



NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

**MINUTES of a meeting held on 10th June 2015 at North Wessex Downs AONB office,
Denford Manor**

Present

Richard Broadhead Chairman
Alison Cross
Garry King

In attendance

Ted Hiscocks NWD AONB Council of Partners Chairman
Henry Oliver NWD AONB Director
Julie Baldwin NWD AONB Partnership Coordinator (*minutes*)
Lucy Page NWD AONB Planning Advisor
Rose Somerset NWD AONB Communications' Officer
Oliver Cripps NWD AONB Projects & Development Manager
Sam Barker Observer – Plymouth University Undergraduate

- 1. Apologies and Welcome**
The meeting convened at 10:00hrs. Apologies were received from Rowan Whimster, Moira Hankinson, Robin Edwards and Sarah Wright. RB welcomed Sam Barker from Plymouth University who is with the AONB Team on a six-week internship placement.
- 2. Minutes of Previous Meetings**
The minutes were agreed and signed off.
- 3. Matters Arising**
HO highlighted in original budget there was an allocation of £5,000.00 for Planning Support, this has now been increased to £9,325.00 now all spending figures have been set. Item 8 **RB** referring to the redundancy clause with the MOU, this is to be revisited.
- 4. Constitutional Item**
Notification was received from Sarah Wright that she has now left Natural England and therefore unable to fulfil her position on the Management Working Group. She has taken up a role as Project Officer for the new Ridgeway Partnership. A letter of thanks is to be sent to Sarah for her involvement and support whilst a member of the Group. We also look forward to working with Sarah once she is in her new role.
ACTION: Director to contact Andy Smith NE Thames Area Manager for a replacement to both the Management Working Group and Council of Partners.
ACTION: Partnership Coordinator to send a letter on behalf of members (Chairman to sign).

5. **Memorandum of Understanding/Local Partnership Agreement – for information**
RB advised members that Wiltshire Council's Legal department have taken longer than hoped to review this. A meeting was held recently with Legal to go through the MOU. **RB** is hopeful that comments will be forthcoming shortly. He will report at the next meeting.
6. **Final figures for Accounts 2014-2015 – for approval**
HO gave an overview on final spending, highlighting a small overspend and therefore Wiltshire Council have made a full claim to DEFRA for 2014/15. **SDF** received significant surplus funding that was available, boosting its spending from £20,000.00 to £25,000.00
7. **Budget Update 2015-15 – for information**
HO introduced the paper. No comments received from members.
8. **Signs Project Brief – for discussion**
HO gave the presentation. Recapping on where the project currently stands, the principles outlined by the MWG and flagging up any changes. He has received examples from other AONBs and PLs which have highlighted several questions that need the guidance of the MWG. One member asked if there is a timetable for this project. **HO** advised that this was not part of the original work plan so no timetable had been set. Hungerford Town Council is eager to trial signage so therefore to get a brief out and tendered for, **HO** is aiming for this calendar year if not the end of the financial year. The implementation of signage once up and running will be a slow burn process, in most cases replacing old for new. **AC** expressed the wish that the logo be used as it does represent everything the North Wessex Downs is. **RB** asked if the current logo was not being considered as it was not being recognized and therefore there was a need for something else as in the case of several other AONBs, or whether we should be using it and making it work for the AONB. **OC** commented that the brief should entail 'here is the logo and a strap line' to be used when doing any promotion. We shouldn't be afraid to give our preference on how the logo is used. Further discussion took place and it was agreed that no other logo, branding or shared identity was necessary. The approach should be to develop ways to apply the existing AONB logo flexibly to a range of different sites and scales. A draft design brief should be circulated to members for comment before sending out for tender if necessary. One member suggested that perhaps the services of a local University or College design course could be a low cost option. Liaison with highway engineers or others conversant with highway standards would also be needed.
ACTIONS: HO to take the signs work forward. Proposals continue.
RB to speak with Wiltshire Council Highways Department to ascertain their set brief for road signage.
9. **Raising awareness of the North Wessex Downs AONB**
RS gave a presentation on a recent project collaboration between the NWD AONB and Vodafone Graduate Trainee Scheme. This was a specific project measuring the awareness of the AONB. It is hoped that this awareness programme can be run again in two years time. **RS** is hopeful that next year we can collaborate with Vodafone again on another graduate project 'How to raise your social media profile'. **RB** thanked **RS** for the hard work. It was good to have a baseline to work from in the future. **OC** commended **RS** for delivering first project from the business plan for 2015.

10. **Friends' Group Update – for information**

HO delivered the report on behalf of the Project Group Chairman Horace Mitchell. The group has now met several times. Members have agreed that it is a viable concept and are now aiming for a more ambitious approach to launch the Friends' Group with a high-profile project. The group will now approach Greenham Common Trust and others for development funding. **TH** asked if this would take up more of the Director's and team's time than planned. **HO** replied that the Project Group's efforts meant he might need to spend less time on it than expected, but there would still need to be significant staff time devoted to it during the development stage. **GK** commended the group for going for the CIO option. He is happy to help with the set-up of the CIO as he is currently a trustee for the new Cranborne Chase AONB supporting organisation and they are just completing their CIO registration. **HO** advised the meeting that Horace Mitchell has offered to attend the next meeting of the Council of Partners to discuss the Friends' Group. It was suggested that the November meeting would be a better time.

ACTION: Partnership coordinator to follow this up for the Council of Partners meeting in November.

11. **Planning Update – for information**

LP introduced the paper. She advised members that there may be a need for the AONB to provide further landscape work for the Bullington Cross public inquiry. Further letters will also now need to be sent to Ed Vaizey MP and the new DEFRA minister, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Environment and Rural Affairs Rory Stewart MP regarding the Vale of White Horse Local Plan and Harwell site allocations.

LP recently attended a CPRE Wiltshire meeting and it highlighted that many local parishes are still unaware of the process for proposing site allocations under the Core Strategy. If sites are allocated in local plans and then applications are submitted in the future, the parishes will have little hope of resisting them.

National Grid – a decision should be made on which projects will go ahead during the week beginning 7th September 2015.

12. **Director's Report – for information**

HO introduced the report and provided further updates. The first joint Management Plan for both halves of the Stonehenge and Avebury **World Heritage Site** has now been published and there is a copy in the AONB office. **National Trails:** the joint Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails Management Group, latterly chaired by the Director, has now officially dissolved itself with the successful establishment of two new independent Trail Partnerships. **HO** ran through the new style of reporting on the work programme, which was received well by members.

RB wished to advise members of the current situation with the Marlborough Downs Nature Improvement Area *(MDNIA). Natural England financial support to the project has now come to end and the MDNIA are now looking for other funding. They have also changed their name to the Marlborough Downs Nature Enhancement Project *(MDNEP).

13. **Accommodation Review – for information**

RB gave a brief background, highlighting concerns about saving money where possible. It has been raised at several Council of Partners meetings about the large cost of accommodation to the AONB and there was a need to look at other potential locations within the local authorities. Wiltshire being the host took the lead but at present there may well be nothing suitable, as they themselves are going through a cost cutting exercise and selling off any unwanted accommodation around the authority. **OC** highlighted that we are currently paying a reasonable market rate for the accommodation and suggests that future reporting should show the breakdown of

fixed and variable costs so that members are more fully informed of what is actually paid, not just in a lump sum.

ACTION: Partnership Coordinate to action the break down costings for the next reporting round.

14. **Any Other Business**

AC asked if the NAAONB is consulting on the Nature Directives. **HO** is not aware but will enquire. **AC** informed members that the Countryside Stewardship Scheme starts in July with first applications to arrive in November. There are workshops being held around the country and Natural England will be sending out invitations. These workshops are aimed at farmers currently. If staff or members are aware of any farmers whose Entry Level Agreements are expiring this year, they need to attend one of these meetings. **HO** asked if there were any briefings lined up for AONBs. **AC** is unaware but advised that Statements of Priority are issued on the Natural England website.

Meeting closed 13:25

Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 23rd September 2015

Signed.....*J. Brown*.....

Date*23/09/2015*.....