

Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Joint Advisory Committee

The Minutes of the meeting held at Hovingham Village Hall on 26 March 2015, commencing at 10.00 am.

Present:-

Members:-

Hambleton District Council: Councillor Christine Cookman in the Chair

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

Ryedale District Council: Councillor Robert Wainwright

Parish Councils: Sally Brown (Ryedale)

Country Land and Business Association: William Worsley

Officers:

Howardian Hills: Paul Jackson, Liz Bassindale and Maggie Cochrane

North Yorkshire County Council: Jane Wilkinson (Secretary) and Ian Fielding (Waste & Countryside Services)

Hambleton District Council: Clare Booth

Heidi Saxby – student (observer)

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

41. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Graham Megson (NYCC), Paula Craddock (Ryedale District Council), Andrew McCormack (Hambleton District Council) and Justine Clark and Rosy Eaton (Natural England).

42. Minutes

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2014, having been previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

43. Matters Arising

Minute No. 31 – DEFRA report “Maximising Revenue for Protected Landscapes”

The AONB Manager advised that DEFRA had still to authorise the release of the report to the general public. He assured Members that upon its release he would provide them with a copy.

Minute No 32 – Location Map of 25th Anniversary Log Seats

The location map of the 25th Anniversary Log Seats was now available on the AONB website. A copy of the map had also been sent to Members.

44. AONB Unit Activity

Considered –

The joint report of the AONB officers and RAY Community Projects Officer, detailing their activities and progress achieved by the Unit during the period November – March 2014/15.

A slideshow of photographs of completed and on-going projects referred to in the report was shown that included photographs of Junior Ranger Club and volunteer activities. Also highlighted during the presentation were the results of an AONB photography competition with the awards presentation held at the Yorkshire Arboretum.

Members endorsed the success of the AONB photographic competition and were pleased to learn that intellectual property rights had been secured on all the entries thereby enabling the images to be used in promotional material.

Resolved –

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

45. Development within the AONB

Considered –

The report of the AONB Manager presenting details of planning applications determined within the AONB during 2014. Appended to the report was a schedule of the planning application statistics for the last five years.

The figures revealed a fall in the number of applications submitted during the last two years, not only within the AONB but also in the Ryedale and Hambleton Districts as a whole and within the North York Moors National Park.

It was highlighted that Hambleton District Council was in the process of reviewing its Local Development Framework and that this could have an impact on the number of houses being built in small villages within the AONB.

Reference was made to the application to erect 500 dwellings on the western edge of Malton. Members commented that the scale of the application made it impossible to make comparisons about its economic impact with that of the other much smaller scale developments within the AONB.

In respect of the Malton development it was reported that determination of the application had been deferred until the end of July/beginning of August to allow for preparation of further information by the applicants. The AONB Manager confirmed that the AONB would be consulted again in due course and that Members would be given an opportunity to contribute to the response prior to it being submitted.

The Chairman commended the quality of AONB responses to planning applications which she said were held in high esteem by planning authorities.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

46. AONB Action Programme 2014/15

Considered –

The report of the AONB Manager on progress made implementing the AONB Management Plan during 2014/15. A copy of the Action Programme covering detailed progress against 2014/15 targets had been circulated to Members via email. Overall performance was similar to the previous year with 80% of specific targets fully achieved.

Members noted that the final wording of the Growth & Infrastructure Bill had now been agreed by the House of Lords and was thought to allow fracking 'under' but not 'in' the boundaries of AONBs and National Parks. It was confirmed that a number of proposed drilling sites had been put forward within the AONB and that the County Council's Minerals team had issued Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Opinions for these, but not Scoping Opinions.

Members discussed restoration of the Lime Avenue at Castle Howard. It was reported that whilst no urgent action was required the ancient Lime trees were nearing the end of their lives. Members highlighted the conflicting views and options that had put been forward in respect of replanting. Members recognised that the AONB had no direct role to play but remained keen to monitor developments.

RESOLVED -

That progress towards achieving 2014/2015 Management Plan targets be noted.

47. AONB Business Plan and Action Programme 2015/16

Considered –

The report of the AONB Manager inviting the Committee to approve the activity proposed in the report aimed at implementing the AONB Management Plan during 2015/16.

Announcements from DEFRA were still awaited about the new Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

Members noted that the £9,000 budget to conserve and enhance historic environment features referred to in paragraph 5.1 of the report would almost certainly change to take account of the monies anticipated from English Heritage for the Monument Management Scheme as described in the AONB Unit Activity report considered earlier in the meeting.

RESOLVED -

That the targets for 2015/16 as contained in the Action Programme be approved.

48. Business Planning for the Future

Considered -

The report of the AONB Manager seeking instructions from Members in respect of the proposal to relocate the AONB Unit office in December 2015.

The proposed office move was in response to anticipated budget cuts. The report contained a detailed analysis of the benefits and disadvantages offered by each of the alternative locations considered.

Members discussed relocation and agreed that as budget pressures were unlikely to diminish in the immediate future, any measures that offered financial savings had to be explored.

The report identified the North York Moors National Park offices in Helmsley as the preferred option. It was reported that in addition to office accommodation, the National Park was also able to provide storage space and had meeting rooms that AONB staff could use.

Members agreed that the cost savings identified in the report made the business case overwhelmingly in favour of the move to Helmsley. The monies saved would allow the Unit to undertake additional countryside management works and would for this reason be supported by the public who they considered would understand the reasons for the move.

Members requested that steps should be taken to protect the separate identify of AONB and National Park volunteers and that AONB signage be displayed on the new accommodation.

Members noted the possibility of holding future meetings of the JAC at the National Park Offices but said they would prefer to continue to use village halls in the AONB.

Resolved -

That subject to any unforeseen developments, the AONB Manager in consultation with the JAC Chairman makes arrangements to move the AONB Unit office from Hovingham to the North York Moors National Park offices in Helmsley in December 2015.

49. National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) - Activity Update

Considered -

The Committee received for information a copy of the National Association for AONBs latest e-newsletter (March 2015).

Resolved -

That the report be noted.

50. Reports from Partner Organisations

North Yorkshire County Council

The review of Countryside Services was now complete. With effect from 1 April 2015 a new staffing structure would be in place. The new structure was designed to address future budget pressures. AONB staff would not be affected. Two teams within the Heritage Section would be amalgamated and there would be a new countryside management team that combined public rights of way and the definitive map teams. There would be an element of staff reduction and changes made to service delivery. Staff from the AONB would be kept informed and would continue to work closely with other NYCC staff throughout this period of transition.

At a national event held for Local Nature Partnerships, there had been a lot of interest in the North Yorkshire and York LNP after it emerged that it was the only one receiving funding to promote the health and wellbeing benefits of the natural environment.

Hambleton District Council

No specific timetable had been agreed for the production of the new Local Plan. Nominations would soon be invited for sites. The Council was due to approve on 7 April 2015 a new Interim Policy Guidance Note that would affect decisions relating to development in smaller settlements.

51. Dates of Future JAC Meetings

Members were asked if they wanted to proceed with an annual site visit in view of the costs involved and the low level of attendance shown previously.

Members said they valued the site visit and contended that previous poor attendance was due to diary clashes as opposed to a lack of interest. The AONB Manager agreed to assess the number of sites that might be suitable for an itinerary and then if applicable to circulate a variety of dates to ascertain members' availability.

Resolved -

- (i) That the date and time of the next meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee be 29 October 2015 at 10.00am at Hovingham Village Hall.
- (ii) The AONB Manager to circulate suggested dates for the annual site visit. Dependent upon Members response and in consultation with the Chairman, the AONB Manager to decide whether or not to proceed with organising an annual site visit.

The meeting concluded at 12.15 pm

JW/JD