

### **Item 3. Recap on purpose and Terms of Reference of Transition Board, and general situation/progress to date**

#### **1. Summary**

This paper presents a general update for clarity at this first meeting of the Transition Board.

#### **2. Background**

- i. The Terms of Reference of the Transition Board are provided at Appendix 1. For flexibility, these do not state that the AONB Partnership Chair and Vice Chairs will necessarily take these roles on the Transition Board. For correctness, this item should therefore include election of Chair of the Transition Board (for which James is willing to stand) and a Vice Chair.
- ii. General progress. The AONB Partnership meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> June supported Conservation Board as the preferred option for an independent body and appointed the Transition Board. Just before this, a useful meeting was held at Craven Arms on 9<sup>th</sup> June with Chris Blake of Defra and representatives of both Councils.
- iii. Both Councils have clarified that they need to take a decision to their Cabinets before making the formal request to Defra to initiate creation of a Conservation Board. The dates for these are set as follows: Shropshire Council 19<sup>th</sup> October and Telford & Wrekin Council 13<sup>th</sup> October. Both Councils have internal processes for signing off the Business Case prior to these dates.
- iv. An additional AONB Partnership meeting has been scheduled for Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> September at 9.30am at Craven Arms Community Centre, to endorse the Business Case prior to the Council Cabinets. Item 5 on today's agenda includes the first full draft of the Business Case.
- v. Negotiations between the AONB Partnership Chair and Shropshire Council regarding future levels of Council funding support have not been concluded, and this creates some uncertainty in the budget which will need resolving sufficiently before the October Cabinet reports.
- vi. Philip Dunne, MP for Ludlow, wrote to the Defra Minister Rory Stewart on 9<sup>th</sup> May about the proposed move to independence for the Shropshire Hills AONB and received a reply on 9<sup>th</sup> June which we have seen. Unfortunately, Rory Stewart has since moved to a different department. On 17<sup>th</sup> July, Lord Gardiner of Kimble was appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at Defra with responsibility for landscape (including AONBs), along with biosecurity strategy, commercial projects and climate change adaptation.
- vii. There is no firm indication of the implications for the proposal to create a Conservation Board of the UK referendum decision to leave the EU, though it is clear that capacity in government departments including Defra will be significantly affected for some time.
- viii. Following further restructuring within Shropshire Council, the AONB Partnership Manager is now being line managed by Chris Edwards, Head of Infrastructure and Communities within George Candler's 'Place and Enterprise' Directorate.
- ix. An internal discussion is scheduled within Shropshire Council during August regarding the possibility of an asset transfer involving Drovers House.
- x. The new Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), the Shropshire Hills AONB Trust was registered by the Charities Commission on 26<sup>th</sup> July. The name was changed from Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund to avoid possible confusion with the proposed Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Board. The existing four trustees will now be

appointing additional trustees to the full complement of eight, comprising one further appointee from the AONB Partnership and three trustees not connected to the Partnership. A public advert will be placed for these and a simple application and interview process operated.

**3. RECOMMENDATION:**

**The Transition Board is recommended to appoint a Chair and Vice Chair, and to note and comment on general progress.**

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**Appendix 1 AONB Transition Board Terms of Reference**