

Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Joint Advisory Committee

The Minutes of the meeting held at Hovingham Village Hall on 5 November 2012, commencing at 10.00 am.

Present:-

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

Ryedale District Council: Councillor Robert Wainwright.

Hambleton District Council: Councillor Christine Cookman.

Parish Councils: David Pontefract (Hambleton).

Country Land and Business Association: William Worsley.

National Farmers Union: Robert Hicks.

Natural England: Justine Clark and Nancy Steadman.

Officers:

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

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

Ryedale District Council: Paula Craddock.

Hambleton District Council: Graham Banks.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

72. Election of Chairman

Resolved –

That County Councillor Clare Wood is elected to serve as Chairman of the Joint Advisory Committee for the next 12 months.

County Councillor Clare Wood in the Chair

73. Apologies for Absence

Submitted on behalf of Ryedale Parish Councillor Gaynor De Barr.

74. Minutes

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 April 2012, having been previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

75. Matters Arising

Min No 64 Retaining Wall at Oulston Bank

It was reported that Newburgh Priory Estate had obtained grant funding to repair fallen sections of wall totalling between 30/40m in length and that the repairs works had commenced on site.

County Councillor Patmore was concerned that other sections of the wall that were on the verge of collapse would compromise the work now being carried out.

David Pontefract said that he had spoken with the contractor who had completed approximately 50% of the work and who shared the concerns of County Councillor Patmore. It was reported that a lack of funds meant that the Estate was not prepared to carry out any further repair works. Members were pleased that some progress had been achieved and Paul Jackson agreed to monitor the situation and provide further updates to future meetings.

Min No 65 – Gate Pillars at Hardy Flatts, Whitwell

An exploration of alternative options to protective wooden posts in front of the stone pillars was outstanding. Update to be reported to the next meeting.

Min No 65 – 25th AONB Commemorative Log Seats

The latest edition of the AONB newsletter had invited suggestions for the location of the commemorative seats. Similarly a letter to all parish councils in the AONB was about to be sent out inviting them to submit suitable locations.

Min No 66 – Appointment of NYCC Volunteer Co-ordinator

A meeting between the AONB Officer and newly appointed Volunteer Co-ordinator had taken place at which volunteer activity within the AONB had been discussed.

Min- 67 – AONB Business Plan and Action Programme 2012/13

It was reported that since the previous meeting no SDF applications had been received that required determination by an E-Panel.

76. Election of Vice-Chairman

Resolved –

That Hambleton District Councillor Christine Cookman is elected as Vice-Chairman of the Joint Advisory Committee for the next 12 months.

77. Election of SDF Panel Representatives

That Ryedale District Councillor Robert Wainwright and David Pontefract (Parish Councils Hambleton) are nominated to represent Howardian Hills AONB on the Sustainable Development Fund Panel for the next 12 months.

That Hambleton District Councillor Christine Cookman is nominated as the substitute member to represent Howardian Hills AONB on the Sustainable Development Fund Panel for the next 12 months.

78. AONB Unit Activity

Considered –

The joint report of AONB Officers detailing their activities and the progress achieved by the Unit during the period April-September 2012.

A slideshow 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 was shown at the meeting.

Members enquired about the effectiveness of the work done to date to clear and control the spread of Himalayan Balsam. The Committee was advised that the plant was an annual and the main method of control used was to cut the plant before it set seed. Timing of the cut was critical. This method had proved successful within the AONB as evidenced by the 50% reduction in the cost of this work each year for the past four years. Because the plant shaded out other vegetation perennial grasses may need to be reintroduced to treated areas.

It was acknowledged that efforts to control the spread of Himalayan balsam within the confines of the AONB could be rendered ineffective unless replicated outside its boundaries. The AONB Manager highlighted a joint project to eradicate non-native species around the River Derwent that involved a number of different organisations. He said that lack of funding/resources was often the reason preventative action was not taken as opposed to a lack of will. The National Park had he said produced a leaflet that was widely available that contained advice on how to control Himalayan balsam. The plant was shallow rooted and could easily be uprooted by hand and small areas could effectively be treated in this way.

During the photographic presentation details of potential future Sustainable Development Fund applications still under development were highlighted. The Chairman recommended that the applicant of the Autism Centre project establish contact with the County Council's Health & Adult Services Directorate to seek advice on how to strengthen their bid.

Members pointed out that the top stones on the northern section of Scackleton Wall at Wiganthorpe had yet to be replaced. The AONB Manager confirmed that appropriate stone had been sourced but that its removal required mineral planning consent. The Chairman and Members of the Committee instructed the AONB Manager to write a letter immediately following the meeting requesting the appropriate consent.

Members enquired when the renovated traditional highway direction signs would be reinstated. The AONB Manager replied that five signs had been renovated but that only one had been reinstated. The County Council's Area Highways Office at Thirsk was responsible for reinstatement works but his efforts to get this work timetabled had to date proved unsuccessful. The Chairman and County Councillor Caroline Patmore agreed to contact Nigel Smith, Area Highways Manager to request that he organise the works.

The Chairman referred to the analysis of grant recipients questionnaire returns for the year 2012/12 at appendix 5 of the report and was concerned that 28% said the work would have been done without a grant being awarded. The AONB Manager acknowledged her concerns and gave assurances to the Committee that he would closely monitor the situation.

In conclusion, the Chairman and Members of the Committee congratulated the AONB Manager and his team on their achievements which given the changes in staff were particularly impressive.

Resolved –

That the content of the report and the information provided at the meeting be noted.

79. AONB Indicators

Considered –

The report of the AONB Manager presenting the 2011/12 annual performance results for the AONB Partnership. The report brought together data on performance, personnel, financial and partnership working. Individual indicator results were appended to the report.

Members commented that whilst it was no longer a requirement that the data was collected it continued to be a useful source of information. It enabled year on year comparative analysis to be undertaken and as it was not too onerous to collect recommended the practice should continue.

Resolved –

That performance indicator results continue to be reported to Joint Advisory Committee on an annual basis.

That the performance indicator results in Appendix 1 of the report be noted.

80. Visitors & Users Survey

Considered –

The report of the AONB Manager presenting the methodology and results of a Visitor & User Survey undertaken in August 2012. The findings of the survey were displayed in detail on large boards in the meeting room.

The AONB Manager said it was interesting to note that significantly more people were aware that the area was a designated AONB than had been the case when the previous survey was undertaken in 2002. The findings of the survey would he said be used to inform the new Management Plan.

Graham Megson commented that the information about disabled users would be helpful when completing equality impact assessments.

The Chairman was concerned that when looking at the survey results in the future external factors such as the weather and the affect of the Olympics and the Queen's Jubilee would be forgotten. The AONB Manager said he would include in the Survey Report a paragraph highlighting the reasons why 2012 was not a typical year.

Resolved –

That the Visitors & Users Survey methodology and results be noted for information.

81. New Agricultural Buildings Design Guide (Draft)

Considered –

The report of the AONB Manager seeking feedback from Members prior to informal consultation and subsequent publication and distribution of a new draft Agricultural Buildings Design Guide for use within the AONB. A copy of the draft design guide was appended to the report.

The AONB Manager said the design guide was based on the model used by North York Moors National Park. Once approved it was intended that the Design Guide was sent to all farmers and agents in the AONB who regularly submitted planning

applications. The Design Guide would also be used as a reference tool by the AONB Manager when commenting on planning applications.

William Worsley said he had reservations about the document in its current form. It was important that the Guide did not frustrate the practice of agriculture which nationally required a significant amount of investment in infrastructure. He was not convinced that it was a good idea to use the same template as that used by the National Park. Farming in the National Park was predominantly livestock whereas in the AONB it was mainly arable which had very different requirements. He said there was a need for large agricultural buildings with adequate space between them to enable farm vehicles to manoeuvre properly and easily. Multi-span roofs were not suitable for grain stores and sky lights should be avoided. Tree planting was often seen as a means to mitigate the appearance of farm buildings but often it was difficult to get advice from district councils and was not followed up after planning consent had been obtained.

The AONB Manager said he had used the National Park template because like the AONB it was a protected landscape and the Guide contained many things that were also relevant to the AONB. He agreed to remove the obvious discordant references.

County Councillor Caroline Patmore suggested that consideration be given to imposing a fee for giving advice similar to the practice employed by district councils.

Nancy Steadman said the number one principle/consideration of the Guide should be location as opposed to design details. With regard to tree planting she said she would prefer to see other options apart from barrier planting used such as the planting of a copse as a means of breaking up the profile of a building.

On behalf of the National Farmers Union Robert Hicks welcomed investment in high quality agricultural buildings which he was keen to see sited for practical reasons close to existing farm buildings. He agreed with the comments of William Worsley about the need for turning space for farm vehicles and suggested that it would be helpful if the Guide when approved was distributed to farm building contractors who often assisted farmers with design aspects of new buildings.

The AONB Manager agreed to liaise outside of the meeting with William Worsley, Robert Hicks and Nancy Steadman about making revisions to the draft guide before circulating it to Members of the Committee.

Members debated whether the Design Guide when approved should be adopted as part of the Local Development Framework. The Chairman expressed support for the document which she said would help raise the profile of the AONB and if formally adopted would place it on a formal footing.

Members agreed to defer making a decision about whether to include the Design Guide in the Local Development Framework until the next meeting of the Committee when hopefully an amended Design Guide would be approved.

Resolved –

- (a) That the AONB Manager liaise with Members of the Committee about amendments to the Design Guide before referring it to the next meeting of the Committee for approval.
- (b) That a decision about whether to include the Design Guide in the Local Development Framework be deferred to the next meeting.

82. AONB Budget

Considered –

The report of the AONB Manager presenting details of expenditure during 2011/12 and highlighting anticipated budgetary needs for 2013/14.

Details of expenditure incurred during 2011/12 were summarised and Members noted the reasons for the above average number of variations between estimated and actual spend on a number of budget heads that had resulted in an underspend of 12%.

The principal reason for the overall budget underspend was the Historic Environment budget head which had spent only 32% of its provision as described in paragraph 2.10 of the report. At the end of the 2011/12 financial year there was a carry forward into 2012/13 of £48,616. The AONB Manager expressed himself satisfied with the overall position.

The AONB Manager then summarised the current budget situation as set out in appendix 5 of the report and estimated anticipated expenditure during 2013/14.

Members supported the approach as outlined in the report. The Chairman congratulated the Unit on its achievement during what had been a challenging time in terms of staff changes and gave notice that if the County Council decided to freeze Council Tax next year then further budget cuts could be experienced.

Resolved –

- (a) That the details of JAC expenditure during 2011/12 be received for information.
- (b) That Partner authorities be asked to consider making financial contributions towards the work of the JAC in 2013/14, in line with Appendix 5 and section 4 of the report.
- (c) That North Yorkshire County Council is invited to review renewal of its lease on the AONB Team office at Hovingham, with all costs continuing to be funded by the AONB Partnership.
- (d) That the increase in NAAONB subscription for a 2-year trial secondment of the Regional Co-ordinators to the national NAAONB Team is noted and outputs monitored.

83. National Association For AONB's

The AONB Manager provided an oral report providing feedback to Members on the annual conference.

The AONB had acted as one of the host authorities and had been responsible for organising two field trips both of which had been very successful. The events had taken a lot of time and effort to organise but the feedback received had been very positive and the conference was said to have been one the best there had been.

On behalf of the Committee the Chairman commended the AONB Manager and his team for their all hard work and efforts.

The AONB Manager summarised the following highlights from the Conference:-

- Minister Richard Benyon pledging strong support for AONBs
- Keynote speaker Ed Gillespie

The National Association had held their AGM in October in London. Minister Richard Benyon had attended and had emphasised the importance of rural growth, the roll out of broadband, tourism and partnership working with the National Parks.

The AONB Manager described the newly created national role for the two former regional co-ordinators who had previously worked in the South East/West. The previous arrangement was he said unbalanced and unsustainable. The AONB Manager supported their new role which he said would cost each AONB £2,700 over two years but was already producing benefits even though they were not officially due to start their new role until April 2013.

Resolved –

That the information provided at the meeting be noted.

84. JAC planning consultations

The Committee received for information and comment a copy of the responses submitted by the AONB Manager to Hambleton and Ryedale District Councils in respect of planning applications within the area of the AONB that had been received since the previous meeting.

In response to a question from a Member the AONB Manager confirmed that he had not been consulted on and was unaware of enforcement action at High House Farm, Oulston.

The Chairman commented that it had been an exceptionally busy period with a wide range of development. The AONB Manager said that the volume of work in this area was always unpredictable.

Resolved –

That the responses attached to the agenda be noted.

85. Reports from Partner Organisations - Oral reports

Considered –

Natural England

The new Environmental Stewardship handbook was now available and contained details of changes made to the allocation of points under the Entry Level Scheme. Changes to the staffing structure of the local office had led to reduced staff numbers which in turn meant officers now had less time for field work. For those staff that remained the future was uncertain. During the Summer the television programme on the restoration of Coulton Mill had provided a lot of good publicity. Within the AONB there were five Environmental Stewardship Applications in the pipeline and invitations had been sent out seeking applications for next year. Works to The Avenue at Castle Howard were planned but overall the future of the Rural Development Programme remained uncertain.

Hambleton District Council

Shared services with Richmondshire District Council were now at an end and planning had reverted to being a single service.

Ryedale District Council

The Local Development Framework document was subject to its examination in September 2012. The Inspector had not officially closed the examination yet and had indicated that further public consultation on changes made during the examination would be needed.

North Yorkshire County Council

The reorganisation of the Public Rights of Way Team was now complete and a new staffing structure in place. Contact details for the Rangers to be provided.

Country Land & Business Association

The Association was very concerned about the effects of Ash Dieback and diseases affecting other species of trees. The Association stressed the importance of mixed planting.

86. Date of Next Meeting

Resolved -

That the date and time of the next meeting of the Committee is Thursday 4 April 2013 at 10.00 am at a venue to be agreed.

The meeting concluded at 12.30 pm.

JW/ALJ