

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Transition Board
Minutes of Meeting 14th March 2017
AONB Partnership office, Drovers House, Craven Arms



Present:

James Williamson (Chair)	Individual member
Cllr Cecilia Motley (Vice Chair)	Shropshire Council
George Chancellor	Individual member
Neil Willcox	Shropshire Council
Hilary Claytonsmith	Town/Parish Council representative
Veronica Cossons	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
Cllr Chris Turley	Telford & Wrekin Council
Cllr David Turner	Shropshire Council
Andrew Wood	Co-opted member
Cllr Heather Kidd	Shropshire Council

AONB Partnership staff:

Phil Holden	AONB Partnership Manager
Alison Kay	Administrator (minute taker)

1. Apologies

Janine Hayter Parish Council representative

2. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting of Tuesday 17th January 2017 were agreed as correct.
- 2.2 Phil confirmed that the application for small business rate relief had just been done.
- 2.3 It was advised that the contribution from Shropshire Council for the shuttle buses for the last 2 years had still not been paid. **- Action Neil to pursue with Transport team**

3. Update on contact with Defra regarding Conservation Board proposal (verbal)

- 3.1 We are currently waiting for Defra to confirm their criteria in order to be able to refine the business case and re-submit.
- 3.2 Howard Davies and Philip Hygate (the CEO and Chair of NAAONB) had recently met with Lord Gardiner, and their discussions had included our proposal. The Minister had concerns about the potential for a large number of AONBs seeking to create Conservation Boards.

4. Draft new Terms of Reference for an AONB Forum group to sit alongside a Conservation Board

- 4.1 The draft Terms of Reference for an AONB Forum evolving from the current Partnership were discussed. It was proposed that the Forum would advise the Conservation Board, supporting the preparation of the Management Plan but not taking responsibility for it.
- 4.2 After some discussion, it was agreed that 'Advisory Group' was a preferable title to 'Forum'.
- 4.3 It was agreed that the draft be re-worded to emphasise working in partnership and a consultant and advisory role. It was also agreed that the representative numbers should be removed. **- Action Phil**

5. AONB Team 2016-17 Work Programme and budgets update

- 5.1 Phil highlighted completion of the LPS's first traineeship by Adam Stallard. A small celebration event had been held, and Adam said he had benefited greatly from the experience.
- 5.2 A number of the core staff had been doing considerable amounts of fee earning work which had improved the budget situation, but inevitably had consequences for other work. The 2016-17 budget is predicted now to outturn with a slight surplus for the year.
- 5.3 Telford & Wrekin Council had asked to pay their contribution 3 years in advance and before the end of the current Financial Year. It was agreed that this was acceptable provided that confirmation that the contribution would continue after the three years were up was received.
- 5.4 No other questions were raised by the board.

6. Shropshire Hills AONB Trust update (verbal)

- 6.1 The Trust is in the process of opening an account with Barclays (due to the closure of Co-op bank). This account would accept standing orders only as payment was required for direct debits. It was estimated that the account would be open within 5 weeks.
- 6.2 The next Trustees meeting will take place on 28th March 2017 and will include a team building session.
- 6.3 A proposal had been made on the fee payable by the Trust towards support from the team for running the Conservation Fund, and this would be decided shortly. It was intended however that the Friends remained a joint venture, with decisions made equally between the Trust and the Partnership. The Conservation Fund Panel will be meeting next Monday to decide on 2017-18 grants.
- 6.4 An event for the Trust and Friends is proposed for when the bank account has been opened and new payment arrangements can be made, probably in April or May.
- 6.5 A reminder was given that the Partnership will need to renew one Trustee appointment at the June meeting, and there is likely to be a further vacancy.

7. Shropshire Hills Uplands Forum event and follow-up

- 7.1 82 people had attended the February event, and copies of the presentation slides had since been sent out. A report of the sessions was being compiled and would also be circulated. The report will also feed into the national Uplands Alliance and to the Defra Uplands team.
- 7.3 There was discussion about how to take this work forward. The subject is on the agenda for the Partnership meeting next week. Aside from convening further discussions through various groups, it was agreed that it would be valuable to develop an AONB Partnership position statement on this topic. It was agreed to bring a draft position statement to the May Transition Board, and to go on to the June Partnership meeting - **Action Phil**

8. County networks update – Shropshire Environmental Leaders Conference, CPRE Shropshire Conference, Local Nature Partnership, tourism networks (verbal)

- 8.1 The CPRE conference on the future of farming in Shropshire at which Cath had spoken had been mainly speakers rather than workshop sessions, and a report had just been circulated.
- 8.2 The Shropshire Environment Leaders conference on the same day had also been mostly speakers, on the topic of the environment post-Brexit. The importance of raising public awareness of nature and ecosystems had been emphasised.

- 8.3 The Shropshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) has agreed to merge with Herefordshire LNP to become a Marches LNP, which will correspond with the area of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).
- 8.4 The 2017 'Great Days in the Shropshire Hills' leaflet has been produced. An LNP sub-group on tourism is creating a valuable dialogue on the role of the natural environment and heritage in tourism.

9. NAAONB update and wider networks (verbal)

- 9.1 Phil had attended the NAAONB Lead Officers meeting in Birmingham in February. Discussion had included joint working with regard to the next round of Management Plans. Phil had been invited to join a sub-group of Lead Officers at the end of March for helping to develop the NAAONB future.
- 9.3 Phil had also attended the national meeting in Crewe of Europarc Atlantic Isles, which is a section of the Europarc Federation. This network is broader than NAAONB, including National Parks and beyond the UK. Maintaining these relationships is valuable, and the Federation run the sustainable tourism Charter and the Young Rangers scheme.

10. Any Other Business – None

11. Date of Next Meeting TBC

Meeting ended at 11:30am