

**HOWARDIAN HILLS
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
13 APRIL 2017**

AONB BUSINESS PLAN AND ACTION PROGRAMME 2017/18

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To agree details of proposed activity to implement the AONB Management Plan during 2017/18.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The AONB Management Plan contains a detailed Action Programme that lists each Objective and Action and identifies a suggested lead agency and partner organisations for implementation.
- 2.2 In addition to setting targets for 2017/18 this report also details some of the mechanisms for achieving the proposed targets, as well as indications of some of the individual projects that may be implemented.
- 2.3 The Action Programme and Targets for 2017/18, together with an indicative timetabling of tasks, has been circulated to Members by email.

3.0 THE ECOSYSTEM APPROACH

- 3.1 Principal activities for the year include:
- Refining a matrix of the habitats and/or Special Qualities of the AONB, plotted against the ecosystem services that they provide.
 - Compiling a matrix of generic types of 'project', plotted against the ecosystem services that the AONB provides.
 - Starting to utilise the matrix of 'projects' when assessing grant requests, planning applications, etc.

4.0 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- 4.1 The proposed budget for landscape and biodiversity works is £25,000, although there would also be further additional funds available from Reserves if necessary. Potential projects to be funded include:
- Commissioning the North & East Yorkshire Datacentre to compile a report of the species records for the Howardian Hills, to assist with Management Plan review in 2018/19.
 - Commissioning a comprehensive project to identify, survey, map and record features of geodiversity interest in the AONB, to assist with Management Plan review in 2018/19.
 - Hedge restoration schemes (subject to integration with grants available from the Countryside Stewardship Scheme).
 - Continuing control of Himalayan balsam along Wath Beck and at Jeffry Bog, Fairy Dell and Mugdale & Barker Woods SINCs. This is a particularly suitable task for the AONB Volunteers.
 - Contributing to new partnerships concentrating on turtle doves and cornfield flowers.

- 4.2 Other activities for the year include:
- Participating via the NAAONB in work to develop new models for supporting conservation work post-Brexit.
 - Engaging with the stakeholder group assisting the North & East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre with biological records management.
 - Continuing to work with Ryedale DC, Scarborough BC and Hambleton DC in a Biodiversity Action Partnership for the joint area.
 - Continuing our programmes of Exmoor pony grazing, SINC management and Special Interest Road Verge management.
 - Continuing our programme of planting individual hedgerow and in-field trees.
 - Carrying out targeted control of Himalayan balsam, rhododendron and bracken on various SINC and other sites.
 - Promoting the Countryside Stewardship Scheme to farmers and land managers (subject to Scheme opening windows, Brexit impact, etc) and identifying new opportunities and methods for assisting them with conservation works.
 - Continuing our participation in the River Derwent and particularly River Rye partnerships, inputting to the Development Phase of the Heritage Lottery Fund project.
 - Continuing to participate in the North Yorkshire & York Local Nature Partnership (LNP).
 - Responding to planning applications potentially affecting important wildlife sites, as appropriate.

5.0 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

- 5.1 The proposed budget for works to conserve and enhance historic environment features is currently £23,000, although there would also be further additional funds available from Reserves if necessary. Potential projects to be funded include:
- Carrying out management works on Scheduled Monuments. This may take more or less of the budget, which may also be increased from its current proposed level dependent upon the amount of work proposed for this year of the Monument Management Scheme.
 - Supporting the production of a Management Plan for the Gilling Castle Lakes.
 - Commissioning the preparation of a Statement of Significance for the Howardian Hills, to assist with Management Plan review in 2018/19.

5.2 Other activities for the year include:

- Delivering the third year of the Monument Management Scheme, funded by Historic England, utilising volunteers wherever possible but also engaging contractors and external assistance in order to maximise draw-down of Historic England grant.
- Participating via the NAAONB in work to develop new models for supporting conservation work post-Brexit.
- Promoting the Countryside Stewardship Scheme to farmers and land managers (subject to Scheme opening windows, Brexit impact, etc) and identifying new opportunities and methods for assisting them with conservation works.
- Responding to planning applications potentially affecting important heritage sites, as appropriate.

6.0 LOCAL COMMUNITIES

- 6.1 The budget for small-scale works in local villages is included within the £22,000 earmarked for projects supporting Sustainable Development and the Rural Economy.

- 6.2 Other activities for the year include:
- Participation in the North York Moors, Coast and Hills LEADER Programme, to promote and develop activities within the AONB.
 - Continued participation in the Amotherby Ward project, and rolling this out to another Ward if applicable.
 - Continued liaison with the principal organisations involved in community work in the AONB, via the regular Community Development Officers' meetings.

7.0 AGRICULTURE

7.1 The proposed combined budget for both landscape and biodiversity works is £25,000, although there would also be further additional funds available from Reserves if necessary. See paragraph 4.1 above for current project ideas.

- 7.2 Other activities for the year include:
- Participating via the NAAONB in work to develop new models for agricultural and rural support post-Brexit.
 - Promoting the Countryside Stewardship Scheme to farmers and land managers (subject to Scheme opening windows, Brexit impact, etc) and identifying new opportunities and methods for assisting them with conservation works.
 - Organising an 'update' meeting for farmers and landowners to disseminate information on, amongst other topics, the Catchment Sensitive Farming Scheme, Brexit issues and the RYE vitalise Heritage Lottery Fund project.
 - Distributing the New Agricultural Buildings & Infrastructure Design Guidance to local farm building construction companies/agents.
 - Responding to consultations and requests for advice, as appropriate.

8.0 FORESTRY AND WOODLAND

- 8.1 Principal activities for the year include:
- Promoting the Countryside Stewardship Scheme to farmers and land managers (subject to Scheme opening windows, Brexit impact, etc) and identifying new opportunities and methods for assisting them with conservation works.
 - Participating via the NAAONB in work to develop new models for supporting forestry and woodland management post-Brexit.
 - Monitoring the incidence of Ash Dieback Disease and other plant health issues.
 - Continuing participation in the North York Moors Native Woodland Partnership.
 - Continuing to provide advice and, where appropriate, financial assistance to woodland managers.
 - Responding to consultations and requests for advice, as appropriate.

9.0 DEVELOPMENT & THE RURAL ECONOMY

- 9.1 Principal activities for the year include:
- Monitoring and inputting as necessary to national policy consultations received by the NAAONB.
 - Responding to consultations received from the Local Planning Authorities and other bodies on development proposals. The amount of work arising from planning consultations is impossible to predict, as our input is entirely reactive, but this is an important area of work and is a high priority.
 - Inputting to the continuing development of the Ryedale and Hambleton Local Plan Strategies, as applicable.
 - Inputting to the continuing development of the North Yorkshire Minerals & Waste Joint Plan, as applicable.

- Continuing liaison with Northern Powergrid on overhead electricity cable undergrounding, to ensure continued sustained progress during the RIIO-ED1 period. Villages/schemes where work should start in 2017/18 include Ganthorpe, Oswaldkirk and Low Easthorpe.
- Considering development of projects to utilise the landscape mitigation funds provided by National Grid to minimise the visual impact of high voltage overhead powerlines, following the completion of a survey report and using experience emerging from the wider national AONB/NP Family.
- Exploring options to support jobs, skills and sustainable economic growth locally, as part of the joint Protected Landscapes Growth Plan submitted to the Local Enterprise Partnership.

10.0 ROADS, TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

10.1 Principal activities for the year include:

- Responding to consultations received from the Highway Authority on works within the carriageway that might have biodiversity, historic environment or landscape implications.
- The repair and restoration of at least 2 traditional direction signs.
- Monitoring progress of initiatives to dual the remaining section of the A64 within the AONB, including starting discussions on wording for a new 2019-2024 AONB Management Plan Objective.

11.0 RECREATION, ACCESS AND TOURISM

11.1 The budget for recreation and access works is included within the £22,000 earmarked for projects supporting Sustainable Development and the Rural Economy.

11.2 Principal activities for the year include:

- Continuing to work in partnership with the other Protected Landscapes in North Yorkshire to deliver projects that access Local Enterprise Partnership funding for recreational/tourism projects, including input to the new Destination Partnerships project.
- Continuing input into tourism business initiatives with Ryedale DC, Welcome to Yorkshire and Visit York.
- Obtaining STEAM tourism visitor data cut to the AONB's boundaries, to help assess the impact of promotional activity and assist with Management Plan review in 2018/19.
- Promotion of the six new 'Easy Access' self-guided route leaflets to enable less-able users to enjoy the AONB.
- Continued development and subsequent delivery of a mechanism to assist NYCC Countryside Access Service staff with resolving Issues with paths in the AONB more quickly and efficiently.
- Recording destination/distance information for all fingerposts located where paths leave a public road.
- Implementation of Public Rights of Way route creation/diversion packages at Castle Howard and Howsham.
- Continuing to control litter at 'hot-spots' and reporting fly-tipping incidents.

12.0 AWARENESS & PROMOTION

12.1 The budget for awareness and promotion work is included within the £22,000 earmarked for projects supporting Sustainable Development and the Rural Economy.

12.2 Principal activities for the year include:

- Further developing circular routes and interpretation, particularly in partnership with the Castle Howard Estate.
- Ensuring that the gateway signs are maintained and that outlets are supplied with copies of our leaflets when requested. Potential new mechanisms for delivering leaflets will be explored and adopted if appropriate, to improve efficiency and timeliness.
- Publishing our 2016/17 Annual Report and AONB News 2017.
- Maintaining our website, attending Ryedale Show and distributing information/promoting the AONB via Twitter.
- Producing a leaflet showcasing the geodiversity of the AONB.
- Completing the production of the new display banners.
- Holding at least 3 Junior Ranger Club days, using mechanisms for delivery that maintain standards but minimise the input required from AONB Unit staff.

13.0 IMPLEMENTATION

13.1 Principal initiatives this year include:

- Participating in any work needed to promote the importance of AONB management and ensure the continuation/maximisation of grant support from Defra.
- Participating via the NAAONB in work to develop new models for agricultural, conservation and rural support post-Brexit.
- Participating in the North York Moors, Coast and Hills LEADER Programme, to promote and develop activities within the AONB.
- Taking in-year opportunities where appropriate to obtain small amounts of grant support for specific projects.
- Delivering the third year of the Monument Management Scheme, funded by Historic England.
- Continuing our participation in the River Derwent and particularly River Rye partnerships, inputting to the Development Phase of the Heritage Lottery Fund project. Also contributing to new partnerships concentrating on turtle doves and cornfield flowers.
- Continuing to work in partnership with the other Protected Landscapes in North Yorkshire to deliver projects that access Local Enterprise Partnership funding for recreational/tourism projects, including input to the new Destination Partnerships project.
- Continuing input into tourism business initiatives with Ryedale DC, Welcome to Yorkshire and Visit York.
- Utilising Reserves appropriately, to supplement the annual projects budget and maintain an AONB Unit resource commensurate with future work priorities and income.
- Exploring options to support jobs, skills and sustainable economic growth locally, as part of the joint Protected Landscapes Growth Plan submitted to the Local Enterprise Partnership.
- Continuing participation in the North York Moors Native Woodland Partnership, to make best use of new opportunities presented in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, LEADER Local Development Strategy, etc.
- Using volunteers to help deliver AONB Management Plan Objectives wherever possible and appropriate.
- Keeping delivery mechanisms under review and making changes/improvements where applicable.

14.0 MONITORING

14.1 Principal activities for the year include:

- Evaluate options/commission report to develop a robust mechanism for assessing the Condition of non-designated Priority Sites, to provide evidence/data to assist with Management Plan review in 2018/19.

15.0 AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN

15.1 Activity planned for this year, in preparation for the next review in 2018/19, involves:

- Preparing a schedule of tasks and deadlines for the review.
- Considering options for the consultation process/mechanisms.
- Organising meeting dates for 7 Topic Groups.

16.0 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR AONBs

16.1 Principal activities for the year include:

- Continuing to represent the conservation interests of the AONB and participate in peer-to-peer learning projects, sharing of information, etc.
- Attending seminars, Northern Group meetings, AONB technical events, etc.

17.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Targets for 2017/18, as contained in the Action Programme, be approved.