

North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership

Friday 29th January 2016

Taw Room, Civic Centre, Barnstaple

Meeting attendees

Steve Pitcher (Chairman)
Cllr. Rodney Cann (NDC)
Cllr. Alan Whittle (TDC)
Rob Joules (NT)
Richard Butler (Community Rep.)
Rose Day (Community Rep.)
Barbara Fryer (Community Rep.)
Caroline Leaver (Community Rep.)
Paul Green (Community Rep.)
Paula Ferris (Coastwise)
Lesley Garlick (DCC)
Alison Boyle (Community Rep.)
Peter Burgess (DWT)
Richard Dyer (NFU)
Cllr Pat Barker (ND+)
Christine Goodall (NE)
Steve Mulberry (Community Rep.)

Officers

Jenny Carey-Wood (Manager)
Dave Edgcombe (Project Officer)
Gigha Klinkenborg (Administrator)
Andy Jones (NDC)
Bruce McFarlane (TDC)

Apologies

Jane Whittaker (TDC)
Jenny Wallace (TDC)
Andy Bell (ND Biosphere Reserve)
Hon. John Rous (CLA)
Liz Dee (NDC)
Richard Prowse (Tarka Country Trust)
Jay Rowntree (EA)
Terry Green (Community Rep.)

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

The Chairman welcomed partners and introductions were made.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Minutes were agreed. Matters arising:-

7. Please can Partners let us know which activities you are able to support the team with – we welcome your input and ideas. **Action: All**

9.2 Support for farmers could be available later this year through a Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund bid being developed by Devon Wildlife Trust and the Biosphere team for the Braunton and Caen Valley area, linked to the Greater Horseshoe Bat project. As well as providing a boost in points for participating farms applying for Higher and Mid-Tier schemes, the Fund would bring training, support, demonstrations and farm visits to address biodiversity, catchment and land management issues.

9.3 No news from NE regarding extending the AONB boundary to include Braunton Great Field. **RDyer** raised issue of air pollution and traffic congestion in the town and possible pressure on Great Field. **CG** confirmed that it is in the system and has to go through the process.

(Steve Mulberry left the room)

3. Partnership Governance

- **Election of Community Representatives:** Nominations of Steve Mulberry and Sally McKay-Roper, proposed by **RDay** and seconded by **RB**. All were in favour. (NB. Correction to circulated paper – Barbara Fryer (not Dyer) is the Community representative and on the planning panel.)

- **Election of Vice-Chairman:** No nominations had been received by the deadline. **SP** reported that in consequence he had approached Steve Mulberry to request his consideration of being nominated, if he were successfully nominated as a Community Representative on the Partnership. **SM** had agreed. Steve Mulberry was proposed by **RDay** and seconded by **BF**. All were in favour.
- **Re-appointment of Planning Panel** – all Agreed
- **Re-appointment of SDF Panel and nominations:** Lorna Jones (NDC officer). **SP** requested representation from Torridge District Council or the district: Barbara Fryer and Alison Boyle were proposed. The 3 nominations were all Agreed.

(Steve Mulberry returned to the room)

4. AONB Manager's Report

JCW summarised her report adding the following points:

- **Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat project** will be delivering a range of public, schools and landowner engagement activities between April and September 2016
- **North Devon Ray Pilot Tagging Project** – **SP** commended the final report to the members (attached)
- **Clean Marine** – project completed and team maintaining monthly beach clean with BR team
- **FLAG 2** – MMO has opened for expressions of interest in February, local discussions taking place to decide if North Devon will bid.
- **PR and Communications Quarterly Report** – **JCW** thanked Alison Heimann for producing the quarterly report. **BF** asked why the website figures had dropped so much? **JCW** suggested it may be due to less publicity activity around SDF projects as a gap between approval and delivery, plus a seasonal drop as fewer visitors around to access website. **RB** suggested it needed looking at in a little more depth. **JCW** reminded members that changes were planned for next year to support the planned education work and rather than an external contractor providing all PR and Communications work, the team will be leading on this and will buy in specific PR support on an ad hoc basis. In reviewing priorities for next year, **JCW** proposed merging the two websites (AONB and Explore the Coast) to improve functionality, update content and make responsive to mobile devices, plus easier to manage one site and work smarter with businesses and agencies to get AONB information to the public. This work would be done in two stages over 2016. **Action: RD, CL, PF and SM to join JCW** for February meeting to review communications. **LG** suggested opportunity to use the 'Explore Devon' website. **PBa** suggested considering use of Apps linked to QR codes, with examples from NDC. **JCW** reported on 1 page article in SDF funded Hartland Post in December, about the AONB's activities which will be a regular feature and also approached by Morteheo and Woolacombe Voice for similar input.
- **New Activity – Coastal Creatures** wildlife project - bid submitted online to Heritage Lottery Fund on 29 January with decision expected in March. Final bid costing £90,586 with HLF grant request of £49,500 (55%), cash match of £41,086, and non-cash contributions of £31,048 from Coastwise, RSPB, volunteers and AONB team. The AONB has been shortlisted for a small grant that adds match funding to include beach cleaning activities to protect wildlife and complement beach surveys. The project is for 2 years and anticipates working with 100 volunteers and training 100

people in species identification and surveying. **PF** expressed congratulations to **JCW** for huge amount of work.

- Chrissie Ingle is consulting on the **Geodiversity project** and found real enthusiasm for this, including from the Devon RIGS and Open University SW group. Potentially a £10k Lottery bid. **Action: All** to provide any contacts to Chrissie.
- **2015/16 Budget** – Noted. **SP** welcomed the generous four year settlement from Defra for the AONBs and other protected landscapes. The 75% Defra 25% local match funding has been maintained as the formula going forward, hence importance of local contributions to ensure national contribution to the area.
- **Business Plan and Budget for 2016-2017 (tabled and attached)**
The draft Business Plan was presented with figures showing the confirmed Defra and DCC contributions, awaiting final confirmation of local match funding from TDC and NDC. It is proposed to keep SDF at the current level of £23,000 with remaining project match funding to support lottery funding bids.
- **Sustainable Development Fund - GK** gave a presentation on the 2015-16 projects. Leverage is much lower than other years £1.2:£1 rather than £7:£1. **Action: GK** to send presentation copies to **PBa** and **RDay**.

5. Landscape Report

- **Seascape Character Assessment** – has been completed and made available on AONB and partner websites. **AJ** reported for NDC that the document would not be used as supplementary planning guidance, but would be presented for adoption as material consideration for local planning. The report provides essential baseline evidence for landscape and visual impact assessments to inform planning decisions and will be presented to the North Devon Executive in early February 2016). **BM** for TDC said a similar process would be adopted for Torridge. **RJ** reported that the National Trust planning advisor had already used the document.
- **SP proposed to the Partnership - that the North Devon and Exmoor Seascape Character Assessment should be adopted as material consideration to the North Devon AONB Management Plan.** This was proposed by **RDay** and seconded by **RJ**. There was unanimous agreement to its adoption by the Partnership.
- **Planning Update** – report had been circulated. **RC** raised concerns about the proposals for the Yelland site. The Seascape Character Assessment could be useful evidence in relation to estuary sites. **PBu** confirmed that DWT would be responding to application in relation to bird species, as were the RSPB and would contact Natural England. No news on Route 39 school. Thanks were expressed to Pete Leaver for his excellent contribution to the planning and development control work for the AONB.

Planning Panel – **SP** reported from the meeting on 1st December 2015.

- **Wind policy consultation** held by LPAs – panel and team contributed.
- **Pre-application advice** – this was considered by the panel in response to requests from LPAs and inclusion in NPPF as good practice.

The following recommendations were made by the Panel to Partnership for their decision:-

- I. **Pre-application advice would be provided for free to the LPAs when requested by them, but not to an applicant.**
- II. **If an applicant requested pre-application advice from the AONB, this would have to be through the LPA and only with a planning officer present, and a charge would be made to the LPA if the AONB planning contractor attended.**
- III. **The AONB would post comments on planning applications on the AONB website to provide more clarity and guidance on AONB policy and special qualities.**

These recommendations were unanimously agreed by the Partnership.

- **Neighbourhood Planning – PBu** stated a need for landscape impact advice in the studies for neighbourhood planning that the AONB team may want to get involved in. Guidance available from the Devon landscape policy group. **Action: DE to put on agenda for next Planning Panel.**
- **AONB Planning Services – DE** reported that the heads of planning of TDC and NDC had been approached to review the AONB's approach to planning, to inform the 2016/17 contract to be tendered.
- **Undergrounding lines – DE** reported that the SW Protected Landscapes Forum had approved £40,000 of funding from OFGEM to support pole and line removal at entrance to Croyde village with additional contribution from landowners. **SP** congratulated DE on his hard work to support this project.

6. Marine Conservation Zones

PF gave an illustrated presentation to the Partnership on the two newly designated Marine Conservation Zones in North Devon, their species and habitats. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/marine-conservation-zone-designations-in-england> Paula expressed her thanks to the Biosphere Reserve's Marine Working group for their hard work and evidence, and suggested the work carried out in North Devon would make an excellent case study of partnership working. Three proposed areas for MCZ's in North Devon were not successful (Morte Platform, the Estuary and the Atlantic Array site in the Bristol Channel). There will be a third round of evidencing and proposals for MCZ's in 2019 and therefore important to obtain the species and habitat recording of the Hartland Point to Westward Ho! coast to ensure this was also protected. Paula welcomed the development of the Coastal Creatures project to engage the public with the intertidal species, and the timeliness with the designation of the MCZs. **PBu** supported work for future areas under 'Tranche 3' including mobile species (harbour porpoise and basking sharks) and the estuarine landscape. For those wishing to keep in touch with progress, see the DWT website to become an MCZ friend www.devonwildlifetrust.org/marine-protected-area/

Questions were asked on the impact of the MCZ for planning in the AONB. The MCZ is a designation and the guidance indicates the different regulatory bodies overseeing different elements of each MCZ. The next stage will develop and implement management plans where Devon and Severn IFCA will draw up any necessary new by-laws to support their management, which will consider the interests of all parties including fishers. The MCZ goes to the high water mark and therefore overlaps with the AONB on certain beaches and foreshores. **SP** thanked **PF** for her enthusiastic and informative presentation.

7. Land Management in the AONB

Verbal presentations were made by Rob Joules from the **National Trust's North Devon Estate** and Andrew Woollacott from Savills, Acting Agent for **Christie Estates** on current activities and issues across the area. **SP** thanked both speakers for updating the Partnership.

8. National Association of AONBs update – Rose Day

- 'Accord' signed between Council for National Parks and NA-AONBs to support joint working. New Defra Minister Rory Stewart very supportive of protected landscapes.
- Outstanding Week – events in AONBs across the country from 17-25th September
- Opportunities for tourism developments through "Discover England" fund from Visit England see <https://www.visitengland.com/biz/about-us/events/discover-england-fund-delivering-world-class-product>
- **SP** expressed the Partnership's sincere thanks to Rose Day for her longstanding contribution and commitment to the AONB in her roles as chair and vice chair, and welcomed her staying on the Partnership and involvement through the National Association of AONBs.

9. Date of next meeting – 20 May 2016 at 10.00am (venue in North Devon to be confirmed)

ATTACHMENTS:

- **Rays Monitoring Final report**
- **Updated AONB Business Plan 2016/17**