



<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership  20 November 2012  9.30am
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<u>Item</u>  <b>2</b>  Public
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## Minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2012

9.30am – 12.15pm

**Responsible Officer** Tim Ward

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### Present

#### Local Authorities

Shropshire Council

Cllr Tim Barker (Vice Chair)

Shropshire Council

Cllr Heather Kidd

Shropshire Council

Cllr Cecilia Motley

Telford & Wrekin Council

Cllr Chris Turley

#### Statutory/Voluntary Agencies & Individual members

Individual member

George Chancellor (Chair)

Individual Member

Alison Caffyn (Vice Chair)

Individual Member

Tom Eyre

individual Member

David Francis

Individual Member

Liz Thomas

Parish Council representative

Jenny Collingridge

Parish Council representative

Bob Welch

British Horse Society

Ronald Repath

Caring for God's Acre

Michael Whithouse

Campaign to Protect Rural England

Clare Cox

Land, Life and Livelihoods

Joy Greenall

Long Mynd & District Bridleways Association

Sue Lee

Natural England

Ruth Fish

Ramblers Association

Sue Jones

Walford & North Shropshire College

Jon Parry

#### Observers/Officers

Shropshire Council

John Harrison (Environment & Sustainability Service Manager)

Tim Ward (Committee Officer)

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership staff team

Phil Holden (AONB Partnership Manager)

Clare Davies (Farming Officer)

Vicky Wood (Farming Community Officer)

### Welcome and Apologies for Absence

1. The Chair welcomed Sue Jones, Ruth Fish and Joy Greenall to their first meeting.
2. Apologies for absence were received from Tony Bostock and Mike Morris (Severn Rivers Trust), Lee Chapman (Individual Member), Veronica Cossons (Shropshire Wildlife Trust), James Gibson (Shropshire Council), Jo Jury (DEFRA), Leo Smith

(Upper Onny Wildlife Group/Shropshire Ornithological Society), David C Smith (Shropshire Geological Society), Rachel Taylor (Telford & Wrekin Council), John Voysey (Institute of Chartered Foresters), David Watson Jones (NFU) and Caroline Whiteman (SASTAK).

### Note of Last Meeting

3. Mr Eyre commented that paragraph 12 did not accurately reflect what he had meant, as the point he was trying to make was that it did not look good to the general public that the AONB Partnership Manager was sending officers on foreign trips in times of austerity. The AONB Partnership Manager reminded members that collaboration was an essential and legitimate component of the LEADER programme. He was aware of a possible negative perception, and as far as possible the collaboration activity involved project participants as well as staff.
4. It was resolved that the note of the meeting held on 7 February 2012 be approved.

### AONB Partnership Activity Update

5. 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:
6. The Farming Project was progressing well and farm advice contacts were now up to target levels.
7. Site works had been completed for the River Clun Freshwater Pearl Mussel Project. Funding had been received from Natural England for additional catchment work.
8. Work was ongoing with the development phase of the Stiperstones & Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme. Consultations and meetings of the Board, Steering Group and special advisory groups had been held. £50,000 of match funding had been secured from the Jean Jackson Trust, and it was proposed that some of this should be used to retain some staffing capacity during the gap while the Stage 2 bid was being processed by HLF (roughly Dec 2012 to June 2013).
9. The Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan was to be submitted to Shropshire Council Cabinet for approval. The verification visit for the application for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas had taken place and a decision was expected shortly.
10. A paper had been taken to the Management Board regarding a review of potential structures for the Partnership as an alternative to hosting by Shropshire Council. The Chair commented that the Management Board had felt that the retaining current arrangement was the best option but that there was need to prepare a plan B in case the situation changed dramatically. Mr Eyre asked would the Partnership be made aware of the options. The Chair said that the Management Board papers were available on the website, and that the Partnership would be involved if any significant decisions were needed. Ms Fish commented that there was need to have continuing dialogue with DEFRA as the funding body to protect as much of the current level of funding as possible. Ms Jones asked whether other AONBs had similar issues and whether anything could be gained from sharing experiences. The AONB Partnership Manager advised her that the exchange of information through the National Association was good, and much had been learned from the experience of other AONBs.

11. Mr Welch commented on the welcome news that the Shuttle service was to be expanded. The AONB Partnership Manager explained that extra funding had been received from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and that in 2013 a new service would be started from Ludlow, with consultation was currently being undertaken on potential routes. Mrs Thomas commented that there had been a lot of interest this year in the new Wenlock Wanderer service.
12. The Chair asked whether any progress had been made with seeking charitable status for the Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB. The AONB Partnership Manager informed him that the matter was not progressing as quickly as he had hoped, but that he was hoping to seek advice as to whether the draft constitution fitted with the requirements of charity status.

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

13. A report updating the Partnership on the progress of the Shropshire Hills LEADER programme had been circulated. The AONB Partnership Manager advised members that following pressure to maximise spend, the Shropshire Hills LEADER programme had exceeded its budget profile for 2011-12. As a result a revised budgetary profile had been submitted to Defra and performance would be measured against the new profile, with the results used to allocate further funding if this becomes available.
14. The AONB Partnership Manager advised members that an additional £25,000 had been allocated to the Shropshire Hills LAG in recognition of the performance up to December 2011. He drew members' attention to projects that had been funded and to those projects which were under development or appraisal. He commented that not all the projects being appraised would necessarily receive approval.
15. The AONB Partnership Manager advise the Partnership that the LEADER Co-ordinator and the AONB Development Officer had recently visited a LAG in the Loir Valley in France as part of work to develop a transnational project on local food with the Loir LAG, 2 LAGs in Estonia and Central Warwickshire LAG. He informed the meeting that a full application would be taken to the next meeting of the Approvals Panel.
16. Mr Eyre expressed concern that some of the applications were from privately owned businesses and questioned whether the Partnership should have sight of the applications. The AONB Partnership Manager said that the Approvals Panel had been set up to carry out this function for the Partnership, and that criteria of public benefit were rigorously applied.

### **AONB Management Plan Review**

17. A report providing members with a summary of the proposed process for the review of the AONB Management Plan and giving material for discussion in a workshop session had been circulated. The AONB Partnership Manager drew members' attention to the timetable for the review and informed members of the intention that a full draft of the updated Plan be brought to a meeting of the Partnership in March 2013 for approval before going out for wider consultation.
18. The AONB Partnership Manager said that it was proposed to update the strategic priorities of the new Plan to bring them in line with the nationally adopted AONB objectives. It was proposed that most of the policies and positions contained in the last Management Plan would remain, although some may need amending.

Members then went into a workshop session to look at the strategic priorities and policies. A summary of the workshop is attached to the minutes.

### **Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Preferred Options Consultation**

19. A report setting out a commentary on Shropshire Council's current consultation on the preferred options for the SAMDev had been circulated in order to inform a response by the Partnership. The Chair reported that he and the AONB Partnership Manager had had a very constructive meeting with planning policy officers which had moved things on since the report had been written. He reminded members that Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 7 had now been superseded by the National Planning Policy Framework, but this included the most important bits of wording on AONBs from PPS7.
20. The AONB Partnership Manager agreed that it had been a very constructive meeting and that assurances had been received that due weight would be given to the AONB in all relevant policies.
21. Mrs Motley commented that it was important that the relevant policies were translated into the advice given to planning committees by officers.
22. Mr Welch commented that the AONB name was often taken in vain with regards to planning to mean 'no change', despite the fact the AONB Partnership recognised the need for development which was sensitive to the aims of the AONB.
23. Mr Harrison advised members that they should not lose sight of the importance of the Place Plans prepared by Shropshire Council, which were reviewed annually.

### **Farming Project**

24. The Partnership received a presentation from Clare Davies (Farming Officer) and Vicky Wood (Farming Community Officer) on the Farming Project. The Farming Officer reminded the Partnership that the aim of the farming project was to conserve and sustain the landscape of the Shropshire Hills by:
  - helping develop a closer rural community
  - improving understanding of farming and food production
  - increasing support for local products and
  - helping to create more viable livelihoods for farming businesses.
25. She then outlined the project's work of advice for farmers in the Less Favoured Area through one to one sessions, running workshops for farmers, working with schools to raise the understanding of upland farming, and identifying, supporting and training farmer champions.
26. The Farming Community Officer then outlined the work she had been doing with schools, stating that the target was to work with 15 farmers and 15 schools. She went on to say that for many of the farmers, working with schools was a new activity. A children's book on farming in the Shropshire Hills had been commissioned, and this would be provided to every primary school child in the AONB. She then outlined the farming events aimed at the wider community.
27. The Chair congratulated the officers on the amount of work carried out and thanked them for their presentation.

### **Brief Verbal Updates from Partners**

28. The Partnership received updates from Cllr Chris Turley (Telford & Wrekin Council), and Michael Whithouse (Caring for God's Acre).
29. Cllr Turley informed the meeting that the Council continued to be active partners in the Wrekin Forest Partnership and were preparing a brief for production of a new Wrekin Forest Plan. He advised that there was currently a planning application in for the creation of a car park at the Donkey Field at the Wrekin. Opinions on this were divided, and he noted that the AONB Partnership had objected.
30. Mr Whithouse reminded members that Caring for God's Acre was originally a Shropshire Hills AONB project. It had started in the mid 1990s and had grown to what it was now having gained charitable status in 2000. He added that a grant of £400,000 had recently been received from the Heritage Lottery Fund to take the work to a national scale. He then outlined past work carried out and future work.

### **Dates of Next Meetings**

31. The AONB Partnership Manager advised members that the timing of meetings for both the Management Board and the Partnership had been altered so that they fitted better with the required reporting timetables.
32. Members noted that future meetings of the Partnership would be held on Tuesday 20 November 2012 and Tuesday 19 March 2013.

### **Other Business**

33. Ms Caffyn raised concern about the operation by Edge Renewables of a wood chipping and storage operation in Lea Quarry at Wenlock Edge. She understood that a retrospective planning application was expected to be made shortly and that the National Trust intended to object due to the effects of the operation on the potential for landscape restoration following cessation of the quarrying. Other members shared these concerns and it was agreed that the Partnership would look closely at the planning application when the opportunity arose.

## Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership meeting 19.6.12 - Management Plan Workshop

### Policies 1-23 group

General agreement that policy detail would only need tweaking in most cases.

Considerable enthusiasm for amalgamating and simplifying policies wherever possible, however, to give greater sharpness and readability.

Suggested taking 23 policies down to around 15 (or even fewer !) with detail transferred out of policies into supporting explanation/justification in order not to lose valuable elements in doing so. For example Policies 12, 13 and 23 might usefully be combined into single policy on access and road management.

Equally, Policies 15,16 and 17 might be integrated into a single policy on woodland.

And Policies 18, 19, 20 and 21 could usefully be developed into a single policy on tranquillity/quiet enjoyment.

Each policy needs a title to make it easier for readers to immediately drill down to areas of interest.

Needs to be a statement right at the start of the Plan underlining the fact that the spirit/intention of each policy area should be regarded as more important than the specific policy wording – to try to overcome ‘clever’ developer or objector misinterpretation and ensure that policy explanations/justifications are given sufficient weight at all times.

Policy 4 on farm diversification needs to be widened to encompass all farm developments (ie. chicken sheds!)

Policy 8 could usefully now include reference to Design Guidance.

Needs to be strong reference to encouraging housing for local families/key workers.

Care must be taken to ensure the Plan isn’t seen as too prohibitive by land owners/managers in order to secure/increase their support for the AONB.

Would be a good idea to pull all Policies and Position Statements plus key Priorities (as well as AONB purposes) and into a simple, readable summary booklet/leaflet to assist very much wider readership and understanding (and encourage people to get copies of the full plan). This would really help to overcome a current ‘accessibility’ issue.

### Policies 24-43 group

Gaps:

Some reference to the importance of bottom up input into policy making for the AONB – articulating the importance of community views. This is relevant to the process of course but worth putting in the plan too.

Proposal to have different/no permitted development rights for agriculture in the AONB - or at least amend the system through which they are approved which does not include notification of the AONB or councillors.

Rainwater harvesting and water management – dealing with droughts, floods, unseasonal weather.

More on encouraging better understanding of the AONB in local communities – developing pride in the special landscapes.

Also more specific policy on educational work with children and young people – in schools and local communities.

Dark skies – a policy to preserve/enhance and promote our dark skies.

Strengthen reference to tourism which highlights particular iconic species in the Shropshire Hills eg red kites

Something on the need to maintain less well used rights of way (especially as budgets are cut) – OK focus on the promoted popular routes but all rights of way should be sustained – and less well used ones may need more input.

More reference to horse riders, alongside walkers and cyclists.

Amends:

Policy 28-36 on energy and renewables - need revisiting: Update with reference to technological advancements and ideally future trends. It may need a more integrated approach on the range of alternative energy technologies and their impacts. Keep the focus on the cumulative effects visually of wind turbines. Spell out better the trade off between efficiency of wind turbines and visual impacts. Consider the recent drive towards erecting turbines as a form of farm diversification and the impact of aggressive sales policies of energy companies – compared with community schemes. Include reference to micro hydro

Policy 42 and 43 on Wrekin Forest - not sure if we need extra policies on specific other areas such as Clee Hill, Wenlock Edge, Stiperstones/Corndon or whether some sort of amalgamated policy for addressing issues in special areas is better.

#### AONB Partnership Positions group

Position 1 on not changing the boundary should remain.

Position 2 on tourism – should discuss with Council – should be promoted to a policy!

Position 3 Cardingmill Valley as Conservation Area – check if still valid, but supported.

Position 4 – sustainable forms of farming – yes, but do we need to define ‘appropriate and sustainable’?

Position 5 environment-led regeneration. Need to be more specific?

Position 6 market price housing outside the AONB to generate finance for affordable within. Unrealistic, need to review or drop.

Position 7. Standards of sensitivity for affordable housing. Yes, keep. Should be a policy?

Position 8. Range of sustainability criteria to judge wind proposals. Yes but broaden to other forms of development too?

Position 9. No large windfarms within 5km of boundary. Query over 5km threshold? Need to review/ update. Other AONBs opposing things in ‘setting’ outside the AONB.

Position 10. Permitted development rights for microgeneration. Need to check current position and update as necessary.

Position 11. Transport - supported.