



NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

**MINUTES of a meeting held on 21 September 2016
at North Wessex Downs AONB office, Denford Manor**

Present

Richard Broadhead Chairman
Megan Cameron (for Robin Edwards)
Garry King
Rowan Whimster
Gerry Hamersley
Alison Cross

In attendance

Julie Baldwin NWD AONB Partnership Coordinator (*minutes*)
Oliver Cripps NWD AONB Projects & Development Manager
Rebecca Davies NWD AONB Planning Advisor
Peter Lemon NWD AONB CoP Observer
Henry Oliver NWD AONB Director

1. Apologies and Welcome

The meeting convened at 10:05hrs. Apologies were received from Robin Edwards, Andrew Smith, Ted Hiscocks and Rose Somerset. A warm welcome was given to Peter Lemon who sits on the Council of Partners and joins the meeting to report on item 6 on the agenda and as an observer.

2. Constitutional Item

AC advised members that due to a change in her role at the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust she will be no longer be able to allocate time to the work of the Management Working Group, but would like to continue with the SDF panel. **RB** thanked **AC** for all her work over the years and wished her well in her new role. **RB** highlighted that there is now a need for a new Vice Chairman and if any member(s) wish to be considered, please advise **HO**. **HO** also highlighted to members that there are still several positions on the Management Working Group that need filling, therefore if members could let **HO** know of anyone who should be invited to join they should please let him know. He also wished to advise members that the position of Chairman of the Council of Partners is due for renewal next March. **TH** is willing to continue and this was supported by **PL** and **GK**. The MWG endorsed the proposal for the next CoP meeting that **TH** continue as Chairman for a further two years. **RB** updated members on the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) for both NWD and Cranborne Chase AONB, reporting that Wiltshire Council legal dept have now reviewed and advised officers on the document.

ACTION: RB to produce a paper on the MoA when able.

3. Minutes of Previous Meetings

The minutes were agreed and signed off.

4. **Matters Arising**

Para.7 National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) Key Performance Indicators – **RB** asked if there was an update from the NAAONB on this. **HO** advised members that the NAAONB has put together a set of KPIs, and reported that this year the NWD AONB had nil returns for the two quantitative KPIs. The KPIs have been discussed in the AONB family and will be reported on to the national AONB Chairmen's conference in November. **RW** asked whether perhaps in our AONB we should have our own measures to work against to provide a body of evidence. **HO** mentioned the Value for Money (VFM) report and agreed to circulate it for possible discussion at the next meeting.

Para.10 **RB** gave a further update on the use of mechanical vehicles on unsealed roads, on which he has been tasked to gather views from other affected AONBs. **OC** offered to help **RB** get the message out to the wider family.

5. **Budget Update for 2016-17 – for information**

HO gave a review and update on the current finance status. He will also produce a paper for the next CoP meeting to propose priority uses for any surplus funds that may become available before the end of the financial year (for example due to some projects that were allocated funds not going ahead). **HO** also updated members on recruitment of the new Partnership Co-ordinators who should be in post on Monday 10th October; in the meantime **JB** will continue to cover essential parts of the job and help with training and induction of the successful candidates.

ACTION: HO to produce a report on spending priorities for any surplus funding for next CoP meeting.

6. **Corporate Strategy Review – for discussion**

HO introduced the paper, and thanked everyone who has helped on this. The initial feedback from April's meeting was reported on at the last CoP meeting in July, where **TH** and **RB** mapped out what should happen next. There is now the need to pull everything together and create a document that can be the subject of discussion at the next workshop on 17 October. **HO** gave a review of each supporting paper. **PL** highlighted that there was no further update on his work, **AC** advised that there are three types of response she has experienced from farmers: negative (thanks to experiencing planning difficulties); a sense that the AONB is simply not relevant to them; and positive comments about support from the North Wessex Farmland Bird Project. **GH** advised members that we need to identify which 'Products and Services' we should be capable of offering and focus on what we are going to fund. It has to be clear what we are offering first, and what we think people will fund, before asking for funding. **OC** gave an overview on the SDF work recently done by a group of Oxford University students and Dr John Sharpe (CoP), on the potential for corporate sponsorship of the NWD Sustainable Development Fund fund. **MC** emphasised that education is extremely important on both sides, to corporate leaders and landowners/farmers, and highlighted the Surrey Hills AONB's work as a good example. There is also a need to make sure you approach corporate leaders and landowners/farmers at the right time, not in the middle of harvest or at financial year-end for example. **OC** told members that the next review of the AONB Management Plan is due to begin in 2017 and perhaps this is a good opportunity to write a plan that suits our needs better for the future. **GK** gave a brief update on the North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust (NWDLT) confirming that it has now been registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. There are three trustees at present but no forward plan as yet. It must remain an independent body from the NWD AONB and be able to deliver charity themes and funding. **HO** said he is open to any discussions or meetings to help progress the review and thanked everyone who had helped draft these papers. **RB** also thanked everyone for their work so far.

ACTION: Oxford University report to be sent to members.

7. **Charging for Planning Officer time – for discussion**

HO gave an overview of options for charging for planning services. This had been discussed at a previous Core Funders' meeting but the proposal generally to charge for pre-application advice subsequently rejected by the Council of Partners. The Chilterns AONB currently

charges for planning services, the Cotswolds AONB is considering doing so and there is now reason to reconsider whether the North Wessex Downs should follow suit. Our sister Wiltshire Council-hosted AONB Cranborne Chase has just introduced a system for charging for pre-application advice. RD has put together a 'menu for charging', and we now need the MWG to decide on whether we should be charging and move this forward to the CoP for ratification. HO asked whether we are able to make a profit from these charges, or do we charge at cost. **RW** suggested that the NWD AONB should be free to charge as long as any profit goes back to good work. There is a need to have a transparent charging policy. **OC** mentioned that it is not uncommon to have a 30% uplift on charging. **RB** advised that it might be necessary to review the policy annually. **RW** advised that we should reassure the CoP that core work is not being diverted to raise further funds. All members agreed that the NWD AONB should be charging for some planning advice and that a paper should be presented to the next CoP meeting for approval.

ACTION: Planning Advisor and Director to produce a paper for approval on charges for next CoP meeting.

8. **Director's report & Work Programme Update – for discussion**

HO gave an overview of the paper.

Big Chalk – objectives still valid even though there may not now be scope to apply for EU LIFE+ funding.

Catchment Partnerships – this has been delayed due to Director's time commitments.

Contacts Database – still waiting on Wiltshire Council IT department feedback but being pursued by JB.

Dark Skies – good progress with Dark Skies being the topic for the Annual Forum this year.

Landscape Enhancement Initiative – HO would like to push this project into next year's work programme. Discussion between AONBs and National Parks suggests problems with scheme criteria and lack of funding for development work are largely coming from OFGEM and not National Grid, with a risk that the £24m set aside for LEI will not be tapped.

Minerals & Waste Position Statement – this has been put on hold, as the Planning Advisor feels a position statement on equestrian-related planning advice is more pressing. A work experience placement has already researched sources of good practice for this.

Working Woods project

– the NWD application to LEADER was ruled ineligible. OC updated that there is £30-£50k available from the Woodland Trust to provide woodland management advice to owners and managers and the funds do not appear to be time limited. HO advised that there is £10K in the NWD funding to support a project but the difficulty is finding external match funding for co-ordination work.

9. **Planning Update – for information**

RD introduced the report providing the following updates:

para 10 East Hagbourne - a statement has been submitted to support our original objection as it has now gone to appeal;

Para 15 Network Rail – landscape impact work is currently focusing on the Cotswolds, but will be moving back to the NWD and Chilterns, with a meeting scheduled in October.

10. **Any Other Business**

The NAAONB notes from the launch of the 'State of Nature 2016' report were circulated to members for information.

11. **Date of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 7th December 2016 (tbc)

Meeting closed at 13:05hrs.

Signed.....

Date