

AONB PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITY UPDATE

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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 wellbeing, enjoyment and understanding and to further sustainable development.

- **Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme**
 Full update will be given as part of the Tour.
 See also <http://www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk/>
- **LEADER** See agenda item 4.
- **Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund** 14 grants awarded for 2015-16, totalling £25,300 including contributions from Jean Jackson Charitable Trust and Millichope Foundation (see Appendix 1).
- **Rivers** Four year WREN-funded River Clun Recovery Project started in April 2015 (WREN is one of the Landfill Tax funds). Alison Jones is working in the part-time project officer post, initiating contact with landowners (further information in agenda item 7). Management Plans for the recovery sites have been prepared.
<http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/looking-after/projects/rivers/>

FARMSCOOPER in the Clun catchment project is completed and written up, with any comments awaited from participating farmers before publication. FARMSCOOPER is a modelling tool which has been used to identify top farming practice measures to reduce loss of sediment, nitrate and phosphate into the river. This project supports actions and recommendations arising from the River Clun Nutrient Management Plan.

Meeting of Clun Catchment Partnership on 17 June, with proposal to create a locally-determined Nature Improvement Area (NIA) for the Clun Catchment. This should help to give recognition to the ecological value of the catchment and hopefully support future funding bids and provide a focus for work of the Catchment Partnership. It is not an official designation that carries any legal implications. Input to Teme Partnership, Clun Steering Group, and Clun Field Officers Group.

- **Shuttles** services for 2015 under way, including third season of Castle Connect service from Ludlow. Two roadshow events 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..

- **Shropshire Hills Sustainable Business Scheme** stands at 80 members. Consultation in progress regarding changes to streamline the administration of the Scheme and pledge process, e.g. three year membership rather than annual.
- **Promotion** activity. 3 press releases issued (year to date) and continued output on social media. Spring E-newsletter issued. Talks to Strettons Civic Society and Severn Trees Trust, Radio Shropshire interview on rivers work. Review of Communications Strategy.
- **Advice and support** to a range of activities and projects, including Western Power undergrounding programme, joint work with CPRE and Norbury School, Clun Forest History Group.
- Meetings held of **Wrekin Forest Partnership** and draft new Wrekin Forest Plan in preparation.

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.
- Discussions with Woodland Trust and other partners about the possible development of **new woodland project work**, e.g. on PAWS (Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites), woodland social enterprises.

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 basic designed pdf.
- **Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan** Ongoing support to Shropshire Hills and Ludlow Destination Development Partnership.
<http://www.shropshirehillstourismpartnership.org.uk/>
- Input to southern Shropshire Walking Forum and various steering groups led by others.
- **Planning.** Submissions on five planning applications –
 - 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.

Develop the AONB Partnership as an inclusive and effective organisation.

- Input to **National Association for AONBs**, through frequent information sharing and consultations. <http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/>

- Draft constitution prepared for establishing the Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund as a **charity**.
- 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** under way.
- 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 late March.
- **Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB** currently has 128 members (including joint couple/family memberships). Andrew Wood is helping as a volunteer with member recruitment. The annual social event is a tour of the Clun uplands on 12 July.

STAFFING

Alison Jones started on 7 April as Clun Catchment Officer on the River Clun Recovery project.

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.

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 Conservation Fund grants 2015-16

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Name of Organisation	Name of project	Amount of grant	Planned total project value	Rate of grant
South Shropshire Youth Forum	Clee Hill and Church Stretton Young Rangers	£3,000.00	£5,105.50	58.76%
Church Stretton Town Council	Developing a vision for Rectory Wood & Field	£1,000.00	£1,500.00	66.67%
John Osborne Arvon Centre	The Dovecote Meadow and Orchard Project	£2,284.00	£4,213.50	54.21%
Redlake Valley CBS	Raising awareness of woodland conservation and the work of RVCBS	£1,136.00	£2,800.00	40.57%
Loudwater Studio	Five Sites, Five Senses	£2,530.00	£4,283.00	59.07%
Shropshire Wildlife Trust	Discover Shropshire Hills - John Muir Award	£3,000.00	£4,800.00	62.50%
Friends of Pontesford Hill	Pontesford Hill Appeal	£500.00	£207,500.00	0.24%
West Mids Butterfly Conservation	Species Champion - sponsoring a species in the new book covering butterflies of West Mids	£150.00	£4,000.00	3.75%
Leigh Hall Estate	Bromlow Callow Gorse Control	£1,500.00	£3,018.75	49.69%
Stiperstones & Corndon LPS	Built Heritage L3 Training	£1,000.00	£3,220.00	31.06%
Stiperstones & Corndon LPS	Ground Nesting Birds Recovery Project	£3,500.00	£10,005.00	34.98%
Upper Onny Wildlife Group	Upper Onny Invasive Plant Project	£2,200.00	£3,498.00	62.89%
S Wheeler & Son	Bales Education Facilities	£1,000.00	£1,400.00	71.43%
Severn Rivers Trust	Teme Riverflies Training	£2,500.00	£5,260.00	47.53%
TOTAL		£25,300.00	£260,603.75	9.71%