



<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 6 th March 2018
--

<u>Item</u> 4

AONB TEAM WORK PROGRAMME 2017-18 BRIEF UPDATES

Responsible Officer Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager
e-mail: phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 254741

Summary

This paper updates Partnership members on key areas of recent activity.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to comment on the topics raised.

Background

AONB team work programme 2017-18 brief updates

TAKING ACTION - on the ground and in our communities - to conserve and enhance natural beauty and to promote enjoyment and understanding.

Stiperstones & Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme (selected updates)

Short extensions have been agreed with HLF for some of the staff contracts - to end April and mid May. The office at Chirbury will be vacated at the end of March.

A final additional output will be the siting of a ropeway trestle at the Bog (a steel lattice tower from an aerial ropeway in Lancashire, very similar to the one which used to run from the Bog to Malehurst). Planning permission for this has been obtained, and the project is being led by Andrew Wood (LPS Chair) mainly through the Shropshire Caving and Mining Club.

The team are busy completing various project outputs, including some interpretation and publications.

Legacy arrangements for various activities are a priority, including support for independent groups (e.g. Marches Meadows Group) and fund-raising for continuation of the Curlew Country project, under new hosting with the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust from April.

Sessions held on evaluation with the LPS Board in Dec and January and report being written.

The LPS will be completed and wound up by mid May.

River Clun Recovery Project (WREN funded)

Contractors are under way at various sites but work on the ground has been affected by poor weather and ground conditions. There are 13 months left of the project overall.

Waiting on permits for boulder work and drinking bays at Recovery Site 1.

Additional work is being carried out for Environment Agency on a borehole water supply project, and a proposal to alleviate a highways drain run-off problem through a wetland.

Other Clun/Teme catchment delivery work

Habitat opportunity mapping is being carried out on the Upper Teme area for Natural England, as a paid contract.

Discussions with Woodland Trust and landowners on several sites for 'Morewoods' tree planting.

Sustainable Tourism delivery

Shuttles – the service has been re-tendered and prices submitted are higher than previously. A new provider has been selected.

Support to completion of EU funded tourism co-operation project, developing on-line marketing.

'Our Common Cause' Upland Commons project

Joy Howells started work on 15th January 2.5 days/week as the national Project Manager, based in our office. The contract has been secured for Cath to act as the Area Facilitator for the Shropshire Hills area, following submission of a detailed bid in a competitive tendering process. The contract is for a 20 month period for 10 days per month.

Education

John Muir Award work completed with Clunbury School and ongoing at Farlow.

Project development

Discussion ongoing re proposed Monument Volunteers project. Feedback from HLF on the project enquiry requires all sites which are to be worked on to be identified now, which is requiring further thought.

Involvement in a site visit meeting with National Trust specialists for Stepping Stones project.

Involvement in development workshop for potential social forestry project, with health sector.

Expression of Interest approved for Woodland Trust 'Trees Outside Woodlands' proposal.

Discussions with EA and partners on possible LIFE fund bid for Clun catchment.

INFLUENCING OTHERS - lead and champion the delivery of public benefits from the AONB, working strategically and collaboratively from policy to grassroots level.

AONB Management Plan

Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report published and work on State of AONB report.

AONB Trust, Conservation Fund and Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB

2017-18 Conservation Fund claims are coming in and project ideas for 2018-19. The Panel is set for 22nd March and applications are being received. Funding criteria have been refined.

Meeting held with volunteers on Friends recruitment – Friends numbers currently 102.

Planning

A meeting was held with members of Shropshire CPRE regarding planning and ways to work more collaboratively.

Four members of the team attended a training session on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment with members of Shropshire Council's South Planning team.

Local partnership working

Wrekin Forest Partnership meeting held 10th January.

The Shropshire Hills Destination Partnership at its meeting of 18th January approved the new Sustainable Tourism Strategy (deferred from before Christmas).

Clun Catchment Partnership meeting held 24th January.

Input to other strategies & schemes

The Sustainable Tourism Charter application was submitted end of February.

Communications & public awareness

A 60th anniversary badge has been developed and a plan of activities.

Several planning meetings have been held for the Hay Meadow Festival on Sat 7th July.

The 'Great Days' leaflet for 2018 has been published (Shropshire Hills Tourism).

Local authorities and Partnerships

James and Hilary met with George Candler on 15th Feb, principally to discuss funding for 2018-19.

Evidence base

Data analysis for 'State of the AONB' report.

Support for groups

The application to Natural England's Stewardship Facilitation Fund by Land Life & Livelihoods and the Upper Clun Community Wildlife group was successful.

MANAGING OUR BUSINESS - develop a robust, effective and financially sustainable AONB organisation.

Transition process to Conservation Board

One meeting of a Transition Board sub-group was held on 8th January.

Phil & James spoke to the LEP Director about Shropshire Council hosting arrangements for the Marches LEP team.

Resilient Heritage

A second Resilient Heritage application was submitted to HLF on 15th January with a total cash budget of £48,634, and grant requested of £38,100. £26,784 of the cost is towards the proposed 1.5 days/week Funding & Programmes Officer post. Consultancy is now £12,000, made up of one contract of £5,400 for 9 days work on support for business planning, communications planning and evaluation, and one of £6,600 for 12 days work on support to develop particular income streams.

AONB Team and office

Costs of business rates have been reduced through a successful challenge on rateable value, but rates for the unregistered unit have now been charged, including retrospectively.

National Association for AONBs

Steph attended the Communications Officers meeting in December.

Phil attended the Lead Officers meeting in Birmingham on 14-15th Feb.

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