

**HOWARDIAN HILLS
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
11 APRIL 2019**

AONB ACTION PROGRAMME 2018/19

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To receive details of progress made on implementing the AONB Management Plan during 2018/19. The Action Programme for 2019/20, 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 summary report outlining the progress achieved on the Management Plan objectives in the previous year. The Action Programme document contains full details of the progress made and this has been circulated to Members by email.
- 2.2 A detailed Red/Amber/Green system is used to monitor progress against targets throughout the course of the year, and analysis shows that 87% of the specific targets were fully achieved, 2% were 25-75% achieved, 2% were less than 25% achieved and 6% were not progressed at all.
- 2.3 Statistically this is a better 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 The principal target that we had hoped to achieve more progress on was the restoration of a couple of traditional direction signs. It had also been planned to submit the Special Interest Road Verges dataset for inclusion in the National Street Gazetteer.

3.0 THE ECOSYSTEM APPROACH

- 3.1 Achievements this year included:
- Inputting to important national and local plans to assess conformity with the AONB Management Plan, including the Ryedale Local Plan Strategy and the North Yorkshire Minerals & Waste Joint Plan, as well as the Defra Health & Harmony, Protecting & Enhancing England's Trees and Woodlands consultations and the MHCLG revisions to the NPPF.
 - Continuing scoping and landowner liaison work in Hovingham and Gilling villages, as part of the Ryedale Villages Natural Flood Management Project run by the River Derwent Partnership.
 - Attending 2 workshops and 3 webinars run by Natural England exclusively for the AONB Network, to assist with climate change adaption and natural capital mapping work.

4.0 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

4.1 Achievements this year included:

- Continuing to participate in the Biodiversity Action Partnership for Ryedale, Scarborough and the AONB.
- Carrying out 19 workdays with volunteers on SINC or SSSI.
- Carrying out management work on a total of 13 grassland sites (all SSSI/SINC bar two).
- Managing 45 Special Interest Road Verges.
- Carrying out Himalayan balsam control works at Fairy Dell SINC, Mugdale & Barker Woods SINC, River Derwent SSSI and along Wath Beck.
- Carrying out scrub removal/management works on Peel Wood & Grasslands SINC, Littledale SINC, Amotherby Lane SINC and Foss Spring Mire (SINC).
- Carrying out clearance of rhododendron on Coulton Moor.
- Contributing significantly to the development of the HLF-funded Ryevitalise Project, including assisting with development of the main programme documents (ecological surveys, data mapping, LCAP, images, project summaries) and individual projects: Wooded Wonders, Education, Citizen Science, Walking routes, volunteering, Paradise Initiative, Trout in the Classroom, Audience Development Plan and the interpretation strategy.
- Contributing significantly to the delivery of the HLF-funded Turtle Doves Project within the AONB, with the Spring 2018 surveys completed; seeding work carried out at Coulton, Sproxton and Terrington; a presentation given to the Northern AONBs Group meeting; a second event held for volunteer surveyors; and the Year 2 survey paperwork prepared.
- Providing funding for community nature areas at Autism Plus (Gilling), Slingsby School (phase 2), and Crayke (phase 1).
- Continuing involvement with the North Yorkshire Local Geological Sites Partnership, and completing a Geodiversity Audit to survey and map the AONB's most important geodiversity sites. 17 sites were identified as candidate Local Geological Sites. These were rationalised into 16 distinct sites and all of these were approved by the Local Geological Sites Panel as being worthy of designation. Site citations were prepared by one of the geologists on the Panel and these will be passed to Ryedale DC for the formal notification process.
- Attending meetings of the North Yorkshire & York Local Nature Partnership, and agreeing a contribution to a continuation funding package. The LNP Co-ordinator prepared a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a project to link the Next Steps charity in Norton with the Yorkshire Farm Flora Facilitation Fund.

5.0 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

5.1 Achievements this year included:

- Completing work on 1 Local Priority Site, and 1 other site/feature.
- Restoring traditional village name signs in Slingsby, Barton-le-Street and Appleton-le-Street, with the refurbishment of 1 old sign and the casting of 7 new replicas.
- Completing Year 4 of the Monument Management Scheme, which is principally funded by Historic England. Bracken was strimmed and/or sprayed on 24 Scheduled Monuments; bramble/brash/scrub regrowth was checked and treated on 13 SMs; and 1 SM was re-seeded. In general the strimming followed by spraying approach appears to have been more resilient in terms of weather-dependence, although the results won't be known until May when the bracken starts re-emerging. Many of the SMs sprayed this year have now received 3 years'-worth of control and will be recommended for removal from the Monuments at Risk Register in 2019.

6.0 LOCAL COMMUNITIES

6.1 Achievements this year included:

- Involvement in Ward Mapping/Planning in Ampleforth and Sheriff Hutton Wards.
- 11 community projects funded in 7 villages.
- Community First Yorkshire project supported with grant aid (see separate report for work achieved by the CFY project officer).
- Continued liaison with the principal organisations involved in community work in the AONB, via the regular Community Development Officers' meetings.
- Supporting the development of a Rural Watch Initiative in the Howardian Hills, which now has 15 Volunteer Co-ordinators and 60 members. Grant aid has been provided to the Police to purchase thermal imaging equipment.

7.0 AGRICULTURE

7.1 Achievements this year included:

- Completing 4 landscape enhancement schemes, involving 128m of hedge planting/gapping-up, 25m of wall restoration and the planting of 12 new individual trees.
- Inputting to NAAONB discussions on Brexit issues, the Agriculture Bill and Glover Review of Protected Landscapes (including hosting a Review Panel visit). The visit went to a local farm to hear first-hand about the issues and opportunities presented by farming in an AONB.
- Scrutinising planning consultations for 20 new agricultural buildings or items of infrastructure.

8.0 FORESTRY AND WOODLAND

8.1 Achievements this year included:

- Scrutinising 3 Forestry Commission Felling Licence consultations.
- Alerting the Forestry Commission to a potential case of illegal felling near Whenby. A Stop Notice was issued and legal investigations are continuing.
- Continuing participation in the North York Moors Native Woodland Partnership
- Monitoring the situation with tree diseases, particularly with some further follow-up Plant Health felling needed in Yearsley Woods to address some lingering signs of Phytophthora disease.

9.0 DEVELOPMENT & THE RURAL ECONOMY

9.1 Achievements this year included:

- Monitoring and inputting as necessary to national policy consultations and requests for information received by the NAAONB.
- Inputting to the Ryedale Local Plan: Local Plan Sites Main Modifications; North York Moors National Park: Local Plan; Minerals & Waste Joint Plan: Call for further evidence on the Hydrocarbons policies.
- Scrutinising a total of 127 development control consultations across all categories – full details of Development statistics for the AONB in 2018 are given in a separate Report on the agenda.
- Scrutinising 10 planning consultations relating to small business development in the AONB.
- Continuing liaison with Northern Powergrid on overhead electricity cable undergrounding. Schemes were finalised for Grimstone Top and Oswaldkirk, with the completion of quite complex design and wayleaves work.

- A partial undergrounding scheme for BT overhead lines was agreed for Nunnington (West) in 2016 and this has now been implemented. BT has also looked retrospectively at the Cawton and Crambe schemes and has completed a rationalisation scheme at Cawton. An objection was lodged against a new line being erected along the perimeter of Newburgh Priory Park – BT rejected our objection but the landowner has now objected because what appears to be public highway verge is in fact private land.
- Working with the Destination Partnerships Officer on: identifying nature-friendly & cycling-friendly businesses; installing pond-dipping platforms & information boards at Terrington, and installing information boards at Castle Howard; holding Dark Skies events at the Arboretum and Castle Howard; providing a planetarium for the February Junior Ranger Club event.

10.0 ROADS, TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

10.1 Achievements this year included:

- Removal of the brown tourism signs for the now-closed Farming Flashback museum at Ampleforth.

11.0 RECREATION, ACCESS AND TOURISM

11.1 Achievements this year included:

- Scrutinising 3 relevant development control consultations.
- Incorporating information on recreational ‘hot-spot’ pressures at various sites into the new Management Plan.
- Holding Dark Skies events at the Yorkshire Arboretum (x2) and Castle Howard, as part of the National Parks’ Dark Skies Week.
- Commissioning a STEAM Report on the visitor economy of the AONB and incorporating the data into the new Management Plan.
- Continuing a major project to assist NYCC with resolving Public Rights of Way issues in the AONB:
 - Installing 15 new/replacement roadside fingerposts and photographing them.
 - Packages of work have been completed by the NYMNPA Modern Apprentices Team at Crambe/Kirkham, Hovingham and Gilling.
- Agreeing to examine the package of Public Rights of Way Diversions and Creations on the Castle Howard Estate to see if any of them could be publicly funded. The package is understood to have been shelved as NYCC has been unable to contribute any funding and all the costs would therefore need to be met by the Estate.
- Litter picking at ‘hot-spots’ throughout the AONB and monitoring/reporting fly-tipping.

12.0 AWARENESS AND PROMOTION

12.1 Achievements this year included:

- Maintaining a neat appearance around the AONB gateway signs.
- Publishing AONB News and our Annual Report for 2017/18.
- Attending the Ryedale Show.
- Maintaining the AONB website.
- Maintaining a presence on Twitter, publicising the practical work being carried out in the AONB and re-Tweeting as appropriate.
- Holding 4 Junior Ranger Club sessions throughout the year, with 84 children attending.

- Inputting to the development of the educational strand of the Ryevitalise project by: helping deliver the Countryside Learning Day at Duncombe Park to engage with teachers; visiting Slingsby, Terrington, Hovingham & Terrington Hall Schools to consult with them; holding a Taster Day at Hovingham School using the village beck; assisting with writing the project pro-forma for submission; and assisting with videoing at Hovingham School for the HLF site visit.
- Presentations were given to the Kirkdale Gardening Club and the NYCC Strategic Planning, Economic Growth and Trading Standards Team.

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.
- Inputting to NAAONB discussions on Brexit issues, the Agriculture Bill, Environment Bill and Glover Review of Protected Landscapes (including hosting a Review Panel visit).
- Assisting with development of the main Ryevitalise Project programme (ecological surveys, data mapping, LCAP, images, project summaries) and individual projects: Wooded Wonders, Education, Citizen Science, Walking routes, volunteering, Paradise Initiative, Trout in the Classroom, Audience Development Plan and interpretation strategy.
- Successful out-sourcing of work to: complete the Geodiversity Audit and compile the site citations for the ratified Local Geological Sites. Significant assistance also provided to major projects that should bring significant and widespread funding/benefits to the AONB: HLF Ryevitalise Project, HLF Turtle Doves Project and the Yorkshire Farm Flora Facilitation Fund.
- Joint working with the North York Moors National Park on: Native Woodland Partnership; Dark Skies Week; developing the Ryevitalise project for Stage 2 HLF Landscape Partnership funding; HLF Turtle Doves Project; Cornfield Flowers Project; post-Brexit agri-environment scheme development.
- Working with the Destination Partnerships Officer on: identifying nature-friendly & cycling-friendly businesses; installing pond-dipping platforms & information boards at Terrington, installing information boards at Castle Howard; holding Dark Skies events at the Arboretum and Castle Howard; providing a planetarium for the February Junior Ranger Club event.
- Achieving volunteer assistance with 13 projects or tasks, worth at least 179 days (£10,500 at SDF volunteering rates). 148 days were spent on site management tasks; 10 days on Junior Ranger Club, shows, etc; and 21 days on Turtle Dove surveying.

14.0 MONITORING

14.1 Achievements this year included:

- Re-evaluating how to assess site condition, as part of the Management Plan review process. It was decided to retain this as an Objective, as new methodologies are emerging and these could help us to develop a robust methodology.

15.0 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR AONBs

15.1 Achievements this year included:

- Inputting to NAAONB discussions on Brexit issues, the Agriculture Bill, Environment Bill and Glover Review of Protected Landscapes (including hosting a Review Panel visit).
- Participating in peer-to-peer and on-line collaborative working initiatives, to share and receive knowledge around the AONB Network, including attending Lead Officers' meetings (x2).
- Attending the national AONB Forum in Canterbury.
- Attending 2 x Northern AONBs Group meetings, including hosting the October event.
- Attending the NAAONB Chairmens' seminar and AGM event.
- Participating in specific meetings with Defra, as part of a small AONB Network Working Group, on Performance Metrics.

16.0 MANAGEMENT PLAN

- Reviewing and updating the AONB Management Plan text.
- Sending the draft text round electronically to 7 Topic Groups, to seek initial comments.
- Reviewing and updating the 'State of the AONB' report.
- Reviewing and updating the SEA and Habitats Regulations Assessments.
- Carrying out public consultation on the draft revised AONB Management Plan.
- Evaluating responses and incorporating these into the final Management Plan as appropriate.
- Providing the final Management Plan text to the Local Authorities for Adoption.
- Sending the Adopted Management Plan text to Defra and publishing all the documents on the AONB website.

17.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the achievements against Targets for 2018/19 be noted.