

**NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
 COUNCIL OF PARTNERS
 10 November 2020 at 10 am
 Virtual Meeting via Microsoft 365 Teams**

Minutes

Present	Initials	Representing
Mr E Hiscocks	EH	Chairman
Cllr Anna McNair-Scott	AMS	Hampshire County Council
Cllr Paul Miller	PM	Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
Cllr Paul Barrow	PB	Vale of White Horse District Council
Cllr Hilary Cole	HC	West Berkshire Council
Cllr Christopher Williams	CWi	Wiltshire Council
Cllr Charles Mathew	CM	Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Gary Sumner	GS	Swindon Borough Council
Cllr Keith Williams	KW	Swindon Borough Council
Community & Parish		
Dr John Sharp	JS	Advisory Member
Mr Donald Heath	DH	Advisory Member
Ms Sharon Egan	SE	Advisory Member
Farming & Rural Business		
Mr Christopher Musgrave	CBM	Advisory Member
Mr Michael Valenzia	MV	Country Land and Business Association
Mr Peter Lemon	PL	Advisory Member
Ms Becky Butland	BB	National Farmers' Union
Historic Environment		
Ms Susie Brew	SB	Advisory Member
Recreation & Tourism		
Mr Richard Clarke	RNC	Advisory Member
North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust		
Mr Donald Sherlock	DS	Representative (Chairman)
Also Present		
Cllr Catherine Webber	CWe	Vale of White Horse District Council
Ms Jo Watson		Mend the Gap Programme
Ms Sarah Nichols		
In Attendance		
Mr Christopher Slack	CS	Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
Mr Jonathan Wilshaw	JW	Swindon Borough Council
Ms Haidrun Breith	HB	Oxfordshire County Council
Mr Tim Goodridge	TG	Test Valley Borough Council
Mr Dominic Lamb	DL	South & Vale District Councils

Mr Paul Hendry	PH	West Berkshire Council
Mr Garry King	GK	Hampshire County Council
Mr Richard Broadhead	RB	Wiltshire Council
Mr Henry Oliver	HO	Director NWD AONB
Ms Corinna Woodall	CW	Senior Project Development & Funding Officer NWD
Ms Claire McCorquodale	CMc	Partnership Coordinator NWD
Mrs Susan Clarke	SC	Partnership Coordinator NWD

PART 1

The Chairman opened the meeting by confirming that in respect of items in Part 1 and listed below, contributions, comments and questions had been invited to be submitted by email for action prior to the meeting and that the required responses had been circulated.

The questions and responses are attached to these minutes at Annex 1 to complete the record and have been circulated to those present with the minutes.

- 1.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 30th June 2020 (paper 1)
- 1.2 Chairman's and Partner Reports
- 1.3 Budget Update (paper 2)
- 1.4 Dark Skies Project Update (paper 3)
- 1.5 Planning Update (paper 4)

PART 2

2.1 Declarations of Interest – None

2.2 Welcome

The Chair welcomed Sarah Nichols, the new Chair-designate from March 2021.

2.3 Apologies for Absence were received from Cllr Rhydian Vaughn, Nick Mottram, Nigel Titchen and Martin Crane

2.4 Director's Report (paper 5)

HO presented the report and drew attention to items that members may find of particular interest.

On 14th September DEFRA issued a call for expressions of interest (EOIs) for a Green Recovery Challenge Fund with a 10-day deadline. Our EOI was successful and working with partners Action for the River Kennet (ARK), the Southern Streams Farmer Group, the Environment Agency and the Town & Manor of Hungerford over a tight three-week period the Sparkling Streams project bid was submitted and there is a presentation later in the Agenda. Members should note that the funding pot stood at £40m against which £170m funding bids were made.

Work on the Dark Skies project was temporarily put on hold to allow the Project Officer to assist with work on the Sparkling Streams Green Recovery Challenge Fund bid.

The Annual Forum will now take place as a virtual event on 29th January 2021. This requires a different set of skills and will be delivered using a virtual platform that has been purchased by the NAAONB.

There was a reluctance by some local authority staff to embrace the proposal to hold meetings/training with the planning officers of our partner authorities to develop a better

understanding of AONB planning and improve liaison. The council leaders that the Chairman and Director had met had expressed support for this initiative.

The North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust had supported the Avebury Sports & Social Club with a £2,500 grant and there were other grants in the pipeline. The Trust had been strengthened with the appointment of three new trustees: Susie Brew, Garry King & Peter Lemon.

CM queried whether links had been made with the Cotswolds or Chilterns AONBs. DS responded that an initial approach had been made and that this will be followed up.

RNC explained that Defra had made available an additional £400,000 to National Parks and AONBs for advocacy work in respect of Environmental Land Management (ELM), indicating that the Government sees national landscapes as best placed to provide advice and guidance to farmers and landowners. The money is available this calendar year for AONBs and National Parks to be trained to deliver advice and to work with local farming communities. CBM noted that farmers forming groups was not only happening in the UK but also across Europe.

Signage Project - EH reported he was making progress and had made contact with a number of highway authorities.

Sarah Nichols left the meeting.

2.5 Constitutional Item (paper 6)

The Council of Partners at its last meeting appointed a Selection Panel from its members and delegated to that panel the recruitment and selection of a new Chairman.

The Council of Partners ratified the decision of the Selection Panel that Sarah Nichols is appointed Chair of the Council of Partners with effect from 9th March 2021, initially for a two-year term.

Sarah Nichols re-joined the meeting and was welcomed by Cllr Paul Miller, Chair of the Selection Panel.

2.6 National Landscapes (paper 7)

The Council of Partners debated the proposal in the Landscapes Review chaired by Julian Glover to label AONBs as National Landscapes whilst the term National Parks remained. This was part of a wider Agenda to ensure that all protected landscapes (National Parks and AONBs) were afforded the same protections and resources.

There were differing views expressed. The majority favoured the change, thinking that it was time for a change, that the term AONB was quite “a mouthful” and that the term National Landscapes brings everyone together. Others felt that terminology was very important and that the landscape should be seen as a working landscape and not a “park”. Some did not see any purpose and that the costs associated with re-branding in the current climate could be viewed as a poor use of funds. AONB is the term used and means little to the public. It was noted that the Cotswolds and Chilterns AONBs had begun rebranding.

Overall, members supported becoming national landscape but felt that the discussion was premature.

2.7 Any Other Business

The North Wessex Downs Annual Forum is Friday 29th January 2021 – a morning event.

Date of Meetings for 2021 Tuesdays 9th March 6th July 9th November.

Currently expected to be an online meeting via MS Teams. Covid-19 guidance permitting, we will look to convene face-to-face meetings if possible.

PART 3

Presentations were circulated after the meeting to all members of the Council of Partners and the Management Working Group

3.1 Sparkling Streams – Green Recovery Challenge Fund bid

Presentation by the Senior Project Development and Funding Officer, Corinna Woodall

Working with the Southern Streams Farmer Group, Action for the River Kennet, Town & Manor of Hungerford and the Environment Agency, Sparkling Streams is an environmental improvement project with the primary objective of habitat restoration and enhancement and improvement of water quality in the river Dun and the Shalbourne, flowing into the river Kennet.

The funding bid to the Lottery is £401,200 at 100% grant. If successful, the project will begin in January 2021 and finish in March 2022.

Although the project refers to fertilizers and nitrate run-off it does not appear to refer to sewage and CM will send CW contacts for WASP Windrush Against Sewage.

The Chairman welcomed Jo Watson to the meeting.

3.2 Mend the Gap Programme

Presentation by Jo Watson, Mend the Gap Programme Manager

A settlement of £3.75m for mitigation and AONB enhancement projects is a fund overseen by a Steering Group with a programme manager hosted by the Chilterns Conservation Board. The expectation is the project will run for three to five years. The Programme area is Didcot to Purley on Thames and a 3km strip of land either side of the railway.

Jo Watson was anxious to make local connections and HC felt that West Berkshire Council could work with the Programme and MV of the CLA offered to provide landowner information.

The Chairman thanked Corinna Woodall and Jo Watson for their very informative presentations.

Meeting closed 11.45 am



9th March 2021