

Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Advisory Committee

The Minutes of the meeting held at Hovingham Village Hall on 14 April 2016, commencing at 10.00 am

Present

Members:

Hambleton District Council: Councillor Christine Cookman in the Chair
 North Yorkshire County Council: County Councillor Caroline Patmore
 Ryedale District Council: Councillors Fiona Farnell and Robert Wainwright
 Parish Councils: Chris Stratton (Hambleton) and Sally Brown (Ryedale)
 Country Land and Business Association: Sir William Worsley
 The Ramblers: Philip Catterall
 Natural England: Margaret Trigg

Officers:

Howardian Hills AONB team: Paul Jackson, Liz Bassindale and Maggie Cochrane
 North Yorkshire County Council: Kate Arscott (Secretary) and Liz Small (Heritage Services Manager)
 Hambleton District Council: Peter Jones
 Ryedale District Council: Paula Craddock

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

64 Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of County Councillor Clare Wood, Jim Smith (Forestry Commission) and Justine Clark and Rosy Eaton (Natural England)

65 Minutes of the Joint Advisory Committee meeting held on 29 October 2015

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2015, having been previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

66 Matters Arising

Minute 56 – AONB Unit Activity

The AONB Manager advised that action to tackle the problem of Himalayan Balsam had moved forward significantly in partnership with the North York Moors National Park, River Rye Partnership and others, and a bid was being made to the Heritage Lottery Fund, which would include public engagement.

Minute 60 – National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) – Activity Update

The AONB Manager confirmed that he would be liaising with The Ramblers regarding the offer to arrange events during Outstanding Week 2016.

Minute 61 – Reports from Partner Organisations

Liz Small, Heritage Services Manager, NYCC, reported that she had passed on to the Public Rights of Way team the comments made at the previous meeting and that it was hoped that a faster response could be provided in future due to improved communications and joint enabling work between NYCC Public Rights of Way and the AONB team.

She also reported that recruitment was underway for a 2 year joint post to support the North Yorkshire and York and the East Riding Local Nature Partnerships.

67 AONB Unit Activity

Members considered a detailed report of the work areas and progress achieved by the AONB Unit since the last meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee. This was accompanied by a slide presentation showcasing some of the work undertaken.

The Committee sought assurance regarding the effectiveness of action to control Rhododendron growth, and also to tackle Phytophthora in the AONB area. Members also queried whether forestry harvesting was likely to be impacted by the Drax power station increased use of biomass. It was explained that there were a range of reasons for felling, including disease control. However, much felling was likely to be related to the age of woodland rather than economic factors.

The Committee welcomed the support and opportunities being provided to people on the autistic spectrum.

Members queried the level of underspend during 2015/16, whilst recognising that there was an element of providing a buffer against the risk of future reduction in funding. The AONB Manager confirmed the strategy behind maintaining a reserve, but also reassured the Committee that appropriate projects would also be brought forward for funding.

Members thanked the AONB Manager for keeping the website up to date with regard to the progress of the Minerals and Waste Joint Plan and associated fracking issues.

The Committee noted that this was Maggie Cochrane's last meeting, and thanked her very much for her work for the AONB over the last eight years.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

68 Development within the AONB

Members considered a report from the AONB Manager giving details of the number and type of planning applications determined within the AONB during 2015. It was reported that data this year was more accurate than had been possible previously as the data for Hambleton was now able to distinguish between parts of parishes that lie within or outside the AONB boundary.

The report outlined the main conclusions to be drawn from the 121 applications received during 2015/16, and members were made aware of the impact this level of applications had on the team's workload.

Peter Jones, Hambleton District Council, reported a 20% increase in applications this year to the authority. He also indicated that the new Local Plan currently being developed was likely to include a policy on tourism.

Members asked whether it was possible to differentiate between applications that had been refused and ones that had been withdrawn before a likely refusal and the AONB Manager undertook to check this.

The Committee also commented on the recent development of solar farms which are visible from the AONB area, and issues associated with glare which had not been anticipated from the initial applications. Peter Jones encouraged members to provide photographic evidence of any issues in order that the Council can build up a picture of the visual impact to influence future policy and decision making. Members asked the AONB Manager to gather photographic evidence where applicable.

The Committee noted the relevance of the colour of materials selected and their appearance in different weather conditions as a pertinent issue in relation to protecting the character of the AONB, an issue which the AONB Manager had highlighted in commenting on individual applications.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

69 AONB Action Programme 2015/16

Members considered details of progress made on implementing the AONB Management Plan during 2015/16. A detailed summary of progress against each objective was provided in an annex circulated separately to the agenda.

The AONB Manager reported that a detailed red/amber/green system was used to monitor progress against annual targets. Analysis showed that 80% of specific targets were fully achieved; 5% were 25-75% achieved; 7% were less than 25% achieved; and 8% were not progressed at all, a similar performance to the previous year.

Progress was reported under the headings of:

- The ecosystem approach
- Natural environment
- Historic environment
- Local communities
- Agriculture
- Forestry and woodland
- Development and the rural economy
- Roads, transport and traffic management
- Recreation, access and tourism
- Awareness and promotion
- Implementation
- Monitoring
- National Association for AONBs

Members raised the issue of tourists and road safety, especially the increasing number of cyclists. Whilst very welcome, the Committee expressed concern that visitors can have a lack of awareness of how dangerous the roads can be within the AONB area, particularly in relation to narrow carriageways, blind spots and HGVs.

There was also concern about the condition of verges in some areas with encroachment and erosion, whilst kerbing was not always the ideal response. Members asked whether weight restrictions could be considered on some routes, although it was acknowledged that this may not be a practicable solution if it only shifted a problem to another area.

The Committee recommended that the Hambleton and Ryedale Area Committees be asked to give consideration to road safety issues in considering the minutes of the Joint Advisory Committee meeting.

Resolved

- a) That the achievements against targets for 2015/16 be noted.
- b) That the Hambleton and Ryedale Area Committees be asked to consider road safety issues in the AONB area when considering the minutes of the JAC meeting.

70 AONB Business Plan and Action Programme 2016/17

Members considered details of proposed activity to implement the AONB Management Plan during 2016/17. A detailed set of proposed targets against each objective was provided in an annex circulated separately to the agenda.

Resolved

That the targets for 2016/17 as contained in the Action Programme be agreed.

71 Business Planning for the Future

Members received details of the recent restructure of the Howardian Hills AONB team, and of potential future mechanisms for project delivery.

The Heritage Services Manager explained the process of the restructure and thanked staff for their engagement with the review process. She explained that it was planned to use the savings from the restructure to employ project staff for fixed term or specialist projects. The AONB Manager highlighted the potential for some staff sharing with the National Parks team following the relocation to the National Park Offices in December.

Members looked forward to hearing how the new more flexible arrangements worked out in practice. They also reiterated the Committee's thanks and best wishes to Maggie Cochrane as she left the team.

Resolved

- a) That the report be noted
- b) That an evaluation of the types and efficiency of new project delivery/support mechanisms be reported to the Joint Advisory Committee in April 2017.

72 National Association for AONBs Activity

The Committee received an update on activity by the National Association for AONBs. The AONB Manager particularly highlighted work around the theme of health and wellbeing, which would be the focus of the Landscapes for Life conference in June. It was hoped that there would be opportunities arising from this for the AONB to explore.

It was noted that Outstanding Week – the national celebration of AONBs - would take place from 17-25 September 2016. Philip Catterall confirmed that the Ramblers would input to the local programme this year.

Resolved

That the report be noted

73 Reports from Partner Organisations

Members of the Committee shared the following information:

Ryedale District Council

The Ryedale Local Plan Sites document is now expected to go out for consultation in the late summer. The Slingsby Design Statement will also be going out to consultation for a 6 week period, and will influence responses to future planning applications.

Hambleton District Council

The Hambleton Local Plan is moving forward. 462 responses had been received in response to the call for sites, and these were now being filtered for preferred options to go out to consultation.

Two new posts had been advertised in the planning service following a reorganisation. A recent recalculation of the housing land supply had shown the figure to be nine years now. The authority was also experiencing a significant pressure for housing, including a number of planning appeals.

North Yorkshire County Council

Following a small restructure, the AONB team now comes under Trading Standards and Planning Services.

Forestry Commission

On behalf of the Forestry Commission, the Secretary reported that the Countryside Stewardship Woodland Improvement Grant was currently open for applications. The Woodland Creation Grant had recently closed, with 48 applications being received for Yorkshire and the North East (the largest number of any Forestry Commission area in England).

Country Land and Business Association

Sir William Worsley reported that he had taken on the role of Chair of the National Forest Company. Over a 25 year period the planted area had risen from 6% to 21%, and tree planting had led to regeneration and increased tourism as well as helping to raise the aspirations of local people. It was interesting to consider the experience gained here might be relevant to the AONB area.

Hambleton Parishes

Chris Stratton reported that 3 local Parish Councils had formed a group which had done some very useful work to understand and assimilate information about shale gas extraction and potential implications for the AONB. He stressed that this was not a pressure group.

NYCC Area Committees

Members suggested that the AONB Manager be invited to attend a future meeting of each of the Hambleton and Ryedale Area Committees, to provide the Area Committees with a better understanding and appreciation of the work undertaken in the AONB area.

Resolved

That the Hambleton and Ryedale Area Committees be asked to consider inviting the AONB Manager to a future meeting to brief Members on the work of the AONB team.

74 Date of next JAC Meeting

Resolved

That the next meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee be held on Thursday 10 November at 10am at the National Park Office, Helmsley.

The meeting concluded at 12.10pm

KA