

NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

COUNCIL OF PARTNERS

MINUTES of a meeting held at

Liddington Village Hall, Liddington, SN4 0HB

on Tuesday 5th March 2019

Present

Mr E Hiscocks
Cllr Paul Miller
Cllr Gary Sumner
Cllr Anna McNair Scott
Cllr Rhydian Vaughn
Cllr Charles Mathew
Cllr Jeanette Clifford
Cllr Fleur de Rhe-Philippe

Representing

Chairman
Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
Swindon Borough Council
Hampshire County Council
Hampshire County Council
Oxfordshire County Council
West Berkshire Council
Wiltshire Council

Community & Parish Interest Group Members

Dr J Sharp Advisory Member
Mr D. Heath Advisory Member
Ms S Egan Advisory Member

Farming & Rural Business Interest Group Members

Mr Christopher Musgrave Advisory Member
Andrea Whitcombe Advisory member

Recreation & Tourism Interest Group Members

Mr M Crane Advisory Member
Mr R Clarke Advisory Member

Historic Environment Interest Group Members

Ms Susie Brew Advisory Member

North Wessex Downs Management Working Group

Mr R Edwards Chairman

North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust

Mr D Sherlock Representative

In attendance

Mr C Slack Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
Mr G King Hampshire County Council
Mr N Mottram Oxfordshire County Council
Mr P Hendry West Berkshire Council
Mr R Broadhead Wiltshire Council
Mr J Wilshaw Swindon Borough Council
Mr D Lamb South & Vale District Council
Mr H Oliver Director, North Wessex Downs AONB
Mrs R Davies Principal Landscape and Planning Officer, North
 Wessex Downs AONB
Ms E Prokop Senior Project Development & Funding Officer. North
 Wessex Downs AONB
Ms J Akam Project Officer, North Wessex Downs AONB

Mrs S Clarke	Partnership Coordinator, North Wessex Downs AONB (job share)
Ms C McCorquodale	Partnership Coordinator, North Wessex Downs AONB (job share)

Apologies for absence were received from:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>
Mr A Smith	Natural England
Cllr Peter Giddens	Test Valley Borough Council
Mr P Lemon	Advisory Member
Mr D Bibby	Test Valley Borough Council
Mr N Titchen.	Advisory Member

1. Members' interests – none declared.
2. Welcome – Ms Sharon Egan (Advisory Member – Community & Parish) was welcomed to her first meeting. Two new staff members, Ewa Prokop, Senior Project Development & Funding Officer who is working full-time and Jacky Akam, Project Officer two days a week were also welcomed.
3. Constitutional Items (papers 1a and 1b)

In respect of the membership of the Management Working Group it was agreed that Gillian Swanton, Jane Howes, Alison Rasey, Garry King and Robin Edwards serve further two-year terms on the Group. The Council of Partners (CoP) noted Councillor Paul Miller will continue for a second term and recorded their thanks to Rowan Whimster who completes his final term in June 2019.

In respect of the membership of the Council of Partners the members approved a third and final term for Richard Clarke, Martin Crane, Peter Lemon and Nigel Titchen and thanked them for their continued support and engagement.
4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (paper 2)
It was agreed that the Minutes from the previous meeting held on 13th November 2018 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.
5. Matters Arising from the Minutes
Oxenwood – FdRP informed the meeting that discussions were ongoing on its future
6. Chairman's Remarks
The Chairman's remarks had been circulated with the Agenda to make them more accessible. Although not exhaustive the paper identified progress and challenges for the AONB.
7. Partnership Round Table
NM informed the meeting that the Oxfordshire Strategic Plan was proceeding apace and contained key environmental aspirations. Oxfordshire County Council CEO with Cllr Charles Mathew and NM had hosted the Lead Officers of the Cotswolds, Chilterns and North Wessex Downs AONBs. It is hoped that this will lead to closer working with the Oxfordshire Growth Board.

JS welcomed the Planning Inspector's decision on the Harwell site but informed the meeting that there continued to be significant development pressures in East Hendred and the surrounding area.

MC drew members' attention to the Great West Way Map and informed the meeting that Hungerford had been identified as an ambassador town.

RNC explained that Action for the River Kennet (ARK) of which he is chair is working with Thames Water to reduce abstraction on the Upper Kennet and suggested that Thames Water be invited to make a presentation to the CoP.

DH drew attention to the development in Marlborough of Rabley Wood that is causing concern as the development area is on a landfill site and there are implications for the siting of the replacement playground and for leakage into the river. He also informed the meeting that Marlborough Town Council was putting on a Dark Skies event in October 2020.

SB informed the meeting that the Pewsey Tourism Partnership had printed a further 8 walks and had just completed filming. The new swimming pool and leisure centre in Pewsey are proving very popular.

GS said that Swindon BC had removed almost all the sites in the AONB from its SHLAA list.

The proposed 100-acre 'science park' at Inlands Farm had generated significant objection and a pressure group had been set up. He noted that the Nationwide Building Society working with the Woodland Trust had undertaken a woodland creation scheme at Pack Hill.

FdRP informed the meeting that Wiltshire Council were funding a £13m scheme for LED street lighting across the County. The design had been produced with reference to the Cranborne Chase guidance on lighting and the lights can be dimmed.

RB updated the meeting on the ongoing issue of motorised vehicles using the Ridgeway. A temporary Traffic Regulation Order was to be imposed on the Ridgeway within the World Heritage Site at Avebury prohibiting all motorised use for the coming summer season (hitherto there has been a seasonal TRO covering just the autumn and winter). Repairs will be made to the surface and the two TROs combined will mean the byway is closed to all motorised users for at least 12 months. After that, depending on how well it has recovered, the intention is to impose an experimental TRO that prohibits 4x4 vehicles but not motorised two-wheelers, and to assess the impact before making a final decision as to whether to remove all motorised use from the route.

CM drew attention to a meeting on 21st May at Wick Bottom Barn, Temple Farm for cluster farm facilitators to discuss "what is working" and "what is not working"; a networking opportunity to share ideas and learn from each other.

CC informed the meeting that at West Berkshire Council's Full Council Meeting being held the evening of the same day at least half the questions tabled were related to environmental issues.

8. North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 (paper 3)

HO presented the Management Plan for approval. PM commended the work done by the Management Working Group and the Management Plan Review Group. He felt that those involved had worked well together and with Ian Hepburn (Management Plan Review Officer).

HO informed the meeting that Andrew Smith (Natural England) supported the document. The Adoption Draft will be available to Local Authorities for signature in April there is a need to understand the process for each local authority and the officer representatives were asked to assist. EH offered to speak to Council Meetings if required. The Management Plan must be signed off by the Secretary of State.

The Council of Partners approved and endorsed the Management Plan 2019-2024 and resolved that local authority partners should submit it to their own adoption processes. Proposed by Cllr Fleur de Rhe-Philipe and seconded by Cllr Anna McNair-Scott.

Action: HO to circulate the adoption draft of the Management Plan (with minor corrections) to local authority partners for adoption as soon as it is ready.

9. Budget Update 2018-2019 (paper4)

The CoP was reassured that the appropriate IT security procedures were in place. The report was noted.

10. Proposed Budget Allocations 2019-2020 (paper 5)

HO presented the report and took questions. The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) initial allocation is reduced from previous years but opportunities may arise to increase the funding; the NWD Landscape Trust would continue to administer the fund.

Design Guide – It had been noted that there had been little support for the production of a guide but as the feedback from eleven other AONBs was very positive about the benefits it was felt that more information should be gathered so that the CoP could make a more informed decision. In Suffolk the local authority produced the design guide as a supplementary document for a proposed 'garden village' development. It is the colour palette that appears to be most useful.

Staff were continually looking for ways to reduce the pressure for and streamline the delivery of planning advice.

Action: design to be on the agenda of the next meeting.

The Proposed Budget for 2019-2020 was approved.

11. Proposed Unit Work Programme 2019-2020 (paper 6)

HO presented the report. 2019-2020 is a transitional year between two Management Plans looking in both directions: back to existing commitments and ongoing activities, and forward to the renewed objectives and changing circumstances addressed by the new five-year Management Plan. This year the work programme also includes core operational activities, such as governance, financial management and general administrative support.

AP explained that it is intended to put on a Walking Festival; it is a pilot so will be quite small but the intention is that it should be spread across the AONB and promoted through local groups and using social media. Using online information rather than a published programme. RC suggested that ARK be contacted as they run riverside walks that give people an opportunity to walk along the parts of the riverbank that are not always open to the public. CM suggested the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust.

EP also drew attention to the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI); she had started site visits in the north-east of the AONB in the Moulsoford and Cholsey area. Work was being undertaken to identify landowners. Expressions of interest need to be submitted in June 2019 and full bids in September, with a decision in Spring 2020. Further expressions of interest can be made in January 2020. SB offered to provide information on a bid she had been involved with that unfortunately had not been successful but perhaps might help.

CM asked for justification of the Heathland Connectivity – HO responded that heathland was a rare, important and threatened habitat nationally and especially in

the SE region. There were small patches of managed heathland in the North Wessex Downs that he felt should be improved by expansion, restoration and connection to other areas.

12. Director's Report (paper 7)

HO confirmed that, as agreed by the CoP at its last meeting, the Management Working Group had oversight of the NWD response to the Designated Landscapes Review. Contributions were also made to joint submissions with the NAAONB and the South East and East Protected Landscapes Forum.

Action SC to circulate the responses to the CoP.

As part of the Glover Review HO had received Dame Fiona Reynolds on a half day visit supported by Sarah Wright, the Ridgway Partnership Officer, Rowan Whimster and Merrick Denton-Thompson (past president of the Landscape Institute). He felt the visit went well and was encouraged that Dame Fiona had ambition for the Review.

In respect of the Great West Way, the new Communications Officer was engaged and using the initiative to promote the AONB.

Our Farmer Cluster work continues to develop with the first Southern Streams Farmer Group event looking at sediment trapping.

13. Planning Update (paper 8)

RD explained that the report was a sample of the workload and identified applications that she felt would be of interest.

Science Park (S/OUT/18/1943) submitted to Swindon BC had over 300 letters of objection and a pressure group had been set up. There were other more suitable sites.

Harwell – should be viewed as a major success of national significance.

Minerals Local Plan – RD was working with officers of West Berkshire Council to identify sites.

Network Rail – Electrification. RD gave a confidential update on discussions with Network Rail and the Cotswolds, Chilterns and North Wessex Downs.

SE advised that there was an application for an incinerator at Barton Stacey in the setting of the AONB. RD noted this to follow up.

14. Resources Group (paper 9)

JS presented the report and asked that a budget for consultants be created to deliver initiatives identified by the Resources Group. The CoP took the view that now the team was fully staffed the resources within the team should be able to respond. If specific skills could not be identified within the team then consideration would be given to buying in the skills, although this would very much depend on the budgets available.

15. North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust

DS explained how the Landscape Trust was evolving and gave a sample of grants given since 2017

- Pillbox conversions for bats £3,000
- Pewsey Vale Tourism leaflets £2,005
- Pewsey Vale Tourism video £1,650

- Ogbourne St Andrew interpretation board £1,000
- Boxford History Group, Roman Mosaic Excavation project £5,000
- Avebury Sports Pavilion £3,000
- Chilton Foliat Community Club £3,000

New assessors had been appointed, criteria reviewed and tightened and every effort was made to ensure that those engaging with the Landscape Trust knew about the North Wessex Downs AONB. Discussions were under way with the AONB Team about sharing a stand at the Royal Berkshire Show 2019. (21st/22nd September 2019)

16. AOB

PM encourages those present to get involved and support the events being planned. Action: HO to ensure that the members of CoP were made aware of volunteering opportunities.

Meeting closed 12 noon.

K. J. S. Hiscox

2/7/2019