

AONB TEAM WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

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Summary

This paper provides a brief update on AONB team work programme activity since the last meeting.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to comment on the information provided.

Background

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

River Clun Recovery Project

Final work is being carried out at the end of this four year WREN-funded project. Over the 4 years, the majority of the project targets have been met or exceeded:

Riparian habitat creation / restoration - 12,000m. Includes alder coppicing, willow pollarding, fencing

Live willow/soft revetment - 225m across 9 holdings

In-channel habitat creation / restoration - 2 Recovery Sites

Woodland creation (planted by contractors & volunteers) - 4,574 trees, 5,178m of riparian woodland creation / restoration covering 3.39ha

Woodland creation (Woodland Trust funded) – 8,756 trees, 11,696m of riparian woodland creation / restoration covering 5.32 ha

Sustainable watering systems for livestock – 11 systems supplied / installed

Farm track restored / upgraded - 1,100m across 5 holdings

Gateways upgraded - 12

Sediment traps / Attenuation measures – 7 over 4 holdings

Watercourse crossing structures to replace/upgrade fords – 14 over 4 holdings

Through the Environment Agency's 'Unmuddying the Waters' fund, we have facilitated and managed projects over 3 years:

Large scale watercourse fencing & solar pump kits installed 5 sites

Small scale watercourse fencing & solar pump kits installed	3 sites
Farm track restored / upgraded	390m
Gateways upgraded	2
Watercourse crossing structures to replace/upgrade fords	2

A total of 39 holdings have been worked with on these two combined projects.

Further funding is available through Environment Agency's 'Unmuddying the Waters' project and from Woodland Trust, and work in the Clun catchment will continue for a further two years.

Water Environment Grant: Teme – Onny – Clun project

This new project in partnership with Severn Rivers Trust funded by the Environment Agency/ Natural England 'Water Environment Grant' is to provide capacity for improved advice to farmers regarding the water environment. This has just been confirmed, and formal agreements are to be drawn up (this project is not yet included in the budget appended).

Sustainable tourism delivery

The Shropshire Hills Shuttle Bus service will run from the 4th May until the end of September. This year it will also be running into Picklescott twice a day in order to service the pub and many accommodation businesses in the village. This is as a result of discussions with the Picklescott community. National Trust funding of an additional £1,000 towards running the buses is much appreciated. We are hoping that the subscribers scheme that we ran very successfully last year will continue to be popular, but will need to look for additional funding options if we wish to continue the service for 2020.

The Shropshire Hills Tourism Expo will be held at Ludlow Racecourse this year on April 3rd. The Expo is being jointly run by the AONB Partnership and Shropshire Hills Tourism who are funding the venue. A morning of tourism business talks, support, leaflet exchanging and promotion will be followed by a sit down conference in the afternoon, with speakers including Carol Ritchie, Chief Executive of the Europarc Federation, Shane Harris from North Pennines AONB, Tish Dockerty from Local to Ludlow and Cllr Lezley Picton, Portfolio holder for Culture, Leisure and Tourism. All Partnership members are welcome to come, please email alison.kay@shropshire.gov.uk to book your place.

The year we are launching the Great Shropshire Hills Cream Tea Trail in partnership with Shropshire Hills Tourism. The Trail will encourage visitors to explore the destination more widely, spreading the economic benefit and promoting some of our must see places. Local businesses will promote the Shropshire Cream Tea, linking locally distinctive food and skills to what will be a very enjoyable trail experience, and visitors will be able to score their favourite cream teas. The winning venue will be announced at the Ludlow Food Festival in September. The Trail is being sponsored by The Ludlow Farm Shop and funded by Shropshire Hills Tourism and will be launched at the Tourism Expo.

Fix the Fort - The fundraising to repair the ramparts of Caer Caradoc has got off to a reasonable start, raising over £800 in a few months. In addition to funds, we have also raised interest from local people wishing to take part in the restoration work. The fundraising also

being supported by the Church Stretton Walking Festival who are donating the money raised for their Fix the Fort walk, which is part of this year's walk programme.

'Our Common Cause' Upland Commons project

Collective visions are being developed with key stakeholders at the three commons involved in the project in our area – Long Mynd, Stiperstones and Clee Liberty.

The Delivery Phase application is to go in by end of October and good progress is being made with assembling match funding.

Stepping Stones project – the National Trust are continuing to develop this major long term initiative. The proposed test for the new Environment Land Management System has been accepted by Defra to go ahead, and will focus on for farmer engagement and whole farm plans. A Defra team visited recently to discuss this.

Project development

The 'Trees Outside Woods' proposed project is still in discussion with Woodland Trust and an Expression of Interest is to be submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (what used to be the Heritage Lottery Fund). This project will integrate with the proposals for enhancing habitat networks in the Upper Teme.

Preparations are being made to submit funding bids for the Monument Volunteers project.

The Marches Crayfish project continuing into a new phase in 2019, and funding has been pledged by Natural England.

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

The Public consultation has been completed and responses analysed. A meeting is scheduled with NFU representatives to discuss their detailed comments.

The Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening report has been completed.

Local authority liaison

Following the Julian Glover visit, a meeting was held with Shropshire Council for the Chair and Partnership Manager with Cllrs Peter Nutting and Lezley Picton, Clive Wright and Mark Barrow, along with Howard Davies from NAAONB. This is being followed up with a visit by Clive and Mark to see work of the team.

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

Conservation Fund 2018-19 claims are being processed and applications received for 2019-20 grants.

Planning

A response was made to Shropshire Council's Preferred Sites consultation regarding Church Stretton proposed housing sites.

Local partnership working

Meetings have been held of the Shropshire Hills Destination Partnership.

Ongoing meetings with River Clun and Freshwater Pearl Mussel Steering Group.

Communications & public awareness

The 'Great Days in the Shropshire Hills' leaflet for 2019 has been published.

Work has started on the new AONB website which we are planning to launch this summer.

The AONB currently enjoys 3,662 followers on Twitter and 2,410 likes and 2,433 followers on Facebook. Both platforms show gradual but consistent growth in engagement.

Support for groups

Support has been given to the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund project by Land Life & Livelihoods and the Upper Clun Community Wildlife group.

Support has also been given to Bishop's Castle and Church Stretton Walking Festivals.

We are starting to host a post-graduate internship working on the Upper Clun catchment.

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

Structure and governance

Refinements have been made to the redrafted Terms of Reference to satisfy the local authorities' Legal Departments.

Glover Review of AONBs and National Parks – written evidence was submitted in December and Julian Glover visited the Shropshire Hills on 17-18th January.

The Management Board met on 21st Jan – the agenda comprised the AONB Team work programme update, Management Plan consultation, Terms of Reference update, Glover Review, AONB Partnership budgets update, new project development and Business Plan workshop.

Resilient Heritage project

A facilitated Business Planning workshop involving the Management Board and team was held on 30th January.

A theme and location needs to be chosen for the Partnership tour on 19th June.

List of Background Papers
The fuller Team Work Programme as submitted to Defra is 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 AONB Partnership 2019 – 20 budget as bid to Defra

Appendix 2 AONB Partnership team work programme summary

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Budget 2019-20

Expenditure	2019-20	Income	2019-20	
	outline budget		outline budget	%
Staff costs (inclusive of NI, pension, training, T&S)	£229,985	Defra AONB Single Pot	£196,202	63.4%
Salary	£168,738	Shropshire Council	£56,830	18.4%
NI	£17,408	Telford & Wrekin Council	£2,694	0.9%
Superannuation	£25,079	Heritage Lottery Fund (Resilient Heritage)	£19,050	6.2%
Pension lump sum	£16,060	Earned income required into core	£34,804	11.2%
Travel & Subsistence	£1,650			
Training	£1,050			
Office costs	£25,830			
Rent (including broadband & communal services)	£11,050			
Rates	£5,300			
Electricity	£780			
Waste collection & cleaning materials	£900			
Office equipment & maintenance	£500			
Printing & stationery	£1,500			
Postage, phone & mobiles	£1,400			
Office vehicle	£4,400			
Support services	£31,290			
Promotional Activity	£660			
Website hosting and development	£240			
Other promotion	£240			
Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB	£180			
Partnership running costs	£4,150			
AONB Partnership and sub-groups	£1,200			
Subscriptions (NAAONB, Europarc Federation, etc)	£2,950			
Strategic & development work	£3,000			
Development work	£1,000			
Landscape guidance consultancy contract	£2,000			
Resilient Heritage project (non staff costs)	£14,665			
Expert advice contracts	£8,190			
Training for staff & volunteers	£1,475			
Expenses for volunteer Friends recruiters	£400			
Publicity & promotion materials	£2,500			
Evaluation	£1,100			
Contingency	£1,000			
CORE TOTAL	£309,580	CORE TOTAL	£309,580	
RIVERS		RIVERS		
Staff costs (inclusive of NI, pension, training, T&S)	£30,673	Environment Agency	£33,000	
Habitat enhancement works	£15,000	Woodland Trust	£5,000	
		AONB Partnership cash match funding	£7,673	
Freshwater Crayfish project	£3,000	Income for crayfish project	£3,000	
Total	£48,673		£48,673	
SHUTTLES		SHUTTLES		
Long Mynd & Stiperstones service operating costs	£30,456	Ticket Income	£3,900	
Leaflet for next season	£800	Concessionary fare compensation	£3,600	
Miscellaneous running costs		Shropshire Council contribution	£7,500	
		National Trust	£6,000	
		Additional income target	£500	
		Brought forward from reserves	£8,506	
		Passenger donations	£1,250	
Total	£31,256		£31,256	
GRAND TOTAL	£389,509	GRAND TOTAL	£389,509	

Area of work	Key actions and targets
TAKING ACTION - on the ground and in our communities - to conserve and enhance natural beauty and to promote enjoyment and understanding.	
River Clun Catchment Project	Begin new phase of Clun Catchment work with funding from Environment Agency and Woodland Trust
'Our Common Cause' Upland Commons project	Support Foundation for Common Land to complete development phase and submit Phase 2 application, by providing office space for Project Manager, convening Area Group, and providing Area Facilitation role.
Sustainable Tourism delivery	Manage 2019 Long Mynd – Stiperstones Shuttles bus service & plan 2020. Develop the 'Caering for Caradoc – Fix the Fort' appeal.
Develop Young People's project	Including John Muir Award, Young Rangers and Traineeship scheme.
Develop a Monument Volunteers project	Support local people to survey and care for heritage sites at risk.
Develop other new projects	Potentially including Road verges, cross-border habitat networks in the Upper Teme, and National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative.
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 review	Complete formal approval and dissemination of the Management Plan. Continue delivery priorities for team and key partners. Engage people especially on upland farming and post-Brexit land management support.
Water Environment Grant	Deliver farm advice in partnership with Severn Rivers Trust (subject to contract)
AONB Trust	Work closely with the Shropshire Hills AONB Trust to develop fund-raising.
Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund	Support the AONB Trust to implement the fund through grants, and provide advice and support for projects.
Friends of Shropshire Hills AONB	Increase membership of Friends, working with the AONB Trust.
Planning	Comment on relevant LDF documents and key planning applications. Maintain and improve links with local authority planning staff and members.
Local partnership working	Continue to lead Clun Catchment Partnership , input to Teme Partnership & Clun steering groups and support catchment management delivery. Support operation of the Shropshire Hills Destination Partnership . Support delivery of new Shropshire Hills Sustainable Tourism Strategy . Support development of 'Stepping Stones' project led by National Trust. Operate and support local partnership structures including Wrekin Forest .
Input to other strategies & schemes	Provide input to at least 4 strategic consultations (non-planning). Comment on non-planning casework such as EIAs, watercourses and hedges.
Communications & public awareness	Update website and use social media . Publish 4 Enewsletters and Annual Review , give 10 talks .
Local authorities and Partnerships	Maintain links with relevant departments of each local authority. Input to Local Nature Partnership and other groups.
Evidence base	Collate data as part of Management Plan monitoring framework.
Guidance & strategy	Complete Landscape Guidance and develop guidance on AONB website.
Support initiatives led by others	Support at least 15 projects and respond to requests for information.
Support for groups	Support 30 community groups in total (includes through activities above).
MANAGING OUR BUSINESS - develop a robust, effective and financially sustainable AONB organisation.	
Hosting and governance	Work with Shropshire Council to develop hosting relationship, and reconsider Conservation Board when Glover Review recommendations are known.
Resilient Heritage (HLF)	Implement capacity building project with AONB Trust, including Business Plans, communications and engagement, and income generation.
AONB Partnership	Involve members and support & develop the Partnership structure.
AONB Team	Hold monthly team meetings, complete performance reviews and training.
National Association for AONBs	Active involvement with NAAONB and other relevant networks.
Volunteering	Involve 300 volunteers through AONB-led and supported activities.