

**Item 3 Update on AONB Team work programme**

**CORE STAFF WORK PROGRAMME (by nationally defined core functions)**

Summarised below are some key activities of the AONB Core Staff from November 2006 to April 2007.

**a) Developing reviewing, preparing and publishing the AONB vision and the CRoW Act AONB Management Plan.**

- Position statement on sustainable tourism approved.
- Evaluation questionnaire on the AONB Management Plan analysed.
- Process for review of Management Plan agreed and work commenced on Sustainability Appraisal scoping.

**b) Promoting the AONB vision and management plan to help distinguish the AONB from adjacent countryside.**

- Evaluation carried out on new visitor-oriented Shropshire Hills portal web page ([www.shropshirehills.info](http://www.shropshirehills.info)) and improvements made.
- 2 press releases issued including on SCC Scrutiny Panel and events programme.
- Article in Explore the Marches.
- Work on distribution of Shropshire Hills souvenir booklet.
- Appearance in BBC Countryfile feature on the Shropshire Hills.
- Preparation begun for AONB 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary activities in 2008.

**c) Advising upon, facilitating and co-ordinating implementation by others of the Management Plan.**

- Submission of 10 further electricity cable undergrounding proposals to regional panel.
- Meetings of Farming Working Group and Access, Recreation & Tourism Working Group, and first meetings of Long Mynd – Stiperstones Group and Historic Environment Working Group.
- Support/ advice for projects, including :
  - Clee Hill Conservation Management Plan
  - Hopton Castle restoration
  - Wrekin Forest project
  - Promotion material for Shropshire Hills Shuttles
  - Upper Clun Wildlife Group
  - South Shropshire tourism brochure
  - Shropshire walking, cycling and riding websites
  - Much Wenlock Windmill restoration

**d) Advising Local Authorities on their activities within AONBs, to encourage them to go beyond normal levels of service (attain the highest possible standards) in countryside management.**

- Detailed input to Shropshire Geodiversity Action Plan and Shropshire Countryside Access Strategy.
- Chairing South Shropshire Partnership Environment Ambition Group and attendance at Shropshire Partnership Environment Forum.
- Attendance at Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre Advisory Panel.

**e) Monitoring and reporting on progress against AONB Management Plan targets.**

- Detailed report provided and attendance at Shropshire County Council Community Services Scrutiny Panel.

**f) Monitoring AONB landscape condition.**

- Further gathering and analysis of GIS and other data towards publication of 'State of the AONB' report.
- Noise monitoring contract completed by Entec – 15 sample points around the AONB.

**g) Accessing resources for management activities.**

- 2007-8 Natural England project bids submitted with 6 elements – local products, river habitat management, Shropshire Hills Shuttles, Wrekin Forest project, free trees scheme and Shropshire Way.
- Work on new project development, including stakeholder consultation event to inform new project bid to Heritage Lottery Fund.
- Liaison with county and regional bodies re Rural Development Plan for England Regional Implementation Plan.
- Discussion with Shropshire Geological Society regarding possible hosting of geology project officer funded by Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund.
- Liaison with South Shropshire Food Events Group and Local to Ludlow over bid for further development of Farmers Markets.

**h) Working with and contributing to the NAAONB activities, sharing advice and best practice nationally and regionally.**

- Attendance at Regional Chairs and lead officers meeting (West Midlands and Wales).
- Attendance at West Midlands Protected Landscapes Forum, including visit to Cannock Chase with Natural England Regional Director and AONB Chairs.
- Attendance at national review meeting on Sustainable Development Fund.
- Support for NAAONB stand at the Outdoors Show, NEC, Birmingham.
- Attendance at NAAONB training seminars on planning and Management Plan review.
- Attendance at Europarc conference on climate change and protected landscapes.

**i) Providing a management role to co-ordinate AONB protection through the actions of the AONB unit, the AONB partnership and other partners at a local and strategic level.**

- Detailed comments made on consultation on West Midlands Economic Strategy.
- Liaison with Shropshire and West Midlands Biodiversity Partnerships regarding biodiversity projects and target setting.
- Liaison with Natural England regarding climate change adaptation pilot project and Natural England Multiple Objectives Project, both focussed on the Shropshire Hills.
- Team training and development day undertaken at Cardingmill Valley.

**j) Developing an involvement by the community in the management of the AONB.**

- Approval of additional Sustainable Development Fund projects for 2006-7 utilising underspend from other AONBs in the region. 23 projects supported in 2006-7.
- Approval by SDF Grant Advisory Panel of 15 projects for 2007-8.
- Further support to Clun Forest 'Land, Life & Livelihoods' group, including a series of 'Green Futures' events organised jointly with Rural Hubs.

**k) Providing landscape related planning advice.**

- Led preparation of joint response to consultation on West Midlands Spatial Strategy from the four West Midlands AONBs.
- Comments on Shropshire County Council Core Strategy and Minerals Development Plan Document.
- Consultation with AONB Partnership on planning applications at Stoke St Milborough.

- Continued support for Church Stretton Town Design Statement, including development of Tree Strategy.
- Phase 1 completed of landscape sensitivity and capacity mapping project (in partnership with 3 District Councils).

<b>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND (SDF)</b>
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Most projects have been completed as planned and final claims are being processed. The list of approved projects for 2006-7 and grant paid to date is shown below.

<b>Grantee</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Amount of grant</b>	<b>Planned total project value</b>	<b>Total grant paid to date</b>	<b>Projection</b>
Rotary Club of Church Stretton	Church Stretton Town Trail	£1,000	£2,382	<b>£1,117.28</b>	<i>£1,117.28</i>
Green Wood Centre	Coppicing and wood certification	£10,000	£25,250	<b>£5,884.96</b>	<i>£10,000.00</i>
Clun Forest - Land, Life and Livelihoods	Land, Life and Livelihoods	£6,000	£13,500	<b>£5,401.06</b>	<i>£7,000.00</i>
Leo Smith	Monitoring and conservation of priority bird species	£10,000	£24,700	<b>£9,237.82</b>	<i>£10,000.00</i>
Hopesay Glebe Farm	Bee-keeping enterprise	£6,620	£11,364	<b>£6,620.00</b>	<i>£7,400.00</i>
Little Wenlock Parish Council	Little Wenlock Benchwalks	£5,500	£8,950	<b>£2,235.53</b>	<i>£5,500.00</i>
Sue Lee	Building Holiday Cabin Accommodation	£5,000	£15,000	<b>£5,000.00</b>	<i>£6,000.00</i>
Soil Association	Food, Farming and the Living Landscape workshops in schools	£3,300	£4,400	<b>£3,300.00</b>	<i>£3,300.00</i>
Glebe Farm	Native Orchid recovery	£1,500	£3,950	<b>£1,596.73</b>	<i>£1,597.00</i>
Ludlow 21 Food and Farming Group	Farmers Market development I	£1,450	£1,975	<b>£1,450.00</b>	<i>£1,450.00</i>
Ditton Priors Parish Council	Steps to toposcope on Brown Clew	£1,500	£2,000	<b>£1,418.00</b>	<i>£1,418.00</i>
Caring For God's Acre	New churchyards leaflet	£3,500	£5,764	<b>£0.00</b>	<i>£3,500.00</i>
Worthen School	Ecolab	£2,000	£6,000	<b>£0.00</b>	<i>£2,000.00</i>
Norbury Walls Group	Stone wall restoration	£3,000	£12,475	<b>£0.00</b>	<i>£3,000.00</i>
Much Wenlock Windmill Trust	Phase II Windmill Hill Conservation	£3,000	£24,440	<b>£627.55</b>	<i>£3,000.00</i>
Shropshire Highland Services	Feasibility Study for SHS Power Plant	£5,000	£50,000	<b>£0.00</b>	<i>£0.00</i>
Ludlow 21 Food and Farming Group	Farmers Market development II	£5,875	£10,286	<b>£3,943.87</b>	<i>£5,875.00</i>
The Park, Minsterley	Biodigester	£2,400	£4,800	<b>£0.00</b>	<i>£2,400.00</i>
Think Graphic	Shropshire Hills childrens activity book	£3,600	£4,225	<b>£3,600.00</b>	<i>£3,600.00</i>
Ludlow 21 - Ludlow Green Festival	Ludlow Green Festival planning	£2,475	£4,388	<b>£0.00</b>	<i>£2,475.00</i>
Church Stretton Area Tourism Group	Church Stretton station gardens	£2,349	£5,331	<b>£2,348.74</b>	<i>£2,348.74</i>
Clun Forest Group - Events	Land, Life & Livelihoods events	£1,175	£1,600	<b>£0.00</b>	<i>£1,175.00</i>
Clun Forest Group - Marketing Group	Collaborative Marketing Group	£1,330	£1,800	<b>£0.00</b>	<i>£1,330.00</i>
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>£87,574</b>	<b>£244,580</b>	<b>£53,781.54</b>	<b>£85,486</b>

**Projects approved for 2007-8 are as follows:**

N.B. Formal grant offers cannot be made until the SDF grant offer from Natural England is received.

<b>Name of Organisation</b>	<b>Brief description</b>	<b>proposed grant</b>	<b>Planned total project value</b>
Marches Energy Agency	Energy advice to tourism businesses in AONB	<b>£6,300</b>	£13,333
Soil Association	Field Days for schools on food, farming and landscape	<b>£6,300</b>	£13,275
Church Stretton Area Tourism Group	Sustainable tourism strategy for Church Stretton	<b>£4,910</b>	£7,420
Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group	Farm conservation advice	<b>£6,300</b>	£13,642
Leo Smith	Conservation of Threatened Birds	<b>£6,300</b>	£30,000
Kate Grubb	Sustainable Tourism Advice Network	<b>£5,184</b>	£6,912
Moral Fibre	Adding value to wool & feltmaking courses	<b>£4,761</b>	£6,348
Hopton Castle Preservation Trust	Site surveys & reports for castle restoration	<b>£2,000</b>	£63,000
Ludlow 21 Food & Farming Group	Shropshire Hills Local Produce Sustainable Marketing Initiative	<b>£7,000</b>	£13,440
Arbor Vitae	Greenscene - Audit of non-food products	<b>£7,000</b>	£14,400
National Trust	Sustainable transport	<b>£3,500</b>	£5,600
Karuna	Organic food/polytunnel/pond restoration	<b>£1,000</b>	£4,200
Bulmer Foundation	Sustainable Development Advocacy course, student bursaries	<b>£5,000</b>	£16,000
Oak Farm	Community Composting Scheme	<b>£3,500</b>	£7,000
Shropshire Children's Scrapstore	Recycling workshops for schools	<b>£2,940</b>	£4,590
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>£71,995</b>	<b>£318,511</b>

**OTHER PROJECTS**

Natural England project grants obtained the AONB Partnership for 2006-7 have been passed on to the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) for farm advisory visits in the Upper Onny area, and to the Shropshire Wildlife Trust for the Wrekin Forest project. Both of these projects have progressed as expected. We are awaiting news on our project bids for 2007-8.

For further information please contact Phil Holden on 01588 674088 or by email at [phil.holden@shropshire-cc.gov.uk](mailto:phil.holden@shropshire-cc.gov.uk).

## BLUE REMEMBERED HILLS PROJECT – WORK PROGRAMME

Summarised below are some key activities of the Blue Remembered Hills project from January to March 2007.

### Project Management:

- Outputs - On target, no current concerns for under achieving planned outputs.
- Budget - Quarter 1 spend is 2% over budget, although an extra £8,000 has been gained from Natural England to cover activity that Di Monether is unable to do, as she is off sick. Some allowance was already included in the planned budget for cover, so this money means we have an extra £6,500 to spend.
- Some of this is envisaged to be spent on evaluation and audio interpretation work.
- Staff - Sue Perry has been covering 2 days per week for Di Monether but will be leaving at the end of April.

### Discover:

- The BRH Exhibition artists have been appointed and the ideas are very exciting. The installation will form part of the new permanent exhibitions at the Discovery Centre from 2008.
- 20,000 Shropshire Hills Event Calendars have been produced.
- We have contributed to 30,000 Explore the Marches brochures.
- The first of three Taste Shropshire magazine editions for the year has been published (35,000)
- The Onny Orchard panel has been designed and will be printed soon.
- Projects planned at Oak Farm, Ditton Priors (a cafe and school for adults with learning difficulties), The Park, Minsterley (a commercial dairy farm) and in conjunction with Rea Valley Down to Earth.
- Evaluation survey of the impact of BRH is being conducted - with 24 schools responding so far.

### Engage:

- 22 landowners have been contacted and advised on conservation.
- Teenagers at Pontesbury Secondary school have been approached about the Down to Earth scheme and are keen to set up their own steering group.
- The feeder schools in the area are also being approached to get involved.
- 107 sites have taken free trees - this include community groups and schools.

### Conserve:

- A remarkable 18,087 local provenance trees have been planted this year (resulting in 49,291 through the life of the project).
- 58 black poplar trees have been planted on 19 sites.
- 3 more lengths of river have been coppiced.
- 3 more veteran tree management plans have been completed.
- 3 black poplar trees have been managed.
- 8 new grazing sites have been managed and another 2 brought under a new grazing regime.

### Sustain:

- Work continues on developing the supply chain for alder products and on the Farmers Markets.

- A project outline has been accepted from Craven Arms Community Food for the Reaching Communities Lottery Fund.
- A project bid is being developed for local scoping work.
- Church Stretton Area Tourism Group are consulting businesses on future activity for the area.
- The Sustainable Transport scheme has gained funding for a further year.
- A meeting with Forestart has identified problems with marketing the wildflower seed. A new approach of selling in smaller packs for the garden market is being investigated.

The Blue Remembered Hills project budgets are reported to the Project Management Group, a sub-group of the AONB Partnership.

For further information please contact Clare Fildes on 01588 674090 or by email at [clare.fildes@shropshire-cc.gov.uk](mailto:clare.fildes@shropshire-cc.gov.uk).