



Mr D Bibby	Test Valley Borough Council
Cllr Dominic Boeck	West Berkshire Council
Ms Lois Philips	Farming & Rural Business Interest Group
Ms Andrea Witcombe	Farming & Rural Business Interest Group

**2. Constitutional Item (paper 1)**

It was noted that Councillor Wayne Crabbe has been appointed to the Council of Partners representing Swindon Borough Council and Councillor Gary Sumner as deputy.

It was agreed that Gillian Swanton (farming and environment), Jane Howes (tourism) and Alison Rasey (nature conservation, rights of way and host authority) be appointed to the Management Working Group initially for a period of two years.

**3. Minutes of Previous Meeting (paper 2)**

It was agreed that the Minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 7 March be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**4. Matters Arising from Minutes**

**CM** referred to his request for details of spending, budget performance and income generation. He felt it was vital that the issue of income generation was satisfactorily addressed; an approach supported by RNC.

**HO** responded that Paper 4 Corporate Strategy Review and Paper 5 Planning Gain are relevant to this issue

**5. Chairman's remarks**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Wayne Crabbe and Alison Rasey to the meeting. He drew attention to the success of the Woodland Event in May attended by 75 people and hoped it would be a model for future activity.

He drew Members' attention to the Forum on 18<sup>th</sup> October – entitled the "Great Outdoors" at Uffington and in partnership with the Ridgeway Partnership.

**EH** informed members that the quarterly E Bulletin had been circulated and if anyone did not receive the email to contact **RS**. He invited members to a light lunch at the end of the meeting as an opportunity to network.

He thanked those present for their ongoing support and involvement.

**6. Partnership Round Table**

**NM** reported that Oxfordshire Council has launched a mapping tool on its website to identify what land in Oxfordshire was susceptible to environmental change. He undertook to provide a link for inclusion in the minute. Link:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/environmental-sensitivity-change>

**JW** Identified that Swindon Borough Council's Green infrastructure document for the Eastern Villages was on the Agenda for the Planning Committee next week.

**WC** explained that he was a rural member on Swindon Borough Council.

**AS** pointed out that with a new Secretary of State he did not know how this would impact on the proposed 25-year Environment Plan. He is revising a North Wessex Downs /Natural England Protocol with HO and Team. He will be representing any Natural England area that includes a part of the AONB. Currently he is working to harness the views of the Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency to forge a stronger and more collaborative approach,

**JS** reported that the Green Sands Appeal had been lost and, although a judicial review had been considered, in the light of legal advice it was decided not to proceed.

**BC** noted that the Great West Way document made no mention of Marlborough.

**PM** had convened a meeting last week with, IH and the responsible Basingstoke & Deane BC Planning Officer to review the Manydown development. He was not impressed with the external consultants working to the project team, who seem to have undertaken a desk exercise. He was determined to get the right outcome and saw Manydown Country Park as a regional asset with links to education and informal recreation.

**FdRP** informed the meeting that Wiltshire Council was commencing the next core strategy review.

**RNC** informed the meeting that as Chair of Action for the River Kennet (ARK) he had attended a ceremony to mark the opening of a new pipeline to provide an alternative water source for south Swindon at a cost of £25m. This winter had been the driest on record and the river had reached critically low levels. Thames Water need to be encouraged to use the pipeline and the Farmoor reservoir during such conditions; they appear reluctant to do so. The positive news is that abstraction from the Og has ceased. The Kennet and its tributaries were an intrinsic part of the landscape character of the AONB.

## **7. AONB Management Plan Review**

As requested the Management Working Group had reviewed their recommendation to the Council of Partners that the life of the current Management Plan should be extended to 2020 when the outcome of Brexit was clearer.

The Management Working Group had considered carefully the comments from the Council of Partners. Whilst maintaining their concern about capacity, and being mindful of the legal requirements, they took the view that there was merit in an approach that amended the current Plan as it allowed areas of weakness to be strengthened and an opportunity for core values to be restated. A contained and targeted approach was supported. RNC drew attention to the work commissioned by the NAAONB which should be used as a reference and guidance document to assist with review.

**RNC** felt that the discussion between the Management Working Group and the Council of Partners had been useful and had confirmed that the governance arrangements for the Partnership were effective.

The Council of Partners expressed the need for a timetable and an active project group. PM offered to pull together a project group. EH asked for volunteers to join the Group. PM expected there to be an update on progress at the next Annual Forum.

**Action: (1) The review of the next AONB Management Plan be undertaken in line with the approach contained in paragraph 12 of the report (2) a project group be formed (3) a timeline be published and made available prior to the Annual Forum.**

8. **North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust (oral report)**

**DS** reported that the Trust was making steady and sure progress and intended to launch in 2018. The Trust was working on a website, had instituted a work programme and was working on patrons and membership detail in respect of both individual and corporate. There had been a slow start to managing the Sustainable Development Fund but that was now moving forward.

9. **Corporate Strategy Review (paper 4)**

**HO** explained that he had met with Rowan Whimster and is now in a position to write a document that will describe the overarching context of the Management Plan, the Work Programme and the other strands of the Corporate Strategy Review to ensure that there is no duplication and to maximise resources.

**HO** reported that Gerry Hammersley with Robin Edwards (Products & Services) are writing a prospectus; once this is complete they will join the Resources Group.

**JS** presented his framework and terms of reference for the Resources Group. He explained that some of the potential funding streams had been identified during work with Oxford University. **NT** emphasised to the Council of Partners that it was everyone's responsibility to pitch in as those leading the work all had day jobs.

**FdRP** felt that income from the parishes would be difficult to achieve.

The Council of Partners agreed that the membership of the Group include **JS** (Chair) **NT**, **GH**, a representative from the North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust and an AONB Partnership office-holder (e.g. Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Council of Partners).

**HO** noted that how the Resources Group fitted within the organisational and governance arrangements of the Partnership needed to be resolved.

Farming & Land Management – **PL** explained that he had undertaken research about how the AONB Unit and Council of Partners were viewed by the farmers and land managers who had such great influence on the landscape. He had sent 80 emails and had only one favourable reply. As further discussion unfolded he found that there was little affinity with the AONB Unit and Council of Partners and frustration, particularly in planning matters. They were seen as having little influence as in situations like the solar farm at Wroughton where we had opposed the application but failed to stop it. The perception is one of weakness.

**PL** is working with Gill Swanton and **HO** to get the farmers on side. He has arranged two meetings with the positive outcome of a Hungerford to Burbage farmer 'cluster' (12,000 acres) to make a bid to the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund. He had surveyed the farmers & land managers and felt it important that the Management Working Group look carefully at the questions arising.

**PL** explained that he needed the views of the Management Working Group on how to improve relationships and perceptions, as both he and **GS** are farmers and a wider perspective was needed.

**HO** drew attention to the farmer 'cluster' meeting facilitated by North Wessex Downs AONB Team and Action for the River Kennet in March (detailed in Paper 7).

**FdRP** observed that in planning matters it is not possible to please all involved and that the problem is inherent in the model. **RNC** said that it was vital that key stakeholders and their interests were identified. For instance in the Surrey Hills AONB the residents work in London and want to maintain the attractiveness of the landscape whereas the North Wessex Downs is very much a farmed landscape.

**CM** expressed the view that the move to action was taking far too long. The Corporate Strategy Review work had started 18 months ago.

**10 Protected Landscapes of the London City Region – a 25-year vision**

**HO** explained that North Wessex Downs had contributed £2k along with other protected landscapes in the South & South East regions to fund work on presenting the importance and value of Protected Landscapes in the future of London as a global city region. The future of the North Wessex Downs would be affected by the growth of London and how it will be managed. Rather than be a spectator, **HO** felt we should actively engage with the debate. The North Wessex Downs were part of the green infrastructure of the city region.

**PM** explained that Basingstoke and Deane were developing a strategy on development within the M3/M4 corridor. He felt the North Wessex Downs AONB had a role to play in this. There is a possibility of developing a collective approach to the Local Enterprise Partnerships.

**FdRP** advised against those present thinking that the Local Enterprise Partnerships were a significant source of funding. Most were fully committed,

**WC** wanted to see improved links between Oxford, Cambridge and Swindon.

**EH** felt that this may be a platform that could be used to discuss the importance of the North Wessex Downs AONB with leaders of the partner authorities.

**Action: SJC to email the presentation to all Members of Council of Partners**

**11 Planning Gain – (paper 5)**

**IH** presented the report on the AONB Unit's experience in relation to planning gain. Our involvement by the developer and/or the planning authority has been ad hoc. The recent and very visible IKEA building in the AONB is the only example so far of where money has been paid by a developer to a local planning authority specifically for AONB purposes. In this case £25,000 was paid to West Berkshire, in April 2015 but the Unit was not involved in any negotiations.

There was a discussion around the need to maintain the professionalism and integrity of the AONB team and the possibility of a conflict of interest. **AS** observed that **NE** often charged for pre-planning advice and would on occasion make an objection to the application when it was subsequently submitted.

The Council of Partners felt the key was absolute transparency and the understanding that the planning process allowed for mitigation.

**EH** took the view that the AONB should be drawing up a Regulation 123 List. **IH** asked for partner planning authorities to let him know who the key contacts are for monitoring s.106 and CIL agreements.

**12 Planning Update - (paper 6)**

IH presented his report and explained that it was not a complete list of current planning issues but a representation of the types of applications and consultations that are active. Members felt that the level of detail and mix of issues met their need to understand the planning pressures.

Although not included in his report, IH drew attention to his work with Network Rail (NR) who had been quiet for the last six months but were now engaging in respect of the GWR electrification programme. This was proving to be extremely challenging as the number of design options NR appeared willing to consider had greatly reduced. Negotiations are being treated as confidential.

Capacity continues to be an issue.

**13. Director's Report - (paper 7)**

HO presented his report and noted the success of the Woodland Forum – Make Your Woods Work for You – delivered with a consultant and the “burger & pint” event at East Garston to promote the Facilitation Fund for farmer ‘clusters’. He informed the Council of Partners that the new format-responsive website was live and any comments or observations should be made to Rose Somerset.

HO explained that the the Work Programme 2017/18 attached to his report was colour-coded to indicate the status of each project. Delivery was being affected by key vacancies. He intended to appoint two part-time posts one focussed on bid writing and project development and the other on delivery. His aim was as far as possible to align the Cranborne Chase and North Wessex Downs AONB jobs descriptions.

**14. Financial Position at End of Year 2016-2017 (paper 8)**

Members noted the end of year spending report for 2016/2017 and the summary of reserves. The AONB Team had generated sufficient non-exchequer income to meet the shortfall in local authority contributions of £4,500 as had been agreed by the Council of Partners. RB confirmed that the Defra claim had been submitted,

**15. Budget Update 2017/2018**

Members approved the budget at the last meeting. Wiltshire Council, the host authority, has put in place new working practices; this has resulted in a delay receiving the spending reports for the first two periods (April-May). CMC & SJC had met with the appropriate finance officer and Wiltshire Council to resolve queries raised as a result of new working practices. Once the third period is available a budget update will be circulated for the first quarter.

**Action: CMC to circulate a budget update for the first quarter to the Council of Partners and the Management Working Group.**

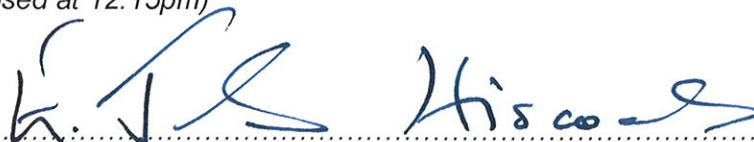
**16. AOB**

Management Plan Review project Group – PM asked for volunteers to join the Group which he offered to Chair. FdRP, EH and GK expressed an interest.

The next meeting of the Council of Partners will be on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> November at Kennet Valley Hall, Lockeridge, Wiltshire, SN8 4EL.

(Meeting closed at 12.15pm)

Signed.....



14/11/2017