

**HOWARDIAN HILLS
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
29 OCTOBER 2015**

AONB UNIT ACTIVITY

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To receive details of the work areas and progress achieved by the AONB Unit since the JAC meeting in April 2015.

2.0 SUMMARY OF PROGRESS ACHIEVED

- 2.1 Appendix 1 gives separate details of the meetings and site visits that have been carried out by the AONB Manager, AONB Officer and AONB Assistant in the period April 2015 to October 2015.
- 2.2 The final budget outturn for 2014/15 is detailed in a separate report on the Agenda. The final contribution payment has been received from Defra.
- 2.3 Work on countryside management has been proceeding. Our regular annual habitat management work on specific SINC sites has taken in two additional sites this year, to control Himalayan balsam. A visually significant wall restoration project has started near Grimston and prices have been obtained for the restoration of the next batch of traditional direction signs. The leader of the Moorswork group has been accredited as a Volunteer Task Leader and we are also considering asking a contractor to go through the same process. This has enabled us to continue using volunteers for both habitat management work and the Monument Management Scheme. Full details of the grants offered and projects initiated are contained in Appendix 2.
- 2.4 A new 8-year period of funding for undergrounding overhead electricity lines has opened. Schemes to utilise the £668,000 budget allocation have been submitted for Oswaldkirk, Nunnington, Ganthorpe, Cawton and Crambe villages, as well as two further schemes to tackle 11KV cross-country routes at Easthorpe and Grimston. Work should hopefully start in early 2016.
- 2.5 The number of planning applications scrutinised has matched the higher levels first seen in 2014/15. Whilst many of them have not needed significant input or comments, the simple number of them, and a few cases that have needed significant input, has made this a major area of work for the AONB Manager in particularly the latter part of the last 6 months. The types of development have been very varied, with the most significant cases being proposals for an extension to Firby Hall, an 88ha solar PV farm near Easingwold, a new farmhouse at Thornton Hill, erection of an agricultural building at Yearsley and installation of a solar PV array at Oulston. The submission of a planning application for test-fracking at Kirby Misperton has also generated some correspondence with local residents. Appendix 3 gives details of the Consultations that the JAC has received this financial year.
- 2.6 A number of new schemes have or are due to come into force in 2015, most notably the new Countryside Stewardship Scheme and the new LEADER Programme. Attendance at workshops and other events over the last six months has ensured that we understand where the best available opportunities for AONB communities and land managers are in these new schemes. Work has also been undertaken progressing the Rural Growth

Programme developed by the four Protected Landscapes for submission to the Local Enterprise Partnership to assist implementation of their Strategic Economic Plan. This follows on from the successful delivery of the pilot Dales & Moors Farm Innovation Project earlier this year.

- 2.7 The new Monument Management Scheme, supported by significant revenue funding from Historic England, was launched in May with a training session for the volunteer surveyors. They then used their new skills to carry out 58 full surveys and 16 preliminary surveys on the total of 80 sites within the AONB. Work has also started to prepare the survey results for submission to Historic England, and to contact landowners to discuss management work we'd like to carry out on Scheduled Monuments this winter.
- 2.8 One Junior Ranger Club session was held in conjunction with the Castle Howard Arboretum, in the April half-term. A further session was held in May but without formal input from the AONB Team due to the pressure of other work. Details of the attendance at the Junior Ranger Club event already held are contained in Appendix 4.
- 2.9 The RAY Community Projects Officer has continued to work with a number of local communities to both prepare and implement Parish Plans. A full list of the work carried out by the RAY officer in the AONB is attached as part of Appendix 1.
- 2.10 Our suite of self-guided walks and cycle rides is now complete for the moment, with publication and printing of the Rides and Rambles 'hub' leaflet and production of digital versions of the remaining four walks routes from Terrington. This gives us 12 routes leaflets, with the 'hub' leaflet to tie them together. We are now looking to develop another mountain bike route and at least two 'easy-access' routes for people with mobility restrictions.
- 2.11 These leaflets are now hosted on a re-vamped AONB website which is focussed much more on providing information for visitors (walks/bike routes, where to visit, etc) and 'researchers' (AONB Management Plan, Annual Reports, etc). The amount of detail has been significantly reduced, thereby helping to minimise the time needed to ensure that text doesn't fall out-of-date.
- 2.12 The latest edition of the AONB Newsletter was prepared in September and was distributed in the week commencing 19th October. The JAC's Annual Report has also been completed and was circulated to the wide range of organisations who work with the JAC to deliver our shared objectives.
- 2.13 The NAAONB Conference was held in Winchester in July and was attended by the AONB Manager.
- 2.14 Work has also progressed on delivering the move of AONB Unit office as agreed at the April meeting of the JAC. Notice on the current premises was handed-in by the required date, the new lease with the North York Moors National Park is being drawn-up, building alteration and re-decoration works at the Old Vicarage are proceeding and we are clearing out junk from the AONB office in preparation for the move, which is booked for 2nd December. All contact details (phone numbers, email addresses, etc) will remain as currently.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the report be noted.