

Shropshire Hills AONB Transition Board
Minutes of Meeting Tuesday 9th August 2016
AONB Partnership office, Drovers House, Craven Arms



Present:

James Williamson (Chair)	Individual member, AONB Partnership Chair
George Chancellor	Individual member, AONB Partnership Vice Chair
Hilary Claytonsmith	Town/Parish Council representative
Cllr Heather Kidd	Shropshire Council
Cllr Cecilia Motley (Vice Chair)	Shropshire Council, AONB Partnership Vice Chair
Cllr Chris Turley	Telford & Wrekin Council
Cllr David Turner	Shropshire Council

Shropshire Council staff:

Neil Willcox	Shropshire Council
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AONB Partnership staff:

Phil Holden	AONB Partnership Manager
Alison Scimia	Administrator (minute taker)

1. Apologies

Veronica Cossons	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
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James Williamson welcomed all members to the first Shropshire Hills AONB Transition Board meeting.

2. Minutes of Management Board meeting of 11 May 2016 and Matters Arising

The minutes were agreed and there were no matters arising. Phil confirmed that all previous actions were completed, except a letter had not been written to Defra Minister Rory Stewart, as Philip Dunne MP had done this.

3. Recap on Purpose and Terms of Reference of Transition Board, and general situation/progress to date

- 3.1 The Terms of Reference required appointment of a Chair and Vice Chair of the Transition Board, since these did not have to be the same as those for the Partnership. James Williamson was standing as Chair, and all Board members unanimously approved this appointment. Cecilia Motley offered to stand as Vice-Chair, which was also approved. Phil ran briefly through progress to date. He said an additional Partnership meeting had been scheduled for 8th September to endorse the Business Case (see para 5) prior to both Council cabinet meetings in October. The issue over funding support also needed to be resolved with Shropshire Council.
- 3.2 Following a further restructuring within the Council, Phil informed the Board he was now being line managed by Chris Edwards, Head of Infrastructure and Communities. Neil Willcox had arranged for a meeting in August to discuss the possible asset transfer of Drovers House.
- 3.3 Phil reported that the new Charitable Incorporated Organisation had finally been registered with the Charity Commission as the 'Shropshire Hills AONB Trust'. The next steps were appointment of four additional trustees, completing the opening of a bank account, putting in place an agreement with the AONB Partnership over operation of the Conservation Fund and Friends scheme, and developing a simple business plan.

- 3.4 Phil had also met with Chris Child from Energise, the county Sports Partnership, to discuss the process of independence (Energise became independent from the Council several years ago). A meeting was scheduled later in August for Phil and James to meet with an officer from the Shropshire pension fund.

4. Co-option of Additional Members

The co-option of up to three members to the Transition Board was allowed under the Terms of Reference, and to date Andrew Wood had come forward. All Board members endorsed the co-option of Andrew Wood. James added that informal discussions with one or two additional people were also being pursued.

5. Draft Business Case for Shropshire Council

- 5.1 Phil explained that the draft Business Case had been adapted from a Shropshire Council template used for 'externalising' services, and that he had been working with Neil and other departments within the Council to address financial, legal and HR issues. A formal decision regarding the creation of a Conservation Board was required to be made by both Councils and Defra and the Business Case document would support this decision.
- 5.2 Cecilia stressed the Business Case needed to be visionary and should explore new directions the organisation could be taken into, as well as what could be achieved differently. Neil said there needed to be a progressive approach. George remarked that the Conservation Board could provide a model to invigorate ideas for the future, as well as engaging local people. Part of the new approach would be running the Conservation Board alongside the new charitable organisation. James commented that paragraph 4 The Vision needed to be more prominent in the document. Cecilia said it was important the Conservation Board would be in a position to apply for funding where it had been unable to before.
- 5.3 Neil felt there was an opportunity to work with the AONB staff team to encapsulate the wording for the vision and Heather suggested holding a workshop with the team. Phil pointed out that due to timescales and practicalities, this would need to be held in the latter part of August, prior to the Partnership meeting on the 8th September and the Cabinet meetings in October. Heather emphasized the importance of holding a workshop session and that the input of all the staff team was needed. The 31st August and 2nd September were suggested as possible dates. Phil and James agreed to organise the session and arrange a date for the workshop as soon as possible, with team members and the Transition Board.

ACTION – Phil and James.

- 5.4 Phil pointed out that the Options Analysis table had been developed in 2012 towards the preferred option at the time of remaining hosted by the Council and developing a charity alongside, and that it required further updating. George suggested the inclusion of structural diagrams would be helpful within the document. James asked if Board members could review the Risk Register and forward any further comments on the Business Case to Phil.

ACTION – all.

6. Budgets

Phil had recently received a reworking of the budget from Shropshire Council Finance Department in a different presentation. This revised budget when finalised would be included as an appendix to the Business Case. Phil then highlighted the following key points from the report:

- 6.1 Staff – the recent pay award of 1% had been added to the budget for 2016/17 and 2017/18, and also as a projection to 2018/19 and 2019/20. The Administrator has secured a post working for the LEADER Programme, which is currently subject to purdah restrictions and therefore awaiting confirmation. It was intended that the post would be refilled at 25 hours/week and these reduced figures are shown from mid-2016. The Clun Catchment Officer post may not be extended to 4 days/week for the full duration of the WREN project, which allows a further slight saving.
- 6.2 Office costs – 2018-19 and 2019-20 budgets are based on an independent body, and so VAT has been allowed from 2018/19 on relevant items. The postage, telecommunications and broadband line has increased as this includes the installation cost of broadband at Drovers House. The Board then discussed the high business rates for the premises, which may be appealed. Phil had held a discussion with the relevant person at Shropshire Council about this. Further internal enquiries would be made by Neil, **ACTION – Neil**.
- 6.3 Projects - Hilary queried the Shuttles usage. Phil explained that from 2018/19 there would probably be less funding available and the Shuttles budget was therefore uncertain. The Natural England contribution of £5k had been lost, but a carry forward of earlier surplus contributions was at present continuing to support the service. The Foundation for Common Land have been asked by HLF to reapply for the Upland Commons project. If successful, this project could be a significant potential source of income to the AONB team.
- 6.4 George questioned James about his view of the overall sustainability of the budgets. James felt these were still challenging and that alternative forms of income needed to be sought.
- 6.5 Hilary asked how fundraising would be carried out within the newly formed charity and the proposed Conservation Board. Phil said it had to be at the charity's discretion how its income was utilised. However, the charity would be able to provide funding to the Conservation Board through applications made to the charity e.g. through the Conservation Fund, for services provided to the charity, or as straightforward donations.

7. Possible Application to HLF Resilient Heritage Fund

Phil explained that we would be eligible to apply to the HLF Resilient Heritage Fund to the Board, and asked Board members for feedback on the ideas circulated. George suggested applying as the charitable body for a sponsorship programme, with the Partnership buying in services. A business fundraising scheme could be established, which would provide sources of income for the future. It was not felt advisable for the charity and the Conservation Board/Partnership to make separate applications. The timing and phasing of an application would need to be considered. James suggested Phil had an initial discussion with HLF about a possible application.

8. Any Other Business

None.

9. Date of Next Meetings

27th September and 1st November 2016.