

North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty PARTNERSHIP

Friday 25th January 2019
Brynsworthy, Barnstaple

MINUTES

Meeting Attendees

Steve Pitcher (Community Rep.)
Cllr Rodney Cann (North Devon Council)
Chris Preece (Voluntary Sector – NDAS)
Cllr Ken James (TDC)
Rose Day (Community Rep.)
Richard Prowse (Tarka Country Trust)
Jonathan Fairhurst (National Trust)
Brian Butler (NFU)
Kirstie Pritchard (Devon CC)
Paula Ferris (Coastwise)
Ivan Buxton (CPRE)
Dr Eirene Williams (Community – Vice Chair)
Martin Batt (Community – Vice Chair)
Paul Green (Community Rep.)
Andy Bell (ND Biosphere)

Guests

Mike Tichford – Head of Place, North Devon Council
Adeline Gladieux (Biosphere – BCHT)

Apologies

Cllr Andrea Davis (Exmoor NPA)
Steve Mulberry (Chairman)
Rob Joules (National Trust)
Cllr Tony Inch (Devon CC)
Pete Burgess (DWT)
Brett Grosvenor (EA)
Christine Goodall (NE)
Trevor Stanbury (ND Marketing Bureau)
Terry Green (Community Rep.)
Sean Kearney (Torrige DC)
Dr James Szymankiewicz (Community Rep.)
Sarah Jennings (Devon CC)
Penny Mills (CPRE)
Peter Burgess (Devon Wildlife Trust)

Officers

Jenny Carey-Wood (Manager)
Dave Edgcombe (Projects Officer)
Joe Penfold (Heritage Officer)
Laura Carolan (Communications Officer)
Andy Jones (NDC)

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

- **Vice-Chair Martin Batt** welcomed Partnership members to the meeting and reported apologies from the Chairman, Steve Mulberry, so Martin would chair the meeting.
- **Mike Tichford, the new ‘Head of Place’ for North Devon Council** welcomed the Partnership to Brynsworthy and reported on priorities and vision for the council to 2050.
- Jenny CW reported on the informal meeting with Lord Ewen Cameron from the **Glover Review** held in late December with the AONB Chairman and team. The meeting was very positive and shared the key points from the Partnership’s response to the Call for Evidence, particularly the boundary review ambitions. Lord Cameron had a good understanding of the issues and was impressed with the community engagement work achieved under Coastal Creatures and other projects.

2. Minutes of the last meeting on 28th September 2018 and matters arising. Minutes agreed Actions / Matters arising;

- New Members – Outstanding action on a Young people forum - **Action: SM/JCW**
- Conflicts of Interest Guidance for members – outstanding **Action: SM/JCW**

- Net Gain for Biodiversity – government consultation on policy to make this mandatory or not closes on 12 February. Agreed presentation to Partnership when clearer policy.

3. Governance

- Parish Council representation on Partnership – two applications received and circulated to members. Vote – unanimous support for Hugh Bone (representing Torridge parishes) and Malcolm Wilkinson (representing North Devon parishes). **Action: JCW** to share decision with all parishes and to deliver an induction programme to clarify roles and reporting responsibilities.

4. AONB Manager's Report – presented, with additional comments below

4.1 Health and Wellbeing – Woolacombe Parkrun – JF reported on success of the run attracting around 100 participants every Saturday, and 12 volunteers – deemed to be the eighth hardest in the country so attracting runners of all abilities. Thanks were expressed to AONB for their financial support and to Laura who is volunteering regularly, the race director briefing before each run highlights AONB. Spin off benefits for local businesses as around 40 people seeking refreshments after the race in local cafes.

4.2 Coastal Heritage – Joe Penfold updated members on the practical conservation work being carried out on 5 hillforts, with volunteers, partners and the help of the NT's 'robotflail'. This work will make the planned photogrammatic surveys (using drones) funded by Historic England more effective with less vegetation in place. EW asked about consideration of wildlife during scrub clearance, JF advised that the work being done at this time of year for lesser impact on wildlife but admitted some loss of habitat would occur but primarily vegetation that is very common across the area (bracken, ivy and gorse). Joe and Dave successfully bid for an additional £16,225 grant from Historic England for a Scheduled Monument Management Scheme which will additionally support new 'interpretation posts' to be placed along the SW Coast Path with financial support from them too, to mark hillforts and WW2 features. A partnership project with the Museums in support of 75th D-Day anniversary has secured funding from Arts Council England through Barnstaple Museum to support events, education and interpretation culminating in events on 15-16th June.

4.3 Sustainable Development Fund – LC updated on progress of the 12 projects offered grant. Possible underspend of £300 may support another project. New scheme opening February for project starts from April 2019.

4.4 Communications Reports – LC gave brief update on social media and website engagement, with new reporting agreed with Working Group. Presented 60th Anniversary activities: a) Celebrate the boundary of the AONB with community and sports groups invited to 'run' a section of the boundary in whatever way they want (run, swim, paddle-board, cycle, amble etc.) in a non-sequential relay. AONB team to fill in the gaps. Regular reporting through media and social media. **ACTION – ALL email LC if you or your organisation want to take part.** B) Stand at North Devon Show on 4th August with Exmoor National Park to celebrate 70th and 60th anniversaries. C) Partnership meeting in September – with business meeting in morning followed by event with invited guests. All partners invited to support and attend.

4.5 Management Plan 2019-2024 – JCW reported that the final consultation with the AONB Partnership had been completed this week, with only a couple of slight amendments, and therefore final sign off obtained from them. The next step includes final sign off by Natural England. The processes and presentations are agreed with the three local planning authorities to complete the adoption process in March 2019.

4.6 Business Plan 2019-20 and Delivery Priorities – JCW advised of several amendments proposed by DCC including to finance tables to match revised Defra layout. Agreed to keep annual priorities as worked well in previous programme period, agreed as biodiversity and health & wellbeing. RP highlighted opportunities with geodiversity as well. Delivery priorities – agreed to keep the full spectrum of short, medium and long term plans. **Action - ALL reply by 5th February to advise JCW** if any other specific work in the AONB planned for the next 1-2 years to include here. Final version to be circulated to all. SP raised issue of boundary review and latest advice from NE on process. **Action: JCW** to write to NE requesting clarification on process and timescales.

5. Partner's Delivery Actions towards the AONB Management Plan

JCW proposed a change to this section of the meeting to provide more formal reporting on delivery of priorities within the AONB Management Plan. This will assist in reviewing achievements before producing the next year's Annual business and delivery plan. Before each meeting, partners with an update should notify the Manager or the Manager will invite reports from partners, and two or three will be scheduled to make a short report or presentation. **This was agreed.**

- **Biosphere – Andy Bell: Natural Flood Management:** work to complement hard flood defences in urban area to reduce rate of water flow and reduce costs. Project funded by EA and working with University of Exeter SWEEP programme to pilot new approaches and improve cost benefit analysis tool used by EA. Work involved range of options including leat dam stores, roughing up land, reducing soil compaction and stocking levels. Assessments being carried out at Cat Combe Martin and in the Kenwith catchment which includes areas around Abbotsham and Portledge in the AONB.
- **Estuary** – refreshing work of John Petty looking at Spring Tides and impact on flooding and water flow to avoid loss of salt marsh and deposits. Also exploring green finance options with Triodos Bank for future investment. At Horsey Island, re-alignment of coast being managed by investment in great bank through repairing Great Sluice and licensed removal of badgers and sett. The raised level of the salt marsh could create an area of 100ha – good for wildlife and reduced flood risk, but some erosion problems arising.
- **Bio-Cultural Heritage Tourism** – new project supported by European INTERREG Channel programme with 4.3m Euros over 4 years, involving 4 biospheres at North Devon and Brighton in England, and Audomarois and Iroise in France. It will support investment in new tourism products and strategies to move people away from sensitive sites, using demonstration projects in the AONB on Braunton Burrows and with Braunton Countryside Centre. See <https://www.bcht.eu/>
- **Campaign to Protect Rural England – Ivan Buxton:** organisation has recently reviewed their activity and public perception is they are seen as negative so considering changes. Recent report on housing and development in Devon being distributed and debated. There will be

seminars across Devon including Tavistock on the 8th Feb and Sandy Park (Exeter) on the 21st March, which the housing minister is due to attend. IB emphasised that they are impressed by the efforts of the AONB team and Partnership and wish to continue their support.

6. Ash Dieback in Devon – Presentation by Andy Jones (with data and slides from DWT)

- Arrived in Devon in 2013, now everywhere with mature trees dying and young trees also affected as not regenerating
- Airborne spores not controllable, affecting urban and rural areas, single trees and in hedges
- Ash supports 17 key species of wildlife
- Slower impact than Dutch Elm – so loss of trees over next 10-15 years, advice is to retain trees as long as possible, but trees near highways and access routes may pose risks
- Information from Devon's Landscape and Ecological Resilience Group on www.naturaldevon.org.uk/devons-natural-environment/devons-wildlife/devon-ash-dieback-action-plan/, EW a member of this group chaired by Rob Wolton.
- RP reported that Tarka Country Trust exploring potential to address physical and cultural impacts, example of 'ash' in many place names and role of ash in products and places
- BB suggested need for information and leaflets for residents, farmers and visitors – to engage and understand, maybe with visitor payback scheme to support replacing trees

7. Landscape Report and Planning Update

DE presented a revised report format as requested at the last meeting and asked for feedback. Partnership agreed new format works by showing the successes and challenges from decisions on applications commented on by the AONB. This time it showed a higher number of decisions going against AONB advice in the North Devon Council area in recent months. These have mainly related to tourism provision and have been supported by the council due to economic benefit. However, DE reminded Partnership members that in the AONB, a strong economic benefit should not over-ride the landscape protection in the legislation. The number of applications assessed appears to be considerably lower from the high of last year. Questions were raised about the proposed development at Yelland and approach of AONB team – although the site is 1km from the AONB boundary, it could have a significant impact on wildlife in the AONB who also use the other side of the estuary. This is being explored in the High Tide Roost survey being carried out by Natural England and the RSPB, due to report in the Spring. The AONB will respond to the application, including wildlife impact with advice from Partnership members.

8. National Association of AONBs - RD reported that she has remained as a Trustee of the National Association for a further year to help provide continuity for the charity during a period of considerable change. Rose shared a report from the NAAONB on the range of activities underway this year, and her report on conference and NAAONB business.

9. Any Other Business – JCW thanked those members of the Partnership who served on Panels and Working Groups over the last year or volunteered at events and activities alongside the team, particularly through the Coastal Creatures and Coastal Heritage projects. Meeting Chair MB thanked the team for their hard work and a very successful year.

10. Date of Next Meeting:

**Friday 17th May 2019 at 10.00am
(Venue TBC)**