for signature.

The Memorandum of Understanding had been signed by Hambleton District Council the previous day and representatives of North Yorkshire County Council had agreed to sign the document immediately after the close of the meeting of the Committee that day. The document had now been approved by legal services at Ryedale District Council and was due to be presented to a meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee later that evening. Final approval would be given at a meeting of full Council on 20 May 2010.

Claire Storey said that the Management Team at Natural England would in the interim period seek a letter of comfort from Ryedale District Council.

RESOLVED –

That progress towards completion of the Memorandum of Understanding be noted.

22. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT MONITORING STATISTICS

CONSIDERED –

The report of the AONB Manager presenting information gathered as part of the monitoring process for the Strategic Environmental Assessment carried out on the AONB Management Plan.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

23. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR AONB'S (NAAONB) ACTIVITY

The AONB Manager gave an oral report.

The Committee was advised that in July 2009 Howard Davies was appointed as the new Chief Executive of the NAAONB. Since taking up his new position in January Mr Davies had proved to be an excellent choice and had reinvigorated the organisation. Traditionally the AONB Manager and Chairman of the Committee met on an annual basis during February/March the Chief Executive of the NAAONB. To date this had not occurred due to his recent appointment.

Work on branding had been delayed to allow input from the new Chief Executive. Proposals had now been agreed and would be rolled out shortly.

The NAAONB had declared that the International Year of Biodiversity would be its campaign theme for 2010. The AONB Unit had agreed to promote this at various events and through a number of initiatives.

RESOLVED –

That the information provided at the meeting be noted.

24. DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE AONB

CONSIDERED –

The annual report of the AONB Manager on the number and type of planning applications determined within the AONB during the previous year.

Members noted the 50% reduction in the number of applications determined in 2009 compared to 2008. The AONB Manager said that the AONB continued to remain under little development pressure with no major contentious schemes being submitted.

Members asked if it was possible to measure the effectiveness of the comments submitted. The AONB Manager said that often the comments submitted related to the colour and type of materials to be used. These were usually incorporated into the standard conditions attached to the consent. Until a development was actually built it was impossible to tell if comments submitted by AONB had been taken on board.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

25. JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE PLANNING CONSULTATIONS

CONSIDERED –

The responses submitted by the AONB Manager to Hambleton and Ryedale District Councils in respect of planning applications received within the area of the AONB since the previous meeting.

Members endorsed the responses made by the AONB Manager in respect of the 7 applications appended to the agenda.

The AONB Manager advised that results of applications already determined were available upon request.

RESOLVED –

That the responses attached to the agenda be noted.

26. ORAL REPORTS FROM PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Hambleton District Council

Local Development Framework – it was reported that the Allocations submission was completed in December 2009. A pre-hearing meeting took place on 10 March 2010. Examinations were due to start on 12 May 2010 and would be heard over a period of ten days. Hambleton District Council was the first local authority in the country to reach this stage. It was hoped that the final report would be available in July 2010.

Natural England

The 'All Landscapes Matter' position statement was now published.

A report was being prepared on utilisation of SDF monies by AONBs – further information on this would be provided as and when it became available.

A new temporary nine month contract was about to be created. The post-holder would analyse the performance and delivery against Natural England condition indicator targets of all AONBs.

Forestry Commission

The Yorkshire Forward funded 3 year capital programme had been approved and was due to start on 1 June 2010. Three hundred and twenty hectares of woodland would be created to reduce flood risk and 800ha of under-managed woodland brought into management. The programme also included work to improve understanding of the region's woodlands including an Ancient Woodland condition assessment programme. Habitat network research was to be taken forward by Forest Research, and a trees and urban climate project would be based at Manchester University.

Government departments have now published plans to show how they propose to tackle climate change. The Defra plan can be found at www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climate/documents/climate-change-plan-2010.pdf the forestry section is on pages 103-105. The proposals include the establishment of a Woodland Carbon Task Force.

The Government has now published its policy on restoring open habitats from forests. The policy can be found at www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/eng-oh-policy-march2010.pdf

Ryedale District Council

Local Development Framework – it was reported that the timetable had been revised following a decision of full council on 15 December 2009 not to approve the final Core Strategy document. Consequently the document had been revised to take account of the many responses received to the consultation. It was hoped that a draft Core Strategy would be published in July 2010 subject to agreement by full council.

North Yorkshire County Council

Second year Local Area Agreement targets have been published. The performance of SINC sites had exceeded the target (this includes a SINC within the AONB). Performance against national indicator 197 in North Yorkshire was 20%. This figure did not compare favourably nationally. The figure reflected the rurality of North Yorkshire where many sites are privately owned and are not subject to active management. Approximately 146 sites out of a total of 735 are in active management.

The final draft of the North Yorkshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project had been sent to local authorities in North Yorkshire for comment. The closing date for receipt of comments was the end of April 2010 after which the final report would be published.

County Councillor Caroline Patmore said that the retaining stone wall at Oulston Bank had collapsed in four places onto the adjacent highway and was hazardous to road users. The AONB Manager agreed to visit the site and to contact the owner following the meeting.

Country Land and Business Association

It was reported that the Campaign for Farmed Environment campaign had been launched in Yorkshire. The campaign was in response to the loss of compulsory set-aside. The scheme aimed to replace the environmental benefits of set-aside on a voluntary basis. Project officers had been appointed and activity was due to start soon.

Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy – the CLA was actively supporting the case for the current budget to be maintained in order to meet the challenges of food and environmental security.

27. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the date of the annual site visit is 23 July 2010.
- (ii) That the date of the next meeting of the Committee is the morning of Friday, 5 November 2010, the exact start time and venue to be confirmed.

JW/JD/ALJ