



<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 1 July 2014 10.45am
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<u>Item</u> 2 Public

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2014

9.30am – 12.05pm

Responsible Officer Tim Ward

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Present

Local Authorities

Shropshire Council

Cllr T Barker (Vice Chair)

Cllr Heather Kidd

Cllr D Turner

Statutory/Voluntary Agencies & Individual members

Individual Member

Alison Caffyn (Vice Chair)

Individual Member

George Chancellor (Chair)

Individual Member

Edward Dugdale

Individual member

Liz Thomas

Individual member

James Williamson

Town & Parish Council representative

Michael Braid

British Horse Society

Ronald Repath

Long Mynd & District Bridleways Association

Sue Lee

Ramblers Association

Sue Jones

Shropshire Geological Society

David C Smith

Shropshire Hills Tourism

Lee Chapman

Strettons Civic Society

Ian Dormor

Upper Onny Wildlife Group and Shropshire

Leo Smith

Ornithological Society

Observers/Officers

Shropshire Council

John Harrison (Environment and Sustainability Manager)

Tim Ward (Committee Officer)

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership staff
team

Pete Banford (LEADER Co-Ordinator)

Clare Fildes (Development Officer)

Phil Holden (AONB Partnership Manager)

Joy Howells (Stiperstones & Corndon Hill Country
Landscape Partnership)

Welcome and Apologies for Absence

1. Apologies for absence were received from Sarah Bury (CPRE), Harriet Carty (Individual Member) Veronica Cossons (Shropshire Wildlife Trust), David Cowell (National Trust), Geoff Grimes (Shropshire Tourism), Deb Hughes (Shropshire Council Officer), Marc Leibrecht (Institute of Chartered Foresters), Fiona Pidduck (Individual Member), Chris Turley (Telford & Wrekin Council), John Voysey (Institute of Chartered Foresters), Bob Welch (Town & Parish Council Rep), Simon West (Forestry Commission) and Michael Whithouse (Caring for God's Acre)

Note of Last Meeting

2. It was resolved that the note of the meeting held on 19 November 2013 be approved.

AONB Partnership Activity Update

3. A report had been circulated updating the Partnership on recent activity by the AONB Partnership staff team.
4. The AONB Partnership Manager took the meeting through the report and highlighted the following points: -
 - The Shuttles service for 2013 had been completed with over 7,500 passenger journeys made between May and September. Two services had been commissioned for 2014, the Long Mynd - Stiperstones Shuttle and the Castle Connect service.
 - Additional funding had been secured for the Sustainable Development Fund, and the Panel were starting to assess the applications for the next round of funding. The annual awards were about to take place and any Partnership members that would like to assist with the Panel were asked to contact the Development Officer as soon as possible.
 - The AONB Management Plan for 2014-19 had been approved by both local authorities, following endorsement by the Partnership and formal observations by Natural England.
 - Further work on the development of a new charitable body linked to the AONB Partnership had taken place, and contract had been let to provide specialist advice. Following receipt of this advice, the Management Board had agreed to take more time to consider the options for this body due to the possibility of potential for divergence of such a body from the aims of the AONB Partnership and the difficulties of establishing the links in an appropriate way. There were also issues around the amount of officer time necessary against the likely financial benefits in the short term.
5. Mr L Smith paid tribute to the AONB Partnership Manager and the AONB staff for all the work involved in the production of the new Management Plan.
6. The AONB Partnership Manager then took the meeting through the new staff structure. He informed the meeting that Mike Kelly had taken up a new broader

- role as Natural Environment Officer across the whole AONB. He went on to advise that the Planning & Landscape Officer was being made redundant at the end of March due to financial cuts. It was intended that the planning role would now be split between other members of staff and that he would maintain oversight of planning matters.
- 7 Mrs Kidd expressed concern regarding the capacity of the team to deal with planning matters, as with the current difficulties caused by the lack of a five year land supply she expected number of applications would be made. The AONB Partnership Manager shared the concern, but said that the level of planning policy work had reduced and that a number of the staff would be involved with dealing with planning matters. The Chair commented that there was need to have a degree of co-ordination to ensure that nothing was missed.
- 8 The AONB Partnership Manager then took the meeting through the budget update. He advised the meeting that staff costs had risen in the 2014 - 15 budget due to the fact that Mike Kelly's salary now formed part of the core budget rather than the project budget as previously. He went on to say that further consideration was being given to alternative office accommodation for a number of reasons including operational, the possibility of reducing costs and also financial risk.
- 9 The Chair commented that securing a future round of LEADER was a critical part of the future for the AONB Partnership.

Shropshire Council Reorganisation

10. The Environment and Sustainability Manager advised the meeting that he would be leaving Shropshire Council shortly. He went on to say that his leaving had prompted a review of the management arrangements for the hosting of the AONB Partnership staff team. The Partnership would be moving to the Outdoor Recreation Partnerships team under Deb Hughes. Mr Leo Smith highlighted the need for the team to retain links with other parts of the Council including natural environment, following the reorganisation.
11. The Chair thanked the Environment and Sustainability Manager for all the work he had done on behalf of the Partnership and the AONB. The AONB Partnership Manager and other members of the Partnership echoed these sentiments.

Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme

12. The meeting received a presentation from Joy Howells, Landscape Partnership Manager on the Stiperstones and Corndon Country Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme, which outlined the current work being undertaken and future plans for the scheme.
13. The Chair commented that it was a good scheme that would also make a valuable contribution to the local economy. The Chair thanked the Landscape Partnership Manager for all the work she had undertaken in getting the scheme under way. He looked forward to further updates on the progress of the Scheme, and potentially visits as part of a Partnership Tour.

LEADER 2015 – 19

14. A report had been circulated making a recommendation that the AONB Partnership bid to be the LEADER Local Action Group (LAG) for the Shropshire Hills for the 2015-20 round of funding.
15. The LEADER Co-ordinator reminded the Partnership that transition funding had been secured which had enabled an extension to his post, and that during this year a review of the performance of the 2009 - 13 programme would be carried out and a new Local Development Strategy (LDS) would be prepared for submission by August 2014.
16. The LEADER Co-ordinator advised the meeting that the priorities set by DEFRA for the next round of LEADER were:
 - Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification
 - Support for increasing farm productivity
 - Support for rural tourism
 - Support for increasing forestry productivity
 - Provision for rural services
 - Support for cultural and heritage activity

He said that these priorities offered great potential for the AONB but there was need to explore the risks and potential conflicts between the priorities and the primary purpose of the AONB. He added that the development of a LDS which fitted with the aims of the AONB should overcome any potential conflicts.

17. The LEADER Co-ordinator reminded the meeting that the Partnership had earlier expressed a preference to continue with the same area as previously. DEFRA had expressed a wish for LEADER to cover rural areas not previously covered, which was also supported by Shropshire Council, but the levels of money available were not yet clear. The AONB Partnership Manager commented that it had been suggested within Shropshire Council that the possibility of having one LAG to cover the whole of the county should be investigated, but that he felt that this would be impractical. He added that there possibly two other LAGs being applied for, one in the north of the county and one in the Severn Valley.
18. The Environment & Sustainability Manager informed the meeting that he had attended a meeting at DEFRA and they had stressed the importance of the economic activities within LEADER. The programme needed to connect with other funding schemes through the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) but was seen as an opportunity to pilot approaches. He went on to say that it was important that the three potential LAGs did not compete with each other and that if necessary some sort of compromise should be reached.
19. After further discussion it was resolved that the Partnership -
 - i support the development and submission of a new LEADER Local Development Strategy for 2015-2020, linking economic outputs strongly to the qualities of the AONB, and with the AONB Partnership as the Local Action Group (with detailed structures to be decided in due course).
 - li approve the role of the LEADER Development Group to support development of the LDS, with any significant decisions coming back to the Partnership.

Proposed Clee Hill Heritage Project

20. A report had been circulated giving a summary of the proposed Clee Hill Heritage Project.
21. The Development Officer took the meeting through the report and outlined the aims and objectives for the scheme which were to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of Titterstone Clee and surrounding area for the benefit of local people, visitors and the local economy. She went on to outline the range of activity that was proposed.
22. The Development Officer advised the meeting that an application would be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund. and that if successful stage 1 funding would allow the employment of a full time project development officer to draw together a detailed stage 2 application. If this were successful, funding would be used to deliver project activity over 2016 – 2019.
23. Following further discussion it was resolved that the Partnership –
note the proposals for the Clee Hill Heritage Project and the opportunity to input comments to the further development phase if the stage 1 bid is successful.

Planning Update (verbal)

24. The AONB Partnership Manager advised the meeting that at the Shropshire Council Cabinet meeting where the final SAMDev document was discussed, the New House Farm site had been removed as a preferred site and other sites in Church Stretton had been agreed.
25. The Chair informed the meeting that he had spoken at the Cabinet meeting on behalf of the AONB Partnership.
26. The AONB Partnership Manager warned the meeting that as the Council did not have a 5 year land supply there may still be a planning application made for the New House Farmsite and that we must be vigilant for this.

Date of Next Meeting

27. The Chair advised members that due to the original date clashing with the Conference of the National Association for AONBs, the date for the July meeting had been changed and that dates for future meeting were confirmed as :-

Tuesday 1 July 2014 and
Tuesday 18 November 2014