

Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Joint Advisory Committee

The Minutes of the meeting held at Gilling Village Hall on 3 April 2014, commencing at 10.00 am.

Present:-

Members:-

Hambleton District Council: Councillor Christine Cookman in the Chair

North Yorkshire County Council: Councillor Clare Wood

Ryedale District Council: Councillor Robert Wainwright

Parish Councils: Stephen Gibson (Ryedale)

Country Land & Business Association:- William Worsley

Natural England: Rosy Eaton (substitute for Justine Clark)

Officers:

Howardian Hills:- Paul Jackson, Liz Bassindale and Maggie Cochrane

North Yorkshire County Council:- Jane Wilkinson (Sec), Ian Fielding (Waste & Countryside Services)

Hambleton District Council: Graham Banks

By Invitation:

Fraser Hugill – Campaign For The Farmed Environment

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

17. Apologies for Absence

Were submitted on behalf of Graham Megson and Councillor Caroline Patmore (North Yorkshire County Council), David Pontefract (Parish Councils Hambleton), Paula Craddock (Ryedale District Council) and Justine Clark and Nancy Stedman (Natural England).

18. Minutes

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2013, having been previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

19. Matters Arising

Minute No 15 – Use of AONB Office as “touch-down” space

It was reported that discussions between the parties had reached a consensus that for a number of reasons it would not be practical for staff from Natural England to use the AONB office as a “touch down” space.

Minute No 15 –Hambleton District Council – Survey of Listed Buildings In AONB

The AONB Manager confirmed receipt of the survey results which he had used to inform the review of the AONB Management Plan.

Wiganthorpe Wall Scackleton

Stone from Robin Hoods Bay was to be used to replace the missing top stones.

20. AONB Unit Activity

Considered –

The joint report of AONB Officers and the RAY Community Projects Officer detailing their activities and the progress achieved by the Unit during the period November – March 2013/14.

A slideshow of photographs of completed and on-going projects referred to in the report that included countryside management works, community projects, volunteer activity, Rural:Urban schools twinning project and Junior Ranger Club days was shown at the meeting. Photographs showing the restoration of Gilling Village Hall, the venue of the meeting that day, were also on display in the meeting room. The village hall had in the past been a recipient of AONB grant funding and Members were advised that the monies awarded had contributed towards the cost of installing ground source heating.

The Chairman commended completed and on-going dry-stone walling projects which she said would be appreciated by future generations.

The AONB Manager responded to a number of questions about the cost of education projects and assured the Committee that in response to budget cuts steps had been taken to minimise capital expenditure and that the current programme represented very good value for money. He did not consider that the Unit's involvement in educational activities detracted from its countryside management works. He acknowledged the inevitability of future austerity measures and against this background and the comments made at the previous meeting undertook to keep the situation under review.

William Worsley commented that since its inception 20 years ago the AONB through its countryside management works had had a significant positive impact on the local landscape. He asked whether the AONB Manager was able to quantify the extent of the outstanding work that remained and if he had a 'wish list' of projects he would like to see completed.

The AONB Manager replied saying it was very difficult to measure success in these terms. Changes to government grant schemes presented new opportunities. The challenge was how to achieve AONB objectives within this framework. The work carried out by the Unit had significantly improved the local landscape fabric. Personally he would like to see the completion of further dry stone walling projects but these were very expensive. He considered the AONB should look to focus on habitat management projects as this was an area where grant funding was increasingly available.

Councillor Wood expressed a view that it was important for the AONB to maintain a 'wish list' of projects. She supported the continuance of on-going countryside management works because of the positive impact they had on the landscape. She emphasised that financial pressures were set to continue and balancing budgets in the future would become increasingly difficult. Against this background she

emphasised the need for the AONB Unit to adopt a strategic view and prioritise future areas of work as otherwise there was a danger it could spread itself too thinly.

The AONB Manager accepted her comments and drew Members attention to paragraphs 2.13 and 2.14 in his covering report which described the latest budget situation.

Resolved –

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

21. The Campaign for the Farmed Environment

The Committee received a presentation from Fraser Hugill, Yorkshire & North East Regional Co-ordinator on the work of the Campaign For the Farmed Environment.

The Campaign with support from a wide range of organisations was aimed at encouraging and supporting farmers and land managers to protect and enhance the environmental value of their farmland through measures that sat alongside productive agriculture. Various leaflets giving advice on different aspects of conservation and recommended voluntary measures and their associated benefits were tabled at the meeting.

Members interested in receiving details of local events organised by the Campaign were invited to subscribe to a mailing list details of which were provided at the meeting.

William Worsley commented that the voluntary industry-led approach adopted by the Campaign had proved both popular and successful and commended the work of the local delivery team.

The Chairman thanked Fraser Hugill for an interesting and informative presentation.

NOTED

22. Development within the AONB

Considered -

The report of the AONB Manager presenting details of planning applications determined within the AONB during 2013. Appended to the report was a list of planning applications divided into development type and parish.

Members noted that despite a small increase in the number of applications submitted the figures for 2013 remained comparable with the average for the previous five years.

Members briefly discussed the merits of wind farms and what constituted a definition of a wind-farm within the confines of AONB boundaries.

Resolved -

That the report be noted.

23. AONB Action Programme 2013/14

Considered -

The report of the AONB Manager on progress achieved implementing the AONB Management Plan during 2013/14.

In accordance with Members instructions full details of progress against 2013/14 targets had been circulated prior to the meeting. Overall Members noted that performance against Management Plan objectives was slightly better than the previous year.

Resolved -

That progress against Management Plan targets for 2013/14 is noted.

24. AONB Business Plan and Action Programme 2014/15

Considered -

The report of AONB Manager inviting the Committee to endorse proposed activity so as to implement the AONB Management Plan during 2014/15.

The AONB Manager prefaced his introduction of the report by saying that Government grant schemes had during the last five/ten years remained fairly static but that this was no longer the case and all were now in a state of flux. Consequently the AONB Unit would need to review how it operated in future so that it remained able to achieve Management Plan objectives.

In response to questions from Members the AONB Manager said he anticipated receiving further details about the new schemes during May following which discussions would be held to determine where resources would best be focused.

Whilst concerned about this lack of certainty Members all agreed it was important for the AONB Unit to be realistic and to take steps to ensure that its future plans were based on having a reduced budget.

The AONB Manager said the situation was extremely fluid and he hoped the position would be clearer when he next reported to the Committee in November.

Ian Fielding said that following the meeting he would speak to the AONB Manager about how best to make plans in anticipation of various possible scenarios.

Resolved -

That the targets for 2014/15 as contained in the Action Programme be approved.

25. AONB Management Plan Review

Considered -

The report of the AONB Manager describing work completed during the review of the AONB Management Plan and anticipated next steps.

The AONB Manager said he hoped he had developed a structure that would make it easier to review the Management Plan in the future.

Members expressed their appreciation for the Plan's new shorter format

Resolved -

That the progress achieved and next steps as detailed in the report be noted.

26. National Association for AONBs Activity

The Committee received for information a copy of National Association for AONBs latest e-newsletter (February 2014).

The AONB Manager drew Members attention to the paragraph on 'Maximising Revenue for Protected Landscapes'. He said that senior Defra officials had been lobbied about how difficult it was for AONBs to get external funding for everyday core work. Consequently the Maximising Revenue for Protected Landscapes study had recently been launched and it was gratifying that the work done by the NAAONB had helped shape such a positive result. County Councillor Clare Wood endorsed the comments of the AONB Manager and commended the work done by the NAAONB,

The AONB Manager agreed to circulate to Members a link to Maximising Revenue for Protected Landscapes study when available.

NOTED

27. Reports from Partner Organisations

Parish Councils Ryedale

A number of wooden directional PROW signs within the AONB were reported as being in need of repair/replacement.

It was explained that maintenance of PROW signs was the responsibility of the County Council's Countryside Services. All defects reported would initially be logged and repair works initiated in accordance with the County Council's PROW maintenance priority criteria. Current financial pressures meant that the County Council was unable to guarantee repairs would be carried out to routes other than those identified as being a priority.

On behalf of landowners and tenant farmers William Worsley said many of them would be willing to assist and/or carryout necessary repair works.

In response to a request the AONB Officer agreed to send the grazing programme for Exmoor ponies.

Hambleton District Council

The Council had embarked upon a partial review of the Local Development Framework. Consultation was underway and a workshop for elected members was due to be held.

Ryedale District

A legal challenge to the Council's Core Strategy had now been withdrawn. Work on site selection was about to commence and the final document was due to be approved by Full Council in January 2015.

A request was made for the Minutes and agenda papers of the JAC Committee to be made available to the Council for wider distribution and publication on its web-site. The Secretary agreed to supply copies to both Ryedale and Hambleton District Councils.

Natural England

Restructure of the local area management team was now complete. The five strong team headed by David Shaw was responsible for South & North Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. Christine Robertson was the new team leader of the land management scheme that included North Yorkshire. Details of the new local delivery model were still being worked on and it was not anticipated they would be finalised for another few months.

North Yorkshire County Council

The strategy for the North Yorkshire & York Local Nature Partnership the subject of consultation before Christmas was about to be adopted. LNPs were designed to help their local area manage the environment. Ian Fielding offered to do a presentation on the work of the LNP at the next meeting.

The County Council was in the process of recruiting four Volunteer Task Leaders. The new Volunteer Task Leaders would enable the County Council to improve the management of volunteers, as they would be taking on a variety of tasks currently done by paid staff. The new Task Leaders would work with the AONB Manager coordinating AONB volunteers to ensure maximum efficiency.

28. Dates of Future JAC Meetings

Resolved -

- (1) That the date of the annual site visit is Friday 25 July 2014.
- (2) That the date and time of the next meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee is Friday 14 November 2014 at 10.00am at a venue to be confirmed.

The meeting concluded at 12.30pm.

JW/JR