

North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty PARTNERSHIP

Friday 31 January 2020
Barnstaple Museum

MINUTES

Meeting Attendees

Steve Mulberry (Chairman)
Dr Eirene Williams (Community – Vice Chair)
Martin Batt (Community – Vice Chair)
Rob Joules (National Trust)
Brett Grosvenor (EA)
Sarah Jennings (DCC)
Steve Pitcher (Community Rep.)
Terry Green (Community Rep.)
Sean Kearney (TorrIDGE DC)
Richard Prowse (Tarka Country Trust)
Brian Butler (NFU)
Hugh Bone (TorrIDGE Parishes Rep)
Chris Preece (Voluntary Sector – NDAS)
Paula Ferris (Coastwise ND)
Peter Burgess (Devon Wildlife Trust)
Andy Jones (NDC)

Apologies

Cllr Ken James (TDC)
Christine Goodall (NE)
Trevor Stanbury (ND Marketing Bureau)
Cllr Ian Crawford (TTEF)
Paul Green (Community Rep.)
Cllr Malcolm Wilkinson (N Devon Council)
Dr James Szymankiewicz (Community Rep.)
Andy Bell (Biosphere Reserve)

Officers

Jenny Carey-Wood (Manager)
Dave Edgcombe (Projects Officer)
Joe Penfold (Heritage Officer)
Laura Carolan (Communications Officer)
Suki Coe (Nature's Tonic)

Guest Speaker

Paul South (National Trust)

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

Chairman **Steve Mulberry** welcomed Partnership members to the meeting and reported apologies.

2. Minutes of the last meeting on 19th September 2019 and matters arising. Minutes agreed Actions / Matters arising;

- **Steve Pitcher** – the chairman reminded members that this would be Steve's last meeting and the Partnership expressed its thanks to Steve for the considerable contribution made over many years in a number of different roles.
- **Parish Council representation** – No response received from second approach to all North Devon parishes in the AONB. JCW proposed approaching North Devon Council and Malcolm Wilkinson to see if he could be the contact for any parish issues raised across the AONB North Devon patch. **Agreed.**
- **Code of Conduct** – only 2 outstanding signatories, **Action: JCW to follow up.**
- **Tree planting in AONB** – AONB team to monitor and report back in Spring.

3. Governance

- **Election of AONB Partnership Members** – two applications had been received to join the Partnership as Community Members. These were from Mike Kelly and Lewis Andrews, both former local-authority planning officers with detailed knowledge of the AONB and other

local interests. MB proposed both candidates to the Partnership, HB seconded the proposal. This received unanimous support from those present and they were duly elected.

- **Election to Planning Panel** – Terri Green advised that he wished to step down, thereby creating two vacancies. The two new Community Representatives (Mike Kelly and Lewis Andrews) were proposed and accepted with recognition that as active planning consultants, they may both need to declare interests and withdraw from discussions on occasion.
- **Election to SDF Panel** – three vacancies as Rose Day had advised she would be stepping down too. Paula Ferris and Terri Green nominated themselves and were elected.

Action: SDF Panel through Chair EW to seek an additional member from the Partnership.

4. Glover Review, 25 YEP and policy

4.1 Glover Review – the Chair advised Partnership that due to the Review being published the day after the last Partnership meeting in September, he had sent a response to Julian Glover c/o Defra welcoming the majority of the proposals; information and links had been sent at the time to members but members had not had the opportunity to discuss them together. JCW reported that a high-level group were working on the proposals within Defra and a Working Group including representatives from AONBs, National Parks and national conservation and wildlife groups were working closely with Defra. The chair invited comments: **MB** welcomed the proposals but noted the absence of commitments to re-wilding and the need for additional resources to deliver most proposals. **SP** asked whether the two local MPs were being kept informed, especially with a change in North Devon? **Action: JCW to ensure follow up with MPs.**

BB recommended waiting for decisions from Defra on implementation.

RP raised challenges around Partnership members being primarily older, retired men and not sufficiently diverse to represent the wider population. **JCW** reported that this Partnership was one of the more diverse with many newer members, a good proportion under 60 etc. Challenge to reach and engage younger people, especially if working and unable to attend meetings. **JCW** suggested there may be merit in working with local partners across North Devon (BR, DWT, NT, NBCP etc.) to set up a youth forum to feed into activities and decision making on environmental issues. **BG** suggested need for clarity on what is the ask, benefits, roles for younger members. **PF** said recent discussion with young people about new Marine Pioneer films revealed they were not aware of environmental consequences of their actions. **BB** recommended a need for good publicity/social media to engage and involve younger people. **SP** questioned whether formal meetings were appropriate and may need to find other approaches (like XR was doing with Friday Climate Change events). **HB** highlighted opportunity to link to economic, business and tourism interests as many young people need jobs. **RJ** re-iterated that diversity not just about age groups, and a need for new tools to reach different genders, abilities etc. **Action: All – ideas and suggestions to SM/JCW by end of February.**

4.2 Colchester Declaration – Species Focus for North Devon – SJ presented six options from the Devon Special Species list that meet the NAAONB criteria: – Black Mining Bee, Brown-banded Carder Bee, Yellow Staghorn Sponge, scarce Blackneck Moth, Dormouse, Greater Horseshoe Bat. Discussion included: strong support for the Carder Bee to engage public and volunteers, links to tourism and honey products, any work would benefit other pollinators and could work with

Bumble Bee Conservation Trust; proposed Greater Horseshoe Bat to continue successful work so far through DWT and partners; support to focus on a marine species as a coastal AONB; but a mammal may be more appropriate given terrestrial focus of AONB.

EW stated opposition to single species approach as can be inappropriate and frivolous, and an ecosystem approach would be more appropriate. Members were advised that whatever species was chosen, work would focus on its associated habitat and ecosystem services from that habitat, thereby providing benefit to a range of species. **JCW** reported still awaiting formal guidance from NAAONB on how this work is to proceed and **SJ** requested further time to consult with a wider range of experts/partners.

Action: SJ and JCW to consult further and bring back final proposal to May Partnership

4.3 Devon Climate Emergency Declaration – **JCW** presented the principles of the declaration and asked if Partnership wished to endorse them? **SJ** explained there was a ‘Partnership’ sign up section related to endorsement rather than action. Questions raised on would this affect our response to proposed windfarms for example, and how would we demonstrate our commitment to these principles? **RP** proposed including principles in our SDF grant criteria. **MB** proposed measuring the carbon footprint of the AONB team. **AGREED to sign up to the Declaration and to report team’s carbon footprint in the annual review.**

Action: EW and JCW to work with SDF Panel to include principles in criteria

Action: MB and JCW to develop methodology to measure team’s carbon footprint

5. Partners’ Delivery Actions towards the AONB Management Plan

- **Pete Burgess (DWT)** made a detailed presentation on the purchase of Horsey Island as the 57th DWT nature reserve, the wildlife on the site and the investigations ongoing to inform future plans for conservation and visitor information/engagement. (N.B. The site is in the setting of the AONB and part of the area formally requested to Natural England for inclusion in an extension of the AONB.)
- **Paul South (NT)** reported on highlights of the 3 years of wildlife monitoring across their estate including Marsh Fritillary butterflies at Brownsham, brown banded Carder bee and short-eared owls at Woolacombe. New management included leaving winter stubble at Hartland to support farmland birds, and tree planting, retaining scrub and grazing at Woolacombe. **Dunescapes Project** (Plantlife, LIFE and Lottery Heritage Fund) aims to make dunes more mobile and includes Braunton Burrows and Woolacombe dunes in national project, includes practical work and provides a community engagement officer (Bev Philips) to reframe professional and public thinking on dune management. Reminder of **NT Tree planting weekend of 22-23 February** at Woolacombe.
- **Martin Batt** reported that NatureTrek were bringing their first nature holiday tour to North Devon in June with input from himself, NT, Coastwise members, Braunton CC and Lundy.

6. Landscape Report and Planning Update – presented by Dave Edgcombe with additional points as follows: -

- **Reporting** – revised table of figures produced to show the scale of planning activity within the AONB and proportion that AONB appraise and comment on (with full table attached for details on each one).
- **Power Line Removal** – Western Power Distribution has allocated the final £240,000 to remove further 2km of lines nearer the ridge line in summer 2020.
- **Beckland** – application submitted for new milking parlour for 1000 cows and stock yard
- **Advice note on erection of Telecom Towers issued** – team working with contractor Airband UK who are primarily using existing infrastructure to install fibre-optics throughout AONB.
- **Meeting with Heads of Planning (TDC and NDC)** – useful meeting with AONB team
- **Thanks to Steve Pitcher** for his considerable help on the Planning Panel
- **Coastal Access – (paper tabled) – formal consultation closes on 15 March 2020**, for statutory consultees (including AONBs) and landowners affected. Aim is to provide a corridor for people along the coast, with seaward side of coast path being open access unless excepted, plus some inland sites including some farmed areas. For example, at Braunton Burrows the coast path has been moved to the beach but propose ‘open access’ status for the rest of the Burrows rather than current ‘permitted access’ status. Some sites are ‘excepted’ for security, safety or conservation reasons (e.g. estuary bird roosting areas).

7. AONB Manager’s Report – presented, with additional comments below: -

7.1 Projects:

- **Coastal Heritage Project** update from Joe Penfold showing good delivery of outputs and strong volunteer engagement – 70 volunteers on survey and practical conservation work; 21 conservation task days held across the AONB; 13 heritage sites have been worked on, including several sessions on larger sites such as Hillsborough and Clovelly Dykes; over 700 person hours contributed to the project.
- **Nature’s Tonic** update from Suki Coe – good engagement with community groups and partners since Christmas after slow start. Targets – 10/24 groups engaged; 6/18 spaces audited; 15/48 potential trainees identified; 6/6 volunteer nature guides identified.
- RP reported that the **Life on the Verge** ends in April but equipment will remain available for communities to borrow.
- **Plastic Free North Devon** – joint bid to Lottery unsuccessful, exploring other funding options.

7.2 Landscape Pioneer – decision to target ‘coastal margins’ in Hartland AONB area as one of four priority landscapes for farmer engagement in the ELMS Test & Trials.

7.3 Sustainable Development Fund –

- Note increase in leverage of funds against SDF grant compared to last few years
- Expecting publicity from a number of SDF projects just finishing, including Nurdle Prototype going on tour at beaches across south of England.
- **Proposal to allocate one-third of fund towards nature recovery projects in 2020/21 – AGREED** with following suggestions: revise SDF criteria to link to climate declaration; ensure not just focused on tree planting; ensure appropriate publicity with examples to raise confidence for successful bids; engage partners to jointly promote.

7.4 Communications Reports – LC gave brief update and summary: -

- **60th Anniversary events ongoing:**
- AONB Boundary Relay – of the 640 people taken part so far 360 were under 18, short slide show of groups and their activities was shown (made by Ella de la Cour – Petroc placement student). Will restart relay in Spring to include inland boundary of AONB.
- Public Speaking Competition on AONB topics – first one at Bideford College on 5th February, and likely Petroc will hold one too.
- Cultural evenings – planning in progress with Beaford for 2 events at Hartland Abbey and a North Devon venue to celebrate the artistic inspiration of the AONB landscape – poetry, literature, photography and film. Details to be confirmed.
- **Events Listing for 2020** – attached, please let team know if you could help at event or want to do joint stand

7.5 National Association of AONBs – full details of conference in Exeter and fieldtrip to North Devon to be provided as soon as available.

8. Any Other Business –

- **Local Nature Partnership** annual conference is on 20 March 2020 at Exeter racecourse – see website
- **Pledge for Nature** initiative of Biosphere Reserve is now live with Bryony Paul leading it
- **Coastwise North Devon** – delighted to report full membership
- **NDAS** – will provide full report on Clovelly Dykes findings to May Partnership
- HB raised issue of good balance of work across Torridge and North Devon but less SDF grants to Torridge side of the AONB.

Action: LC to work with HB to support additional promotion in Torridge

- Reminder of Environment Agency's **Challenges and Choices consultation** on water bodies and catchments – deadline: 24 April 2020. See <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/environment-and-business/challenges-and-choices/>

9. Dates of Next Meetings:

Friday 15th May 2020 at 10.00am in Torridge
Friday 25th September 2020 at 10.00am in North Devon