

## Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

### Joint Advisory Committee

The Minutes of the meeting held at Hovingham Village Hall on 14 November 2014, 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

Natural England: Rosy Eaton

**Officers:**

Howardian Hills: Paul Jackson, Liz Bassindale and Maggie Cochrane

North Yorkshire County Council: Steve Loach (Secretary) and Graham Megson (Waste & Countryside Services)

Ryedale District Council: Paula Craddock

**By Invitation:**

Amy Thomas - Programme Manager LEADER Local Development Strategy

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**Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book**

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**29. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Justine Clark (Natural England), Graham Banks (Hambleton District Council) and Jane Wilkinson (Secretary - North Yorkshire County Council).

**30. Minutes**

**Resolved –**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 April 2014, having been previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the following alterations:-

Minute No. 27 - Reports from Partner Organisations - Natural England

The whole paragraph be amended to read as follows:-

“The structure of the local area teams was now complete. The five strong management team, headed by David Shaw, was responsible for Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire. The new Team Leader for North Yorkshire and the Howardian Hills

AONB area was Christine Robertson. Details of the new local delivery model were still being worked on and it was not anticipated that they would be finalised for another few months.”

NB – See Minute No.39 below.

### **31. Matters Arising**

#### Minute No. 24 - AONB Business Plan and Action Programme 2014/15

The AONB Manager stated that the Minute had indicated that he hoped to present a clearer position with regards to the future budget for the AONB at today’s meeting, however, he noted that, at this stage, he was not in a position to provide any further details in relation to the long term funding for the AONB. He stated that he would provide budget details within the budget report.

#### Minute No. 26 - National Association for AONB’s Activity

The AONB Manager referred to the DEFRA report “Maximising Revenue for Protected Landscapes”, mentioned in the Minutes. He noted that the report had not been officially released by DEFRA on a public basis as yet, with only restricted access given to that, which had allowed a copy to be provided to the Chairman of the Joint Advisory Committee. He emphasised that when that became publicly available he would circulate to the remainder of the Members.

#### Minute No. 27 - Reports from Partner Organisations - Ryedale District

In relation to the request for the Minutes and agenda papers of the JAC Committee to be made available for wider distribution it was noted that these had now been uploaded onto the County Council website and were generally available for all to view and use accordingly.

### **32. 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 April 2014 to October 2014.

A slideshow provided 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 provided at the meeting.

The following projects were highlighted in particular:

- ◆ High Farm, Brandsby.
- ◆ Wiganthorpe Wall, Scackleton.
- ◆ Acorn Hill Barn.
- ◆ Tree planting, Throstle Nest Farm, Sproxton.
- ◆ Churchyard development - Appleton le Street and Amotherby Churchyard.
- ◆ Jeffry Bog.
- ◆ Fairy Dell.
- ◆ Exmoor Ponies.
- ◆ Bee Orchid - Yearsley Moor.
- ◆ Rhododendron clearing - Yearsley Moor.

- ◆ School twinning plus final visits.
- ◆ Junior Rangers - Howsham Mill.
- ◆ 25th Anniversary Log Seats.

Arising from the presentation the following issues and points were highlighted:-

- ◆ In terms of the repaired wall at High Farm, Brandsby it was noted that a one metre strip up to the wall was kept clear, by spraying, to prevent the reoccurrence of problems and to ensure that maintenance could be carried out.
- ◆ Congratulations were offered for the school's twinning project that had been delivered and the benefits that this had brought to the children involved.
- ◆ The importance of encouraging volunteers was emphasised and it was noted that their involvement in community projects was an essential part of the 2020 Vision for North Yorkshire County Council.
- ◆ It was noted that public access to Howsham Mill was available every Sunday, with no restrictions on the public footpath and bridge leading to the Mill.
- ◆ At the request of the Chairman the AONB Manager agreed to prepare a map providing details of the location of the 25th Anniversary log seats, and to put this on the AONB website. It was noted that a number of the seats were in very well used locations but that some were intentionally in less well used places.

The AONB Manager provided details of volunteer activity that had taken place during 2013/14. He expected even more voluntary contribution to be indicated for 2014/15.

He noted that the number of planning applications had risen substantially during the year, which had resulted in an increased workload for the AONB Team and noted that this particular aspect of the team's work was unpredictable.

A printed version of the AONB Management Plan was circulated to Members of the Committee and it was noted that this was now available on the website, with a view to reducing the number of printed copies required.

Details of a project undertaken alongside Ryedale District Council and "Visit York" which encourages people visiting York to spend some time in the Ryedale and Howardian Hills areas were outlined. The project gives publicity to the areas and also provides details of public transport links. Members queried how the economic benefit of the project to the Ryedale and Howardian Hills areas was monitored and the AONB Manager stated that he would obtain that information to demonstrate the benefits that had been obtained through the project.

#### **Resolved –**

That the report and issues raised be noted.

### **33. JAC Planning Consultations**

Considered -

Details of the response of the AONB Manager to various planning consultations that had arisen since the previous meeting. Details of the responses were set out in full in the report.

The following issues and points were raised in discussion of the report:

- ◆ It was unclear as yet as to whether the large increase in planning applications was across all Authorities and the AONB Manager stated that a clearer picture would be available at the next meeting of the JAC. Members suggested it would be interesting to compare the figures across the different Authorities to determine whether the economic upturn was a major factor in this increase. It was noted that there was a mixture of types of applications; however, there had not been a significant increase in the number of housing developments. It was suggested that a year on year analysis of the number of planning consultations undertaken within the AONB, together with planning application figures from the local authorities, be provided for consideration to determine whether there was a trend in relation to an increase in planning applications and whether this was associated with the economic upturn.
- ◆ Concern was raised regarding the planning process whereby planning applications were submitted and before they were put forward for a decision, by a Planning Committee, these were withdrawn, probably to amend the application to address issues that had arisen during the application stage, and then were dealt with through a delegated decision. This did not allow any further comment on the application from bodies, such as the AONB, on the amended application. It was asked how this could be addressed. In response the AONB Manager emphasised that comments would have been submitted on the original application submission and it was unlikely that significant changes, that were unacceptable to the AONB, would be included in a revised application that was subsequently delegated to officer decision. It was noted that some authorities had a pre-application process that allowed comments and issues to be resolved prior to the application being submitted initially, which negated the need for the withdrawal and resubmissions stage.

#### **Resolved -**

That the report and issues raised be noted.

### **34. LEADER Local Development Strategy**

LEADER Programme Manager, Amy Thomas, gave a presentation, highlighting the following:-

#### Introduction

- ◆ LEADER - Rural Development Programme for England - private/public sector partnership.
- ◆ £2.6m - Last programme - £5.6m with matched funding.
- ◆ Supported 65 projects.
- ◆ Small scale environmental schemes.

#### LEADER - 2015/2020

- ◆ Transition from one project to next.
- ◆ National Park - lead partner.

- ◆ NYCC - accountable body.
- ◆ Linked various partners.
- ◆ Consulting local partners - local consultation events.
- ◆ Local development strategy - submitted to DEFRA - decision expected shortly.
- ◆ Looking at projects, promotion, recruitment to Executive.

A map of the LEADER area was outlined.

#### Programme

- ◆ Economic in focus.
- ◆ Projects to deliver 70% direct economic benefit.
- ◆ Six priorities - set by DEFRA - determined by local need.
- ◆ Create 115 jobs f/t, 210 businesses supported, 107 projects funded.

#### Programme Priorities

##### First Year

- ◆ Agricultural productivity.
- ◆ Micro-small businesses.
- ◆ Rural tourism.

##### Following Years

- ◆ Rural services.
- ◆ Culture and heritage.
- ◆ Other projects.

##### Next Steps

- ◆ Work on projects.
- ◆ Expect decision from DEFRA.
- ◆ Updates on website.
- ◆ Recruit volunteers for Executive Group.
- ◆ Expect to have up and running from January.

It was stated that the presentation slides would be circulated to Members of the JAC.

Discussion of the presentation resulted in the following issues and points being highlighted:-

- ◆ It was expected that the three top priorities outlined would be the concentration for efforts within the first year of the programme with other priorities targeted from 2016 onwards.
- ◆ The new Executive Body would be the decision-making body that would decide on the various applications for funding that come in. Members of the Executive Body would come from the various surrounding local authority groups.
- ◆ A detailed map, outlined in the presentation, was available on the website and had a zoom facility.
- ◆ There would still be opportunities for the continuation of existing projects, however, these would have to deliver clear economic outputs.
- ◆ Consideration was being given to how to develop the Farmers' Network and Information Exchange through various partners and networks in an attempt to develop this.
- ◆ It was noted that development work was taking place on all of the priorities, not just the first three, however, the later priorities were at a less developed stage currently.
- ◆ It was emphasised that all aspects of how to deliver the priorities would be taken account of for each project to ensure delivery brought maximum benefit.

**Resolved -**

That Amy Thomas be thanked for her presentation, the contents of which be noted, together with the issues raised.

**35. AONB Indicators**

Considered -

The report of the AONB Manager providing details of the indicators used to measure AONB partnership performance, annually. The results for 2013/14 were attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The AONB Manager highlighted the financial resources indicator which showed the total income for the AONB as £207,225, with 91% of that figure being received from DEFRA and local authorities. He went on to highlight the additional resources mobilised by AONB Unit through its partnership work which totalled £337,545, the percentage of the figure from DEFRA in relation to that was 37% and from local authorities 18%. This demonstrated the level of financial leverage and added value obtained by the AONB Unit through its wider project programmes and partnerships.

**Resolved -**

That the performance indicator results contained in Appendix 1 to the report be noted.

**36. Business Planning for the Future**

Considered -

The report of the AONB Manager requesting the Joint Advisory Committee to consider the next steps for improving the efficiency of the AONB Unit processes and also potential options for future office accommodation. The report set out the issues to be taken account of in relation to the business planning, highlighting the following:-

- ◆ The DEFRA grant had declined by 21% over the previous four financial years and was likely to continue in that manner.
- ◆ NYCC, the largest local authority contributor, was looking to reduce its budget in the future and, although there were no reductions planned for 2015/16, there was the potential for reductions in funding provided in the future.
- ◆ The budget for 2015/16 worked on an assumption of a 2% reduction in budget from DEFRA.
- ◆ The main areas that require consideration in relation to future challenges, to be worked on over the next six months, were highlighted as the processes for distributing money to projects and the possible relocation of the AONB Unit office.
- ◆ In terms of the processes for distributing money to projects, details of the proposed changes were provided within the report.
- ◆ In terms of the potential relocation of the AONB Unit office it was noted that three potential alternative sites had been considered these being Ryedale House, the Area Highways Office at Kirby Misperton and the North York Moors National Park Authority Office in Helmsley. It was also noted that there was some potential for the use of the library at Easingwold, but that was subject to other factors at the moment, therefore, may be too early for consideration as a site. The potential of locating on the Sheriff Hutton Industrial Estate had also been considered. The various pros and cons of the sites highlighted were outlined.
- ◆ It was noted that the relocation option could utilise the two year break clause in the current lease for the Wath Court Offices, should it be desirable to relocate the AONB Unit in December 2015. It was noted that relocation could save in the region of £6,500 per annum.

Members discussed the issues raised in the report and the following points and issues were highlighted:-

- ◆ The potential new office locations would enable some shared services to be developed which could be of benefit to the AONB.
- ◆ The relocation of the Unit office would see one-off costs being incurred, which would have a slightly detrimental effect on the budget for the forthcoming year.
- ◆ Members suggested that the current location of the AONB Unit office was appropriate and it would be beneficial if the Unit could remain there.
- ◆ It was noted that funding from NYCC and DEFRA would be subject to variation in the future and the situation as to how much the AONB would receive remained volatile. It was considered appropriate, therefore, that

consideration be given to how best to save resources in terms of the AONB Unit and that relocation would need to be a factor to be taken account of. It was suggested that talks be held with NYCC Property Services in respect of potential office locations and that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the JAC providing details of potential cost savings alongside various venues, to allow Members to make an informed decision on this matter.

- ◆ It was noted that other cost factors relating to a relocation would also need to be taken account of when determining the overall costs of relocating.
- ◆ It was noted that there was a potential for remaining at the current location, in a smaller unit, but that was yet to be investigated and that could be included in the report to the future meeting.
- ◆ It was suggested that all potential funding sources be considered in terms of the location of the Unit as there was a potential for low cost office space to be obtained in the area which could be of benefit and help to reduce costs.
- ◆ It was recognised that the possible relocation of the Unit was a complex issue, but emphasised that this had to be undertaken by December 2015, otherwise the lease would have to continue until December 2017. It was noted that the issue was made more difficult because the funding allocation from DEFRA for the AONB would not be determined until probably December 2015, however, notice to quit to the landlord for the current office location would have to be provided by June 2015. It was necessary, therefore, for any decision on a move by the Unit to be made at the next meeting.

#### **Resolved -**

- (i) That the efficiency changes proposed for the project funding processes be noted; and
- (ii) That work be undertaken to scope options for changing the location of the AONB Unit office, as outlined in section 4 of the report, and that a further report be submitted to the next meeting of the JAC for a decision to be made on those options.

### **37. AONB Budget**

#### **Considered -**

The report of the AONB Manager providing details of expenditure during 2013/14 and requesting Members to consider anticipated budgetary needs for 2015/16.

Details of the final income and expenditure accounts for 2013/14 were set out in Appendix 1 to the report and details of countryside management and Sustainable Development Fund projects supported were detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.

The final analysis of the budget saw little variation from the original budget and gave a projected carry forward of £45,000, with £9,300 having been allocated to projects in 2014/15.

Details of the 2014/15 budget were provided in Appendix 3 to the report, which amounted to £176,026 but did not include the balance of reserves of £45,689 from 2013/14. Details of potential underspends and overspends on the budget were outlined.

The proposed budget for 2015/16 was also provided in Appendix 3 to the report and was expected to be £168,129 although it was noted that it would be late in the current financial year before the exact position of any of the funding partners was known.

It was noted that staffing costs had been reduced slightly in the figures provided and that the proposed 2.2% pay award to April 2016 had been factored in.

It was noted that, in view of the decision made on the previous item, the office costs were not yet known.

The AONB Manager provided highlights of the proposals within the proposed 2015/16 budget.

It was suggested that the terminology used in terms of the carry forward should not be described as reserves as this was not always considered appropriate, in terms of carrying (reserves) forward by Central Government. It was therefore suggested that this be referred to in future as carried forward budget.

**Resolved -**

- (i) That the details of the JAC expenditure during 2013/14 be received for information; and
- (ii) That partner authorities be requested to consider making financial contributions towards the work of the JAC in 2015/16, in line with the details set out in Appendix 3 and section 4 of the report.

**38. National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) - Activity Update**

Considered -

The report of the CEO for the NAAONB from October 2013 to October 2014. The report set out the work completed for the NAAONB Business Plan during the timeframe highlighted.

Highlights included:

- ◆ The work undertaken by the NAAONB to ensure that no in-year cuts in budget were implemented by DEFRA.
- ◆ Meetings had been held with both Chambers of the Parliament in England, the Assembly Members in Wales, Senior Civil Servants and Board Members of both Natural England and Natural Resources Wales, to raise the importance of the AONBs and the challenges they are facing.
- ◆ The individual financial contributions to the National Association from the AONBs was substantial but not set to rise; however, the Association provided an ability to be represented at a national level and on a national stage and was of great importance to the AONBs.
- ◆ The papers for the Annual General Meeting of the NAAONB were published on the national website and the Chairman and AONB Manager would be attending that meeting on behalf of the JAC.

Members welcomed the report and emphasised the importance of being a part of the national body that was able to negotiate on their behalf at a national level.

**Resolved -**

That the report be noted.

**39. Reports from Partner Organisations**

Ryedale District Council

It was noted that the Minutes of the previous meeting referred to a final document to be submitted in terms of site selection for the Council's core strategy. This, however, should have been referred to as a draft document which would be submitted for consultation in the New Year. A meeting to consider the draft document would take place at Ryedale District Council on 27 January 2015. Paula Craddock requested that the Minutes of the previous meeting be amended to read "...and the draft document for consultation was due to be approved by Full Council in January 2015."

It was noted that Ms Craddock had arrived late at the Meeting and, therefore, had been unable to raise this issue when the Minutes were signed as a correct record. It was accepted that the amendment highlighted was appropriate and could be included as an amendment to the previous minutes.

Natural England

The representative of Natural England highlighted the New Countryside Stewardship Scheme and noted that details would be available in relation to this shortly.

Hambleton District Council

Details would be available shortly on the New Single Local Plan which the District Council was developing and would be looking to adopt. It was noted that consultation had taken place with all partners on planning and land development in relation to this. Local communities had benefited from being able to submit into that consultation process and further consultation would take place once the Local Plan had been developed and adopted.

It was noted that Hambleton District Council's officer representative, Graham Banks, was to leave the local authority shortly.

**40. Dates of Future JAC Meetings**

**Resolved -**

- (i) That the date and time of the next meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee be Thursday 26 March 2015 at 10.00 am.
- (ii) That consideration be given to whether to undertake an annual site visit at the next meeting of the JAC.

The meeting concluded at 12.30pm

SL/JR