

Shropshire Hills AONB Transition Board
Minutes of Meeting Tuesday 27th September 2016
AONB Partnership office, Drovers House, Craven Arms



Present:

James Williamson (Chair)	Individual member, AONB Partnership Chair
George Chancellor	Individual member, AONB Partnership Vice Chair
Hilary Claytonsmith	Town/Parish Council representative
Cllr Cecilia Motley (Vice Chair)	Shropshire Council, AONB Partnership Vice Chair
Cllr Chris Turley	Telford & Wrekin Council
Cllr David Turner	Shropshire Council
Andrew Wood	Co-opted member
Janine Hayter	Parish Council representative

AONB Partnership staff:

Phil Holden	AONB Partnership Manager
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1. Apologies

Veronica Cossons	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
Neil Willcox	Shropshire Council
Heather Kidd	Shropshire Council

James Williamson welcomed Andrew and Janine to the Transition Board.

2. Minutes of Management Board meeting of 9th August 2016 and Matters Arising

- 2.1 The minutes were agreed as correct. All actions had been completed. It was agreed that an appeal on business rates should be pursued – **ACTION Phil**.

3. Progress towards Council Cabinet decisions on Business Case

- 3.1 Phil reported that progress through the internal processes of both Councils leading to the Cabinet meetings appeared to be good. Neil was currently on leave, but had sent round the Cabinet report with the Business Case to relevant colleagues in Shropshire Council Finance, Legal, etc. Phil was continuing to work with SC Finance on final presentation of budget and cash flow information, but had not heard of any problems being raised.
- 3.2 Fran Lancaster had been progressing the report through Telford & Wrekin Council's processes, and following the answering of some queries, it had been through the Senior Management Team. Thanks were due to both Neil and Fran for their support.
- 3.3 Cecilia said that she had been asked to present the Shropshire Council Cabinet paper and was checking about any conflicts of interest, though she would not be available to be there in person and may have a statement read by someone else.
- 3.4 The current draft of the Business Case documents had been circulated, and Hilary raised some concerns about the vision, which she felt did not tie closely enough to AONB purposes, conserving and enhancing natural beauty, etc. After discussion it was agreed that the wording was aimed at this stage at securing Defra approval and could be refined further in future. The

word 'their' in the third bullet point would be removed. Rather than describing it as a 'vision', it was felt better to introduce it with "Our aspirations for the Conservation Board are to be:"

4. Contact with Defra re criteria for decision, approach to Minister etc

- 4.1 Phil said that he had last week at an Uplands Alliance event in London briefly met Margaret Read, who was now overseeing the Defra Protected Landscapes team. Following this conversation, a letter had been sent to her by James seeking greater clarity on Defra's process for the decision, which had been circulated. Phil had also done some work on the arguments why a Conservation Board was appropriate to the Shropshire Hills as a large AONB with two authorities. It was agreed that the existence of large rural unitary authorities had changed the picture since the CROW Act was written. The reasons why the current structure or merging more closely into Shropshire Council were not felt viable would also need to be made clear in the submission to Defra.
- 4.2 Cecilia mentioned that the trajectory of local government was uncertain, but that continued greater amalgamation or sharing of services across county boundaries may have implications.
- 4.3 Janine felt that the documents so far did not get across the benefits to decision making processes. The need to emphasise the uniqueness of our situation was also stressed.
- 4.4 The timescale for the submission to Defra was discussed, and the end of November was agreed as a target date. It was agreed that the Business Case document would need refining for Defra from the version submitted to the Councils. **ACTION – Phil to work on this with others.**
- 4.5 It was agreed that seeking to contact the Defra Minister Lord Gardiner via Philip Dunne should be pursued now, though the timing of a meeting would be best once the Councils had approved the case at their Cabinets. **ACTION – James.**

5. Engagement with key organisations & public – leaflet, meetings etc

- 5.1 It was agreed that though the answer from Defra regarding the timing of their consultation would make a difference, our process of engagement still needed to win hearts and minds. It needed to be prepared now, so as to be put into effect quickly after the Council Cabinet meetings. The approach was supported of writing with the leaflet to relevant organisations, backed up by requests for face to face meetings with certain key organisations, along with wider public engagement through AONB communication channels.
- 5.2 Janine felt that the leaflet needed to convey more of the good work the AONB Partnership was doing and put across that the proposal was to do more of this more cost efficiently, rather than starting something completely new. This was supported. It was also agreed the leaflet did not need to go into so much detail about the approval process, etc.
- 5.3 The Board discussed the incorrect recent coverage by the South Shropshire Journal of the AONB Trust formation (which stated that the Trust was to take over hosting the Partnership from the Council). In the hope of avoiding confusion, the Board agreed to exclude any mention of the new Trust from the leaflet.

- 5.4 It was agreed to try to meet each of the local ward councillors to provide them with additional information to help them in any discussions with Parish Councils. **ACTION – Phil and James.**
- 5.5 A single fold format (i.e. A5 pamphlet) was preferred, and it was felt that in-house 'design' on Publisher was more appropriate than involving an external designer. **ACTION – Phil to pursue, with Janine and Nigel.**

6. Project enquiry for HLF 'Resilient Heritage' Fund

- 6.1 Phil outlined his conversation with HLF, and that a full application would be pursued, preferably coming from the new AONB Trust rather than the Partnership. The delivery mechanism for various of the activities was discussed, with the options of commissioning consultants, taking on new staff capacity or using existing staff and volunteers. It was agreed that commissioning consultants was probably the best way to go for many of the aspects in view of the limited resources within the team and that the benefits of getting aspects such as fund raising started ASAP would ultimately produce the best payback. The process of making the full application would require fleshing out the ideas, and the valuable knowledge and support of Board members was welcomed. A target timescale of before the end of the year for the full application was agreed. **ACTION – Phil to pursue, with support from others.** Andrew offered the help of his wife, Rosie, who has significant experience of preparing grant applications to the HLF. It was also suggested to explore the possibility of a potential consultant who we might use to do some of the work on subjects such as "developing fundraising" to assist in writing some of the application.

7. Any Other Business

Phil queried whether papers from the Transition Board should be routinely published in full on the website, and it was agreed not to do this, noting that any information could be given on request. The Board would develop a way of working around identifying any items felt to be confidential.

Phil said he would like the agenda for future meetings to include some updates on current activity and finances as well as transition issues.

8. Date of Next Meetings

1st November 2016 and 1st December 2016.