

**North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Partnership
Friday 23rd September 2016
Royal North Devon Golf Club, Northam**

MINUTES

Meeting attendees

Steve Pitcher (Chairman)
Steve Mulberry (Vice Chairman)
Rose Day (Community Rep.)
Hon. John Rous (CLA)
Barbara Fryer (Community Rep.)
Richard Butler (Community Rep.)
Alison Boyle (Community Rep.)
Paula Ferris (Coastwise ND)
Peter Burgess (DWT)
Cllr. Andrea Davis (ENP)
Caroline Leaver (Community Rep.)
Paul Green (Community Rep.)
Lesley Garlick (DCC)
Richard Dyer (NFU)
Richard Prowse (Tarka Country Trust)
Lewis Andrews (TDC)
Cllr. Robin Julian (DCC)
Cllr. Andrea Davis (ENPA)
Justin Seedhouse (NT)

Apologies

Andy Bell (ND Biosphere Reserve)
Terry Green (Community Rep.)
Cllr. Alan Whittle (TDC)
Brett Grosvenor (EA)
Rob Joules (NT)
Christine Goodall (NE)
Cllr Pat Barker (ND+)
Cllr Rodney Cann (NDC)

Officers

Jenny Carey-Wood (Manager)
Dave Edgcombe (Projects Officer)
Cat Oliver (Education Officer)
Gigha Klinkenborg (Administrator)

Speaker

Jo Traill Thomson (Natural England)

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

The Chairman welcomed partners and attendees Justin Seedhouse (NT) and Jo Traill Thompson (Natural England)

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising: – these were amended to show the correct venue of the last Partnership (Croyde) and agreed. **Matters arising:-**

- **Route 39 Academy** - LA gave an update on the Route 39 Academy which is progressing. They are working though the conditions on lighting etc. with advice from AONB and local people are monitoring the situation. So far, there have been no problems, the contractors are on site and highways have begun access work.
- **Dogs** – an outstanding action point, NT have shared information and we will be looking at this issue over the winter. **Action: team.**
- **Planning Issues** - Changes to Natural England planning contributions were announced restricting comments to nationally significant infrastructure only. Feedback from the local office is that there is unlikely to be much change at present.
- **Planning protocol** - Awaiting feedback from DCC, **Action: LG** to follow up.

3. AONB Manager's Report (Copy attached)

JCW circulated her report adding the following points:

a) Delivering the Management Plan

Biodiversity:

- **Wild Shorts** – an SDF supported wildlife film competition is well underway and has had very good publicity and take-up.
- **Life on the Verge – Biosphere:** HLF grant and SDF grant have just been approved. This Tarka Country Trust project is working with Biosphere team targeting AONB communities in Hartland, Croyde and Braunton. Will advertise Coordinator position.

Geodiversity:

- **Silver, Smoke and Strawberries** – this free booklet produced by Chrissie Ingle was launched at Come Martin Museum in late August, requesting donations to support a reprint. JCW expressed thanks to Cllr. Rodney Cann for supporting the launch.

Historic Environment:

- **Heaven and Hell – as story of churches** – SDF project led by Seize the Moment working with young people, researching churches in the AONB, Lundy and BR.
- **Hartland Abbey Interpretation** – new displays on the management of the estate within the AONB and the locations for film/TV series

b) State of Nature 2016 <https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/whatwedo/stateofnature2016>

JCW brought this report to the attention of the Partnership. Produced annually by 53 organisations, over the last 3 years, using data collected across the country through citizen science and volunteers, the findings raise serious concerns and a call for action for all of us. Key points:-

- 56% of species studied have declined over the last 50 years
- 1 in 7 of our species are at risk of extinction
- There are 165 critically endangered species
- 10% decline in farmland birds
- 2% decline in butterflies
- Species decline is being attributed to two main causes - intensive agricultural land management (70% of land used for food production) and climate change, although climate can have positive impacts too
- David Attenborough was at the launch and said that it was a very important document; Brexit has happened and we will need to renegotiate treaties giving an opportunity to “match our patch”
- In the ‘Biodiversity Intactness Index’, the UK was 189th out of 218 countries, a long way behind most other European countries

The launch recommended next steps and what is needed to address these challenges:

- Farmers can’t do green when they’re in the red
- We must support farmers to deliver good environmental outcomes
- Our most protected areas must be really looked after
- We need to deliver landscape scale action for species as well as for carbon, access, wellbeing etc.
- We need to get children involved – instead of talking about it Do it!
- AONB Partnership addressing some of these issues through projects and SDF but we need to do more

Comments

- **PF** - We need a holistic approach. There is a danger we might be overlooked. Wildlife corridors are significant, for example the project to reintroduce the water vole at Braunton Marsh, being led by Derek Gower
- **PB** – Report is important and should be viewed as a call for action. The AONB is a core area for wildlife due to its protection, but losses will mainly be in the setting
- **CL** – supports the call for action, particularly interested in a holistic approach that includes climate change, transport, access and engaging children
- **RDyer** - is concerned that the generalist view is that farming is at fault for the decline in wildlife, but this is primarily in areas of intensive farming, and not the farming in the AONB. The government needs to protect the extensive and traditional farmer, not just give grants to the farms that have trashed their wildlife
- **RJ** – It is hoped that post Brexit, money will be redistributed to smaller farms which will help wildlife
- **RDyer** - Small farmers are struggling and the big boys are reaping all the benefits.
- **SP** asked about the NFU position, which appears to favour the eastern side of the country and larger farms
- **RDyer** responded that even in Devon it is the larger farms who are most engaged with NFU, but South West and upland farmers are trying to redress the balance
- **PB** – What should the AONB be doing? Engage with people to understand what wildlife they have and how to protect it. Special species and doorstep species, not forgetting the marine environment. Also to bring political influence on future agri-environment programmes to meet the identified needs
- **RJ** – The problem of rats on Lundy has now been solved, consequently puffin numbers are now increasing demonstrating the impact we can have
- **SP** – asked about data for the AONB. **JCW** - The baseline evidence on our wildlife is mixed. DBRC have a lot of bird data and work to support campaigning on the MCZs means there is also a lot of marine evidence, but limited other data. **PB** reported current issues with wildlife data as NE has removed funding for local biodiversity record centres as part of their “open data” approach so that all data is free and available to all, but this threatens some of our local data, particularly sensitive data collected by different agencies for different purposes.
- **Action: JCW** to provide a report to January Partnership on availability of wildlife data and data gaps as part of the AONB monitoring work

c) Projects and Activities

- **Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project** – **Ed Parr Ferris** is moving to take up **PB**'s Conservation post at DWT so a new project manager is being recruited for the GHB project. **JCW** extended the Partnership's thanks to EPF for his enthusiastic and successful work on the project which is making good progress
- Geodiversity project - HLF advised us not to submit another bid this year until we had demonstrated good delivery with Coastal Creatures
- **JCW** holding initial consultation meetings with farmers in the AONB in the Autumn

- d) **AONB Office** - the team are relocating to the 1st floor of Taw View at the end of September, the Civic Centre Annex building in front of the police station, after considering other offices. The Executive will review office accommodation once moved
- e) **Monitoring and reporting** – JCW reported difficulties in producing performance indicators for NAAONB and Defra due to lack of definitions, resulting in some AONBs not providing figures. No feedback received yet. Clarification requested on work to SAM at Bucks Mills from JS – work included clearing scrub, fencing, grazing and ongoing funding for management.
- f) **Sustainable Development Fund**
The budget for 2016/17 is £25,000. We have received 9 applications, 4 approved, 5 not successful. We have around £12,000 left although there are 4 pipeline projects that may take up to £9,500 grant which would leave only £2,800. **JCW** requested **All Partners** to publicise the SDF grant scheme (**see attached flyer**) and thanked the SDF panel members for their time and effort, including project monitoring visits

g) **Communications**

- **AONBs Outstanding Week – 17 – 25th September** – We have actively engaged with the national event, organising 10 events during the week linked to our projects' and partners' activities. JCW coordinated press coverage with journalist Martin Hesp for a Devon wide AONBs and Outstanding week feature in the Western Morning News on 13/9/16, plus promotion in local papers of several events. Partners have done their own publicity.
- **Social Media** – influenced by advertisements for the AONB Education officer and enhanced with her appointment in July with significant contributions to social media; major success with Cat's first video of a Sun Fish, more may be used as clearly popular on social media
- **Websites** – good feedback on new website, transfer from Explore the Coast still ongoing
- **Events** – JCW thanked the team for their strong support, as well as the chair and vice-chair, Barbara Fryer, Paula Ferris, Coastwise volunteers with beach cleans and John Breeds with bat walks and monitoring. **Action: All** to advise if anyone can support the team with a couple of hours at the Autumn events.
- **Communications Working Group** – meeting in October to review 2016 events and communications

4. **Coastal Creatures Project Presentation by Cat Oliver**

- Suggested that the AONB might invite donations from corporate volunteers
- **R Day** suggested contacting the Atlantic Coast Cooperative Trust to attend their AGM, offering a CC presentation

5. **Landscape Report**

- **Additional points to the circulated reports:-**
- **AB** asked if the team could raise awareness of the AONB among potential developers and housing associations to ensure understanding of our policies, given the amount of development in and adjacent to the AONB. **SP** reported that this was being

addressed in two ways; firstly SP and DE had attended the planning agents forum in Torridge and had useful discussions there and secondly, the offer of pre-planning application advice to developers provided an opportunity to highlight appropriate policies and issues prior to an application being submitted

- **Beckland Farm** – DE reported regular contact from local community concerned by activities at the farm, but the AONB unable to address them but liaising with EA and TDC. Water lagoon will not raise any concerns with the AONB due to screening, but some concerns about water flow and quality. Slurry lagoon issues being addressed by EA, Public Health Devon and DCC Highways. **RJ** advised that Cllr Whittle (TDC) addressing the issue locally.
- **Line removal works** at Croyde (work anticipated in autumn 2016) and Morteheo/Woolacombe on NT land in winter 2017/18 after community consultations
- **Beach clean activities** – to note that team are doing the MCS surveys of marine litter this month, to feed into national data and our ongoing work. Publicity referring to ‘bin bags of rubbish’ collected as more comprehensible to public than weight
- **Tranquillity monitoring** – **SP** attended SW meeting and suggested the AONB participate in a Devon wide tranquillity monitoring project. Agreed

6. North Devon Pioneer - Presentation by Jo Traill Thompson, Natural England

- **R Day** concerned at the lack of information and engagement on the proposal, including contact with the NAAONB. **SP, JCW and JTT** advised that the timing of the initiative linked to Defra’s 25 Year Environment Framework was delayed due to purdah around the Referendum vote and Brexit decision impact. Discussions had been confidential for some time until Secretary of State announcement in late August and this is part of the first engagements and consultations on the proposals, identifying key partners and their potential contributions as no additional funding to support the Pioneer areas at this stage.
- **RDay and PF** proposed that the AONB should be a member of the “Core group” on the North Devon landscape pioneer. **Agreed: SP, SM and JCW** to consider this following briefing meeting at end of September. **Action: JCW** to attend NE briefing meeting and report back.
- **AD** concerned that National Parks had not been included in early discussions, nor had the County Council. The AONB Partnership was significant to delivery and innovation in the area, including having a National Park representative on the Partnership, the only one in Devon to do so. AD stated that local authorities are looking to be more effective with less money, working with existing partnerships rather than creating something new, so had questions about this proposal. **Action: JTT** to contact National Park teams ASAP and explained that the geographical boundaries were expected to be fluid and would reflect innovation and opportunity rather than existing administrative boundaries
- **PF** requested follow up information on the ‘Marine Pioneer’ –as critical to the AONB setting and current CC project. **Action: JCW**

7. National Association of AONBs - report circulated by Rose Day

Additional points:

- Conference demonstrated a wealth of health and wellbeing initiatives across the AONB family, many of the projects may interest partners and can be viewed at:- <http://landscapesforlifeevents.org.uk/category/conference-2016/>
- An 'infographic' about AONBs in England showing their contribution to the economy, tourism, wildlife and wellbeing was circulated (**attached**)

8. News from Partners

- **RJ** - mentioned the problems at Bideford Bay Holiday Park. Problems include pests and water discharges, all should have been conditions to the planning consent
- **LG** - Discover England fund of £40 million. SWCP awarded £359k in first pilot year for developing itineraries around the Path
- **RDyer** – Livestock numbers are decreasing and people are using land for silage rather than grazing, with impacts on wildlife. There are also some silly ideas about re-wilding which could be a threat to farmers and protected landscapes as all managed.
- **AD** – National Parks' "8 Point Plan", agreed with Defra Minister Andrea Leadsom is about young people, tourism, food, health and wellbeing in National Parks. In summary - 'Eat less, move more'. ENPA would also be interested in tranquillity mapping. **Action: JCW** to forward information.
- **PF**– Ted Oaks' film 'Tribes, Predators and Us' on next week. Coastwise autumn programme of talks starts next week, see <http://www.coastwisenorthdevon.org.uk/>
- **RP** – Reminder that applications (up to £500) are being sought for the Tarka Country Trust's Community Wildlife Fund – please promote within your communities, see <http://www.tarkacountrytrust.org.uk/community-wildlife-fund.html>
- **LA** – Hartland Lighthouse sold recently. There will be access road improvements and an extension to the building to restore original terrace of buildings along one side.

9. Any other business

None

10. Date of next meeting – Friday 27th January 2017 at 10.00am, at Taw View, Barnstaple