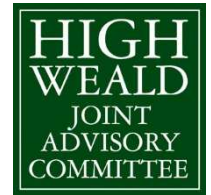


# High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee



## Agenda

**Wednesday 8 November at 10.30am**

**Ashburnham Place Battle East Sussex TN33 9NF**

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. Election of Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Management Board Members

To elect the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Management Board Members - list of nominees (page 44).
5. Minutes of the JAC meeting

To confirm the minutes of the last meeting of the JAC held on 29 March 2017 (page 3)
6. Minutes of the Management Board Meeting

To note the matters arising from the Management Board meeting held on October 4 2017 (page 10)  
Appendix: Design guidance timetable (page 11)
7. Minutes of the Officer Steering Group

To note the minutes of the Officer Steering Group meeting held on 27 September 2017 (page 15).
8. Draft Revenue Budget 2017/2018

To consider a report by the Treasurer (page 24), - Appendix B - Budget 2017/2018 and Indicative budget 2018/2019 and Appendix C - an indicative Project Budget.
9. Management Plan Review Update 2017-2019

To consider a report by the AONB Co-Director, supporting the proposed schedule of changes to the Management Plan (page 34), - Appendix on the Management Plan Review Schedule 2017-2019.
10. Risk Management and Staffing changes

To consider a report by the AONB Co-Director on risk management (page 36) and staffing changes (page 40) Appendix A - Risk Log and Appendix B - High Weald AONB Organisational chart.
11. Any other business

Next Joint Advisory Committee Meeting – tbd March 2017.

12. Presentation from Tom Warder of Action in rural Sussex about the Sussex Community Housing Hub.

Lunch followed by a walk and talk from Ashburnham Place Manager David Giles

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

Samantha Nicholas  
Clerk to the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee  
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# High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee



## Minutes of Meeting

Wednesday 29 March 2017 at 10.30am

Holy Cross Priory, Lewes Road, Cross-in-Hand, Heathfield, TN21 0DZ

### Members present:

Cllr B Kentfield	Rother District Council, Vice Chairman
Cllr M Sydney	Surrey County Council
Cllr Mrs L Lockwood	Tandridge District Council
Cllr Mrs J Soyke	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Cllr A Pickering	Ashford Borough Council
Mrs L Newland	Natural England
Mrs A Field	Forestry Commission

### Officers present:

Mr J Lavender	AONB Co-Director, High Weald AONB Unit
Mrs S Marsh	AONB Co-Director, High Weald AONB Unit
Ms C Tester	AONB Planning Advisor, High Weald AONB Unit
Mr A Fowler	Finance Manager, East Sussex County Council
Mr D Marlow	OSG Chairman, Rother District Council
Mr D Greenwood	Officer, Surrey County Council

### 1. **PRESENTATION:** The story of the **Historic Routeways within the Weald – Jeremy Lake**

- 1.1 Dr Jeremy Lake has been commissioned to research the routeways story in the context of their national significance, supporting the current update of the historic routeways dataset. Jeremy presented the significant events within the routeway timeline and highlighted the importance of the routeways to the development of settlements within the High Weald. The research paper will set the context and background supporting the decision making process for highway improvements, public rights of way diversions as well as new developments.
- 1.2 The research paper will be available in early Summer 2017. The key research terms will also be built into the Management Plan glossary as part of the review process.
- 1.3 Cllr Tidy asked whether Dr Lake had specific information on routeways in the Crowborough and High Hurstwood area. Dr Lake confirmed that he was researching pilot areas in the AONB and he could potentially include this area.
- 1.4 Cllr A Pickering enquired about the importance of 1840s as a cut-off date for the Weald routeways story. Dr Lake explained that around this time the railways were established and with the development of turnpikes the rural areas became more accessible to explore.

### 2. **APOLOGIES**

- 2.1 Apologies were received from the following Members and officers:

- Mrs Jill Davison, Cllr M Balfour, Cllr R Street, Cllr H Rogers, Cllr L Kitchen, Mr T Bamford, Mr R Edwards, Mrs V Pullan, Miss J Hollingum, Mr M Nouch, Mr D Scully, Mrs H French.
- 2.2 Cllr B Kentfield chaired the meeting in the absence of Mrs J Davison.
- 2.3 Cllr Michael Sydney announced that this meeting of the JAC would be his last as he will be retiring from his position as Surrey County Councillor for Lingfield District at the forthcoming local elections although he will continue to be actively involved in countryside matters with Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) for Tandridge and Surrey. Cllr Brian Kentfield, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Cllr Michael Sydney for his significant contribution to the High Weald AONB over the past 12 years.

3. **MEMBERS INTERESTS**

- 3.1 It was noted that there were no declarations of interest raised by the Members.

4. **URGENT MATTERS**

- 4.1 It was noted that no urgent matters were raised by the Members.

5. **MINUTES OF THE JAC MEETING – 16 November 2017**

- 5.1 RESOLVED to agree the minutes of the meeting of 16 November 2017 as a correct record.

6. **MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD – 1 March 2017**

- 6.1 RESOLVED to note the minutes of the Management Board held on 1 March 2017 as a correct record.

7. **MINUTES OF THE OFFICER STEERING GROUP – 22 September 2017**

- 7.1 The Committee considered a verbal report on the Officer Steering Group (OSG) by the OSG Chairman, David Marlow.
- 7.2 David informed the Members that the Steering Group had been well attended and local authority officers with design and conservation positions had participated in a discussion on developing AONB design guidance and principles.
- 7.3 David explained that the AONB design guidance and principles is a key piece of work that is essential for the future of ensuring best practise for housing developments within the AONB. He confirmed that there was a consensus from the officers that High Weald design guidance and principles should be progressed in collaboration with a design sub-group. The officers representing the 15 local authorities were keen to hold a design conference to develop understanding on urban and rural design options which could be run in conjunction with the design sub-group.
- 7.4 David was pleased to announce that the Environmental Colour Assessment had been supported by a modest contribution from the majority of the local authorities. This guidance will enhance the local authority's decision making processes when engaging with planning applications.

7.5 However, it was explained to the Members that local authority Development Managers are hard placed to use all the information provided due to the number of applications they are receiving. The local authorities therefore welcomed additional training from the AONB Unit on the AONB component datasets. David asked the Members present to encourage their teams in their own authorities to engage with this training as the interpretation of the data is paramount in the success of judging each application.

7.6 Cllr Tidy clarified that due to the pressure of housing development within the AONB there should be a balance between medieval landscape characteristics of settlements as well as the more modern issues such as parking. Jason Lavender responded that good master-planning is key and that the local authorities need to convince developers to move away from generic models and think of the local 'sense of place' when designing housing developments. Cllr Kentfield explained that early intervention in the pre-application process is essential to ensuring better development designs and that Rother District Council had been successful with this approach with a recent application.

7.7 RESOLVED to note:

The Minutes of the Officer Steering Group held on 22 September 2017 as a correct record.

## 8. **REVENUE BUDGET 2017/2018**

8.1 The Committee considered a report by Finance Manager, Andy Fowler, who presented the Revenue Budget for 2017/18.

8.2 Andy Fowler advised that the 2017/18 core budget is a balanced budget which provides the JAC with the capacity to deliver its core function.

8.3 It was highlighted in Appendix A – 2016/2017 budget, due to staff vacancies there had been a surplus of £6,100 which will go into reserves. There was also an increase in accommodation costs due to the increased rental costs following the office lease renewal.

8.4 In Appendix B - 2017/2018 the Staff costs has increased to accommodate incremental progression, contributions to the pension fund of 20.30% and estimated inflation of 1% for Single Status and LMG salaries.

8.6 £42,300 was allocated from the Defra 'single pot' to Projects and successful grant applications, and inclusion of Sussex Lund as a new programme, which has resulted in a significant increase in expenditure on self-funding projects.

8.7 RESOLVED to note the report and:

- i. approved the Revenue Budget for 2017/18.
- ii. thank Defra and partner authorities for maintaining their contributions.

## 9. **AONB Management Plan Evidence and Guidance Programme – Planning Approach 2017-2020**

9.1 The JAC considered a report by Claire Tester, Planning Advisor, on AONB Planning Advice.

- 9.2 Claire Tester explained that this report forms part of the business strategy for the AONB Unit and sets out the proposed approach to planning matters. The report reflects the changing context since the Localism Act in 2011 and brings it up to date with the publication of the Housing White Paper in February 2017 and the potential impact of Brexit.
- 9.3 Locally the AONB Unit has noted a significant increase in the number and the size of housing proposals and site allocations as the AONB comes under pressure to accommodate some of the South of England's housing need. The paper looks at ways the AONB Unit can approach planning matters to assist the local authorities to meet their statutory duty to conserve and enhance the High Weald and meet their objectives in the AONB Management Plan.
- 9.4 It is proposed to do this by:
- I. the production of Advice Notes and factsheets to address emerging issues and to provide support and training to officers and Members.
  - II. to ensure early input to Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans to ensure that AONB policies are met as well as being involved in pre-planning applications. Claire Tester asked Members to urge their officers to ensure involvement from the AONB Unit where possible.
  - III. to work with regional and national parties to influence Government Policy and practice within AONBs.
- 9.5 Cllr Pickering asked whether having a solid Local Plan would supersede the Neighbourhood Planning process. A discussion took place on the importance of Neighbourhood Plans in informing the local communities about the key characteristics of the High Weald AONB and that in the absence of a Local Plan, it can help to protect the community's 'sense of place' through design principles and protection of key areas that the community values. Claire Tester confirmed that the AONB Unit had received around 60 planning applications since May 2016.
- 9.6 Jason Lavender informed the Committee that a 600 house development with a hospice within the AONB boundary at Pease Pottage had been approved by Mid Sussex District Council, and that he believed the development was the largest one within an AONB for many years.
- 9.7 RESOLVED to note to approve the approach to planning matters as set out in the report.
- 10. MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW 2017 – PROGRESS AND ISSUES**
- 10.1 The JAC considered a report by Sally Marsh, AONB Co-Director on the key issues that will impact on the production of the Management Plan 2019 as a 'light touch' review.
- 10.2 The AONB Unit has written to David Henshilwood of Natural England providing a timetable for the review of the Management Plan 2019. This timetable was agreed at the Joint Advisory Committee held on 16 November 2016.

- 10.3 Sally informed the Committee that the launch of the Management Plan in 2019 coincides with the 60th anniversary of the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act which paved the way for AONB designation. National Parks and AONBs are discussing with Defra and others how this significant anniversary could be celebrated.
- 10.3 During the next 18 month consultation period the AONB Unit will be holding a series of High Weald AONB Management Plan (HWMP) review workshops involving experts across the AONB including officers and Members to update the key issues and targets for the HWMP.
- 10.4 The AONB Management Plan review process will be led by Charles Winchester with guidance and support from the Joint Directors, Sally Marsh and Jason Lavender and the Planning Advisor, Claire Tester.
- 10.5 The independent review panel for the Welsh Assembly has now reported and the recommendations for protected landscapes that are being taken forward in Wales are based on the principle that AONBs have a clear role in the future and are well placed to deliver the current priorities for the Welsh government including sustainable management of natural resources and sustainable economic development.
- 10.6 The AONB Unit is developing a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund to raise the brand awareness on an AONB wider-scale aiming to coincide with the launch of the AONB Management Plan in 2019.
- 10.7 However, of more immediate and fundamental concern, was the new GOV.uk website formed by amalgamating websites from government agencies and departments. Vital policy documents, underpinning the AONBs' designation, have been removed and are not easily accessible, without a freedom of information request. This process is cumbersome and the loss of access to this information has wide ranging implications for the future of AONBs. In response to this situation the Management Board agreed that a letter about these issues should be sent to Lord Gardiner and copied to the Members of Parliament with constituencies within the High Weald AONB.
- 10.8 Alison Field, Forestry Commission informed the Committee that they had been working closely with the Government website team to ensure that as much as possible could be placed on the central website. However, they would still also have to find a separate site to house other aspects of their day to day advice and were looking to a charitable trust to manage this process.
- 10.9 There was a general sense of agreement that as public funded bodies the policy information should be placed in the central Government Portal. The JAC asked that the letter should be sent to Lord Gardiner and they suggested a few changes to strengthen the tone of the letter to alert Lord Gardiner of the severity of the situation and the wider impact on other Government agencies.
- 10.10 The impact of the increase in planning developments within the AONB and additional evidence will lead to a more in-depth review of the settlement section of the Management Plan.

- 10.11 Brexit and Defra’s potential move towards a Natural Capital approach will be reflected in the AONB Management Plan. Currently it is already largely structured around the area’s natural capital as it emphasis physical landscape components rather than “special qualities” however the review will put greater emphasis on the role of the High Weald’s grasslands and woodlands in carbon sequestration and storage.
- 10.12 There is an ongoing discussion at the NAAONB that new Agri-environmental payments based on a natural capital approach could be administered through the AONB partnerships that would be able to tailor funding to landscape priority areas.
- 10.13 The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) scoping paper runs alongside the HWMP review and will be sent to partners for consultation in April 2017.
- 10.14 RESOLVED to note the report and agreed to:
- i. support the principle of a ‘light touch’ review’;
  - ii. support the allocation of AONB Unit staff resources to the review set out in paragraph 2.1 & 2.2;
  - iii. support the recommendations for the scope of the review set out in paragraph 6.1;
  - iv. agreed the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) scoping paper attached at Appendix A;
  - v. to send the letter to Lord Gardiner AONB Policy Information and GOV.UK, Copied to MPs with constituencies within the High Weald AONB.

## **11. EXTERNAL FUNDING - SUSSEX LUND**

- 11.1 The JAC considered a report by Jason Lavender, on behalf of Gerry Sherwin, AONB Business Manager who was not present at the meeting.
- 11.2 Sussex Lund is a grants programme launched in March 2016 by Peter Baldwin and Lisbet Rausing, co-founders of Arcadia, one of the UK’s largest philanthropic foundations. Sussex Lund aims to improve the present day landscape of the High Weald AONB by making contributions to small, practical projects that have immediate effect and inspire wider change. Last year the Sussex Community Fund managed the £250,000 grants programme but felt that it did not align with their core objectives. The AONB Unit was asked to manage the fund for 2017/18 using the current staff within the AONB Unit. The application period closes on 2 May 2017 and the applications will be formally assessed by the Sussex Lund grants panel in June 2017.
- 11.4 RESOLVED to note the report and to;
- i. welcome the collaborative approach to Sussex Lund, agree the decision-making process and approve the risk management strategy;
  - ii. thank Professor Baldwin and Dr Rausing for their ongoing interest in and support for the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

## **12. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 12.1 The JAC considered a report by Jason Lavender on risk management and the associated risk management matrix.

12.2 Jason explained that the greatest risk to the AONB Unit continued to be the loss of staff particularly given their technical expertise and knowledge and interest in the area. However he was pleased to announce that the AONB Unit had filled the communications role, which had been vacant for some time. The Communication Officer, Emma White, will start with the AONB Unit after Easter and will be working part-time.

12.3 RESOLVED to note the report and:

- i. request that the Management Board continue to meet to review significant risks a required and develop options for their management.

### **13. AOB**

13.1 David Greenwood informed the Committee that Rural Development Programme for England LEADER funding had met to discuss the future of the programme and that there was commitment to be able to access grants until March 2019. However, continued funding would be dependent on the success of the projects coming forward. Grants for local produce and tourism are also still available.

13.2 Alison Field informed the Members of the Countryside Productivity Scheme which is part of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) and another grant source for farmers and landowners in the South East.

13.3 Alison Field informed the Committee that the Forestry Commission is offering a planning masterclass for forestry and woodlands for local authority officers. David Marlow suggested that they may be able to merge several local authorities in a common location as these training sessions would be welcomed. The AONB Unit also offered support in communicating this offer to their contacts.

13.4 Suggested meeting dates will be distributed by doodle poll for the next Management Board meeting to be held in June 2017.

13.5 The Members were also asked to consider whether they wish to apply for Chairman or Vice-chairman or for a place on the Management Board. The elections will be held at the next meeting to be held in November 2017.

**HIGH WEALD JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE – Management Board  
Minutes – 10.30am, 4 October 2017, Acorn Tourism, Woodland  
Enterprise Centre, Hastings Road, East Sussex, TN5 7PR.**



Samantha Nicholas  
Clerk to the High Weald AONB  
Joint Advisory Committee

Present:           Members:  
                  Mrs Jill Davison                       Sevenoaks District Council (Chairman)  
                  Cllr Brian Kentfield                 Rother District Council (Vice-chairman)  
                  Cllr Matthew Balfour                Kent County Council  
                  Cllr Christopher Hersey             Mid Sussex District Council  
                  Cllr Mrs Rowena Moore             Weald District Council

Also Present:  
                  Sally Marsh                             AONB Director (job share)  
                  Claire Tester                         AONB Planning Advisor  
                  Emma White                         AONB Communications Officer

Apologies

1. The following persons gave their apologies for absence:  
Jason Lavender, Cllr Tidy and Cllr Acraman

Members' Interests

2. There were no declarations of interest from the Members of the Management Board.

Minutes of the Management Board meeting held on 5 July 2017

3. The minutes of the last meeting, held on 5 July 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

Matters arising from the minutes

4. Cllr B Kentfield enquired whether the Environmental Colour Assessment Guidance had been circulated. It was confirmed that this would happen once the training had been completed on 5 and 6 October 2017.
5. Cllr Moore highlighted the value of the Sustainable Housing Study's exploration of community housing schemes and enquired whether the Sustainable Housing Study had been published. It was explained that officers were concerned about some of the information included in the document.
6. **It was agreed that the Members were supportive of the Sustainable Housing Study and would like to see it published subject to officer's feedback. The Unit would liaise with the Officer Steering Group (OSG).**

Officer Steering Group Update (OSG)

7. Claire Tester updated the Members of the OSG Meeting held on 27 September 2017 and members discussed the following points.
8. Election of OSG Chairman and Vice-chairman for the term of November 2017 to November 2019. The Members were informed that David Marlow who has been working with the Group for many years will be stepping down due to staffing pressures at Rother DC. Diane Russell, will be joining the OSG as the Rother DC representative. Diane is also participating in the Design Guidance Sub-Group. The Members thanked David for his time supporting the OSG. It was confirmed that David Greenwood, Surrey CC, was voted in as Chairman and Jennifer Hollingum, Mid Sussex DC, as Vice-chairman.
9. The Members were informed that AONB Signage guidance, produced by Charles Winchester, is being utilised by Dormansland Parish Council who wish to install AONB boundary signage. The Unit has also put forward an AONB Boundary project for the Horsham District Council Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP).
10. A discussion took place on the importance of raising the AONB profile due to the intense housing pressure within the AONB. The Members were informed that Highways England has a small fund for signage such as for the A21. Cllr Moore confirmed her support for AONB Boundary signage as an excellent way to raise the profile of the AONB. Cllr Hersey requested a hardcopy of the guidance so he could discuss this with his local parishes as he was concerned about rural signage clutter. It was explained that this guidance allows for integration of the High Weald branding into village signage thus helping with this issue.
11. Claire took the Members through the update on local authority issues and initiatives which may impact on the AONB. 3 areas were discussed:
  - i. **New Village Study:** David Scully presented to the OSG the Tunbridge Wells BC New Village Study. This study has also being carried out by Tandridge DC. This study is looking at new sites with housing allocations of 5,000 houses within the Borough and the AONB. The report should be ready by January to share with the Group. Tandridge DC Local Plan Garden Villages Consultation has already started will run from Monday 14 August to 5pm on Monday 9 October. The locations are Blindley Heath, Edenbridge, Land west of Edenbridge, Redhill Aerodrome, South Godstone. Jill Davison commented that Tandridge DC had not consulted Sevenoaks DC prior to the site being allocated near to Edenbridge.
  - ii. **Biodiversity Reports:** Helen French informed the OSG that Sevenoaks BC does not have the necessary biodiversity data to assess potential sites within the Green Belt. They are therefore developing a desk top/GIS biodiversity issues and options paper.
  - iii. **Ashdown Forest Air Pollution Study:** Marina Briggingshaw updated the Group that in 2014 a Wealden DC study on Ashdown Forest and air pollution had been started. Wealden DC now has 3 years data on air quality across key roads and traffic crossings. This report was suggested by the Inspector as part of the core strategy and the report is now with Natural England for consideration. The Ashdown Forest Group is also looking at navigation measures around the forest, a low emission zone, and compensatory measures towards landowners for Heath Management.
12. Claire Tester informed the Members of bespoke officer training which was being held at Mid Sussex DC. With the support of Jennifer Hollingum, the planning team requested a workshop which will increase their knowledge of the High Weald Management Plan, guidance to support site allocations and handling of key component data and photographic imagery. This will be

followed by a site visit looking a key AONB features. Other local authorities are being encouraged to hold bespoke AONB workshops at their offices.

#### Design Guidance Timetable

13. The Members were taken through the Design Guidance Timetable. Claire explained that Design South East has been commissioned to develop a High Weald Design Guidance based on the 'Build for Life' themes looking at all key aspects of design guidance for new building developments within the AONB. The consultants had a positive briefing session with guidelines to look at a broad spectrum of design principles. 9 examples of High Weald designs good and bad and feedback on sites alongside Inspectorates decisions were also presented at the initial meeting. The design guidance is to be developed from October 2017 to February 2018. The aim is to have the public consultation in April-June 2018. Two examples sections are to be produced by November to be reviewed by the Design sub-group.
14. A discussion took place on the importance of having guidance which is useable by the developers as well as the local authorities. It was also important that other partnerships should be aware of the guidance so that there was a reduction in conflicting information.
15. Claire Tester highlighted that Wealden DC did not have a representative on the Design sub-group and it would be useful to have input from their perspective. The Members also felt that it would be useful for the JAC Committee Members to see these initial examples.
16. **Members requested to be included in the circulation lists for design examples.**

#### Management Pan Review update

17. Sally Marsh informed the Members that the responsibility for delivering the 2019 review programme was placed in the hands of the Landscape Advisor Charles Winchester, but with his departure, the Unit has had to revise this approach. In order to meet the review timetable a decision has been made not to fill the post in the short term but for the AONB Director to lead on the review with support from the Planning Advisor. The timetable may slip a little but not significantly and the Unit still anticipates meeting key milestones. The scope of the review will need to be contained in view of the reduced staff resources but this remains consistent with the JAC decision to support a light touch review.
18. The Members were taken through the schedule of proposed changes to the structure of the AONB Management Plan. The OSG Members have already received an annotated interactive pdf with the proposed changes together with the schedule. Detailed changes will be circulated to the officers for comment before the draft is produced for the early February OSG meeting .
19. The most significant changes to the light touch review are:
  - The introduction of AONB standard policy page putting into context 'Natural Beauty' and the challenges the National Parks and AONBs are facing
  - The Ministerial foreword has been agreed to be supplied by The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP for the AONB family
  - Expanded character component statements are to be included These were included in the consultation meetings and encourage by the officers as they will help support planning appeals by laying out more detailed information on each of the five character components: Geology, Landform, Water Systems and Climate

- Reduction of targets in recognition of the pressure on staff within local authorities
  - Increased glossary to make sure terminology is consistent
  - Facts and figure section will include natural capital information emphasising the physical landscape components with figures on the role of the High Weald's grasslands and woodlands in carbon sequestration and storage.
20. Cllr Balfour enquired whether the Management Plan would also be incorporating air quality and impact of tree diseases such as Ash dieback and a discussion followed. Sally provided examples to Members of recent planning applications that incorporated the planting of bramble and elder, likely to be non-native cultivates possible grown in European nurseries that may also introduce infected soil. The need to scrutinise new planting schemes and be aware of practices that might facilitate tree diseases will be highlighted in the review.
21. Sally Marsh also informed the Members that the AONB family had been asked to give evidence to Lords Select Committee on NERC Act 2006, however, the focus was largely on Natural England's effectiveness rather than the scope of natural beauty.

### Budget 2017/18

22. Sally Marsh informed the Members that there were no issues with the Budget 2017/18, and the income generated, including from Sussex Lund, had allowed for a balanced budget. Surplus resulting from the vacant Landscape Advisor post has also allowed the Unit to recruit other technical staff on a short term basis such as a GIS Intern.
23. There may be greater risks with the 2018/19 Budgets as local authorities are under pressure to reduce their budgets and external funding opportunities Sussex Lund and National Grid are not guaranteed in the future.

### Communication Plan

24. Emma White, AONB Communication officer, informed the Members that she has been familiarising herself with the AONB as her background has been in Tourism, working with 'Visit England'. Emma took the Members through the AONB communication plan which will underpin the Unit's publicity over the next year. The key areas of focus are High Weald Heroes, Sussex Lund and AONB Design Guidance. The Unit will be using several different mediums such as enews, press releases and website articles alongside social media to engage with our key audiences.
25. There have been several new approaches to publicise the High Weald Heroes programme. This included High Weald Heroes (HWH) School of the month press release with images of the children engaging with a HWH action and a quote from Rachel Bennington, AONB Education officer. The HWH newsletter which is a quarterly communication for the staffroom. This informs the schools of the availability of curriculum lead workshops. The Unit is also engaging in publicising the HWH John Muir project. The John Muir Award is a national environmental award scheme. It encourages people to connect with, enjoy and care for wild places. The HWH version has been developed into a primary school resource to engage young people in developing their own local landscape projects.
26. Emma informed the Members of the Public Consultation Survey questionnaire link which has been circulated to Members and officers. This survey seeks to explore what aspects of the High Weald residents find particularly beautiful and how they enjoy the area.

27. Cllr Balfour enquired whether the Unit was using the publicity from the launch of the film 'Goodbye Christopher Robin' for the AONB benefit. Cllr Moore suggested the Unit could use the Welly Walk routes or sites across the AONB so that visitors might get the same 'experience' as visiting the Ashdown Forest thus aiding mitigation issues.

#### Risk Management and staff changes

28. Sally Marsh took the Members through the recruitment changes within the Unit. Matt Pitts resigned his position as Landscape Community Advisor in June to take a new position with Kent County Council as a Landscape Advisor on chalk grassland. Matt will remain with the Unit for one day a week until end of October. Ross Wingfield has joined the team in September 2017 as Land Management Advisor. Ross used to work for the National Trust at the Scotney Castle Estates and has local knowledge of the AONB as well as having a solid knowledge in land management. Christine Meadows also joined the Unit, in a part-time capacity, working alongside Ross Wingfield. Christine has experience in the management and restoration of ancient woodlands.
29. Iain Parkinson will be joining the Unit in October 2017 on a year's secondment from Kew Royal Botanic Gardens. He will be focussing on species-rich grassland and setting up a Meadows group.
30. Eleanor Wilding has been working as a GIS intern over the summer period and will remain with the Unit until March 2018 in a part-time capacity.
31. **The Unit will issue a new organisational chart with the Joint Advisory Committee Paper for November 2017.**

#### AOB

32. The Joint Advisory Committee Meeting will be held on 8 November 2017 at Ashburnham Christian Retreat, Ashburnham Place, Battle, TN33 9NF.
33. There will be a presentation from Tom Warder of Action in rural Sussex about the Sussex Community Housing Hub. After lunch the Members are invited to a walk and talk from the Site Manager.

# Appendix: High Weald AONB Design Guide Timetable

June 2017	Consultants Design South East commissioned
July 2017	Inception Workshop
Sept 2017	Design Sub-Group discussion on structure
Oct 2017	Progress report to MB
Nov 2017	Example sections provided to Design Sub-Group
Feb 2018	Consultation draft produced for OSG
Feb 2018	Informal consultation with other LA departments
Mar 2018	Consultation draft agreed by JAC
Apr - May 2018	Formal Public Consultation
June-August 2018	Amendments and modifications
Sept 2018	Amended draft discussed by OSG & MB
Nov 2018	Final version agreed by JAC
Winter 2018	Launch and communications

## Agenda item: 7

# High Weald Officer Steering Group

Notes of a meeting of the High Weald Officer Steering Group held on Wednesday 27 September 2017, at 10.30am Acorn Tourism, Woodland Enterprise, Hastings Road, Flimwell, TN5 7PR

Clerk to JAC: Samantha Nicholas

### PRESENT:

Virginia Pullan, East Sussex County Council (Vice-Chairman)  
Marina Briggishaw, Wealden District Council  
David Greenwood, Surrey County Council  
David Scully, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council  
Jennifer Hollingum, Mid Sussex District Council  
Jenny Knowles, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council  
Helen French, Sevenoaks Borough Council  
Matthew Nouch, Ashford District Council  
Diane Russell, Rother District Council  
Jason Lavender, Co-Director High Weald AONB Unit  
Claire Tester, Planning Advisor High Weald AONB Unit

	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Action</b>
1.	<b>MINUTES</b>  The Minutes of the meeting held on the 22 February 2017 were agreed as a correct record. Matters arising from the Minutes were as follows.	
1.2	Samantha Nicholas informed the officers that the workshops for the Environmental Colour Assessment (ECA) Guidance for the AONB on 5 and 6 October 2017 will be well attended. However, there were a few Local Authorities (LAs) that had not responded and these have been re-contacted to encourage them to send a representative. The officers confirmed that their preference would be to receive a high resolution pdf to circulate within their own local authority.	
1.3	<b>The Unit to circulate High Resolution pdf when available to all Local Authorities</b>	<b>The Unit</b>
1.4	4.2 Diane Russell informed the Group that appeal for the Pashley Road, Ticehurst, planning application had been dismissed. However, the grounds for dismissal were not based on AONB considerations but due to heritage issues.	

David Scully also highlighted that there was similar outcome for a site in Goudhurst which was dismissed on the grounds of heritage buildings (views from the listed church) and the impact on the ridge top settlement.

**1.5 Both of the Appeal findings will be circulated to the officers**

**Diane  
Russell/David  
Scully**

**2. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman**

2.1 Jason Lavender thanked Virginia Pullan for her support to the Group as Vice-Chairman over the past two years. He also passed on the Joint Advisory Committees special thanks to David Marlow, Rother District Council, who was unable to attend the meeting. David has worked with the Group as Chairman for many years and has been an integral part of ensuring the AONBs steady progress in policies and procedures.

2.2 The Group voted in David Greenwood, Surrey County Council, as Chairman and Jennifer Hollingum, Mid-Sussex District Council, as Vice-chairman for the period of November 2017 to November 2019.

**3. AONB Projects update**

3.1 Jason Lavender informed the Group that the Restocking Project was initiated due to the decline in the number of livestock, cattle and sheep, and the reduction in the number of farms since the foot and mouth outbreak in 2001. Lucy Carnaghan was recruited in July 2016 by the High Weald AONB Unit to work part time until the end of August 2017. She ran the pilot project and set up a practical support project to find out whether external support can help attract new entrants to farming and secure the productive management of the AONB through aggregating under-utilised pasture across multiple land holdings. This has been funded by East Sussex County Council and the Unit's project fund.

Jason has also met with the Land Partnership who help landowners parcel out land and buildings on which 'land entrepreneurs' can establish new, independent businesses. The Land Partnership business model could potentially be replicated across the AONB.

- 3.2 Jason took the Group through the recruitment changes within the Unit. Matt Pitts resigned his position as Landscape Community Advisor in June to take a new part-time position with Kent County Council as a Landscape Advisor on chalk grassland. Matt will remain with the Unit for one day a week until end of October. Ross Wingfield has joined the team in September 2017 as Land Management Advisor. Ross used to work for the National Trust at the Scotney Castle Estates and has local knowledge of the AONB as well as having a solid knowledge in land management. Christine Meadows has also joined the Unit, in a part-time capacity, working alongside Ross Wingfield. Christine has experience in the management and restoration of ancient woodlands and their associated wildlife and human ecosystems.
- Iain Parkinson will be joining the Unit in October 2017 on a year's secondment from Kew Botanical Gardens. He will be focussing on species-rich grassland and setting up a Meadows group.
- Eleanor Wilding has been working as a GIS intern over the Summer period and will remain with the Unit until March 2018 in a part-time capacity.
- 3.3 The Beautiful Boundaries project has been secured through the National Grid's Visual Impact Provision - Landscape Enhancement Initiative. This aims to reduce the visual impact of National Grid's existing infrastructure and improve the related visual quality of the landscape. A grant of £199,860 from National Grid's Initiative, will manage, restore and create boundary features within the corridor affected by the National Grid's transmission line. 10 landowners have had applications approved to restore or plant hedgerows on locations where there are viewpoints of the line from the area's extensive public rights of way system.
- 3.4 Sussex Lund has been established by Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin to improve the present day landscape of the High Weald AONB by making contributions to small, practical projects that have immediate effect and inspire wider change. The Unit were asked to take over the management of Sussex Lund this year. The Unit

received 38 applications covering a wide range of projects on woodland and wetland restoration, access, and amenities. Cllr Sylvia Tidy, East Sussex CC, sits on the advisory panel and £250,000 was allocated to 36 projects from communities, parishes and partners such as Wildlife Trusts and National Trust.

- 3.5 The Unit has initiated an annual meeting with the South Downs National Park to discuss cross partnership working. To date The South Downs has assisted the Unit with AONB's Dark Skies work programme. The South Downs has also shown great interest in developing their own Environmental Colour Assessment Guidance after being shown the AONB's guidance at the meeting held in September.

The South Downs has also initiated a sheep worrying campaign due to Sussex being the worst County for sheep fatalities. Jason informed the Group that he is working the campaign so it can be launched to a wider audience across the AONB.

South Downs is also part of the devolution proposals for transport across the South East 7 project. This will support the development of National Park and AONB guidance for Highways across the area.

- 3.6 AONB Signage guidance, produced by Charles Winchester, is also being utilised by Dormansland Parish Council. Claire Tester informed the Group that the Unit had put forward an AONB Boundary signage project for Horsham DC as part of the Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) review. Horsham has only 4 roads which feed into the AONB and therefore it would be relatively easy to install boundary signage.

- 3.7 Jason also informed the group that he met with the Crowborough Town Council Ranger to inspect Walshes Park. This site is the Wealden SANGS (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space) pilot scheme. There was a discussion around areas of improvement on a more practical level and how earlier partnership working would avoid basic errors. It was suggested that a Do/Don'ts list would be useful to highlight specific ecological points. Marina Brigginsshaw welcomed support from the Unit to look at the SANGS and to give

advice on the sites earlier on in the process. The Unit were invited to visit the next SANGS site in Uckfield.

**5. Update on local authority issues/initiatives which impact on the AONB**

**5.1 New Village Study:** David Scully introduced the Tunbridge Wells BC New Village Study. A similar study has also been carried out by Tandridge DC. This study is looking at sites which have been put forward for around 5,000 houses within the Borough and the AONB. The report should be ready by January to share with the Group. Tandridge DC Local Plan Garden Villages Consultation will run from Monday 14 August to 5pm on Monday 9 October. There are no sites within the AONB. However, one of the proposed areas is very close to Edenbridge, partly within Tandridge and partly within Sevenoaks DC, and in the setting of the High Weald AONB.

**5.2 Biodiversity Report:** Helen French informed the Group that Sevenoaks BC does not have the necessary biodiversity data to assess potential sites within the Green Belt. They are therefore developing a GIS biodiversity study to assess the biodiversity sensitivity of the whole district and also to advise on a policy to secure net-gains in biodiversity from development. David Scully is also reviewing the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council biodiversity evidence looking at a “biodiversity net gain “ approach. He felt that the Management Plan review should also include specific data to measure biodiversity net gain including addressing the issue of off-setting.

Jenny Knowles, Tonbridge & Malling DC informed the Group that the application for a new village at Chattenden Woods and Lodge Hill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) had been withdrawn. This is a nationally important area of ancient woodland and rare grassland that supports one of the largest populations of nightingales in the UK. The Unit was concerned that the use of biodiversity off-setting approach should be a last resort when considering moving species to habitats that may not be viable, especially as some species cannot easily be relocated due to

migration patterns.

- 5.4 **Ashdown Forest Air Pollution Study:** Marina Briggingshaw updated the Group that in 2014 a Wealden DC study on Ashdown Forest and air pollution had been started. Wealden DC now has 3 years data on air quality across key roads and traffic crossings. This report was suggested by the Inspector as part of the adoption of the Core Strategy Local Plan and the report is now with Natural England for consideration. The Ashdown Forest Group is also looking at mitigation measures around the forest, a low emission zone, and compensatory measures towards landowners for Heathland restoration.

Other mitigation discussed was managing 'dogs on leads' policies for access to the Forest at breeding season, such as the National Park 'take a lead' campaign. Also research on visitor pressure on sensitive sites is being undertaken.

It was suggested that as part of Welly Walk publicity we could put key messages into the schools about keeping dogs on leads, especially during the nesting season.

## 6. **Design Guidance update**

- 6.1 Design South East has been commissioned to develop a High Weald Design Guidance based on the 'Build for Life' themes looking at all key aspects of design guidance relevant to the AONB. The consultants had a positive briefing session in July with guidelines to look at a broad spectrum of design principles. 9 examples of High Weald designs good and bad and feedback on sites alongside Inspectorate decisions were also presented at the initial meeting. The design guidance is to be developed from October 2017 to February 2018. Aiming to have the public consultation process with in May -June 2018, including engaging with developers.

- 6.2 **The draft Design Guidance will be circulated before the next OSG meeting on 7 February 2018.** The Unit

## 7. **Training/CPD**

- 7.1 Jennifer Hollingum took the officers through a training programme specifically developed for their planning team at Mid Sussex DC. This

will be delivered by Sally Marsh and Claire Tester. Jennifer explained that she approached the planning team and they responded with key areas they wanted more knowledge on including the High Weald Management Plan and guidance to support site allocations. From this they devised a two hour workshop which will include a presentation, handling of key component data and photographic imagery, followed by a site visit looking at key AONB features.

Claire Tester encouraged other OSG members to similarly discuss with their local authorities their training needs on the AONB and the best way to address these. There would not be 'one size fits all'. For some authorities with a lot of AONB a half day workshop may be necessary. For others with only a small part of the AONB, a presentation slot at any of the local authority's team meetings may be sufficient and would be easier for officers to fit into their busy work-schedules.

## **8.0 Management Plan update**

8.1 Claire Tester explained to the officers that responsibility for delivering the 2019 review programme was originally placed in the hands of the Landscape Advisor with support from the AONB Director, Sally Marsh. With Charles Winchester's departure the Unit has had to revise this approach. In order to meet the review timetable a decision has been made not to fill the post in the short term but for Sally Marsh to lead on the review with support from the Planning Advisor. The timetable may slip a little but not significantly and we still anticipate meeting key milestones. The scope of the review will need to be contained in view of the reduced staff resources but this remains consistent with the JAC decision to support a light touch review.

The OSG Members have been sent an interactive pdf annotated with the proposed changes together with a summary in table form. Comments on these proposals is requested so that progress can be made. OSG members can provide individual responses to the

proposals by adding their comments in the boxes provided and returning this to Claire Tester.

8.2 A robust discussion took place on how the Unit gives feedback on site specific planning applications, which one member felt was unhelpfully negative. The Joint Advisory Committee in March supported a report suggesting that the Unit use clearer terminology in consultation responses including, where appropriate, that it 'objects' to planning applications. This was due to the current climate of build pressure within the AONB and the increasing number of appeals the authorities have to defend.

The officers felt that the Unit should remain independent on their views as an advisory body. The Unit was another consultation voice which may or may not be taken into consideration when looking at site allocations. It was also voiced that the Unit's responses were a good source of information for the case officers. It was agreed that the case officers should be encouraged to contact the Planning Advisor directly to discuss this information if they needed further clarification.

The officers discussed the two separate planning processes and agreed that the earlier the comments from the Unit at pre-application stage, the better the process would be. However, as many local plans have not been submitted, and planning applications on non-allocated sites are coming in on an increasing number, training was essential. Helen French offered to trial a response system to encourage Sevenoaks Borough Council case officers to discuss cases earlier in the process with Claire Tester.

**Officers to respond to the Management Plan schedule review and send responses to Claire Tester. LA Officers**

Alongside the management plan review Claire Tester is completing the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) having sent the report to the statutory consultees (Natural England, Historic England & Environment Agency) and incorporated their comments. The final SEA will be completed to assess any updated objectives or targets in the new Management Plan. Screening reports for a Habitats

Regulations Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment are also being prepared by the Planning advisor.

**9. Items for Management Board and JAC**

- 9.1
- OSG update
  - Update on AONB Unit projects

**Samantha  
Nicholas**

**10. A.O.B**

- 10.1 Jennifer Hollingum asked if any of the officers had an example of a local list of heritage assets as Mid Sussex DC was undertaking this process. Helen French referred to Historic England's guidance and offered to send over this report to Jennifer and Matthew Nouch, Ashford BC.
- 10.2 David Greenwood informed the officers of the changes to the timings for the Kent, Surrey and Sussex LEADER Fund. LEADER funding is still available but the programme is being shortened to potential March 2019, and applicants should check with their local Kent, Surrey or Sussex LEADER group, and local businesses, communities, farmers, foresters and land managers can apply for grants up to £50,000 before Christmas this year. Food and drink producers are also among those businesses eligible for funding through the LEADER Programme and the RDPE Growth Programme. David highlighted one of the many Leader funded projects which is supporting a wood processing programme to update sawmills in the Balcombe area near Haywards Heath.
- 10.3 Next Meeting is booked for Wednesday 7 February 2018.

2016/17 Actual	2017/18		2018/19					2019/20
	Budget £'000	Forecast £'000	Original		Budget		Budget £'000	Indicative Budget £'000
			Budget £'000	Inflation £'000	Pressures £'000	Other £'000		
<b>Actual Details</b>								
<b>Expenditure</b>								
219.0 Staff costs	235.8	238.3	235.8	1.8	0.0	2.2	239.7	242.1
36.6 Accommodation/office equipment	37.2	36.8	37.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	37.2	38.0
6.1 Partnership running costs	11.5	9.6	11.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.5	11.7
27.3 Support services	27.3	27.3	27.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	27.3	27.3
<b>289.0 Total Core Expenditure</b>	<b>311.8</b>	<b>311.9</b>	<b>311.8</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>315.7</b>	<b>319.1</b>
40.3 JAC expenditure on self-funding projects	431.6	161.7	431.6	0.0	0.0	(72.3)	359.3	359.3
61.0 Defra expenditure on self-funding projects	42.3	42.3	42.3	0.0	0.0	4.5	46.8	49.2
Project Enabling Fund expenditure on self-funding projects	16.6	10.7	16.6	0.0	0.0	(3.5)	13.1	13.1
101.3 Total JAC expenditure on self-funding projects	<b>490.5</b>	<b>214.7</b>	<b>490.5</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>(71.3)</b>	<b>419.2</b>	<b>421.6</b>
<b>390.3 Total Gross Expenditure</b>	<b>802.3</b>	<b>526.6</b>	<b>802.3</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>(69.1)</b>	<b>734.9</b>	<b>740.7</b>
<b>Core Contributions</b>								
210.2 Defra	222.2	222.2	222.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	222.2	224.4
22.4 East Sussex County Council	22.4	22.4	22.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.4	22.4
10.0 Kent County Council	10.0	10.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0	10.0
9.3 West Sussex County Council	9.3	9.3	9.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.3	9.3
2.9 Surrey County Council	2.9	2.9	2.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.9	2.9
7.2 Wealden District	7.2	7.2	7.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.2	7.2
7.2 Rother District Council	7.2	7.2	7.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.2	7.2
5.6 Mid Sussex District Council	5.6	5.6	5.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.6	5.6
6.7 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	6.7	6.7	6.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.7	6.7
4.7 Horsham District Council	4.7	4.7	4.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.7	4.7
3.6 Sevenoaks District Council	3.6	3.6	3.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.6	3.6
0.8 Ashford Borough Council	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.8
1.5 Hastings Borough Council	1.5	1.5	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	1.5
2.2 Tandridge District Council	2.2	2.2	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	2.2
0.3 Crawley Borough Council	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.3
0.3 Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.3
4.1 Other Income	5.0	5.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	3.8	8.8	10.0
<b>299.0 Total Core Contributions</b>	<b>311.9</b>	<b>311.9</b>	<b>311.9</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>315.7</b>	<b>319.1</b>
Project Enabling Fund: (to)/from balances	16.6	10.7	16.6	0.0	0.0	(3.5)	13.1	13.1
<b>0.0 Total Local Authority Project Enabling Fund Contribution</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>10.7</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>-3.5</b>	<b>13.1</b>	<b>13.1</b>
61.0 Defra contributions to self-funding projects	42.3	42.3	42.3	0.0	0.0	4.5	46.8	49.2
40.3 JAC contributions to self-funding projects	431.6	161.7	431.6	0.0	0.0	(72.3)	359.3	359.3
<b>400.3 Total Contributions</b>	<b>802.4</b>	<b>526.6</b>	<b>802.4</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>(67.5)</b>	<b>734.9</b>	<b>740.7</b>
<b>10.0 Transfer (from)/to reserves</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>(1.8)</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>(0.0)</b>	<b>(0.0)</b>
(10.0) Total (surplus)/deficit for year	0.1	(0.0)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
115.0 Reserves Brought Forward	125.0	125.0	125.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	125.0	125.0
10.0 Transfer (from)/to reserves	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	(0.0)	(0.0)
125.0 Reserves Carried Forward	<b>125.1</b>	<b>125.0</b>	<b>125.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>125.0</b>	<b>125.0</b>

Agenda Item: 8

**Committee:** High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

**Date:** 8 November 2017

**Title of Report:** Draft Revenue Budget 2018/19

**By:** Treasurer to the Joint Advisory Committee

**Purpose:** To consider the draft Revenue Budget 2018/19 and agree it as a basis for consultation with contributing bodies

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to approve:

1. the draft budget for 2018/19; and
2. the commencement of budget consultation with the local authorities and Defra.

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### 1. FINANCIAL APPRAISAL

- 1.1 A draft budget for 2018/19 is attached in Appendix B. It is recommended that the draft budget be approved as a basis for consultation with contributing bodies/authorities.
- 1.2 A balanced core budget has been set for 2018/19. This has been achieved through a Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) contribution at the level received in 2017/18, with an inflationary increase of £4,549.
- 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 2018/19 will be presented to the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) for approval at its March 2018 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 Appendix A 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 £97,800 in 2018/19 are likely to generate additional funds for core activities and projects of at least £637,100.

Defra Core Funding	£222,200
Other Core Income	£8,800
Defra Projects Funding	£46,800
Non-Defra Projects Funding	<u>£359,300</u>
<b>Total External Funding</b>	<b>£637,100</b>

Local Authority Funding	£84,700
Local Authority Project Enabling Fund	£13,100
<b>Total Contributions</b>	<b>£734,900</b>

#### The High Weald Unit's Work Plan 2018/19

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

#### High Weald JAC Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)

- 2.5 The budget has been developed within the context of the tri-partite Memorandum of Understanding between Defra, Natural England and the National Association Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) and the service level agreement between local authorities and High Weald JAC's host authority, East Sussex County Council.

#### Defra Contribution

- 2.6 In April 2016 Defra confirmed that the High Weald AONB's annual budget to March 2020 will be maintained in real terms; rising from £259,985 in 2016/17 to £273,632 in 2019/20 (provisional).

#### High Weald JAC Budget 2017/18

- 2.7 The forecast outturn for 2017/18 is to break-even. The forecast reserves at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 are £125,000.

### **3. FINANCIAL ISSUES**

- 3.1 The draft budget is presented to the JAC for consideration. Appendix B shows the Core Budget and Appendix C shows an indicative Project Budget. A break-even budget for 2018/19 is presented.
- 3.2 The draft budget assumes an allocation of the Defra contribution between core and projects of 84% to core and 16% to projects. The draft budget assumes that local authorities will strive to maintain their contributions at the 2017/18 level.

#### Core Budget – Expenditure

##### **Summary**

- 3.3 Inflation has been applied at rate of 1% for staff and 0% for all other costs.

3.4 The budget has increased by £2,200 due to a small increase in staff costs.

### **Staff Costs**

3.5 The draft budget allows for a small core team of 5.1 FTE: Director (1.1FTE); Business Manager (0.8FTE); Strategic Planner (0.8FTE); Landscape Advisor (1FTE); Team Support Officer (0.8FTE); and a budget for IT, Communications, Finance and student intern support (0.6FTE).

3.6 Staff costs are subject to inflation of 1%, amounting to a £1,800 increase, and incremental progression amounting to a further £2,200 increase. The current budget assumes contributions to the East Sussex Pension Fund of 20.30% in 2018/19.

### **Accommodation/Office Equipment**

3.6 This standstill budget covers the cost of office rent, rates and maintenance, office running costs and office supplies.

### **Partnership running costs and support services**

3.7 Partnership running costs is a standstill budget that includes the NAAONB membership fee and the costs associated with JAC meetings, representing the partnership at relevant regional and national forums, producing the annual review and miscellaneous PR costs.

3.8 Support services is a standstill budget that assumes 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.

### **Core Budget – Income**

#### **Summary**

3.9 The draft budget shows contributions from local authorities at the same level as 2017/18 and the Defra contribution at the same level as 2017/18 with an inflationary increase of £4,549.

#### **Defra**

3.10 The 2018/19 core contribution is assumed in this report to be £222,200.

#### **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 2017/18 level.

#### **Other Contributions**

3.12 The draft budget assumes other contributions to the core budget of £8,800 from charges to projects for management, administration and office costs.

### **Core Budget - Reserves**

- 3.13 The JAC reserves at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 are estimated to be £125,000, the same as the forecast for 31 March 2018.

### **Self-Funding Projects**

- 3.14 The indicative Self-funding projects budget is attached at Appendix C. The Partnership's project budget is presented as 4 programmes; Community Engagement (including High Weald Heroes); Management Plan Research and Evidence; Landscape Enhancement; and Project Development.
- 3.15 The project budget allows for 2.2FTE project officers: Land Management Project Officers (1.6FTE) and an Education Officer (0.6FTE).
- 3.16 Local authority contributions are primarily those made in prior years through the Project Enabling Fund or to specific projects, for example High Weald Heroes.
- 3.17 The indicative budget reflects the Committee's role in managing non-government grants landscape enhancements on behalf of Sussex Lund and National Grid. At the Management Board meeting of 29 June 2017 members received a report on the management approach to these grant schemes and grant awards of £321,305 were approved.
- 3.18 National Grid and Sussex Lund will make annual contributions towards the management of the Schemes (£20,900 and £25,000 per annum respectively). A proportion of the funding will cover the costs of core staff time on the Schemes, indicated in 'other income' in Appendix B. The balance is used to fund the Partnership's land management project officers to support potential and successful applicants, enabling project success.
- 3.19 The majority of grant awards are paid retrospectively on project completion. The self-funding projects budget and outturn is therefore indicative as forecasting external partners project completion and claim dates is difficult.
- 3.20 The Defra grant contribution allocated to Partnership Projects is £46,800.

## **4. FINANCIAL ISSUES 2018/19 AND BEYOND**

- 4.1 Following reducing Defra contributions of £71,020 between 2011 and 2015, and equivalent savings, Defra have maintained their contributions at the same level with an inflationary increase between 2016 and 2020. As yet there is no indication of likely contributions beyond 2020.
- 4.2 A balanced position has been achieved for 2018/19 assuming local authorities maintain their core contribution at the 2017/18 level.
- 4.3 The Defra contribution is conditional on match funding equivalent to 25% of the core funding in cash terms being secured from other sources, such that Defra funding does not exceed 75% of the total core funding. Maintaining match funding levels is therefore essential.

4.4 The JAC continues to consider ways of reducing costs or further increasing other income. Reducing the number and hours of core staff further, allocating a greater % of the Defra contribution to core costs and an office relocation remain as options for balancing the budget.

4.5 The JAC needs to retain a minimum reserve of £95,000 to meet redundancy costs.

## **5. RISKS**

5.1 The risks and financial implication that the JAC will wish to note are that the core budget for 2018/19 assumes:

- That Defra maintains its contribution in the final year of its 4-year commitment to protecting National Park and AONB funding.
- That local authorities can maintain their core contributions at the same level as 2017/18 to provide the cash match required to meet the Defra contract requirements.
- That employer's pension costs for 2018/19 will be 20.30%.
- That salary inflation for 2018/19 will be 1%
- That inflation for other costs for 2018/19 will be 0%.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 The JAC should note that the draft budget contains a number of budget assumptions which may be affected by changes in Government and the financial environment created by the Brexit.

6.2 The Management Board continues to consider savings option, and alternative contribution sources, so that a balanced budget can continue to be achieved.

6.3 The draft budget for self-financing projects assumes operation of four programmes in 2018/19.

6.4 Support for the draft budget will provide the JAC with the capacity to deliver most of its core functions in 2018/19.

Mark Whiffin  
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.

**HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE****SELF FUNDING PROJECTS OUTTURN 2017/18 & INDICATIVE BUDGET 2018/19**

	Budget 2017/18			Forecast 2017/18			Indicative Budget 2018/19		
	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000
<b><u>1 Community Outreach</u></b>									
<b>JAC expenditure</b>	<b>18.8</b>			<b>16.9</b>			<b>4.7</b>		
Defra		(14.2)			(12.3)			(3.7)	
Local authorities		(4.7)			(4.7)			0.0	
Other		0.0	<b>(0.0)</b>		0.0	<b>(0.0)</b>		(1.0)	<b>0.0</b>
<b>High Weald Heroes</b>									
<b>JAC expenditure</b>	<b>23.7</b>			<b>22.9</b>			<b>26.2</b>		
Defra		(11.9)			(11.4)			(13.1)	
Local authorities		(11.9)			(6.0)			(13.1)	
Other		0.0	<b>0.0</b>		(5.5)	<b>0.0</b>		0.0	<b>0.0</b>
<b><u>2 Management Plan Evidence and Guidance</u></b>									
<b>JAC expenditure</b>	<b>18.7</b>			<b>26.5</b>			<b>20.0</b>		
Defra		(10.7)			(18.5)			(20.0)	
Other		(8.0)	<b>0.0</b>		(8.0)	<b>0.0</b>		0.0	<b>0.0</b>
<b><u>3 Landscape Enhancement</u></b>									
<b>JAC expenditure</b>	<b>415.6</b>			<b>142.3</b>			<b>358.3</b>		
Environment Agency		(29.0)			0.0			0.0	
Local authorities		(38.1)			(6.9)			(20.1)	
Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund		(20.5)			(20.5)			(21.5)	
National Grid		(103.0)			(49.4)			(102.2)	
Sussex Lund (Charities Aid Foundation)		(225.0)	<b>0.0</b>		(65.5)	<b>0.0</b>		(214.5)	<b>0.0</b>
<b><u>4 Project Development</u></b>									
<b>JAC expenditure</b>	<b>13.6</b>			<b>6.0</b>			<b>10.0</b>		
Defra		(5.5)			0.0			(10.0)	
Local authorities		(8.1)	<b>0.0</b>		(6.0)	<b>0.0</b>		0.0	<b>0.0</b>
<b>JAC expenditure (to Appendix A)</b>	<b>490.5</b>	<b>(431.6)</b>		<b>214.7</b>	<b>(161.7)</b>		<b>419.1</b>	<b>(359.3)</b>	
<b>Expenditure funded by PEF (to Appendix A)</b>		<b>(16.6)</b>			<b>(10.7)</b>			<b>(13.1)</b>	
<b>Expenditure funded by Defra (to Appendix A)</b>		<b>(42.3)</b>			<b>(42.3)</b>			<b>(46.8)</b>	
<b>TOTAL JAC expenditure/income</b>	<b>490.5</b>	<b>(490.5)</b>	<b>(0.0)</b>	<b>214.7</b>	<b>(214.7)</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>419.1</b>	<b>(419.1)</b>	<b>0.0</b>



High Weald Joint Advisory Committee  
 Nomination of Board Members 2017-2019

Nomination for Chairman:	Cllr Mrs Sylvia Tidy
Proposed by:	Cllr Matthew Balfour
Seconded by:	Cllr Bill Acraman
Nomination for Vice Chairman:	Cllr Brian Kentfield
Proposed by:	Mrs Jill Davison
Seconded by:	Cllr Sylvia Tidy
Nomination for Board Member	Cllr Bill Acraman
Proposed by:	Cllr S Tidy
Seconded by:	Cllr C Hersey
Nomination for Board Member	Cllr M Balfour
Proposed by:	Jill Davison
Seconded by:	Cllr C Hersey
Nomination for Board Member	Cllr Mrs Rowena Moore
Proposed by:	Cllr M Balfour
Seconded by:	Mrs Jill Davison
Nomination for Board Member	Cllr Christopher Hersey
Proposed by:	Mrs Jill Davison
Seconded by:	Cllr B Kentfield
Nomination for Board Member	Mrs Jill Davison
Proposed by:	Management Board
Nomination for Board Member	Position open
Proposed by:	
Seconded by:	

Agenda Item: 9

**Committee:** High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

**Date:** 08 November 2017

**Title of Report:** AONB Management Plan Review 2017: Progress report

**By:** AONB Director

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

1. Support the proposed schedule of changes to structure and content as set out in paragraph 7.
- 

### 1. Background

1.1 At its meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2017 the High Weald JAC approved the following recommendations:

- To support the principle of a light touch review
- To support allocation of AONB staff and resources to the review
- To support the scope of the review as set out in the paragraph 6.1 of the committee report
- To agree the SEA scoping paper.

1.2 Responsibility for delivering the 2019 review programme had been placed in the hands of the Landscape Advisor with support from the AONB Director. With the departure of our Landscape Advisor we have had to revise this approach. In order to meet the review timetable a decision has been made not to fill the post in the short term but for the AONB Director to lead on the review with support from the Planning Advisor. As a result the timetable may slip a little but not significantly and we still anticipate meeting key milestones. The scope of the review will need to be contained in view of the reduced staff resources but this remains consistent with the JAC decision to support a light touch review.

### 2. Progress to date

3.1 Background information has been collated and comments made on the current plan revisited and considered. A schedule of changes to the structure and contents has been prepared and attached at paragraph 7. The schedule of changes has been agreed by the OSG at their meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2017, and the Management Board at their meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2017. Once the schedule of changes has been approved by the JAC, the detailed process of editing the text will begin. A draft Plan for public consultation should be available for approval by the JAC in March 2018.

### 6 Conclusions

6.1 Members are asked to approve the changes proposed listed below.

## Schedule of proposed changes: Autumn 2017

Page no.	Section	Changes proposed
	Front cover	<p>New front page: Advice from planning appeal QC suggests we make it clear this is a policy document not a site management plan.</p> <p>New title: High Weald Management Plan 2019 - 2024: A statutory plan formulating policy for the management of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (this wording taken from CRoW Act 2000)</p> <p>Add: The High Weald: An outstanding medieval landscape</p> <p>Move: partner logos from the back page to front page</p> <p>Review: Image</p>
	Inside front cover	Retain: with minor edits,
1	Ministerial forward	Replace: with revised foreword, being negotiated by NAAONB with minister
2	JAC foreword	Replace: Draft to be prepared for current Chairman by SM
3	Contents	<p>Review: minor changes to contents</p> <p>Move: Statement of significance to the front of the plan</p> <p>Add: history of designation</p>
4	About the Plan	<p>Reduce and edit to make this introduction more accessible</p> <p>Move: Format of the plan and incorporate into Approach pp. 19 - 24</p>
5-8	The High Weald	Retain: this section with minor edits
9-13	Key facts	<p>Reduce: from 5 to 3 pages,</p> <p>Remove: Environmental profile maps</p> <p>Add: Natural capital facts and figs; more detailed map of the AONB possibly across a double page</p>
14-18	Introduction	<p>Replace: this section with 4 page summary being prepared for all AONB MPs by NAAONB - legal context, and national/international context.</p> <p>Review and edit to ensure HW specific approach is retained.</p>
19-22	Approach and	Add: paragraphs on the policy context inc. Brexit - to explain

	principles	<p>how to use this plan to guide targeting statements for future of agri-environment scheme.</p> <p>Review 2.2. and 2.3 Strengthen: setting para. 2.5 Add: comment on natural capital under 2.6</p> <p>Edit to cut text to minimum.</p>
23-24	Role and relationships	<p>Revise: Para 3.4 to make more reference to NPG, and to reflect experience of recent AONB planning appeals</p> <p>Edit to cut text to minimum.</p>
25	The Vision for 2024	Retain with minor edits
26	Statement of Significance	Retain with minor edits and move to front
27-44	Components section (general changes)	<p>All component sections to be revised pp. 27 - 44</p> <p>Retain: character statement.</p> <p>Add: single page character statement describing sub-characteristics and keys facts and figs; fully referenced to link to evidence base</p> <p>Minor edits to vision</p> <p>Revise: top 5 issues to reflect consultation outputs.</p> <p>Retain: Objectives and rationale</p> <p>Review: Indicators of success with a view to reduce number.</p> <p>Update: targets and review to reduce number</p>
30-32	Settlement	Revise section to reflect design guidance outputs
33-35	Routeways	Update section to reflect revised routeway data and research
36-39	Woodland	Revise section to reflect increased incident of tree diseases
40-44	Field and Heath	Revise section to include outputs of field system program; review of second tier meadow sites, and restocking
45-49	Understanding and enjoyment	Add: single page explaining the areas special qualities
50-52	Implementation	Revise to reflect focus on community delivery, reduced public sector funding and changing landownership patterns
53-55	Monitoring	Replace with summary of 2017 Plan monitoring report
56	Glossary	Expand to include definitions of all key terms
	Inside back cover	Retain with minor edits
	Back cover	Move logos to front

Sally Marsh, AONB Co-Director (s.marsh@highweald.org)

# High Weald AONB Management Plan Review 2019 Timetable

Dec 2016	Scoping review
Feb 2017	Issues & principles report presented to OSG
Mar 2017	Scope of review approved by MB & JAC
Apr 2017	Statutory consultees alerted
May 2017	Expert engagement
July 2017	Public engagement
July 2017	Performance and Condition Monitoring
<b>Sept – Nov 2017</b>	<b>Progress reports to OSG, MB &amp; JAC</b>
<b>Jan 2018</b>	<b>Consultation draft produced for OSG</b>
<b>Mar 2018</b>	<b>Consultation draft agreed by JAC</b>
<b>Apr - May 2018</b>	<b>Formal Public Consultation</b>
<b>June-August 2018</b>	<b>Amendments and modifications</b>
<b>Sept 2018</b>	<b>Amended draft discussed by OSG &amp; MB</b>
<b>Nov 2018</b>	<b>Final draft agreed by Joint Advisory Committee</b>
<b>Dec 2018 - Feb 2019</b>	<b>Local Authority committee processes to adopt</b>
<b>Mar 2019</b>	<b>Plan sent to Secretary of State</b>
<b>Apr 2019</b>	<b>SoS endorsement</b>
<b>May 2019</b>	<b>Dissemination and communication</b>

Agenda Item: 10

**Committee:** High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> November 2017

**Title of Report:** Risk Management

**By:** AONB Director

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are recommended to:

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

### **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 For some years following a requirement put in place by the Audit Commission, the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee's annual external accounts were audited by an external and third party organization (in addition to the annual audit undertaken by ESCC) and the accounts were assessed against ten control objectives. One of those control objectives was to record and assess significant risks to the achievement of the High Weald JAC objectives and review the adequacy of arrangements to manage the risks.
- 1.2 On the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 the Audit Commission was closed and although there is now no requirement for the external audit, we will continue the biannual report on recording and assessing the significant risks facing the High Weald JAC as this has proven to be of value and is a generally accepted form of 'good practice'.
- 1.3 The key risks to the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) are set out in Appendix A.
- 1.4 The JAC is a strong partnership supported by the AONB Unit, a small specialist team providing advice and guidance on the conservation and enhancement of a nationally important landscape. The work of the JAC relies on three things: partnership contributions to the core budget; success raising external funds to the project budget and; retaining/recruiting staff with the appropriate skills and experience to do this work. Given this, the most significant risks to the work of the JAC are constraints on both the financial and personnel resources of the AONB Unit.
- 1.5 Members will be aware that since 2010 the AONB Unit has accommodated cuts of £70,000 in the Defra contribution to the core budget but over the same period the local authority partners on the JAC have worked very hard to maintain the local

authority contributions to the core budget, albeit without an increase in line with inflation.

## **2.0 Key risks 2017/18 and beyond**

- 2.1 Although further cuts to the Defra contribution for 2016-2018 were expected to follow the 2015 Comprehensive Spending Review and Autumn Statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced towards the end of January 2016 that the funding in real terms for Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty partnerships (and National Park authorities) would be protected for the next four years up until 2019/20.
- 2.2 This decision was welcomed and gives the necessary breathing space to continue to innovate against a backdrop of greater certainty and support and contribute to the role and remit of the local authorities with an interest in the High Weald AONB. However, it should be noted that local authority contributions towards the core business of the JAC will remain under pressure during this period and there remains the risk that the current Chancellor of the Exchequer may at any time choose to revoke the funding settlement for AONB partnerships made in January 2016.

## **3.0 Risk mitigation**

- 3.1 The High Weald AONB Unit's current business strategy (2014-2018) responds to the risks to the work of the JAC caused by the constraints on both the financial and personnel resources of the AONB Unit. This strategy is tailored to the local circumstances and specific needs of the High Weald and it covers the first four years of the revised AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019.
- 3.2 Unlike previous business plans, which proposed ambitious work programmes and sought external funds to realize them, the 2014-2018 strategy is informed by the financial cuts since 2010 and the likely budget constraints for the current business strategy period and focuses on maintaining effective delivery of the JAC's core activity. Raising external funds to support the work is still difficult and it has become increasingly competitive and the pragmatic approach has been a move during 2015-2016 to a smaller, more resilient core team that is competent across a range of disciplines. However, the AONB Unit needs to retain a capacity for responding positively to opportunities to secure new resources and develop new partnerships to achieve AONB management plan objectives and support the work of others in the AONB.
- 3.3 The development of secure and alternative long-term income streams adequate enough to support the core remit of the JAC may be possible (although the difficulties achieving this are often under-estimated) but they are unlikely to address any shortfall in contributions within the strategy's timescale. The potential for charitable trusts and social enterprise companies to play a role in the future has been considered and will be kept under review but the focus for this business plan period is to remain a local authority supported partnership with a close relationship to government bodies whose policies influence management of the AONB landscape.

- 3.4 During the preparation of the current business strategy a risk assessment was undertaken in 2014 to identify priorities and make further decisions on financial, staff and other resource allocation. Following this, a report considering the impacts of the cuts and options to safeguard the service the JAC provides was presented to and approved by the Management Board in March 2014.
- 3.5 This report has informed and shaped the current business strategy and the AONB Unit has actively pursued a variety of options to address the risk of declining financial and personnel resources. To date the following measures have been put in place and/or considered:
- A significant reduction in accommodation and office costs;
  - A reduction in ESCC support service costs;
  - A reduction in the communications budget including the loss of the High Weald Anvil magazine;
  - The use of project reserves to support an expanded project programme that encourages financial contributions from new partnerships and organizations;
  - Testing the viability of an AONB consultancy to undertake contract work e.g. events management, Good Woods Project, Sussex Walks Festival;
  - Charging for hosting and/or managing self-financing projects;
  - The use of internships to support the core work programme and provide valuable work experience for the successful applicants;
  - Continuing to apply to external sources of funds from private businesses, charitable trusts, and government agencies to support community, research, and demonstration projects;
  - Sharing/secondment of staff with partner organizations and other AONB Units and National Park Authorities;
  - Restructuring of the AONB Unit to ensure staff have the appropriate skills and experience to achieve the statutory AONB Management Plan and support the JAC partnership;
  - Narrowing of the scope of the work undertaken by the AONB Unit;
  - Investigating the feasibility of establishing a 'charging policy' for pre-application advice;
  - Looking at the opportunities for a closer relationship with the High Weald Landscape Trust (set up by the AONB Unit in 2004);
  - Investigating further the opportunities for corporate sponsorship;
  - Investigating the opportunities for encouraging philanthropic donations towards the work of the JAC;
  - Investigating alternative funds to support the work of the JAC e.g. Corporate Social Responsibility, corporate investment;
  - Investigating the viability of setting up a company or social enterprise limited by guarantee (such as High Weald Design, established by the AONB Unit in 1994).

#### **4.0 Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 4.1 Risk management systems are in place and conform to the appropriate East Sussex County Council policy.

- 4.2 The years 2017 to 2018 will continue to be characterised by constraints on both the financial and personnel resources of the AONB Unit and this remains the most significant risk to the core work of the JAC.
- 4.3 The High Weald AONB Unit's current business strategy (2014-2018) is tailored to the High Weald's local circumstances and specific needs and aims to address the risk to the work of the JAC associated with declining financial contributions to the core work for 2017/18 and beyond.
- 4.4 The business strategy will ensure that by the end of the period the JAC will remain as a strong partnership supported by a small dedicated team providing specialist technical advice to conserve and promote the value of this nationally protected landscape. An appropriate organisational structure has been established to manage self-funded projects supporting AONB Management Plan objectives, and develop income generating activities.

**Contact:** JD Lavender AONB Co-Director [j.lavender@highweald.org](mailto:j.lavender@highweald.org)

## **Agenda Item: 10**

**Committee:** High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

**Date:** 8 November 2017

**Title of Report:** AONB Partnership Staff

**By:** AONB Director

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### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are recommended to note the report.

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#### **1.0 Matthew Pitts and Charles Winchester**

1.1 After working very successfully for the AONB Partnership for many years both Matt and Charles resigned during the summer to take up employment elsewhere. Matt has joined the Old Chalk New Downs project run by Kent County Council and his role will be advising on how to improve, restore, and reconnect threatened chalk grassland habitats in and around the Kent Downs AONB. Charles meanwhile has moved to the South Downs National Park Authority to work as the Wealden Heath Ranger for the Park Authority's northern area.

#### **2.0 Land Management Project Officers**

2.1 We have recently recruited three experienced advisors to deliver the High Weald land management programme. They are helping land managers to work together at a landscape scale and enabling the development and delivery of a range of farm, woodland, and wetland projects in support of the three schemes being run by the Partnership: Sussex Lund; National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative; and Natural England's Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund.

2.1 Ross Wingfield has joined the AONB Partnership as a full time project officer coming from the National Trust, where he spent ten years as Senior Ranger at the 780-acre Scotney Castle and various other National Trust properties. After gaining a degree in Zoology, Ross travelled and worked in conservation and land management roles all over the world before returning to live and work in the High Weald where he grew up.

2.2 Christine Meadows will be working part-time for the AONB Partnership and she is a long term resident of the Weald and the Downs with experience in the management and restoration of ancient woodlands and their associated wildlife. Christine has a business and consultancy background and she has worked with a number of landowners creating simple and viable landscape management projects.

2.3 Iain Parkinson has joined the AONB Partnership on a one-year secondment (two days a week) from the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew based at Wakehurst Botanic Garden where he is the Conservation and Arboretum Manager. Iain's main responsibilities at Wakehurst include the management of the tree collections,

nature reserves, and the SSSI and wider landscape and given his particular expertise with grasslands, Iain will be focusing on the raising the awareness of the on-going need to conserve and restore the High Weald's species-rich grasslands.

### **3.0 High Weald Paid Internship**

- 3.1 Ellie Wilding is the latest person to take up the annual paid part-time internship offered by the AONB Partnership. Ellie is from Uckfield and graduated in the summer with a BSc in Geography. She will be reviewing the Field and Heath Character Component data and the associated maps, digitising and geo-referencing tithe maps to add to our extensive GIS database, and merging the Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) data from Sussex and Kent with new data from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to provide an up-to-date and comprehensive dataset of the historic field systems throughout the High Weald.

### **4.0 Conclusions and Recommendation**

- 4.1 Members are asked to note the report.

Contact: JD Lavender AONB Co-Director, [j.lavender@highweald.org](mailto:j.lavender@highweald.org)

Item 10 Appendix A High Weald JAC - Key Risks 08.09.17  
 Sponsor: Sally Marsh/Jason Lavender  
 Author: Jason Lavender  
 Date: April 2017 - March 2018

## Risk Log

<b>Likelihood Ranking</b>	1 = Improbable (<10%); 2 = Unlikely (10-30%); 3 = Less than Likely (30-50%); 4 = More than Likely (50-80%); 5 = Probable (>80%)
<b>Consequence Ranking</b>	1 = Minor; 2 = Moderate; 3 = Significant; 4 = Substantial; 5 = Grave

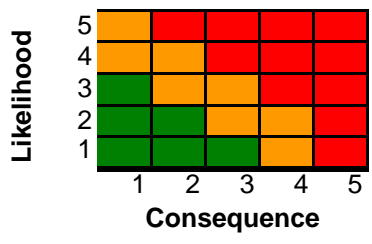
<b>Likelihood</b>	5					
	4					
	3					
	2					
	1					
		1	2	3	4	5
		<b>Consequence</b>				

<b>Control Rating</b>	
1. Excessive	Controls exceed the level required to manage the risk
2. Optimal	Controls are comprehensive & commensurate with the risk. All controls are working as intended.
3. Adequate	Some shortfall in level of controls but these do not materially affect the level of residual risk.
4. Inadequate	Weaknesses & inefficiency in controls do not treat the risk as intended.

Unit ref	Risk no	Risk What can go wrong	Root Causes How it can go wrong	Owner	Inherent Risk			Controls / Mitigating Actions Preventative & reactive control measures	Control Owner	Residual Risk					
		Format: EVENT leading to CONSEQUENCE resulting in EFFECT ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES													
	1	Reduced activity/service due to declining budgets. JAC with a lower profile as a champion for the High Weald. Less proactive work to enable public understanding, management and enjoyment of the AONB.	Public sector spending cuts affecting Defra and local authorities leading to a further reduction in the JAC's budget.	AONB Director	4	4	Red	Unit to continue to take into account direction of government and local authorities. JAC members and officers involved in and supportive of partnership and able to lobby robustly for funds internally and externally. JAC Chairman, on behalf of partnership, to lobby robustly for maintaining contributions. Alternative sources of core income sought. Options to reduce expenditure without adversely affecting on service explored. Planned change in scope of JAC's core work programme.	AONB Director	2	4	4	Red		

2	Unit unable to attract external funding for the implementation or coordination of projects that meet AONB Management Plan objectives.	Public sector cuts resulting in difficulties securing funds to match external grants e.g. Heritage Lottery Fund. Without commitment from 'local' partners, bids for external funds are rarely feasible and considered weak by potential donor organizations. Unit objectives do not align with grant-aiding bodies objectives. Increased competition for fewer and smaller grants. Target audiences for grant-aiding bodies do not exist within the High Weald.	AONB Director	4	4	Red	Partnership organizations and others consider identifying funds to ensure local matched funds can be used to attract external grants and allow partnership projects to be developed. Keep a clear understanding of grant-aiding bodies objectives. Unit to take into account direction & remit of grant-aiding bodies. Fundraising expertise within the Unit developed and maintained. Alternative fundraising options explored.	AONB Director	2	3	4	Red
3	IT needs not met, Unit unable to work efficiently and undertake research activity, fewer outputs, direction of JAC work programme compromised	Poor links to computer network/server results in slow machine operation, inability to download GIS data, update website etc.	AONB Director	3	3	Amber	Technical advice sought and recommendations/solutions implemented.	AONB Director	3	3	3	Amber
4	Loss of grant aid due to self-financing project outputs not being met.	Project staff seeking and moving to new jobs as the current contract end date approaches. Project objectives not completed, undue workload on the remaining AONB core staff to complete project work. Adverse affect to the AONB core work remit and much reduced capacity and time to raise funds to support core work.	AONB Director	2	2	Green	Support and funding secured for retention bonuses. Longer notice periods for project staff. Projects developed and managed to ensure that the completion of key/complex outputs are not planned for the end of the contract. Flexibility built into core staff work programmes in order that there is a capacity to finish self-financing projects if required.	AONB Director	2	2	2	Green
5	AONB advice given by Unit staff not up to date and opportunities missed to ensure AONBs remain at the forefront of national policy.	A rapidly changing external policy environment in terms of planning and land use affecting the AONB.	AONB Director	4	4	Red	Continue the close liaison with SEEPL colleagues in the region, NAAONB and local authority colleagues to share information. In the short term scrutinize national policy and consider and examine potential future issues, opportunities and developments.	AONB Director	3	3	3	Amber
6	Future possibility that what is being implemented and coordinated by the AONB Partnership is not valued by Defra and/or the current Secretary of State. National Elections and/or Cabinet re-shuffles resulting in the loss of supportive Defra Minister.	Total loss or severe reduction of national government funding and commitment to AONB Partnerships.	AONB Director	3	5	Red	Continued and concerted engagement with Defra and Natural England and ongoing liaison with and reporting on NAAONB/SEEPL work programmes. Active engagement with Defra Ministers directly and in conjunction with NAAONB and SEEPL. Active engagement of High Weald AONB Patrons and supportive High Weald MPs.	AONB Director	2	3	5	Red



**Agenda No: 10 Appendix B**  
**High Weald AONB Unit**  
**Staff Structure**  
**October 2017**

