

**NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
 COUNCIL OF PARTNERS
 9 November 2021 at 10.00am
 Virtual Meeting via Microsoft 365 Teams**

Minutes

Present	Initials	Representing
Ms Sarah Nichols	SN	Chair
Cllr Paul Miller	PM	Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
Cllr Juliet Henderson	JH	Hampshire County Council
Cllr Sally Povolotsky	SP	Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Gary Sumner	GS	Swindon Borough Council
Cllr Paul Barrow	PB	Vale of White Horse District Council
Cllr Catherine Webber	CWe	Vale of White Horse District Council (Deputy)
Cllr Hilary Cole	HC	West Berkshire Council
Cllr Nabil Najjar	NN	Wiltshire 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 Tim Bamford	MV	Country Land and Business Association
Mr Peter Lemon	PL	Advisory Member
Ms Andrea Witcombe	AW	National Farmers' Union
Historic Environment		
Recreation & Tourism		
Nature Conservation		
Dr Katrina Easterling	KE	Advisory Member
Tom Hayward	TH	Advisory Member
North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust (NWDLT)		
Mr Donald Sherlock	DS	Representative (Chairman)
In Attendance		
Ms Julia Nethercott	JN	Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
Ms Haidrun Breith	HB	Oxfordshire County Council
Mr Dominic Lamb	DL	South & Vale District Councils
Mr Paul Hendry	PH	West Berkshire Council
Mr Garry King	GK	Hampshire County Council
Mr Henry Oliver	HO	Director NWD AONB
Ms Corinna Woodall	CW	Senior Project Development & Funding Officer
Ms Rebecca Davies	RD	Principal Landscape & Planning Officer
Mr Robert West	RW	Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer
Mrs Susan Clarke	SC	Partnership Coordinator NWD

PART 1

The Chair opened the meeting by confirming that one question had been received and would be addressed under item 2.1.7 in respect of the information items listed below and circulated with the Agenda.

- 1.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2021 (paper 1) Agreed
- 1.2 Planning Update (paper 2)
- 1.3 Director's Report (paper 3)

PART 2

2.1 Declarations of Interest – None.

2.2 Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed Councillor Juliet Henderson representing Hampshire County Council (HCC) and Councillor Sally Povolotsky representing Oxfordshire CC.

She also welcomed the Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer, Robert West and from Action for the River Kennet, Project Officer working on Sparkling Streams, James King.

Apologies for absence from Dr Michelle Leek (Natural England) Chris Musgrave, Susie Brew, Tim Goodridge (Test Valley BC) and Christopher Slack (Basingstoke & Deane BC) substituted by Julia Nethercott.

2.5 Chair's Report followed by Partnership Round Table (paper 4)

The Chair apologised for the meeting taking place on Teams as she had hoped for an in-person meeting but with the current Covid-19 rates it was considered more prudent to continue with a virtual meeting.

She reported that the AONB Team had been very busy over the past months and had delivered, with Marlborough Town Council and Marlborough College, a successful Dark Skies festival over the half term. She thanked Donald Heath who had given his full support and who had achieved significant publicity for the event, particularly in the Gazette and Herald online.

The Sparkling Streams project has also continued apace with major capital works on site and James King would give more details later in the meeting. The rain garden at the primary school in Shalbourne had been opened. Funds had been received from Defra for the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (FiPL). Robert West, the Programme's Project Officer has been successfully appointed and it is hoped that his support officer will join the team later this month.

The Management Working Group (MWG) has focused on the proposed Partnership objectives agreed at the last meeting. The process is ongoing and she will report further at the March 2022 meeting .

To address raising the profile of the AONB as a priority she reported she had started to meet, individually, all the seven AONB MPs. To date she has seen Robert Buckland, David Johnston, Danny Kruger and Kit Malthouse. The meeting with Kit Malthouse, now a member of the Cabinet, was particularly fruitful and he has agreed to sponsor a parliamentary group of these seven MPs which the Partnership could ask to champion up to three initiatives.

Action: SN asked the members of the Partnership to think carefully about which three should be addressed and let her know.

Kit Malthouse MP had suggested that greater environmental protections could be achieved using planning legislation rather than environmental legislation. He also undertook to ask George Eustice MP, in Cabinet, the current status of the Glover report. He supported signage into the AONB. Danny Kruger MP, has offered to raise a parliamentary question on Glover. He, with David Johnston MP and Kit Malthouse MP, sit on an ecological group in government. Meetings are planned in the future with James Gray MP, Laura Farris MP and Alok Sharma MP.

The Chair explained that one of her priorities is to raise the AONB profile at government level and at local council level in an effort to engage more with partner local authorities. That is why, when she asked the elected councillors and their officers for an update on what they were doing in their local authorities to support the aims and objectives of the AONB, she copied that request to Council Leaders and Chief Executives as she feels it is vital that engagement is achieved at the highest level.

Action: SN reported she had met Richard Clewer, the Leader of Wiltshire Council, and asked other local authority members to speak to their Leaders to facilitate similar meetings.

Councillor Paul Miller, Chair of the MWG and Vice Chair of the CoP, worked closely with the Chair on this initiative, and she asked PM to set the standard by asking him to introduce his update for Basingstoke and Deane BC.

PM summarised his local authority's approach to supporting the aims and objectives published in the AONB Management Plan and delivered through collaborative working with local communities and other bodies who share the same aspiration and vision for the AONB (Update attached at Appendix 1).

Garry King, Hampshire CC Officer, summarised his local authority's work explaining that Hampshire CC did not have a local plan but had a Minerals and Waste Plan. Councillor Juliet Henderson supported his summary and drew attention to her particular concerns about the need for signage in protected landscapes and the need to reach out to diverse communities. She was also keen to secure speed restrictions in villages particularly to protect and encourage walkers and cyclists. The walking and cycling strategies encourage people into the landscape and a key issue is how to get more diverse communities to enjoy it, and safely. In the past she had run a study into the lived experiences of the minority ethnic communities in Basingstoke and she was working with Cllr Paul Miller to set up a working group to examine accessibility issues.

Haidrun Breith, Oxfordshire CC Officer, summarised her local authority work. The Minerals & Waste Plan includes reference to the AONB designation. Every opportunity is taken to raise the profile of the AONB and the Good Lighting Guide recently published has proved very helpful. She explained that Oxfordshire CC supports a tree planting project, OxTrees, which includes woodland planting, hedgerows and agro-forestry systems. (See [Oxfordshire Treescapes Project \(oxtrees.uk\)](https://www.oxtrees.uk)) She also drew attention to the consultation on the link road between Didcot and Clifton Hampden in the setting of the AONB. (Update attached at Appendix 2)

Dominic Lamb, officer for South Oxfordshire DC and the Vale of White Horse DC, explained that both districts' councils are working on issues relating to the Environment Bill. Both authorities declared climate emergencies and South Oxfordshire DC also declared an ecological emergency. He drew attention to work on the overarching Oxfordshire Plan 2050 under which Local Plans will sit and to some extent have to conform with. Both district

councils are working together on a joint Local Plan even though they are two separate political entities . They are at the very beginning of the process.

Cllr Paul Barrow supplemented the officer contribution for the Vale of White Horse DC and expressed concern about the potential future development within the Oxford - Cambridge Arc which could do significant biodiversity damage. (Update attached at Appendix 3)

Councillor Gary Sumner, Swindon BC, explained the council had completed its regulation 19 consultation that would be submitted to cabinet in December. The council, this summer, appointed a full-time ecologist to deliver biodiversity gain and it is now a pilot council operating as a licensing authority for Great crested newts and is working to identify biodiversity corridors, accelerating the forestry work to plant 350 hectares of woodland over five years, in a sensitive way that maintains the landscape character of the AONB. The council has a zero emissions plan and has set a target for net zero emissions by 2030. Work is being undertaken with the bus companies to reduce emissions and to improve the bus network into rural areas which will benefit the villages in the AONB.

A policy is in place for the Science Museum, now the national collection centre site, as a hub for the circular economy, science and technology research testing facilities and renewable energy generation.

Many residents of Swindon do not know about the AONB and there is an opportunity with the development of the Eastern Villages

Action: Signage to be added to a proposed gateway art installation/feature at Pack Hill.

Councillor Phil North, Test Valley BC and his officer Tim Goodridge were not present. (Update attached at Appendix 4)

Councillor Hilary Cole, West Berkshire Council, reported that it had completed its Regulation 19 consultation. It had declared a climate emergency; it had an environmental strategy and a transport plan. In its Minerals & Waste Plan it had only one site in the AONB, for extracting soft sand. She asked for more input to the development control committee from the AONB as there were many occasions when input would have been useful but had not been provided. She said that the Head of Service would be in contact.

HC commented on the greater focus being placed by the CoP on how local authorities operate in the protected landscape and advocated a light touch. She drew attention to the fact that the officers are already under tremendous pressure delivering for their local authorities. The Chair responded that if local authorities work together they would be able to achieve far more than working alone and she wanted to develop a culture of collaboration working towards a common aim. In respect of planning resources, there was an understanding that more resources were needed and this is included in a report on spending priorities later on the agenda. She confirmed that it was her intention to meet with Lord Benyon.

Cllr Nabil Najjar explained he was the portfolio holder for Arts, Heritage & Tourism at Wiltshire Council. In addition to the North Wessex Downs AONB, Cranborne Chase and the Cotswolds AONBs and a small proportion of the New Forest National Park lie within Wiltshire and so he had a real understanding of the needs of protected landscapes. Wiltshire Council is committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and Friends of the Earth named the Council as the most climate friendly in England. The Leader, Richard Clewer, is focussed on the environmental agenda and is at COP 26 addressing a fringe meeting. Wiltshire Council is looking at how to integrate natural assets with wider tourism and economic recovery. One initiative that is being worked on is an initiative called the World

Heritage Trails, a series of significant walks that can be downloaded free from a dedicated website and the Council will be asking other stakeholders to upload their routes to help increase footfall.

Wiltshire Council is committed to other initiatives supporting canal restoration and reaffirming to stakeholders the intention to support preservation of the natural environment and also cultural heritage. To achieve that, work is being done to actively engage with the community through Area Boards and back bench councillors. He explained that he had been working with Cranborne Chase AONB to engage with local backbench councillors, members of the planning committees and Area Boards so that they start to gain a more in-depth understanding of protected landscapes. The aim was to ensure that all parts of the council decision making process were fully cognisant of their responsibility for the national protected landscapes. There is a presentation later in the month by Cranborne Chase AONB to Wiltshire councillors which will look at dark skies, planning and other initiatives. He hoped this would foster dialogue across the council and raise the profile of the AONB and he was optimistic about its impact.

The Chair responded that this was an approach that could be useful to other local authorities and asked the Director for comment. Henry Oliver agreed that this is a helpful approach.

Action: HO to engage with local authorities if they gather their members together.

PM thanked the local authorities for their reports. He asked that for those who had not provided a written report to do so. He explained that the MWG could then review them, identify areas of commonality, and best practice to build up a strategic view. Once this document had been pulled together it could be shared. The strategic direction would be influenced by central government, legislation, climate change and would be constantly evolving. It would be a key tool in working with stakeholders and he welcomed the comments from Swindon BC in relation to the gateway into the AONB and initiatives for traffic management, walking and cycling. He drew attention to the Whitchurch signage which had generated discussion about the wording on signage and the need to identify the North Wessex Downs as a protected landscape. This was in-line with the Glover report and he felt that this approach could be common across the AONB and was open for discussion. HO provided the context that the AONB had paid for the design, production and installation of the sign to raise awareness and to work with the local community who had instigated the placement of a sign. The sign did include the words "nationally protected landscape" in an attempt at future proofing.

Peter Lemon welcomed the approach by Swindon BC to raise the profile of the North Wessex Downs. In respect to traffic speeds he cautioned that cyclists exceeded speed limits in villages and felt this needed to be taken into consideration when looking at managing different road users.

HC welcomed efforts to work together but felt that this placed a further burden on overstretched officers. The Chair responded that a true partnership would achieve a better use of resources and should not be viewed as an encumbrance. She agreed with Cllr Cole that when speaking to local authorities resources should be included in any discussion.

The Chair had sent a similar email request to the Interest Group members but had not received a reply.

Donald Sherlock, North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust, commented that there were 22 major routes in and out of the AONB which would lead to 44 entry and exit signs which the Landscape Trust, given the funds, could deliver. (Update attached as Appendix 5)

Action: Local authority and other partners which have not supplied written reports as requested to do so as soon as possible.

2.4 Corporate Strategy Review Update – for information

2.4.1 PR, Business Development & Funding

The Chair explained that the profile-raising, business development and funding groups had been brought together into one group. The group has looked at the marketing strategy and reviewed the previous work done by the Resources Group and the AONB Team. The group noted that CW is already working with Defra and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The approach they decided on is that it is easier to go after one or two achievable targets than take a scatter gun approach. The approach is looking at what is achievable in less than six months, six to eighteen months and longer term up to three years.

What is important is to establish relationships. If people are known and can help it makes it a lot easier than cold calling. She asked the Partnership who do you know, what are your networks where could we start a conversation? Could we team with them, partner with them and narrow down to two or three opportunities? Second, what is the message; you only have a couple of minutes to engage with a CEO or similar – “the elevator speech”. What we need are some metrics and KPIs. What do we bring to the party where have we been successful and ask organisations about how they see us. Profile raising will continue from MP level down through local authorities and parish councils. There is some work to do and it is intended to report to the next CoP.

JS added that the group had identified the Ridgeway Partnership as important to work with on mutual profile-raising. It had looked at universities who run courses on landscape protection and inviting students to undertake projects to benefit the AONB. The Chair reminded him that the latter was mid-term.

Cllr Sally Povolosky queried what level of funding was being sought? SP is a sustainability engineer and Director of Living Oxfordshire, a Living Laboratory collaborating and testing solutions for sustainability. The founding members include EDF, Ocado, Siemens and Oxford University. This is a ready-made network. She offered a presentation where she could offer support and help develop opportunities including working with students. She reminded the councillors at this meeting that they all had access to a priority fund which can be utilised for signage in councillors' divisions or wards. She offered expertise on business support and development.

PM reinforced the Chair's approach that it was not purely funding; it was greater than that. It was developing mutually beneficial relationships which did not necessarily mean funding. Raising the AONB's profile and companies' credentials benefitting from forging relationships with the AONB could also be valid aims.

2.4.2 Diversity & Inclusion

PM explained that in the last council elections at Basingstoke & Deane BC there had been an increase in councillors from minority groups. There is a virtual meeting planned. Recently the Diwali celebrations had been the result of the local authority and the community working together and it had been very successful. He encouraged other groups to hold events in the North Wessex Downs landscape in future years. There is little travel time and the publicity about the AONB is positive with minimal input from officers. He asked other local authorities to try and emulate that if they are not already doing so.

Break 11.15 return 11.25

2.5 Budget Update (paper 5)

The CoP noted the Budget Update for 2021-22 and received a presentation from the Director on the financial framework:

- Budget process
- DEFRA bid
- Core functions
- Core & Projects budgets
- Quarter 3 review
- Reporting and claims

11.25 Cllr Nabil Najjar left the meeting

2.6 Spending Priorities to March 2022 (paper 6)

The Director explained that at this stage of the year it is not possible to predict precisely how much underspend will be available later in the year. However, the current position suggests that some budgets will not be spent in full and there will be opportunities to reallocate the money elsewhere to achieve additional results. This year other sources of funding are also a factor. For example, the time of existing Team members, budgeted from core, that has been used to set up and start the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme pending recruitment of dedicated staff, is being claimed from DEFRA and this allows a substantial sum from salary allocations to be redirected elsewhere.

The MWG have considered spending priorities and the paper includes their input. In line with best practice the CoP is requested to endorse the priority areas listed in the report. They are not in exact priority order as a number of factors will come into play but he drew attention to the additional resource for planning. Councillor Cole had raised this earlier and it is fully recognised that this is an area of work that is under increasing pressure. A recent example is the planning support given to a partner authority for the Inland Farm Inquiry which required three weeks of officer time. The aspiration is to be able to take a more consistent approach to providing planning advice for applications across the AONB.

The CoP endorsed the areas of spend as follows:-

- Additional planning support – cost dependent on rate and no. of days
- Great West Way – estimated cost: £1.75 - £5.25K (dep. on period covered)
- Streatley Youth Hostel Feasibility Study contribution – cost: £5K
- Additional communications support - cost dependent on rate and no. of days
- Hybrid working office equipment – estimated cost £1-5K
- Farmer cluster development – estimated cost: £3-5K
- Sustainable Development Fund – cost dependent on resources available

PM identified the Streatley Youth Hostel as something that would benefit from partnership working and from engaging with the commercial sector. HO explained that extensive partnership working was taking place with YHA and West Berkshire Council also allocating funds and CCB, the Ridgeway Partnership, the Mend the Gap Programme Manager and concerned community representatives also involved.

11.58 Cllr Sally Povolotsky left the meeting

2.7 Project Updates

2.7.1 Farming in Protected Landscapes – presentation & update by Rob West the FiPL Officer.

The Chair thanked RW for his thorough presentation.

Tom Hayward noted that although the Team had done a great job in getting FiPL up and running what is the impact of a delay in delivering on other items in the work programme namely the Nature Recovery Plan (NRP) and Species Recovery Plan by the end of March? HO responded that the decision had been taken to not apply for any further project funding but focus on nature recovery and species recovery plans between now and the end of the financial year. He hoped that by March a consultation document would be in the public domain providing a strategic framework for nature recovery across and beyond the AONB as local authority partners began work in earnest on their Local Nature Recovery Strategies under the Environment Act. He explained that NE was allocating a grant of £30k for development of a Big Chalk Nature Recovery Proposal. This is a high-level strategic project working with partners potentially funded through component three of the new Environmental Land Management Scheme. This project extends from the Cotswolds to the Kent Downs and provides an opportunity to work with neighbouring AONBs.

2.7.2 Sparkling Streams – presentation and update by James King the Project Officer

The Project Officer provided an update on a number of projects funded through the NLHF Green Recovery Fund and delivered through the partnership working of Action for the River Kennet (ARK), NWD AONB, Hungerford Town & Manor and the Southern Streams farmers group.

PL explained how the Southern Streams farmers group formed around the need to protect the water quality in the rivers Shal and Dun.

CW explained that the Project was on time and to budget with the partners involved seeing this as a very productive way of working together and that without the Southern Streams farmers group this project could not have been delivered. She drew attention to work at Eddington Mill which had not been part of the presentation and indicated that an update would come to the next meeting. She reported that the NLHF officer was very satisfied with the project delivery. We had also recently hosted a successful day visit by Defra's Environment Bill team.

The Chair thanked JK for an informative presentation.

AOB

Planning applications – notification.

Cllr Paul Barrow drew attention to a planning application submitted in Letcombe Bassett which lies within the AONB for a fairly large stable yard set-up just north of the Ridgeway. It is quite contentious within the village. AONB officers were not notified by the District Council. He was concerned about applications such as this being missed.

HO recapped that pressure on the AONB Principal Landscape & Planning Officer was recognised and additional resources were being made available under spending priorities.

RD explained that she was updating the protocols between the AONB and partner authorities as some referred most applications to her and others very few. She asked that if members were aware of applications such as this to check with her as she relies on members of the public and partners to assist her.

Cllr Hilary Cole notified the Partnership that she would not be representing West Berkshire Council in the future and the Partnership will be notified of her successor in due course.

Date of Meetings for 2022 Tuesday 8th March, 5 July, 8 November

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Meeting closed 12.18 pm

Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council – Update

- Planning legislation and the balance between new build/maintaining the beauty of the natural landscape

BDBC currently refers to NPPF Guidance on AONBs as featured under Section 15 when considering development proposals. BDBC's Current Local Plan includes policies relating to the AONB, Landscape, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure. The BDBC Local Plan update is taking place and will be in progress till finalisation in 2023. We are revising Local Plan policies relating to the AONB and the natural landscape in line with incoming legislation.

- The upcoming Environment Bill and focus on Climate Change

BDBC declared a climate change emergency in 2019 and has created a Climate Change Strategy. With relation to the Environment Bill we are updating Local Plan policies to take into account incoming Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Networks and enacting measurable biodiversity net gain on development. We are presently enacting a request for a minimum of 10% Biodiversity net gain on all major proposals over 0.1ha.

- Post Covid reforms and the importance of mental health and wellbeing:

BDBC is currently working with Hampshire CC on a new Walking and Cycling Strategy across the County with a particular focus on the connectivity flow into and out of the AONB border that exists within our Borough. In addition, we are liaising with the restructured CCG organisation to promote outdoor Health and Wellbeing activities including the Walking Festival planned for the celebration of the NWDAONB 50th anniversary.

- Farming, the move away from the Common Agricultural Payments system to the Environmental Land Management System (ELMS).

BDBC is working with the AONB Unit in the implementation of the ELMS. HCC are undertaking one of the 5 National pilot schemes within the Hampshire Downs to the southwest of the AONB.

- The Glover report and potential changes in National Park and AONB governance and funding with the possibility of combining the organisations into a National Landscapes service

BDBC recognises that the Glover report is an essential reference document and the report is referred to whenever applicable. We look forward to the details flowing from Glover as they are either set into legislation or recommendations from DEFRA.

The major development at Manydown will include a 100ha Park and an option under serious consideration is putting aside land for the potential use for agricultural projects to create an environment for all levels of educational benefit.

APPENDIX 2

Oxfordshire County Council update (09/11/2021)

Author: Haidrun Breith, Landscape Specialist, OCC

Planning: Oxfordshire's Mineral & Waste Plan Core Strategy (2017) includes landscape policy with particular reference to AONBs. OCC raise the profile of the AONB when responding to planning applications (mineral & waste, transport), highlighting not only direct impacts but also indirect impacts such as increased HGV movements associated with developments or lighting.

The recently prepared NWD AONB guide to external lighting is proving really useful when responding to planning applications and we often signpost planning officers and developers to it.

LNRS (Local Nature Recovery Strategy): OCC have responded to recent Defra consultation. Oxfordshire already has a good Draft Nature Recovery Network hosted by Wild Oxfordshire [Oxfordshire's Nature Recovery Network | Wild Oxfordshire](#), which informs strategic planning and will inform a LNRS.

OxTrees: the Oxfordshire Treescape Project (OxTrees) and mapping has recently been launched [Oxfordshire Treescapes Project \(oxtrees.uk\)](#). The Oxfordshire Treescapes Project is an Oxfordshire-wide project that is run by GrowGreenCarbon in partnership with Oxford University's Environmental Change Institute, and which has been supported by OCC amongst other partners. It identifies opportunities for tree planting within Oxfordshire and defines a number of different treescapes such as woodland, hedgerows, agroforestry systems, community orchards, street trees, gardens or public places to enable the right tree planting in the right places.

OxTrees is a charity that offers advice to farmers, landowners, community groups and parish councils.

Didcot - Clifton Hampden road scheme: the application for a link road between Didcot and Clifton Hampden including a new Thames crossing has been made and consultation is expected to start this week. Whilst the development is not within the NWD AONB it might potentially affect the AONB, eg by being visible from it.

APPENDIX 3

Report from VWHDC

- The Vale and South Oxfordshire are in the early stages of developing a new Joint Local Plan, the various topics covered by the plan including Landscape (AONB's), nature's recovery and all the other topics normally covered by Local Plans are currently being scoped out.
- The Councils have recently adopted a new Tree Policy which can be found [here](#):
- The Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire are working with the Berkshire Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust and Finance Earth on a project to set up a Habitat Banking Pilot scheme. The scheme would attract external investment to allow the creation of new habitats that would then be sold to developers who need to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain from developments in South and Vale. These habitat banks would then be managed by BBOWT in perpetuity.
- The Oxfordshire Treescape Project is a project backed by the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire that was initiated 18 months ago with both South Oxfordshire and the Vale providing seed corn funding along with the other Oxfordshire Local Authorities. The project is now entering an exciting new phase and has been formed into a fully charitable initiative which has launched the Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Map, a powerful tool that shows the right places to establish treescapes for the right reasons.

The research and mapping will be made available to Oxfordshire's farmers, landowners and community groups on a not for profit basis. The maps will be published by Oxfordshire County Council in an accessible, interactive format that will allow investigation of treescape opportunities across Oxfordshire. It will be possible to see:

- Existing treescapes
- Areas unsuitable for treescapes such as higher grade agricultural land, sites of high natural value or archaeological sites
- Priority areas for biodiversity, natural flood management and other benefits
- Where treescapes can be placed to bring the most benefits

The maps will allow anyone interested to examine where treescapes can and cannot be introduced in Oxfordshire and what benefits they would bring in each area. They will also tell a story - of how we can maximise the benefits of treescapes while at the same helping to tackle the biodiversity and climate crises. To find out more about this project visit www.oxtrees.uk

- A planning application has been submitted in Letcombe Bassett which lies within the AONB. This is for a fairly large stable yard set-up just north of the Ridgeway and it is quite contentious within the village. AONB officers were not notified by the district council and I informed them of the application resulting in an objection to the proposal. I felt that AONB should have been

notified but want to get the views of the CoP as to whether all planning applications within the AONB should be subject to notification or whether it is sufficient for planning officers to notify the AONB where there is any level of contention associated with the application.

Dominic Lamb

Cllr Paul Barrow

Cllr Catherine Webber

APPENDIX 4

Report from Test Valley Borough Council

- Planning legislation and the balance between new build/maintaining the beauty of the natural landscape
 - The Council recognises in Local Plan policy E2 that it has a duty under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to the purpose of the AONB designation in making decisions as the local planning authority. The purpose (Section 82(1) of the Act) is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB. The Council has adopted the Management Plan and will take account of it in its decision making. TVBC recognise the importance of the AONB as a protected landscape and has policies in place in the current Local Plan which seeks to protect, conserve and enhance the landscape character of the Borough specifically identifying the landscape and scenic beauty of North Wessex Downs AONB as requiring conservation and special protection. As work on the new Local Plan progresses this policy shall be reviewed and where possible strengthened to ensure the protection of the AONB continues. Other policies such as those surrounding the matter of light pollution will also be investigated and shall take into account work already carried out through the Council of Partners. The AONB has also featured prominently in other Council planning documents including the recently adopted Hurstbourne Tarrant Village Design Statement, as well as the Council's Landscape Character Assessment and Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Study which will form part of the evidence base for the new Local Plan.
- The upcoming Environment Bill and focus on Climate Change
 - The issue of climate change is a key matter which will run throughout the new Local Plan additionally the local environment is also a key priority within the Council's Corporate Plan. The Council declared a climate emergency in September 2019 and committed to identify steps we can take to achieve carbon-neutrality as soon as possible. In June 2020 the Council approved its climate emergency action plan; a living document. It will need to be reviewed to take account of our progress as well as changes in technology, government policy and available opportunities. It is difficult to know how the Environment Bill will impact TVBC as it is still going through Parliament, however we will be scrutinising it to determine how it impacts us locally as soon as it is legislated. Mandating biodiversity net gain through the planning system with a 2 year transition period before implementation is already reflected in the NPPF. A consultation on the detail about the proposals is expected imminently, this is anticipated to also create a market for offsite opportunities for delivering biodiversity credits which may have implications within the AONB. We also await the results of a recent consultation about the logistics of requiring the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies which local plans would need to have regard to.
- Post Covid reforms and the importance of mental health and wellbeing
 - The new Local Plan will contain a new strategic policy which seeks well designed, healthy places which will have an emphasis on allowing for car free access to the countryside.
- Farming, the move away from the Common Agricultural Payments system to the Environmental Land Management System (ELMS).
 - For TVBC we welcome any scheme which aims to not only support farming and the rural economy through new innovative and vibrant approach to the sector; but will also support and enhance the countryside as well as make a significant and

widespread contribution to national and local environmental goals, including the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. We await further updates regarding the scheme from Government. The Council have engaged with DEFRA on the matter of Environmental Land Management through PfSH in the context of the nutrient neutrality issue.

- The Glover report and potential changes in National Park and AONB governance and funding with the possibility of combining the organisations into a National Landscapes service
 - TVBC are aware of the Glover Report as an authority with both the North Wessex Downs AONB to the north and New Forest NP to the south within our Borough; and welcomes any proposals which ensures the protected status of these important assets. We await the outcome of the report's recommendations; what is also important is ensuring the continued protection of these areas and that they remain unspoilt and accessible for the enjoyment of future generations.