



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

Date: Monday, 9 November
2015

**Committee:
Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership**

Date: Tuesday, 17 November 2015

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)	Veronica Cossons
James Williamson (Vice Chairman)	Dave Cowell
Heather Kidd	Ian Dormor
Cecilia Motley	Carol Griffiths
Robert Tindall	Geoff Grimes
David Turner	Alan Jones
Chris Turley	Sue Jones
Mr Andy Boddington	Jenny Joy
Alison Caffyn	Bill Klemperer
Dr David Gibbon	Sue Lee
Mr John Pritchard	Marc Liebrecht
Mr John Woolmer	Hazel MacDowell
Ms Hilary Claytonsmith	Mr David Mills
Mr Clive Leworthy	Mr Andy Pugh
Mr John Tucker	Ronald Repath
Caroline Bedell	David C. Smith
Gillian Binks	Leo Smith
Sarah Bury	Ms Donna Tavenor
Lee Chapman	Michael Whithouse

Your Committee Officer is:

Tim Ward Committee Officer

Tel: 01743 257713

Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk

AGENDA

1 Welcome and Apologies for Absence

To receive apologies for absence

2 Minutes of the last meeting (Pages 1 - 6)

To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 25 June 2015 as a true record

3 Proposed Amendments to the Terms of Reference (Pages 7 - 20)

This paper recommends an update of the AONB Partnership's Terms of Reference following loss of the LEADER programme, along with a couple of particular proposed changes regarding number of seats and term for appointments to positions of responsibility.

4 Election of Chair, Vice Chairs and Seats to the Management Board

5 AONB Partnership Activity Update (Pages 21 - 26)

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

6 Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund (Pages 27 - 28)

This paper updates members with progress to establish the Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

7 River Clun Recovery Project

To receive a presentation on the River Clun Recovery Project

8 Update on Tourism Work (Pages 29 - 30)

This paper updates members with the range of AONB Partnership activity on sustainable tourism, and changes to the organisation of tourism structures within the county.

9 Proposed Uplands Commons Project (Pages 31 - 32)

This paper outlines to members the proposed national project on upland commons, involving the Shropshire Hills AONB along with four English National Parks.

10 Dates of Next Meetings

To agree dates for future meetings



Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership

17 November 2015

9.30 am

Item

2

Public

MINUTES OF THE SHROPSHIRE HILLS AONB PARTNERSHIP MEETING HELD ON 25 JUNE 2015 9.30 - 11.15 AM AT SNAILBEACH VILLAGE HALL

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

Present

Local Authorities

Shropshire Council

Cllr Tim Barker (Vice Chair)
Cllr Cecilia Motley
Cllr David Turner

Telford & Wrekin Council

Cllr Chris Turley

Statutory/Voluntary Agencies & Individual members

Individual Member	Alison Caffyn
Individual Member	George Chancellor (Chair)
Individual member	James Williamson (Vice-Chair)
Town & Parish Council representative	Keith Bartlett
British Horse Society	Ronald Repath
Butterfly Conservation	Rhona Goddard
Caring for God's Acre	Gill Binks
DEFRA/RPA	Jo Jury
Forestry Commission	Donna Tavernor
Land Life & Livelihoods	Joy Greenall
Longmynd & District Bridleways Association	Sue Lee
Natural England	Hazel McDowall
Ramblers Association	Sue Jones
Shropshire Geological Society	David C Smith
Strettons Civic Society	Ian Dormor
Shropshire Wildlife Trust	Veronica Cossons

Observers/Officers

Shropshire Council

Andy Evans (Head of Economic Growth & Prosperity)
Tim Ward (Committee Officer)

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Staff
Team

Phil Holden (AONB Partnership Manager)
Alison Jones (Clun Catchment Officer)

1 Welcome and Apologies for Absence

1.1 The Chair welcomed Jo Jury (DEFRA), Rhona Goddard (Butterfly Conservation), Donna Tavernor (Forestry Commission), Andy Evans (Head of Economic Growth & Prosperity, Shropshire Council) and Alison Jones (Clun Catchment Officer AONB Partnership) to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies for absence were received from:

Caroline Bedell (CLA), Pete Carty (National Trust), Sarah Bury (CPRE), Harriet Carty (Individual Member), Lee Chapman (South Shropshire Tourism), Hilary Claytonsmith (Town/Parish Council Representative), Carol Griffiths (NFU), Geoff Grimes (Shropshire Tourism), Gill Hamer (Marches LEP), Deb Hughes (Shropshire Council), Cllr. Heather Kidd (Shropshire Council), Bill Klemperer (English Heritage), Marc Liebrecht (ICF), Fiona Pidduck (Individual Member), Leo Smith (Upper Onny Wildlife Group / Shropshire Ornithological Society), Elizabeth Thomas (Individual Member).

2 Note of the last meeting

2.1 The note of the last meeting held on 17 March 2015 had been circulated.

2.2 RESOLVED:-

That the note of the last meeting be confirmed as a correct record.

3 AONB Partnership Update

3.1 Members received the report of the AONB Partnership Manager which provided an update of recent activity.

3.2 The AONB Partnership Manager advised members that 14 grants totalling £25,300 had been awarded from the Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund, and drew their attention to the appendix to the report which listed the projects. He reminded the meeting that funding for the scheme was made up from the subscriptions to the Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB, together with contributions from the Jean Jackson Charitable Trust and the Millichope Foundation.

3.3 The AONB Partnership Manager advised members that a consultation was in progress regarding changes to streamline the administration of the Sustainable Business Scheme, to include a two year membership and pledge rather than annual renewal.

3.4 The AONB Partnership Manager informed members that the Partnership Team were currently working with partners to develop potential new projects including:

- Involvement in feasibility work for a landscape-scale conservation project focused on the Long Mynd and Stiperstones area.
- Input into proposals by the Foundation for Common Land for a possible national project on upland commons, with activity in the Shropshire Hills AONB and four other areas.
- Discussions with Woodland Trust and other partners about the possible development of new woodland project work, e.g. supporting woodland social enterprises, and encouraging management of PAWS (Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites).

3.5 The AONB Partnership Manager advised the meeting that further discussions had taken place regarding the possible relocation of the office to Church Stretton. Shropshire Council was continuing with proposals for relocating the library, though this was now subject to a legal challenge. In the event of the AONB Partnership team being able to relocate to the library premises, the team were also developing a proposal for the AONB Partnership to manage the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) in the same building, on a commissioned basis with financial support from Shropshire Council, and using volunteers to assist in staffing the facility. Dr Dormor enquired whether the VIC would occupy the same area as currently. The AONB Partnership Manager said that the current space would be used, and commented that an advantage of this proposal was that the VIC would be able to operate in situ with minimal set-up costs, rather than alternatives of relocating the VIC.

4 LEADER 2015-20

- 4.1 Members received a report which outlined the proposed changes in governance arrangements for the 2015-20 Natural Growth LEADER programme.
- 4.2 The Chair commented that the proposals comprised a fundamental change in the governance of the LEADER programme, and asked the AONB Partnership Manager to give a little more background.
- 4.3 The AONB Partnership Manager briefly outlined discussions held during the transition year in 2014, which after much deliberation, had led to the bid submitted in September 2014 based on the benefits of integrating AONB and LEADER functions, and with the Partnership again acting as the LEADER Local Action Group (LAG). This bid had received formal support from Shropshire Council as accountable body and from the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). In November 2014 a letter had been received from Defra indicating that the bid had been successful, subject to confirmation by contract. A competing bid for the area based on the AONB Partnership not being the LAG had been rejected.
- 4.4 The AONB Partnership Manager went on to say that at the end of April 2015, local Defra officers had first raised issues regarding proposed governance arrangements for the southern Shropshire programme, and indicating that key aspects of the proposals as set out in the bid would no longer be acceptable. For example, the AONB Partnership was now considered to be an 'interest group', and since the grant decision making panel could not comprise of more than 49% from any single interest group, that the proposed structure where members of the Approvals Panel would become members of the AONB Partnership would not now conform to this rule. While Defra would allow an option where the Partnership remained as the LAG, the Panel must be independent of it. Partnership representatives felt that in this scenario the Partnership would not be truly acting as a LAG in the manner intended, and would lay itself open to risk from decisions made in its name over which it had little control. Further, Defra's guidance that the AONB Partnership's conservation remit could now be considered a 'conflict of interest' made the Partnership's role potentially much more difficult, especially since clear written guidance on this topic was not forthcoming. The second option, to separate the governance of the LEADER and AONB functions and make the new Panel into the LAG was therefore, with reluctance, favoured. The subsequent decision of Shropshire Council to take the LEADER Programme Manager in-house had not been expected.
- 4.5 Ms Jury advised the meeting that the LDS submission had been robust and good, but a recent interpretation around conflicts of interest had required changes. There was an issue of perception and a need for consistency over the whole of the country. She added that other Local Action Groups were having to address the same issues.
- 4.6 The Chair then asked the Head of Economic Growth and Prosperity to inform the Partnership about the Council's proposed change to the staffing arrangements. The Head of Economic Growth and Prosperity said that the AONB's Partnership work and role in securing the LEADER programme was recognised, but since the recent guidance from Defra, the Council felt that the LEADER programme sat better within Shropshire Council than with the AONB Partnership team. This would strengthen the accountable body role and enable better links with the LEP and other funding programmes.
- 4.7 The Chair commented that there was need to make a decision swiftly, since a Delivery Plan had to be submitted to Defra by the end of July. He added that during discussions with Shropshire Council he had received assurances that the Council would find ways for the AONB Partnership to replace the loss of earned income from hosting the LEADER programme, such that the Partnership would not be financially disadvantaged by the Council's decision.
- 4.8 A number of comments and queries from members were discussed in considerable depth, including: -

- How could the AONB Partnership be considered as an 'interest group' when it is made up of a large number of different organisations?
- How could the aims of the AONB Partnership be protected when LEADER grant decisions were made under the new arrangement?
- The ground had shifted under our feet and it wasn't clear in this case why Defra had supported the Partnership's bid to deliver the programme.
- How would the new Panel be made up and how would members be recruited to it?
- How would the new LAG avoid conflicts of interest itself?
- Would there not be some negative perceptions about the location of the Programme Manager at Shirehall, outside the LEADER area?

4.9 The AONB Partnership Manager said that the two elements of the Partnership being the LAG and the team hosting the Programme Manger were the essence of the lead organisation role, and the loss of these was very disappointing, as well as leaving implications for loss of earned income to the Partnership. He advised the meeting that there would need to be dialogue between the Partnership and Shropshire Council over the recruitment of the Panel as the new LAG.

4.10 The Chair commented that it was important that the Partnership maintained as much influence as possible and that members of the Partnership may wish to apply to be members of the LAG to ensure this.

4.11 The Chair proposed the resolution that *The Approvals Panel should be reconstituted as the LAG for the Natural Growth LEADER Programme under the direct organisation of Shropshire Council with the proviso that the AONB Partnership will not lose out financially through these changes.*

4.12 Ms Caffyn proposed that the following amendment be made *'that the AONB should retain involvement and influence in the programme'*. This was agreed.

4.13 Following a vote, and with great regret and disappointment on the part of all concerned, it was Resolved that: -

The Approvals Panel should be reconstituted as the LAG for the Natural Growth LEADER Programme under the direct organisation of Shropshire Council with the proviso that the AONB Partnership will not lose out financially through these changes and retains involvement and influence in the programme.

5 AONB Partnership Biennial Membership review

5.1 Members received the report of the AONB Partnership Manager which provided them with information about the biennial membership review.

5.2 The AONB Partnership Manager advised members that the Partnership's Terms of Reference provided for a biennial review of membership, which included appointments to the Individual Member seats and a review of the organisational seats. He reminded members that it had been agreed that the current review would also include direct applications for the Town & Parish Council seats rather than SALC appointing the representatives.

5.3 It was agreed that the number of seats in the various categories should remain the same, and that the three non-statutory organisations with the lowest attendance should be invited to reapply for their seats on the Partnership.

6 Proposed Charitable Organisation

- 6.1 Members received the report of the AONB Partnership Manager which provided an update on progress to establish the Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund as a charity.
- 6.2 The AONB Partnership Manager advised the meeting that a draft Constitution had been prepared and that it was proposed that the initial charity trustees be recruited to enable them to be involved in developing the final version of the Constitution. He added that it was proposed that four or five trustees would be initially recruited with the additional seats filled once the charity was established and registered with the Charity Commission. He then outlined the required skills and aptitudes for trustees and asked that if anyone was interested in volunteering to be a Trustee to let him know by email by 10 July 2015.

7 River Clun Recovery Project

- 7.1 It was agreed that due to lack of time the presentation would be deferred to a future meeting.

8 Dates of Next Meetings

- 8.1 The AONB Partnership Manager reminded members that the next meeting of the Partnership would be held on Tuesday 17 November 2015.

Signed (Chairman)

Date:

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<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 17 November 2015	<u>Item</u> 3
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PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO TERMS OF REFERENCE

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

Summary

This paper recommends an update of the AONB Partnership's Terms of Reference following loss of the LEADER programme, along with a couple of particular proposed changes regarding number of seats and term for appointments to positions of responsibility.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to approve the changes and endorse the updated Terms of Reference.

Background

The AONB Partnership has the formal status of a Joint Advisory Committee under the Local Government Act 1972 to the two constituent local authorities Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council. The Partnership's Terms of Reference are therefore formally approved by the two local authorities. This was last done in 2010, and an update reflecting the new LEADER programme which came before the Partnership in November 2014 (but never went forward for local authority approval) is no longer relevant. The Terms of Reference document at Appendix 1 has had the content relating to roles of the Partnership regarding LEADER removed. A new section 3 on the role of the host authority has been added, which is text formerly in the rolling three year Memorandum of Understanding with Defra, but Defra are no longer issuing these. There are one or two other simple updates for correctness, but no other substantive changes. Members are recommended to endorse this update. It will be apparent that these changes result in a simpler document reflecting the clearer purpose of the AONB Partnership without LEADER, which is a plus side of losing the programme.

In addition to this update, three specific and substantive minor changes to the Terms of Reference are recommended here, two of which have been suggested to members in recent email correspondence:

Increase in number of seats for Parish and Town Councils from three to six.

This autumn the AONB Partnership for the first time invited applications from Parish and Town Councillors from the 60 Parish and Town Councils and Parish Meetings falling within the AONB. This enables the Partnership to develop a closer relationship with Parish Councils than previously when the seats were filled with nominees appointed by Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC). The seats attracted a good deal of interest, and six good applications were received. It is felt that continuing to develop awareness of the AONB and the AONB Partnership with Parish and Town Councils is a very useful direction, and this may be better achieved by raising the number of seats to six. This would also enable the Partnership to benefit from the skills of the individuals who applied, and achieve a broader geographical representation (there are 83 Parishes falling within the AONB).

Two year term for Chair, Vice Chairs and Management Board seats.

The appointments to Chair, Vice Chairs and the six elected Management Board seats are currently done annually. The advantages of moving to a two year term include better stability and development of knowledge (there are only three Management Board meetings a year), along with reduced admin for the nomination process.

Specifying explicit support of members and applicants for AONB purposes

A further minor amendment to the process of biennial membership review and related sections of the Terms of Reference is recommended, following discussions resulting from this year's applications. This is to change the application forms more explicitly to require applicants (both organisations and individuals) to clarify their basic support for the purposes of AONB designation. The comment has been received that this is currently notable by its absence, and the current application form reflects a wide range of topic interest areas, without focussing on the over-riding statutory purpose of AONBs to conserve and enhance natural beauty. Members' support for this change is recommended.

These recommended changes are indicated in the attached document as tracked changes.

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 in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.
Appendices Appendix 1 Shropshire Hills AONB Terms of Reference, update at Nov 2015

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership

Terms of Reference

(Amended 6 November 2015, pending formal approval)



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)**.

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 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). 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.

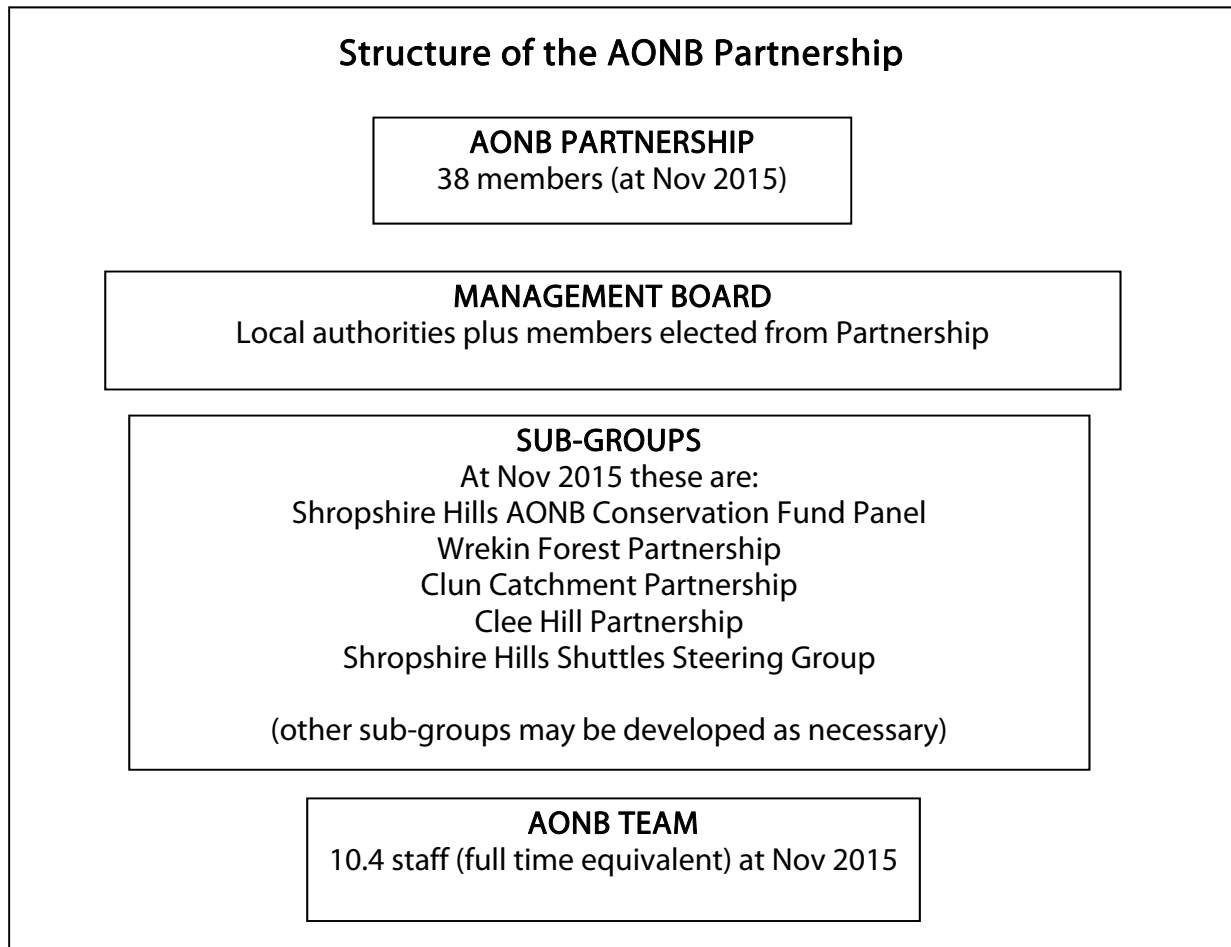
1.5. The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership plays three main **roles regarding the AONB**:

- 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.

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**. 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 (see map at Appendix 2).

- 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 can be 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).



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 will **advise and support the activity of others** in support of the Management Plan, seeking to maximise co-ordination.
- 2.8. 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. 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. The Partnership will **monitor condition of the AONB and progress** with Management Plan implementation, and will publish an annual review of progress.
- 2.11. 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 **National Association for AONBs.**
- 2.12. The Partnership will link and co-ordinate appropriately with **Local Joint Committees** and other local partnerships.
- 2.13. The Partnership will **evaluate** its activities and seek to **make continuous improvements** including through developing the knowledge and skills of its members.

Roles specific to the AONB Partnership (the Joint Advisory Committee itself):

- 2.14. 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. 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. The Partnership will play a **scrutiny role in relation to the AONB designation**, seeking to ensure that the **policy and practice of partners and other organisations** are aligned with the AONB's purposes, and with priorities of the Management Plan; and making constructive recommendations and proposals for improvement.
- 2.17. The Partnership will undertake a **biennial review of its membership**, and will periodically review its governance to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.
- 2.18. 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 Partnership Manager will be employed at a senior level to act as a respected advocate for, and champion of the AONB. The AONB Partnership 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 Partnership 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 Telford and Wrekin Council (the representative should be a relevant portfolio holder or local ward member);
- Six elected members of parish or town councils within or partly within the AONB;
- A maximum of seven representatives of other statutory bodies;
- A maximum of twenty representatives appointed by non-statutory or voluntary organisations;
- A maximum of seven individual members.

All of the above will be full voting members.

- 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 an application process 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 to AONB purposes and relevant areas of interest;
- ability to make a valuable contribution to the Partnership.

Non-statutory and voluntary bodies

- support for AONB purposes and a clear overlap in remit with that of the AONB;
- a significant material or operational interest within the AONB;
- 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.

- 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 Telford & Wrekin Council (if not one of the Vice Chairs);
 - Six additional Partnership members elected biennially by the Partnership.
 - A local authority officer lead representative from Shropshire Council.
- 5.11. The Management Board may **co-opt** members to these seats if they are not filled by an election process.
- 5.12. The Management Board may assign certain members to **advise on particular 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
on behalf of TELFORD AND WREKIN COUNCIL

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 a biennial basis, or as necessary. The Chair will be a non-local authority member. The Chair will not serve for more than three consecutive terms (i.e. six years maximum). Both Vice Chair posts will be elected biennially 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).

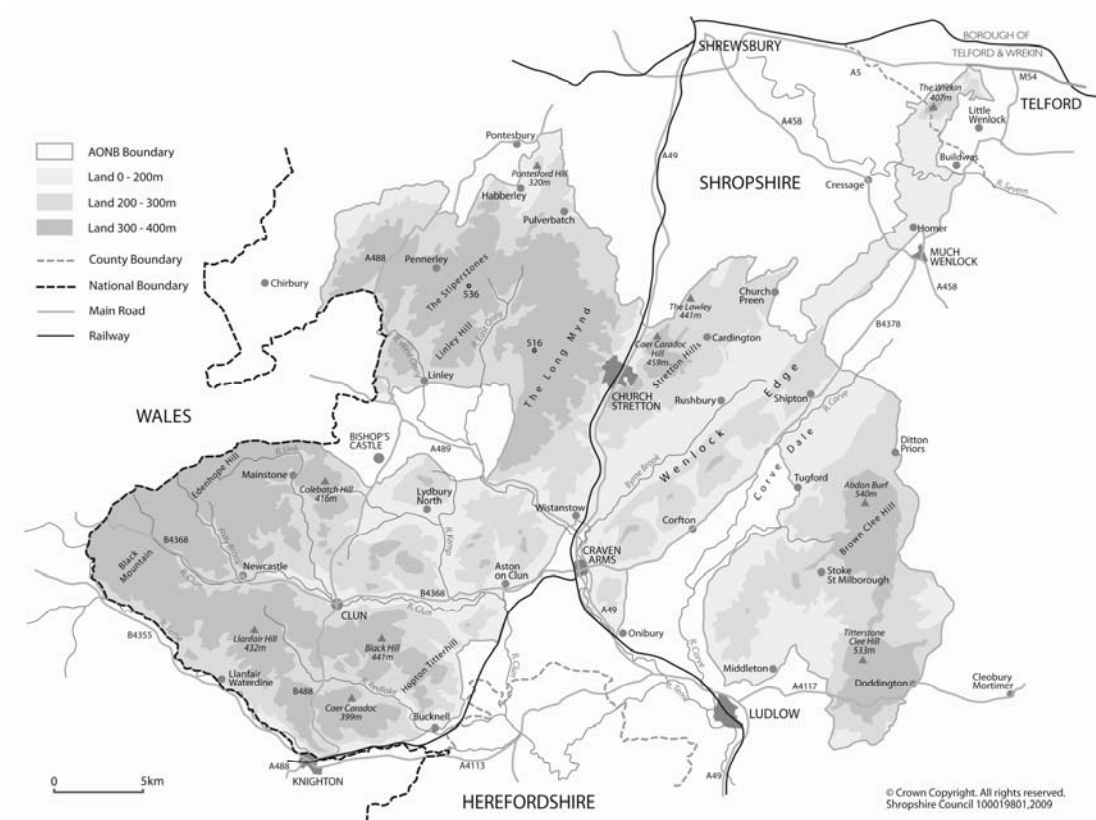
If the group is making a material decision in relation to such a declared interest (e.g. approval of a grant) the member must leave the meeting for discussion of that item and the decision, but may make a brief statement of information before leaving. If the Chair decides that the discussion or decision 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.

6. Withdrawal of membership

6.1 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 organisation to provide a different representative.

Appendix 2 Map of the Shropshire Hills AONB



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;
- 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.

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<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 17 November 2015	<u>Item</u> 5
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AONB PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITY UPDATE

Responsible Officer Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager
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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 2015-16 (April 2015 – present)

Take and co-ordinate action to conserve and enhance natural beauty, to promote enjoyment and understanding and to further sustainable development.

- **LEADER programme handover** Following decisions made by Defra and Shropshire Council in June, the running of the Southern Shropshire LEADER programme has been handed over to the Council's Outdoor Partnerships team. The LEADER Programme Manager Pete Banford has been transferred. The AONB Partnership Chair and Manager have provided support and input to the new arrangements where necessary. A new Local Action Group (LAG) is being formed, and George Chancellor has volunteered to represent the AONB Partnership on this. Shropshire Council made a commitment to make good the loss of the AONB Partnership's expected earned income from running LEADER (from claimable management, admin and office costs). This has been confirmed as a cash contribution towards rental and service costs of the team's new office, totalling £49,970 over the 5-6 year period of the LEADER programme.
- **Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme**

The Scheme is now half-way through its five-year duration, and a mid-term review is currently being completed, largely by an external consultant.

The focus of activity over the summer has included the second season of Community Wildlife Group bird and plant surveys, and completion of the first year's curlew nest surveillance and monitoring project. This has highlighted the desperate plight of the local curlew population - of 13 nests monitored, no chicks were successfully fledged.

The £115k four year contract for mixed heritage skills apprenticeships awarded to North Shropshire College was regrettably terminated due to lack of delivery. Some of the money already paid to the College was returned. The Training element of the Scheme is being redesigned with reduced outputs for mostly in-house delivery through the team with an extra part-time post.

The 'Buzz in the Borders' pollinator and wildlife gardening project is progressing well with continuing community projects in Pulverbatch, Stiperstones and Chirbury.

Small-scale meadow managing equipment (a small tractor and accessories) was purchased and gifted to the newly formed Marches Meadow Group. Although there have been teething issues with the equipment and contractor (and the weather), the machinery has been making hay over the late summer months.

Going into the autumn a new season of Tuesday Task Team has started with practical habitat management at mining/quarrying, castle and hillfort sites throughout the Scheme area, as well as a new programme of Open Hills archaeological fieldwork.

Finally, the Scheme has progressed a number of access projects this summer and is also planning interpretation at a number of sites with support from Nigel McDonald. In the three months between July-Sept 2015 the Scheme has benefitted from the support of 108 volunteers, completing 97 days work and amounting to a voluntary contribution of over £8,900.

See <http://www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk/> for further information.

- **Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund** 14 grants awarded for 2015-16, totalling £25,300 including contributions from Jean Jackson Charitable Trust and Millichope Foundation. The Jean Jackson Trust have just confirmed an annual contribution of £15,000 for the next three years, which is greatly appreciated. For further information and a summary of the projects funded in 2015-16, see <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/aonb-partnership/conservation-fund/>.

- **River Clun Recovery Project**

Practical habitat improvement work on the two recovery sites for Freshwater Pearl Mussel has begun, following the production of Management Plans, landowner liaison and obtaining necessary statutory consents. Advisory visits to over 30 farms or holdings, where issues affecting the conservation status of the River Clun SAC have been identified. These include sites adjacent to the SAC up to the top of the catchment near Anchor, plus tributaries such as Folly Brook and the Unk.

Working towards implementation of the Management Plans for the Recovery Sites; involving liaison with 7 landowners adjacent Recovery Site 1 (Bush Farm), and 2 landowners adjacent to Recovery Site 2 (Lawn Farm). Engaged with landowners to secure 8 practical projects, with farmers signed up to work with the Project, with several more under development. Completion of detailed riparian surveys, Felling Licence applications and Ordinary Watercourse Consents. Engagement of contractors (local) for tree management, fencing and track restoration work.

See <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/looking-after/projects/rivers/> for further information.

- **Other Clun Catchment work**

Natural England are funding an additional **Recovery Site Monitoring project** with input from Plymouth University and West Country Rivers Trust.

Input made to the Natural England/APEM **Sediment Survey** of the Clun Catchment.

Leading on work on **highways runoff** in the lower Clun Catchment – working with Environment Agency and Shropshire Highways Team to map sediment pathways to the river.

Consultee re highway modification at Clun SAC - worked with Parsons Brinkhoff, Herefordshire Council and Environment Agency.

Developed Area Plan/Proposals to manage diffuse and point source pollution in vicinity of Clun SAC.

The AONB Partnership leads the **Clun Catchment Partnership** which met on 17 June and 7 October. Input to the Clun Freshwater Pearl Mussel Steering Group, Clun Field Officers Group and Teme Catchment Partnership.

Working with Woodland Trust, Land Life & Livelihoods and Severn Rivers Trust on a project to encourage **woodland creation** in upper Clun and Teme catchment.

- **Shuttles** services for 2015 completed in late September for the Long Mynd & Stiperstones service, and early October for the Castle Connect service from Ludlow. Passenger numbers have increased by 3.4% over 2014 levels, with over 6,700 people making using the two services in 2015. Two roadshow events were held to publicise start of season. Some very good feedback facilitated through the use of an evaluation form included with the timetable. Also great feedback from communities and business as well as via social media. 2016 services are in

preparation, but unfortunately the longstanding £5,000 Natural England contribution (from the Stiperstones NNR) has been lost. For further information see <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/enjoying-the-shropshire-hills/shuttles/>.

- **Shropshire Hills Sustainable Business Network** The original Sustainable Business Scheme has been relaunched as a Sustainable Business Network with a stronger focus on sustainable tourism. Membership of the Network is now for a minimum period of two years. New members apply for membership by completing a sustainability pledge. At the end of the two years they are awarded a certificate. A bronze, silver and gold certificate hierarchy has been adopted, reflecting the businesses' commitment over 6 years. All the businesses in the old scheme have been invited to join the new network. Workshops are being held to help businesses transfer their membership. See <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/enjoying-the-shropshire-hills/buy-local-be-sustainable/>.

- **Promotion activity.**

The **Newsletter** has moved to a completely web based format allowing us to share it more easily. This also makes it easier to promote it through our social media platforms as well as by direct mail. The new system allows a greatly improved management of newsletter subscriptions in line with the Data Protection Act. The new format also allows us to produce more frequent news 'bulletins' where necessary to highlight upcoming events and share information. We are working on targeting bulletins most relevant to certain audiences – such as Business Network members.

Social media continues to be one of our most effective platforms for sharing information about our and partners activities locally. The Facebook page currently has over 1,000 likes and is building its list of followers. Twitter followers have now reached 2,257 for the AONB site and 1,584 followers for the Buy Local Twitter feed. Our Twitter use continues to develop with the objective of driving more traffic towards our website and newsletter, as well as engaging in direct conversation with our followers locally and nationally.

The **website** has been simplified to give greater prominence to visitor-oriented material (about the AONB [area](#)), and bringing up to date the more technical sections on the Partnership's work. Contributing to the new Outdoor Partnerships website www.shropshiresgreatoutdoors.co.uk.

Press - 1 double page Shropshire Magazine article and 1 four column news item in the Shropshire Star about our Bruce Bairnsfather walk (October 3rd). This was achieved in collaboration with writer Keith Pybus one of our volunteer walks leaders and Friend of the AONB. The walk celebrated the connection between the famous WW1 cartoonist and landscape painter's work and the Shropshire Hills.

Other activity has included: a BBC Radio Shropshire interview (River Clun Recovery Project), attendance at a number of shows, and talks to: Bishops Castle Town Hall, Westhope WI, Worthen Garden Club, Church Stretton Rotary Club and Market Drayton branch of SWT. Guided walk on Stiperstones for Church Stretton Women's Refuge (women and children).

- **Advice and support** to a range of activities and projects, including Western Power undergrounding programme, Memories of the Landscape (joint work with CPRE, Clwys Powys Archaeological Trust, Clun Forest History Group and Newcastle School), HeARTland project (joint work with National Trust, Arts Alive & Ben Osborne), Upper Gravenor (developing the farm for educational and community benefit), Sophie Holt (local food project), Tru Wood (social forestry) and Friends of Pontesford Hill.
- Several meetings held of a revitalised **Wrekin Forest Partnership**, and the new Wrekin Forest Plan has been approved. <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/aonb-partnership/area-initiatives/wrekin-forest/>

Project development

- Involvement in 'Stepping Stones' feasibility work for a **landscape-scale conservation project focused on the Long Mynd and Stiperstones area.**

- Input into proposals by the Foundation for Common land for a **possible Commons project**, with activity in the Shropshire Hills AONB and other upland areas (see paper at agenda item 9).
- Discussions with Woodland Trust, Small Woods Association and Woods for Wellbeing about the possible development of **new woodland project work**, e.g. on PAWS (Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites), woodland social enterprises and Social Forestry.

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** available on website. Work in progress on a basic designed pdf with figures and some images.
- **Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan** The AONB Partnership now has the leading and coordinating role for the **Shropshire Hills & Ludlow Destination Partnership**, following the withdrawal of Shropshire Council staffing support for DDPs.
<http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/aonb-partnership/area-initiatives/shropshire-hills-and-ludlow-destination-development-partnership/>.

Working closely with partners in support of **Irresistible Offa**, which is the development of the Walking with Offa cross-border collaboration project. Current focus of work has centred on researching and discussing potential EU funding (such as InterReg) to support new project initiatives identified in the Irresistible Offa Business Plan.

Working closely with **Shropshire Hills Tourism** on the production of a new visitor map of the Shropshire Hills to replace the now out of print Discovery Map.

- Input to southern Shropshire Walking Forum and various steering groups led by others.
- **Planning.** Submissions on nine planning applications –
 - [Spring Cottage extension, Leighton – 12.10.15](#)
 - [Anaerobic Digester, Bitterley – 11.9.15](#)
 - [Proposed Development, Land North & East of Cwms Lane, Church Stretton – 18.8.15](#)
 - [Solar Farm, Henley, Acton Scott – Appeal – 23.7.15](#)
 - [Church Stretton Housing, Land east of Shrewsbury Road – 2.6.15](#)
 - [Springbank Employment Site, Church Stretton – 2.6.15](#)
 - [Whitton Solar Farm, Caynham – 23.4.15](#)
 - [Proposed dwelling NW of the Fishpools, Pontesford Hill – 23.4.15](#)
 - [Newcastle Hall Barns, Newcastle, Craven Arms – 14.4.15](#)
- Input to other **non-planning casework and strategies**, including EA River Basin Management Plans, response to EU Habitats and Birds Directives consultation, Ordinary Watercourse Consent consultations, Natural England Environmental Impact Assessment screening decision consultations.

Develop the AONB Partnership as an inclusive and effective organisation.

- Input to **National Association for AONBs**, through annual conference and frequent information sharing and consultations. <http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/>. The Shropshire Hills AONB will be one of the host areas for the 2016 Conference.
- Support and input to establishing the Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund as a **charity** (see paper at agenda item 6).
- Further discussions about possible **relocation of office** to Church Stretton, and formulating proposal to manage the **Church Stretton Visitor Information Centre** on commissioned basis with financial support from Shropshire Council.

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**.
- 2015 **volunteer-led guided walks programme** completed and review going on.
- **John Muir Award** programme with schools (education/activity programme themed on wild places), currently working with Bucknell and Rushbury primary schools. Training day for leaders on John Muir Award planned for mid-November. AONB talk and guided walk on Long Mynd for 120 students from Idsall Secondary School, Shifnal. Attended Growing Up Green & Global Conference, picked up two new schools for possible involvement in JMA next year (Kinlet and Shrewsbury St. George's). Organising field study trip for students from University Centre Shrewsbury, part of their new geography module 'Border Regions: landscape, place and identity'.
- **Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB** currently has 89 members (counting joint couple/family memberships as one). Andrew Wood is helping as a volunteer with member recruitment. The annual social event was a tour of the Clun uplands on 12 July.
- David Tomkins is currently helping as a volunteer on the River Clun Recovery Project in a technical research role. Volunteers assisted with work to tackle a Himalayan balsam outbreak on the River Kemp, and volunteer tree planting is planned in the Clun Catchment for this winter.

FINANCE SUMMARY

The AONB Partnership budgets are reported in detail to the Management Board. Due to the ongoing squeeze on core funding and the difficulty in obtaining contributions to core running costs from projects, the 2015-16 budgets are currently predicting a deficit for the first time. All possible savings and economies are being made, and the office move will reduce ongoing costs (after meeting one-off expenses associated with the move). Any deficit will be met from the reserve of earned income held from previous years.

<p>List of Background Papers Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2014-19. The full 2015-16 Team work programme can be made available to members on request.</p>
<p>Human Rights Act Appraisal The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.</p>
<p>Environmental Appraisal The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.</p>
<p>Risk Management Appraisal Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.</p>
<p>Community / Consultations Appraisal The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.</p>
<p>Appendices None</p>

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<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 17 November 2015	<u>Item</u> 6
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SHROPSHIRE HILLS AONB CONSERVATION FUND

Responsible Officer Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager
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Summary

This paper updates members with progress to establish the Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note the progress and the proposed links with the new charity.

Background

Since the Partnership meeting of 25 June 2015 and earlier papers on this topic, further progress has been made. A group of four founding trustees has formed and has met twice, on 24 August and 6 October, with a third meeting on 10 November. The trustees are Anthony Morgan, George Chancellor, Sarah Bury and Phil Holden. At the 6 October meeting, the trustees approved and adopted the constitution (with just minor refinements from the draft seen by the Management Board on 6 May 2015). The next steps are the opening of a bank account and then application to register as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with the Charity Commission.

It must be noted that the charitable body is not part of the AONB Partnership structure, and must exist independently of it. The trustees are a group of individuals with support for the proposed objects of the charity, and their role is to act in the interests of the charity and those objects, declaring any potentially conflicting interests where these may arise. The constitution sets out some of the preferred links between the CIO and the AONB Partnership, but these remain to be approved by the Charity Commission. They include the ability of the AONB Partnership to appoint up to three Nominated trustees (out of a maximum of eight trustees overall), and the AONB Partnership Manager to be an *ex officio* trustee (i.e. linked to occupation of this post). It is hoped that relating the charity's object closely to the purposes of AONB designation will ensure that it remains focussed on benefitting the AONB area, while avoiding what could be unacceptably close levels of perceived or actual 'control' by the AONB Partnership.

It is hoped that the round of Conservation Fund grant awards next spring will be made through the charity rather than through Shropshire Council as now. The trustees would reappoint the Grant Panel and take overall responsibility for the grants at that point. Subscriptions from the Friends scheme will also from then be paid directly to the Conservation Fund, with the advantages of charitable status. Note however that the Friends are not voting members of the charity. This is in keeping with the agreed concept of the charity as a 'fund' rather than a 'group', and to help ensure that it remains apolitical. There are also other streams of income for the Fund apart from the Friends, and it is hoped to develop these further. It is expected that the AONB Partnership team will continue to provide administration of Conservation Fund grants, and may be paid a small fee for this.

The relationships between the AONB Partnership, the charity and the Friends scheme will be a little complicated for those less involved to understand easily, and when the charity is fully established,

communicating this clearly will be a priority. The main expected activities of the charity will be to raise funds and distribute grants to benefit the AONB, in ways which it can do more effectively than the AONB Partnership. It can however, as the trustees decide, undertake a broad range of activities which meet the charitable objects. The AONB Partnership is allowed to benefit financially by receipt of grants or donations, or in payment for services supplied (within certain regulations).

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 in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.
Appendices None



<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 17 November 2015	<u>Item</u> 8
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UPDATE ON TOURISM WORK

Responsible Officer Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager
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Summary

This paper updates members with the range of AONB Partnership activity on sustainable tourism, and changes to the organisation of tourism structures within the county.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note the information and provide comments.

Background

The AONB Partnership's activity on tourism has gradually increased over recent years and become more coherent. The main reason for our involvement is to deliver our conservation remit by influencing the patterns, impacts etc of tourism, which is a significant and increasing influence on the AONB. Tourism also of course delivers economic benefit, and while this is not our own primary purpose, it helps the designation and our work to be valued, and tourism related work has the potential to be a valuable additional income stream for the AONB Partnership.

In the last five years the influence of the AONB and of sustainable approaches in tourism have considerably strengthened. When the Districts were merged into a new unitary Shropshire Council in 2009, a series of Destination Development Partnerships were formed on an area basis. This timed with the AONB Partnership securing Advantage West Midlands funding for a Sustainable Tourism Strategy, which formed the basis for our successful application to the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. This accolade is held by 131 protected areas in 16 countries, including in the UK eight AONBs and six National Parks. The Sustainable Tourism Strategy is the only tourism strategy for the area. It is not a niche strategy for a small part of the market, but represents a collective view of how tourism in the area should be managed, which is a real strength.

Post-unitary, South Shropshire Tourism Association became Shropshire Hills Tourism. With its geography and identity thus aligned better with ours, we have worked more closely. This has included publications, such as combining the Events brochure with the accommodation guide for 2015, and as a new map-based visitor guide for 2016 (replacing an earlier, now out of print map printed in 2010).

Our strategic and promotional work on tourism has been complemented by other practical delivery projects, including the Shuttles, the Sustainable Business Network, and Walking with Offa, which have collectively raised the AONB Partnership's profile and value in tourism sector with key partners. In 2014 we restructured the team to include for the first time a core post focused on sustainable tourism.

Current position/changes/drivers

- Shropshire Council has recently reduced its Tourism Officers from two to one in the county and changed the role. This has resulted in withdrawal from administrative support for the DDP, which the AONB Partnership has agreed to take on, to maintain momentum of the group.

- Tourism is a strand in current LEADER and EAFRD European funding programmes, in which the DDP area strategies are recognised as the main strategic direction, since there is no current county level tourism strategy.
- Shropshire Council is gradually reducing support for front line visitor information services, seeking them to be adopted by the voluntary and business sectors
- A new 'Visit Shropshire' partnership group at a county level has been formed (administered by Shropshire Tourism, it had its first meeting on 5 November). This follows demise of the county level Tourism Strategy Board. The DDPs are not directly represented on Visit Shropshire.
- The Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund charity offers a potential route for visitor giving.
- Our European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas is up for renewal in late 2016.
- Our Shropshire Hills Sustainable Business Network has been relaunched with a stronger focus on the tourism sector.
- Visitor pressures are increasing in certain areas, such as the Long Mynd.

Proposed directions

- Retain sustainable tourism as a strong strand of our work and area of developing influence and expertise.
- There is an ongoing need to ensure the importance of the AONB as a fundamental pillar of the visitor economy and its sustainable management are taken account of by county level structures.
- The Shuttles will be continued as far as possible, although new sources of funding will be needed to maintain the current level of service.
- Continued active role in promotion with a sustainable message – continue to expand visitor content on website, social media, TripAdvisor, collaborative work on publications, etc.
- Continue to develop relationship with Shropshire Hills Tourism.
- Ideally we would renew the European Charter, as this helps to ensure the processes of an agreed strategy are in place, but cost is a real issue (€5,000 to renew for a further five years).
- Continue to participate in NAAONB's Sustainable Tourism network.
- There is a more active role for us in helping to provide strategic management approaches for pressured areas and those lacking management – e.g. The Wrekin, Long Mynd, Clee Hill, Stretton Hills.
- On the ground projects through visitor giving, etc – e.g. Caer Caradoc eroded paths.
- There is potential for us to take a more proactive chargeable role in pre-application advice on tourism planning applications.
- Connect tourism to ecological/heritage projects e.g. visitor management, wildlife/heritage tourism.

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 in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.
Appendices None



<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 17 November 2015	<u>Item</u> 9
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PROPOSED UPLAND COMMONS PROJECT

Responsible Officer Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager
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Summary

This paper outlines to members the proposed national project on upland commons, involving the Shropshire Hills AONB along with four English National Parks.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note the information and provide comments.

Background

The Foundation for Common Land has over 2015 convened a partnership of organisations who have an interest in common land to work together to sustain pastoral commoning alongside landscape and biodiversity conservation. It includes conservation, farming, sporting, landowning, water and access organisations. The proposed project 'Our Common Cause' focuses on enhancing the heritage of common land in five upland areas of England - Dartmoor, Yorkshire Dales, North York Moors, Shropshire Hills and Cumbria.

Grazing and management of Britain's common lands are fundamental to the continued provision of these benefits. Hill farmers practice commoning - the collective stewardship of common land. They maintain traditional pastoral systems developed over many centuries, adapted to local circumstances and informed by the experience of farming communities. Hill farming communities and conservation organisations are concerned about the loss of skills and heritage associated with commoning. All agree that once the traditional systems and techniques, local infrastructure and expertise is lost, it will be very difficult to re-establish threatening our natural and cultural heritage.

A major focus of the project will be on sharing experience and learning between the five areas through a programme of mentoring, skills sharing and the promotion of best practice. It will build on the findings of "Better Outcomes on Upland Commons" which conducted five case studies (including the Long Mynd in the Shropshire Hills), and identified 12 attributes of successful management, concluding that:

'respectful and long enduring relationships between individuals and groups are at the heart of delivering better outcomes'.

The project will implement these findings to ensure improved outcomes for all, giving particular reference to:

- increasing understanding of each other's interests and outcomes, and lack of motivation to deliver public goods,
- enhancing skills among commoners, conservation bodies and owners,
- resolving conflicts that impede heritage conservation,
- ensuring proper value is given to the cultural landscape and heritage provided by commoners,
- increasing awareness of the of role commoning in delivering numerous public goods.

A Steering Group with representation from national bodies and the five areas is overseeing the development of a project application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), with a target timescale of early December for submission. The project would provide staffing support and funding to each of the five areas including Shropshire Hills AONB, to work with three commons in each area, where commoners and landowners want to participate and benefit from this opportunity.

It is expected that the three year delivery stage of the project would:

- Support active management of the commons by encouraging uptake of funding such as agri-environment, and the delivery of statutory duties.
- Fund practical works which cannot be funded from other sources, e.g.
 - small capital works to assist commoners managing the common and grazing stock,
 - works to protect and enhance archaeological sites and biodiversity,
 - activities to record and celebrate the distinctive cultural heritage of commoning.
- Support commoners' associations and the ability of commoners, stakeholders, owners and local communities, to recognise and manage the assets of common land.
- Awareness raising to develop knowledge, understanding and pride about common land and commoning.
- Promote the range and extent of public benefits deriving from common land to ensure a wider understanding of their value and the need to conserve them.

If the application is successful, HLF would first fund a two year development stage, which would involve:

- Agreeing outcomes and joint plans for active management of commons in each area
- Evidence gathering working with hill farmers to investigate the state of pastoral commoning and record the environmental and cultural goods provided by each area.
- Identifying barriers to local aspirations, including skills of all stakeholders and developing a training plan including e.g. governance, negotiating and practical skills.
- Developing a programme to increase public engagement and understanding of commons and the public benefits that they provide.
- Reviewing the potential for payments for ecosystem services from upland commons and assess the potential for a pilot study in one of the project areas.
- Exploring the opportunities for working with commons and the farms to which rights are attached as part of more robust, landscape-scale ecological networks.

<p>List of Background Papers Report of the 'Better Outcomes on Upland Commons' project 2014, available at http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/aonb-partnership/recent-projects/better-outcomes-on-upland-commons/. Foundation for Common Land website http://www.foundationforcommonland.org.uk/.</p>
<p>Human Rights Act Appraisal The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.</p>
<p>Environmental Appraisal The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.</p>
<p>Risk Management Appraisal Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.</p>
<p>Community / Consultations Appraisal The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.</p>
<p>Appendices None</p>