

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Transition Board
Minutes of Meeting Tuesday 5th September 2017
AONB Partnership office, Drovers House, Craven Arms



Present:

James Williamson (Chair)	Individual member
Veronica Cossons	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
George Chancellor	Individual member
Hilary Claytonsmith	Parish/Town Council rep
Cllr Heather Kidd	Shropshire Council
Cllr Chris Turley	Telford & Wrekin Council
Neil Willcox	Shropshire Council

AONB Partnership staff:

Phil Holden	AONB Partnership Manager
Nigel McDonald	Sustainable Tourism Officer (for item 5)

1. Apologies

Janine Hayter	Parish/Town Council rep
Fran Lancaster	Telford & Wrekin Council
Cllr Cecilia Motley	Shropshire Council
Cllr David Turner	Shropshire Council
Andrew Wood	Co-opted member

2. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting of 18th May 2017 were agreed as correct.
- 2.2 All actions relating to resubmission to Defra and the summer Tour had been completed.
- 2.3 Proposed meeting with Shropshire Council re planning issues – carried forward. James and Phil had recently discussed requesting a meeting with the Planning Portfolio Holder Cllr Robert Macey and Adrian Cooper (Head of Strategic Policy), with the Management Plan review as context. A separate meeting may be requested later with Cllr David Evans (Chair of South Planning Committee) and Ian Kilby (Head of Development Management) to discuss planning decision-making in relation to the AONB. Heather offered to contribute, as she was on the LDF Member Panel. **ACTION – Phil and James, with Councillors.**
- 2.4 Follow up had been sought with Gemma Davies on Economic Growth Strategy but no response. The AONB was mentioned in the final strategy. No further follow-up.

3. AONB Team 2017-18 Work Programme update

- 3.1 Phil highlighted the Hay Meadow Festival and Buzz in the Borders video, and mentioned the LPS celebration event to be held on 17th October – **ACTION - Phil to circulate details.**
- 3.2 Also highlighted were the habitat opportunity mapping in the Upper Teme, review of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy, and the meetings with SC Portfolio Holder and Leader. The down-sizing by one office unit and business rates were discussed.
- 3.3 A brief review discussion was held on the 7th July Tour event. There was broad agreement with the views of the AONB Trust trustees – June rather than July, stick to a weekday, fixing the date earlier and a wider invitation. Additional suggestions were to think carefully about

the agenda and content to suit the different audiences, possible break-out groups to discuss things, and to encourage (or condition) more of the Conservation Fund grant recipients to bring some information about their project.

3.4 The possibility of a visit by Lord Gardiner was highlighted.

4. AONB Partnership budgets update

4.1 Phil said the budget position for 2017-18 was now improved, due to reduced costs and successful income earning, and a small surplus was now predicted on the year.

4.2 It was agreed that office rent will be shown differently in future so that two years of costs are not showing within one year's budget as at present.

4.3 The significant reduction in overall turnover at the end of the LPS was noted, and the need to bring new projects on stream very soon.

5. Proposal to renew Europarc Federation Sustainable Tourism Charter

5.1 Phil highlighted some key points from the paper, and members asked questions of Phil and Nigel. Topics included the implications of Brexit, how much could be achieved without renewing the Charter, whether the Charter would constrain future innovation with rules, and strengths identified in the previous evaluation (the Shuttles and the Sustainable Business Network were discussed in some detail).

5.2 Members expressed some scepticism and challenge, but came to a decision to support the renewal, provided it was really used to good effect over the next period. Options and recommendations for this would be discussed at the December meeting, and a further request made to the Europarc Federation for a reduction in fee and/or extension to the period – **ACTION Phil & Nigel.**

6. AONB Partnership membership biennial review and recruitment

6.1 George queried whether there was a need to make any changes. After discussion, it was agreed to invite any individual and Parish/Town Council members who wished to remain as members to do so, and only appoint to vacancies arising if anyone wanted to step down. This allowed an opportunity for new people to get involved, but would minimise the changes and work required. **ACTION Phil and team to progress.**

6.2 James was going to stand again as Chair, but George would be stepping down as Vice Chair.

7. AONB Management Plan review

7.1 Phil explained that the key point in the paper was that the Plan review process needed to start now. George said that having the State of the AONB report was a crucial stage, which was not completed last time. James felt that the Plan review should be used as a way of going out and talking to people. Finding out at an early stage what people thought were current issues was felt to be valuable, with a second stage of consultation later on the actual new Plan. Hilary said the document itself needed to be more user friendly, and this was agreed.

7.2 It was agreed that a session would be held at the November Partnership meeting, and key delivery partners asked to present the current issues for the AONB as they saw them - **ACTION Phil.** Heather suggested asking Parish Councils this too.

7.3 Neil suggested writing a couple of pages to scope and clarify what the Plan review was for, why it was being done and how it would be useful.

7.4 The NAAONB's aspiration that Management Plans should serve as targeting statements for new agri-environment and rural development funding was discussed and supported. Some members expressed that the AONB organisation should not seek to be the delivery body for such new schemes.

8. Project development

8.1 Phil highlighted that there needed to be prioritisation – some of the proposals listed would make more difference than others to our overall levels of activity. He said the Youth project and the Monuments volunteering were the two top priorities. Members supported this.

8.2 The National Grid funding was discussed and it was agreed to keep progressing gradually with this without necessarily giving it too much time. Stepping Stones was discussed, and the fact that this was an important initiative that we needed to be involved with, rather than a project we were leading.

8.3 James raised the issue of capacity in light of governance changes and the Management Plan review as well over the coming period, and suggested that proposals to increase capacity in the team be looked at. The Board supported this – **ACTION Phil to progress.**

9. AONB Trust update (verbal)

9.1 Phil said the Trustees had held a meeting and first AGM on 25th July and that the three main posts had been reappointed: Anthony Morgan as Chairman, Diane Lyle as Secretary and George Chancellor as Treasurer. Veronica had replaced Sarah Bury as one of the AONB Partnership appointed trustees. Following the Tour and publicity, the Friends leaflets were being actively distributed, and a web domain name and email address for the Trust had been registered. The next trustees meeting was on 26th September.

9.2 George added that all possible existing networks of trustees were being used to push the Friends. Standing Orders were available through Barclays and an arrangement for Direct Debits had been set up through 'Total Giving'. £1,048 of income from Friends had been raised since June (c.f. c£2,500 pa previously). The Gift Aid registration with HMRC was hopefully going through now after some minor problems the first time.

10. Any other business

10.1 Annual Review. Members made positive comments on the final draft Review which had been circulated.

10.2 Poultry developments. The response of NFU reps to the information circulated to Partnership members was discussed briefly. Points were raised about planning permissions not including requirements to remove the large buildings when no longer used, about transport issues, and about the similar visual and landscape character issues associated with solar farms. It was felt the invitation from NFU to visit a poultry unit should be taken up, but that looking at views near to the developments was more relevant to the AONB remit than seeing inside. Understanding better why some farmers choose to go into poultry was felt to be valuable. If possible, an arrangement would be made to follow the AONB Partnership meeting in November.

11. Date of Next Meeting - Thursday 7th December 2017.