

DORSET AONB PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Minutes of meeting held on 31st October 2006

The Dorset AONB Partnership Board met at Burraton House, Poundbury on the 31st October 2006

Present

Tim Frost - Chairman

Cllr N Cake (Purbeck District Council), Cllr Leicester (Weymouth & Portland Borough Council), Cathy Fitzroy (Natural England), Cllr Hilary Cox (Dorset County Council), Vincent May (Purbeck Heritage Committee), Dick Preston (Forestry Commission), Cllr Roake (North Dorset District Council), Rob Rhodes (National Trust).

Officers

Sarah Bentley (AONB Team Manager), Sue Dampney (Dorset AONB), Doug Harman (Dorset AONB), Sue Mitchell (Dorset AONB), Tom Munro (Dorset AONB), David Rees (Dorset Woodlink Officer), Ali Morse (Dorset Grassland Officer), Sally Lloyd Jacobs (West Dorset District Council), Sam Rose (World Heritage Team), Andrew Price (Dorset County Council), Kate Evans (Weymouth & Portland Borough Council).

Item 1. Apologies were received from:

Alison Turnock (Dorset AONB), Hilary Jordon (West Dorset District Council), Owen Yeatman (National Farmers Union), Kevin Morris (North Dorset District Council), Richard Belding (Natural England), Jim White (Natural England), Tracey Brightman (Environment Agency), David Bunt (Environment Agency), Helen Mann (National Trust), Steve Andrews (National Trust), Heather McBeth (Government office South West), Tim Badman (Dorset County Council).

Item 2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 23rd May were confirmed and signed

2.2 Matters arising:

Planning Protocol: The AONB Team Manager reported that work was still underway on the planning protocol, due to the need to find a solution that would be acceptable to all parties. Members emphasised the importance of resolving this issue.

Annual Review: The annual review had been produced following members input at the last meeting. Copies had been distributed to all partners and stakeholders.

Hurn Air Space: Following lengthy discussions at the last meeting, a response to the Hurn Air Space Development Proposals had been submitted, expressing concerns regarding the impacts on tranquillity in the Purbeck part of the AONB and requesting that some monitoring should take place to inform future decisions. The Team Manager had received a response outlining the difficulties associated with this. The application was now in the hands of the Civil Aviation Authority and the AONB Partnership had been consulted again. Members agreed that the Team Manager should submit a response reiterating their concerns.

Under-grounding of Powerlines: The Board agreed ten priority locations for under-grounding of power lines at the last meeting and these were subsequently sent to Southern Electric for consideration. Southern Electric has since confirmed that the following lines will be under-grounded: Ferry Road, Renscombe Farm to Worth Matravers, plus two lines near East Bexington and Abbotsbury. Discussions are underway regarding Hartland Moor and further sites are also being located as there is still funding unallocated.

Item 3. Natural England Grant Priorities for 2007/8

3.1 A report was given by the AONB Team Manager on the grant bids to Natural England for Core Funding for the AONB Team / Partnership, AONB Projects and the Sustainable Development Fund.

- 3.2 The team manager noted that, with the creation of Natural England, the core functions of AONB Partnerships were under review and there may need to be some minor changes to the forms, but the majority of the tasks outlined were not expected to change. The Board approved the content of the core funding bid. The Team Manager asked for confirmation of core funding contributions from local authorities. Dorset County Council and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council confirmed that funding was available; West Dorset District Council, Purbeck District Council and North Dorset District Council could not confirm. AONB Projects: The Board approved the project funding bids and the priorities assigned to them as presented. The Board agreed that the maximum £100,000 should be requested for the Sustainable Development Fund.
Resolved: The recommendations were agreed as presented.

Item 4. Update on the AONB Sustainable Development Fund

- 4.1 The Team Manager presented the paper, reporting that all of the £80,000 grant for this year's sustainable development fund had been allocated to projects, with a small amount kept back to cover administrative costs. The funding panel had proposed that all applications to the fund should be submitted upfront and allocations made at the start of the year to enable the best projects to be selected. A small amount would be held back for small scale community projects. Applications for next year will have to be in by Mid February 2007.
Resolved: The Board noted the progress on administration of the sustainable development fund.

Item 5. Dorset AONB Management Plan Review

- 5.1 The Team Manager gave a report on the proposed timetable of the review of the AONB Management Plan Review, outlining the process required and proposing that the review process linked to reviews of other key strategies being undertaken during the same period. This might include the Dorset Biodiversity Strategy, World Heritage Management Plan and Heritage Strategies. Cllr Cake requested that any consultation be presented in simple terms with removal of as much jargon as possible. Cllr Cox noted the importance of being aware of the bigger picture and ensuring that the Plan reflects the need to work county-wide where this is most practical.
Resolved: The Board approved the proposed time table for the Management Plan review.
The Board approved development of a joined up approach to consultation where practical.

Item 6. Landscape Character Assessment & Management Guidelines

- 6.1 The AONB Landscape Planning Officer gave a presentation on the emerging Landscape Character Assessment and Guidance being produced for the AONB. He noted that the process was based on a desk study to identify landscape description units, followed by a field survey to record visual characteristics. The Board was requested to consider the format of the work and look at outline content to ensure the approach was suitable for wider consultation. Andrew Price asked how the work linked to the Renewable Energy Strategy. It was suggested that the work would provide a basis for consideration of renewable energy development, but that further landscape capacity and sensitivity studies were being discussed with the Energy Group. Cllr Leicester suggested that the names of the character areas were best confirmed through consultation with local people.
Resolved: The Board agreed the format and outline of content for wider consultation.

Item 7. Endorsement of Direct from Dorset Environmental Criteria

- 7.1 The AONB Team Manager presented the paper outlining the proposed new assessment criteria for the Direct from Dorset Scheme, introducing environmental standards. The Board

was asked to approve the criteria and, on the basis of introduction of both these minimum standards and a 'conservation grade' standard, to give its formal endorsement to the DFD scheme. Members asked how the scheme operated and it was reported that it operates through the County's Trading Standards Team.

Resolved: The Board approved the criteria and, with introduction of environmental standards and a 'conservation grade' standard, formally endorsed the Direct from Dorset Scheme.

Item 8. Dorset Design & Heritage Forum

- 8.1 The AONB Team Manager presented a paper on the new Dorset Design & Heritage Forum, which had been established through the DSP Culture Theme Group. A bid was being finalised through the Forum by Dorset County Council's Cultural Development Team for Arts Council funding to take forward a programme of activity. This would include a County Design Promoter post, a housing design programme, characterisation work and a training programme. Members approved the idea of artists linking to the design / planning process and noted the importance of appropriate design in the AONB. Concerns were expressed over the Team's capacity to manage another officer, but support from Culture Services and other Forum members would be available to assist.

Resolved: The Board noted the development of the Design & Heritage Forum and approved the AONB Team's involvement in its delivery.

Item 9. Rural Pathfinder & DSP Environment Theme Group

- 9.1 The AONB Team manager gave a verbal report updating the Board on the latest developments in the DSP Environment Theme Group and Rural Pathfinder. Items raised at the last DSP Environment theme group included the revision of the community strategy, the grassland LAA target and the potential for a 'Marine Park' as part of the 2012 legacy. The Theme Group had spent some time developing draft material for the Environment Chapter of the new Community Strategy, proposing that climate change be included as a strategic challenge for Dorset.

- 9.2 The AONB Technical Advisory Group, with additional representatives from Natural England, had met to discuss the Pathfinder proposals. The proposals outlined four key work areas for Dorset's environment - the broad countryside agenda, coastal and marine issues, heathland and green infrastructure issues in South East Dorset and renewable energy / energy efficiency. The proposal being developed was for the AONB Partnership to act as lead co-ordinating body for the countryside work area, operating across the County. The Partnership would still retain its AONB function and the team would remain focused on the AONB, but the work of other teams such as Dorset Countryside Service would be reported to the Board. There were still some detailed issues that needed to be considered and a proposal would be brought to the next meeting. Members agreed that measures that could reduce duplication and facilitate greater co-ordination would be welcome.

Item 10. Team Update on Current Work Programme

- 10.1 Team members gave brief updates on their work. The Dorset Woodlink Project was developing well, with a successful Wood Fuel Fayre held at Kingston Maurward raising interest in wood fuel installations. Work was also underway on a new Woodland Strategy for Dorset. The Pastures New grassland initiative was also well underway. 175Ha of grassland had been surveyed over the summer and target areas for management had been identified. The target would be launched at the Annual Forum in November. The AONB Countryside Officer updated the Board on the South Dorset Ridgeway Project and the opportunity to restore the Osmington White Horse, which has its bicentenary in 2008.

Item 11. Updates from Heritage Committees

- 11.1 Vincent May updated the Board on the activities of Purbeck Heritage Committee. Following the successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, a team had been appointed to take the project forward, including a Project Manager, Biodiversity Officer, Education Officer and an

administrative assistant. The Studland Peninsula Integrated Transport project had made some progress, with controls now in place to prevent overnight camping along ferry road, and discussions were underway on cycle tracks linking with Norden. The Committee had responded to the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy consultation, and to Poole Harbour Aquatic Plan. Prof. May had also written to Jim Knight to express the Committee's concerns over shortfalls in payments to farmers and the impacts this was having on the area and the Committee's work.

- 11.2 Cllr Roake updated the Board on the activities of the North Dorset Countryside and Heritage Panel. The Liveability Initiative was coming to an end, funding from which had enabled the pilot Winterbornes Project to be developed. The Council's audit report praised the link with the Ranger Service and the environmental work it supported. The North Dorset Trailway between Sturminster and Shillingstone would be successfully completed soon with the opening of a new bridge at Fiddleford. Cllr Roake also expressed concern over the large Bio-ethanol plant at Henstridge, and the potential impacts of traffic movements associated with it.
- 11.3 Sally Lloyd-Jacob updated the Board on the activities of the West Dorset Heritage Joint Advisory Committee. Key projects discussed at the Committee were the ongoing progress with the South Dorset Ridgeway Project through the AONB, and the Poundbury development brief consultation. A new Landscape Architect had been appointed at WDDC, Martin Peacock, who would be developing work on the Committee's Framework for Action.

Item 12. Updates from other Partners

- 12.1 Cathy Fitzroy gave the board details of the new Natural England staffing structure. There would be five teams in the South West - a regionally based Partnerships and Advocacy Team and regionally based Business and Finance Team, then three area teams - Devon & Cornwall, Dorset & Somerset, and Wiltshire & Avon. A structure chart would be circulated.
- 12.2 Rob Rhodes from the National Trust outlined the Trust's proposals for Hardy's Cottage, including making it available as self-catering accommodation with an interpretive angle over the winter. The proposals are attached. The AONB Team were keen to work with the Trust to make more of the Hardy story, linking to the Hardy Trail.
- 12.3 Sam Rose invited members to attend the Annual Conference for the World Heritage Site on 15th December.

Item 13. Any other business

- 13.1 The Chairman noted the need to promote the Partnership's work and achieve a higher public profile. Members agreed but emphasised that this was a task for the Board as well as the Team. Prof. May offered to give talks on the AONB as he does for the World Heritage Site.
- 13.2 The Team Manager reminded members that the Annual AONB Forum would take place on 28th November at Lulworth Castle, held jointly with the Biodiversity Partnership. She also noted that Natural England and the National Association for AONBs had agreed a set of performance indicators for AONB partnerships, which the Board would be monitored against in future.
- 13.3 Two members of the Board had left since the last meeting. Jim White had retired from Natural England following 30 years of working in Dorset. David Bunt had changed role within the Environment Agency and would therefore no longer be the Agency's representative on the Board. The Agency was restructuring and considering how to fill this role in the light of limited staff resources. Board members expressed their sincere thanks for all the work and input that Jim and David had provided to the Partnership. The Chairman agreed to write a letter of thanks to each on behalf of the Partnership.

Item 14. Date of Next meeting: Tuesday 23rd January 2007, same venue Burraton House, Poundbury 10am-1pm (this meeting was subsequently postponed).