

**HOWARDIAN HILLS  
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY  
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
4 APRIL 2013**

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR AONBs (NAAONB) ACTIVITY**

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To receive details of the work currently being carried out by the NAAONB.

**2.0 KEY MESSAGES**

2.1 The AONB Manager attended the northern Chairmen's Meeting in York on 20<sup>th</sup> February, which also had representatives from the other northern AONBs. The principal messages coming from the meeting are listed below:

2.2 The NAAONB Business Plan is due for review and will be sent round to Lead Officers electronically. The current Business Plan has a fundamental issue in that no time has been allocated to service:

- The demands of Defra, and particularly Natural England, in relation to national strategic AONB issues.
- The development of Accords with other relevant organisations with whom we should be partnering.
- The time needed to just 'run the business'.

2.3 The National Growth Strategy (Heseltine Report) contains a number of recommendations that are of relevance to AONBs:

- Wealth creation needs to be part of the plans of all Government bodies.
- Public services ought to be devolved to the private/local sectors.
- Leadership and management skills need to be developed.
- A Duty of Regard in relation to economic growth should be placed on Local Authorities.

2.4 The next 3-year Comprehensive Spending Review (to April 2017) could potentially see another 23% reduction for Defra, based on current figures (February 2013) and assuming the safeguarding of currently protected budgets.

2.5 The NAAONB has been involved in a variety of pieces of work to address these potential issues:

- A national policy group has been established.
- Non-Exchequer funding sources are being explored.
- Defra is preparing a Vision for AONBs.
- Comments have been submitted to the consultation on the Growth & Infrastructure Bill.
- The Defra Minister Richard Benyon MP has written a Foreword for use in all the revised AONB Management Plans.

2.6 The key messages coming out of Defra in relation to the next CSR period are:

- There will be further cuts in funding.
- The next round of Memoranda of Agreement will not contain a clause allowing Defra funding to be used for any redundancy costs.

2.7 The priorities for the next Management Plan period are principally Biodiversity (as articulated by the Natural Environment White Paper and Biodiversity 2020 Strategy), Sustainable Development (in the form of ecosystem services) and Environmental Education. Access & Recreation is slipping down the agenda, but rising particularly quickly are Rural Economic Development and Food & Farming. It is likely to be these latter two areas that Defra will want to see addressed in the forthcoming review of Management Plans.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATION**

That the progress and issues detailed above be noted for information.