

**HOWARDIAN HILLS  
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY  
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
11 November 2021**

**Item 3: Staff Team Progress Reports**

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To receive details of the work areas and progress achieved by the AONB Unit since the last meeting of the JAC.

**2.0 SUMMARY OF PROGRESS ACHIEVED**

- 2.1 Appendix 1 gives separate details of the work that has been carried out by the AONB Manager and AONB Officers in the period April to October 2021 and the anticipated work in November 2021 – March 2022.
- 2.2 The new Manager, Ellie Hook, started in post on 26 July and Paul Jackson continued to work 2 days per week in a handover period until 8 September.
- 2.3 The new Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, part of Defra's Agricultural Transition Plan, opened for applications from 1 July 2021 and runs until the end of March 2024. The scheme has been designed to provide funding support to farmers and land managers in England's 44 protected landscapes - National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Norfolk Broads. Each area has been allocated a budget and will be responsible for assessing and awarding funding for projects. FiPL funds projects that deliver on at least one of four themes - climate, nature, people and place. Examples of potential projects include actions to reduce carbon emissions on farm, conserving historic features on farm, or promoting connectivity between habitats.
- 2.4 The Howardian Hills FiPL programme was allocated a budget for 2021/22 of £209,782 (including an allocation of £28,850 for advice and guidance and £16,970 for admin, leaving £163,962 for project funding). The total funding was lower in 2022/23 and 23/24 at £149,665.93pa, with the same allowances for advice and guidance and administration. Following a re-profiling in October, £40,000 of the project funding has been moved from 2021/22 to 2022/23 to reduce the risk of losing unallocated project funding in the first year.
- 2.5 The FiPL funding is being allocated via a Panel, shared with the NYMNPA who chair it, with Howardian Hills representatives of Ellie Hook (Vice Chair), Alice Hayter (Hovingham Estate, land manager/farmer representative) and Hugh Clear Hill (NYCC). There have been four Panel meetings to date, inc. one training session.
- 2.6 A first draft of the Howardian Hills AONB Nature Recovery Plan map has been produced.
- 2.7 Though the Monument Management Scheme has now formally ended, activity on managing Scheduled Monuments has continued, delivered in partnership with landowners or directly by the Staff Team, mainly bracken and bramble control.

- 2.8 The Ryevitalise Landscape Partnership project is progressing well and Francesca Pert has continued to work as part of the Ryevitalise team for 2 days per week, with a particular focus on the development of the 'Cause and Effect' themed river art exhibition planned for Nunnington Hall.
- 2.9 Work on the Turtle Doves survey, Exmoor Ponies grazing project, Monument Management Scheme bracken control works, Himalayan balsam control and AONB Volunteers Work Plan has been delivered, despite the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. However Ryedale Show was cancelled and Junior Ranger Club sessions have not re-started.
- 2.10 Initial support has been offered to the steering group working to assess the proposal for a new Yorkshire Wolds AONB.
- 2.11 NAAONB work has focused mainly on the future re-branding and re-positioning of AONBs and the implementation of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.
- 2.12 The balance of funds carried forward into 2021/22 was approximately £72,000. A small amount of the 'Reserve Fund' has been allocated for use within the 2021/22 budget, mainly for the recruitment costs of the new manager.
- 2.13 The first claim for payment of the 2021/22 grant, for £94,534, was submitted in September 2021 and has been paid.
- 2.14 The final claim for payment of the 2021/22 grant, for £31,512, will be submitted to Defra in early March 2022 for payment by the end of March 2022. A grant allocation proposal and the agreed work programme for 2022/23 is expected to be submitted to Defra in April, once a formal grant offer letter has been received.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATION**

That the report be received for information.

### AONB MANAGER REPORTS

Paul Jackson

#### June – September 2021

Work during this period has principally consisted of:

- Planning application consultations scrutiny and responses
- Putting in place the initial plans for the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme
- 2 x FiPL/Ryevitalise/CS Farm Walks, Hovingham
- Completing preparation of our Nature Recovery Plan map
- Passing template letters and GIS site boundary information to Ryedale DC, NYCC and the Ecological Data Centre for the formal designation of Local Geological Sites.
- Completing a hand-over to Ellie Hook as the new AONB Manager

Other work:

- Procuring restoration projects for a traditional road sign and a traditional direction sign (damaged in road traffic collision)
- Carrying out management works on selected Scheduled Monuments
- Cataloguing a backlog of site photos.
- Tidying-up a myriad of loose ends as best I could!

Ellie Hook

#### August – October 2021

Work during this period has principally consisted of:

- Familiarisation with the AONB, Team and local contacts, inc:
  - handover meetings with Paul
  - site visits
  - team briefings and monthly progress review meetings
  - meetings with the large landowners
  - meetings with a range of other local contacts
- Familiarisation with the landscape and habitats
- Familiarisation with NYCC, inc induction programme, target setting, training, systems familiarisation
- Planning applications and other consultations scrutiny and responses
- Completing required reporting to Defra
- Initial support for the steering team assessing the proposal for a new Yorkshire Wolds AONB
- Putting in place arrangements for the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, including:
  - fulfilling Defra reporting requirements and budget re-profiling
  - working with NYMNP to create and define procedures for operation of the joint FiPL Panel
  - delivery of the first FiPL Panel meeting, including taking the Vice-Chair role
  - continuing the work on the Howardian Hills application pack and website

- information
- progress with hiring FiPL staff
- putting a call-off contract in place for FiPL support
- acting as FiPL facilitator, conducting site visits, helping to prepare applications
- attendance at Defra and NAAONB FiPL briefings

### November 2021 – March 2022

Work during this period will principally consist of:

- Continuing familiarisation with the AONB, team, local contacts, landscape and habitats
- Analysis of the current work plan and budget and development of suggestions for any adaptations, inc. discussion at the winter JAC
- Preparation of the 2022-23 budget, inc. FiPL
- Fulfilling Defra reporting requirements
- Planning application and consultations scrutiny and responses, including felling licences
- Full implementation of FiPL and drive to ensure distribution of the first year funding, including recruitment of facilitator and admin staff
- Responding to Glover developments and other national consultations
- Continuing to offer support to the steering team assessing the proposal for a new Yorkshire Wolds AONB
- Maintaining NAAONB links, attending the Lead Officer Meeting, Northern Lead Officer Group meeting and any Undergrounding Group meeting

## **AONB OFFICER REPORTS**

Liz Bassindale

### April - October 2021

Work during this period has principally consisted of:

- Providing Project Fund applicants with application guidance, making grant offers, checking completed projects and making grant payments. Significant amount of chasing end of year grant claims April/May 2021.
- Ryevitalise – planning INNS work. Site visits and site meetings in the Ampleforth area (access, outreach and land management). Linking with landowners. Filming of interpretation video. Joint development of a community wildlife event with Ampleforth Parish Council. Attended joint Board and Steering Group Meeting. Initial interpretation of hydrological modelling for the Ampleforth area.
- Farming in Protected Landscapes – farmer advice event in Hovingham, keeping up with announcements and webinars, producing content for our website, drafting application and guidance documents, initial conversations and site visits with possible applicants, attendance at Panel meetings, working with Consultants on the development of Projects, presentation of application to FiPL Panel. Meeting with Castle Howard Estate Team re. FiPL ideas.
- MMS – bramble clearance on round barrow, Fryton Wood. Landowner permissions obtained for summer work and Castle Howard supplied with a work plan as they are now managing their own monuments. Organising bracken cutting then crushing on round barrows near Grimston (AONB Team) and

bracken cutting then crushing near Newburgh (AONB volunteers cut then TCV crush).

- Turtle Dove Project – land access permissions, volunteers evening, preparation of survey packs and land access maps, risk assessments sent to surveyors and all volunteers registered, surveys undertaken.
- INNS – Giant hogweed reports forwarded to YDCP for treatment, Himalayan balsam control arranged for six sites (mix of SINCs and SSSI) and assisted Francesca with organising Wath Beck clearance when required. Control carried out by four contractors, TCV and AONB volunteer team.
- Monitoring developments in the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions, etc and relating them to the AONB Volunteer activities. Reviewing risk assessments and procedures in order to re-start the group in May. Planning and delivery of summer activities and planning autumn activities. Identifying a leader for the group from October onwards and briefing them on covid working.
- Working with communities –site visit to Terrington Primary School to discuss ideas to improve their schools grounds for wildlife and vegetable growing, follow-up information supplied. Grant offered to St Benedict's Primary School, Ampleforth, for Forest Schools/outdoor learning area. Advisory visits to Ampleforth Millennium Green to help the Parish Council to start up a wildlife project, links provided to Community First Yorkshire, Ryevitalise and Cornfield Flowers Project for specialist advice/support. Interpretation board for The Green to be produced by Ryevitalise working with the village schools.
- AONB Newsletter – Articles written and gathered from other contributors, images sourced, design and print completed on time, door to door delivery successful, enquiries coming in relating to articles (particularly volunteering).

#### Other work:

- Communities/outreach – Outdoor Education and Community Projects Officer at Gilling Castle linked with Stronger Communities and LNP for advice about green social prescribing and linking with community support charities in Norton.
- Communities – initial enquiries re grant funding received from Huttons Ambo and Slingsby Village Halls. Responses and grant advice being provided with support from Community First Yorkshire Development Officer. Street light replacement advice, Swinton, linked to Dark Skies advice from NYMNP.
- Conservation projects – joint Ampleforth Abbey and FC site visit inc Pied Flycatcher and Redstart areas. Attending Ryevitalise and LNP meetings. Fen management advice, Ampleforth. Grassland management site visit and advice, Terrington. Coulton Fen SINC site visit with Natural England and volunteer task organised as a result of the visit.
- Stone walling repairs site visit, Terrington. Stone wall volunteer task site visits, Stonegrave Minster.
- Tree spiral removal day, Castle Howard Avenue.
- Cornfield Flowers Project - contributing to developing a bid to NLHF to build on the success of the current project.
- Appleton le Street Churchyard SINC cut and raked, Kendrew Green management adjusted following advice from NYCC Ecologist.
- Northern Group AONB Volunteer Officers working group video calls – working our way through the rules, regulations and public perceptions together.
- NAAONB workshops and online discussions – keeping up to date with the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and attending Communications Officers meeting.
- NAAONB Conference – attended online – July 2021.
- Keeping in touch with delivery of the end of the CS/ELM Advocacy Project.
- Attending Ryedale area Communities, Volunteering and VCSE monthly

- meetings.
- Panel member at the North Yorkshire Funding Summit organised by Community First Yorkshire.
- 'Sit Back and Enjoy the Ride' leaflet printed and copies ready to collect from Ryedale House.
- JAC – presentation preparation.
- Showing Ellie round some of the AONB, introducing her to some of the Projects and Ryevitalise and discussions about the way forwards as a new Team.

### November 2021 - March 2022

Work during this period is likely to include:

- Providing Project Fund applicants with application guidance, making grant offers, checking completed projects and making grant payments.
- Continuing to work with Ellie and Francesca to determine future ways of working, allocating work areas etc.
- Ongoing work with Ampleforth Estate about involvement with Ryevitalise, walking routes and FiPL.
- FiPL including attending NAAONB briefings, advising potential applicants, supporting the Delivery and Guidance consultants, attending Panel meetings and presenting projects to the Panel when required.
- Working with Community First Yorkshire to support community projects.
- Identifying and planning Autumn and Winter volunteer tasks. Supporting Peter as he returns as the AONB Volunteer Team Leader.
- Organising cutting and raking of Kendrew Green in the early Spring.
- Organising bramble strimming on Scheduled Monuments at Risk.
- Ongoing work with Gilling Castle relating to outreach work.
- Turtle Dove surveys – collating results of the 2021 surveys and starting to plan for the 2022 surveys if the Steering Group identify a need for them.
- Supporting the Ryevitalise Team when required including coordinating the Evaluation and Monitoring Group and attending Steering Group meetings. Update meetings with the Programme Manager. Linking with landowners and community groups and identifying Projects where FiPL and Ryevitalise funding can be used in parallel to enhance the final result.
- Attending Cornfield Flowers Project and River Derwent Partnership meetings. Supporting the LNP Officer with the bid to NLHF for the next stage of the Cornfield Flowers Project.
- Communities, Volunteering and VCSE meetings – monthly.

Francesca Pert

### April - October 2021

Work during this period has principally consisted of:

- Volunteers – Assisting Liz with planning autumn activities. Investigated possible tasks to help churchyard maintenance at Crayke and Amotherby. Organised Wath Wood Boundary SINC volunteer scrub clearance and organising two volunteer tree shelter removal events for Nov & Dec.
- Developing the strategy for reducing the impact of plastic tree protection waste on the HHAONB landscape. This has included: organising a hedge spiral removal

day with partners; chairing a meeting between Rainbow Professional, Castle Howard Estate, North York Moors National Park Woodland Team to start collaborating on local solutions; collaborating with industry partners to start a pvc spiral recycling scheme; presenting our work to the Forestry Plastic Working Group; organising AONB volunteers to bag 6000 shelters on Castle Howard Estate to go to be recycled. Preparing an advice note and uploading resources and links to the HHAONB website.

- Ryevitalise: working with Ryevitalise & the National Trust (NT) to develop the 'Cause and Effect' river-themed art exhibition planned for Nunnington Hall. This has involved: planning and leading a site visit with artists; outlining the HHAONB's potential contributions and aspirations for the exhibition for the draft project brief; Planning, scheduling and writing briefs for the filming of the interpretation video; Accompanying the artists and production company on 4 filming site visits introducing them to landowners, gaining permissions, producing prompt questions for contributors and explaining landscape features. Giving some AONB time to Ryedale School creative writing workshops at Nunnington Hall running a workshop to introduce the geography of the area to year 8 students.
- INNS –Himalayan balsam control arranged for Wath Beck, seeking landowner permissions, sending maps and landowner contacts to contractors and setting up purchase orders. Control carried out by two contractors. Obtained permission for INNS control in Mugdale and Barker Woods.
- Exmoor Pony conservation grazing programme – liaised with landowners and the Yorkshire Exmoor Pony Trust to create a schedule. Organised contractor to complete boundary checks and maintenance of sites. Placed order and liaised with YEPT where necessary.
- Website / communications – Added and kept updated information about the new FIPL funding scheme to the grants page of the website, updated the Coronavirus page and worked on updating banners and gaining Google Analytics set up with Bronco (web developer).
- MMS – Bracken crushing on round barrows near Grimston (AONB Team).
- AONB Newsletter – Assisted Liz in writing and editing of articles and assisted with the smooth running of the design, print and Door to Door process.

#### Other work:

- Meetings with PJ and LB to discuss team tasks and new staffing.
- Booking the Royal Mail Door-to-Door delivery of the AONB Newsletter for its new timeslot in August.
- Investigating how to obtain analytics data for usage of our website.
- Site visit with landowners in Crayke to give advice on developing the wildlife benefit of their plot of land.
- Working up IPM targets and IPM meeting with Paul.
- National Landscapes Forum – identifying HHAONB access issues with the forum and liaising with NYCC IThelp and the forum's web developer to try to resolve our access issues – ongoing.
- Initial contact with NYCC highways about Special Interest Road Verges cut.
- Growth and Heritage Team Meetings.
- Action Programme updates.
- Communities/outreach – Represented the AONB and Ryevitalise on a stall at Ryedale Eco-fair in Pickering. Landscapes for Life Week – made Ryevitalise team aware of this which resulted in LB and Rye team organising Ampleforth outreach event.
- Introductory half-day with Ellie walking around Hall Moor, visiting the Arboretum Tree Health Centre and talking about my involvement in AONB

- project work.
- Introductory day about Ryevitalise for Ellie with LB and Ryevitalise with site visit to Rose Cottage, Terrington.
  - Discussions with LB and EH about new ways of working.
  - Observed FIPL meeting with new consultants to gain insight of the scheme.
  - NAAONB Conference – online in July.
  - Landscape Recovery Webinar – online in August.
  - Three weeks annual leave in July / August, 2 days unpaid leave in August, 1 day flexi, 1 day annual leave
  - Two days of self-isolation due to child at home with Covid-19 symptoms.

### November 2021 – March 2022

Work during this period will principally consist of:

- Providing Project Fund applicants with application guidance, making grant offers, checking completed projects and making grant payments.
- Cause and Effect exhibition – working with Ryevitalise and NT to develop engagement activities to run alongside the exhibition. Planning and accompanying film crew and artists on final filming day. Proofing-viewing final interpretation film.
- Assisting LB with organising volunteer tasks. Organise 2 volunteer tasks to bag and recycle spent tree shelters. Organise another spiral removal task with younger volunteers.
- Assisting EH and Liz Small to inform designation of the Yorkshire Wolds as an AONB.
- Continuing to develop a strategy for reducing the amount of plastic tree protection waste in the HHAONB. Continue work with Castle Howard Estate NYMNPA and industry partners to develop local recycling solutions. Investigate whether a FIPL project could be created to help fund this work.
- Developing thinking around linking with urban areas and outreach to under-served audiences.
- Investigating updates required to the AONB website accessibility.
- FIPL - arrange a site meeting with Potter Hill landowner to talk about FIPL and ash die back. Accompany one of the other AONB staff on a FIPL liaison site visit near Ampleforth to develop knowledge of the scheme and the NW AONB area.
- Assisting the new AONB manager to develop team new ways of working where necessary.