

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

**AONB BUSINESS PLAN AND ACTION PROGRAMME 2015/16**

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To agree details of proposed activity to implement the AONB Management Plan during 2015/16.

**2.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The AONB Management Plan contains a detailed Action Programme that lists each Objective and Action and identifies a suggested lead agency and partner organisations for implementation.
- 2.2 In addition to setting targets for 2015/16 this report also details some of the mechanisms for achieving the proposed targets, as well as indications of some of the individual projects that may be implemented.
- 2.3 The Action Programme and Targets for 2015/16, together with an indicative timetabling of tasks, has been circulated to Members by email.

**3.0 THE ECOSYSTEM APPROACH**

- 3.1 Principal activities for the year include:
- Compiling a matrix of the habitats and Special Qualities of the AONB, plotted against the ecosystem services that they provide.
  - Compiling a matrix of generic types of 'project', plotted against the ecosystem services that the AONB provides.
  - Starting to utilise the matrix of 'projects' when assessing grant requests, planning applications, etc.

**4.0 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

- 4.1 The proposed budget for landscape and biodiversity works is £15,000, although there would also be additional funds available from Reserves if necessary. Potential projects to be funded include:
- Continuing restoration of roadside drystone walls in the Yearsley/Grimstone area (subject to integration with grants available from the Countryside Stewardship Scheme).
  - Hedge restoration at Ampleforth (subject to integration with grants available from the Countryside Stewardship Scheme).
  - Planting of new in-field and boundary trees.
  - Continued control of rhododendron in Park Wood (adjacent to Yearsley Moor Woodlands SINC).
  - Control of Himalayan balsam along Wath Beck and at Jeffry Bog, Fairy Dell and Mugdale & Barker Woods SINCS.
- 4.2 Other activities for the year include:
- Setting up sites in BARS2 and inputting habitat management activities.
  - Scoping options and costs for preparing a report on the species records for the AONB.

- Contributing to discussions to develop a sustainable future for the North & East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre and the North Yorkshire Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation system.
- Working in partnership with Ryedale DC, Scarborough BC and Hambleton DC to continue development a new Biodiversity Action Plan for the joint area.
- Continuing our programmes of Exmoor pony grazing, SINC management and road verge management.
- Continuing our programme of planting individual hedgerow and in-field trees.
- Carrying out targeted control of Himalayan balsam, Western hemlock, rhododendron and bracken on various SINC and other sites.
- Promoting the new Countryside Stewardship Scheme to farmers and land managers and identifying new opportunities and methods for assisting them with conservation works.
- Implementing Year 1 works on the River Rye project, as part of the Yorkshire Derwent Catchment Partnership Strategy.
- Progressing initiatives to identify and conserve features of geodiversity interest in the AONB.
- Continuing to participate in the North Yorkshire & York Local Nature Partnership (LNP).

## **5.0 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**

- 5.1 The proposed budget for works to conserve and enhance historic environment features is currently £9,000, although there would also be additional funds available from Reserves if necessary. Potential projects to be funded include:
- Restoring traditional direction signs.
  - Carrying out management works on Scheduled Monuments. This may take more or less of the budget (which may also be increased from its current proposed level), dependent upon the amount of work proposed for the first year of the new Monument Management Scheme.
- 5.2 Other activities for the year include:
- Delivering the first year of the new Monument Management Scheme, funded by English Heritage, utilising volunteers wherever possible.
  - Promoting the new Countryside Stewardship Scheme to farmers and land managers and identifying new opportunities and methods for assisting them with conservation works.
  - Monitoring the re-organisation of English Heritage and its National Heritage Protection Plan.

## **6.0 LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

- 6.1 The budget for small-scale works in local villages is included within the £22,000 earmarked for projects supporting Sustainable Development and the Rural Economy.
- 6.2 Other activities for the year include:
- Participation in the new North York Moors, Coast and Hills LEADER Programme, to promote and develop activities within the AONB.
  - 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 The proposed combined budget for both landscape and biodiversity works is £15,000, although there would also be additional funds available from Reserves if necessary. See paragraph 4.1 above.

- 7.2 Other activities for the year include:
- Promoting the new Countryside Stewardship Scheme to farmers and land managers and identifying new opportunities and methods for assisting them with conservation works.
  - Responding to consultations and requests for advice, as appropriate.

## **8.0 FORESTRY AND WOODLAND**

- 8.1 Principal activities for the year include:
- Promoting the new Countryside Stewardship Scheme to farmers and land managers and identifying new opportunities and methods for assisting them with conservation works.
  - Monitoring the incidence of Ash Dieback Disease and other plant health issues.
  - Exploring options to support the woodfuel market locally, as part of the joint Protected Landscapes Growth Plan submitted to the Local Enterprise Partnership.
  - Continuing to provide advice and, where appropriate, financial assistance to woodland managers.
  - Responding to consultations and requests for advice, as appropriate.

## **9.0 DEVELOPMENT & THE RURAL ECONOMY**

- 9.1 Principal activities for the year include:
- Monitoring and inputting as necessary to national policy consultations received by the NAAONB.
  - Responding to consultations received from the Local Planning Authorities and other bodies on development proposals. The amount of work arising from planning consultations is impossible to predict, as our input is entirely reactive, but this is an important area of work and is a high priority.
  - Inputting to the continuing development of the Ryedale Local Plan, as applicable.
  - Continuing liaison with Northern Powergrid on overhead electricity cable undergrounding, to ensure a swift start to projects in the new RIIO-ED1 period.
  - If appropriate, taking advantage of landscape mitigation funds provided by National Grid to minimise the visual impact of high voltage overhead powerlines.
  - Exploring 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.

## **10.0 ROADS, TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT**

- 10.1 Principal activities for the year include:
- Responding to consultations received from the Highway Authority on works within the carriageway that might have biodiversity, historic environment or landscape implications.
  - Participating in the next review of the North Yorkshire Local Transport Plan.
  - The repair and restoration of at least 2 traditional direction signs.
  - Participating in the development of the Jacobs study on a road improvement package for the A64, particularly with reference to dualling the remaining section within the AONB.

## **11.0 RECREATION, ACCESS AND TOURISM**

- 11.1 The budget for recreation and access works is included within the £22,000 earmarked for projects supporting Sustainable Development and the Rural Economy.

- 11.2 Principal activities for the year include:
- Involvement in discussions on future changes to Public Rights of Way maintenance procedures, as a result of the Countryside Service re-structure at North Yorkshire CC.
  - 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.
  - Implementation of Public Rights of Way route creation/diversion packages at Castle Howard and Howsham.
  - Continuing to control litter at 'hot-spots' and reporting fly-tipping incidents.

## **12.0 AWARENESS & PROMOTION**

12.1 The budget for awareness and promotion work is included within the £22,000 earmarked for projects supporting Sustainable Development and the Rural Economy.

- 12.2 Principal activities for the year include:
- Further developing circular routes for off-road cyclists, particularly in partnership with the Castle Howard Estate
  - Ensuring that the gateway signs are maintained and that outlets are supplied with copies of our leaflets when requested.
  - Approaching the Highways Agency to further discuss the installation of Gateway Signs on the A64.
  - Publishing our 2014/15 Annual Report and AONB News 2015.
  - Refreshing our website, attending Ryedale Show and distributing information/ promoting the AONB via Twitter.
  - Scoping options for preparing a leaflet about the geodiversity of the AONB.
  - Holding at least 3 Junior Ranger Club days, taking the project around the AONB where possible.

## **13.0 IMPLEMENTATION**

- 13.1 Principal initiatives this year include:
- Participating in any work needed to promote the importance of AONB management and ensure the continuation/maximisation of grant support from Defra.
  - Participating in the new North York Moors, Coast and Hills LEADER Programme, to promote and develop activities within the AONB.
  - Taking in-year opportunities where appropriate to obtain small amounts of grant support for specific projects.
  - Delivering the first year of the new Monument Management Scheme, funded by English Heritage.
  - Implementing Year 1 works on the River Rye project, as part of the Yorkshire Derwent Catchment Partnership Strategy.
  - 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.
  - Utilising Reserves appropriately, to supplement the annual projects budget and maintain an AONB Unit resource commensurate with future work priorities and income.
  - Reviewing all AONB grant processes and assistance options once agri-environment scheme, LEP and LEADER programmes are fully finalised, in order to maintain effectiveness and efficiency.
  - Exploring 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.

- Exploring future options for the Native Woodland Development partnership with the North York Moors National Park and other organisations, to make best use of new opportunities presented in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, LEADER Local Development Strategy, etc.
- Using volunteers to help deliver AONB Management Plan Objectives wherever possible and appropriate.
- Move the AONB Unit office to the North York Moors National Park Authority premises in Helmsley.

#### **14.0 MONITORING**

14.1 Principal activities for the year include:

- Further developing an assessment mechanism for non-designated Natural and Historic Environment Priority Sites.
- Revising the 2014 data for the relevant AONB Condition Indicator, following any changes to the assessment mechanism described above.
- Continuing the digitisation of practical conservation work completed/funded by the JAC.

#### **15.0 AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN**

15.1 No activity planned for this year.

#### **16.0 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR AONBs**

16.1 Principal activities for the year include:

- Continuing to participate in lobbying, peer-to-peer learning projects, sharing of information, etc.
- Attending seminars, Northern Group meetings, AONB technical events, etc.

#### **17.0 RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Targets for 2015/16, as contained in the Action Programme, be approved.