

North Wessex Downs Council of Partners 10.03.2020

Agenda Item 2

Minutes of the meeting held on 12.11.2019

NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY COUNCIL OF PARTNERS  
Minutes of the meeting held at Bishops Cannings Village Hall, Wiltshire on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2019

Present	Initials	Representing
Mr E Hiscocks	EH	Chairman
Cllr Anna McNair-Scott	AMS	Hampshire County Council
Cllr Charles Mathew	CM	Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Paul Barrow	PB	Vale of White Horse District Council
Cllr Hilary Cole	HC	West Berkshire Council
Cllr Fleur de Rhe-Philippe	FdRP	Wiltshire Council
Cllr Gary Sumner	GS	Swindon Borough Council
Community & Parish		
Dr John Sharp	JS	Advisory Member
Ms Sharon Egan	SE	Advisory Member
Farming & Rural Business Interests		
Mr Christopher Musgrave	CBM	Advisory Member
Mr Tim Bamford	TB	Country Landowners Association
Historic Environment		
Ms Susie Brew	SB	Advisory Member
Recreation & Tourism		
Mr Martin Crane	MC	Advisory Member
Mr Richard Clarke	RNC	Advisory Member
North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust		
Mr Donald Sherlock	DS	Representative (Chairman)
Also Present		
Mr John Martin		U3A
In Attendance		
Mr Christopher Slack	CS	Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
Mr Garry King	GK	Hampshire County Council
Mr Nick Mottram	NM	Oxfordshire County Council
Mr Jonathan Wilshaw	JW	Swindon Borough Council
Mr Tim Goodridge	TG	Test Valley Borough Council
Mr Dominic Lamb	DL	South and Vale District Councils
Mr Paul Hendry	PH	West Berkshire Council
Mr Richard Broadhead	RB	Wiltshire Council
Mr Henry Oliver	HO	Director NWD AONB

Mrs Rebecca Davies	RD	Principal Landscape & Planning Officer NWD
Miss Ewa Prokop	EP	Senior Project Development & Funding Officer NWD
Mrs Ann Shepley	AS	Communications Officer NWD
Ms Claire McCorquodale	CMc	Partnership Coordinator NWD
Mrs Susan Clarke	SC	Partnership Coordinator NWD

**PART 1**

1. Members' interests – none declared
2. Welcome John Martin of U3A as a guest who is considering nomination to become a member of the Council of Partners.
3. Apologies for absence were received from:

Cllr Jenny Hannaby	JH	Vale of White Horse District Council
Cllr Paul Miller	PM	Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
Mr. Donald Heath	DH	Advisory Member
Mr. Peter Lemon	PL	Advisory Member
Cllr Cathy Martyn	CM	Swindon Borough Council
Cllr Rhydian Vaughn	RV	Hampshire County Council
Ms Andi Witcombe	AW	NFU
Mr. Nigel Titchen	NT	Advisory Member

**4. Designated Landscapes Review.**

The Director briefly outlined the background to the Review, the timetable and the part played by the North Wessex Downs. The North Wessex Downs AONB made its own submission and contributed to those of the National Association for AONBs and the South East and East Protected Landscapes forum. Many of the suggestions made in these submissions are reflected in the final report, which was published on 21 September 2019. He asked Richard Clarke, Policy Manager for the National Association for AONBs to give an overview and comment on the next steps.

RC explained that the review focused on 5 areas:

1. Landscapes alive for nature and beauty
2. Landscapes for everyone
3. Living in landscapes
4. More special places
5. New ways of working

RC highlighted the following points. The proposal that AONBs should be renamed national landscapes with an increase in government funding. The underlying theme of the Review is that landscapes are a positive force for the nation's well-being and therefore accessibility is one of the most important issues to be addressed.

Planning and land management are also key topics. The current planning system gives great weight to economic drivers rather than the right development in the right place. Changes to the role of national landscapes within the planning system are proposed, such

as protected landscapes becoming statutory consultees. How the land is managed through Defra's Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) is being looked at with 12 AONBs signing up to a pilot scheme bid for and managed by the NAAONB under Defra's "Tests & Trials".

To respond to issues in the Review a change in resources, governance and legislation was needed; initial soundings from Defra and government generally indicate that there will be no real engagement with the Review for the next twelve months.

The Chairman thanked RC. Views expressed from the Partnership included concerns about managing access into the landscape; measuring the effectiveness of tourism such as the Great West Way initiative; and rewilding, the latter leading to a reduction in farming production. Climate change was also central to how the landscapes are managed, with adaptation as a key response.

## **PART 2**

### **5. Constitutional item (paper 1)**

The appointment of Mr Christopher Musgrave as an Advisory Member representing Farming & Rural Business was approved.

### **6. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (paper 2)**

It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd July 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **7. Matters Arising.**

Colour & Design in Landscapes – the CoP had been impressed by the benefits presented to them by Jem Waygood at the last meeting and had supported the commissioning of a design guide based on his approach. HO explained that this had proved costlier than had been expected. Local authority members present commented that austerity is not over and there were many pressures on their budgets. This work needed to be measured against other activities in the work programme taking into account the support expressed at the last meeting by the CoP and their understanding that the effectiveness of the Principal Landscape and Planning Officer would be enhanced. If necessary, third party funding should be sought.

### **8. Chairman's Remarks**

The Chairman's remarks had been circulated with the Agenda. HO reminded the members about the Forum on 15<sup>th</sup> November at Englefield House and announced that the Management Plan 2019 -2024 would be available at that event in hard copy. It would also be available on the website.

### **9. Partnership Round Table**

RC – Action for the River Kennet AGM 19<sup>th</sup> November 23019 in the British Legion Hall in Hungerford. All welcome. In addition to the business of the AGM the topic for debate is the reintroduction of beavers into the river Kennet catchment.

GS – drew attention to tree planting at the Common Head roundabout and the community forest east of Swindon north of Wanborough. The Setting Position Statement (q.v.) was relevant to the application for a 100-acre science park. The AONB Unit had objected to the

Badbury site being included in the SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) an application for 15 houses has been received and the Unit will object.

AMS – was reassured that the Principal Landscape and Planning Officer was fully engaged with the application for the Wheelabrator, Harewood.

HC – briefed the CoP that the West Berkshire Local Plan Review (LPR) to 2036 Consultation Statement for Regulation 18 had been published in June 2019. Following on from this the list of potential housing sites will be published in January 2020. Work on a Minerals Local Plan will start in the new year.

TG – noted that he had produced a report on the Designated Landscapes Review for Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Council members.

RB – Wiltshire Council continued to restructure, and he was unsure exactly in which department his team would eventually be located.

PB – Vale of White Horse DC adopted its Local Plan Part 2 in October 2019 with a view to rapidly reviewing it to include improved environmental standards.

JS – Pressure for development of the Harwell site continues.

SB the Pewsey Tourism Partnership is distributing leaflets to schools and a family day in Tidworth was very successful with a lot of interest being expressed about walking in the landscape.

MC – Hungerford Town Council is working with West Berkshire Council in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan: Hungerford 2036.

CM – A new Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan for the period until 2031 is underway. Site allocations are now being identified. The Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Spatial Plan (JSP, Oxfordshire 2050) includes objectives to reduce fragmentation of, and improve, ecological networks, very much in line with the ideas expressed in the Glover report on nature recovery networks.

NM – in the face of the proposed Oxford to Cambridge growth arc attention is being given to strategic nature conservation areas/networks linking the Cotswolds, the North Wessex Downs and the Ridgeway National trail.

CS – Basingstoke & Deane BC has declared a climate emergency, and this will be a key consideration in its policy and decision making.

#### 10. North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust (oral report by DS, the Chairman of NWDLT)

The Trust had a stand with the AONB Partnership at The Royal County of Berkshire Show. It organised a celebration as the North Wessex Downs contribution to marking the 'national moment' of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act during Landscapes for Life Week. Both Richard Benyon MP and Kit Malthouse MP spoke enthusiastically about the AONB landscape. Promoting the work of the Trust to the parish councils continues. The Trust also administers the NWD Sustainable Development Fund and this year made three grants to a value of £4,357. There is less budget available in the current and following years and efforts are being made to attract funding from other sources.

The Trust continues to work closely with the AONB Team; DS recorded his thanks to CMC and members of the team who supported them at The Royal County of Berkshire Show.

*11.30am Tim Bamford left the meeting*

#### **11. Future of the Resources Group (paper 3)**

The Council of Partners noted that the AONB is now fully staffed and agreed that (1) the Resources Group be disbanded, (2) confirmed that the Management Working Group will resume strategic guidance and oversight of the Team's fundraising and research work along with the rest of the work programme on behalf of the Council of Partners, and (3) JS, as Chairman of the Resources Group, join the Management Working Group.

#### **12. Resources Group Report (paper 4)**

JS presented the final report of the Resources Group. The Chairman thanked him and the members of the group for their contribution for their work during the life of the group.

#### **13. Budget Update (paper 5)**

The CoP noted the report. Members asked for clarification to be included about the reasons for underspending particularly when no spending was recorded against a budget heading. In respect of the Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) insufficient interest had been generated from the landowners. In respect of the White Horses/Arts Council project development is in full swing but expenditure will not be incurred this year; a request to carry forward will be made. In respect to Undy's Meadow, Andover Trees United and Dark Skies it is likewise a matter of timing. In respect of the latter work is being carried out on a design guide and there is collaboration with Marlborough Town Council for a Dark Skies Festival in 2020.

CMC confirmed that all local authorities had paid their contributions.

#### **14. Management Plan Review 2019 -2024**

All local authorities have now formally adopted the Management Plan.

The Management Plan will be available in hard copy for the Annual Forum 2019 and accessible on the North Wessex Downs website. All councillors and relevant officers will be sent a link to the website.

#### **15.Revised Position Statement on Setting (paper 6)**

The AONB has come under significant pressure for development in or affecting its setting and the updated statement will aid local authorities and developers in developing or assessing the impact of proposals and making decisions. The Council of Partners agreed the updated Position Statement. The Statement will be made available on the NWD website.

#### **16. Spending Priorities to March 2020 (paper 7)**

HO presented the priorities for use of any underspend that may be identified in the current financial year. The CoP were critical that the five areas of proposed spend were not ranked and the description of the constraints on actual spend were unclear. HO responded that the

five projects were broadly in order of priority and confirmed that all were identified in the approved annual work programme.

The Director explained that the timetable for submission of the annual funding claim to Defra had changed and that information was required to be submitted by the end of February.

There was a discussion about the merits of using different types of media. GS expressed the view that leaflets were not an effective means of communication and favoured digital communications where he felt that they had a longer reach and were more cost effective and sustainable. There was also a view that printed information had its place in marketing alongside either media.

*GS left the meeting at 12.20pm*

The Council of Partners supported the list of projects.

#### **17. Land of the White Horse project (paper 8)**

The CoP was informed that an application would be made by the deadline of 2 March 2020 to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for project development funding and the outcome would be known by the end of June 2020.

#### **18. Evaluation of the Walking Festival (paper 9)**

The first Walking Festival was successful: planned and delivered in a short space of time, it raised the profile of the AONB in line with Communications Strategy and Management Plan objectives. 148 bookings were made with 122 people attending. The feedback was positive, and resources have been allocated for a Festival in 2020, building on the experience gained.

#### **19. Proposed Local Authority Contributions 2020-2021**

The Director briefed the CoP that no information had yet been received from Defra. For the time being we should assume no change from the current year.

#### **20. Director's Report (paper 10)**

The CoP noted the report and the risk associated with the loss of the GIS/IT contractor who had given notice and was providing an ad hoc interim support service as the AONB sought alternative ways of accessing GIS and web support. GK suggested that Hampshire CC was set up to provide such services as they had the required licences and expertise.

#### **21. Planning Update (paper 11)**

The CoP noted the report and recognised the volume and complexity of the planning applications she comments on and her contribution to planning policy development across the AONB. and recorded their thanks to Rebecca Davies for her work.

#### **22. AOB,**

HO reminded members of the Forum on 15<sup>th</sup> November and asked for proposals for the focus of the next Forum in 2020.

He also advised members of The Dark Skies Festival with Marlborough Town Council that will take place 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> October 2020

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Meeting closed 12.30pm

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized monogram followed by the name 'H. B. Wood'. A horizontal line is drawn underneath the signature.