

**Forest of Bowland AONB Joint Advisory Committee
3 October 2008, 2pm, Slaidburn Village Hall**

Minutes

Present

Lancashire County Council

County Councillor Jean Yates (Chair)

Messrs: Hetty Byrne, Holly Gregson (Minutes), Cathy Hopley, Susan McDonald, Don McKay, Dave Padley, Mike Pugh, John Rhodes, Tarja Wilson

Craven District Council

Laura Kennedy
Carol Lee
Hazel Smith

Pendle Borough Council

Cllr James Starkie

Ribble Valley Borough Council

Colin Hirst

Wyre Borough Council

Cllr Roger Brooks
Alison Boden
Duncan Byrne

Bowland Land Owners and Farmers Group

Henry Bainbridge

Lancashire Association of Local Councils

Micheal Helm

Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board

Suzi Williams

Natural England

Stuart Pasley

North West Development Agency

Matthew Waltho

Ramblers Association

David Kelly

RSPB

Pete Wilson

Rural Futures

Laurence Whitehouse

United Utilities Plc

C Fleming
Caroline Holden

Yorkshire Local Council Association

Colin Price

Apologies for Absence

Cllr Philip Boyle	Pendle Borough Council
CC Peter Elliott	Lancashire County Council
CC Dave Ireton	North Yorkshire County Council
Cllr Tony Johnson	Lancashire City Council
Cllr Donny Whaites	Craven District Council
CC Mary Wilson	Lancashire County Council
Andrew Gouldstone	RSPB
Ian Grindy	United Utilities Plc
Terence Norris	Peak & Northern Footpath Society

Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

Resolved

County Councillor Jean Yates was elected as Chair for a period of one year and County Councillor Mary Wilson was elected as Vice Chair for a period of one year.

Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 April 2008

The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Natural England's Access Priorities

Micheal Helm noted that he has been in correspondence with Natural England regarding access priorities. He felt that the initial letter he received was disappointing but has since held further discussions and is more assured of their commitment.

Constitution and Terms of Reference 2008/09

The Chair referred Members to the report and asked for comments.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

2008/09 Revenue Budget and Staffing Update

John Rhodes referred members to Appendix 'A' noting that column 2 refers to the original estimates for 2008/09 and column 3 refers to the revised estimates for 2008/09 which takes into consideration the additional income that has been secured. This includes savings on staffing cost, additional grants from Natural England (NE) and Heritage Lottery Fund and contributions from Ribble Valley Borough Council amongst other things.

John highlighted that Appendix 'A' column 4 relates to the estimate budgets for 2009/10; the estimates are based on a continuation of the level of service agreed by the committee. John explained that income from partner core contributions had been included in the budget based on contributions requested for 2008/09 plus 2.9% provision for inflation. In respect of grant support from Natural England it has been included on the basis that guidance from their Chief Executive has indicated that grant support would be provided in 2009/10 and 2010/11 at a minimum of 95% of the total offered in 2008/09 towards core costs.

John added that resources from individuals, local authorities and other bodies for projects in Bowland have been sought during 2008/09 and this would continue in 2009/10. He referred members to Appendix 'A2' and offered congratulations to AONB staff on securing over £400,000 of additional funds.

Responding to a query from Cllr Roger Brooks, John explained that the NE grant core contribution was based on a national formula which takes into consideration the complexity of the area, the sustainable development in AONBs, etc. He added that additional grants were available to bid for.

Resolved

That:

- i. The 2008/09 Revised Estimates be noted;

- ii. The 2009/10 Revenue Budget as set out in the report be approved;
and
- iii. The funding authorities be requested to make appropriate provision in their revenue budgets.

AONB Management Plan

a. Staffing

The Chair noted that Lucy Barron had been appointed as Head of the Silverdale and Arnsdale AONB and so had resigned her position in the Forest of Bowland. She passed on her thanks to Lucy for her dedication and commitment to her work and wished her well in her new position.

Don McKay referred members to the report highlighting that it was intended that the management and governance of the AONB would be reviewed during 2009, however with the recent vacancy of the Assistant AONB Officer it was felt that it would be appropriate to undertake this review imminently so that when the vacancy is filled a person with the appropriate skills is selected.

Don explained that, in principle, he would like to set up a commissioning budget to respond to any shortfall in skills and to respond to the short term needs. For example, he highlighted that targeted support could be brought in for assisting applicants to submit better quality bids for HLS.

Resolved

That:

- i. the review of governance and management proposed in the revised Management Plan be implemented in this calendar year;
- ii. the Communities and Funding Officer take on the additional responsibility of deputising for the AONB Officer and take on the lead role in Sustainable Tourism work / Green Tourism Project in preparation for the renewal of the European Charter 2009/10;
- iii. The current temporary post of Community Projects Officer be extended for a further year on a part time basis of three days a week to ensure continuity in community engagement projects and the extension of the successful Bowland Volunteer Scheme;
- iv. A commissioning budget be set up to respond to any shortfall in skills and to respond to short term needs; and
- v. Lancashire County Council be requested to take the necessary action to extend a temporary 3 day per week post of Community Engagement Projects Officer to 31 March 2010, and to manage all these changes within the current level of Joint Advisory Committee budget provision being requested from funding partners.

b. AONB Officer Activities

Don referred members to the report and asked for comments.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

Reviewing the Management Plan

Don highlighted that in April 2008 the Committee agreed the second consultation stage which ran from 11 August 2008 and closes 3 October 2008. Don noted that there had been a good response and in the main very positive, he highlighted the following points:

- Lots of praise on clarity.
- People would like to see more on the special qualities of the AONB and felt this side of the plan should be strengthened.
- Include more of the information from the old plan on the landscape character.
- Maps would be in the new plan.

He thanked partners for their contributions and ensured Members that the responses to the plan would be circulated once they had been analysed. He added that a special meeting of the Committee would be arranged should substantial amendments be needed.

Responding to a query, Don noted that the final Management Plan needed to be with the Secretary of State by March 2009 and so taking into consideration printing time it was hoped that the final text could be approved no later than mid December. Council officers expressed some concerns with this as it was thought that the deadline would be too tight to fit in with Cabinet approvals so it was agreed that text would be finalised by the end of December.

Resolved

That:

- i. The revised Management Plan subject to detailed changes to be agreed by the Chair and Vice Chairs action be approved;
- ii. In the unlikely event that of any substantial changes be required as a result of a late submission that a special meeting of the JAC be held to agree these;
- iii. Subject to the foregoing to recommend the revised Management Plan to the local authorities for their approval and adoption; and
- iv. Officers be requested to make arrangements for publication of the plan and submission in due course to the Secretary of State.

Assistant AONB Officer Report

Don referred Members to the Assistant AONB officer report which gave details of the progress that's been undertaken with traditional boundaries, Bowland carved way markers project and strategic access. Don added that an interesting project is being run in conjunction with RSPB which aims to inspire children about and help them celebrate Bowland's exceptional birds and

wildlife. Schools have been offered 4 half day sessions which would be interactive, fun and linked to the National Curriculum.

Don highlighted that funding had been secured to update the Landscape Charter Assessment. He explained that the assessment was originally undertaken in 2000 and was vital in gaining knowledge about the changing landscape.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

Publicity and Information

Susan McDonald noted that the Annual Report has been published on line and that hard copies are available on request only. Susan added that she continues to represent the AONB on the Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board Marketing Meeting and their Country Escapes campaign. It was highlighted through joint working the AONB benefits from PR campaigns, familiarisation visits, advertising, direct mail campaigns and leaflets and publications.

Susan explained that this year's Bowland Festival was a huge success which showcased the special qualities of the area for people and wildlife. She added that next year the Bowland festival would not be run over a single week but instead we would promote events through the seasons under the theme of 'Festival Bowland'. It would be advertised on the website and a quarterly events calendar would be available. 'Festival Bowland' would be marketed as:

"To celebrate birds, landscape, wildlife and the culture of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty".

David Kelly enquired about ticks are they are becoming a growing problem for countryside users. Susan explained that she is currently putting together a leaflet which provides guidance regarding ticks and eradication techniques.

Resolved

That report be noted.

Lancashire Green Tourism Project and Community and Funding Officer Report including 'Landscape Stories': HLF Project

Hetty Byrne and Cathy Hopley took members through the report highlighting that following the success of the Green Tourism Project within the Forest of Bowland area it has now been rolled out County wide. It is aimed to enrol a further 60 accredited business throughout Lancashire in 3 years of which it is anticipated that 20 plus would be from the AONB area.

Cathy referred Members to her activities and drew their attention to the 'Landscape Stories' Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Project. The project aims to work with communities to record, interpret, and celebrate heritage features and land based industries within the Bowland landscape. Cathy highlighted that four local projects have been identified, these are:

- Pre historic remains in Pendle
- Influences of cheese making in the landscape and cultural heritage
- Impact of chair making in the Chipping area landscape
- Lime kilns in the Slaidburn area

Cathy added that the project will employ a full time Community Officer for a period of two years and that the post will be advertised within the next couple of months.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

Sustainable Bowland Successor Activity – Officer Reports

Hetty Byrne explained that the Forest of Bowland website is integrated with the Lancashire and Blackpool Tourism Board (LBTB) website for items such as an events search engine. Hetty added that work has also been undertaken on the accommodation search, events pages and local products database which are more comprehensive. She explained that future developments include bird profiles, hen harrier footage, wildlife blogs and wildlife walks.

Hetty added that a business enterprise and a visitor survey had been administered and in both cases the results were encouraging. In particular the business responses highlighted an increase in visitor spend since 2006.

Mike Pugh referred Members to a list of his activities on page 42 of the report highlighting his involvement with organising and guiding a party from Malvern Hills AONB to show them the sustainable tourism work that has been undertaken.

Responding to a query Mike explained that the Europarc Charter is a charter for sustainable tourism in protected areas.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)

Cathy referred members to the report noting the good work and project support. She asked for comments.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

Delivering Annual Programme of Projects

Tarja Wilson and Duncan Byrne took members through the reports highlighting the following projects:

- Traditional boundaries: hedgerow and dry stone walling competitions have been undertaken. The boundaries chosen are those identified as priority boundaries through a survey.
- Tramper Network and Local Businesses: some local business within the Bowland area have linked together to buy a tramper which has improved business.
- Disabled Ramblers: A number of disabled ramblers undertook a three day visit included individuals using personal trampers and others hiring trampers from the County Council.
- Festivals: World Environment Day took place on 5th June with an event in Bleasdale. It was a very successful day with lots displays, information, activities and two guided walks.
- Conservation and Preservation
- Restoration of traditional highways signposts
- Volunteering: Volunteers have helped to construct routes in Gisburn Forest Cycleway which would include extreme cycle routes and cycle routes which are family friendly. Volunteers have also assisted in making next boxes at Waddow Hall.
- Wadder demonstration Day

Tarja noted that the report contained full details of the activities.

The Chair congratulated the Countryside Officers for all the excellent work they undertake. She suggested that volunteers are sought from within the County Councils and Borough Councils as she felt that some staff would be willing to volunteer.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

RSPB Report

Pete Wilson explained that within the AONB, work has been undertaken on education and that the Wader Project Officer based with Lancashire Rural Futures is still operating in the Bowland Area. He added that he works on the United Utilities estates within Bowland and that he works within 3 key areas:

- Monitoring breeding of Hen Harriers: 80% of successful nests in England are within the Forest of Bowland area.
- Events programme – engaging the public to educate and inform

- Sustainable catchment areas

Pete added that this was the 3rd year that the Eagle Owl had nested in the area but due to hatching in a less accessible area there has not been as much public interest.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

Sustainable Tourism Business Network

Mike Pugh explained there are three elements to the Sustainable Tourism Business Network:

- The development and support of the network
- The Bowland Experience which was a private enterprise and the name Bowland Experience has been acquired by the County Council
- Bowland Tourism and Environment Fund which is a visitor payback scheme and part of the Europarc Charter commitment.

Mike went on to explain the functions of the Network and how it operates, maintains sustainability and benefits the AONB. Mike took Members through a number of available options including charitable status, company limited by guarantee, social enterprise, Community Interest Company (CIC) or Industrial and Provident Society (IPS). He highlighted some research he had undertaken and asked that Members endorse some further work to investigate options and develop proposals for structuring these activities.

Micheal Helm congratulated officers on the work they had undertaken and suggested that charging for the use of car parks would provide some money to assist with sustainable development. Discussion around the advantages and disadvantages of charging for car parking the main points being:

- Payment by charge or donation?
- If charging for car parking it might become necessary to provide security
- Car parks are crowded so charging might be beneficial

The Chair thanked the Committee for these comments and suggested that should the research Mike undertake need looking at in more detail before the next meeting a special meeting would be convened.

Resolved

That

- i. Mike be endorsed to undertake some further work to investigate options and develop proposals for structuring these activities; and
- ii. A special meeting of the Forest of Bowland ANOB Joint Advisory Committee be convened should it become necessary.

Landscape Charter Assessment

Don noted that this had been dealt with under the Assistant AONB Officer Report adding that tender documents were due back soon.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

Any Other Business

No items to report.

Date and Time of Next Meeting

24 April 2009 – Provisional