

### Item 3 Update on AONB Team 2007-8 work programme and budgets

#### STAFFING

Clare Fildes has been appointed as Development Officer (full time permanent).

#### 2007-8 WORK PROGRAMME SUMMARY PROGRESS UPDATE, AT 26/11/07

##### Successes

- Two major pieces of **strategic work** in support of planning in the AONB are nearing completion. The Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study will be used to inform Site Allocations documents, and the Church Stretton Town Design Statement is about to go to print.
- Operation of the **AONB Partnership** continues to be strengthened – individual member seats were oversubscribed in the recent review, and a Wrekin Forest Partnership linked to the AONB is shortly to be formed. The Long Mynd – Stiperstones Group is successfully engaging farmers and community representatives. The new core Development Officer post has been filled.
- The **Blue Remembered Hills Project** is completing its last outputs before ending in December. Down to Earth Celebration Events were recently held in the Clun Forest, Clee Hills and Rea Valley. The cycle route at Eastridge Wood was recently opened, and a number of training events on the landscape for Walking for Health leaders have been held.
- 16 projects supported by the **Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)** are progressing well, including:
  - FWAG have run several “Farmers’ Den” advisory clinics, also involving SSDC’s Planning Dept.
  - The Sustainable Tourism Advice Network held a successful open day at Ecocabin and Buckshead Cottage.
  - The Church Stretton Sustainable Tourism Initiative held a well attended event for local businesses.
  - 200 businesses are being invited to feature in the Shropshire Hills Local Products website.
  - A student from the Holme Lacy College MSc course in ‘Sustainable Development Advocacy’ has been on placement with the AONB Partnership looking at transport issues.
- **Other externally funded project work** includes:
  - Alder coppicing and management plans at 10 sites, including a significant partnership collaboration at Clun Castle between English Heritage and Environment Agency.
  - The Local Products directory (printed) is in preparation, to complement the website.
  - The Shropshire Hills Christmas Wood Fair was held at the Green Wood Centre on 17 November. Seminars on climate change, woodlands and wood fuel attracted up to 48 people.

##### Challenges and Issues

- Work on review of the **AONB Management Plan** is behind schedule. The supporting documents of the ‘State of the AONB’ report and ‘Sustainability Appraisal Scoping report’ are also behind. Appointment of the Development Officer should free more time to progress these.
- The situation and outlook on **funding** is mixed. Recent project bids to Esmee Fairbairn Foundation for local food work, and to the Forestry Commission for a small woodlands

project were unsuccessful. Natural England's budget is going to be tight in 2008-9 due to Defra's budget difficulties, leaving in particular project and SDF funding vulnerable.

- The AONB Partnership appears well placed with its bid to deliver **LEADER** as part of the Rural Development Programme for England 2007-13. Relevant partners are helping to deliver a bid for submission by 4 Jan 08.
- The programme of **undergrounding of electricity cables** is not progressing well. Having asked AONBs for suggestions of schemes and allocated £6m in their area, Central Networks are rejecting most suggestions as impractical because of rocky ground. If this programme is to deliver landscape benefits as intended, the rules on spending allocation need to be changed.
- 2008 brings challenges and opportunities with the **50<sup>th</sup> anniversary** of designation of the Shropshire Hills AONB, proposed launch of a 'Friends of the Shropshire Hills' group, and hosting the national AONB Conference. Capacity just about exists to do justice to these occasions.

#### UPDATE ON CORE BUDGET

Below is a summary of current expenditure of the core budget at 20 November 2007. Points to note include:

1. Staff costs are lower than expected due to delays in filling the Development Officer post.
2. The 10% contribution towards the Community Officer post from the Sustainable Development Fund is reduced as only £70,000 was offered for SDF instead of the £100,000 bid.
3. Office costs – Rent & Services. The spend to date includes £10,000 paid towards the window replacement bill, and allows for the remaining £7,206 to be paid this Financial Year. £10,000 contribution has also been paid by SCC Property Services, and projections assume a further £10,000 contribution to be made. This item puts considerable pressure on the overall budget, and results in significant curtailing of other activities.
4. Rates are higher than expected – an appeal on the rateable value is outstanding.
5. The study on economic value of AONB landscape and Sustainable Tourism & Interpretation guidance have had to be shelved due to lack available funds. The agricultural buildings design guide can hopefully be published next Financial Year.
6. The spring 2007 newsletter was not produced this year due to vacancy in the Promotions & Recreation Officer post. The Autumn newsletter was shelved due to workload, coincidence of timing with the Annual Review, and plans for a more significant publication as the Events guide in spring 2008.
7. Budget for 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary activity up to March 2008 is restricted to £1,800 for the Events programme and £600 for 3 new mobile display panels.
8. Money originally allocated for external help with project development was reallocated earlier in the Financial year to the Development Officer post.

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).

## Core Budget Summary at 20 November 2007

<u>Expenditure</u>	Sub-heading budgeted cost	Sub total budgeted cost	Actual spend at 20/11/07	Month 8 Profile estimate	Predicted outturn at year end
<b>Staff costs</b>		<b>157,277</b>	<b>82,290</b>	<b>107,057</b>	<b>149,133</b>
Salaries	131,989		64,677	84,473	127,964
National Insurance	8,886		4,433	5,687	8,635
Superannuation	13,502		7,418	8,641	11,838
Travel & Subsistence	8,200		1,926	5,248	3,000
Training	4,700		1,640	3,008	2,500
Advertising & recruitment costs			2,196	0	2,196
Contribution from SDF	-10,000		0	0	-7,000
<b>Office costs</b>		<b>27,358</b>	<b>33,357</b>	<b>17,458</b>	<b>52,626</b>
Rent & services	12,000		19,975	7,680	34,181
Rates	5,584		7,976	5,584	7,976
Cleaning	2,000		530	1,280	1,637
Office equipment & maintenance	3,000		2,546	1,920	3,978
Printing & stationery	4,500		3,059	2,880	4,780
Postage & telecommunications	6,000		4,997	3,840	5,800
BRH contribution	-5,726		-5,726	-5,726	-5,726
<b>Research &amp; Monitoring</b>		<b>8,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,900</b>	<b>4,400</b>
Publish State of the AONB report	3,000		0	0	2,500
Study on economic value of AONB landscape	5,000		0	0	0
OS licence fee	0		1,900	1,900	1,900
<b>Promotional Activity</b>		<b>9,900</b>	<b>4,206</b>	<b>6,381</b>	<b>6,947</b>
Newsletter	3,000		302	1,500	302
Events publicity	1,900		200	1,216	2,000
Website development	1,000		175	640	500
Annual Review	2,000		1,745	1,745	1,745
Promotion, including coverage in others' publications	2,000		1,784	1,280	2,400
<b>Strategic Policy &amp; Guidance</b>		<b>2,500</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>6,500</b>
Sustainable Tourism & Interpretation guidance	2,500		0		0
Publish agricultural buildings design guidance	0		0		0
Landscape Sensitivity contract	0		5,000	5,000	5,000
Church Stretton Town Design Statement	0		0		1,500
<b>Project development</b>		<b>12,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7,680</b>	<b>0</b>
Consultancy to assist with project development and funding bids					
<b>Volunteer and Community Support</b>		<b>2,500</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>1,600</b>	<b>400</b>
Support for Parish Plans, community groups and volunteering					
<b>Meeting and Partnership costs</b>		<b>2,844</b>	<b>1,532</b>	<b>1,820</b>	<b>2,373</b>
<b>TOTAL ELIGIBLE COSTS</b>		<b>222,379</b>	<b>126,585</b>	<b>148,896</b>	<b>222,379</b>