

HOWARDIAN HILLS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the meeting held at Hovingham Village Hall on 5 November 2010.

PRESENT:-

Hambleton District Council: Councillors Christine Cookman and Percy Featherstone.
Ryedale District Council: Councillor Jim Bailey and Robert Wainwright.
North Yorkshire County Council: County Councillor Clare Wood.
Parish Councils: Ian Read (Ryedale) & David Pontefract (Hambleton).
Country Land and Business Association: Jane Harrison.
Ramblers Association: Geoff Eastwood.

Officers:

Paul Jackson, Liz Bassindale and Maggie Cochrane – Howardian Hills AONB.
Jane Wilkinson (Secretary) and Graham Megson – North Yorkshire County Council.
Anne Cooper – Hambleton District Council.
Paula Craddock – Ryedale District Council.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

28. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED –

That County Councillor Clare Wood is elected to serve as Chairman of the Joint Advisory Committee for a minimum of 24 months.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR CLARE WOOD IN THE CHAIR

29. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Were submitted on behalf of Brian Davies and Claire Storey (Natural England), Dorothy Fairburn (Country Land and Business Association), Councillor Caroline Patmore (North Yorkshire County Council) and Stephen Prest (National Farmers Union).

30. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2010, having been previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

Minute Number 18 – AONB Unit Activity

The AONB Manager confirmed that the 8 projects deferred the previous winter on account of the severe weather had now been sent to the contractor with instructions for him to complete.

Minute Number 19 AONB Action Programme 2009/10

The AONB Manager reported that the actual number of SINC sites within the AONB under active management was 73%.

The underground cabling work at Nunnington was almost complete and further similar projects were planned.

Minute Number 20 – AONB Business Plan and Action Programme 2010/11

Work on the digitisation of completed countryside management works had not commenced. The AONB Manager was hopeful that this work would however be completed over the course of the next few months.

Due to pressure of work the visitor and user survey had not been carried out. The AONB Manager said that he had agreed with the Chairman to delay the start of the survey until 2012 as this would enable the results to be fed into the new 2013 Management Plan and would also coincide with the tenth anniversary of the original survey.

Minute No 21 – Natural England/Local Authority Memorandum of Understanding

It was reported that the Memorandum of Understanding had now been signed and completed by all parties.

Minute Number 26 – Retaining Wall at Oulston Bank

The AONB Manager said he was due to meet later that week with representatives from the Newburgh Priory Estate. At that meeting he agreed to raise the collapse of the retaining wall and to enquire about works to rectify it.

31. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED –

That Hambleton District Councillor Christine Cookman is elected as Vice Chairman of the Joint Advisory Committee for the next 24 months.

32. ELECTION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND PANEL REPRESENTATIVES

RESOLVED –

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 24 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 24 months.

33. AONB UNIT ACTIVITY

CONSIDERED –

The joint report of AONB Officers detailing their activities and progress achieved by the AONB Unit since the previous meeting in April 2010. Copies of a Nunnington walks leaflet recently produced by the AONB Unit were tabled at the meeting.

The Committee received a power-point presentation 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.

In view of anticipated funding cuts it was suggested that as the majority of Higher Level Stewardship monies were now being directed towards upland areas the AONB Manager should make representations to Natural England and the Government stressing the importance of these monies to AONBs. It was pointed out that the award of monies to upland areas was an attempt to replace lost grant monies. The AONB Manager said that the current economic climate meant that it was now more important than ever for partners to work together to deliver AONB objectives. He acknowledged that now was the right time to make representations when they stood a chance of influencing future policy.

The Chairman congratulated AONB staff on their hard work and achievements and in particular the level of external funding they had managed to secure. She referred to the annual site visit that had taken place in July which she said was extremely well organised and had been a very enjoyable and worthwhile day.

RESOLVED –

That the content of the report be noted.

34. AONB INDICATORS

CONSIDERED –

The report of the AONB Manager presenting performance data on the Indicators used to measure AONB Partnership performance and Condition.

The AONB Manager said that he intended to gather condition information on a five year cycle for inclusion in the Management Plan. This would enable progress to be measured, trends identified and if necessary steps taken to amend Indicators.

The Chairman said that following the parliamentary elections in June the new government had announced that the National Indicator Set was to be replaced and that local authority data requirements would be reduced. She queried whether the AONB Indicators were over bureaucratic and necessary. The AONB Manager replied that Natural England had stated that it wanted some information from the National Indicator Set to still be available based on AONB boundaries. Also the Government would in the future want to be able to measure if the monies awarded to AONBs had been effective. The Committee noted that there were no specific targets attached to the Indicators but that instead they related to priorities identified in the Management Plan.

A Member pointed out that the Indicators did not measure ease of public access to the AONB area and suggested this was addressed. The AONB Manager replied that within the Strategic Environmental Assessment there was a public access Indicator and that he would look to link both sets of Indicators in the future.

RESOLVED –

(a) That the Performance Indicator results in Appendix 1 of the report be noted.

(b) That the Condition Indicator data in Appendix 2 of the report be noted.

35. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR AONBS (NAAONB) ACTIVITY

CONSIDERED –

The report of AONB Manager updating the Committee on initiatives currently being carried out by the NAAONB.

The AONB Manager said that the launch of the branding scheme was taking much longer than had been originally anticipated and that little progress had been achieved to date. He agreed to consult with the Chairman on any consultations subsequently issued by the NAAONB.

With regard to decisions surrounding future funding and the sponsoring body for AONBs the AONB Manager referred Members to Appendix 2 which set out the latest position. Representations for the Minister to announce his final decision as soon as possible had been made and it was hoped that the position would be known by mid November. The indications from Natural England were that decisions surrounding the profile of the budget cuts to be made would be done in consultation with Defra. Current thinking was that it was unlikely that cuts to AONB funding would be at a different rate to that of the National Parks.

The AONB Manager reported that the approach adopted by the NAAONB in the face of anticipated funding cuts had been to accept that cuts were inevitable and to call for them to be spread across the next four years as opposed to being front loaded in year 1. This was because many AONBs were small units and the impact of a 30% cut in funding in year 1 would be devastating. The NAAONB had made the point that AONBs were a good way of delivering the government's 'Big Society' agenda.

The AONB Manager said that the previous week the Chairman of Natural England Poul Christensen had visited the area to look at on the ground joint initiatives being undertaken with the National Park and other partners. During the visit he had commented that he was very impressed with what he had seen and impressed by what had been achieved with minimal resource. The AONB Manager said that he had taken the opportunity to lobby him on the profile of the spending cuts.

Assurances were given that if sponsorship of AONB funding was transferred to Defra the Unit would continue to have a close working relationship with Natural England.

It was acknowledged that the NAAONB subscription fees could be significantly increased as a result of the budget cuts.

The Committee voiced its support for the approach adopted by the NAAONB. The Chairman said that Members would await the decision of the Minister with much interest. It was agreed that the AONB Manager would in the meantime write to Ann McIntosh MP to engage her support.

Regarding attendance at the NAAONB northern meeting in York on 12 January 2011 that Committee agreed that the Vice Chair would attend on behalf of the Chairman.

RESOLVED –

(a) That the initiatives described in the report be noted.

- (b) That the AONB Manager liaise with the JAC Chairman on the branding initiative described in paragraph 2.6 of the report, should decisions be required before the next meeting of the JAC.

36. AONB BUDGET

CONSIDERED –

The report of the AONB Manager detailing expenditure during 2009/10 and highlighting anticipated budgetary needs for 2011/12.

The AONB Manager said that the 2011/12 budget was based on the worst-case scenario for anticipated funding cuts. If the funding cuts proved to be not as severe then any extra monies gained would be added to the projects budget.

Members supported the approach outlined in the report and were keen for the AONB Unit to continue to produce its annual newsletter. Members requested that the AONB Manager explore ways of reducing the cost of the newsletter by for example reducing its length and printing it in black and white.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the details of JAC expenditure during 2009/10 be noted.
- (b) That Partner authorities be asked to consider making financial contributions towards the work of the JAC in 2011/12, in line with Appendix 5 and section 4 of the report.

37. JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE PLANNING CONSULTATIONS

CONSIDERED –

The responses submitted by the AONB Manager to Hambleton and Ryedale District Councils in respect of planning applications within the area of the AONB received since the previous meeting.

The AONB Manager said that the results of applications already determined were available upon request.

The Committee was informed that the application for construction of an agricultural building at the Avenue, Dalby had been refused. The Applicant had however, submitted a further application for a similar building on a different part of the same field the subject of the original application. A site visit had taken place at which the AONB Manager had repeated concerns about the size and need for the building. He said he intended to take advice on stocking rates before sending a response. Members of the Committee supported this approach and reiterated the objections set forth in the original response.

RESOLVED –

That the responses attached to the agenda be noted.

38. ORAL REPORTS FROM PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

North Yorkshire County Council

It was reported that information on the National Indicator for SINC sites would continue to be collected until the end of the financial year.

A series of public consultation events on the County Council's 2011/12 budget was about to commence in each of the seven districts in North Yorkshire. The first had taken place in Hambleton on Tuesday 2 November 2010 at 6.30 pm at the public library in Northallerton. Approximately 40 members of the public had attended.

Ryedale District Council

Local Development Framework – it was reported that today was the closing date for feedback on the consultation on the Core Strategy document.

Hambleton District Council

Local Development Framework – following the hearing in examination held in May 2010 the final report of the inspector had been received in September. The inspector had recommended 9 changes none of which were significant. Members would be invited to adopt the final strategy at a full council meeting on 21 December, 2010.

At the request of Councillor Featherstone it was agreed that Greens Beck be added to the work programme for treating Himalayan Balsam. It was explained that this work was most effective when started at the beginning of a watercourse and the work continued steadily downstream. For this reason AONB Officers said that it would be some time before the stretch of the beck Councillor Featherstone had enquired about was treated.

Country Land and Business Association

The Campaign for the Farmed Environment was continuing and the Association was encouraging farmers to participate. The selection of North Yorkshire as a pilot area for broadband access in villages was an exciting prospect.

Ramblers Association

A national programme aimed at getting people walking was underway. The Association was concerned that cuts in public service funding would result in an increase in outstanding maintenance issues on the public rights of way network.

The AONB Manager agreed to supply the Association with copies of the leaflet recently produced by the AONB Unit on Walks in and around Nunnington for inclusion in the Associations newsletter.

39. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the date of the 2011 annual site visit is 22 July 2011.
- (ii) That the date of the next meeting of the Committee is the morning of Thursday 31 March 2011, the exact start time and venue to be confirmed.

JW/ALJ