



Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership

25 June 2015

9.30 am

Item

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Public

MINUTES OF THE SHROPSHIRE HILLS AONB PARTNERSHIP MEETING HELD ON 17 MARCH 2015 9.30 - 11.55 AM

Responsible Officer: Tim Ward

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Present

Local Authorities

Shropshire Council

Cllr Tim Barker (Vice Chair)

Cllr Cecilia Motley

Statutory/Voluntary Agencies & Individual members

Individual Member	Alison Caffyn
Individual Member	Harriet Carty
Individual member	James Williamson (Vice-Chair)
Town & Parish Council representative	Keith Bartlett
Town & Parish Council representative	Hilary Claytonsmith
British Horse Society	Ronald Repath
Butterfly Conservation	Jenny Joy
Country Land & Business Association (CLA)	Caroline Bedell
Land Life & Livelihoods	Rob Harris
Longmynd & District Bridleways Association	Sue Lee
NFU	Helen Cork
Ramblers Association	Sue Jones
Shropshire Geological Society	David C Smith
Strettons Civic Society	Ian Dormor
Shropshire Wildlife Trust	Veronica Cossons

Observers/Officers

Shropshire Council	Deb Hughes (Shropshire Outdoor Partnerships Manager)
	Tim Ward (Committee Officer)
Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership staff team	Cath Landles (Community & Landscape Officer)
	Nigel McDonald (Sustainable Business Officer)
	Phil Holden (AONB Partnership Manager)

1 Welcome and Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 In the absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair, Councillor Barker chaired the meeting.
- 1.2 The Vice-Chair welcomed Rob Harris, who was representing Land Life and Livelihoods in the absence of Michael Whithouse and Joy Greenall.
- 1.3 Apologies for absence were received Tony Bostock (Severn Rivers Trust), Sarah Bury (CPRE), Pete Carty (National Trust), George Chancellor (Individual Member), Joy Greenall (Land Life & Livelihoods), Geoff Grimes (Shropshire Tourism), Heather Kidd (Shropshire Council), Hazel McDowall (Natural England), Fiona Pidduck (Individual Member), Phil Ridley (North Shropshire College), Leo Smith (Upper Onny Wildlife Group/Shropshire

Ornithological Society), Cllr Chris Turley (Telford & Wrekin Council), Cllr David Turner (Shropshire Council) and Michael Whithouse (Land Life & Livelihoods).

- 1.4 The AONB Partnership Manager informed the meeting that it had been agreed with the Local Enterprise Partnership that they would take a seat on the Partnership but they had not yet agreed who their representative would be.

2 Note of the last meeting

- 2.1 The note of the last meeting had been circulated.

2.2 **RESOLVED:-**

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

- 2.3 The AONB Partnership Manager said that he had been asked by a member of the public whether the AONB Partnership desire to relocate its office was driving the proposed move of Church Stretton library. He had advised the enquirer that this was definitely not the case, but as publicly stated, the Partnership was indeed interested in the possibility of occupying the library premises, if they should become vacant as a result of Shropshire Council decisions about reorganisation of services in the town.

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 much progress was being made by the Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership and this would provide for the focus for the Annual Tour in June.
- 3.3 The AONB Partnership Manager informed the meeting of the launch of the Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund. This had been developed with funding from the Jean Jackson Charitable Trust, the Millichope Foundation and from the Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB, and had replaced the Sustainable Development Fund. New guidance and support to applicants had been developed. He advised that 14 applications for funding had been received and the Conservation Fund Panel would be meeting on the 19 March to allocate the £25,300 available for 2015-16.
- 3.4 The AONB Partnership Manager advised members that a four year funding package had been secured from WREN for a River Clun Recovery Project, and that Alison Jones, who had previously worked in the area for FWAG, had been appointed to the post of part time Clun Catchment Officer.
- 3.5 The AONB Partnership Manager informed the meeting of a small project looking at the application of the 'FARMSCOPER' modelling tool in the Clun Catchment, which had been funded by Natural England's area innovation fund. Six farm visits had been carried out by ADAS to apply the FARMSCOPER tool to identify the top farming practice measures to reduce loss of sediment, nitrate and phosphate into the river. He advised that the reports were currently being prepared and would support actions and recommendations arising from the River Clun Nutrient Management Plan. Cllr Barker commented that a lot of focus had been put on the effects of agriculture and asked whether the effects of householders had been assessed. He was informed that some work had been done to assess the effect of septic tanks in the upper catchment and the effect had been negligible but it was not known whether this was the case for the whole of the catchment area. It was also commented that a significant source of phosphate was from the sewage works in Bishop's Castle, and there was also run off from highways.

3.6 The Vice –Chair thanked the AONB Partnership Manager for his update.

4 LEADER 2015-20 Bid

4.1 Members received a report which provided an update on the 2015-20 LEADER programme.

4.2 The AONB Partnership Manager advised the meeting that the bid submitted to Defra for the AONB Partnership to deliver the LEADER programme in southern Shropshire had been successful and the programme budget had been confirmed at 2,540,000 euros which was the 13th largest allocation among the 80 LAGS. He commented that the sterling equivalent of the funding would be confirmed annually which could make planning ahead more difficult as the actual sterling programme budget would be dependent on fluctuations in the exchange rate during the period.

4.3 The AONB Partnership Manager informed the meeting that following confirmation of the programme budget, the operational arrangements had been planned in more detail, and a request had been made to DEFRA to enable the Partnership to operate the management and administration (M&A) at the maximum allowable rate of 18%. He advised that the current Co-ordinator's post would be upgraded to take account of the extra responsibility associated with the new programme, and there was a small amount of money in the budget which may be used to pay for a limited amount of work by other Partnership staff. Ms Caffyn queried as to whether core staff could work outside the boundary of the AONB. The AONB Manager said that there would only be a very limited amount of time available for this type of work, so this was unlikely to be a significant issue.

4.4 The AONB Partnership Manager advised that there was need to appoint Approvals and Appraisal Panels and these would need to include representatives from the wider working area of the LEADER programme, and that members would need to be appropriate to the priorities set out in the Natural Growth LDS. He added that the recruitment adverts would be placed shortly. It was hoped that recruitment would be completed in time for members to take advantage of training provided by DEFRA but that if this was not possible, the information gained through this training could be cascaded down to members through local training.

4.5 Mrs Motley advised that she had been appointed to the RDPE Monitoring Board and would feed back any information to the Partnership team.

4.6 Ms Caffyn enquired as to whether the LEADER bid in North Shropshire had been successful. The AONB Manager advised her that following the bid had been turned down and an appeal had been unsuccessful. He added that there were a number of other small grant schemes where projects could submit bids to which may go some way to plugging the gap.

4.7 Mrs Carty queried the level of match funding that would be required and whether this would need to be in the form of cash. The AONB Manager advised that the detail had not yet been received but that in the past "in kind" match funding had been allowed. The intervention rates in this round of LEADER were however considerably lower than previous rounds, typically 40%, so more match funding would be required by projects.

5 Area-Based Working in the AONB

5.1 Members received the report of the AONB Partnership Manager which provided an update on the various area-based partnerships which were operated by or supported by the AONB Partnership.

5.2 The AONB Partnership Manager reminded members that the AONB Partnership team supported a number of local area partnerships which focussed on landscape and conservation issues and supported the work of the Partnership. He advised that currently the Partnership supported the following groups: -

- Wrekin Forest Partnership
- Clun Catchment Partnership
- Clee Hill Partnership
- Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme

and that each group had their own Terms of Reference which were published on the AONB website along with minutes of meetings.

5.3 The AONB Partnership Manager advised Members that, amongst other benefits, the groups were an important means of taking forward the Biodiversity Priority Areas for Action which were one of the key approaches for biodiversity in Shropshire, and that these areas would be a good guide for the development of any further groups in the future.

5.4 Mrs Bedell queried how Nature Improvement Areas were set up (NIAs). The AONB Partnership Manager advised that they could be self-appointing, but the guidance recommended that the support of the Local Nature Partnership along with relevant local stakeholders.

6 Shropshire Hills Shuttles

6.1 Members received a presentation from the Sustainable Business Officer on the Shropshire Hills Shuttles which outlined the performance of the two Shuttles services and proposals for the future running of the service.

6.2 The Sustainable Business Officer informed the meeting that on the whole passenger numbers had increased year on year, but the service was still very dependent on public subsidy and partner contributions.

6.3 Several members made suggestions for alterations to the service which the Sustainable Business Officer agreed to consider.

6.4 The Vice Chairman thanked the Sustainable Business Officer for his presentation.

7 John Muir Award

7.1 The meeting received a presentation on the John Muir Award scheme from the Community and Landscape Officer (Copy attached to minutes). This set out her work with primary schools on the John Muir Award, an environmental award focussed on wild places which consisted of three levels, each having four challenges. She went on to outline some of the work completed to date and worked planned for the future.

7.2 Members congratulated the Community and Landscapes Officer on her valuable work and the Vice Chair thanked her for her presentation.

8 Dates of Next Meetings

8.1 The AONB Partnership Manager reminded members that future meetings of the Partnership would be held on: -

Thursday 25 June 2015
Tuesday 17 November 2015

He advised members that the next meeting would be held in Snailbeach Village Hall and would be followed by the Annual Tour which would be based on the Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: