

North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty PARTNERSHIP

Friday 26th May 2017
Lee Memorial Hall

MINUTES

Meeting Attendees

Steve Pitcher (Chairman)
Rose Day (Community Rep.)
Steve Mulberry (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Rodney Cann (NDC)
Terry Green (Community Rep.)
Paula Ferris (Coastwise ND)
Paul Green (Community Rep.)
Lesley Garlick (DCC)
Richard Prowse (Tarka Country Trust)
Lewis Andrews (TDC)
Jonathan Fairhurst (NT)
Trevor Stanbury (NDMB)
Siobhan Murphy (NE)

Apologies

Hon. John Rous (CLA)
Rob Joules (NT)
Alison Boyle (Community Rep.)
Cllr. Andrea Davis (ENPA)
Pete Burgess (DWT)
Brett Grosvenor (EA)
Richard Butler (Community Rep.)
Caroline Leaver (Community Rep.)
Richard Dyer (NFU)
Barbara Fryer (Community Rep.)
Andy Jones (NDC)
Andy Bell (ND Biosphere Reserve)
Gigha Klinkenborg (Administrator)

Officers

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

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

The Chairman welcomed partners and received apologies. He expressed his condolences for the death of Cllr Alan Whittle who had served on the Partnership as the representative from Torridge District Council, actively engaging with AONB issues and the team. An email was sent to TDC on behalf of the Partnership. The chairman expressed thanks to Robin Julian for his contribution as DCC representative. We are awaiting new appointees from Torridge District Council and Devon County Council. (**Update:** Cllr Linda Hellyer in Bideford East appointed by DCC).

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising. Minutes agreed as an accurate record. Matters arising:-

- **Management Plan Monitoring** – partners to be contacted over the summer.
- **Local Geodiversity Action Plan** – plan finalised and circulated to all by email
- **Braunton Burrows** – DE had met with land agent and BR team, plus SDF grant approved to support production of an information and walks booklet by a local individual

3. AONB Manager's Report

JCW presented her report adding the following points:

i. Management Plan Delivery

- **Annual Priorities** – two new areas of work in progress to deliver actions in the Management Plan: 1) a bid to HLF being developed with partners on **Historic Environment** to include a HEAP for Clovelly/Hartland, heritage recording and surveys, practical conservation work and community archaeology; 2) a contract to carry out research and community consultation on ‘**Naturally Healthy Activities**’ has been let to local contractors Lodestar Associates reporting end of July.
- **Biodiversity and Geodiversity** priorities – work is ongoing through Coastal Creatures project, Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project and seeking funding to implement Local Geodiversity Action Plan.
- **Defra Pioneers** – PF requested information on the Natural Flood Management work at Braunton as an early action from the Landscape Pioneer. **Action: JCW**

ii. Sustainable Development Fund

- £5,000 committed including funds for commissioned “Naturally Healthy Activities’ work. **JCW** requested **All Partners** to publicise the SDF grant scheme with **attached flyer**.

iii. Quarterly Communications report and Events for 2017

- **Feedback from Communications Working Group held on 22 May by SMulberry:** Website analysis suggested some editing required to improve Search Engine access – team to review with designers. Agreement to update existing strategy with new targets. Recommendation to consider whether a Communications Strategy should be included in the Management Plan this time. Team will produce new AONB leaflet/map this year. Thanks expressed to Barbara Fryer for monitoring social media and providing feedback to the team. TS offered advice through North Devon Marketing Bureau chairman Nick White, and advised logging events on their website too when aimed at general public. RC recommended linking AONB messages more explicitly with economic issues to gain a wider audience.
- **Reaching new audiences** - RP asked if future work on wellbeing could include ‘cultural’ wellbeing too. He welcomed the Naturally Healthy Activities work that would explicitly target disadvantaged communities, including young people. PF advised that increasing access to the AONB required a balance of information and education work to avoid negative impacts on wildlife and landscape. TS reported on the resilience of wildlife around his visitor attraction. He also challenged the Partnership to engage with a younger membership both with the AONB and on the Partnership. SMulberry supported this and suggested a need to have a range of initiatives to interest different groups. JCW emphasised that the Coastal Creatures project and the proposed heritage project were explicitly designed to broaden our audience engagement.
- **Events** – new event at Hartland had been successful, decision to withdraw from Oceanfest but continue active support of the Marathon. **Action: All** - Let team know if you can help with any 2017 events.

4. Coastal Creatures – Citizen Science and work with Schools, presentation by Cat Oliver

- Project has developed a wide range of **citizen science** activities:
 - I. Bi-monthly species census on the 4 Focus Beaches (Combe Martin, Croyde, Lee Bay and Westward Ho!) involving up to 20 volunteers; information is recorded on iRecord and uploaded to the National Biodiversity Network <https://nbn.org.uk/> – so available to all
 - II. Biotope mapping – a snapshot of all the species and habitats on the 4 beaches carried out with college students and volunteers using a Trimble (a GPS based mini-computer)
 - III. Schools recording – using pre-planned record sheets to introduce students to scientific recording
 - IV. Bioblitz – recording all species in a defined area during a defined time period. Among the 450 species found at Croyde last year, 150 were newly recorded at Croyde.
 - V. Marine litter surveys for the Marine Conservation Society as part of their national Great British Beach Clean events
 - VI. Shore Thing surveys of non-native invasives and climate change indicator species.
 - VII. Nurdle hunts – event planned with the National Trust at Woolacombe to link in with national initiative on monitoring tiny plastic particles on our beaches
 - VIII. Big Seaweed Search – national monitoring of 12 types of seaweed
 - IX. Great Eggcase Hunt – cases of skates and rays reporting to national scheme
 - X. Capturing our Coast – inter-tidal surveys linked to national University based research through MBA and Universities of Plymouth and Newcastle
- **Work with Schools and Colleges**

Project has engaged with 16 different institutions through 24 trips carrying out a wide range of activities and themes. Two students have volunteered with the project and two more are joining the team this summer. The ‘transport’ budget has been an important resource to encourage engagement with the coast. The project has also prioritised raising awareness of plastics with every student, pupil and volunteers to aim to reduce single use plastic, and the consequent marine litter.

5. Update from the National Trust, Jonathon Fairhurst

- **Grazing of Woolacombe Warren** – 35 ha site requiring improved management for wildlife habitats; supportive tenant farmer agreed to graze site with 10 Red Devon cattle over winter using invisible fencing technology (as seen on BBC Countryfile). Significant benefit to the wildlife on the site this spring with increased number and range of wildflowers. NT moving to more ‘high nature farming’, particularly on marginal land, with anticipated changes due to Brexit.
- **Wildlife Monitoring** – NT obtained advice on wildlife monitoring to understand impact of land management on wildlife across North Devon and Exmoor. Information on different habitat types with recommended monitoring techniques and protocols for each. Selected a sample of 5 high value sites in North Devon (and more in Torridge) to be monitored by intern and volunteers using a range of techniques and targeting selected species. Team will report back in the future. SP thanked Jonathon for his interesting presentation.

6. Landscape Report – Dave Edcombe

- Report on **planning applications** – busy last year with 52 responses by the AONB Partnership. Thanks extended by DE to Pete Leaver, the planning contractor for completing all work within the budget, and to the members of the Planning Panel who have made a major contribution this year and grown in confidence over the years to support the AONB team
- Issues – slow progress on Beckland – requires environmental impact assessment and issue of cattle shed being larger than permitted; lots of activity in Croyde with transition from campsites to more permanent structures, plus new housing. PF expressed concern at loss of basic campsites; TS said upgrading was a trend particularly towards ‘nature focussed’ sites. **Action: JCW** to talk to NDMB for information on trends; Tranquillity Mapping – SP reported slow but steady progress for future Devon work.
- JCW commented on the contribution being made to the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership’s Productivity Plan, by the AONBs and National Parks advising them on the value of natural capital and the environment to the Devon and Somerset economy. RC agreed with their value and the priority for North Devon Council of supporting economic activity whilst respecting the environment.
- **Mortehoe and Woolacombe scheme for undergrounding lines** agreed with Western Power and £850k allocated for scheme to remove 4km of line, 53 poles and 5 transformers. Work will start in September following public consultation in late June, with highways work planned for December/January to minimise disruption. Scheme should be complete by spring 2018. Lines will all be laid along roads so little wildlife or archaeological impacts. SP expressed Partnership’s thanks to Dave for considerable work and impressive success of obtaining funding and agreements.

7. A Farmed Landscape – presentation by Jenny Carey-Wood

- Report back on two meetings with farmers in the AONB in response to Brexit decision, to begin engagement with farmers. Farmers had asked what the AONB Partnership wanted in terms of land use to conserve the area and what tourists and the public wanted. Team had requested analysis of land use within the AONB to explore historic change and to inform future policy debate and priorities in the next Management Plan.
- Initial analysis by Devon Biodiversity Record Centre of two 5km² blocks in Hartland and Georgeham compared the Dudley Stamp land use maps from 1960 at designation with aerial photos from 2010. This indicated a level of intensification of farming in the Hartland area, an increase in semi-natural habitat in the Georgeham area, and a noticeable increase in the built up area and small increases in broadleaved woodland in both areas. These changes probably reflect CAP and agri-environment priorities, as well as farm diversification and tourism demand.
- A land-use map for the AONB from 2015 data was produced by Andy Bell using data from the NBN Priority Habitats mapping, RPA field returns and the National Forest Inventory. This showed nearly 60% of the area is currently under pasture, 15% under woodland or scrub, nearly 8% under arable and 11% coastal habitats with very small areas of Culm, upland Peat, open water and just over 2% defined as ‘urban’. A direct comparison with the Dudley Stamp map did not seem possible. SMurphy advised

that it is available on MAGIC and NE could possibly provide assistance to provide this. **Action: JCW and Natural England**

- Team have agreed some actions to take forward with the farming community including holding an AONB Open Forum in October focussed on the “Farmed Landscape” and a bi-annual networking meeting with farmers including a farm visit.

8. National Association of AONBs – report previously circulated was presented by Rose Day. RD, SP and JCW attending national conference in July.

9. News from Partners

- **Richard Prowse** – The Tarka Country Trust’s Community Wildlife Fund is open for applications www.tarkacountrytrust.org.uk/community-wildlife-fund.html. The ‘Life on the Verge’ project is now training communities. SP suggested inviting the project officer Clare Manning to present to next Partnership.
- **Terry Green** reported back from North Devon Archaeological Society on the Geophysical survey of Clovelly Dykes funded by the SDF. It identified some interesting features but a further area needs surveying to provide stronger evidence. NDAS are organising a guided walk of the site on 24 September and will invite the SDF Panel members to attend.
- **Paula Ferris** reported that Coastwise were holding a microscope workshop on 23 June that would demonstrate the SDF funded equipment. All welcome but booking essential with PF. See: <http://www.coastwisenorthdevon.org.uk/courses.html>

10. Any other business

- **Richard Dyer** had asked team to extend an invitation to a **Tractor Tour of Braunton Marsh being led by the Braunton Marsh Internal Drainage Board on Tuesday 5 September 2017**. This is a chance for all interested parties to discuss the impact and management of coastal realignment covering issues of Horsey Island, retaining bank, rights of way etc. Meet at Fairlynch, Braunton at 1.30pm and finishing with a cream tea. All Partnership members are invited. **RSVP to Gigha Klinkenborg**. More details will be sent nearer the time.
- **Steve Pitcher** reminded partners that he would be standing down in September and invited members to consider the **positions of AONB chair and vice-chair**. Nomination papers will be sent out in early September. Please speak to the chair, vice chair or manager if you want further information at this stage.

11. Date of next meeting

Friday 29th September 2017 at 10.00am in Torridge (venue tbc)