

**HOWARDIAN HILLS
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
26 MARCH 2015**

AONB ACTION PROGRAMME 2014/15

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To receive details of progress made on implementing the AONB Management Plan during 2014/15. The Action Programme for 2015/16, incorporating business planning requirements, is covered under a separate Report on this agenda.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 At each Spring meeting the JAC considers a report detailing the progress achieved on the Management Plan objectives. The Action Programme contains details of the progress made against the previous year's targets. The Action Programme covering detailed progress against 2014/15 targets has been circulated to Members by email.
- 2.2 A detailed Red/Amber/Green system is used to monitor progress against annual targets, and analysis shows that 80% of the specific targets were fully achieved, 4% were substantially achieved, 3% were 25-75% achieved, 3% were less than 25% achieved and 10% were not progressed at all.
- 2.3 Statistically this is a very similar performance than the previous year. Targets where no action was completed were largely those that were overtaken by events, relied heavily on action from partner organisations or were/became lower relative priorities for the AONB Unit during the year.
- 2.4 Targets that we had hoped to achieve better progress on included entering details of hedges planted, etc onto a GIS database; compiling a matrix of the habitats and Special Qualities of the AONB, plotted against the ecosystem services that they provide; geodiversity management and a Condition Assessment mechanism for non-statutory Natural and Historic Environment Priority Sites.

3.0 THE ECOSYSTEM APPROACH

- 3.1 Achievements this year included:
- Monitoring information on climate change scenarios and possible impacts.

4.0 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- 4.1 Achievements this year included:
- Participating in groups developing a new Biodiversity Action Plan for Ryedale, Scarborough and the AONB, and exploring options for ecological data storage and handling within North Yorkshire.
 - Carrying out 11 workdays with volunteers on 4 SINC's.
 - Managing a total of 12 grassland sites (all SINC's bar one).
 - Managing 45 Special Interest Road Verges.
 - Completing clearance of rhododendron in Park Wood adjacent to Yearsley Moor Woodlands SINC, with volunteers.
 - Controlling Himalayan balsam along approx. 5.8km of Wath Beck, at Jeffry Bog SINC and at Fairy Dell SINC.
 - Planting 37 individual or in-field trees, with all the costs subsequently recouped via a grant from the Environment Agency.

- Continuing to participate in the partnership focussed on the River Rye, to develop a project to tackle Himalayan balsam, river quality and sedimentation on a catchment scale. This is now part of the Yorkshire Derwent Catchment Partnership, principally lead by the East Yorkshire Rivers Trust and North York Moors National Park, and a comprehensive Strategy is being prepared.
- Supporting the management or creation of village wildlife areas at Amotherby and Westow.
- Becoming involved with the North Yorkshire Local Geological Sites Partnership for the first time, to progress survey and management work on the AONB's most important geodiversity sites.

5.0 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

5.1 Achievements this year included:

- Developing a targeted programme of survey and management work for Scheduled Monuments, particularly those which are At Risk, utilising volunteers wherever possible. Submitted a 4-year programme brief to English Heritage for funding.
- Carrying out bracken and rhododendron control works on Scheduled Monuments at Hovingham and Newburgh.
- Completing work on 12 Local Priority Sites or other historic features. The most significant of these were the works on Scheduled Monuments described above, repairs to a Listed field barn and restoration of 4 traditional direction signs.
- Supporting the restoration of the Castle Howard Avenue, with a mixture of selective felling, replanting, woodland clearance and parkland re-creation.

6.0 LOCAL COMMUNITIES

6.1 Achievements this year included:

- Continuing involvement in the North York Moors, Coast and Hills LEADER Transition phase, participating in development of a new Local Development Strategy.
- Community projects funded in 2 villages, including 1 Village Hall project supported.
- Rural Action Yorkshire project supported with an SDF grant (see separate report for work achieved by project officer).
- Supporting an AONB Photographic competition and prize-giving event, principally organised by RAY.
- Continued liaison with the principal organisations involved in community work in the AONB, via the regular Community Development Officers' meetings.

7.0 AGRICULTURE

7.1 Achievements this year included:

- Participating in the local NELMS verification process, to ensure that all information on species, habitats, heritage assets, etc was correctly identified.
- Completing 6 landscape enhancement schemes involving 449m of hedge planting/gapping-up and 265m of field wall restoration.
- Submitting responses to planning consultations for 18 new agricultural buildings or infrastructure.
- Responding to HLS consultations and requests for advice, as appropriate.

8.0 FORESTRY AND WOODLAND

8.1 Achievements this year included:

- Scrutinising 13 Forestry Commission English Woodland Grant Scheme consultation.
- Monitoring the situation with tree diseases.
- Responding to consultations and requests for advice, as appropriate.

9.0 DEVELOPMENT & THE RURAL ECONOMY

9.1 Achievements this year included:

- Monitoring and inputting as necessary to national policy consultations received by the NAAONB.
- Scrutinising a total of 90 development control consultations across all categories – full details of Development statistics for the AONB in 2014 are given in a separate Report on this agenda.
- Scrutinising 7 planning consultations related to small business development in the AONB.
- Continuing liaison with Northern Powergrid on overhead electricity cable undergrounding, particularly in Bulmer. Developing a framework for implementation of the next 8-year programme, as part of RIIO-ED1.
- Surveying National Grid overhead power lines close to the AONB and submitting these for potential mitigation as part of the RIIO-T1 Visual Improvement Project being run by National Grid.
- Carrying out site visits with the contractors during the seismic survey in autumn 2014, to understand the process.
- Attending meetings and debates to learn more about fracking.
- Continuing to explore options to support jobs, skills and sustainable economic growth locally, as part of the joint Protected Landscapes Growth Plan submitted to the Local Enterprise Partnership.
- Participating in the partnership set up to run the Dales & Moors Farmer Innovation Project, with at least 1 farmer from the AONB participating.
- Supporting new mobile phone masts proposed as part of the Government's Mobile Infrastructure Programme to tackle 'not-spots'.

10.0 ROADS, TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

10.1 Achievements this year included:

- Scrutinising 9 development control consultations.
- Renovating 4 traditional direction signs in the Bulmer, Crambe, Firby and Howsham areas. Highways Agency approached about the sign at Barton Hill, to ensure protection during proposed works.
- Involvement in the NYCC/RDC study to identify improvements to the A64, which may ultimately involve full dualling of the remaining single carriageway section within the AONB.

11.0 RECREATION, ACCESS AND TOURISM

11.1 Achievements this year included:

- Scrutinising 3 development control consultations.
- Publishing a hub leaflet promoting routes in the wider Castle Howard area.
- Re-printing the Great Outdoors leaflet with the North York Moors National Park and Welcome to Yorkshire, featuring some more of our walking and cycling routes.
- Developing and implementing an initiative with Visit York, via Ryedale DC and Welcome to Yorkshire.
- Utilising the new Volunteer Task Leaders to run tasks on PRow maintenance within the AONB.
- Continuing to negotiate a package of improvements in PRow routing on the Castle Howard Estate.
- Continuing input into the 'Moors and More' local distinctiveness project and other similar tourism business initiatives with Ryedale DC, Welcome to Yorkshire and Visit York.
- Litter picking at 'hot-spots' throughout the AONB.
- Digitising the remaining 3 walks routes around Terrington, to make a uniform package of 12 electronic leaflets for the whole AONB.

12.0 AWARENESS AND PROMOTION

12.1 Achievements this year included:

- Maintaining a neat appearance around the AONB gateway signs.
- Approaching the Highways Agency to enquire about installing brown tourism gateway signs on the A64.
- Publishing AONB News and our Annual Report for 2013/14.
- Attending the Ryedale Show.
- Installing the remaining three 25th Anniversary log seats.
- Distributing AONB literature to outlets in the AONB.
- Maintaining the AONB website – 48,201 Page Views by 13,731 Users. Scoping options for a low-cost re-fresh of the website's appearance.
- Giving 2 evening talks.
- Holding 4 Junior Ranger Club sessions throughout the year, with 66 children attending.
- Completing 6 Round 4 visits of the LEADER and Heritage Lottery Fund-supported Rural:Urban Schools Twinning Project, to finish the programme. Wrapping-up of final project reports and finances.

13.0 IMPLEMENTATION

13.1 Achievements this year included:

- Utilising the Defra Single Pot funding arrangements to ensure maximum leverage of funds into the AONB.
- Participating in the local NELMS verification process, to ensure that all information on species, habitats, assets, etc was correctly identified for use in the new scheme.
- Continuing our involvement with the LEADER Transition Steering Group, preparing a new Local Development Strategy. Approval received from Defra, with funding of £2.34m.
- Successfully applying for funding for treeplanting schemes from the EA Mitigation Fund; applying for NYCC funding for geodiversity survey work in 2015.
- Developing a targeted programme of survey and management work for Scheduled Monuments, particularly those which are At Risk, utilising volunteers wherever possible. Submitted a 4-year programme brief to English Heritage for funding, which was approved and a full application submission invited.
- Continuing to participate in the partnership focussed on the River Rye, to develop a project to tackle Himalayan balsam, river quality and sedimentation on a catchment scale. This is now part of the Yorkshire Derwent Catchment Partnership, principally lead by the East Yorkshire Rivers Trust and North York Moors National Park, and a comprehensive Strategy is being prepared.
- Continuing to balance our Reserves position against new information being received on likely future levels of Government and local authority funding, so as to utilise our resources most efficiently in delivering Management Plan Objectives and practical conservation projects.
- Rebecca Thompson was seconded from the North York Moors National Park Authority for 1 day per week until November 2014, to backfill the reduction in Liz Bassindale's hours.
- Reviewing the AONB grant processes in order to maintain effectiveness and efficiency.
- Continuing to explore options to support jobs, skills and sustainable economic growth locally, as part of the joint Protected Landscapes Growth Plan submitted to the Local Enterprise Partnership. Dales & Moors Farmer Innovation Project established.
- Achieving volunteer assistance for 25 tasks or projects, worth at least 193 days or £13,400.

14.0 MONITORING

14.1 Achievements this year included:

- Continuing the digitisation of practical conservation work completed/funded by the JAC.
- Completing the fixed-point photography monitoring project and compiling a set of baseline photos.

15.0 AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN

15.1 Achievements this year included:

- Producing the final version for printing, followed by publication and circulation.

16.0 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR AONBs

16.1 Achievements this year included:

- Attending the national AONB Forum in Penrith.
- Attending 1 x Northern AONBs Group meetings.
- Attending the NAAONB Chairmens' seminar and AGM event.
- Participating in peer-to-peer and on-line collaborative working initiatives, to share and receive knowledge around the AONB Family.

17.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the achievements against Targets for 2014/15 be noted.