

HIGH WEALD JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee will be held at 10:30 am on Friday 8 November 2013 at Acorn Tourism, Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell, East Sussex TN5 7PR



- Tea and Coffee available from 10.00 am. Lunch will also be available.

10.30am THEMED PRESENTATION - Our Land update-Responsible Travel

1. Apologies
2. Members' Interests
Members and officers are invited to make any declarations of any interest that they may have in relation to items on the agenda and are reminded to make any declaration at any stage during the meeting if it then becomes apparent that this may be required when a particular item or issue is considered.
3. Urgent matters
Members are asked to raise any urgent matters at this stage and not at the end of the meeting. The Chairman will decide whether the JAC should discuss any items so raised but asks members to give her prior notification of such matters unless urgency prevents it.
4. Minutes of the JAC meeting
To confirm the minutes of the last meeting of the JAC held on 25 March 2013 (page 1)
5. Minutes of the Management Board - 8 October 2013
To note the minutes of the Management Board meeting held on 8 October 2013 (page 7)
6. Minutes of the Officer Steering Group - 8 October 2013
To note the minutes of the Officer Steering meeting held on 8 October 2013 (page 10)
7. Matters arising from Minutes
8. Nomination of Board Members
To nominate the Chair, Vice Chair and 4 Management Board Members
To give consideration to co-optees to join the Joint Advisory Committee
9. Revenue Budget 2013/14
To consider report by the Deputy Treasurer (page 27)
10. Management Plan Review 2014- 2019
To consider report by the AONB Director (page 33)
11. Planning Issues
To consider a report from OSG Members (page 36)

12. High Weald Projects
To consider a report by the AONB Director (page 42)
13. News from the National Association for AONBs
To consider a report by the AONB Director (page 47)
14. High Weald AONB Unit Staff
To consider a report by the AONB Director (page 51)
15. IUCN Category V Compliance
To consider a report by the AONB Director (page 53)
16. The Value of AONB Partnerships
To consider a report by the AONB Director (page 55)
17. Risk Management
To consider a report by the AONB Director, Risk Log attached at (page 57)
18. Any other business
Next Meeting for Joint Advisory Committee is to be held on 26 March 2014

To: ALL MEMBERS OF THE HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY
COMMITTEE

Samantha Nicholas
Clerk to the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell, East Sussex TN5 7PR
E: s.nicholas@highweald.org; T: 01580 879500



HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

25 March 2013 Meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee held at the Council Chamber, East Grinstead Town Council, East Court, East Grinstead

Present:

Cllr B Kentfield	Rother District Council, Chair
Cllr M Balfour	Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
Cllr Mrs J Davison	Sevenoaks District Council
Cllr C Hersey	Mid Sussex District Council, Vice Chair
Cllr Mrs E Kitchen	Horsham District Council
Cllr Mrs R Moore	Wealden District Council
Cllr Mrs J Soyke	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Cllr R Street	Hastings Borough Council
Cllr M Sydney	Surrey County/Tandridge District Council
Cllr Mrs S Tidy	East Sussex County Council
Mr R Edwards	CLA
Mr J Seymour	Natural England

Officers:

Ms R Child	Kent County Council
Mr M Davidson	Hastings Borough Council
Mr A Fowler	Finance Manager, East Sussex County Council
Mr D Greenwood	Surrey County Council
Mr J Lavender	AONB Director (job share)
Ms S Marsh	AONB Director (job share)
Mr G Mee	Assistant Director ETE, East Sussex County Council
Mr P Newdick	Tandridge District Council
Ms S Nicholas	AONB Unit
Mr D Scully	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Mr A Shaw	AONB Unit

Also present:

Dr B Vorley	International Institute for Environment and Development
-------------	---

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies were received from the following Members and officers:

Councillor Blake and Councillor Mrs Blake; Councillor Taylor; Ms V Pullan.

2. MEMBERS INTERESTS

2.1 All Members declared a personal interest in Item 8 in that they were members of local authorities that contributed to the finances of the High Weald AONB.

Agenda Item No. 4

2.2 Councillor Tidy declared a personal interest as the owner of a small farm in the High Weald.

2.3 Councillor Balfour declared a personal interest as a retired land agent.

3. VICE CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

3.1 Councillor Hersey thanked Alma Howell of Mid Sussex District Council and long standing member of the Officer Steering Group for her contribution to the High Weald AONB, and the JAC wished her well in her new role at English Heritage.

4. PRESENTATIONS

Restocking the High Weald

4.1 Dr Bill Vorley of the International Institute for Environment and Development gave a presentation to the JAC about securing the future of livestock farming in the High Weald's working landscape. A copy of the presentation is included in the Minute Book. He set out the unusual nature of the High Weald as a medieval pastoral landscape within the south-east of England. The decline in livestock numbers was set out: 24.1% reduction in cattle and 31.6% in sheep. The impacts on the landscape, with the degradation of grassland, and on economic resilience were considered.

4.2 Dr Vorley set out his methodology for addressing (1) a more productive use of the available grassland resource, with space for new entrants into livestock farming, and (2) a reformed Environmental Stewardship policy that is better adapted for lowland pastoral small farm landscape.

4.3 The rise in non-farmers owning farmland and the increase in numbers of farmers approaching retirement were set out, as were the barriers to young people entering farming, such as aversion to long-term tenancies and financial constraints. A potential solution has been proposed by which underused land could be matched with young farmers to contribute to the maintenance of the landscape, build soil fertility and produce high quality red meat. This would take the form of farm business tenancies or shared farming arrangements which would be mutually beneficial to non-farming landowners and young farmers.

4.4 The suitability of Environmental Stewardship schemes to farms in the High Weald was examined, together with the pattern of distribution across the AONB. It was noted that under half of the AONB's agricultural area is under Stewardship and that this was concentrated in the north west and south eastern parts of the High Weald. The difficulties facing small farms trying to enter Stewardship schemes were set out. An approach to lobbying was suggested, focussing on rebalancing the application of Stewardship to its original intentions, improving the 'fit' to small farms, raising expectations from mainstream permanent pasture and locally adapted Stewardship to produce a more bespoke agri-environmental scheme.

4.5 In conclusion Dr Vorley suggested that the future of the High Weald landscape must come from the farming community, to help young people in need of a foothold into farming address the growing amount of pasture in need of animals as a route to sustainable intensification.

4.6 The Committee warmly welcomed this report, Dr Vorley's involvement, its initial findings and the work the AONB Unit has done to gain local and national support for the findings. The Committee also discussed the scope of the next stages and potential partners. It was suggested that the issue be brought to the attention of the South East Local Economic Partnership, and to approach them for funds and support for a feasibility study and a pilot scheme. The practicalities of the agreements supporting the proposal were discussed by the Committee, and

Agenda Item No. 4

how to allay concerns regarding tenancies and to promote the scheme as a practical way to utilise land to non-farming landowners.

- 4.7 The Committee also discussed the application of the Common Agricultural Policy, and the discretion available to member states concerning the split between direct payments and agri-environmental schemes. Mr Seymour of Natural England confirmed that grassland farming was a live debate across the Country, and that it was an apposite time to influence policy development.

Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme - Conclusions

- 4.8 Jason Lavender gave a presentation setting out the achievements and outcomes of the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme (WFR). A copy of the presentation is included in the Minute Book. The background of the scheme was outlined and the overarching theme relating to the maidens of the four medieval hunting forests. In total the scheme supported 31 projects and involved 20 separate organizations working together.
- 4.9 An example was given from each of the five themes: enhancing publically accessible sites; understanding and conserving the historic environment; public celebration and learning; learning in schools; and training and skills.
- 4.10 The key achievements were set out in terms of the biodiversity and access improvements with maintenance invested with Delivery partners for 10 years; with project outputs such as guided walk leaflets produced, archaeological toolkits and the LIDAR survey; with resources being published online, and having enhanced people's understanding of heritage and increased the skills base.
- 4.11 The Director distributed examples of the legacy booklet which had been delivered to 130,000 households within the WFR area, as well as deposited with libraries, tourism information centres and visitor centres.
- 4.12 The Committee expressed their thanks to Simon Aguss, the Scheme Manager, and the delivery partners of an enjoyable and inspirational scheme.

5. MINUTES OF THE JAC MEETING - 14 NOVEMBER 2012

- 5.1 RESOLVED to agree the Minutes of the meeting of 14 November 2012 as a correct record.

6. MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD - 27 FEBRUARY 2013

- 6.1 RESOLVED to note the Minutes of the Management Board held on 27 February 2013.

7. MINUTES OF THE OFFICER STEERING GROUP - 25 FEBRUARY 2013

- 7.1 RESOLVED to note the Minute of the Officer Steering Group held on 25 February 2013.

8. MATTERS ARISING

- 8.1 None.

9. DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2013/14

- 9.1 The Committee considered a report by the Deputy Treasurer which presented the Draft Revenue Budget for 2013/14. Andy Fowler of East Sussex County Council explained that a balanced budget had been prepared, taking into account nett savings of £1700. He identified

Agenda Item No. 4

the pressures to be expected in the next year, and the means by which to address those pressures.

- 9.2 Looking forward to 2014/15 the Finance Manager identified a potential deficit, owing to reduced funding from DEFRA, of £20,400 with the potential for further pressure from scheduled Single Status Reviews. In view of this the Committee will need to consider further options to cut further in future years to avoid depleting the reserves.
- 9.3 Reserves were reported as standing at £88,100, which could cover the potential shortfall and retain the recommended 5% minimum level of reserves. Alternative options, such as revisiting the allocation of funds from DEFRA between the core budget and project fund were presented, with the proviso that this might affect the ability to secure matched funding.
- 9.4 The Committee discussed the impact of removing the budget for website development. The Director assured the Committee the content of the site would be kept up to date and remains as vibrant and interesting as it is currently.
- 9.5 Councillor Sydney expressed his concerns regarding the likely future national cuts to funding given his position on the Surrey Hills AONB Joint Committee and the National Association for AONBs. Alternative models of funding such as Community Interest Companies and Community Trusts were suggested as potentially suitable, as well as exploiting the High Weald brand commercially. Both Jason Lavender and Sally Marsh assured the Committee that future funding has been and continues to be the subject of long-running discussions and that a number of seemingly straight-forward options had been trialled by different AONB partnerships in the past without lasting success. It was suggested that the Management Board considers the issue.
- 9.4 RESOLVED to (1) approve the Revenue Budget for 2013/14;
(2) thank local authorities and Defra for their contributions towards core costs and High Weald Heroes; and
(3) request that the Management Board considers strategic future funding options and solutions.

10. MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

- 10.1 The Committee considered a report introduced by Sally Marsh, which presented the proposed version of the draft Management Plan for consultation. Sally explained that the Introduction had been revised with input from both the Officer Steering Group and Management Board, taking into consideration policy changes since the previous edition of the Plan. New five year targets have been developed.
- 10.2 The Committee discussed the inclusion of green travel plans for small businesses. It was confirmed that they would be encouraged to develop one, rather than it being a requirement.
- 10.3 RESOLVED to (1) approve the consultation draft of the Management Plan and to agree to proceed with the public consultation, subject to final approval by:
i) The Chairman
ii) The Management Board
iii) The Chairman of the Officer Steering Group
- (2) note the Plan's supporting documents including the Performance Monitoring Report, Condition Monitoring Report, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment.

Agenda Item No. 4

10. HIGH WEALD AONB JAC PROJECTS

- 10.1 The Committee received a verbal report by Jason Lavender, which set out the projects currently underway within the context of the increasing difficulty generating additional funds.
- 10.2 The Co- Director explained that last year's unsuccessful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a Landscape Partnership Scheme centred on Battle and the Brede Valley would be revised and resubmitted to the HLF by the end of May. Should the revised bid also fail, the AONB Unit will aim to use the match-funding already raised to support landowners and farmers in the area on farm conservation and habitat projects.
- 10.3 The Co-Director explained that the funds provided by some of the JAC partners in support of the High Weald primary school project High Weald Heroes currently allowed the Unit to recruit a part-time officer for two years. A funding bid to the HLF is being prepared with the aim of securing a full-time officer for three years.
- 10.4 A third bid to the Skills for the Future element of the HLF was outlined and aims to provide a number of apprenticeships for young people wishing to begin a career in the woodland/forestry industry. The outcome of the bid will be known at the end of May.
- 10.5 The considerable achievements of the sustainable tourism project "Our Land", a collaboration of south east AONB partnerships and a private business were outlined. The Director reported that Gerry Sherwin, the AONB Business Manager had been asked to join a new steering group to assist with the expansion of the scheme to the rest of England.
- 10.6 The 2012 Kent Food, Farming and Landscape Award had been sponsored by the High Weald and the Kent Downs AONB partnerships. Jason Lavender and the Cllr Kentfield attended the awards dinner in March to represent the JAC. The High Weald's involvement was well received and it was agreed that the JAC should look to jointly sponsor the same award for 2013 and also aim to do something similar for Sussex.
- 10.7 RESOLVED to note the report.

11. HIGH WEALD AONB UNIT STAFFING UPDATE

- 11.1 The Committee considered a report by the AONB Director which highlighted the staff changes since the last JAC, which included the recruitment on a fixed-term contract of Charles Winchester to work on Management Plan review and the volunteer work of Dr Bill Vorley, Michael Satchwell, Eugenie van Heijgen and Andrew Warren-Payne. .
- 11.2 RESOLVED to (1) note the report;
(2) thank the staff and volunteers for their valued contributions.

12. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 12.1 The Committee considered a report on risk management and the associated risk matrix.
- 12.2 The likely continued reduction in funding was highlighted as the key risk. The Director reported that a reduction in the rent of the Unit's office at the Woodland Enterprise Centre had been successfully negotiated.
- 12.3 RESOLVED to (1) note the report; and
(2) request that the Management Board meet to review significant risks as required and develop options for their management.

Agenda Item No. 4

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

13.1 Date in October 2013 to be agreed.



**HIGH WEALD JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING 8 OCTOBER 2013**

Held at the Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell at 1245

Present: Members:

Cllr B Kentfield	Rother District Council and Chairman of the Management Board
Cllr M Balfour	Kent County Council
Cllr J Davison	Sevenoaks District Council
Cllr S Tidy	East Sussex County Council
Cllr E Kitchen	Horsham District Council

Also Present:

Jason Lavender	AONB Director (job share)
Sally Marsh	AONB Director (job share)
David Marlow	Chairman of High Weald AONB Officers Steering Group

Apologies

1. Apologies were received from Cllr Christopher Hersey, Mid Sussex District Council and Vice Chairman of the Management Board; Geoff Mead, Assistant Director, Economy, Transport and Environment, East Sussex County Council; Andy Fowler, East Sussex County Council, Finance.

Minutes

2. The minutes of the Management Board meeting held on 26 June 2013, were approved and agreed as correct record by the Chairman.
3. It was reported from the actions of the minutes of the last meeting that Cllr Jill Davison would give feedback with regard to a grants meeting for Leader funding. Jill informed the members that there would be interim money and Leader funding would still be available but in smaller quantities.

Urgent Matters

4. No urgent matters were raised.

Nomination of JAC Chair and Vice-chair

5. The process for nomination of the JAC Chairman and Vice Chairman and also to the Management Board were discussed and the nomination of co-optees onto the JAC.

Actions:

- The AONB Unit will write to the JAC Members calling for nominations to the Management Board and for the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the JAC.
- The AONB Director to invite the National Farmers Union (Southern) to nominate a co-opted Member to the High Weald JAC.
- Elizabeth Kitchen to invite West Sussex County Council to confirm the nomination of their Member to the High Weald JAC.

AONB Management Plan review 2014

6. The AONB Director provided a verbal report on the review of the AONB Management Plan consultation.

- 100 individuals and/or interest groups had commented on the Management Plan.
 - The High Weald OSG members had either provided comments on and secured changes to the text or confirmed they approved the draft text.
 - West Sussex County Council have yet to provide comments on the draft AONB Management Plan
7. The Chairman of the Officers Steering Group (OSG) informed the Members that at the OSG meeting earlier in the day, minor changes to a small number of the draft AONB Management Plan targets had been reviewed. He reported that the OSG meeting had been both positive and constructive and he and the OSG recognised that the AONB Management Plan is an aspiration rather than being wholly prescriptive.
 8. Jason Lavender wanted it brought to the Management Board's attention the very considerable work and effort Sally Marsh has dedicated to the current review of the draft AONB. He also took the opportunity to stress the positive support the AONB Unit had received from David Marlow and the other members of the OSG.
 9. The AONB Director informed the Members that the next steps for the Management Plan implementation was for the JAC Chair to write to the appropriate contact at the local authorities with a specific date for completion, at the end of February is preferable.

Action: Cllr Jill Davison to proof read the final draft version of AONB Management Plan.

The Value of AONB Partnerships

10. The AONB Director brought to the Members' attention the recent report 'The Value of AONB Partnerships', which is an independent assessment on the role and work of AONB partnerships. The report has been commissioned by the AONB partnerships (England, Wales, and Northern Ireland) to contribute impartial evidence to the discussions taking place with national and local government representatives over funding and the operation of AONB partnerships.
11. The report finds, among many other things, that dedicated AONB Units are seen as an effective means of achieving the purposes of AONB designation, that they provide long-term credibility and expertise, they can react quickly to different circumstances and opportunities, and that AONB units are well placed to make the most of available funds and raise further funds for the benefit of the area.
12. The AONB Director informed the Members of a letter received from Tom Surrey, the Deputy Director, Landscape and Outdoor Recreation at Defra thanking the AONB Unit and the JAC for the continued commitment to implementing the AONB purpose in challenging times and for the resilient and positive approach shown in the face of a testing financial settlement and competing demands on time and resource. In particular, Mr Surrey stressed he values the way the approach shown to working in partnership and the ability to attract and secure external funds to support the work of the partnership.
13. The AONB Director reported that following the recent UK cabinet reshuffle, Richard Benyon, had stepped down from his Ministerial position at Defra and also, as a consequence, from his responsibility for AONBs and National Parks. Mr Benyon's replacement for AONBs and National Parks is yet to be announced.
14. Cllr Sylvia Tidy suggested the JAC write and send a letter to the new Minister to congratulate him on his appointment and include a copy of the AONB Management Plan.

Budget and business planning

15. The AONB Director presented the case for the recruitment of a part time AONB Communication and Marketing Officer on a fixed-term contract until the end of March 2015 to fulfil the needs of the AONB work programme. The Management Board were reminded that the core Unit staff posts of Interpretation Officer (full time) and Finance Administrator (part time) have been vacant since 2008 and the Research Officer (full time) has been vacant since 2012. This post will be responsible for the public enjoyment and understanding remit of the AONB Management Plan and the Management Plan. The Management Plan approved the post

16. Given the reduction in the Defra contribution to the AONB partnership since 2010 and the subsequent cuts to address the resulting budget deficit the AONB Director mentioned that the remaining staff will have to continue to accommodate the essential work of vacant posts within their own work programmes. The on-going uncertainty with regard to future funding after 2015 means that it is hard to predict what the future holds but both AONB Co-Directors will be reviewing the Unit's business strategy in the spring of 2014 and make decisions on the future medium- to long-term direction and what resources (staff and finances) the AONB Unit can sustain

Officer Steering Group (OSG) Update

17. David Marlow, Chair of OSG, reported back on the OSG Meeting, held on the morning of 8 October 2013. He announced that he has been re-elected as Chair and Vice Chair position would be held by David Scully, Tunbridge Wells BC.
18. The Chairman of the OSG reported that the OSG had spent a constructive meeting finalizing the comments on the AONB draft Management Plan. The management Board were also informed of the implications for the AONB due to the current requirements to meet all the housing allocations for the area.

AONB projects and staffing

19. The AONB Director reported on the following:
- The research reports 'High Weald AONB Biodiversity Statement' 'Eco-camping in the High Weald AONB' and 'Fracking: How it works, its application and potential in the UK, and its environmental and public health impacts' will be available soon to download from www.highweald.org;
 - The current consultation on the Biodiversity Offsetting Green paper (Defra), which the Secretary of State presented to the recent National Park Conference;
 - The consultation on the proposed greater flexibilities to the change of use (DCLG);
 - The Common Agricultural Policy reform due to begin in late October;
 - The New Environmental Land management Scheme (NELMS) - consultation on this is expected in November;
 - The progress on 'Re-stocking the High Weald' project
 - High Weald Heroes had again failed to get HLF support but a smaller scale project with a part-time education officer using the funds already secured will begin soon;
 - The AONB Unit had been approached by both the Kent Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency to work on a public consultation exercise relating to the Rivers Rother, Brede and Tillingham.
 - Wealden District Council had approached the AONB Unit for help with and guidance on the proposed Wealden Walking Festival.

Action: Sally Marsh to report to the Management Board following the national consultations.

National and regional issues

20. The NAAONB AGM is to be held on 14th November 2013 and representation from a Board Member is required.

Any Other Business

21. Nothing was raised.

Date for the next Management Board meeting

22. 5th March 2014. Time and location to be confirmed.



High Weald Officer Steering Group

Notes of a meeting of the High Weald Officer Steering Group held on Wednesday 8 October 2013 at the High Weald Unit, Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell

PRESENT:

David Marlow, Rother District Council (Chair)
Marina Briggins Shaw, Wealden District Council
Kirsti Johnson, Sevenoaks Borough Council
David Greenwood, Surrey County Council
Sally Marsh, Co-Director High Weald Unit
Jason Lavender, Co-Director High Weald Unit
David Scully, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Andrew Shaw, High Weald AONB Unit
Virginia Pullan, East Sussex County Council
Tim Cookson, Hastings Borough Council
Ruth Childs, Kent County Council
Jennifer Hollingum, Mid-Sussex CC

Action

1. MINUTES

- 1.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 25 February 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

2. APOLOGIES

- 2.1 Apologies for absence were received from: Paul Newdick, Tandridge DC; Jackie Lewis, WSCC; Julia Conneybeer, NE; Geoff Mee, ESCC; Nicola Davies, NE.

- 2.2 Marina Briggins Shaw informed the group that she would be representing Wealden DC at future meetings.
David Marlow introduced Diana Russell, Rother DC who was present due to her work with the Management Plan & PD rights in Rother DC.

3. NOMINATION OF OSG CHAIRPERSON AND VICE CHAIR

- 3.1 David Marlow was re-elected as Chair
David Scully was nominated and elected as Vice Chair

4. MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW - APPROVE REVISED TEXT

- 4.1 Sally Marsh informed the group that not all Local Authorities had responded to the Management Plan review including West Sussex

CC and Horsham DC. Tandridge DC and Surrey CC had informed the Unit that they had made comments previously and would be led by the group's decisions.

- 4.2 The group discussed the amendments to the Management Plan text. The group raised issues and agreed or amended specific text as follows:

Text of the para. 2.1 (p16): The text was revised to reflect that evidence underpinning the Plan conforms to the key principle of Landscape Character Assessment.

Item 2.5: David Marlow welcomed the reference to the Low Weald.

Item changes to p20: Diane Russell raised an issue with using the term 'criteria based'. The group discussed that this wording in this context may be misleading.

Action: Highlight 'criteria base' reference back to paragraph of NPPF. UNIT

David Marlow raised issues concerning how some of the targets had been drafted. Many targets were considered to be too aspirational and ambitious. Following discussion, it was agreed that the Unit would look at the introductory text to check if the aspirational nature of the targets was clear.

Target S3 a) was considered to be too specific and impacted on key partner English Heritage.

Ruth Childs highlighted to the group that this target may create an environment where English Heritage may give greater consideration to listing critical buildings.

The suggestion of a pre-paragraph was discussed and the group agreed it was preferred to change the text of Target S3 a).

Action: To change wording in Target S3a to 'request prioritisation of listed buildings'. UNIT

Target S3c adoption of design guidance: The group discussed the use of the word 'adoption'. The need for and production of design guidance in principle was supported, and it was agreed to change the wording as follows: UNIT

Action: To change words to 'Improve design quality supported by production of High Weald specific design guidance'.

Target G3b new developments meeting carbon neutral standards: UNIT

- The group discussed the use of the word ‘meeting’ in this context.
Action: It was agreed to replace the word ‘meeting’ with site specific design briefs ‘seeking’ zero carbon ...
- The group discussed whether the lack of affordable housing was the only key factor to the placement of woodland coppice workers.
 Sally Marsh responded, with reference to the woodland coppice workers questionnaire, which clearly indicated this was the key factor. UNIT
- Action: To change words to ‘from a combination of socio-economic factors including the lack of affordable housing and** UNIT
- Targets for 2019 K. (p.38): The group discussed the reference to a 30m buffer zone was confusing and wording should be modified to be compatible with Natural England Standing advice.
Action: To change text to..... of minimum of 15 metres also having regard for the individual context....
- 4.3 Virginia Pullen raised a concern with regard to ESCC having the resources to carry out actions internally, on R2 Objective: to enhance the ecological function of routeways. David Marlow and David Scully indicated that this could be achieved through a community or parish project.
- 4.4 Diane Russell tabled a question regarding Targets FH1 (p.41), asking about the nature of “a new initiative” referred to. It was highlighted that this was in response to NE and there was a need to recognise agriculture policy changes.
- 4.5 Sally Marsh requested that the Local Authorities need to inform the Unit of their internal processes for the adoption of the Management Plan and who the key point of contact should be to receive the final Plan.
- Action: Email to be sent to Officers requesting information on the specific Local Authority adoption plan and the key points of contact within the Local Authority to receive the final copy.** SM
- 5. Budget**
- 5.1 It was reported that the budget remained stable for 2013/2014. It was highlighted that due to conflicting information on future budgets for 2015/2016, and Defra’s potential requirement to a further saving

of 30%, made planning for 2015/2016 difficult.

6. THE VALUE OF AONBS PARTNERSHIPS

- 6.1 Jason Lavender informed the group of the value of AONB Partnerships report, which is an independent assessment, prepared for the AONB Partnerships, by LUC, in July 2013

Action: a copy of the report was requested to be sent electronically to all members.

SN

7. AONB PLANNING ISSUES

- 7.1 David Marlow led the discussion surrounding the increased pressure on meeting the full housing needs through the planning changes and interpretation of NPPF. It was highlighted that this was a broader planning issue across High Weald and it would be more efficient to collectively work on policy guidance, in line with the Duty to Cooperate.

- 7.2 Andrew Shaw took the group through the current issues and reforms to the Planning system and highlighted that although NPPF paragraphs 115/116 were being applied more consistently, more appeals have still been lost, on basis of housing demand and lack of a five year supply issues. The issue had been discussed at the Directors meeting for SE&EPL in September, and the NAAONB aim to lobby for a more equitable and clearer justified description of the balance to be struck between this need over harm balance, and its interpretation in planning policy and implementation by the planning inspectorate.

- 7.3 David Marlow informed the group that pressure on housing and numbers allocated across all villages (40/50 in smaller villages) may collectively have an impact on AONB.

It was reported that ESCC Strategic Planning Members were also concerned about the cumulative pressure on the AONB.

Marina Briggingshaw informed the group that due to the timing of the adopting plans, that prematurity could not be given weight, and the consequence of this was that permissions were be given in advance of being allocated, such as in Heathfield. Tunbridge Wells had similarly experiences, such as at Hawkhurst.

Kirsti Johnson, Sevenoaks BC, informed the group that due to the large extent of Green Belt allocation they had different issues to

face, but felt they could achieve their targets.

Jennifer Hollingum, Mid-Sussex CC informed the group that the local housing study had incorporated High Weald policy. Targets should be met with the combination of village plans and cumulative allocation district plans.

The group recommended that these issues should be highlighted to the JAC, with greater emphasis to be put on collective pressure through to DCLG and local MPs.

Actions: A group recommendation is to be pulled together with initial thoughts from David Marlow and Andrew Shaw on overall review of policy progress, which will circulated to OSG Members. In support of this, a template will also be issued for Local Authorities to complete more accurate current and planned housing numbers. AS

Additional Action: A sub-group be set up to review relevant policies and SPDs across the AONB and consider the potential for further cooperation on the development of strategic policies and supporting guidance, including specific regard to housing development and design issues.

8. AONB ISSUES UPDATE:

8.1 The group was informed that the Unit have a part-time researcher, Charles Winchester who is producing research in areas that the Committee require a technical position on, such as the Fracking Report.

David Scully confirmed that Tunbridge Wells BC would like to have access to this information when it was available.

Ruth Childs offered to share with the group best practise paper on solar farms and impact on landscapes.

Action: Unit will look at best method to deliver this information to group.

Unit

8.2 The following research reports were raised:
The Gatwick Report was discussed. The group was informed that currently Cllr Michael Sidney sits on GATCOMM.

8.3 A biodiversity statement for the High Weald has been prepared.

8.4 A Unit response to the DCLG consultation “greater flexibility to changes of use” and its impact on settlement issues and farm buildings is being prepared. The deadline required is 15 October 2013.

The group discussed the value of farmsteads as a heritage asset and the issue of farmstead buildings not being listed. The impact of this may lead to the unnecessary loss of agriculture buildings and subsequently more planning applications for new builds when demand is required again.

Unit

Action: Unit response is appended

8.5 The group were informed of the new CAP reform. The current scheme will be replaced. The deadline for consultation is October 2013.

9. PROJECT UPDATES AND OFFICER FEEDBACK/PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Jason Lavender verbally updated members on the Unit projects as follows:

9.1 It was reported that the ‘Restocking in High Weald’ was moving to the next phase. Both Kent CC and East Sussex CC have offered monetary support. Jason Lavender has presented the report to the Prince’s Trust. A return visit has been requested to inform other operation managers of this report.

Action: The report will be made available to the Officers.

Unit

9.2 It was reported that the Battle & Brede Landscape Partnership Scheme outcome for Phase 1 development funding will be received on 23 October. The Unit have the funding to provide a smaller scale project covering this area if the bid is unsuccessful.

9.3 It was reported that the High Weald Heroes programme, which has been covered for the past year by Samantha Nicholas, is to continue with a post, for 2 days a week, from January 2014.

9.4 It was reported that the Unit was involved with the Environment Agency River catchment partnership lead by Kent Wildlife Trust.

This project was to initiate a bottom up management plan approach for the Rother river area.

- 9.5 It was reported that a High Weald walking festival was to take place in September 2014 for two weeks. The Unit are part of the working committee and will be involved with conducting some of the walks. David Scully informed the group that Tunbridge Wells BC was also holding a 70 km night walk.
- 9.6 It was reported that there would be an appointment of an Ancient Woodland Restoration Officer to be located at the Unit's office at Woodland Enterprise Centre.
- 9.7 It was reported that Our Land sustainable tourism website, which is managed by Responsible Travel (RT), was expanding as a National brand. To establish the brand RT is seeking funding with the support of the AONBs.

10. ITEMS FOR JAC

- 10.1
- Management Plan
 - Planning paper – consider current reforms to the planning system

11. OTHER UPDATES/AOB

- 11.1 David Marlow suggested that a future item on tourism planning and development would be very useful.

12. OTHER UPDATES/AONB NEXT MEETING DATE

- 12.1 The group was informed that there were 4 vacancies on National AONB Management Board.
- 12.2 It was noted that a potential date of Tuesday 25 February was put forward for the next meeting but this will be confirmed through a doodle poll. SN



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

Consultation questions - response form

We are seeking your views to the following questions on the proposals to support sustainable development and growth through encouraging the reuse of empty and redundant existing buildings where the original use was no longer required or appropriate.

How to respond:

The closing date for responses is 15 October 2013

A response form is available on the DCLG website, and can also be submitted via Survey Monkey at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NHXVK66>

Responses should be sent preferably by email:

Email responses to: Changeofuse.planning@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Written responses can also be sent to:

Saima Williams
Consultation Team (Greater flexibilities to change use)
Planning Development Management Division
Department for Communities and Local Government
1/J3, Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

About you

i) Your details:

Name:	Andrew Shaw
Position:	AONB Policy and Planning Officer
Name of organisation (if applicable):	High Weald AONB Unit
Address:	Woodland Enterprise Centre, Hastings Road, Flimwell, E SX, TN5 7PR
Email:	a.shaw@highweald.org
Telephone number:	01580 879955

ii) Are the views expressed on this consultation an official response from the organisation you represent or your own personal views?

Organisational response

Personal views

iii) Please tick the box which best describes you or your organisation:

District Council

Metropolitan district council

London borough council

Unitary authority

County council/county borough council

Parish /community council

Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB)

Planner

Professional trade association

- Land owner
- Private developer/house builder
- Developer association
- Residents association
- Voluntary sector/charity
- Other

(please comment):	The High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee is a partnership of 15 local authorities with statutory responsibility for AONBs, as well as a number of bodies with an interest in the future of this nationally designated landscape, who advise on the care and management of the High Weald AONB
-------------------	--

iv) What is your main area of expertise or interest in this work (please tick one box)?

- Chief Executive
- Planner
- Developer
- Surveyor
- Member of professional or trade association
- Councillor
- Planning policy/implementation
- Environmental protection
- Other

(please comment):	
-------------------	--

Would you be happy for us to contact you again in relation to this questionnaire?

Yes No

ii) Questions

Please refer to the relevant parts of the consultation document for narrative relating to each question.

Question 1: Do you agree there should be permitted development rights, as proposed, for shops (A1) and financial and professional services (A2) to change use to a dwelling house (C3) and to carry out building work connected with the change of use?

How do you think the prior approval requirement should be worded, in order to ensure that it is tightly defined and delivers maximum benefits?

Yes No

Comments

No comments

Question 2: Do you agree there should be permitted development rights for retail units (A1) to change use to banks and building societies?

Yes No

Comments

No comments

Question 3: Do you agree there should be permitted development rights, as proposed, for existing buildings used for agricultural purposes to change use to a dwelling house (C3) and to carry out building work connected with the change of use?

Yes No

Comments

General comments:

- The dispersed historic settlements of farmsteads and hamlets are fundamental to the character of the High Weald AONB. Protecting this distinctive character is a key objective of the statutory AONB Management Plan. Public bodies have a 'duty of regard' under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to properly consider how their actions impact on the purpose of AONBs.
- It is our view that the Consultation as currently drafted would result in significant erosion of the character of this nationally designated landscape.
- There appears to be no clear rural policy framework to justify the need for these proposals or evidence base to underpin them. Opportunities already exist under the current planning system to accommodate re-development of farmsteads. Progress has been made in many areas, including protected landscapes, to achieve re-development of farm buildings that serve local socio-economic needs and conserve the character of these beautiful landscapes. Excellent guidance has been produced by English Heritage in partnership with local authorities, and supported by systematic and extensive evidence. The need to remove the requirement for planning permission has not been proven.
- Comments on the wider impacts and suggestions for mitigating the impact should this proposal go ahead are detailed below.

There is considerable concern regarding the adverse impacts upon this nationally designated landscape that will result from the implementation of the new PD right. Of critical concern is the in-effectiveness of controls to ensure the development is acceptable, i.e. the prior approval regime.

While the broad aspirations outlined in para 34 might be supported (to avoid high-impact development, provide local consideration, avoid over development) these would require a much clearer definition of what "an acceptable change of use" would be.

The need to include the physical alterations (para 35) necessary for conversion is questioned; why is this included when it was not included within the new Class M "flexible use" PD right under SI 1101 (May 2013)? There is no justification for including the physical works in this permitted development right, separately or differently to the rights under Class M (where planning permission would be required for the physical works resulting from those changes of use.) Residential conversions are much more complex physical projects than conversion to a business use, so this additional freedom

is miss-applied. Changes to a dwelling house will require extensive and detailed changes that go beyond the “limited physical development” outlined in para 35. The prior approval regime is unlikely to be able to manage the level of detail and design input that would be required to successfully deliver this aspect of the process, particularly in highly sensitive areas such as the AONB.

Similarly the further provision under bullet 3 of para 36, to allow demolition and rebuild, is entirely unnecessary and places a high level risk on the stock of, predominantly historic, farm buildings, as well as a risk to the overall stock of available agricultural working space.

The High Weald AONB has over 3000 historic farmsteads, many of which contain highly significant pre 17th century timber framed buildings. The High Weald is one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe and historic farmsteads play a major role in this. Under listing of these historic assets is a major concern and reflected in the AONB Management Plan targets.

Conversions can be controlled and managed to retain their character – both the essential features of the building and its place within the overall group. However the demolition of (potentially historic) farm buildings will result in the total loss of these heritage assets and their replacement with a contemporary structure, with very little control over its appearance or design quality. The effect on the character of historic farmsteads and the natural beauty of the High Weald will be significant and irreversible.

The consultation appears to fail to recognise that the majority of farmsteads, and agricultural buildings within them, are comprised of a range of buildings of all ages and build style, and significantly include a very high level of historic farm buildings, that (while mostly not listed, but in the High Weald included within the County HER) have a very high historic and cultural significance and sensitivity. The stock of heritage assets that may be affected by the new PD right is very high, and the consultation takes no account of the threat or risk to these heritage assets.

Agriculture and the management of woodland has produced a landscape of international importance and these industries remain the primary tools for maintaining the beauty of the High Weald landscape. Agricultural and forestry infrastructure (i.e. barns, workshops and yard space) are essential. Measures to prevent (and reverse) the current decline and permanent loss of this infrastructure are set out in the AONB Management Plan. In a study of forestry workers in the High Weald over 3 years between 2009 and 2012 over 80% consistently identified the need for affordable yard space as critical to their business. Implementation of the Government’s proposals as currently drafted would have a significant detrimental impact on the provision of yards and affordable workspace for these industries.

The High Weald is a lowland pastoral and wooded landscape. It is a working landscape, which must be underpinned by the economic vitality of agriculture and forestry. However, it is surrounded by intense economic pressure and the ‘London effect’ on land values and ownership is an important feature, and where property is bought for lifestyle, the agricultural and woodland infrastructure and resource may

often, though not always, be lost.

Including within the PD right, the physical changes necessary creates the potential and likely risk of unrestricted or badly controlled conversions and redevelopment that is unconstrained by design, landscape character and rural quality. Many or most local authorities do not have in place the resources, guidance or expertise to 'vet' or control the delivery of the quality and level of design necessary to ensure that these changes do not result in inappropriate and badly designed development that will have a significant impact on the quality and character of these locations in a nationally designated landscape. English Heritage has produced its preliminary Farmstead Toolkit and assessment framework (see http://www.farmsteadstoolkit.co.uk/tk_intro.html) which provides the level of design and assessment input that would be required to begin to achieve the level of design that would be required. This framework could assist in providing the criteria to meet the test in para 34 of defining what "an acceptable change of use" would be.

There is concern regarding the definition of an agricultural unit, especially given the very fragmented nature of holdings and multiple ownership within them. This is particularly prevalent in the High Weald AONB where there is a high incidence of hobby farmers and small units, often in more than single ownership leaving the potential for multiple exercising of pd rights on separate ownership within a single group of buildings. While the definition is accepted as it stands, the consultation does not appear to consider the complexity and level of variations in ownership and use that already exist within sometimes complex groups of building and land.

The proposal represents a range of risks and threats to rural landscape character and specifically to the natural beauty of the AONB; it provides for the change of use of *any* agricultural building including those of historic cultural and heritage value, which are in many areas the majority of available farm buildings (as well as those most suitable and desirable for conversion) creating a threat of the loss of and poor conversion and adaptation of these highly sensitive assets. The application of the proposed rights to poorly designed, poorly sited and utilitarian buildings is of equal concern; accentuating some of the impacts that these may already have within a nationally designated landscape. It does not allow for the level of change and design required to sensitively and appropriately convert this historic stock of buildings.

Additional extensive and 'unplanned' development within the rural area may represent a considerable threat to the quality of the rural environment and cumulatively have a significant impact on landscape character and natural beauty. The allowance within the consent for physical changes to the building stock (to facilitate the change of use) is not considered appropriate as a part of the permitted development regime, and is a departure from the established approach, and the consideration of demolition as part of a permitted development right is considered completely inappropriate given the character and quality of the building stock that this may affect.

While the principle of additional development in rural areas is not wholly inappropriate (where it can be controlled and managed effectively in line with landscape character) it is the ability of the prior approval regime to deliver the level of control necessary to achieve the stated objectives of the change that is of principle concern. The consultation does not set out or detail what it means under para 34 - it

does not define what is acceptable (other than in general terms of the scale of potential changes) potentially allowing a wide range of uncontrolled and poorly designed developments in very sensitive locations. It does not recognise the complexity of the range of farm buildings, holding and ownership pattern, and the historic character of the majority of farmsteads. As it stands the proposal will represent an unacceptable impact on landscape character and a direct risk to natural beauty, and some form of exemption or exclusion for protected landscapes (eg article 1(5) land) should be included to manage these risks.

Overall we consider that the proposals will do little to increase the sustainable vitality of rural communities and sound management of AONB's. The risk is that (through a failure of implementation and the efficiency of the prior notification system) they could be exploited to provide large and inappropriately designed residential units within the countryside with associated sub-urbanization, and additional (permitted) development such as enclosures, outbuildings, brick piers, gated entrances and the domestic paraphernalia that inevitably will increase over time. Thus the change may have unintended and unforeseen impacts and effects that will not be compatible with, or help deliver, the wider range of objectives for rural areas when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework, taken as a whole.

Question 4: Do you agree that there should be permitted development rights, as proposed, to allow offices (B1), hotels (C1); residential institutions (C2); secure residential institutions (C2A) and assembly and leisure (D2) to change use to nurseries providing childcare, and to carry out building work connected with the change of use?

Yes No

Comments

No comments

Question 5: Do you agree there should be permitted development rights, as proposed, for buildings used for agricultural purposes to change use to new state funded schools and nurseries providing childcare and to carry out building work connected with the change of use?

Yes No

Comments

Please see comments re Question 3, which apply equally here

Question 6: Do you have any comments and further evidence on the benefits and impact of our proposals set out in the consultation?

Yes No

Comments

Thank you for your comments.

Consultation criteria

About this consultation

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent, and where relevant who else they have consulted in reaching their conclusions when they respond.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004). If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, there is a statutory code of practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department for Communities and Local Government will process your personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and in the majority of circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties. Individual responses will not be acknowledged unless specifically requested. Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this document and respond.

If you have any queries regarding the consultation process, please contact:
DCLG Consultation Co-ordinator
Zone 6/H10 Eland House
London SW1E 5DU
email: consultationcoordinator@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Committee:	High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Date:	8 November 2013
Title of Report:	Draft Revenue Budget 2014/15
By:	Deputy Treasurer to the Joint Advisory Committee
Purpose:	To consider the draft Revenue Budget 2014/15 and agree it as a basis for consultation with contributing bodies

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to approve:

1. the draft budget for 2014/15; and
2. the commencement of budget consultation with the local authorities and Defra

and to thank Plumpton College for agreeing to reduce rent for High Weald AONB Unit's use of the Woodland Enterprise Centre.

Supporting information

1. FINANCIAL APPRAISAL

- 1.1 A draft budget for 2014/2015 is attached. It is recommended that the budget shown in Appendix A and Appendix C be approved as a basis for consultation with contributing bodies/authorities.
- 1.2 Net savings of £2,200 have been identified and included in the Core budget and the Core budget has been balanced by allocating 83% of the reducing Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) contribution to the Core budget.
- 1.3 There are a number of key/significant financial issues and risks which are detailed in this report.
- 1.4 Following consultation with contributing bodies/authorities, a final budget for 2014/2015 will be presented to the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) for approval at its March 2014 meeting.

2. CONTEXT

- 2.1 The draft budget should be considered within the following context.

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

2.2 As the High Weald is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the JAC is required to carry out many statutory functions on behalf of local authorities under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. These statutory duties are set out in detail at the end of the report. At a time of cutbacks in public spending and local authorities having to make considerable savings, it is important that the core funding of the JAC remains sufficient to deliver those statutory services. This ensures that the JAC can continue to manage statutory services in a co-ordinated way.

2.3 It should be noted that local authority contributions in the region of £103,500 in 2014/2015 are likely to generate external funding of at least £365,100 through Defra and other organisations:

Non-Defra on Projects	£100,300
Defra Core	£214,700
Defra Projects	£44,000
Other Income	£6,200
Total External Funding	£365,100

The High Weald Unit's Work Plan 2014/2015

2.4 The budget has been developed to support the implementation of the Unit's rolling work plan.

High Weald JAC/Defra Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)

2.5 The budget has been developed within the context of the arrangements between Defra and the High Weald JAC.

Decreasing Defra Contributions

2.6 In December 2010 Defra advised AONB partnerships that there would be a total reduction in contributions of 21.5% based on the 2010/11 allocation. The total grant reduction is approximately £71,020. It was advised that the reduction would be made equally over the four years 2011/12 to 2014/15.

High Weald JAC Budget 2013/2014

2.7 The forecast outturn for 2013/14 shows a break-even position. The forecast reserves at 31st March 2014 are £89,200. A further £250,000 has been received from ESCC in advance, to be used for the Battle and Brede Landscape Partnership Scheme in future years.

3. FINANCIAL ISSUES

3.1 The draft budget is presented to the JAC for consideration. Appendix A shows the Core Budget and Appendix C shows the High Weald Heroes Project Budget, for consultation with local authorities and Defra. Appendix B shows an indicative Project Budget. Planned Net savings of £2,200 have been made which would result in a break-even budget for 2014/15. The budget takes account of the annual reduction in Defra's contribution.

3.2 The draft budget assumes a revision of the allocation of the Defra contribution between core and projects from 78% core and 22% projects in 2013/2014 to 83% core and 17% projects in 2014/2015. The draft budget assumes that local authorities will strive to maintain their contributions at the 2013/14 level.

Core Budget - Expenditure

Summary

3.3 Inflation has been applied at the recommendation of East Sussex County Council Finance staff at the rate of 1% for staff and 0% for all other costs. Net savings of £2,200 have been assumed in the budget, summarised as follows:

Staff Costs	£4,600
Partnership Running Costs	£1,300
Accommodation/Office Equipment	-£5,900
Additional Income from increased fees	-£2,200
Total Net Savings	£2,200

Staff Costs

3.3 The draft budget allows for a core team of 5.5 FTE staff: Director (1.2FTE); Business Manager (0.8FTE); Planning Officer (1.0FTE); Research Officer (0.6FTE); Communications Officer (0.6FTE); Team Support Officer (0.8FTE) and Administrator (0.5FTE). Staff costs are subject to inflation of 1% and incremental progression as a result of revised grades following the Single Status Review of three posts and newly appointed staff starting at the bottom of their salary scale. The current budget assumes contributions to the pension fund of 20.10% in 2014/2015.

Accommodation/Office Equipment

3.4 These costs cover rent, rates, office equipment, office maintenance and running costs. Savings of £5,900 have been made through a reduction in rent by Plumpton College of £5,000 and a reduction in IT network costs following an in kind upgrade of the network by East Sussex County Council.

Core Communications

3.5 This is a standstill budget that allows for the production of the annual review and minor public relations costs.

Partnership running costs and support services

3.6 These budget headings cover the costs associated with JAC meetings, events, training and audit fees, including the audit of the Small Bodies Annual Return. Increased costs of £1,300 arise from the increase in the NAAONB membership fee following incorporation of AONB regional posts (previously funded by Protected Landscapes project budgets) into the NAAONB core budget.

- 3.7 The budget headings assume that IT, personnel and financial support will continue to be provided by ESCC and the JAC's clerk service will continue to be provided in house by the High Weald JAC's Team Support Officer.

High Weald Heroes

- 3.8 In 2012/13 and 2013/14 specific requests were made for contributions towards the continuation of the AONB-wide project High Weald Heroes – the JAC's primary school outreach programme, to enable the project to continue. Contributions already committed of £10,950 demonstrated strong support for extension of the Project, and recruitment of a Project Officer (0.4FTE) is now underway. Ideally the project would operate over 3 years, therefore a final request, for contributions towards Year 3 of the project, are included as Appendix C.

Core Budget - Income

Summary

- 3.9 The draft budget shows contributions from local authorities at the same level as 2013/14. The budgeted contribution from Defra also remains at the same level as 2013/14.

Defra

- 3.10 The 2014/15 core contribution is assumed in this report to be £214,700 which is the same as 2013/14.

Local Authority Contributions

- 3.11 The draft budget assumes no inflationary increase to the core contributions of local authorities and assumes that they will strive to maintain contributions at the 2013/14 level.

Other Contributions

- 3.12 The draft budget assumes other contributions to the core budget of £6,200 mainly from self-funding projects contributing to accommodation costs.

Core Budget - Reserves

- 3.13 The JAC reserves at 31st March 2015 are estimated to be £89,200 the same as the forecast for 31st March 2014.

Self-Funding Projects

- 3.14 The Self-funding projects budget is attached at Appendix B. The projects include the Sustainable Development Fund, the Livings Woods Project, the Community Historic Settlement Project and projects in development, the Battle and Brede Landscape Partnership Scheme and High Weald Heroes Phase II. Projects in development, whose budgets have yet to be confirmed, have not been detailed in the Appendix B.

- 3.15 The Defra grant contribution allocated to Partnership Projects is £44,000 which is 29% less than the 2013/14 contribution of £61,800.

3.16 The Defra grant contribution allocated to the Sustainable Development Fund is £30,500 in 2014/15 which is 1% more than the 2013/14 contribution.

4. FINANCIAL ISSUES 2014/15 AND BEYOND

4.1 There have been annual reductions made in the Defra contribution to achieve the total CSR saving of 21.5% by March 2015. The following table shows the trajectory of Defra grant allocation and budget savings made since 2010/11.

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Defra grant allocated to:					
Core	249.8	232.5	232.1	214.7	214.7
Projects and SDF	79.9	79.4	62.1	61.7	44.0
Total	329.7	309.9	294.2	276.4	258.7
Core expenditure	354.1	346.6	325.4	323.6	324.4
Defra core contribution	249.8	232.5	232.1	214.7	214.7
LA core contribution	104.8	105.9	101.6	103.5	103.5
Other	15.4	8.2	(4.5)	5.4	6.2
(Surplus)/Deficit	(15.9)	(2.5)	(3.8)	0	0
Savings made	13	18.7	28.7	1.7	2.2
Reserves at 31 st March	82.9	85.4	89.2	89.2	89.2

4.2 The 2014/15 figures assume local authorities maintain their core contribution at the 2013/14 level. A balanced position has been achieved, but at the expense of reducing the amount of Defra grant allocated to Self Funding Projects.

4.3 In view of future CSR savings the JAC needs to consider further savings options, obtaining additional contributions, use of the reserves and allocating a greater proportion of the Defra single pot contribution towards core costs. Savings will be necessary in order to avoid depleting reserves, as this course of action is not sustainable in the long term.

4.4 The remaining savings options include: office relocation and reducing the hours and number of core staff.

4.5 There is a need to have a minimum level of reserves of 5% (£16,000) of expenditure to meet contingencies. Reserves may also be required to fund potential redundancy costs.

4.6 There may be scope for new self-financing projects to make a greater contribution towards core costs.

4.7 The Defra grant contribution allocated to Partnership Projects has reduced to enable the core element to be maintained at 2013/14 level.

5. RISKS

5.1 The key risks and financial implications that the JAC will wish to note are that the core budget for 2014/15 assumes:

- That local authorities can maintain their core contributions at the same level as 2013/14.
- That Defra can offer core contributions of 78.5% of 2010/11 levels.
- That employer's pension costs for 2014/15 will be 20.10%.
- That salary inflation for 2014/15 will be 1%.

5.2 Beyond 2014/15 there is no clarity around the level of Defra funding.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The JAC should note that the draft budget contains a number of budget assumptions, many of which could change given the current financial climate.
- 6.2 The Management Board will consider the remaining savings options, alternative contribution sources and use of the JAC reserves, in the context of a new Business Strategy for 2015 – 2018, so that a balanced budget can be achieved in 2015/16.
- 6.3 The draft budget for self-financing projects assumes operation of five significant sized projects in 2014/15.
- 6.4 Support for the draft budget will provide the JAC with the capacity to deliver most of its core functions in 2014/15.

Phil Packham

Acting Deputy Treasurer to the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Statutory purpose of the High Weald AONB

The designation of the High Weald as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) places several statutory duties on local authorities under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000:

- **Section 82** affirms the primary purpose of AONBs to conserve and enhance natural beauty
- **Section 84** confirms the powers of local authorities to take all such action expedient to achieve the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty
- **Section 85** places a duty on all public bodies and statutory undertakers to *have regard* to the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty. This duty is in addition to the power under section 84 (above)
- **Section 89** creates a statutory responsibility for local authorities to produce and review AONB management plans, where appropriate acting jointly. Management Plans formulate the local authorities policy for the management of the AONB and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it.

These duties are principally discharged through the High Weald AONB Unit, acting jointly on behalf of the local authorities, although they apply to all council functions and activities where they affect the use of land, in the AONB.

Committee: High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Date: 8th November 2013
Title of Report: High Weald AONB Management Plan Review 2014 - 2019
By: High Weald AONB Director

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the revised Plan text as the agreed AONB Management Plan for the period 2014 - 2019;
2. Authorise the Chairman to write to partner local authorities recommending the Plan for adoption according to the timetable set out in paragraph 3.2 and;
3. Approve the supporting documents Performance Monitoring Report, Condition Monitoring Report, Consultation Report, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and scoping study, and the Appropriate Assessment.

1.0 Background

1.1 A Management Plan for the High Weald AONB was first prepared in 1994 with the first statutory AONB Management Plan, prepared under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000), adopted in March 2004 by all 15 partner local authorities covering the area. The statutory regulations require that the plan be reviewed every five years. This document represents the 2nd review of the 2004 Management Plan which was intended as a 20 year strategy.

2.0 Progress to date

2.1 The scope of the current review was discussed by the JAC and a light touch approach agreed. At its meeting on 14th November 2012 the JAC approved the progress made towards preparing a consultation draft, in line with the timetable previously agreed. Natural England was formally notified of the decision to revise the Plan and the agreed timetable, as required, in January 2013.

2.2 Supporting documents were prepared alongside the revised Plan and made available to the Officer's Steering Group and Management Board for comment. These included:

- Condition Monitoring Report - an assessment of the current condition of the key components of AONB character to inform the review process;
- Performance Monitoring Report - an assessment of the progress made by partners towards delivering the AONB Plan 2014 to inform the review process;
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and associated scoping and baseline report - to fulfil obligations under European Directive (2001/42EC) commonly called the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive requiring plans to be assessed for any adverse impacts on the environment.
- Appropriate Assessment: required by regulation 61 of the Habitats Regulations 2012, and carried out to allow the competent authority to ascertain whether the Plan would adversely affect the integrity of EU protected sites.

- 2.3 The text of the Consultation Draft was approved by the JAC in March 2013 and the Draft was published for public consultation in June with a six week consultation period ending on 26th July 2013. The supporting documents outlined above were published with the Plan. Two hundred and two comments were received. These were considered by the AONB Director and the Officer's Steering Group. The agreed responses to the comments are included in the Consultation Report. Revisions to the text were agreed by the Officers' Steering Group on 8th October 2013 and by the Management Board later the same day.
- 2.4 The purpose of this paper is to advise members of the result of the public consultation and seek member agreement on the final text of the AONB Management Plan 2014 - 2019. The final text of the Plan is attached as a part formatted pdf with changes highlighted and revised text shown in comment boxes. A word document showing the changes is also made available.
- 2.5 Once approved and adopted by partner authorities formal notification to the secretary of state (DEFRA) of the adoption of the Plan is required to complete the process.

3.0 Conclusions and recommendations

- 3.1 The Management Plan has now been through the public consultation stage and the revised text has been checked and amended by the Officers' Steering Group and Management Board. The JAC are now asked to formally approve the final text and supporting documents.
- 3.2 Once the text has been approved the Plan will be reformatted for publication with high quality maps and images. The JAC are asked to authorise the Chairman to write formally to all partner authorities requesting that they adopt the AONB Management Plan in line with the requirement of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 by 31st March 2014. The AONB Director and Officer representatives on the OSG will assist the Chairman.
- 3.3 Supporting documents already made available electronically for the Members of the Joint Advisory Committee are:
- AONB Management Plan: Consultation Draft with approved changes
 - Report of OSG/MB agreed text changes
 - Performance Monitoring Report;
 - Condition Monitoring Report;
 - Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
 - Appropriate Assessment
 - Consultation Report

Contact: S Marsh, AONB Co-Director, s.marsh@highweald.org

APPENDIX: Management Plan review timetable:
 Agreed by the JAC March 2012

Management Plan review timetable			
Mar-12	[Green]	scoping review	
Apr-12			
May-12			
Jun-12	[Red X]	Review scoping approved by MB	
Jul-12	[Pink]	Issues & options, and plan monitoring	Performance monitoring report
Aug-12			
Sep-12			Condition monitoring report
Oct-12	[Red X]	progress report to JAC	
Nov-12	[Light Green]	plan redrafted	
Dec-12			
Jan-13			
Feb-13			SEA and AA reports
Mar-13	[Red X]	Consultation Draft approved	
Apr-13	[Orange]	plan consultation	
May-13			
Jun-13			
Jul-13	[Purple]	amendments & modifications	
Aug-13			
Sep-13			
Oct-13	[Red X]	final draft agreed	
Nov-13	[Pink]	LA Committee processes	
Dec-13			
Jan-14			
Feb-14			
Mar-14			
Apr-14	[Red]	Adoption	

Committee: High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Date: 8th November 2013

Title of Report: Current reforms and operation of the Planning system

Purpose of Report: To note current reforms to the planning system, as well as increasing housing pressures, and to consider their implications for the High Weald

RECOMMENDATIONS

The JAC is recommended to:

1. Note the issues arising for the conservation and enhancement of the High Weald AONB from both the recent and currently proposed changes to Permitted Development Rights and from the increasing pressure to accommodate significant new housing, and endorse the Directors' response to the recent consultation on the former;
 2. Authorise the Chairman to write to the Secretaries of State for Communities and Local Government and for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (also forwarded to other key interests) highlighting the JAC serious concerns over the above issues, drawing on the points highlighted at paragraph 3 & 13-15 of the report;
 3. Ask the OSG to advise further on:
 - i) the scale of planned and potential future housing development, relative to historic rates, and the likely implications for the main components of landscape character of the High Weald, and
 - ii) the potentials, and priorities, for further cooperation between member local planning authorities on the development of both strategic policies and supporting guidance to ensure effective support for the conservation and enhancement of the High Weald AONB.
-

Context

1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has been in force for 18 months, the last 6 of which the full provisions, including the presumption in favour of sustainable development, have applied universally. Additionally, a number of other reforms, principally to the Use Classes Order and Permitted Development (PD) rights, have been enacted or are under consultation.
2. This report highlights the main issues, as identified by the Officer Steering Group, arising from both the current application of the NPPF and these legislative changes for JAC consideration.

Permitted Development Rights

3. The main changes to PD Rights that raise concerns are the, now effective, right to change from office to residential use and, more significantly, the recent proposal to allow changes of use (including physical alterations and, potentially, redevelopment) of agricultural buildings to residential. The main concerns regarding the proposed new permitted development rights (as expressed in the officer response to the consultation) are that;
- The dispersed historic settlements of farmsteads and hamlets are fundamental to the character of the High Weald AONB. Protecting this distinctive character is a key objective of the statutory AONB Management Plan.
 - It is our view that the Consultation as currently drafted would result in significant erosion of the character of this nationally designated landscape.
 - There is concern that the prior notification process will be unable to effectively control developments resulting in poorly designed development occurring
 - That the inclusion of a right to physical changes threatens the stock and integrity of historic but unprotected buildings in historic farmsteads
 - Allowing demolition and rebuild is a significant threat to historic farm buildings and agricultural working space affecting the capacity for delivering land management.
 - There appears to be no clear rural policy framework to justify the need for these proposals or evidence base to underpin them. The need to remove the requirement for planning permission has not been proven.
 - Additional extensive and 'unplanned' development within the rural area may represent a considerable threat to the quality of the rural environment and cumulatively have a significant impact on landscape character and natural beauty

AONBs and housing in the NPPF

4. The key references to AONBs in the NPPF are:
- Paragraph 14, which highlights AONBs (and National Parks) as being the subject of restrictive policies in the Framework which would justify Local Plans not meeting the objectively assessed needs for development
 - Paragraph 115, which states that *'Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.'*
 - Paragraph 116, which sets out a policy presumption against major development in AONBs, stating that *'Planning permission should be refused for major developments in these designated areas except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest.'* It also provides a basis for considering such proposals (in the same terms as the previous PPS7), namely:
 - *the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;*
 - *the cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and*
 - *any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities,*

and the extent to which that could be moderated.

5. It is also relevant to note the relevant references to meeting housing needs at Paragraphs 47 and 179. The former states: *'To boost significantly the supply of housing, local planning authorities should ... use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in this Framework'*.
6. The latter, which relates to planning across local boundaries, states: *'Joint working should enable local planning authorities to work together to meet development requirements which cannot wholly be met within their own areas – for instance, because of a lack of physical capacity or because to do so would cause significant harm to the principles and policies of this Framework.'*

Consideration

7. It can be seen from the above that, as with many aspects of planning, there is a potential tension within the NPPF itself where development is not compatible with conserving landscape and scenic beauty of an AONB.
8. On the face of it, the 'great weight' reference, together with the strict tests for major development, represents an appropriately high regard to AONBs. In fact, the general experience is that clear focus of paragraphs 115 and 116 of the NPPF has been useful -they are being regularly quoted by the Planning Inspectorate.
9. However, the need to meet housing needs could undermine the objectives behind these paragraphs if there is no clear agreement between LPAs on alternative locations outside AONBs for major development.
10. Allied to this, it is also evident that the general scale of housing needs/demand on the LPAs covered to some degree by the AONB is increasing, based on the default figures provide by Government. As Figure 1 shows the projected annual need (column 2) is higher in all areas than the planned rate (column 3 as currently provided for in local plans) illustrating the potential future pressure for an increase in housing numbers. This is compounded by the historically low actual build rates (column 4) across the AONB which is creating a build up of un-met demand that will have to be 'rolled forward' These figures impact on current local plans and their 5 year land supply implying a need for existing plans to be rapidly updated.
11. In applying the NPPF in relation to housing in AONBs, it is clear, both locally and in other AONBs, that 'great weight' is actually being given to meeting wider housing needs and demands, even when there is an acknowledged adverse impact on the landscape and scenic beauty of an AONB.
12. The weight being given to meeting 'the objectively assessed needs for housing' is undoubtedly increased further when a LPA cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land. This situation (which arises by virtue of paragraph 49 of the NPPF) can open the door for any site in an AONB, irrespective of whether it is considered by the adopted Local Plan to be suitable for development, to be entertained. There are several important recent appeals that nearly all relate to a failure by councils to achieve a 5 years land supply.
13. Whilst LPAs in the High Weald have generally previously maintained a five year housing land supply, the new 'needs-based' approach to identifying housing land requirements (in concert with the depressed level of house building activity on approved sites) is impacting on

local LPAs housing land supply position. Figure 1 shows that several LPA's covered by the AONB now have land supply issues. Furthermore, there is clear evidence that developers are using this situation to promote sites that have previously been resisted on AONB impact grounds.

14. This situation means that in large parts of the High Weald, at least in the short term, any land or site is vulnerable to gaining an inappropriate planning permission for development, and outside the proper process for making site allocations.
15. Looking further ahead, the next round of plans will be expected to meet a higher level of need for housing (based on household projections). This may lead to a higher level of allocations within AONB, given the constraints and limits on existing urban areas, the AONB boundary and pressure and limitations across Housing Market Areas.
16. Of course, AONB designation is not a means to prevent development and should not be viewed as such. Rather, it provides a basis for ensuring that development decisions, both strategically and locally, are made with proper regard to the nationally important character of the Area. In the case of the High Weald, its very essence is a "small scale" landscape, with perceptible links to its medieval origins and characterised by a dispersed settlement pattern set amongst ancient woodland and pattern of small irregular fields and historic routeways. Within the AONB, development needs to do more and work harder, to meet the landscape character of the area and respect its natural beauty.
17. Serious concerns exist over the individual and cumulative impacts of a substantial uplift in development occurring within it, and the impact of it on landscape character.
18. At its core, there needs to be a greater regard for determining how development can be satisfactorily accommodated or absorbed in protected landscapes in coming to decisions about the scale of future development.
19. The NAAONB is aiming to lobby for a more equitable and clearer justified description of the balance to be struck between this need over harm balance, and are arguing that natural beauty is not being afforded the great weight indicated by the NPPF. It is the interpretation of the NPPF in reaching "the planning balance" that is the main problem, rather than the NPPF itself.
20. For the AONB, a key issue is the balance being made between the need to meet housing development (under paragraph 47) on the one hand and the 'great weight' test in paragraph 115 and the major development test in paragraph 116 on the other. The argument is that these should be equal in weight in planning terms, not least as the 'great weight' test is the highest test that can be applied to landscape conservation, so it carries significant influence.
21. While acknowledging the clear coverage of AONBs and other protected landscapes in the NPPF, the seeming lack of balancing of its core principles in practice is cause for concern now and for the next round of plan-making affecting the High Weald.

Conclusions

22. While the NAAONB is making its own representations, it is particularly important because of the intrinsic landscape characteristics of the High Weald, that the specific issues arising from both PD rights changes and planning practice in relation to housing growth are expressed to Government.

23. It is proposed that the Chairman write on behalf of the JAC to both the Secretaries of State for Communities and Local Government and for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to express the specific concerns in relation to the High Weald AONB. In addition, it is suggested that this letter be copied to local MPs, the National Association of AONBs and the national parks associations.
24. At the same time, it has been evident from officer discussions that there is a need to look further at development capacity and at making character-based assessments of housing potential in the AONB. This could inform LPA's strategic policies for development in the AONB as well as the development of guidance on the design and layout of development. Hence it is recommended that the Officer Steering Group be asked to pursue these further.

	2006 - 2026 New Households ¹	Annual ²	Planned Rate ³	Build Rate ⁴	5 Year land supply	LP Status
Horsham	13534	677	600	262	no	Revision
Mid Sussex	10995	550	530	407	no	Examination
Wealden	12218	611	450	425	yes	Adopted
Rother	10757	538	309	245	no	Examination
Sevenoaks	9092	455	165	230	yes	Adopted

Figure 1: current housing demand and supply

Tunbridge Wells	10548	527	300	400	yes	Adopted
Ashford	14488	724	1173	490	yes	Adopted
Tandridge, Hastings Tonbridge & Malling, Crawley	Figures not available at small area level					

The table is based on data from the www.howmanyhomes.org website which summaries the Household Projection figures and compares it to the current and projected housing rates and local plan allocations, showing rises in housing numbers over time

Committee: High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Date: 8th November 2013
Title of Report: High Weald AONB projects
By: AONB Director

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to note the report.

1.0 Background

1.1 As a strong partnership organization, the High Weald JAC is an effective advocate for the AONB and it is able to play a leading role identifying and promoting a range of approaches to support the responsible and sustainable management of one of England's finest landscapes. One of the approaches that has consistently proved successful is the initiation and management of a range of projects following bids to external organizations for funds and other support.

2.0 Application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a Landscape Partnership Scheme - Battle and Brede

2.1 Members will recall from the last JAC meeting that the AONB Unit had been unsuccessful with its 2012 application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the maximum grant of £2 million to support a large scale Landscape Partnership Schemes (LPS) for the Battle and Brede area. The application was subsequently revised, paying particular attention to those elements of the bid the HLF felt required further work, and re-submitted in May 2013.

2.2 The HLF announced on the 30th October that this second application had failed and although it was always understood that the competition for funds would be considerable - 24 bids requesting a total of £52 million from a £20 million fund - the AONB Unit is bitterly disappointed with the result given the significant time and effort dedicated to this application during the past two years.

2.3 Nine applications for LPS funds have been successful - four are within National Parks (the New Forest, the Yorkshire Dales, the North York Moors, and the Lake District), one in Scotland (Assynt), one in Northern Ireland (Lough Neagh), two in the north of England (Derwent Valley and Humberhead Levels), and one in part of an AONB (East Wight). The four applications from Surrey, Kent and Sussex were unsuccessful.

2.4 The AONB Unit is yet to receive an appraisal from the HLF on why the bid was not successful but it is extremely unlikely that the AONB Unit has the resources to sustain a third application to the HLF for the Battle and Brede area. However, and in view of the £290,000 the AONB Unit has secured (which was to be used as a contribution to the proposed Battle and Brede LPS), there is the potential for a smaller-scale, farm habitat enhancement project for the Brede Valley. A discussion

with some local interest groups and individuals including landowners and farmers on a range of options has already begun.

3.0 Restocking the Weald. Securing the future of livestock farming in the High Weald's working landscape

- 3.1** A working countryside supporting environmentally responsible land-based activities is vital for the continued management and evolution of our rural areas, for the sustainable provision of our essential needs - food, water, energy, employment, residential and business development - and for the long-term vibrancy of our rural economies and communities.
- 3.2** In common with much of the British countryside, the High Weald is facing a complex mix of issues - low farm incomes, a decline in the agricultural and woodland workforce, a lack of affordable housing for key land based workers, and high land and housing values. Also a scarcity of yard and workspace for rural businesses, residential conversion of farm buildings, limited markets for local land based products and services, an increase in non-productive land management, and a general inability to retain young workers and secure agricultural and forestry employment opportunities for them.
- 3.3** Identifying solutions to address these concerns is both complex and daunting but it is clear that, among other things, a buoyant, vibrant and environmentally responsible agricultural and woodland industry is essential if the High Weald is to support and maintain the necessary pool of agricultural and forestry skills, direct and indirect rural employment, the farming and woodland management infrastructure and provide the motivation, the funds and the means for the continued conservation and enhancement of the much-loved countryside.
- 3.4** In recognition of a concern for the future of livestock farming in the High Weald, the AONB Unit and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) collaborated on the short report *'Restocking the Weald. Securing the future of livestock farming in the High Weald's working landscape.'* Members will recall Dr Bill Vorley's presentation on this issue at the last meeting of the JAC. This report identifies a number of specific causes for the decline in livestock farming in the area notably the increase of non-farmers in farmland ownership, an ageing farming population, and the difficulty young and aspiring farmers face getting into the livestock sector and it proposes a range of measures that may address these issues.
- 3.5** The AONB Director has presented the report's initial findings many times since the spring (e.g. Heathfield Agricultural Show, the Rural Group of the South East Local Economic Partnership, the Director General of the NFU, and Clarence House) and it has gained considerable support from a number of organizations and individuals representing farming and the rural economy at both the local and national level. In April the report was submitted as the JAC's response to the Future of Farming Review Group's call for specific ideas on the recruitment of young and new entrants to the land-based sector. In July, this Group published its findings and made specific mention of the High Weald report and the scope for reviving the livestock sector.
- 3.6** A contract to commission the second phase of this research, a feasibility study, as the first step towards developing and establishing a coordinated partnership scheme for the High Weald AONB and the Low Weald will be awarded by mid-November. Recognizing the importance of livestock grazing for the area both economic departments of East Sussex County Council and Kent County Council have generously contributed funds for the feasibility study. Its aims are twofold:

- to examine thoroughly the report's proposals and establish the need and potential for a coordinated scheme to implement these proposals; and
- should the need and the potential be established, to make recommendations on the feasibility and content of setting up a coordinated partnership scheme for the area and provide an outline business case for its implementation.

4.0 Our Land – sustainable rural tourism for the south east's protected landscapes

4.1 Our Land began three years ago as a joint collaboration between nine protected landscapes in the south east of England and the private company responsibletravel.com to develop and promote sustainable rural tourism. Within a short period of time Our Land has become the leading place online for a visitor to find a locally distinctive rural holiday in the south east's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks. The Head of Research & Strategy at Visit Kent has recognized this and stated recently "Visit Kent were delighted to work with Our Land on joint promotions. We benefited from new marketing channels, increased profile for the area and a substantial increase of sign ups to our e-newsletters - most importantly Our Land helps us to provide a better and quality service to potential visitors."

4.2 To be featured and promoted by Our Land, each tourism business has been carefully selected for their efforts to conserve and promote the much-loved features of the protected landscape they are based in. This initiative has been very successful and it is now possible for any protected landscape within the UK to join.

4.3 In the High Weald AONB, ten further tourism businesses have been recruited to Our Land since April, a programme of five events have been developed, 14 blogs encouraging visitors to the High Weald have been published and one article written for the Ordnance Survey newsletter. The AONB Business Manager continues to sit on the steering group contributing to the business plan for Our Land for the next three years and to oversee the development and creation of a social enterprise to support the initiative in the longer term.

5.0 Living Woods

5.1 Members will be aware that Living Woods represents the third phase of the High Weald Ancient Woodland Restoration programme and is financially supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Forestry Commission and the Woodland Trust. The AONB Woodland Officer makes contact with woodland owners and by site visits and training events informs them on how the High Weald woods have evolved and been managed in the past and gives advice on how they, as current owners, can manage the woods into the future.

5.2 The AONB Woodland Officer has contacted approximately 140 woodland owners offering woodland management advice, which has so far been taken up by 40 owners. Each owner has been given a site-specific historic map and a newly developed High Weald-specific interactive PDF, which allows the owner to look at a range of historic maps from 1800 to the present day. This also provides information on the archaeological record for the vicinity and a set of maps identifying the location of the High Weald's landscape character features. Each map includes hyperlinks to a variety of useful website links for further information relevant to the particular map's theme. Each visit is supplemented by further support and contact.

5.3 In addition and as a result of this initial contact three woodland condition assessments have been undertaken on behalf of the woodland owners: two

plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS) and one neglected ancient gill woodland.

- 5.4 66 people attended two training days organized and run by the AONB Woodland Officer in conjunction with the South East Deer Initiative to inform landowners on the need for deer management within woodlands (one at Wakehurst Place and the other at Bedgebury Pinetum). Most people present were either woodland owners or deer stalkers.
- 5.5 17 woodland owners and forestry contractors came on the Ancient Woodland Restoration training day, which was run in partnership with Dave Bonsall of the Woodland Trust at Brede High Woods, a woodland currently undergoing careful and considered restoration.
- 5.6 Schools, community and special interest groups have also been supported by the AONB Woodland Officer in their efforts to understand or manage woodlands and the forestry sector. Woodland archaeology survey and training events were held at Ashplatts Community Woodland, East Grinstead and at Standen House and Gardens, in West Sussex and two woodland ecology training sessions at Combwell Woods in Kent. Pupils from three secondary schools in East Sussex were linked to three High Weald forestry businesses - the timber architects Inwood Design, High Weald Furniture manufacturers of high quality wooden furniture, and Alex Ball a forestry contractor and builder of National Hunt steeplechase fences and hurdles. The pupils were required to spend time with the businesses to learn about, and gain experience of, this sector and, with support from Same Sky a community arts charity, to present their findings at a careers event hosted by Heathfield School.
- 5.7 The AONB Woodland Officer has also been undertaking woodland advisory visits on behalf of the B&Q Grown in Britain Project. B&Q are keen to help bring unmanaged woodlands into sustainable management and, given the High Weald partnership's pioneering work within the woodland sector, has commissioned the AONB Unit to give advice to 20 woodland owners with a combined holding of 500 hectares (approximately 1,250 acres). Owners that had not to date received woodland management advice were contacted and need to be visited before the end of January 2014. To date, the work is progressing well towards this target and will be met by the completion date.
- 6.0 **Kent Food, Farming and Landscape Award - Taste of Kent Awards 2014**
- 6.1 For the second year the High Weald AONB partnership is jointly sponsoring with the Kent Downs AONB partnership the 'Kent Food, Farming and Landscape Award.' This award, supported by the National Farmers Union (Kent) and the Country Land and Business Association (Kent) forms part of the The Produced in Kent inspired Taste of Kent Awards to celebrate Kent's outstanding food and drink businesses.
- 6.2 Launched at the Kent Show earlier in the year, the 'Kent Food, Farming & Landscape Award' is free to enter and is open to all categories of farmers and food producers, from livestock and arable through to fruit farmers and juice producers. Both the Kent Downs and the High Weald partnerships are keen to stress the vital role farming can play conserving and enhancing the great landscapes of Kent.
- 7.0 **Research**
- 7.1 The AONB Research Officer has continued to undertake research on current and emerging rural and land use issues of relevance to the AONB Unit's remit, which can subsequently be used by both the AONB Unit staff and the wider AONB partnership.

7.2 Since the last meeting of the JAC the Research Officer has provided considerable support to the current review of the AONB Management Plan and has researched and written *High Weald AONB Biodiversity Statement* and *Fracking: How it works, its application and potential in the UK, and its environmental and public health impacts* both of which will soon be available to download from www.highweald.org.

8.0 High Weald Community Landscape Fund

8.1 This fund, previously known as the Sustainable Development Fund, provides grants to the local community for social, environmental and economic projects within the AONB. The AONB Unit receives applications for financial support for projects from individuals and local interest groups, which are assessed and awarded by an external Grants Panel. This annual grant runs from April to March each year and this year there is a fund of £15,000 available.

8.2 To date five projects have received funds to help them with their project work: student Rosie Earwaker received £300 towards her High Weald survey for the rare woodland hairy horned mason bee; Kent Wildlife Trust received £1500 towards fencing to allow livestock grazing but protect the adjacent ancient woodland at The Gill, Goudhurst; Turners Hill Primary School's bee project received £500 for bee hives; Great Dixter Charitable Trust received £1000 towards the restoration of ancient woodland; and Daneshill Routeway Group received £1000 for their 'Heritage Training' events for members of the local community.

9.0 Conclusions and Recommendation

9.1 Given the current financial recession, it is more apparent than ever that the competition for comparatively limited funds is currently very strong. However, the High Weald AONB JAC has a long and successful record raising significant funds from a variety of sources to support innovative demonstration and research projects within the AONB and it is hoped that this hard-won experience will ensure the AONB JAC continues to attract and secure support from a variety of public, private and charitable sources for its work.

Contact: JD Lavender, AONB Co-Director, j.lavender@highweald.org

Committee: High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Date: 8th November 2013
Title of Report: News from the National Association for AONBs
By: High Weald AONB Director

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to note the report.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) was formed in 1998 as an independent company to act on behalf of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England, Northern Ireland and Wales.
- 1.2 Its membership is largely composed of AONB partnerships and representatives from local authorities whose boundaries include AONBs and who are concerned to improve their management and funding arrangements. The NAAONB is administered by a Management Board and holds an Annual Conference, which provides an opportunity for those working in AONBs to join together and address issues of current concern.
- 1.3 The NAAONB also works through Joint Accords with the Association of National Park Authorities and other major organisations to establish agreements over issues which directly affect the work within AONBs.

2.0 Landscapes for Life Conferences 2013

- 2.1 The theme for the AONB Conference this year was water. The responsible management of water is one of the most important issues we face over the next decade and beyond and the Conference brought together over 120 delegates to discuss the role the UK's protected landscapes has in ensuring that our water systems are well managed.
- 2.2 Sponsored by Adnams of Southwold, Anglian Water, The Environment Agency, Essex and Suffolk Water, Green Traveller, St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Suffolk County Council, the three days of presentations, discussions and site visits looked at the links between water and natural beauty and set out the main issues needing consideration. National issues were outlined as was the way AONB teams are working in collaboration with local authorities, government bodies, farmers and landowners, utility providers, regulators and others to develop innovative solutions to manage our most precious resource.
- 2.3 The Conference was opened by the then Defra Minister, Richard Benyon MP who praised the work of the NAAONB and the AONB partnerships and he was delighted to sign a Sustainable Tourism Joint Accord between Defra, Visit England and the AONB partnerships.

- 2.4 Other speakers included academics and representatives from the water companies, the Environment Agency, Natural England, the National Farmers Union and other East Anglian partnerships and discussions focused on the development of a vision for the future where protected landscapes play an important and integral role in the stewardship of the UK's water resources.
- 2.5 Site visits to the iconic lowland landscape of Constable Country, the "fossilised" dune systems of the Norfolk and Suffolk Coasts, and the waterways that make up the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads highlighted the work that local people are undertaking to help manage our water systems.
- 2.6 Philip Hygate, NAAONB Chairman said, "We were delighted to bring delegates to the East of England and are extremely grateful to our generous sponsors. The lively debate and discussion will without doubt result in useful practical action throughout the UK's Protected Landscapes. I am sure that delegates left the conference with the knowledge that the AONB Family is working hard to protect our most valuable resource."
- 3.0 The Bowland Award**
- 3.1 The Bowland Award is presented annually by the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty for "the best project, best practice or outstanding contribution to the wellbeing of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty."
- 3.2 The Award provides an opportunity to highlight the range of activity taking place within AONBs across the country and this year nominations were invited for "the best project, best practice or outstanding contribution to the wellbeing of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty that promote landscape-scale conservation or celebration of the water environment."
- 3.3 Promoted via the media and member organisations, two nominations came from non NAAONB members showing an emerging and welcome recognition for this Award from outside the protected landscape profession. Eight nominations were received from a number of regions including the Solway Coast, the Wye Valley and the Suffolk Coast and a diverse range of projects were submitted.
- 3.4 At the Conference, Mike Fox and Steve Rodrick, respectively Chairman and Chief Officer of the Chilterns Conservation Board were delighted to accept the Bowland Award for the work done by the Chilterns Chalk Stream Project.
- 4.0 CLA Game Fair 2013**
- 4.1 The National Association for AONBs was pleased to secure a third invitation from the Game and Wildlife Conservancy Trust (GWCT) to share their stand at July's CLA Game Fair.
- 4.2 The small team from the AONB Family (Philip Hygate, Howard Davies, Jill Smith, Jason Lavender and Paul Jackson) who attended the three day event spoke with members of the public, ran a raffle for AONB and field sports related prizes and attended a number of meetings and previously arranged appointments. The cost of entry for the three days for three members of the team was generously donated by the Bellhurst Trust.
- 4.3 Some of the highlights of the weekend were:

- Teresa Dent, the CEO of GWCT welcomed the AONB partnerships as an important part of the GWCT stand in her opening address to Richard Benyon, Defra Minister.
- Jason Lavender's meetings with the Wild Trout Trust on the opportunities for working more closely together, informal meetings with the CLA and contributions to the GWCT Debate on whether "Reared Pheasant shoots can make a valuable contribution to nature conservation."
- Paul Jackson's contributions to The Country Life Debate "Nature - Should we interfere?"
- Discussion over how the AONB partnerships might be involved with GWCT landscape-scale research pilots with Nick Sotherton of GWCT.
- Philip Hygate and Howard Davies meeting with Rene Olivieri and Paul Wilkinson to discuss how to take the NAAONB/Wildlife Trusts Accord forward and the development and recording of results with related joint internal and external communication on this.
- Howard Davies and Jill Smith meeting with Poul Christensen and Dave Webster of Natural England to confirm the strength of the relationship between the NAAONB, Defra and Natural England.
- Howard Davies meeting with Joe Dimpleby, editor of Shooting Times, to discuss future articles relating to the AONB partnerships' work supporting field sports.
- Howard Davies meeting with Richard Benyon MP, Teresa Dent and Ian Coghill, (GWCT Chairman) who welcomed the plans for a Management Plan workshop at Loddington demonstration farm.
- Howard Davies meeting with Richard Ali, the CEO of the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) to take further previous conversations on the relationship between BASC's "Green Shoots" campaign and the AONB partnerships.
- A meeting with Dorothy Fairburn, Director of the CLA Northern Region who indicated that CLA recognise the popularity of the AONB partnerships and the NAAONB with the coalition government.

5.0 Training

- 5.1** A number of NAAONB workshops for the benefit of AONB partnership staff have been held since April on the role of AONB designation in the planning policy process, social forestry, and reviewing management plans. The latter training event led to the establishment of an area on the NAAONB electronic forum 'Basecamp' to ensure the work on the review of AONB Management Plans currently being undertaken and any associated documents were made available to all AONB Units and Conservation Boards in the country.

6.0 Consultation Responses

- 6.1** On the behalf of the AONB partnerships, the NAAONB has responded to a number of consultation requests during the summer - DCLG consultation on greater flexibilities for change of use, Defra's Triennial Review of the Marine Management Organization, the National Grid's Consultation on its Visual Impact Provision Policy, the National Assembly for Wales' Environment and Sustainability Committee Inquiry into Sustainable Land Management, and the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery. The responses can be read at www.aonb.org.uk
- 6.2** Along with National Parks England the NAAONB has provided advice and guidance to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's consultation on the appropriate locations for broadband cabinets and overhead lines to assist with the installation of superfast broadband networks. The final document can be read at www.gov.uk/government/consultations.

7.0 Conclusions and recommendation

7.1 Members are asked to note the report.

Contact: JD Lavender AONB Co-Director, j.lavender@highweald.org

Committee: High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Date: 8th November 2013
Title of Report: High Weald AONB Unit - Staff
By: High Weald AONB Director

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to note the report.

1.0 Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme Manager

1.1 Members will recall that since the conclusion last year of the successful Weald Forest Ridge Scheme, Simon Aguss, the Scheme Manager, remained at the AONB Unit on a fixed-term contract to assist the Unit on a number of projects including the development, writing and submission of applications for external funds e.g. the revised bid for a proposed Landscape Partnership Scheme for the Battle and Brede area of the High Weald.

1.2 This fixed-term post is due to conclude at the end of November and Simon will be made redundant.

2.0 AONB Communication and Marketing Officer - part-time fixed term post

2.1 Members will recall that the core Unit staff posts of Interpretation Officer (full time) and Finance Administrator (part time) have been vacant since 2008 and the Research Officer (full time) has been vacant since 2012 following Ruth Child's resignation from the post.

2.2 To fulfil the needs of the AONB work programme, the High Weald Management Board has approved the recruitment of a part time AONB Communication and Marketing Officer on a fixed-term contract until the end of March 2015. This post will, among other things, take a lead on the public enjoyment and understanding remit of the AONB Management Plan and will lead events, give presentations, develop and promote the website, work with others to develop and implement communication and interpretation projects, and generally promote the High Weald AONB to a variety of individuals and interest groups.

3.0 Education Officer - High Weald Heroes

3.1 Members will be aware that the well regarded High Weald Heroes (HWH) primary school education project began as a pilot in 2007 and following a bid for financial support to the Heritage Lottery Funds "Your Heritage Programme" in May 2009 the project was extended across the entire AONB.

3.2 HWH connects children with their local landscape enabling them and the wider school community to learn about, value, gain access to and care for the area in a variety of ways each tailored to the individual school or teachers' needs.

3.3 Applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund 'Your Heritage' for financial support for HWH to increase the post to full-time have been unsuccessful. However, the AONB Unit has secured a budget for a two-day post for two years using financial

contributions from local authority partners and Defra and will be recruiting for the post soon.

4.0 Research Officer – part-time fixed term post

4.1 Charles Winchester recruited on a five month contract in March has had his contract extended until the end of January 2014 and will continue to provide technical support for the AONB Management Plan review and undertake the AONB Unit’s research and data work programme.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendation

5.1 Members are asked to: note the report; and thank Simon Aguss for his dedication to and enthusiasm for the High Weald AONB, particularly for his impressive management of the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme.

Contact: JD Lavender AONB Co-Director, j.lavender@highweald.org

Committee: High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Date: 8th November 2013
Title of Report: AONBs and IUCN Category V Compliance
By: High Weald AONB Director

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to note the report.

1.0 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Category V Compliance

- 1.1** The High Weald AONB Unit was delighted to receive confirmation in June from the IUCN UK Committee that AONBs are considered to be of Category V status. This confirmation follows three years of work with the IUCN UK Committee by the NAAONB consisting of technical advice on the development of the IUCN's guidance on categorisation (known as the Putting Nature on the Map Project), open forum discussion and the drawing up of a Statement of Compliance, supported by evidence from all the UK AONB partnerships. This statement was accepted by the IUCN panel and places AONBs firmly on the global map when it comes to biodiversity conservation and enhancement.
- 1.2** The High Weald AONB Unit, in common with all AONB Units and Conservation Boards, provided evidence to show clearly that the designation meets the high standards demanded by the IUCN. The NAAONB compiled this evidence and presented it as an accompaniment to the Draft Statement of Compliance to the World Commission on Protected Areas UK Protected Areas Assessment Panel.
- 1.3** Chris Mahon, Chief Executive, of the IUCN National Committee UK informed the NAAONB that, "We considered that the evidence was persuasive and that each manager had demonstrated a full understanding of the IUCN definition of a protected area, fully supported the generic statement and had plans to strengthen the place of nature conservation in future."
- 1.4** He added, "We were agreed that all the AONB partnerships had demonstrated to our satisfaction that they should retain their status as IUCN Category V protected areas and will accordingly so recommend to United Nations Environment Programme's World Conservation Monitoring Centre."
- 1.5** Howard Davies, the CEO of the NAAONB said, "This is the culmination of three years' work by the NAAONB and we are indebted to Paul Tiplady from Craggatak for his *pro-bono* work on the Statement of Compliance. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty make a significant impact to conserving the UK's biodiversity and the reaffirmation of their Category V status is a great recognition that AONBs remain the UK's Landscapes for Life."

2.0 Conclusions and Recommendation

2.1 Members are asked to note the report.

Contact: JD Lavender AONB Co-Director, j.lavender@highweald.org

Committee: High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Date: 8th November 2013
Title of Report: The Value of AONB Partnerships
By: High Weald AONB Director

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to note the report.

1.0 The Value of AONB Partnerships - a report by Land Use Consultants

1.1 On behalf of the AONB partnerships the National Association for AONBs commissioned an independent assessment of AONB partnerships, which was published in July. This report *The Value of AONB Partnerships* was prepared by Land Use Consultants (LUC) during a period when the role and work of protected landscapes is coming under increasing scrutiny during the run-up to the UK Government's announcement of its Spending Round 2013 and the current programme of expenditure reductions across government departments and local authorities.

1.2 This report shows that:

- AONB partnerships are embedded within, and trusted by, local communities;
- The mix of locally accountable elected members with members of local interest groups and officers from national agencies provides an effective structure for deciding local priorities and co-ordinating shared programmes of action;
- AONB partnerships excel at using small sums of public money to draw extra money and resources into rural communities;
- AONB partnerships are highly successful at using the core funding they receive from central government and constituent Local Authorities to lever other income. The diversity of AONB partnerships' membership gives them the ability to turn small individual contributions, which would on their own achieve little, into significant shared endeavours. Without core funding the ability of the AONB partnership to lever in money and in-kind support will disappear;
- AONB partnerships are flexible, adaptable and respond to change;
- The work being undertaken by AONB partnerships is of growing relevance to national and local policy objectives. Concepts such as sustainable development, the ecosystems approach and the environment as an economic driver and determinant of health and wellbeing, all of which are core tenets of the AONB purpose, now have widespread acceptance in national and local policy. This has meant that the work of AONB partnerships is of mainstream interest to many partners in a way that would not have been the case ten years ago;

- AONB partnerships are helping facilitate new ways of working in the public sector;
 - AONB Partnerships and their staff are actively involved in a range of delivery projects, often taking responsibility for leading projects where there are gaps in the capacity of partners to do so. This is seen as a key strength of the AONB Partnership approach and is increasingly relevant to the way most Local Authorities are operating more as commissioning bodies;
 - AONB partnerships work together and recognise the benefits of acting together;
- 1.3** Richard Benyon MP, then Defra Minister was impressed with the report's findings and during his presentation at the AONB conference earlier in the summer highlighted the importance of working in partnership and the key role that AONB partnerships have as intermediaries, facilitating the right conditions and trust.
- 1.4** Howard Davies, the CEO of the NAAONB said "LUC's work has recognised the true value of AONB partnerships and has also highlighted concerns about their future funding. All AONB partnerships are keen to use their influence to support the current drive for economic recovery and growth. The high landscape quality of AONBs, articulated in terms of their natural beauty, is now recognised as a key economic driver and the greatest opportunities for AONB partnerships are likely to lie in those sectors that manage or derive their business from this natural beauty - such as food, drink, forestry and tourism."
- 1.5** Howard added "It is important that AONB partnerships are well equipped to continue their important work at a local community level and the NAAONB will continue to work with Defra and Natural Resources Wales to ensure this." A copy of the report is available from either www.highweald.org or www.aonb.org.uk.
- 2.0 Conclusions and Recommendation**
- 2.1** Members are asked to note the report.

Contact: JD Lavender AONB Co-Director, j.lavender@highweald.org

Agenda Item No. 17

Committee: High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Date: 8th November 2013
Title of Report: Risk Management
By: AONB Director

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the report and;
2. Request that the Management Board meet to review significant risks as required and develop options for their management.

1.0 Background

1.1 Members are aware that as part of the process of producing the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee's annual external accounts ten control objectives are assessed. One of the control objectives is:

- Significant risks to achieving High Weald objectives are recorded and assessed and the adequacy of arrangements reviewed.

1.2 The key risks to the Joint Advisory Committee are set out in Appendix A.

1.3 Given that the Joint Advisory Committee's work is reliant on partnership contributions and the need to successfully raise external funding, the cause of the most significant risks is financial.

1.4 Over the last 3 financial years, a reduction of 16.3% in the Defra contribution has required financial cuts to address the arising budget deficit.

1.5 These cuts have been achieved by planned cuts to the core budget involving: a significant reduction in the communications budget, leading to the loss of the High Weald Anvil; reductions in the staff budget made possible by not recruiting to the vacant Finance Officer and Interpretation Officer posts; ending of the contract with ESCC to provide the clerk service to the JAC; a reduction in the budget for IT development and reduction in the JAC's project/SDF budget.

1.6 The affect of these cuts have, in part, been mitigated through: the work of the JAC's project officers who have delivered communication activities as part of self-financing projects; the absorption of the essential work activities of vacant posts/roles by other staff, in particular the AONB Business Manager and Team Support Officer; and the recruitment of consultants where absolutely necessary to meet the deficit in skills or resources.

2.0 Key risks 2014/15 and beyond

2.1 Further reductions in financial contributions by the JAC partnership towards the JAC's core business will mean that the JAC will be unable to maintain the current level of work under the Business Strategy 2010/14 headings, which are:

- Preparing, monitoring and reviewing the AONB Management Plan
- Co-ordinating action and enabling delivery of the AONB Management Plan by individuals and communities
- Providing advice and guidance to partners on CroW, Section 85
- Adding value to our partners' wider landscape and environmental objectives within the AONB
- Enabling the JAC to be an effective champion for the High Weald.

2.2 As a consequence, the key risks to note are:

- AONB Unit staff will continue to undertake the JAC's clerk service (to date provided in turn by West Sussex and East Sussex County Councils) and this may result in a more informal service to the JAC.
- A reduced budget for the JAC's accommodation and running costs will result in the JAC being unable to maintain its computer systems to capitalise on developments in Information Technology. This may result in less efficient ways of working.
- Existing staff will have to continue to accommodate the essential work of vacant posts within their own work programmes. Reduced budgets in 2014/15 mean there is no capacity to bring in consultants to provide support if required.
- Self-financing projects employing project officers have now all ended which limits the opportunities for project activity to fill work gaps left by a reduced core budget.
- There is currently limited 'local' match funding making it difficult to secure external funding from grant-aiding bodies for new self-financing projects.

2.3 A risk assessment of reduced activity under each business strategy heading will be undertaken in the spring of 2014 to identify priorities and make further decisions on financial, staff and other resource allocation. Such an assessment will need to consider whether there is scope to mitigate the risks.

2.4 Funding uncertainty means that it is hard to forecast the number or scale of self-financing projects during and beyond 2014/15. This makes it harder to plan the allocation of core resources between core functions.

3.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1 Risk management systems in line with East Sussex County Council policy are in place.

- 3.2** Since 2010/11 the impact of reduced financial contributions to the JAC core work has been mitigated through the work of the JAC's self-financing projects and by increasing the work and remit of existing AONB Unit staff.
- 3.3** From 2014/15 the impact of reducing contributions to core work will be greater and further cuts in 2015/16 will require more radical changes to the JAC's operations.
- 3.4** During the spring of 2014, the JAC will need to prioritise core functions so that a direction for making further decisions about resource allocation from 2015/16 onwards can be set.

Contact: JD Lavender AONB Co-Director j.lavender@highweald.org