

NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
COUNCIL OF PARTNERS

**MINUTES of a meeting held at
Kennet Valley Village Hall
on Tuesday 14th November 2017**

Present

Mr E Hiscocks
Cllr Fleur de Rhe-Philippe
Cllr Anna McNair Scott
Cllr Charles Mathew

Representing

Chairman
Wiltshire Council
Hampshire County Council
Oxfordshire County Council

Community & Parish Interest Group Members

Mr Bryan D Castle
Dr J Sharp

Farming & Rural Business Interest Group Members

Mr Peter Lemon

Nature & Tourism Interest Group Members

Ms Meg Chambers
Mr Paul Rogers

Recreation & Tourism Interest Group Members

Mr R Clarke
Mr M Crane

North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust

Mr D Sherlock

In attendance

Mr R Broadhead	Wiltshire Council
Mr Paul Hendry	West Berkshire Council
Mr J Wilshaw	Swindon Borough Council
Mr D Lamb	Vale of White Horse District Council
Mr N Mottram	Oxfordshire County Council
Mr C Slack	Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
Mr H Oliver	Director, North Wessex Downs AONB
Mr I Hepburn	Planning Advisor North Wessex Downs AONB
Ms R Somerset	Communications 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)

Also present

Mr Paul Rogers

Apologies for absence were received from:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>
Cllr Dominic Boeck	West Berkshire Council

Cllr Wayne Crabbe	Swindon BC
Mr D Bibby	Test Valley Borough Council
Mr Garry King	Hampshire County Council
Cllr Paul Miller	Basingstoke & Deane BC
Ms Lois Philips	Farming & Rural Business Interest Group
Mr Nigel Titchen	Community & Parish Interest Group
Andrew Smith	Natural England

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

It was agreed that Paul Rogers be appointed as an Advisory member for the Nature Conservation Interest Group initially for a period of 2 years.

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

It was agreed that the Minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 4 July be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

4. **Matters Arising from Minutes**

None

5. **Chairman's remarks**

The Chairman welcomed Mr. Paul Rogers to the meeting. He drew attention to the work going on behind the scenes with the Resources Group, Chaired by Dr John Sharpe, the Management Working Group now chaired by Robin Edwards, the Management Plan Review Group chaired by Cllr Paul Miller and the Landscape Trust chaired by Donald Sherlock.

He thanked the Team, and specifically mentioned Rose, Claire and Sue, for the success of the Annual Forum which was well attended and generated positive feedback.

He will meet Ian Huspeth, Leader of Oxfordshire County Council next week and Graham Jones, the Leader of West Berkshire Council in December. He asked members to indicate if there were others that they feel he should meet.

The Annual AONB Chairmen's Conference takes place in London and the Director will attend alone as unfortunately due to a longstanding engagement he is unable to do so.

The next Council of Partners meeting is at Marlborough Golf Club and if members are aware of other suitable venues they should please speak to Susan Clarke.

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**

AMS – thanked the CoP on behalf of GK for funding his attendance at the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) Annual Conference.

JS – expressed concern at the Vale of White Horse District Council again proposing sites for 1,000 houses within the AONB.

FdRP – Notified the meeting that Wiltshire Council was revising its core strategy in collaboration with Swindon Borough Council.

RB reported on his involvement in the national discussion on the management of motor vehicles on unsealed roads and byways open to all traffic; he had initially chaired a working group but had to step down as he could not give it the time that was needed. However he did keep a watching brief on progress. It was disappointing that the Government had indicated that there would be no new legislation but there would be a new good practice guide to strengthen local authority staff understanding of the current legislative framework so that, for example, the making of TROs (Traffic Regulation Orders) was not so regularly challenged.

MC explained that, as described at the Make Your Woodland Work for You event in May, the Woodland Trust was offering help owners of plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS) and ancient woodland affected by invasive non-native species such as rhododendron. The owners can request a survey with advice and support to help them with ongoing management.

PL cited the impact of not replacing Oliver Cripps (OC) who had left the team in December 2016. The Management Working Group (MWG) is aware and the matter is a key concern. PL wanted minuted the need to replace OC. HO explained that he intended replacing OC's post with 2 part-time posts, one as a senior funding and project development manager and one as a project officer. He said that the process of job evaluation in line with the new job families requirements of Wiltshire Council, the host authority, and the need to align our posts with those at Cranborne Chase AONB, had caused delay. RB explained to the CoP that the Wiltshire Council job evaluation process was robust and time consuming. HO said he valued the CoP support to increase the team to deliver the work of the AONB.

MC informed the meeting that as part of the Great West Way project an itinerary for the equine industry had been published to help with marketing overseas. He asked what was happening with the design of the welcome signs for the AONB?

NM – reported that EH and HO were meeting the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council on 22nd November to discuss the value of the AONB designation against the backdrop of the Council considering its Mineral & Waste Core Strategy site allocations.

JW Swindon BC is dealing with three major planning applications east of Swindon. The Lockmead development inquiry is underway.

CS The Basingstoke & Deane BC Green Infrastructure Plan is at its consultation stage.

RC introduced the work of ARK and how it aligns with that of the AONB. He also said there was a rapidly evolving positive relationship with Thames Water and that Rivers Trusts had a role in the wider landscape in respect to water resources and soil management to deliver integrated landscape and water management.

- 7. Charlotte Hitchmough, Director ARK** delivered a presentation on their work over the last 12 months and its aspiration for the future. ARK are now working further downstream between Hungerford and Reading and intend to employ a project officer to work with the Angling Trust and those with an interest in that part of the river. The AONB may wish to support the project.

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. The Sustainable Development Fund is fully subscribed. All queries to GK in the first instance.
9. **Budget Update for 2017-2018 (paper 3)** The budget was presented as a snapshot. The projected underspend of approximately £43,000 was due to carrying a vacancy.
10. **Spending Priorities to March 2018 (paper 4)**
There was discussion around the lack of specific financial allocations against the projects listed in the report; that the figures were too notional and therefore not meaningful. HO explained that he wanted to maintain flexibility and all projects delivered the aims and objectives of the Management Plan. RC wanted to be confident that the budget was being used as effectively as possible and would withstand scrutiny from Defra particularly as there appears to be an intention to fund projects such as the Avebury World Heritage Site Landscape Strategy where the work will not be delivered in this financial year. A further complication is that the Avebury World Heritage Site is the responsibility of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) and therefore moving funds would be effectively moving funds between government departments without authority to do so.
FdRP expressed the view that the CoP should not micro-manage the budget.

The spending priorities to March 2018 detailed in the report were agreed.
11. **Local Authority Budget Contributions 2018-2019 - (paper 5)**
Members noted the proposed local authority contributions based on the commitment made by DEFRA to AONBs in its four-year funding commitment from 2016-2020 and that it is subject to review if this commitment were to change.
12. **Management Plan Review - (paper 5)**
Since the last meeting a project group has been formed chaired by Cllr Paul Miller. Due to personal circumstances Cllr Miller did not attend the first meeting of the Project Group but has sent a full email to the Director who will meet him later this month.
13. **Corporate Strategy Review Update (paper 7)**
JS, the Chairman of the Resources Group, explained that the Group had met twice, Gerry Hamersley was producing a draft prospectus, and the Group was looking at ways of generating non-exchequer funding through advertising or sponsorship of such publications as the *Discover* leaflet. They were working with six Oxford University students who were researching how other AONBs approach advertising. The CoP agreed the Terms of Reference for the Group.


HO informed the meeting that the Overarching Corporate Strategy Document would be circulated soon.

In respect of the Farming and Land Management strand of the work EH, PL, HO were meeting with Gillian Swanton (member of MWG) for further discussion after this meeting.
14. **Director's Report (paper 8)**
HO thanked the team for their work during a busy period. He drew attention to the Hungerford Common Wildflower Restoration project and the work of the Landscape Trust.

15. **Planning Update (paper 8)** IH presented his report and explained it was not a complete list of current planning issues but representative of his workload.
16/03061/OUTMAJ (West Berkshire) Housing development; Salisbury Road, Hungerford.
The AONB will continue to object during the remaining stages of the planning process.
Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 indicated the continuing pressure for homes in the AONB.
17/01235/COMIND (West Berkshire) Free-range egg-laying unit; Beedon Common. The conduct of the West Berkshire Planning Committee on considering the application gave cause for concern as disparaging remarks were made about the AONB which indicated a lack of understanding of national planning policy and protected landscapes. It is intended to offer briefings or training to councillors to improve their understanding.
Great Western Electrification Project (GWEP) it is disheartening that whilst discussions with AONBs are taking place on mitigation the infrastructure continues to be put in place. Any retrospective mitigation works will be far more expensive.
16. AOB Rural Housing – HO explained that he and the Chairman had met Claire Perry MP and she had offered to involve the AONB in a conference she was planning on this issue.

The next meeting of the Council of Partners will be on Tuesday 6th March 2018
(Meeting closed at 12.25pm)

Signed.....



Date.....

6 March 2018