



<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership
18 October 2011
9.30am

<u>Item</u>
2
Public

## Minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2011

9.30am – 12.00pm

**Responsible Officer** Tim Ward  
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### Present

#### Local Authorities

Shropshire Council  
Shropshire Council  
Shropshire Council  
Telford & Wrekin Council

Cllr Tim Barker (Vice Chair)  
Cllr Heather Kidd  
Cllr Cecilia Motley  
Cllr Chris Turley

#### Statutory/Voluntary Agencies & Individual members

Individual member  
Individual Member  
Individual Member  
Individual Member  
Individual member  
Parish Council representative  
Parish Council representative  
British Horse Society  
Caring for God's Acre  
Campaign to Protect Rural England  
Country Land & Business Association  
Institute of Chartered Foresters  
Long Mynd & District Bridleways Association  
National Farmers Union  
National Trust  
Ramblers Association  
SASTAK  
Shropshire Geological Society  
Shropshire Wildlife Trust  
Upper Onny Wildlife Group/Shropshire  
Ornithological Society  
Walford & North Shropshire College

George Chancellor (Chair)  
Alison Caffyn (Vice Chair)  
Lee Chapman  
David Francis  
Elizabeth Thomas  
Dr Keith Bartlett  
Bob Welch  
Ronald Repath  
Michael Whithouse  
Clare Cox  
Michael Watney  
John Voysey  
Sue Lee  
David Watson-Jones  
Pete Carty  
Bill Hodges  
Caroline Whiteman  
David C Smith  
Veronica Cossons  
  
Leo Smith  
Jon Parry

#### Observers/Officers

Shropshire Council  
  
Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership staff team

John Harrison (Head of Environment & Sustainability)  
Tim Ward (Committee Officer)  
Pete Banford (LEADER Co-ordinator)  
Glynn Barratt (Planning & Landscape Officer)  
Phil Holden (AONB Partnership Manager)

## Welcome and Apologies for Absence

1. The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.
2. Apologies for absence were received from Dr Jenny Collingridge (Parish Council rep), Jeff Edwards (Natural England), David Gibbon (Individual Member), Cllr James Gibson (Shropshire Council), Jenny Joy (Butterfly Conservation), Hazel McDowall (Natural England), Nick Williams (Butterfly Conservation), Steve Price (Group Manager Environment, Shropshire Council),

## Note of Last Meeting

3. It was resolved that the note of the meeting held on 21 June 2011 be approved.
4. The AONB Partnership Manager informed the meeting that a response had been made to the Independent Forestry Panel and was on the AONB website. He apologised that due to time constraints it had not been possible to circulate the response before it was submitted but that he had based the response on the discussion that had been had at the meeting.

## Election of Chair and Vice Chairs

5. The AONB Partnership Manager informed the meeting that one nomination had been received for the position of Chair of the Partnership and two nominations for the two Vice Chair positions.
6. It was resolved that :-  
  
George Chancellor be elected Chair of the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership for the forthcoming year and that  
  
Cllr Tim Barker and Alison Caffyn be elected Vice Chairs of the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership for the forthcoming year.
7. The AONB Partnership Manager informed the meeting that the two year term for the Independent Members of the Partnership had expired. He apologised that due to oversight the vacancies had not been advertised but this would be done shortly and that members would be advised of applicants and a vote carried out if necessary by post and email. He also advised the meeting that he had received the resignation of David Gibbon as an Individual Member. The Chair expressed his regret that Mr Gibbon was leaving the Partnership and commented that he had been a valuable member who had contributed a lot to the Partnership and its work. It was agreed that a note should be written to Mr Gibbon thanking him for all that he had done during his time on the Partnership.

## Election of Members to the Management Board

8. The AONB Manager advised the meeting that five nominations had been received for the six vacancies on the Management Board.
9. It was resolved that Cllr Cecilia Motley, Cllr Heather Kidd, Leo Smith, Jon Parry and Veronica Cossons be elected to serve on the Management Board.
10. The Chair advised the meeting that the Management Board would be looking to co-opt a member of the Partnership to fill the remaining seat.

## AONB Partnership Activity Update

10. The meeting received a report giving a brief summary of current activity and progress of the AONB Partnership's staff team. The AONB Partnership Manager highlighted some key points from the report, as set out below:
11. Unfortunately Helen Kent had resigned from the post of Farming Officer and that the post would be advertised shortly. Work was progressing with the farming project and that three shows had been attended. Mr Watson-Jones asked how successful the attendance at shows had been. The AONB Partnership Manager commented that feedback had been mixed and that Burwarton Show had not been as successful as had been hoped, and that attendance at shows took up a lot of staff time. Mr Chapman commented that in time possibly this type of work could be done by members of the Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB.
12. The SITA funded River Clun Freshwater Pearl Mussel project was now under way, and that preparation work was in progress on sites for practical work on both the Upper and Lower Clun. Further funding for the project was being offered by Natural England from funds linked to Species Recovery and River Restoration priorities.
13. Work was ongoing with the Woodlands Project and that a total of 92 woodland owners had been visited and that 22 management plans were now in place. The SITA funded Heartwoods woodland project was now under way and the project officer was working 2 days a week on this employed by Heartwoods but still based at the AONB office.
14. The Shuttles service for 2011 was now completed and that performance analysis showed that passenger numbers were down by 6.5% on 2010. Ticket income was however down by 25.5%, which seemed to be mainly caused by the purchase of more single tickets and fewer Day Rover tickets. Planning work for the 2012 season was under way and that there was the possibility of extra funding from the new Local Sustainable Transport Fund for the provision of new services and that this could be used to fund the Wenlock Wanderer.
15. Delivery of the 'Walking with Offa' project within the Shropshire Hills was ongoing, and that a number of events and training sessions for walks leaders had been held. He went on to say that a PR contract had resulted in national publicity and that a web marketing strategy had been prepared. Welsh Assembly Government funding of £750,000 was now in place alongside the funding from all the English partners for the cross border co-operation project and that a project coordinator had been appointed by Adventa who were the LEADER Local Action Group for Monmouthshire who were overseeing the whole project.
16. The stage 1 of the Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme had been passed by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the recruitment of a Co-ordinator on a one year contract was under way and four consultancy contracts were to be let for natural heritage, cultural heritage, access and interpretation and training which would provide specialist input to the project. Following concerns expressed by residents in the Corndon Hill area a public meeting had been held and most of the concerns had been addressed. Because the project extended beyond the AONB into Wales it would be developed with something of its own identity and not just as a Shropshire Hill AONB project.
17. The Annual Review for 2010-11 was currently in preparation and 1,000 copies would be printed. Other promotion work had included a new walking page on the AONB website, a number of press releases and improved output on social media such as Facebook and Twitter.
18. The Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan had been formally approved by Shropshire Council and the Ludlow Destination Development Partnership and it was intended that an application for the Europarc Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas would be submitted in December 2011.
19. The consultation into the National Planning Policy Framework had been received and that it had been decided that the Partnership would not be making a response. The National

Association of AONBs had made a very good response, as had Shropshire Council. Mrs Kidd commented that she felt that the Partnership should make a response as there were specific items in the consultation that would affect the AONB and that whilst the Shropshire Council response was good she felt that the "one size fits all" approach did not address the specific concerns of the AONB. The Chairman commented that one factor in the decision not to formulate a response had been one of capacity.

20. Progress was being made with the development of a formal constitution for the Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB and members of the Partnership were thanked for their help. There were currently 133 individual members and six parish and town council members of the Friends.
21. The new funding Memorandum of Agreement between Defra and the local authorities was currently under consideration for signing. A review was also under way of potential structures for the AONB Partnership as an alternative to hosting by Shropshire Council.
22. Mr Welch asked whether the AONB and Church Stretton Town Council would have to chance to link in to the £150,000 funding which Shropshire Council has obtained for a "Campaign for Walking". He went on to say that there did not appear to have been a lot of joined up work.

### **LEADER in the Shropshire Hills Update**

23. A report giving an update on the progress of the Shropshire Hills LEADER programme had been circulated. The LEADER Co-ordinator informed the meeting that the Shropshire Hills LEADER programme was the best performing Local Action Group in the West Midlands region in terms of expenditure made, and as a result of this good financial performance the 20% cut in funding for the year 2011-12 had been reinstated.
24. The LEADER Co-ordinator informed the meeting that Defra had notified the AONB Partnership that the budget for 2012-13 would be cut by 35%. He went on to say that Defra had stated that they wished to give priority to upland areas. Unfortunately the criterion used was that 40% of the LAG should be agricultural Severely Disadvantaged Area (SDA) and that the Shropshire Hills LEADER area at 29% did not qualify although the AONB itself has 49% SDA. The cut would not affect existing contracted projects, but it would affect the amount of funding available for future projects. He added that there was a small possibility that the LAG may be allocated some more funding if there is an underspend in other areas, as under EU rules Defra must ensure that 5% of RDPE is spend through the LEADER.
25. The LEADER Co-ordinator suggested that there may be need to look at the boundary of the LEADER area prior to the next round of LEADER as it was expected that the AONB would wish to continue as a LAG and preliminary discussions had been held with Defra to this effect. Members generally felt that it had been the right decision to extend the boundary beyond the AONB boundary to include the adjacent market towns.
26. The LEADER Co-ordinator informed the meeting that the LAG had approved £751,123 of funding. He went on to outline the projects that had been granted funding since the last meeting of the Partnership.
27. The LEADER Co-ordinator advised the meeting that he was currently working with potential applicants to ensure that there was a bank of projects ready to go should extra funding become available. Mr Watney questioned whether organisations would spend time and money developing projects with little prospect of gaining funding. Several members expressed the view that some organisations would carry out the work. The LEADER Co-ordinator felt that if this work was not done we may miss out on potential funding and that as long as the LAG was honest with the groups there should not be a problem.

## Brief Verbal Updates from Partners

28. The Chair reminded members that this relatively new item was an opportunity for Partnership members to update the Partnership on their activities, and would be rotated around the membership over future meetings.

### Upper Onny Wildlife Group

Mr Leo Smith informed the meeting that although he represented the Upper Onny Wildlife Group he also worked with The Upper Clun and Kemp Valley Community Wildlife Groups. He went on to say that his main work was monitoring bird numbers especially curlew and lapwing and that in general numbers of both species had declined and that he was involved in working with to create and maintain habitats as part of agri-environment schemes. He added that the recording work provided valuable information to Natural England with regards to habitat management for agri-environment schemes. A LEADER application was currently in for development of new Community Wildlife Groups in other parts of the AONB.

### National Trust

Mr Carty informed the meeting that the management restructure of the National Trust had been completed and that he was part of a new South Shropshire team, though the need to retain the 'Shropshire Hills' brand for visitors was appreciated. He said that in general the restructure had worked well as the addition of properties such as Dudmaston Hall had increased the money coming into the team. He went on to say that work on the Wenlock Quarries project was progressing slowly and that community engagement work would restart soon. Mr Carty commented that the National Trust was making a corporate push to promote the "outdoor agenda" and that this was reflected in work he was doing with links to local mountain biking groups and businesses. He also informed the meeting of plans to create an informal camp site at Pole Cottage on the Long Mynd for groups taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's (DofE) Award scheme and commented that a recent survey had shown upwards of 500 DofE groups used the Long Mynd in a year.

### English Heritage

Mr Klemperer said that as a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review, English Heritage had received a cut of 32% in its funding. He went on to say that in the past English Heritage had had two grant streams - one for historic buildings and one for churches where the grants were split equally between the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and English Heritage. He said that in the future the church grants would come totally from HLF and that this would have an effect on those English Heritage staff who were responsible for administering the grants. Mr Klemperer went on to say that English Heritage owned 420 sites around the country, many of which were open to the public. He added that 20% of the sites created 80% of the income and that it was hoped that this income could be increased to reduce reliance on government grants. He then outlined work that English Heritage was carrying out in the Shropshire Hills area.

## AONB Management Plan 2009 – 14 Evaluation

29. The AONB Partnership Manager reminded members that second statutory AONB Management Plan was now half way through its five year period, and that it was timely to start thinking about the evaluation and review process. A workshop session was held in three groups on the topics of
- Planning
  - Conservation & Land Management
  - Visitors, Tourism & Promotion
30. The write-up of the workshop sessions is included as an Appendix to these notes of the meeting.

## **Dates of Next Meetings**

31. The dates of future meetings of the Partnership were confirmed as

Tuesday 7 February 2012,  
Tuesday 19 June 2012 and  
Tuesday 23 October 2012.