

**HOWARDIAN HILLS
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
19 APRIL 2018**

AONB ACTION PROGRAMME 2017/18

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To receive details of progress made on implementing the AONB Management Plan during 2017/18. The Action Programme for 2018/19, incorporating business planning requirements, is covered under a separate Report on this agenda.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 At each Spring meeting the JAC considers a summary report outlining the progress achieved on the Management Plan objectives in the previous year. The Action Programme contains full details of the progress made and has been circulated to Members by email.
- 2.2 A detailed Red/Amber/Green system is used to monitor progress against annual targets, and analysis shows that 82% of the specific targets were fully achieved, 4% were 25-75% achieved, 6% were less than 25% achieved and 8% were not progressed at all.
- 2.3 Statistically this is a very similar performance to the previous year. Targets where no action was completed were largely those that were overtaken by events, relied heavily on action from partner organisations or were/became lower relative priorities for the AONB Unit during the year.
- 2.4 The principal target that we had hoped to achieve more progress on was the restoration of a couple of traditional direction signs. Many of the remaining 'missed' targets will be covered during the Management Plan review process.

3.0 THE ECOSYSTEM APPROACH

- 3.1 Achievements this year included:
- Inputting to important local plans such as the Ryedale and Hambleton Local Plan Strategies and the Minerals & Waste Joint Plan, to assess conformity with the AONB Management Plan.
 - Defra funding awarded to Hovingham and Gilling villages, as part of the Ryedale Villages Natural Flood Management Project run by the River Derwent Partnership.

4.0 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- 4.1 Achievements this year included:
- Continuing to participate in the Biodiversity Action Partnership for Ryedale, Scarborough and the AONB.
 - Carrying out 18 workdays with volunteers on 7 SINCs or SSSIs.
 - Managing a total of 14 grassland sites (all SSSI/SINC bar two).
 - Managing 45 Special Interest Road Verges.
 - Carrying out Himalayan balsam control works at Jeffry Bog SINC, Fairy Dell SINC, Mugdale & Barker Woods SINC, River Derwent SSSI and along Wath Beck.
 - Carrying out rotational scrub management at Terrington Carr SINC, as well as scrub removal at Peel Wood & Grasslands SINC, Littledale SINC, Amotherby Lane SINC and Cawton Fens SINC.
 - Carrying out clearance of rhododendron on Coulton Moor.

- Contributing significantly to the development of the HLF-funded Ryevitalise Project, with attendance at Steering Group meetings, preparation of several of the sub-project proformas and input to the Landscape Conservation Action Plan.
- Contributing significantly to the development of the HLF-funded Turtle Doves Project within the AONB, with site visits arranged, schools involved and volunteers trained for Spring 2018 surveying.
- Providing funding for nature areas at Amotherby Churchyard and Slingsby School.
- Continuing involvement with the North Yorkshire Local Geological Sites Partnership and also commissioning a Geodiversity Audit to survey and map the AONB's most important geodiversity sites. An initial test-run of 11 site surveys was completed, with the remaining c.75 site surveys to be completed by early summer 2018.
- Attending meetings of the North Yorkshire & York Local Nature Partnership, and agreeing a contribution to a continuation funding package.

5.0 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

5.1 Achievements this year included:

- Completing work on 2 Local Priority Sites, and 7 other sites/features.
- Restoring traditional village name signs in Coneysthorpe, Coulton, Welburn, Brandsby, Stearsby, Dalby and Skewsby with the refurbishment of 7 old signs and the casting of 6 new replicas.
- Year 3 of the Monument Management Scheme, which is principally funded by Historic England, was a major disappointment. Site visits in July 2017 indicated that bracken spraying on many of the largest sites in 2016 appeared to have been ineffective. Bracken was still head-high and this prevented any possible re-vegetation trials being considered for winter 2017/18. Although bracken was sprayed on 14 SMs in 2017, the weather conditions were so wet that efficiency may well have been compromised on some sites, and again some of the largest sites simply couldn't be sprayed. Bramble and scrub regrowth following cutting in winter 2016/17 was checked on 8 SMs, with stump treatment thankfully showing to have been c.95% successful.

6.0 LOCAL COMMUNITIES

6.1 Achievements this year included:

- Involvement in Ward Mapping/Planning Project with Hovingham and Ampleforth Wards.
- Community projects funded in 3 villages and advice provided to 3 other projects
- Community First Yorkshire project supported with an SDF grant (see separate report for work achieved by the CFY project officer).
- Continued liaison with the principal organisations involved in community work in the AONB, via the regular Community Development Officers' meetings.
- Holding a meeting with North Yorkshire Police to discuss extending a Rural Watch Initiative from the Yorkshire Wolds into the Howardian Hills.

7.0 AGRICULTURE

7.1 Achievements this year included:

- Completing 6 landscape enhancement schemes, involving 500m of hedge planting/gapping-up, 100m of hedge laying, 324m of wall restoration and the planting of 1 new copse.
- Inputting to NAAONB discussions on Brexit issues, as well as evaluating reports, news and opinions from other organisations. Involvement also in NAAONB/Defra working groups and promoting our Management Plan as a potential foundation document for a new agri-environment scheme tailored to the AONB.

- Holding a Farmers' Update event in Helmsley. Presentations were given on Catchment Sensitive Farming and the Ryevitalise Project; also by the NFU and Farm Advisory Service. 85 attendees; 30% of them Young Farmers; c.30% from the AONB.
- Circulating the New Farm Buildings & Infrastructure Design Guidance to local farm building construction companies.
- Scrutinising planning consultations for 13 new agricultural buildings or infrastructure.

8.0 FORESTRY AND WOODLAND

8.1 Achievements this year included:

- Scrutinising 5 Forestry Commission Felling Licence consultations and 1 Woodland Management Plan consultation.
- Continuing participation in the North York Moors Native Woodland Partnership
- Monitoring the situation with tree diseases, particularly following some follow-up Plant Health felling in Yearsley Woods.
- Responding to consultations and requests for advice, as appropriate.

9.0 DEVELOPMENT & THE RURAL ECONOMY

9.1 Achievements this year included:

- Monitoring and inputting as necessary to national policy consultations received by the NAAONB.
- Inputting to the Ryedale Local Plan: Local Sites Consultation; Hambleton Local Plan: Easingwold Area Plan Alternative Sites and Local Green Spaces; North Yorkshire Minerals & Waste Joint Plan: Addendum of Proposed Changes.
- Scrutinising a total of 98 development control consultations across all categories – full details of Development statistics for the AONB in 2017 are given in a separate Report on the agenda.
- Scrutinising 5 planning consultations relating to small business development in the AONB.
- Continuing liaison with Northern Powergrid on overhead electricity cable undergrounding. Schemes were completed at Nunnington (with final removal of the poles) and Ganthorpe.
- A partial undergrounding scheme for BT overhead lines was agreed for Nunnington (West) in 2016 but has yet to be implemented. BT has also looked retrospectively at the Cawton and Crambe schemes and has initiated a removal scheme at Cawton.
- Attending the first meeting of the Ryevitalise Lowland Farmer Cluster, looking at training needs for local farm businesses.

10.0 ROADS, TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

10.1 Achievements this year included:

- Scrutinising 1 development control consultation.
- Updating the AONB Design Guidance for Highways Works and presenting it to the Highways Asset Management Heads of Service meeting for discussion and adoption.
- Developing a simplified methodology for restoration of traditional direction signs.

11.0 RECREATION, ACCESS AND TOURISM

11.1 Achievements this year included:

- Scrutinising 3 relevant development control consultations.
- Monitoring recreational 'hot-spot' pressures at various sites.

- Progressing a major project to assist NYCC with resolving Public Rights of Way issues in the AONB:
 - 99% of all roadside fingerposts have been photographed, to record the distance and destination information. Overhanging or encroaching vegetation was also cut back as necessary at the same time.
 - 24 new/replacement fingerposts have been made and installed, with the next batch of 18 also made and awaiting installation.
 - Packages of work have been completed by the NYMNPA Modern Apprentices Team at Bulmer and Welburn. Works to the River Derwent path at Crambe are scheduled for late Spring, when ground conditions allow.
- Uploading the Easy Countryside Trails leaflets to a newly created page on the AONB website and promoting the routes to various groups, including parents with young children via the Ryedale Mumbler website. Grant support provided to Sight Support Ryedale, to use and provide reviews of the Trails (which were universally good).
- Litter picking at 'hot-spots' throughout the AONB and monitoring fly-tipping.

12.0 AWARENESS AND PROMOTION

12.1 Achievements this year included:

- Maintaining a neat appearance around the AONB gateway signs.
- Publishing AONB News and our Annual Report for 2016/17.
- Attending the Ryedale Show.
- Completing the design and production of 7 new display banners.
- Mailed out supplies of our 'Rides & Rambles' leaflet to accommodation providers in the AONB.
- Maintaining and adding to the AONB website.
- Maintaining a presence on Twitter, publicising the practical work being carried out in the AONB and re-Tweeting as appropriate.
- Holding 4 Junior Ranger Club sessions throughout the year, with 94 children attending.
- Presentations given to York Ornithological Club and the Welburn Gardening Club.

13.0 IMPLEMENTATION

13.1 Achievements this year included:

- Utilising the Defra Single Pot funding arrangements to ensure maximum leverage of funds into the AONB.
- Assisting with development of the main Ryevitalise Project programme documents (ecological surveys, data mapping, LCAP) and individual projects: Wooded Wonders, Education, Citizen Science, Walking routes, farmer champions, volunteering, Paradise Initiative, Trout in the Classroom.
- £3k secured from HDC & RDC as a contribution to the Geodiversity Audit; £50k secured from Defra by River Derwent Partnership for Natural Flood Management project, with 2 of the 4 villages involved being in the AONB; successful application written for LNP funding, to enable Moorswork to buy a fen mower.
- Successful out-sourcing of work to: carry out a Geodiversity Audit. Significant assistance also provided to major projects that should bring significant and widespread funding/benefits to the AONB: HLF Ryevitalise Project, HLF Turtle Doves Project, Cornfield Flowers Project.
- Joint working with the North York Moors National Park on: Native Woodland Partnership; Dark Skies Week; developing the RYEvitalise project for Stage 2 HLF Landscape Partnership funding; HLF Turtle Doves Project; technical help with the AONB Monument Management Scheme; post-Brexit agri-environment scheme development.

- Achieving volunteer assistance with 17 projects or tasks, worth at least 139 days (£7,870 at SDF volunteering rates). 124 days were spent on site management tasks; 15 days on Junior Ranger Club, helping at shows, misc.

14.0 MONITORING

14.1 No work carried out this year.

15.0 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR AONBs

15.1 Achievements this year included:

- Attending the national AONB Forum in Winchester.
- Attending 2 x Northern AONBs Group meetings.
- Attending the NAAONB Chairmens' seminar and AGM event.
- Participating in peer-to-peer and on-line collaborative working initiatives, to share and receive knowledge around the AONB Family.
- Participating in specific meetings with Defra, as part of a small AONB Family Working Group, on Performance Metrics and Future Agri-Environment Schemes.

16.0 MANAGEMENT PLAN

- Review schedule approved by the JAC and work started on scoping the amount of revision needed to Objectives and Actions.

17.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the achievements against Targets for 2017/18 be noted.