

HOWARDIAN HILLS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the meeting held at Brandsby Village Hall on 31 March 2011, commencing at 10.00 am.

PRESENT:-

North Yorkshire County Council: County Councillor Clare Wood in the Chair.

Hambleton District Council: Councillors Christine Cookman and Percy Featherstone.

Ryedale District Council: Councillor Robert Wainwright.

North Yorkshire County Council: County Councillor Caroline Patmore.

Parish Councils: David Pontefract (Hambleton).

Country Land and Business Association: Dorothy Fairburn.

Ramblers Association: Geoff Eastwood.

Natural England: Justine Clark and Claire Storey.

Officers:

Paul Jackson, Liz Bassindale and Maggie Cochrane – Howardian Hills AONB.

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

Paula Craddock – Ryedale District Council.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

The Chairman congratulated Dorothy Fairburn and Christine Cookman on both being awarded MBEs in the New Year's Honour List.

40. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Stephen Prest (National Farmers Union), Vince Carter (Forestry Commission), Ian Read (Ryedale Parish Councils), and Graham Banks (Hambleton District Council).

41. MATTERS ARISING

Minute No 30 - Retaining Wall at Oulston Bank

The AONB Manager confirmed that at his meeting with representatives from the Newburgh Priory Estate he had raised the issue of the collapsed retaining wall. The Estate was he said contemplating cutting back the bank and replacing it with stone gabions. He advised that in his opinion this was unlikely to receive Conservation Area approval from Hambleton District Council, as a similar application had in the past been refused.

County Councillor Caroline Patmore said that the situation was now urgent as the wall was in danger of total collapse. Any further periods of wet weather would result in more sections collapsing.

The Committee concluded that whilst ultimately a matter for the Estate the need to continue to monitor the situation was noted.

Minute No 35 – National Association For AONB's (NAAONB) Activity

The AONB Manager reported that guidelines appertaining to the launch of the new branding scheme were now the subject of a three month trial period. The Officer Steering Group had commented on the guidelines but final decisions had yet to be taken. The AONB Manager agreed to liaise with the Chairman if any decisions were required before the Committee next met in November.

Minute No 37 – Planning Application – Agricultural Building at the Avenue, Dalby

It was reported that the re-submitted planning application had subsequently been withdrawn with no further resubmission lodged.

42. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2010, having been previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

43. FORMAT OF JAC MEETINGS AND REPORTS

The AONB Manager invited Members to comment on the format and content of JAC meetings and agenda papers.

The AONB Manager was keen to receive feedback from Members and said that the current economic downturn and cuts to funding had led to similar discussions on the format of JAC meetings taking place in other AONBs. He suggested that future agenda could for example include a standard item that identified a topic for debate which could be linked to a site visit to enable Members to view the relevant landscape in situ.

By way of background information on the content of agenda papers, the Committee was advised that the AONB Manager took approximately 30/35 hours to prepare the agenda papers in their current style. The Committee noted that a lot of the information contained in the reports needed to be recorded and monitored in any event.

Members commented that the Committee met only twice a year. At those meetings it approved both the budget and AONB Business Plan. It was therefore important that Members received comprehensive information that enabled them to make informed decisions. Members said they were satisfied with the meetings and reports in their current format and that as it was already a requirement that some of the information provided to them was recorded, production of the reports was not therefore overly onerous.

At the suggestion of the Chairman, Members agreed that at the conclusion of each of the remaining items on the agenda they would comment on its format.

44. AONB UNIT ACTIVITY

CONSIDERED –

The joint report of AONB Officers detailing their activities and progress achieved by the AONB Unit since the previous meeting in November 2010.

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

Members' attention was drawn in particular to the major new school twinning project and the programme of twinning visits due to take place in May/June and the in-field and boundary tree planting schemes. The AONB Manager reported that on 25 February 2011 Anne McIntosh MP had visited the AONB offices. During the visit she had expressed an interest in arranging a further visit to view countryside management works within the AONB. Consequently the AONB Manager said there was a possibility of inviting her to attend the annual site visit in July.

Members commented that litter everywhere was a growing problem. The AONB Manager said that following a restructure at the County Council, countryside services and waste management were now part of the same service unit. At a recent staff event the suggestion of a joint litter initiative aimed at recycling roadside waste had been raised.

A Member said that Ryedale and Hambleton District Councils provided residents of towns and villages carrying out a 'litter pick' with bags, litter pickers and collected the rubbish after the event. Members of the Committee agreed that knowledge of this service was not widely known and asked the district council officers who attended the Committee to look at improving their promotion of the service.

The Chairman referred to paragraph 2.8 of the report on the work of the Community Development Officer at Rural Action North Yorkshire and said it would be useful if future reports contained an expanded narrative of her activities. Members commented that over recent months there had been an increase in activities undertaken by Rural Action North Yorkshire which had been generally well received on account of their being of a more practical nature in supporting communities.

A Member enquired about the planning application at Ampleforth (erection of a 5 bedroom agricultural workers dwelling, page 29 of report) and was advised that the application had now been approved subject to a landscape scheme. The Committee was keen to see the landscape scheme enforced and agreed to monitor the situation.

Report Format

Members were content with the format of the report, with the following comments:-

- In appendix 1 details of officers' annual leave are not required.
- Details of planning applications are welcomed but the report could be restructured so as to avoid duplication of these details in the report on Development within the AONB that appears later on the agenda.

RESOLVED –

That the content of the report be noted.

45. AONB ACTION PROGRAMME 2010/11

CONSIDERED –

The report of the AONB Manager containing details of implementation of the AONB Management Plan during 2010/11. Details of progress/performance against 2010/11 targets was appended to the report.

The AONB Manager said analysis of performance revealed that 79% of specific targets had been achieved and/or exceeded. This figure was slightly lower than the previous two years due to the reasons set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report. Additionally the school twinning project was a major piece of work with only one target attached to it.

The Chairman congratulated the AONB team on their achievements during 2010/11.

A Member said that it had come to his attention that development control advice available from district councils on renewable energies was scarce. He said that he would welcome a discussion on this topic at a future meeting to enable the AONB to agree a policy for responding to planning applications of this type. The AONB Manager said that he had noticed a growing number of solar panels within the AONB and agreed that this was an area that would benefit from further research. The Planning Officer from Ryedale District Council was aware of a recent government consultation on this subject and that some development was classed as permitted. She said she would be happy to provide a report to the next meeting. Members of the Committee agreed to her suggestion.

The Chairman said she would welcome further information on new renewable energy technologies especially wind farms and requested that an expert in this field be invited to the next meeting. It was further suggested that an invitation to attend the presentation be extended to local landowners. The AONB Manager agreed to discuss the arrangements with the Chairman outside of the meeting.

Graham Megson referred to a meeting of Nidderdale AONB at which Susan Briggs had given a presentation on encouraging rural businesses. He said that the presentation had been very interesting and contained practical advice on how to expand the visitor experience such as charging visitors to watch everyday farming practices such as lambing. He believed the Committee would benefit from receiving a similar presentation. Members of the Committee were keen to pursue his suggestion and the AONB Manager agreed to look into it further.

Report Format

Members were content with the format of the report, with the following comments:-

- Inclusion of an additional explanatory paragraph on the projects the AONB team would have liked to have tackled and the reasons for not doing so.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the progress made to date in implementing the Management Plan be noted.
- (b) That the achievements against Targets for 2010/11 be noted.
- (c) That a report on development control appertaining to renewable energy technologies be referred to the next meeting.

46. AONB BUSINESS PLAN AND ACTION PROGRAMME 2011/12

CONSIDERED –

The report of AONB Manager inviting the Committee to approve a programme of proposed activity designed to implement the AONB Management Plan during

2011/12. The Action Programme and Targets for 2011/12, together with a timetable for completion of the tasks were appended to the report.

District Councillor Robert Wainwright sought clarification of what was happening to the fingerpost sign in Hovingham that had been broken by a passing vehicle. The AONB Manager said that the sign had been removed by the County Council and that he would find out if it could be replaced or needed to be recast.

The Chairman commented that she was pleased to see the inclusion of the restoration of traditional direction signs and asked if volunteers would assist with either the record keeping or restoration. The AONB Manager replied that restoration involved liaison with staff from area highways and that it was not appropriate for this work to be done by volunteers. In order to create a log of the mile posts it was necessary to first agree a methodology. The AONB Manager proposed to use the National Street Gazetteer to achieve this as the information would then become widely available.

Dorothy Fairburn stressed the importance of the work on developing the fixed-point photography monitoring project and hoped it would be given priority and asked if it was intended to utilise volunteers. The Committee was advised that during the first year AONB staff would compile a list of locations and a set of baseline photographs. Work identifying potential sites was already underway. In subsequent years much of the work would be conducted by volunteers and/or a local camera club.

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

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Targets for 2011/12, as contained in the Action Programme be approved.
- (b) That the continuation of the administrative arrangements with the North York Moors National Park Authority for the Sustainable Development Fund scheme be approved and noted.
- (c) That the contribution towards the Native Woodland Development Officer post be continued and noted.

47. DEFRA/LOCAL AUTHORITY AGREEMENT

The AONB Manager gave an oral report.

The Committee was advised that the signing of a new Memorandum of Understanding between DEFRA, the County Council and Hambleton and Ryedale District Councils was getting underway. The new agreement was very similar to the document signed the previous June with Natural England. The new draft Memorandum had still to be approved by legal services within the constituent local authorities before being signed and it was hoped that this would be completed in due course.

The Committee noted that it had still to be determined whether a representative of DEFRA would be appointed as a new member of the Committee or whether representatives of Natural England would continue to attend.

RESOLVED –

That the information provided at the meeting be noted.

48. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR AONBS - ACTIVITY

The Vice Chairman, Christine Cookman presented a briefing note she had produced following her attendance at the January meeting of northern area chairmen and lead officers of AONBs. A copy of the briefing paper tabled at the meeting was placed in the Minute Book.

The AONB Manager reported that the Secretary of State was due to visit the AONB on 19 May 2011 and that Members of the Committee were welcome to attend. The itinerary for the visit had still to be agreed and once finalised would be made available to Members. With regard to the development of closer links with National Parks and the review of governance arrangements within National Parks Members noted that the Minister liked the AONB model as it represented very good value for money and was an effective means of delivering the 'big society'.

A Member asked if the withdrawal by Lincolnshire County Council of payment of their annual membership subscription fee would lead to higher fees for remaining members. The AONB Manager said the issue was that the County Council did not wish to pay twice as the membership fee was paid both by the County Council and the AONB. North Yorkshire County Council had adopted the same stance and no longer paid an annual subscription fee. Because of the drop in income, subscription fees were likely to rise as otherwise it would not be possible to deliver the work identified in the NAAONB Business Plan. The financial position of the NAAONB was unsustainable, as for the past 3/4years the previous Chief Executive had carried out a significant amount of work for which he had not been paid. The new Business Plan was currently out to consultation and contained a proposal to increase subscriptions. The AONB Manager said that he would provide Members with a web-site link so that they could view the draft Business Plan and that he would liaise with the Chairman regarding the Committee's response. Members noted that the draft Business Plan was due to be approved at the AGM of the NAAONB in October 2011.

The AONB Manager said that it was the responsibility of all AONBs to scrutinise the efficiency of the NAAONB. For this reason it was important to submit a formal response to the consultation on the draft Business Plan.

RESOLVED –

That the information provided at the meeting be noted.

49. 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 2010. A summary of the planning applications determined during 2010 was appended to the report. Also appended to the report were copies of 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.

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

Claire Storey of Natural England drew Members attention to the cluster effect of applications for 18/25m wind turbines and said that perhaps this was something the AONB should be aware of when responding to individual applications. She also said

that as a lot of the comments made by the AONB Manager related to the colour of materials if the relevant part of AONB policy was incorporated into the standard conditions issued by Hambleton and Ryedale District Councils it would save officer time and be much more efficient. The Chairman supported her suggestion and the AONB Manager agreed to complete the basic design guidance for new farm buildings that he had started work on which could then be referred to the district councils.

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

RESOLVED –

That the responses and information in the report be noted.

50. ORAL REPORTS FROM PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Ramblers Association

The local programme of walks for 2011 included ten that started from parishes within the AONB. Geoff Eastwood agreed to liaise with the AONB Manager about providing the event organisers with practical advice about parking etc so as to minimise any disruption.

Hambleton District Council

Councillor Percy Featherstone announced this was his last meeting as he had decided not to stand for re-election in May. During his eighteen years as a member of the Committee the AONB had he said, gone from strength to strength. The Chairman thanked Councillor Featherstone for his outstanding contribution and wished him a long and happy retirement.

It was reported that Rural Housing Enabler funding had now been secured for 12 months and that the LDF Allocations document was subject to legal challenge which was unlikely to be decided until the summer. Cuts to the Council's tourism service meant the closure of Thirsk Tourist Information Centre and its transfer to the about to-be converted public conveniences in the Market Place.

Ryedale District Council

Following consultation a new Core Strategy document was being prepared which would be released for consultation at the end of the summer. It was anticipated that the document would refer to national guidance as opposed to identifying specific sites for release.

North Yorkshire County Council

Following a restructure within the Business & Environmental Services Directorate waste management and countryside services were now part of the same service unit managed by Ian Fielding.

Country Land and Business Association

The Campaign for the Farmed Environment was continuing. Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy was likely to be major area of work area due to the negative impact on funding. Announcements about LEPs and the transfer of RDPE funding to DEFRA could lead to delivery problems in North Yorkshire.

Natural England

Following a restructure the area now covered by the Yorkshire North Team had been extended to include Leyburn and Easingwold. No major staff changes resulted from the restructure.

The Committee noted that the permissive access element of Higher Level Stewardship agreements had been removed, however educational access had now been reinstated. Members commented that the loss of permissive access was regrettable given the level of public demand and the benefits it produced when compared to the small cost involved. The AONB Manager said that as the issue affected all AONBs he would seek guidance from the NAAONB on lobbying.

Within the area of the AONB, four applications for Higher Level Countryside Stewardship had been scoped but only one had been selected to progress. The remaining three applications would be resubmitted next year. Five Countryside Stewardship Agreements within the AONB were also due to expire in 2012 all of which would be scoped during 2011.

No problems were anticipated with the signing of a new Agreement between DEFRA Natural England and the AONBs nationally. It was hoped that the new Memorandum would specify the level of partnership between the parties.

Claire Storey said this was her last meeting as she was about to take up a new post with responsibility for land use (planning). She did not yet know the identity of her replacement and agreed to provide the AONB Manager with contact details once she was notified.

The Chairman wished her best luck in her new role and thanked her for her contribution whilst a member of the Committee.

Forrestry Commission

It was reported that William Worsley had been appointed a member of the Advisory Panel on Forestry Policy with responsibility for advising on the future of the public forest estate. The public forest estate disposal programme was currently on hold but the £40m anticipated income from disposals remained in the budget.

The staff consultation on the structure of the Forestry Commission was due to close the following day and the Chairman was reported as saying that it would be a smaller organisation with fewer staff and fewer offices. The office at Wheldrake was due to close in the next couple of months and affected staff would relocate to Foss House in York. The closure was independent of the staff consultation.

The Big Tree Plant Programme was about to be launched. The programme was aimed at community woodland planting and provided funding of £1m per annum for the next four years.

51. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the date of the annual site visit is 29 July 2011.
- (ii) That the date and time of the next meeting of the Committee is 10.00 am on 3 November 2011 at a venue to be confirmed.

The meeting concluded at 12.45 pm.

JW/ALJ

2011-03-31 - Howardian Hills AONB Minutes/8