

**NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY  
 COUNCIL OF PARTNERS  
 30 June 2020 at 10:00am  
 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 Fleur de Rhé-Philippe	FdRP	Wiltshire Council
Cllr Rhydian Vaughn	RV	Hampshire County Council
Cllr Charles Mathew	CM	Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Gary Sumner	GS	Swindon Borough Council
Cllr Cathy Martyn	CMa	Swindon Borough Council
Community & Parish		
Dr John Sharp	JS	Advisory Member
Mr Donald Heath	DH	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)
In Attendance		
Mr Christopher Slack	CS	Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
Mr Nick Mottram	NM	Oxfordshire County 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 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
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## **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 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020 (paper 1)
- 1.2 Chairman's and Partner Reports
- 1.3 End of Year Financial Report 2019 – 2020 (paper 2)
- 1.4 Planning Update (paper 3)
- 1.5 Director's Report (paper 4)

## **PART 2**

2.1 Declarations of Interest – None

2.2 Welcome

The Chair welcomed Betty Butland representing the National Farmers' Union.

2.3 Apologies for Absence were received from Ms Sharon Egan, Cllr Jenny Hannaby, Mr Garry King and Mr Jonathan Wilshaw.

2.4 Constitutional Item – Recruitment of new Chairman (paper 5)

The current Chairman's term of office finishes in March 2021. The Council of Partners noted that the Management Working Group had scrutinised the Candidate Brief and agreed the composition of the Selection Panel.

The Panel will include:

- an officer and an elected member representative from the host authority, Wiltshire Council;
- another Local Authority elected member of the Council of Partners to represent the other councils;
- an Advisory member of the Council of Partners; and
- a member of the Management Working Group.

The Director would be in attendance. This is a Panel of five.

Cllr Fleur de Rhé-Philippe advised the Council of Partners that she was relinquishing her AONB responsibilities as of tomorrow and these will pass to Cllr Chris Williams. She does not intend to stand for election in May 2021. Members expressed their gratitude for her guidance and contribution as one of the founding members of the Partnership.

Richard Broadhead will serve as the Wiltshire Council officer representative on the Panel.

The Management Working Group will be represented by Cllr Paul Miller. Ms Sharon Egan and Mr. Peter Lemon expressed an interest in representing the Advisory members and Cllrs Paul Barrow, Hilary Cole and Charles Mathew expressed an interest in representing the Local Authority elected members.

The Council of Partners took the opportunity to thank the Chairman for the efficient way he had led the Council over the past six years.

## 2.5 Revisions to the Work Programme (paper 6)

The revisions to the work programme in response to the issues emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic, have been scrutinised and contributed to by the Management Working Group (MWG) and are recommended for approval.

HO updated members on the published report. There had been discussion at the MWG about how an additional package of small grants could be made available through the Sustainable Development Fund and delivered by the North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust to help local communities. Initially a maximum grant of £500 had been identified as part of the grant giving guidelines. However further discussion after the MWG meeting with the Landscape Trust identified the need for greater flexibility and the guidelines would be amended accordingly.

In respect of the website, the MWG identified stabilising the existing web site and developing a new site as priorities and is supporting Ann Shepley (AS), the Communications Officer, to draft a user requirement brief for the new site. AS has produced a first draft that is with the Team for comment. AS has also worked with Harry Bell of Jubilee Computing to stabilise the existing web platform and it is intended to test the new platform next week. The gap between the departure of the Senior Project Development & Funding Officer and the new appointment to the post will result in a saving that can be applied as a contribution to website development.

HC queried the inclusion of the Landscape Colour Design Guidance in the work programme. HO explained that although the Council of Partners had initially been cautious about the value of a design guide, they had received a presentation by Jem Waygood of Waygood Colour at the July 2019 meeting and had decided that this approach would be of great benefit. This work was being funded mainly by Defra.

PL explained that work by the Southern Streams Farmer Group continued with soil samples being taken. He also informed the meeting that one of his farms was part of a DEFRA Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) pilot.

The revised work programme was agreed by the Council of Partners on the basis that it should be flexible in the current climate. The Chairman advised that in recognition of the current uncertainties an extra meeting of the MWG had been proposed for July.

## 2.6 Any Other Business:

The Partnership Agreement – several local authorities had not signed the Agreement and the Chairman urged them to do so. CM advised that this was being actively resolved by Oxfordshire County Council.

The North Wessex Downs Annual Forum is Friday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2020 (the venue may change depending on whether Government guidelines can be observed).

## PART 3

3.1 The Colchester Declaration: plans for Nature Recovery in AONBs.  
A presentation by the Director.

Questions were taken directly and via the Chat function as follows:

EH: "We hear much about "Wilding" today. Are there any sites identified for this in the AONB?"

HO: Sites are not formally identified but a small site in Hungerford is being considered by the Town and Manor for a project to create habitat for biodiversity and increase carbon sequestration. PL thought the concept was excellent for land that is of poorer quality. CBM explained that one farmer who is part of the Marlborough Downs Nature Enhancement Partnership (NEP) is working on rewilding an area to demonstrate best practice. This is on a small scale but it is a concept that has a "slow burn".

MV: Are you talking about species reintroduction? If so, please include landowners early when consulting?

HO: The AONB recognises that landowners will always be central to this approach.

EH: Have all our partner local authorities got the staff in place to do what is necessary?

HO: Local authorities are experiencing unprecedented calls on their budgets. It is intended that the Unit will be a source of support to them on this.

CM: Five Species – what are they?

HO: Rather than focussing on individual species, our initial submission identified broad species assemblages characteristic of important North Wessex Downs habitats including chalk grassland plants and invertebrates, chalk stream spp., arable weeds and farmland birds. This will now be reviewed making use of the Species Tool that has since been made available by Natural England. The revised list will be circulated to members when available.

A copy of the presentation, NAAONB briefing notes and the Colchester Declaration will be circulated to the Council of Partners after the meeting. (*circulated on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2020*)

Meeting closed 11.15am