

Shropshire Council
Legal and Democratic Services
Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
SY2 6ND

Date: Monday, 10 November
2014

My Ref:

Your Ref:

Committee:
Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership

Date: Tuesday, 18 November 2014

Time: 9.30 am

Venue: Shropshire Room, Craven Arms Community Centre, Newington Way,
Craven Arms, Shropshire, SY7 9PS

You are requested to attend the above meeting.
The Agenda is attached

Claire Porter
Corporate Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)

Members of Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership

George Chancellor (Chairman)	Carol Griffiths
Tim Barker (Vice Chairman)	Dawn Griffiths
Alison Caffyn (Vice Chairman)	Geoff Grimes
Heather Kidd	Alan Jones
Cecilia Motley	Sue Jones
David Turner	Jenny Joy
Chris Turley	Jo Jury
Harriet Carty	Bill Klemperer
Edward Dugdale	Sue Lee
Fiona Pidduck	Marc Liebrecht
Elizabeth Thomas	Hazel MacDowell
James Williamson	Ms Penny Oliver
Dr Keith Bartlett	Vivienne Parry
Gillian Binks	Mr Andy Pugh
Tony Bostock	Ronald Repath
Sarah Bury	David C. Smith
Lee Chapman	Leo Smith
Veronica Cossons	Caroline Whiteman

Dave Cowell
Ian Dormer

Michael Whithouse

Your Committee Officer is:

Tim Ward Committee Officer

Tel: 01743 252739

Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk

AGENDA

1 Welcome and Apologies for Absence

To receive apologies for absence

2 Election of Chair, Vice Chairs and seats to the Management Board

3 Note of the last meeting (Pages 1 - 6)

The note of the meeting held on 1 July 2014 is attached for approval

4 AONB Partnership Update (Pages 7 - 12)

This paper provides members with a summary update of recent activity of the AONB Partnership staff team, and a staffing update.

5 LEADER 2015-20 Bid (Pages 13 - 20)

This paper provides an update on the AONB Partnership's bid to be a LEADER Local Action Group for the 2015-20 round of funding, and presents draft Terms of Reference for the new LEADER Approvals Panel and Appraisal Panel.

6 Proposed Amendments to the AONB Terms of Reference (Pages 21 - 36)

This paper provides proposed revisions to the AONB Partnership's Terms of Reference taking into account the new LEADER programme and other changes. These require endorsement from the Partnership before being approved formally by the two local authorities.

7 Development of Charitable Structure for Friends and a Small Grants Scheme (Pages 37 - 40)

This paper provides an updated proposal for development of a charitable structure for the Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB, as well as a proposed realignment of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) to become a new small grants scheme more focussed on conservation.

8 Planning Application for Housing and Tourism at New House Farm Church Stretton

A verbal update will be given

9 Dates of Next Meetings

To confirm dates of future meetings as: -

Tuesday 18 March 2015

Thursday 2 July 2015

Tuesday 17 November 2015



Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership
18 November 2014
9.30 am

Item
3
Public

MINUTES OF THE SHROPSHIRE HILLS AONB PARTNERSHIP MEETING HELD ON 1 JULY 2014
10.45 AM - 1.00 PM

Responsible Officer: Tim Ward
Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 252739

Present

Local Authorities

Shropshire Council

Cllr Tim Barker (Vice Chair)

Cllr Heather Kidd

Cllr David Turner

Telford & Wrekin Council

Cllr Chris Turley

Statutory/Voluntary Agencies & Individual members

Individual Member

Alison Caffyn (Vice Chair)

Individual Member

Harriet Carty

Individual Member

George Chancellor (Chair)

Individual Member

Edward Dugdale

Individual Member

Fiona Pidduck

Individual member

Elizabeth Thomas

Individual member

James Williamson

Town & Parish Council representative

Hilary Claytonsmith

British Horse Society

Ronald Repath

Caring for God's Acre

Gillian Binks

Country Land & Business Association (CLA)

Caroline Bedell

CPRE

Sarah Bury

Land, Life and Livelihoods

Joy Greenall

National Farmers Union

Helen Cork

David Mills

National Trust

Pete Carty

Ramblers Association

Sue Jones

Shropshire Geological Society

David C Smith

Shropshire Tourism

Geoff Grimes

Strettons Civic Society

Ian Dormor

Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Veronica Cossons

Observers/Officers

Shropshire Council	Tim Ward (Committee Officer)
	Ben Walker (Connecting Shropshire)
Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership staff team	Pete Banford (LEADER Co-ordinator)
	Phil Holden (AONB Partnership Manager)

1 Welcome and Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed Mrs Claytonsmith and Mrs Bedell to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies for absence were received from Tony Bostock (Severn Rivers Trust) Lee Chapman (Shropshire Hills Tourism), Jackie Doodson (Walford & North Shropshire College), Dawn Griffiths (Natural England), Deb Hughes (Shropshire Council), Jenny Joy (Butterfly Conservation), Marc Liebrecht (Institute of Chartered Foresters), Cllr Cecilia Motley (Shropshire Council), Phil Ridley (Walford & North Shropshire College) and Mike Williams (Butterfly Conservation).

2 Note of the last meeting

- 2.1 It was resolved that the note of the meeting held on 18 March 2014 be approved.

3 AONB Partnership Activity and Staffing Update

- 3.1 Members received the report of the AONB Partnership Manager with a summary update of recent activity of the AONB Partnership staff team and a staffing update.
- 3.2 The AONB Partnership Manager advised members that the Stiperstones & Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme was progressing well, and took them through the progress to date, outlining the many different activities that had taken place. Members were reminded that further details of the scheme were available on the Landscape Partnership Scheme website www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk. Harriet Carty said that it was an aspiration for Landscape Partnership Schemes that other organisations would focus their projects into that area to boost activity.
- 3.3 The AONB Partnership Manager advised the meeting that £22,703 had been allocated to nine projects this year through the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF). He informed members that additional funding had been received from the Jean Jackson Charitable Trust and the Millichope Foundation and that this funding, along with the Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB membership fees, was the only funding for the SDF as there was no Defra funding available as in previous years.
- 3.4 The AONB Partnership Manager informed members that funding of £216,000 had been secured from WREN for a four year project focussing on Freshwater Pearl Mussel recovery sites, and reduction of sediment in the river through work on runoff pathways and rural sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). He added that the project included a Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) funded research bid working with the University of Worcester to investigate resistance to *Phytophthora* disease in alders.

- 3.5 The AONB Partnership Manager advised that team members had undertaken a case study on the Long Mynd as part of the “Better Outcomes on Upland Commons” project which was led by the Foundation for Common Land. The report arising from this work would be published shortly.
- 3.6 The AONB Partnership Manager informed members that project planning for the proposed Clee Hill Heritage Project was well advanced but that the stage 1 application to the Heritage Lottery Fund had been delayed to September as there were some issues around whether Shropshire Council would take on the leases for some of the Heritage sites which were still to be resolved.
- 3.7 The AONB Partnership Manager advised that the Management Board had agreed to take more time to consider the options with regard to setting up a charitable body linked to the AONB. He went on to say that the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) had recently gained charitable status, though it wasn’t anticipated that the Association would be raising money nationally which would come to individual AONBs.
- 3.8 The AONB Partnership Manager reminded members that in a restructure as a result of budget reductions, the Planning and Landscape Officer post had been made redundant at the end of March and Mike Kelly had moved to the newly created core post of Natural Environment Officer. He informed the meeting that Clare Fildes would be leaving the team to take up a post with Shropshire Council’s Outdoor Recreation Partnerships Team. He added that a further staffing review had taken place as a result of this and it had been decided not to refill the post of Development Officer directly but to create a new post of Sustainable Tourism and Business Officer. This would result in a structure where a number of more senior officers within the team would have responsibility for developing new projects, accessing external funding and managing project staff.
- 3.9 The Chair paid tribute to the amount of work that the Development Officer had done during her time working for the AONB Partnership. This was echoed by all present.
- 3.10 Mrs Kidd expressed some concern as to whether the team would have capacity for development of larger projects. The AONB Partnership Manager said that several members of staff had been involved in applying for and gaining project grants. There was not an immediate need now for a very large scale project with the LPS under way, and over time staff could build their experience, with training if necessary. The Chairman commented that there was a strong network for advice, as well as events organised on fund-raising through the NAAONB.
- 3.11 The Chair thanked the AONB Partnership Manager for his report.

4 Connecting Shropshire Broadband Programme Update

- 4.1 Members received a presentation from the Marketing and Engagement Manager for Connecting Shropshire which updated them with progress made on the Connecting Shropshire Broadband Project.

- 4.2 Mrs Kidd commented that broadband speed achieved very much depended on the condition of the copper wire running to the premises, and that she knew of instances where neighbouring properties received very differing broadband speeds. She asked what work was being done to update the copper connections. The Marketing and Engagement Manager informed her that this issue was being investigated with BT.
- 4.3 Mrs Kidd asked how much of the AONB area would not be enabled through the project, as businesses in the area were very dependent on good broadband speeds to effectively carry out their business activities. The Marketing and Engagement Manager advised that businesses could contact the project office and would be advised whether their area was included in the project and would also be given advice on the other options available to them.
- 4.4 Mrs Kidd expressed concern that the number of mobile 'not spots' was actually increasing and that mobile phone signals seemed to be deteriorating. She added that young people increasingly relied on a good 3G signal. The Marketing and Engagement Manager agreed to pass on her concerns to the relevant officer.
- 4.5 Mrs Bury asked whether the distance from the fibre-enabled box had any implications. The Marketing and Engagement Manager advised that superfast speed should be available within one mile of the box, but premises further away may receive slower speeds.
- 4.6 Mr Williamson asked how upgrade decisions on exchanges and boxes were made. The Marketing and Engagement Manager advised that decisions were based on engineering logic and value for money assessments.
- 4.7 The Chairman enquired how communities could find out further information. The Marketing and Engagement Manager stated that most information was available on the Connecting Shropshire website <http://connectingshropshire.co.uk/> or alternatively by contacting the Connecting Shropshire office.
- 4.8 The Chairman thanked the Marketing and Engagement Manager for his presentation.

5 Planning Pressures and the AONB

- 5.1 Members had received a report with information on the outcome of applications on which the AONB Partnership had commented, and on patterns regarding recent planning applications affecting the AONB.
- 5.2 The AONB Partnership Manager commented that there had been a significant increase in the number of planning applications being submitted over the past 12 months. He added that there were growing concerns that the AONB designation was not being given due weight when applications were determined. This was disappointing given the work to get the designation adequately recognised in planning policy, and the strong weight given to the designation within the National Planning Policy Framework. With loss of the part-time Planning & Landscape Officer post, the team's way of working would be different, but currently the number of consultation responses being made had actually increased. A

proposal was being considered to submit a standard response on all consultations received highlighting the planning authorities' duties and relevant policies.

- 5.3 The Chair commented that the increase in applications was in large part due to a large number of speculative housing applications as a result of the lack of a 5 year land supply.
- 5.4 Cllr Kidd commented that there were many housing applications for 5 bedroom houses. She asked whether members should alert the AONB team to contentious planning applications, and the Chairman agreed that this would be helpful. Cllr Barker said that the pressure was not just from housing, but also agricultural buildings, infrastructure, etc.
- 5.5 Mr Turley commented that it was not only the AONB area which was experiencing the pressures the AONB Partnership Manager had referred to; similar pressures were being experienced across the Telford and Wrekin area.
- 5.6 Mrs Bedell commented that she believed that the publication of the SAMDev would bring an end to the pressures currently being experienced and asked whether it may be worth employing a temporary officer for 8 to 12 months to deal with the planning issues and ease the pressures on other staff.
- 5.7 Mrs Binks asked whether there was a role for the NAAONB. The AONB Partnership Manager advised that the Association did not have capacity to take on local casework. Ms Greenall observed that in some cases farmers were objecting to the scale of some poultry shed applications.
- 5.8 Mrs Claytonsmith informed the meeting that Church Stretton Town Council had suggested that the area should be designated a National Park which would give it the powers to become a planning authority. The Chairman commented that this was unlikely to happen for a number of reasons.
- 5.9 Mr Carty commented that the National Trust along with a number of other organisations were increasingly unhappy with the current planning system and suggested that organisations should write to Shropshire Council and central government expressing their concerns. Mrs Bury said that the Planning Committee members should be made more aware of the AONB Management Plan.
- 5.10 The Chairman commented that it may be useful if he and the AONB Partnership Manager had another meeting with the Planning Department to express the concerns raised.

6 LEADER 2015 - 2020

- 6.1 Members received an update report on the AONB Partnership's bid to be a LEADER Local Action Group (LAG) for the 2015–2020 round of funding.
- 6.2 The LEADER Co-ordinator informed members that the LEADER 2009–2013 evaluation report had been produced and was undergoing final editing prior to publication on the AONB website.

- 6.3 The LEADER Co-ordinator advised members that proposed boundaries for the LAGs for Shropshire were submitted to Defra in May in order for an indication of potential available funding to be given. He added that the AONB Partnership had submitted a proposed LEADER working area which covered the whole of the south of the county south of a line along the M54, A5 and A458, including some of the rural area of Telford & Wrekin.
- 6.4 The LEADER Co-ordinator informed members that Defra had advised the AONB Partnership that an indicative budget of between £1.89 million and £2.7 million would be available for this southern Shropshire area.
- 6.5 The LEADER Co-ordinator advised members that the proposed overall purpose for the 2015-20 LEADER programme in southern Shropshire was proposed to be "To improve the economic wellbeing of the area through sustainable development, drawing on the area's environmental and cultural assets and qualities". It was noted that the LEADER Local Development Strategy (LDS) would need to implement the six national LEADER priorities, and the following had been proposed as the way to convey and direct these in the most appropriate ways to the needs of the area:
- Increasing farm productivity in ways which enhance natural capital;
 - Developing sustainable micro and small enterprises and farm diversification;
 - Building rural tourism making the most of Shropshire's assets;
 - Improving rural services to support business growth and development;
 - Enhancing the natural, cultural and heritage attractions of the area;
 - Increasing woodland and forest productivity in ways which enhance natural capital.
- 6.6 The LEADER Co-ordinator advised members that the full draft LDS would be published by the end of July and would be circulated to Partnership members for their comments prior to submission to Defra by 5 September 2014.
- 6.7 The Chair thanked the LEADER Co-ordinator for his report and reminded members of the further opportunity to comment at the LEADER consultation event being held after the meeting.

7 Date of Next Meeting

- 7.1 Members were reminded that the next meeting of the AONB Partnership would be held on Tuesday 18 November 2014.



Committee and Date	Item
Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership	4
18 November 2014	

AONB PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITY UPDATE

Responsible Officer Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager

e-mail: phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01588 674088

Fax 01588 674099

Summary

This paper provides members with a summary update of recent activity of the AONB Partnership staff team, and a staffing update.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note the information provided and offer comments.

KEY AREAS OF PROGRESS IN 2014-15 (July 2014 - present)

Take and co-ordinate action to conserve and enhance natural beauty, to promote wellbeing, enjoyment and understanding and to further sustainable development.
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- **Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme**

Over the summer months the team has been focusing on seasonal activity around meadow creation and management with meadow demonstration and training events including scything and green hay spreading. There has been a lot of activity within our 'Open hills, old ways & commons' project to complete training on the LIDAR data and introduce the team of volunteers to archaeological fieldwork and recording, and the two new Community Wildlife Group volunteer surveyors have completed their first season of surveys. A number of engagement events have been completed for 'Down to Earth' in the Churchstoke area and community-based project ideas are starting to take shape. A programme of practical conservation task days to conserve and manage a number of hillfort and castle sites and on our six WREN-funded 'Rescuing rocks' sites has also started this autumn. Restoration work, being managed by Shropshire Council, has commenced at Snailbeach mine site during September 2014 and capital works continue to be negotiated with the landowners at Cothercott barytes mine and the 1784 Engine House in Pontesbury.

Since July the LPS team has organised and delivered 24 events and training activities - some examples include Open hills fieldwork week, Down to Earth heritage bus tour, Callow Hill dormouse survey, Castle Pulverbatch event and a series of 'Working with lime' taster days at Snailbeach mine site as part of the restoration work. See <http://www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk/>

- **LEADER** Local Development Strategy submitted to Defra on 5 September (see item 5).

- £22,703 allocated in **Sustainable Development Fund** grants to 9 projects (listed in paper for 1 July meeting) for 2014-15 with additional funding from Jean Jackson Charitable Trust and Millichope Foundation. Some projects from 2013-14 continuing.
- **Rivers.** Three year SITA funded River Clun Freshwater Pearl Mussel Project completed August 2014, along with additional Natural England funded activity. Capital work programme well supported by volunteer involvement to undertake riparian tree planting and river monitoring. Final project delivery elements included removal of a woody debris dam on the Clun SAC, installation of solar pasture pump on Clun SAC, hydraulic ram livestock watering system upper Clun, installation of sediment traps and upland re-wetting project supported by SWT. Meeting of Clun Catchment Partnership held, and input to Teme Partnership, Severn Uplands Partnership, Clun Steering Group, Clun Field Officers Group and Clun Nutrient Management Plan Group. Clun Himalayan Balsam strategy published.

Preparation under way for start in April 2015 of four year project (with £216k of WREN (landfill tax) funding) focussing on freshwater pearl mussel recovery sites, runoff pathways and a lower Clun rural SuDS project. Bid also made for a NERC funded research project working with the University of Worcester investigating resistance in alder to *Phytophthora* disease. £5k secured from Natural England innovation fund for small project modelling economics of on-farm environmental measures.

<http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/looking-after/projects/rivers/>

- **Shuttles** services for 2014 completed, including second season of Castle Connect service from Ludlow. The Long Mynd and Stiperstones bus carried 4,342 passengers in the 2014 season (very similar to last year but from slightly more operating days), and Castle Connect carried 2,512 passengers (up from 1,976 last year). Ticket and concessionary fare income, along with partner contributions, covered the cost of running and publicising the service, and similar funds are available to run the same services again next year. The Local Sustainable Transport Fund contributions remain crucial to the viability of the service.
- SDF funded **Buy Local** project has supported recruitment of new members and renewals of membership of the **Shropshire Hills Sustainable Business Scheme**, now at 77 members.
- **Walking with Offa co-operation project** Proposals being developed for second phase of project to include business engagement and volunteer development. Key themes will be heritage, wildlife and culture. <https://www.facebook.com/WalkingWithOffa>
- **Proposed Clee Hill Heritage Project.** Stage 1 application has had to be abandoned due to Shropshire Council decision not to take on leases for the heritage sites.
- **Promotion** activity. 9 press releases issued and continued output on social media. Joint Shropshire Hills 2014 Events programme and visitor guide well distributed. Website updated. AONB display at a number of events. 2015 Visitor Guide in preparation jointly with Shropshire Hills Tourism.

- **Advice and support** to a range of activities and projects, including Walkers are Welcome group, joint work with CPRE and Norbury School, Bishop's Castle Town Hall, Stiperstones Bioblitz event, Long Mynd Dark Skies initiative, Rectory Wood & Field.
- Proposed **Marches Uplands project** Discussions ongoing with Bulmer Foundation and Herefordshire Rural Hub on development of a project along the lines of the earlier Shropshire Hills Farming project.
- Meeting of **Wrekin Forest Partnership**, and survey prepared to inform a new Management Plan for the Wrekin Forest area.

Develop policy and strategy for the area through the AONB Management Plan, and influence the policies and strategies of others.

- Text version of approved **AONB Management Plan 2014-19** published on website.
- **Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan** Mid-term review of Strategy completed with Shropshire Hills and Ludlow Destination Development Partnership. <http://www.shropshirehillstourismpartnership.org.uk/>
- **Planning.** Submissions on six planning applications – residential development at Bentlawnt, 3 dwellings at Norbury, solar farms at Acton Scott and Whitton, poultry sheds at Hopton Heath, and further comments on Garregy Lwyd windfarm in Powys for the public inquiry. (see <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/looking-after/planning/planning-consultations/>).
- Meeting with new Natural England North Mercia Area Manager.
- Input to Ordinary Watercourse consents and other **non-planning casework**.

Develop the AONB Partnership as an inclusive and effective organisation.

- Input to **National Association for AONBs**, through frequent information sharing and consultations. <http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/>
- Updates discussed to Partnership Terms of Reference.
- Participation in team away day with Shropshire Council Outdoor Partnerships staff.
- Discussions continue about possible alternative **office premises**, with consultations now under way by Shropshire Council on reorganisation of services at Church Stretton which may make the current library building available to us.

Support the involvement of the community in the management of the AONB (also a cross-cutting theme in some items above).

- Support and advice for a wide range of **community projects**.
- New programme of **volunteer-led guided walks**, with support for six walk leaders.
- John Muir Award programme with **schools** (education/activity programme themed on wild places), currently working with Newcastle and Clun primary schools.
- **Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB** currently has 80 members (with some renewals pending). Friends social event held on 13 July, bus tour on LPS Rescuing Rocks &

Overgrown Relics project. Andrew Wood has been helping as a volunteer with member recruitment.

• Attendance at AONB Partnership led **events** (excluding Landscape Partnership Scheme):

2 Jul	Norbury School John Muir Award (JMA) at Stiperstones	30
3 Jul	Clee Hill School JMA, visit 3 to the Novers - Wildlife Day	28
7 Jul	Sustainable Business Scheme event with Bobby Britnell	6
7 Jul	Clee Hill School JMA, visit 4 to The Novers	24
9 Jul	Bishop's Castle School JMA Sharing event	60
10 Jul	Clee Hill School JMA Sharing event	60
11 Jul	Norbury School JMA Sharing Day at Stiperstones	65
13 Jul	Rescuing Rocks Bus Tour for Friends of Shropshire Hills AONB	12
14 Jul	AONB Talk to Hope Bowdler WI	45
2 Aug	Preparing for War - in the Air and on the Rails	14
3 Aug	Preparing for War - in the Air and on the Rails	19
20 Aug	Dormice and Archangels in the Hope Valley guided walk	cancelled
30 Aug	Close to the Edge at the Munslows guided walk	14
17 Sep	JMA Intro session with Clun Primary School	20
18 Sep	JMA Intro session with Newcastle Primary School	17
19 Sep	Parish Planning session with Norbury Primary School and CPRE	40
20 Sep	The Kaiser gate-crashed my 21 st guided walk	22
24 Sep	JMA visit 1 to Brynmawr with Clun Primary School	23
19 Oct	Bogs, Frogs, Bridges and Knolls guided walk	cancelled
TOTAL		499

STAFFING

As part of the team restructure set out in papers for the 1 July meeting, recruitment was undertaken for the new Sustainable Business Officer post, with interviews on 8 September. Nigel McDonald was appointed and is due to start on 17 November. Nigel worked for the team ten years ago, and has most recently been running his own company in the field of interpretation.

List of Background Papers

Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2014-19.

The full 2014-15 Team work programme can be made available to members on request.

Human Rights Act Appraisal

The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.

Environmental Appraisal

The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.

Risk Management Appraisal

Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.

Community / Consultations Appraisal

The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.

Appendices

None

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<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 18 November 2014	<u>Item</u> 5
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LEADER 2015-2020 BID

Responsible Officer Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager
e-mail: phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01588 674088 Fax 01588 674099

Summary

This paper provides an update on the AONB Partnership's bid to be a LEADER Local Action Group for the 2015-20 round of funding, and presents draft Terms of Reference for the new LEADER Approvals Panel and Appraisal Panel.

Background

The AONB Partnership submitted to Defra on 5 September a Local Development Strategy (LDS) for southern Shropshire as its bid to deliver the 2015 – 2020 LEADER programme (available at <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/looking-after/leader/>). This followed development work since 2013, including the discussions at the Partnership meeting and LEADER workshop of 1 July, and the circulation for comments of a full draft LDS in August.

It emerged after the submission date that a competing bid for the same southern Shropshire area had been made by the Intelligence Foundation CIC. This group had received a Defra transition grant for the eastern part of Shropshire not covered by the 2007-13 LEADER programme, and had been required in this contract to work with the other two transition organisations in Shropshire. Over the period from April to September, AONB Partnership staff put considerable time into collaborating with IFCIC, and took on board their views as far as possible. IFCIC however were insistent that they did not support the AONB Partnership being the LAG. This view was not compatible with the Partnership's agreed position to bid as a LAG, for the benefits from integration of functions, and in order both to minimise any potential conflicts between LEADER and AONB purposes, and to provide means to resolve such conflicts as may arise. Some sharing of draft documents and some joint work on consultation was carried out with IFCIC, but the basis of collaboration was strained. The Partnership maintained its consistent stance that it would bid to be a LAG, while IFCIC's role was not entirely clear, both to us and other stakeholders. At the stage of the AONB Partnership's draft LDS gaining the necessary LEP endorsement in mid-August, IFCIC indicated their support for our bid, but only after the bid deadline did we discover that they had in fact submitted a competing bid, using our LDS document as the template with their own modifications. After a considerable delay following our request, we were provided with a copy of this document, but it has still not to our knowledge been made publicly available.

The CLA made known to us that they had strong reservations about the AONB Partnership being the LAG for the new LEADER round, and had in fact put these in writing to Defra. They also expressed support for IFCIC's alternative LAG proposals, although at that stage it was not clear that a competing bid would be made. CLA have been content however to remain as members of the AONB Partnership listed in our bid.

The Defra decision on the bids is expected during November, though the original indication of a decision by early November has been put back. The competing bid has affected our ability to plan ahead, and the increased uncertainty does not aid delivery of Defra's aspirations for a quick start to the new programme. The way ahead clearly depends on the Defra's decision, and while a full acceptance or rejection of our bid would provide clarity one way or the other, a possible decision to accept aspects of our bid but with conditions or modifications may require us to consider options carefully. With significant operational implications for the team as well as the Partnership itself, the LEADER Development Group felt that the responsibility for deciding how to respond in the event of a conditional decision from Defra should rest finally with the Chair and the AONB Partnership Manager. This is in line with the Partnership's Terms of Reference.

The LEADER Co-ordinator has been following up enquiries from potential applicants (including referrals from Shropshire Council and NFU), and giving general advice with provisos about the confirmation of the programme. The Co-ordinator's contract is to be extended by three months, and contingency plans are being prepared.

Further work has been done on the detail of how the governance arrangements would work for LEADER within the AONB Partnership structure, and draft Terms of Reference for the LEADER Approvals Panel are provided at Appendix 1, and for the Appraisal Panel at Appendix 2. These should be read in conjunction with the revisions to the AONB Partnership Terms of Reference (item 6 on the agenda). If Defra approve the programme, it is proposed to proceed with advertising the application process for the Panels in order that the programme may start as soon as practicable. The application process will be publicised in ways that help ensure the appropriate representation geographically and in terms of interests relevant to the programme. It is proposed that the decisions on applications and appointments to the Approvals Panel be made by the Management Board. It may be more difficult than previously to get members for the Appraisal Panel as these are often professional staff and many organisations now have less capacity. It is likely that the recruitment of appraisers can be led by the AONB Partnership team.

The national LEADER Operating Manual is expected to be made available to LAGs early in the New Year. It is possible that the Terms of Reference for the Panels may need to be refined in the light of the content of this.

4. Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to:

- a) note the current position, and be aware of possible outcomes,
- b) approve, subject to any comments, the Approvals and Appraisals Panels Terms of Reference.

<p>List of Background Papers</p> <p>'Natural Growth' LEADER Local Development Strategy 2015-2020 submission, at http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/looking-after/leader/.</p>
<p>Human Rights Act Appraisal</p> <p>The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.</p>

Environmental Appraisal

The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.

Risk Management Appraisal

Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.

Community / Consultations Appraisal

The topics raised follow on from earlier discussions with Partnership members.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Draft Terms of Reference, LEADER Approvals Panel

Appendix 2 Draft Terms of Reference, LEADER Appraisal Panel

'NATURAL GROWTH' LEADER PROGRAMME, SOUTHERN SHROPSHIRE

LEADER APPROVALS PANEL TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Purpose and Remit

- 1.1. The Panel will be a sub-group of the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, which is formally the LEADER Local Action Group (LAG) as well as the body formed by the local authorities to co-ordinate management of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The primary role of the Panel will be to make decisions on the allocation of LEADER grants to ensure the best delivery of the approved Local Development Strategy, on behalf of the Partnership as the LAG.

2. In particular the Panel will:

- 2.1. Approve, reject and advise on applications for funding submitted in accordance with an approved process in an open and transparent manner, in order to deliver the Local Development Strategy.

(In line with the AONB Partnership Terms of Reference, the Partnership as the LAG may 'call in' certain decisions on funding applications, for example where there is a perceived conflict with AONB purposes).

3. Panel members will in addition:

- 3.1. Champion the LEADER programme, its aims and objectives, and encourage good partnership working between organisations and businesses to ensure co-ordination/ collaboration of efforts within the programme area.
- 3.2. Act as advocates for LEADER, and ensure integration of LEADER objectives with the purposes of the AONB where possible.
- 3.3. Help to ensure integration of LEADER with other funding streams managed by Shropshire Council, the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership and other organisations.

4. Membership

- 4.1. The membership of the Panel will be determined from an application process overseen by the AONB Partnership as the LAG.

- 4.2. The Panel will have 10 members comprising:

- a representative from Defra Rural Development Team (RPA)
- 3 other public sector representatives
- 3 private sector business representatives appropriate to the economic and employment priorities of the programme
- 3 other socio-economic representatives e.g. charitable organisations, Community Interest Companies, individuals

The AONB Partnership Manager will attend Panel meetings in an advisory capacity but will not have voting rights.

- 4.3. The membership of the Panel will be reviewed every two years or as determined by the AONB Partnership. Members are requested to give two months notice if possible if they wish to stand down from the Panel.

5. Operation

- 5.1. The Panel will meet as necessary but as a minimum four times a year to determine grant applications. During the first two years of the programme to ensure sufficient projects are approved to achieve the budget profile, the Panel may meet every two months. Project applicants, where requested, will attend the Approvals Panel meeting to provide a brief overview of their project and to answer questions from the Panel.
- 5.2. A Chair for the Panel meetings will be elected annually or as necessary by the Panel.
- 5.3. The Shropshire Hills AONB Team will provide administrative support. In the event of dispute, guidance from the AONB Partnership or its Chair may be sought. Agendas and any papers will be circulated by the Shropshire Hills AONB Team at least a week before meetings.
- 5.4. Updates on activity of the Panel will be given periodically to the AONB Partnership as the LEADER LAG. Minutes of the Panel will be made publicly available.

'NATURAL GROWTH' LEADER PROGRAMME, SOUTHERN SHROPSHIRE LEADER APPRAISAL PANEL TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Purpose and Remit

The Panel will be a sub-group of the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, which is formally the LEADER Local Action Group (LAG), as well as the body formed by the local authorities to fulfil their legal duty to co-ordinate management of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The primary role of the Panel will be to appraise projects that apply for a LEADER grant.

2. In particular the LEADER Appraisal Panel will:

- 2.1. Verify that each project proposal:
 - contributes to meeting the programme's objectives and outcomes
 - clearly requires LEADER funding for the project to proceed
 - represents good value for money
 - sets out appropriate management arrangements which will deliver results and monitor progress
 - has financial analysis on an activity basis which is consistent with the scale of outputs proposed
 - takes into account sound evidence of effective practice and establishes the plausibility of the proposed activity
 - uses comparative data (wherever relevant) to substantiate project planning assumptions
 - establishes credible and necessary links with other activities and its wider area of benefit.
- 2.2. Ensure that the appraisal is carried out in accordance with the requirements of DEFRA / RPA guidance and any changes that may arise.
- 2.3. Challenge proposals and seek additional details (not necessarily just accepting representations by applicants at their face value).
- 2.4. Press for analysis of information in such a way that it aids judgement about the quality and risks of the project proposition.
- 2.5. Make any of the following recommendations :
 - the project be recommended for approval
 - further information/clarification is required before recommending for approval/rejection
 - the submission be recommended for rejection
 - specify conditions for funding.

3. Membership

- 3.1. The Appraisal Panel will consist of representatives from the LAG and where appropriate from individuals with a specialist knowledge or expertise that relates directly to the application. A pool of Appraisers will be developed and selected to appraise projects in accordance with their knowledge, skills and expertise. A

representative of the accountable body, Shropshire Council, will be a member of the Panel.

- 3.2. Appointment to the Panel will be led by the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership team or otherwise as decided by the LAG.
- 3.3. The Panel may invite or co-opt other persons to its meetings as observers, consultants or advisors as needed.
- 3.4. The Panel may require project owners/developers to attend the meeting at which their submission is being considered to give a short presentation and answer queries raised by members.
- 3.5. The membership of the Panel will be reviewed every two years or as determined by the LAG. Members are requested to give two months notice if possible if they wish to stand down from the Panel.
- 3.6. The LAG will give consideration to remunerating appraisers or their employing organisations if this is felt necessary to fulfil the function effectively, in line with procedures of Defra and of Shropshire Council as accountable body.

4. Operation

- 4.1. The Panel will meet as necessary to appraise grant applications, and meet jointly with the Approvals Panel for steering purposes. Meetings are expected to take place on a quarterly basis.
- 4.2. The LEADER Co-ordinator will facilitate and call all meetings of the Panel.
- 4.3. A minimum of three trained appraisers drawn from the pool of appraisers and co-opted representative(s) from specialist areas of work, where necessary will appraise each project.
- 4.4. The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership team will provide administrative support, and will circulate agendas and any papers preferably at least two weeks before meetings.
- 4.5. Members with an interest in a particular project should declare this at the meeting. If a member of the Panel may benefit themselves in any way from the award of a grant, they may provide information and advice but may not participate in the appraisal on that application.
- 4.6. The LEADER Co-ordinator will complete the Appraisal Panel record for each project proposal considered. This will record recommendations arising from the meetings. The LEADER Co-ordinator will liaise with the projects to resolve the queries and submit a response which will be circulated to the Appraisal Panel.
- 4.7. Appraised projects with recommendations will then be presented to the Approval group.

5. Fulfilling of functions

- 5.1 The Panel will undertake its business with regard to:
 - the approved 'Natural Growth' LEADER Local Development Strategy for southern Shropshire
 - any appraisal criteria developed by the LAG
 - relevant guidance and grant conditions issued by Defra.

- 5.2 Members of the Panel unable to attend the meeting may contribute their views by sending in their appraisal forms which will be taken into account at the meeting.
- 5.3 The Panel will be governed by and report to the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership as the LAG, and updates on activity of the Panel will be given periodically to the Partnership.

DRAFT



<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 18 November 2014	<u>Item</u> 6
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PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO AONB PARTNERSHIP TERMS OF REFERENCE

Responsible Officer Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager
e-mail: phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01588 674088 Fax 01588 674099

1. Summary

This paper provides proposed revisions to the AONB Partnership's Terms of Reference taking into account the new LEADER programme and other changes. These require endorsement from the Partnership before being approved formally by the two local authorities.

2. Background

- 2.1. The AONB Partnership Terms of Reference are formally approved by the two local authorities, since the Partnership is formally a 'Joint Advisory Committee' to the two Councils rather than a constituted body in its own right. It is however appropriate for the Partnership itself first to endorse the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference.
- 2.2. The Partnership's Terms of Reference were last updated in 2009 to take into account the Partnership also becoming a LEADER Local Action Group (LAG). While the proposal for the new LEADER round is for the Partnership again to be a LAG, the differences of the new programme make some updating of the Terms of Reference necessary. These changes were discussed in draft form at the Management Board meeting on 11 September.
- 2.3. In addition to changes proposed in respect of LEADER, there are some changes to the Terms of Reference regarding AONB functions. These include reflecting the receipt of funding now from Defra rather than Natural England, and the addition of a paragraph formerly within the funding Memorandum of Agreement (which will expire in March) on the relationship with the host authority. There is also a change which will enable the Partnership to recruit directly the three Parish/Town Council seats (in the same way as the individual members seats are filled), rather than these being appointed by the Shropshire Association of Local Councils. This will help the AONB Partnership to develop further its direct relationship with Parish Councils in the area, and to draw on a larger potential applicant pool for these seats.
- 2.4. It has been suggested also that the appointments of Chair and Vice Chair and to the six elected seats on the Management Board be made on a two year basis rather than every year, and this change has been made to the Terms of Reference. This would provide a greater degree of certainty alongside reduced administration, while at the same time perhaps encouraging a healthy level of change and renewal at the time of reappointments, more than is the case with the current annual process.

- 2.5. The next step of securing formal approval of the revised Terms of Reference from the two local authorities depends on the outcome of the Defra decision on the Partnership's LEADER bid. If this is approved, the Terms of Reference can go forward for approval (probably waiting until release of the national LEADER Operating Manual to ensure compliance). If the LEADER bid is not approved, the sections relating to LEADER will need to be removed and the other revisions submitted for approval.

3. Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to endorse the Terms of Reference to go forward for approval by the two local authorities, subject to the Defra decision and guidance on LEADER.

List of Background Papers 'Natural Growth' LEADER Local Development Strategy 2015-2020 submission, at http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/looking-after/leader/ .
Human Rights Act Appraisal The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.
Environmental Appraisal The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.
Risk Management Appraisal Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.
Community / Consultations Appraisal The topics raised follow on from earlier discussions with Partnership members.
Appendices Appendix 1 Draft Amended Terms of Reference for Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership

Terms of Reference

Redraft at 17 Oct 2014



1. Introduction

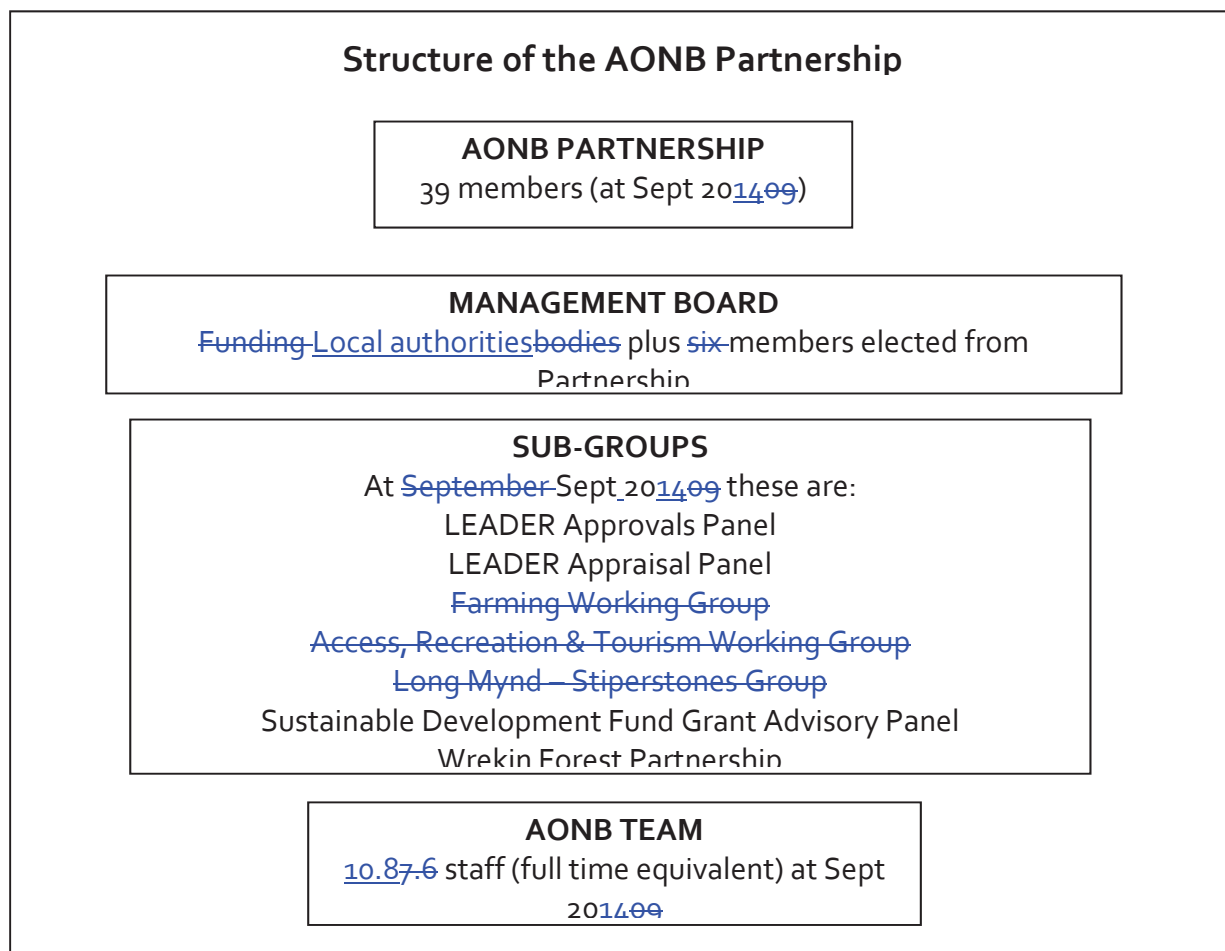
- 1.1. The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership is the body responsible for coordinating the management of the **Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**. From 2015~~08~~ to 2020~~13~~, the AONB Partnership will also formally be the Local Action Group (LAG) for **LEADER** in ~~southern~~^{the} Shropshire~~Hills~~, a delivery element of the Rural Development Programme for England, governed by EU regulations.
- 1.2. The purposes of the national AONB designation are as follows:
 - *The primary purpose of designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.*
 - *In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, and other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.*
 - *Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.* (Countryside Agency, 2001)
- 1.3. Local authorities have a **legal obligation under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000** to prepare and review a Management Plan for the AONB, and to 'act jointly' in doing this. The AONB Partnership is the body formed principally to fulfil this requirement, and includes a substantially wider membership in order to engage a range of relevant interests in the management of the area.
- 1.4. The Partnership has the **formal status of a 'Joint Advisory Committee'** under Section 102(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to the two local authorities of Shropshire Council and ~~the Borough of~~ Telford & Wrekin ~~Council~~. The Partnership has a number of sub-groups, and its work is **supported by a staff team**, employed by Shropshire Council as host authority and accountable body (see structure diagram). ~~Funding and management arrangements are set out in a Memorandum of Understanding between the main funders Defra Natural England and the local authorities.~~ The AONB Team operate under the title of the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, and the term 'Team' is used only where it is necessary to distinguish from the Joint Advisory Committee itself.
- 1.5. The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership plays three main **roles regarding the AONB**:
 - To **develop policy and strategy** for the area especially through the AONB Management Plan, and to influence the policies and strategies of others.

- To **take and support action** to conserve and enhance natural beauty, to promote enjoyment, understanding and wellbeing, and to further sustainable development. Key approaches include co-ordination, advice and funding.
- To **support the involvement of the community** in the management of the AONB, and foster community pride and capacity in relation to the Shropshire Hills.

In addition, the Partnership plays the role of **Local Action Group for the LEADER programme**. Some aspects of this are set out below, and also in greater detail in a [Memorandum of Agreement between the Partnership as a LAG and Shropshire Council as accountable body for the programme](#).

- 1.6. As set out in [Management Plan policy and](#) a position statement of February 2008 on the AONB boundary, the Partnership will **focus its work strongly on the designated AONB area**, ~~but it~~ will however work in a flexible and pragmatic way in relation to the AONB boundary, to secure the maximum benefit for the Shropshire Hills and where appropriate the surrounding area, including through operation of the LEADER programme (see map at Appendix 2). The LEADER programme operates over a wider area than the AONB and has a different remit, and both representation on the Partnership and the approach to promotion of the programme need to take this into account. However, there are significant **benefits from connections and integration between AONB and LEADER work**, and these will be sought as far as appropriate.
- 1.7. The Partnership seeks to **add value, and engage people** in support of the AONB's purposes. It will help to tackle fragmentation and improve local accountability. The AONB's remit is broad and complex, and the Partnership will strive to raise understanding and give a high priority to **clear communication and openness**. The different groups of the Partnership will operate in ways most effective to their function, and this may include site visits, presentations, workshops and other formats in addition to traditional meetings. The Partnership will seek to **develop the roles of partners**. (See Membership Accord at Appendix 3).

Structure of the AONB Partnership



2. Roles and Responsibilities of the AONB Partnership

Roles of the Partnership in which the **AONB Team** has an important supporting role:

- 2.1. The Partnership will lead the **review of the statutory Management Plan** for the AONB every five years. This Plan will be formally approved by each individual local authority, and will as required in the CRow Act 2000, '*formulate their policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it*'.
- 2.2. The Partnership will co-ordinate and facilitate the **implementation of the Management Plan**, and will **monitor progress** in achieving its objectives, policies and actions. Actions in support of the Management Plan are taken by a wide range of parties, but organisations belonging to the AONB Partnership have an especially important role.
- 2.3. The Partnership will seek to **champion the interests of and vision for the Shropshire Hills AONB**, and will promote a coherent and strong identity for the area.
- 2.4. **Planning.** The Partnership will seek to add value to the role of local authorities as planning authorities for the AONB, especially by **contributing to the development of planning policy and guidance, and by providing comments on significant development proposals and planning applications**. The AONB Partnership is not a statutory consultee in planning matters and can only provide selective input. The

planning authorities have a legal obligation to take into account the AONB designation in all relevant decisions. Detailed roles and procedures for the AONB Partnership's involvement in planning are set out in a formal Planning Protocol with the local authorities.

2.5. The Partnership will seek to **secure resources** required for effective management of the AONB, including external funds to assist in delivering management activities and projects.

2.6. The Partnership will **lead the implementation of projects** in support of the AONB Management Plan.

2.7. The Partnership through its LEADER Co-ordinator will guide applicants for LEADER grants through the application process, and if successful, the requirements of claims and reporting.

~~2.7.2.8.~~ The Partnership will **advise and support the activity of others** in support of the Management Plan, seeking to maximise co-ordination.

~~2.8.2.9.~~ The Partnership will seek to ensure that public bodies fulfil their **duty under S85 of the CRow Act** to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB in the exercise and performance of their functions.

~~2.9.2.10.~~ The Partnership will establish and maintain **effective working relationships** with relevant bodies at national, regional and local levels where these can contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Shropshire Hills AONB and can contribute to wider understanding and best practice in protected area management.

~~2.10.2.11.~~ The Partnership will **monitor condition of the AONB and progress** with Management Plan implementation, and will publish an annual review of progress.

~~2.11.2.12.~~ The Partnership will share best practice at a regional and national level, and contribute to the development of AONBs, especially by belonging to and playing an active part in the **West Midlands Protected Landscapes Forum and the National Association for AONBs**.

~~2.12.2.13.~~ The Partnership will link and co-ordinate appropriately with **local strategic partnerships, Local Joint Committees** and other local ~~structures~~ **partnerships**.

The Partnership will guide applicants for LEADER grants through the application process, and if successful, the requirements of claims and reporting.

~~2.13.2.14.~~ The Partnership will **evaluate** its activities and seek to **make continuous improvements**. ~~Including through developing In particular it will seek to develop~~ the knowledge and skills of its members.

~~(N.B. Priorities for activity of the AONB Team are established nationally by Natural England).~~

Roles specific to the AONB Partnership (the Joint Advisory Committee itself, also the LEADER Local Action Group):

~~2.14-2.15.~~ The Partnership will **receive relevant reports** to consider matters of strategy or policy or relating to implementation of the Management Plan, and give advice and recommendations to the responsible local authorities, statutory bodies and others on these matters.

~~2.15-2.16.~~ The Partnership will establish and operate **sub-groups and Working Groups** and delegated governance structures that it considers are necessary for the effective performance of its functions.

~~2.16-2.17.~~ The Partnership will play a **scrutiny role in relation to the AONB**, seeking to ensure that the **policy and practice of partners and other organisations** are aligned with the AONB's purposes and priorities of the Management Plan; and making constructive recommendations and proposals for improvement.

2.18. The Partnership, as the LEADER Local Action Group, will **oversee the delivery of the LEADER programme, agreeing and monitoring the strategic direction, through**~~g-~~~~to preparing and approving the Local Development Strategy,~~ receiving approvals reports and Business Plan Updates, and monitoring and reviewing overall progress against the Local Development Strategy, and where necessary scrutinising decisions.

~~2.17-2.19.~~ The Partnership will delegate authority to a LEADER Approvals Panel to make decisions on the award of LEADER grants in line with the approved Local Development Strategy. The Partnership as the LAG may on occasions (e.g. where potential conflict arises between a LEADER application and the LDS, or within the AONB, with AONB purposes) take back direct responsibility for decisions on the award of LEADER grants. This will be where possible by agreement between the Partnership Chair, the Approvals Panel Chair and the AONB Partnership Manager, but ultimately at the discretion of the Partnership Chair.

~~2.18-2.20.~~ The Partnership will be **part of a network of LEADER Local Action Groups** to share best practice and help contribute to the delivery of the LEADER approach within the Rural Development Programme for England.

~~2.19-2.21.~~ The Partnership will seek to **build the capacity** of those involved in LEADER so that as many sectors of the community as possible have the ability to participate in the delivery of the LEADER Strategy and to ensure the best legacy from the programme.

~~2.20-2.22.~~ The Partnership will undertake a **biennial review of its membership**, and will periodically review its governance to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

~~2.21-2.23.~~ All members of the Partnership will be requested to sign a **'Membership Accord'** setting out the basis on which they will be expected to contribute to the work of the Partnership (see Appendix 4).

3. Role of the host authority

3.1. The principal roles of the host authority are:

- to employ the Staff Unit on behalf of the Partnership and provide all necessary personnel support;
- to advise and, where appropriate, to act on behalf of the Partnership in respect of legal and financial matters;
- to provide administrative and other support services which assist in the effective operation and functioning of the Partnership (e.g. IT and payroll, accountancy services);
- to provide technical advice and support to the Partnership to ensure that it complies with any legal requirements (e.g. staff development, health and safety, managing premises, etc).

3.2. The Staff Unit will work for the whole Partnership and have its own identity. Activities will be delivered under the identity of the Partnership, rather than that of the Host Authority or individual Parties. A degree of independence for the Partnership from the Host Authority will be necessary, particularly when the Partnership is consulted by or is required to make comments and provide advice on schemes and activities of its constituent Local Authorities.

3.3. An AONB Manager will be employed at a senior level to act as a respected advocate for, and champion of the AONB. The AONB Manager will be given authority to work with key partners at a senior level, for example Chief Executives, lead Planning Officers, key committees and Local Authority members. The line management of the AONB Manager for day to day purposes will be through the Host Authority.

4. Membership

4.1 Membership of the Partnership will be as follows:

- Four elected Members appointed by Shropshire Council (representatives should be relevant portfolio holders or local ward members);
- One elected member appointed by ~~the Borough of~~ Telford and Wrekin Council (the representative should be a relevant portfolio holder or local ward member);
- Three elected members of parish or town councils within or partly within the AONB ~~(nominated by the Shropshire Association of Local Councils);~~
- A maximum of seven representatives of other statutory bodies (this category may include the Local Enterprise Partnership);
- A maximum of twenty representatives appointed by non-statutory or voluntary organisations;
- A maximum of seven individual members.
- ~~The All members of the~~ LEADER Approvals Panel ~~Chair~~ will be co-opted as ~~a~~ members of the Partnership, if not already ~~one members~~ through the categories above.

All of the above will be full voting members.

N.B. The membership of a LEADER Action Group must be a local public-private partnership with at least 50% membership from the non-Public Sector (i.e. private plus voluntary/community sectors).

- 4.2 The Partnership will review its membership not less than every two years. This will include reappointment to individual member seats, and may include further review as the Partnership deems necessary. ~~The Partnership will operate a~~ An application process will be operated for the individual member seats and Parish/Town Council seats, and where necessary for non-statutory or voluntary organisations. Appointment of applicants to seats will be made by the full Partnership, based on the following criteria:

Individual and Parish/Town Council members

- resident in the AONB or a nearby town or countryside;
- proven commitment in an area of interest relevant to the AONB;
- ability to make a valuable contribution to the Partnership, including its roles as a LEADER LAG.

Non-statutory and voluntary bodies

- a clear overlap in remit with that of the AONB;
- a significant material or operational interest within the AONB and/or LEADER area;
- representative with ability to make a valuable contribution to the Partnership.

- 4.3 Statutory and non-statutory bodies on the Partnership will appoint a named representative to attend as their member, and may identify a named 'deputy' who will also receive papers and may attend meetings in place of the representative without prior arrangement. A representative other than the named member or deputy may attend a meeting in their place by agreement with the Chair.

- 4.4 The Rules of Procedure of the Partnership are set out in Appendix 1.

5. Management Board

The general remit of the Management Board will be:

- 5.1. **On behalf of the Partnership to oversee the work of the AONB Team and the finances of the AONB Partnership, and to make representations and recommendations and give advice on behalf of the Partnership where appropriate.**

In particular the Management Board will:

- 5.2. **Monitor progress** with the annual work programme for the AONB Team staff, ~~and with key performance indicators~~ including the LEADER programme.
- 5.3. **Provide guidance** to the AONB Partnership Manager and make recommendations to improve the effectiveness and performance of the AONB Team.
- 5.4. **Scrutinise budgets and management accounts** of the AONB Partnership, including the LEADER programme, and advise and recommend to the host authority (Shropshire Council) and funding partners on these matters.

- 5.5. **Approve or endorse significant decisions** on the deployment of the Partnership's staff and financial resources.
- 5.6. Comment on and develop initial **drafts of reports and policy statements**.
- 5.7. **Take decisions or agree positions** on behalf of the AONB Partnership as delegated.
- 5.8. **Foster understanding** of and support for the AONB Partnership and its activities among key organisations and the wider community.
- 5.9. The Management Board may participate in **recruitment** and appointment of staff of the AONB Team on behalf of the Partnership to the extent that this is consistent with Shropshire Council's procedures.
- 5.10. **Membership** of the Management Board will be:
- The Chair and two Vice-Chairs of the Partnership (one Vice chair will be a Shropshire Council member - see Rules of Procedure para 2.1 at Appendix 1);
 - The elected member representing the ~~Borough of~~ Telford & Wrekin Council (if not one of the Vice Chairs);
 - ~~A representative of Natural England;~~
 - Six additional Partnership members elected ~~biennially~~annually by the Partnership.
 - A local authority officer lead representative from ~~both~~ Shropshire Council ~~and the Borough of Telford & Wrekin Council~~.
- 5.11. The Management Board may **co-opt** members to these seats if they are not filled by an election process.
- ~~5.11-5.12.~~ The Management Board may assign members to certain **portfolio topics** to provide additional support to the Chair and AONB Partnership Manager. The scope and responsibilities for such roles will be defined in writing.

APPROVAL OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

Signed

Date

Position

on behalf of SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

Signed

Date

Position

Appendix 1 Rules of Procedure of the Partnership.

All parties recognise that the Partnership is likely to be most effective if its recommendations can be reached by consensus rather than by confrontation, but if it is necessary to regulate any debate then the Chairman shall have the power to order that the Council Procedure Rules Sub-Committees under the Constitution of Shropshire Council shall apply.

1. Meetings

1.1. The Partnership will normally meet three times per year. A site-based meeting or tour will normally be held annually. The Chair of the Partnership may call additional meetings or cancel pre-arranged meetings if it is felt that there is either urgent business which needs to be discussed or there is insufficient business to justify a meeting being held.

1.2. The Management Board will normally meet three times per year, with additional meetings being called (or cancelled) as necessary by the Chair.

1.3. Other sub-groups or Working Groups established by the Partnership will meet as determined by those groups.

2. Chair and Vice Chairs

2.1. The Partnership will elect its own Chair on an ~~biennial~~^{annual} basis, or as necessary. The Chair will be a non-local authority member. Both Vice Chair posts will be elected ~~biennially~~^{annually} by the Partnership, or as necessary. One Vice Chair post will be an elected member of Shropshire Council and the other Vice Chair post will be open to any Partnership member. Nominations will be invited in advance of the meeting at which the elections take place.

2.2. The Chair of the Partnership will also be the Chair of the Management Board.

2.3 In the event of neither the Chair or Vice Chair being present at a meeting of the Partnership, a chair for the meeting will be elected by the Partnership members present.

2.4 The expectations of Chair and Vice Chair roles are set out in Role Descriptions and Person Specifications, which will be reviewed as necessary by the Partnership.

3. Local authority officers

3.1 A local authority member may be accompanied to a Partnership meeting by one officer, but an officer may still attend if the member is absent.

3.2 If a member wishes to be accompanied to a Partnership meeting by more than one officer, or if more than one officer wishes to attend such a meeting when the member is absent, this should be with the prior agreement of the Chair.

3.3 Local authority officers attending Partnership meetings do not have the right to vote on issues being decided by the Partnership, except when the member representative of the local authority is not in attendance and he/she has delegated authority to the officer to vote on his/her behalf. In such cases, one local authority officer, with the prior agreement of the Chair, may vote on behalf of the member.

4. Declaration of interests

4.1 Members of the Partnership and any of its sub-groups shall declare an interest in a meeting where a matter discussed may affect:

- their own wellbeing or financial position, or
- the wellbeing or financial position of a family member, close associate, or

- the financial position of an employer/business of the member, their family member or close associate, or
- the financial position of a charitable body, association or other group with which they are closely associated.

(The meaning of 'wellbeing', 'financial position', 'family member' and 'close associate' will be as defined in the Standards for England Guidance on the Code of Conduct).

If the group is making a material decision in relation to such a declared interest (e.g. approval of a grant) the member must leave the meeting for discussion of that item and the decision, but may make a brief statement of information before leaving. If the Chair decides that the discussion or decision is more general and not materially affecting the interest declared, then the member is entitled to remain and participate in the discussion, but not vote.

4.2 Members who have other decision making or regulatory roles (e.g. planning, licensing) relating to a matter discussed shall declare such an interest. They may participate in the discussion and voting but should, if they intend to take part in the regulatory decision, make clear that their contribution is based on the facts available at the time, and that they may therefore decide to vote in a different way in the decision making body.

N.B. The LEADER Approvals and Appraisals Panels come under a more detailed declaration of interest protocol outlined in the LEADER Business Plan.

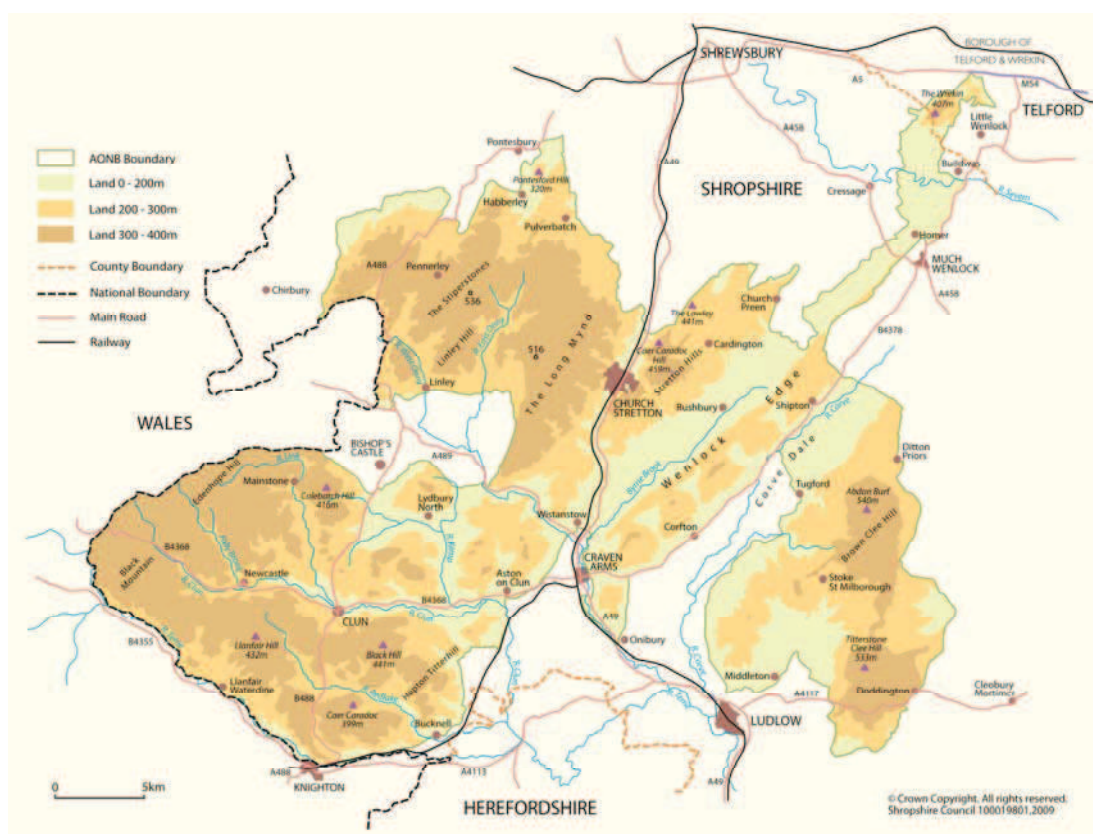
5. Quorum for LEADER grant decision-making

If the Partnership is making decisions on award of LEADER grants when 'called in', the quorum shall be no less than 15 members, and balanced such that public sector representation does not exceed 50%.

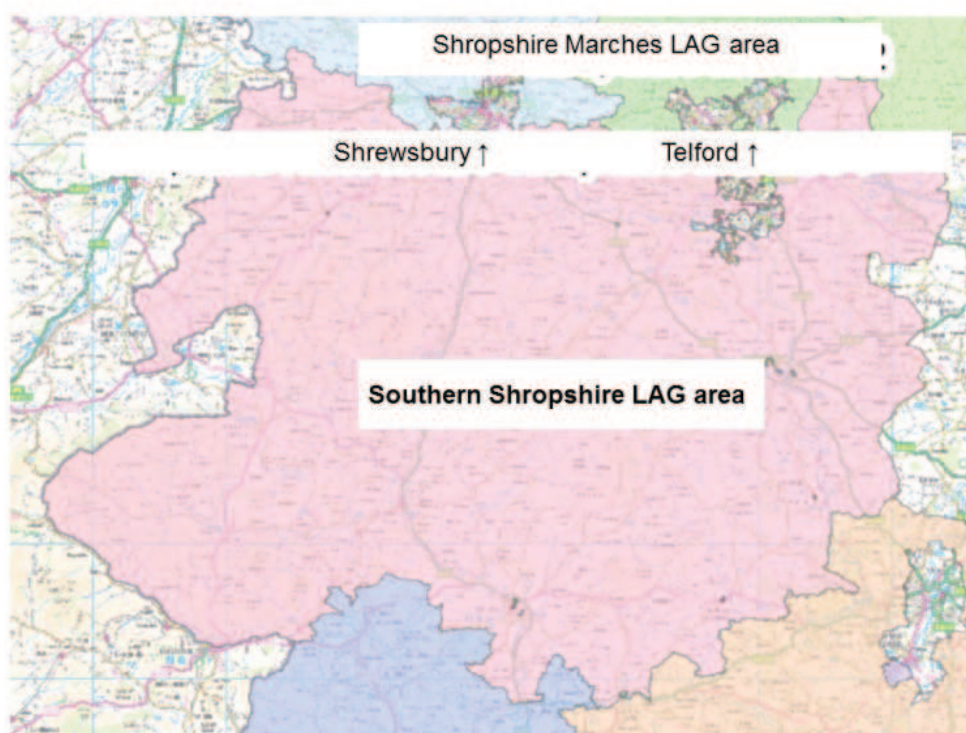
56. Withdrawal of membership

56.1 In the event of conduct or alleged conduct of a member which is not consistent with the Partnership's Terms of Reference, every effort will be made to resolve the issue by informal negotiation. The Partnership as a body may however in last resort resolve to withdraw membership in a serious case after due consideration, or, in the case of an organisation member, resolve to ask the appointing body organisation to provide a different representative.

Appendix 2 Maps of the Shropshire Hills AONB and LEADER area



AONB



Leader area

Appendix 3 Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Membership Accord

The AONB Partnership, through the AONB Team, undertakes to:

- keep partners informed of the work of the Partnership, and of how money is spent.
- seek to foster relationships and common understanding with partners through personal contact as well as through written communication and organised meetings.
- ensure that there is a need and clear purpose for meetings, and ensure that good organisation prevents people being inconvenienced.
- prepare for meetings with agendas and supporting information to make the best use of everyone's time, and circulate these at least a week in advance for formal meetings.
- promptly circulate appropriate and accurate minutes or notes of meetings.
- outline as clearly as possible what we hope to achieve through particular areas of work, and seek to meet the realistic expectations which others have of us.
- acknowledge the support that people give, either through their professional or personal time, or through their knowledge, skills and efforts.
- provide appropriate support, recognition and training to volunteers who work for us or on our behalf.
- make grant claims to funders according to the timescales and conditions they require.
- provide training to Partnership members appropriate to their needs and role.

The Partnership in addition undertakes to meet the following customer care quality standards:

- Staff will be courteous and helpful. Where we are unable to assist anyone making enquiries or to offer a grant, we will explain why and seek to suggest alternative sources of assistance.
- We will take account of the abilities of people we deal with, and adapt our services as reasonably practicable to allow for this.
- We will respond to telephone, letter, email or fax enquiries within ten days.
- We will assess and pay grants as quickly as possible. Any forms will be clear and as simple as possible. Grant conditions will be as simple as required.
- We will pay invoices promptly and give priority to following up enquiries from creditors.

Members of the Partnership undertake to:

- promote the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the AONB and champion the vision set out in the AONB Management Plan and LEADER Strategy;
- contribute knowledge, expertise and experience to the work of the Partnership;
- support and play a full and active part in the work of the Partnership in fulfilling its roles and responsibilities as set out in the Terms of Reference;
- assist the Partnership in achieving an independent and apolitical profile in the performance of its functions;
- attend Partnership meetings whenever possible and, if no longer able to attend meetings on a regular basis, to step down from the Partnership or to seek another representative from their organisation.
- read and consider Partnership papers in advance of meetings;
- recognise the validity of other members' views and accept joint responsibility for the decisions of the Partnership once made;

Organisations belonging to the Partnership undertake in addition, to:

- keep the Partnership informed of their work relevant to the AONB.
- be prepared to adjust their activities and work with others to improve co-ordination of activity in the AONB.

- report back to their organisation on the work of the Partnership, and bring to the Partnership or AONB Team appropriate and relevant updates and information.



<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 18 November 2014	<u>Item</u> 7
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DEVELOPMENT OF CHARITABLE STRUCTURE FOR FRIENDS AND SMALL GRANT SCHEME

Responsible Officer Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager
e-mail: phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01588 674088 Fax 01588 674099

1. Summary

This paper provides an updated proposal for development of a charitable structure for the Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB, as well as a proposed realignment of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) to become a new small grants scheme more focussed on conservation.

2. Background

- 2.1. The AONB Partnership has been looking for some time at options for developing the Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB group including charitable status. A first attempt at this highlighted the potential risks of a fully independent group seeking to distance itself from the AONB Partnership and take on broader lobbying roles, which was never the intention for the Friends. The more recent proposal for a CIO arguably would have put too many functions within it, and consideration of some specialist advice obtained again raised issues about the risks associated with a group very independent from the Partnership. The potential benefits of obtaining charitable status are however still remain, and the essence of a new proposal has recently emerged.
- 2.2. In addition to the Friends aspects, the team has been having discussions about the future of the Sustainable Development Fund. SDF was started in 2005 as an initiative of the Defra Minister of the time. It was deliberately broad in its scope, and enabled us to fund projects showing social and economic as well as environmental benefits, but ideally all three together. At its peak, we were giving grants totalling £100k per year, all with government funding. As this has gradually reduced to zero within SDF, we have been able to keep the fund going with the membership subs from Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB and through the generous support of the Millichope Foundation and Jean Jackson Trust. We would very much like to continue and develop our sources of income, including by increasing Friends membership numbers, and if possible by adding strands of 'visitor giving' and charitable donations (perhaps through a single structure as a development of the Friends).
- 2.3. Our research on the motivation of both Friends and visitors as donors has led us to consider whether we should look at realigning the grant scheme more closely with the primary conservation aims of the AONB (including landscape, along with biodiversity, heritage etc, and education and awareness-raising activities related to these). This would seem to have the directness of connection which would most elicit support from donors. It would mean tightening the criteria/ scope for funding, and consequently

dropping the title 'Sustainable Development Fund'. Additional factors are that the criteria of SDF are relatively wide for the smaller amounts of money now available, the fact that we don't have a small grants scheme specifically for conservation projects (other than through the Landscape Partnership Scheme and other periodic projects such as on rivers).

- 2.4. The proposal to refocus (and rename) SDF has been discussed with the representatives of the Fund's two main charitable trust donors, and with the Sustainable Development Panel. All were supportive of the proposal, with some useful suggestions including retaining conservation-related education work, and ensuring a strong element of public benefit for all grants, especially where these may be to private landowners.
- 2.5. Proposal. The strands which the new proposal seeks to bring together are:
 - Friends – need for charitable status for Gift Aid, separateness from Council, etc,
 - Proposed refocus of SDF more towards AONB primary conservation purpose (partly to increase attractiveness to donors),
 - Aspiration for a Shropshire Hills 'visitor giving' scheme, ideally linked to the above (in order both to build critical mass and avoid multiple mechanisms).
- 2.6. The thought is to create a charity potentially called 'Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund', which would bring in money through:
 - the Friends scheme, which keeps its current branding, but the payee for subs becomes the Conservation Fund instead of Shropshire Council,
 - visitor giving, by whatever means we choose to develop,
 - potentially from business fundraising and other charitable trusts.
- 2.7. The role of volunteer trustees for the Fund would be principally to help raise money, and in turn to make the decisions about the distribution of funds in grants. The trustees/committee would not however take on roles to represent or lead the Friends group as an organisation, as the group is not structured or intended for this purpose. The title of the fund, along with wording in the constitution, would help to ensure that the group did not in the future diverge unhelpfully from AONB purposes, but can also be sufficiently independent from the AONB Partnership to satisfy the Charities Commission. The Fund also can be the title under which the grants are given out, replacing SDF. (If 'Fund' is not acceptable as the title for a charity, it could be 'Trust' at the end instead, which would give its money out through the Fund).
- 2.8. Further work will help to establish whether such an arrangement would best be pursued through a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) or simply a charitable trust. The principal difference is that the incorporation within a CIO provides for limited liability on trustees, but under the simple model of drawing in charitable donations and distributing grants, the trustees may not be exposed to any risk and so this may not be necessary.

3. Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to comment on the revised proposal for a charitable structure to develop the Friends, visitor giving and realigning SDF to a small conservation grants scheme.

List of Background Papers
None
Human Rights Act Appraisal
The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.
Environmental Appraisal
The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.
Risk Management Appraisal
Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.
Community / Consultations Appraisal
The topics raised follow on from earlier discussions with Partnership members.
Appendices
none

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