

# **Cranborne Chase**

## **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**



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### **STEERING GROUP**

**10.30 am, Monday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

**Cranborne Estate Office**  
4 High Street, Cranborne, Wimborne, BH21 5PS

### **MINUTES**

#### **1. WELCOME / PRESENT / APOLOGIES**

<b>Member</b>		<b>Present</b>	<b>Apologies</b>
Richard Broadhead	Wilts Chairman	√	
Phil Sterling	DCC	√	
Gary Foyle	EDDC	√	
Michael Mounde	Chairman REG	√	
James Ives	NFDC		
Kevin Morris	NDDC	√	
Susan Batstone	NE	√	
Barry James	SCC		
David Clarke	MDC		√
Garry King	HCC	√	
Vacant	Chairman P&T		
Gavin Fauvel	Chairman LMAF	√	

#### **AONB Team**

Linda Nunn	AONB Director	√	
Shirley Merrick	Support Officer	√	

Gary Foyle, Community and Recreation Team Leader, has replaced Alan Ottoway and Matthew Reeks, both East Dorset District Council representatives.  
Phil Sterling has replaced Peter Moore (DCC)

#### **ACTION 1**

1. Apologies were noted, and new Members welcomed.

#### **2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING AND ANY MATTERS ARISING**

Action 2.2 RB has not sent a letter to James Stanford yet. Members recommended that it should still be sent.

Action 2.4 South Somerset District Council has now formally adopted the Management Plan.

Action 2.5 The Management Plan has been sent to Lord de Mauley, as required by DEFRA.

Action 3.1 With a General Election due in May, the AONB will have to wait to see what DEFRA will do about funding for AONBs in future years.

Action 3.4 Somerset County Council has confirmed its contribution to this AONB for 2015 - 2016. It will be the usual (reduced) £500 contribution instead of £702.

### **3. BUDGET UPDATE**

#### **a. 2014 – 2015**

The Core Budget break down was explained by LN, plus the budget headings and what costs are included in these. The DEFRA claim does not require this much detail. The unexpected extra staff costs, arising due to the review of staff entitlements by Wiltshire Council, have caused a budget deficit in staff salaries. LN will double check these figures, and needs permission to access the AONB reserve to cover these costs.

The Projects budget is funded 100% by DEFRA. LN provided details of the Chalk Valley Sustainable Rural Tourism Project, the proposed Countryside Centre and the Reaching Communities HLF bid, and the reasons for the remaining funds.

To spend the remaining funds the projects suggested by the AONB team at its meeting last week were reviewed, with their projected costs. LN highlighted the priority projects, the feasibility study for a Heritage Trail and the GIS work. The Stepping Stones project money is for additional work to grow plant plugs by volunteers and then plant them. Each project was reviewed and the merits of each one assessed.

The Steering Group rejected two of the projects for lack of projected output; the W&S LNP and the fingerpost roundels.

#### **b. 2015 – 2016**

LN explained the breakdown of the costs for 2015 – 2016 and the negative £12,000 difference from last year of the salary/training/travel costs. Requests for the Local Authority contributions for 2015 – 16 will remain the same as this year, and the DEFRA contribution remains the same. Any pay rise in salaries in 2015 – 16 have not been taken into account yet. The rent/rates/services are very low and the only option would be for all staff to work from home and find a small space for RB and SM. The GIS support remains the same. Some AONBs are holding their Annual Forum every two years, and this may become an option. Members suggested trying to get sponsorship for the event or charging.

GF challenged the IT costs and the need to reduce/control this expenditure. The IT contracts need to be put out to tender, and going back to Wiltshire Council to host the server should not be ruled out.

Local Authorities are now in the process of setting budgets. Dorset, Hampshire and Wiltshire Council's are all facing major budget cuts and cannot guarantee AONB contributions will not be cut. Cuts are very likely in 2016 - 2017. LN reminded members of the effect of any cuts on the DEFRA match funding. Members were acutely aware of their statutory responsibility to produce a Management Plan, and the contribution of the

AONB to the area. LN produced a report for NDDC last year on the value of the AONB to the District Council, and Wiltshire Council has requested a similar report. The Steering Group recognised the need for them to agree priorities for the AONB.

<b>ACTION 3</b>
1. Steering Group authorised LN to transfer funds up to £3,000 from the reserve account to cover the deficit caused by the additional costs to staff salaries.
2. Steering Group agreed the projects that would now be funded by the remaining funds
3. Steering Group noted the projected budget spend for 2014 – 15 and recommended that contracts need to be reviewed to cut costs further.
4. Steering Group noted the proposed budgets for 2015 – 16 and the issues the AONB will face with reduced budgets this year, and potentially greater cuts the following year.
5. Members to notify LN when they have confirmation of their authority's contribution and more importantly if they become aware of any cut to that contribution to the AONB,
6. Members warned of the cuts to their own LA budgets and the real possibility of cuts in contributions to the AONB, and the need to address this issue at the earliest opportunity.
7. LN to look at the possibility of charging for attendance to the Annual Forum, or finding sponsorship.

#### **4. PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) has finally been signed by all LA partners. From April 2015 LA partners need to sign up to a Partnership Agreement (PA). DEFRA will not be signing the agreement. The MOA and this PA have similar legal weight. The PA includes a contributions table, but the redundancy issue is not comprehensively covered. The AONB reserve account was previously identified as a possible pot of money to cover costs in the event of any redundancies, and by using the salaries budget. DEFRA will not cover any redundancy costs. Members agreed that a change of words was required in paragraph 27, that 'unanimous' be changed to 'majority'.

**27 Redundancy** *e) If a redundancy (redundancies) occurs, it may be possible to utilise the 'balance' or 'reserve' the AONB holds with Wiltshire Council as Host Authority, however, the decision to utilise this funding for the purpose of redundancy payment(s) must be **unanimously** voted for by the Partnership Panel **by a majority.***

Members agreed that the Dorset representative should liaise with the Wiltshire representative over the wording of both agreements as hosts for the Dorset AONB and the Cranborne Chase AONB respectively. Wiltshire Council would like to have the same agreement with North Wessex Downs AONB and this AONB. Wiltshire Council's legal department to check the wording of the Agreement in the first instance. LA partners need to be reminded that for every pound cut in contributions results in a £3 loss from DEFRA. This could lead to redundancies.

<b>ACTION 4</b>
1. LN to change the wording in paragraph 27 e from 'unanimously' to 'majority'.
2. Wiltshire Council will have their legal department check the Agreement, as host authority.
3. Once DCC are content that the Agreement is basically in line with their one for the Dorset AONB then the Agreement should be sent out to other partner Authorities for signing.
4. Members need to brief their council members on the Panel of this Agreement so that they are prepared for the next Partnership Panel meeting.
5. LN will send the latest draft of the Agreement out to Steering Group this week.

### **5. CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE AONB PARTNERSHIP**

There are three potential candidates standing for Chairman. A date was sent to all three candidates so that the interviews could take place in one day. Unfortunately one person was not free that day so another date is being arranged. Due to this delay Steering Group recommended that the date of the Partnership Panel should be put back to 15<sup>th</sup> April. They also recommended that Michael Mounde should chair the whole meeting, with the new Chairman observing for his first meeting.

Due to the change of the Panel meeting to April and therefore Panel Members missing the opportunity to discuss the budgets for 2015 – 2016 Members requested that LN send the papers to Panel members by email for comment.

<b>ACTION 5</b>
1. SG noted the change of date for Chairman interviews and recommended that the Partnership Panel meeting needed to be changed from 4 <sup>th</sup> March to 15 <sup>th</sup> April.
2. SG recommended the process for the new Chairman to take over at the next Panel meeting.
3. LN to send out the budget figures to Panel members at the beginning of March.

### **6. 2014-15 DELIVERY PLAN & WORK OF THE TEAM SINCE PANEL MEETING ON 14<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER**

The AONB team met on 2<sup>nd</sup> February and discussed the Delivery Plan in detail. The comments made by the team, and any recommendations for change in output or timescales, was recorded. Once the document has been updated it will be sent to Members by the end of the week.

The work of the team is listed below, and does not include everything that is being worked on at this current time.

Richard Burden, Landscape and Planning Advisor. RB has been commenting on:-

- CIL policy consultations, including AONB project recommendations and the charging levels proposed.
- Large grain stores and farm building change of use.
- C13 and Dinah's Hollow road closure and proposed remedial works.

- Proposed wind turbines and field scale solar farms.

Also he has been

- Looking at charging for pre-application advice and arranging a half day seminar where Tamar AONB will lead on how they have successfully achieved this.
- Dark Night Sky status and how to progress this project.
- Looking to finalise the Highways project publication which is still being delayed by Wiltshire Council unable to find someone in the highways department to sign it off.

David Blake Project Development Officer

DB has been working on taking the following projects forward:-

- LIFE bids for chalk grassland
- Stepping Stones Project
- Local Nature Partnership – attending the Wiltshire meetings
- Archaeology HLF bid
- Wessex Water – securing funding for the farmland bird officer post
- Organising the 5<sup>th</sup> Cranborne Chase Woodfair on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> October. Preparing a brief for Bradsons who will help to run the event for the AONB. This event comes with risks if an issue arises to deter people attending. Wiltshire Council covers the liability aspect of the insurance, and event insurance is possible, with various levels of cover.

Tracy Adams, Farmland Bird Project Officer. TA has been out working on

- A Turtle dove survey
- Working with landowners to achieve habitat gains along the Wessex Water pipeline
- Wessex Water fund this post now but Natural England have funded extra work for TA until the end of March.

Anne Carney Funding and Partnerships Officer. AC has been working on:-

- The Leader bid for the Heart of Wessex
- The 'Discover...' projects ['Discover Chalke Valley'](#) and ['Discover Nadder'](#)
- Community work with villages faced with losing their public house.
- Finding a location for the Cranborne Chase Countryside Centre.
- Finding trustees for the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
- Liaising with the North Dorset Local Action group (LAG) and the Heart of Wessex

Harry Bell GIS and Communications Officer. HB has been

- Building and maintaining the 'Discover...' websites
- Producing maps when required
- Producing the E-bulletin
- HB will be presenting a workshop on 25<sup>th</sup> February at Broadchalk to business owners within the AONB on websites and IT.

Shirley Merrick Team Support Officer.

SM continues to provide support to the team in a variety of ways. She works closely with RB to type and send his consultation responses, and to monitor outcomes.

Jo Taylor Team Support Officer.

JT currently has a working from home agreement and is dealing with finance and other IT based work.

Linda Nunn, AONB Director. LN leads on the following projects, amongst the day-to-day operations of managing the team and fulfilling objectives:-

- The Cranborne Chase Countryside Centre.
- The setting up of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation
- The tourism initiatives
- The Delivery Plan
- Achieving Dark Night Sky status

For the benefit of new Members LN briefed the meeting on the progress of the Countryside Centre, including finding and visiting potential sites, and visiting prospective trustees for the CIO, which will run the Centre.

<b>ACTION 6</b>
1. LN to send out to Members the Delivery Plan document with the comments by the AONB Team
2. Members noted the details of the Cranborne Chase Woodfair, and the risks involved in running the event.
3. Members noted the update on the Countryside Centre and the need to put aside money this year into an account to enable the CIO to be set up.
4. LN to keep the Steering Group updated on any significant progress towards a Centre.

## **7. PANEL REPORTS FOR WEDNESDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> MARCH**

1. Welcome from the Vice Chairman
2. Minutes of the meeting 13<sup>th</sup> November 2014
3. Matters arising
4. Report A – Partnership Agreement 2015
5. Report B – Budget 2014/15 and proposed budget 2015-16
6. Report C – Delivery Plan 2014-15 and team work update

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

GF – is TA or DB working with cluster farms? LN – YES

MM – the Heart of Wessex has been successful in its bid for Leader funding but it will not be known until August just how much has been awarded.

## **9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next Steering Group will meet on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> July, at 10.30am, at the Cranborne Estate Office. Members thanked GF for hosting this and the next meeting.

The next Partnership Panel meeting will be on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> April.

**The meeting ended at 1 pm.**

Minutes signed as a true record

By Richard Broadhead .....Chairman  
On 8<sup>th</sup> July 2015