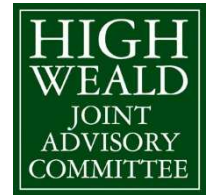


# High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee



## Agenda

Wednesday 28 November 2018

Kew Royal Botanical Gardens, Wakehurst Ardingly, Haywards Heath, Sussex,  
RH17 6TN

### Nature Recovery Project

To note a presentation and report from Gerry Sherwin, AONB Business Manager and Iain Parkinson Kew Royal Botanical Gardens about the High Weald AONB Nature Recovery Network Project.

1. Apologies
2. Members' Interests

Members and officers are invited to make any declarations of any interest that they may have in relation to items on the agenda and are reminded to make any declaration at any stage during the meeting if it then becomes apparent that this may be required when a particular item or issue is considered.
3. Urgent matters

Members are asked to raise any urgent matters at this stage and not at the end of the meeting. The Chairman will decide whether the JAC should discuss any items so raised but asks members to give her prior notification of such matters unless urgency prevents it.
4. Minutes of the JAC meeting

To consider the minutes of the last meeting of the JAC held on 28 March 2018 (page 3)
5. Minutes of the Management Board Meeting

To note the matters arising from the Management Board meeting held on 31 October 2018 (page 10)
6. Minutes of the Officer Steering Group

To note the minutes of the last meeting of the OSG held on 26 September 2018 (page 14)
7. Management Plan 2019-2024 Final version

To approve the Final Management Plan 2019-2024, (page 21) Plan appended
8. Discussion on report for the Review of Designated Landscapes 2018-19

To discuss and approve the report produced from the Management Board Members on the questions from the Review of Designated Landscapes 2018-19 and call for evidence (page 26).
9. Draft Revenue Budget for 2018/19 and Business Plan 2019/2020

To consider a report by the Treasurer on the draft Revenue Budget 2018/2019 and Business Plan 2019/20 (page 36) Appendix B: Forecast outturn 2018/19 and Budget 2019/20 and indicative budget 2020/21 and Appendix C: Self-funding projects outturn 2018/19 and indicative budget 2019/20

10. Nature Recovery Project

To approve the action that is being taken to start to deliver the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 (page42)

11. Risk Management

To consider a report by the AONB Co-Director on risk management (page 45); Appendix A: High Weald JAC - Key Risks

12. Any other business

Management Board Meeting – March 2019

Next Joint Advisory Committee Meeting – 27 March 2019

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

Samantha Nicholas

Clerk to the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell, East Sussex TN5 7PR

E: [s.nicholas@highweald.org](mailto:s.nicholas@highweald.org); T: 01424 723011

# High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

## Minutes of Meeting



Held at 10.30am on Wednesday 28 March 2018 at Dale Hill Golf Club

### Members present:

Cllr Mrs S Tidy	East Sussex County Council, Chairman
Cllr B Kentfield	Rother District Council, Vice Chairman
Cllr M Balfour	Kent County Council
Cllr M Dickins	Sevenoaks Borough Council
Cllr L Lockwood	Tandridge District Council
Cllr H Rogers	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Cllr Mrs R Moore	Wealden District Council
Cllr B Acraman	West Sussex County Council
Mrs A Field	Forestry Commission
Robin Edwards	CLA
Mrs J Davison	Community Co-optee

### Officers present:

Mrs S Marsh	AONB Co-Director, High Weald AONB Unit
Ms G Sherwin	AONB Business Manager, High Weald AONB Unit
Ms C Tester	AONB Planning Adviser, High Weald AONB Unit
Mr A Fowler	Finance Manager, East Sussex County Council
Mr T Dyer	Team Manager, Environment and Heritage, West Sussex County Council
Ms J Hollingum	Planning Officer, Mid Sussex District Council

## 1. APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Apologies were received from the following Members and officers:  
Cllr C Hersey, Cllr L Steeds, Cllr J Soyke, Cllr A Pickering, Cllr R Street, Cllr A Lee, Murray Davidson, Helen French, Virginia Pullan.
- 1.2 The Chairman commented that there were a number of Councillors that were not in attendance at this meeting. The Councillors were reminded that the commitment of attendance twice a year was not onerous. It was important to show support to the Unit's hard work at this particular time especially as there are so many changes happening.

## 2. MEMBERS INTERESTS

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

## 3. URGENT MATTERS

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

#### **4. PARTICIPATIVE CONSULTATION OF MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW**

- 4.1 Sally Marsh informed the Members that the Defra 25 Year Plan has renewed commitment to the AONBs to focus on 'Natural Beauty'. Sally Marsh presented that there were several external issues which will impact on AONBs. These include an AONB review process focussing on how the AONBs may be best placed to support other agri-environmental schemes. Brexit and the National Planning and Policy Framework Review (NPPFR). However, the AONBs are also working towards the celebration of the 70<sup>th</sup> year Anniversary. As part of these changes the Joint Advisory Committee has been asked to submit a collective view from the perspective of the AONB on 'Beauty'.
- 4.3 The Members were taken through a series of perception exercises which will be pooled with anonymity to produce a collective view from the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC). The results will be fed back to the Members at the November JAC Meeting.
- 4.4 **Cllr Moore requested that a copy of the perception exercises were sent to her for an internal meeting.**

#### **5. MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW: DRAFT CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 Sally Marsh took the Members through the time scale for the AONB Management Plan review process. The Members were reminded that due to the large number of local authorities it is imperative they have 3-4 months to take the Management Plan through their internal processes prior to publication in March 2019. The latest the public consultation might be able to go out is May 2018, closing end of July so that there will be time to analyse these results in time for early feedback to the officers and Members.
- 5.2 Sally Marsh reminded the Members of the key changes to the AONB Management Plan that have been agreed to date through Officer Steering Group (OSG) consultation:
- The introduction of AONB standard policy page putting into context 'Natural Beauty' and the challenges the National Parks and AONBs are facing
  - Expanded character component statements, these were included in the consultation meetings held in May 2017. These have been encouraged 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, Woodland, Field & Heath, Settlement, Routeways
  - Reduction of targets in recognition of the pressure on staff within local authorities. These targets are to be called 'Actions and Aims', which was agreed at the OSG meeting held on 19 March
  - 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.
- 5.3 Sally Marsh confirmed that the major changes have been agreed but there were still some minor text changes which needed to be agreed at the next OSG meeting in April.

- 5.4 Cllr Brian Kentfield asked whether the updated comments from the officers had been circulated. Samantha Nicholas confirmed that these comments would be sent out prior to the next OSG meeting.
- 5.5 Cllr Tidy invited Jennifer Hollingum, OSG Vice-chairman, to respond on behalf of the OSG to the progress of the AONB Management Plan Review. Jennifer confirmed that the OSG had a very thorough discussion on majority of the changes to the Management Plan. The officers mainly focussed on the settlement and land-based economy chapters. The officers indicated that another meeting in April or beginning of May would be effective to ensure all text changes have been covered and agreed.
- 5.6 Claire Tester also informed the Members of the important supporting documents running alongside the Management Plan; Draft Management Plan 2019 to 2024 Equality Impact Assessment; Management Plan review 2019 - Draft HRA Screening Matrix; Management Plan Review 2019 - Draft SEA Objective Assessment Table; Management Plan Review 2019 - SEA Draft Environmental Report; Management Plan Review 2019 - Draft HRA Screening. A link has been circulated to local authorities for comments.
- <http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/high-weald-aonb-management-plan-documents/mp-2019-2024-draft-docs.html>
- 5.7 Cllr Tidy enquired to how wide the public consultation has been so far. Sally Marsh confirmed that a series of High Weald Character Component-themed workshops were hosted during May 2017. From September to November 2017, the High Weald AONB Partnership also ran an online public engagement survey as part of the ongoing Management Plan review. This survey sought to explore what aspects of the High Weald the public find particularly beautiful and how they most like to enjoy the area, as well as perceptions of the biggest threats and desired improvements. A total of 294 people completed the survey and the results were subject to a full qualitative and quantitative analysis.
- 5.8 It was noted that the Unit will send a link to the Public engagement report for Members to circulate.
- 5.9 **RESOLVED to approve the Management Plan Consultation Draft for public consultation subject to agreement on minor text changes.**
- (1) agreed the Plan timetable.**
- (2) delegated to the Management Board responsibility to arbitrate on any outstanding matters arising from further partner discussions of the issues detailed in para. 2.5 of the AONB Management Plan 2019 Review: Consultation Draft Report**
- (3) delegated to Management Board responsibility to approve the final Consultation draft in a timely fashion to allow public consultation to proceed according to the agreed timetable.**

**6. MINUTES OF THE JAC MEETING – 8 November 2017**

6.1 RESOLVED to note the minutes of the Management Board held on 8 November 2017 as a correct record.

**7. MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD – 7 March 2018**

7.2 RESOLVED to note the minutes of the Management Board held on 7 March 2017 as a correct record.

**8. MINUTES OF THE OFFICER STEERING GROUP – 19 March 2018**

8.1 Jennifer Hollingum confirmed that the majority of the meeting had focussed on the Management Plan Review and the outstanding agenda items would be covered more thoroughly at the next OSG Meeting in September 2018.

8.2 RESOLVED to note:

8.3 The Minutes of the Officer Steering Group held on 19 March 2018 as a correct record.

**9. LOOKING BACK LOOKING FORWARD PRESENTATION**

9.1 Gerry Sherwin presented the highlights of the Annual Review and future work plans for the Unit.

9.1 The Members were taken through the 3 workflow areas that the Unit manages: Policy and Planning, Landscape Enhancement and Community outreach programmes. Key areas highlighted were:

Policy and Planning:

- 104 development proposals had been responded to and support had been given to the Neighbourhood Planning processes for 15 of the AONB Parishes
- A new character component GIS layer has been created for historic field patterns. The meadows layers is also being updated, managed by Iain Parkinson, who is on secondment from Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Wakehurst
- A historic routeways report has been produced by Jeremy Lake to support the Management Plan evidence base
- The design colour guidance is underway and production of AONB design guidance is underway.

Landscape Enhancement:

- Ross Wingfield and Christine Meadows are currently managing projects worth up to £330,000
- The Upper Rother and Dudwell Farm Cluster Group is beginning to take shape with key landscape scale projects such as Deer Management and Giant Hogweed eradication launched
- Sussex Lund is in its second successive year with the Unit and has aided projects eradicating rhododendron, hedge restoration and meadow creation.

- The Unit is holding Land Management events for Farm Cluster Members to get involved with
- The Unit is discussing a proposal with Fresh Start Enterprise, [freshstartlandenterprise.org.uk](http://freshstartlandenterprise.org.uk), to support the Restocking Project in the AONB.

#### Community outreach:

- High Weald Heroes – 72 Events supporting over 3000 children in outdoor learning experiences
- High Weald John Muir has been piloted with two primary schools, Punnett Town and Stonegate. The Schools have enjoyed the process so much they are continuing to do the programme independently
- New Crowborough Festival Association – ‘Top of the Weald’ was supported and primary schools within Crowborough received High Weald Hero geography and art workshops
- Increase Social media activity managed by Emma White, Communication officer
- Dark Skies – 30 responses for call for actions to collect data have been received from Parishes, Neighbourhood Planning Groups and individual landowners
- Hedgerow restoration boards have been so well received that the Unit are producing more
- High Weald Walking Festival from 15 September has been launched with over 30 walks managed by the Ramblers, Woodland Trust, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Standens, National Trust and the Unit’s officers
- Review of the AONB website to link with celebrations in 2019.

9.2 Cllr Tidy thanked the Unit for the enormity of the work schedule and re-emphasised the importance of council representation at the meetings.

9.3 Cllr Rogers asked whether the database protection legislation changes would have an impact on the Unit’s workload. Gerry Sherwin confirmed that they are developing processes to ensure positive written contact is being issued to the current contacts on their database as well as ensuring we have better quality contacts that the Unit can work in partnership with.

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

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

10.2 Andy Fowler advised the Members that there was a surplus of £15,600 which was due to a rate rebate and additional income from staff charged on project time.

10.2 For 2018/19 budget the core budget will increase due the rate of annual increments for staff budget of 1%, although the pay award may be settled at a higher rate which can be covered through the reserves.

10.3 All local authorities have agreed funding and Defra have agreed an increase in funds of £4,000 to £269,000.

10.4 £46,800 has been allocated from the Defra ‘single pot’ to Projects.

10.5 Successful grant applications, and inclusion of the Sussex Lund as a new programme, has resulted in a significant increase in expenditure on self-funding projects

**10.6 RESOLVED to note the report and:**

**(1) approve the Draft Revenue Budget for 2017/18.**

**(2) commence budget consultation with the local authorities and Defra**

**(3) and thanked the local authorities for their support and East Sussex County Council finance and the Unit for the management of the budget**

## **11. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF) REVIEW**

11.1 The JAC considered a verbal report by Claire Tester on the key changes to the NPPF Review. The consultation closed on 10 May 2018.

11.2 Claire Tester is working with other AONBs to produce a response to the NPPF review which is a significant rewrite. The Unit can provide track changes for the Members if it will help the internal consultation process.

11.3 Some of the main changes have been in the glossary with the dilution of definition of 'Major' being 10 units and above; the merging of paragraph 115 and 116 which omits that AONBs have the highest protection alongside National Parks. There is also a removal of Net environmental gain which is part of the Defra 25 Year Plan.

11.4 This may have a significant impact on level of development as it is trying to encourage more small scale sites to be developed especially as a significant loss of small and medium developers to be able to operate in this area.

11.5 Cllr Moore enquired about how the local authorities might help with this process. Claire Tester urged the local authorities to individually respond and the Unit will circulate the track changes if requested.

11.6 RESOLVED to note the verbal update of the National Planning and Policy Framework review.

## **12. AONB DESIGN GUIDANCE UPDATE**

12.1 Claire Tester informed the Members that in response to increased development pressure the High Weald AONB Partnership has been working with the local planning authorities to improve the quality of developments by the production of AONB design guidance. However, due to the Management Plan review and the level of detail the officers have had to impart to the consultants the timetable has been delayed. To enable the revised timetable JAC is requested to delegate the sign-off of the consultation draft Design Guide to Management Board. It is suggested that, once the Design Sub-Group is content with the draft, it is circulated to all JAC and OSG members so they have an opportunity to input any further comments before Management Board considers the consultation version



**12.2 RESOLVED to approve the following recommendations:**

**(1) Agree the revised timetable as set out in Appendix 3.**

**(2) Delegate to the Management Board responsibility to agree a consultation version of the Design Guide to allow public consultation to proceed according to the agreed timetable.**

### **13. RISK MANAGEMENT AND STAFF UPDATE**

13.1 The JAC considered a report by Jason Lavender on risk management and staffing updates and the associated risk management matrix.

10.2 Jason Lavender highlighted to the Members that the biggest risk to the AONB was the change in ministerial directives.

10.3 The Members were informed that the Unit has contact with local MPs such as Hue Merriman. Sir Nicholas Soames and Nusrat Ghani follow AONB on twitter.

10.4 Cllr Tidy commented that it was good to see so many risks have moved from red to amber or green especially areas such as IT and staff.

**10.5 RESOLVED to note the reports and request that the Management Board continue to meet to review significant risks as required and develop options for their management.**

### **11. AOB**

11.1 Jason Lavender informed the Members that the Unit would be formally responding to the consultation on Health and Harmony: the future of food, farming and the environment in a Green Brexit which closes on 8 May 2018. The Members were urged to ensure that the local authorities respond as well. In order to help this process and information sheet has been produced to circulate to the Members.

11.2 Robin Edwards, CLA informed the Members of a workshop Managing Land for public benefit - Natural Capital Conference and workshop held by CLA, on 12 April 2018.



**HIGH WEALD JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE – Management Board  
Minutes – 10.30am, 31 October 2018, Acorn Tourism, Woodland  
Enterprise Centre, Hastings Road, East Sussex, TN5 7PR.**

Samantha Nicholas  
Clerk to the High Weald AONB  
Joint Advisory Committee

Present:           Members:  
                  Cllr Mrs Sylvia Tidy                   East Sussex County Council (Chairman)  
                  Cllr Brian Kentfield                   Rother District Council (Vice-chairman)  
                  Mrs Jill Davison                       Community Co-optee  
                  Cllr Matthew Balfour                   Kent County Council  
                  Cllr Mrs Rowena Moore                   Weald District Council  
                  Cllr Chris Hersey                       Mid Sussex District Council  
                  Cllr Peter Bradbury                   West Sussex County Council

Also Present:  
                  Sally Marsh                               AONB Director (job share)  
                  Jason Lavender                         AONB Director (job share)  
                  Claire Tester                            AONB Planning Advisor  
                  Gerry Sherwin                         AONB Business Manager  
                  David Greenwood                     OSG Chairman, Surrey County Council

Apologies

1. There were no apologies for absence.

Members' Interests

2. Cllr Bradbury informed the Members that he is also a Councillor for Mid Sussex District Council.

Minutes of the Management Board meeting held on 20 June 2018

3. The minutes of the last meeting, held on 20 June 2018, were agreed as a correct record.

Matters arising from the minutes

4. Pt. 10, an invitation has been extended to Julian Glover to meet with the High Weald AONB Partnership, which is being considered.

Management Plan Consultation updates

5. Sally Marsh informed the Members that there had been 143 responses to the Public Consultation on the Draft Management Plan 2019-2024 review. These responses and the subsequent amendments to the Management Plan have been agreed by the officers at the meeting held on 26 September 2018. Further minor amendments from the meeting were circulated by email to the officers and have had positive responses from local authorities.

6. Sally Marsh took the Members through the Management Plan 2019-2024 timetable. A initial desktop published version of the Management Plan will be signed off at the Joint Advisory Committee Meeting on 28 November 2018. Once approved the local authorities and Natural England will receive a final version to take through their own internal adoption processes with the supplementary documents; Equality Impact Assessment; Habitat Regulation Screening; and Strategic Environment Assessment. Once adopted by all local authorities the final Plan and supplementary documents will be sent to the Secretary of State in April 2019.
7. Madam Chairman thanked the Unit for all their hard work with the production of the Management Plan to date and asked the Members if there were any further amendments required.
8. Cllr Bradbury enquired about the implication of a local authority not adopting the Management Plan. It was confirmed that that there is a responsibility for the local authorities to jointly work towards the delivery of the Management Plan. All local authorities have been engaged through several consultations over an 18 month period.
9. **It was agreed that the Management Plan 2019-2024 required no further amendments and the Unit could proceed with producing a desktop publish version for approval at the JAC Meeting to be held on 28 November 2018.**

#### OSG update

10. David Greenwood confirmed that the majority of the OSG Meeting held on 26 September 2018 was focussed on the responses from the public consultation and the subsequent amendments to the Management Plan. David thanked the Unit for coordinating the process effectively.
11. The Service Level Agreement was discussed and has been circulated for internal sign off to the local authorities in alignment with the Management Plan timings of 2019-2024.
12. The additional supporting documents to the design guidance were also discussed including the Responsible Planting and Eco-camping Guidance. There was also a drive from the officers once the design guidance was completed to go to public consultation as a Supplementary Planning Document (SDP).
13. The OSG meeting was followed by a design guidance workshop which was well attended and has supported further progress of the guidance.
14. Madam Chairman thanked the officers for their continued support with the Management Plan and Design Guidance. Cllr Kentfield also informed the Members that Diane Russell who has led on the design guidance has just returned to work after a fall. This may lead to a delay in the in the next stage of the guidance development. The Members passed on their thanks to Diane for the additional time and energy she has put into writing the guidance with the support of the Design Guidance Sub-group.
15. Cllr Bradbury welcomed some additional support for the West Sussex CC officer Don Baker, County Ecologist. Claire Tester agreed to set up a meeting with Don to up-date him on guidance.

### Review of designated landscapes discussion

16. Sally Marsh led a workshop on exploring the Member's views on the current protected landscape status leading to a joint response from the Committee for the review of designated landscapes.
17. Sally informed the Members that this is the first review of AONBs since 1972 and amendments in 1983 through the Countryside Commission. The Members had been sent a draft report of the collective views from South East AONBs, as starting point for the discussion.
18. The Members discussed the following areas: Purpose of the designated areas, planning, land management, governance and the AONB name.
19. Cllr Tidy asked whether a public consultation should take place to outline the reasons why the Partnership would be putting specific views forward.
- 20. It was agreed that the workshop outcomes would be used as a basis for a JAC report on the joint response from the High Weald AONB Partnership for approval at the JAC meeting in November.**

### Design guidance update

21. Claire Tester informed the Members that East Sussex Highways engineers were invited to attend the design guidance workshop following the OSG Meeting on 26 September 2018. This was an opportunity to receive positive feedback on including the road layout guidance.
22. Diane Russell will be incorporating the feedback from the meeting into the guidance document. The updated Guidance will be sent to Design South East to produce a desk-top version for the consultation process. If the local authorities are to adopt the guidance as SPDs the consultation will have to take a different process to ensure that the guidance remains a consistent document across the AONB.
23. The additional guidance Responsible Planting and Eco-camping Guidance is currently being developed and the Unit are working towards getting appropriate good/bad design images to complete the guidance. Cllr Moore asked if there was any guidance available and Claire confirmed that a research document Eco-camping in the High Weald: review of the potential environmental impacts and recommendations for future development was available on the AONB website.
24. Once the AONB Design Guidance is approved the next stage will be to communicate the guidance to developers and planners. The Members suggested that a conference with key guest speakers would be effective way of raising awareness.

### Nature Recovery Network

25. Gerry Sherwin took the Members through the Nature Recovery Network project. The project aims to build the mechanism for a nature recovery network (NRN) that will achieve bigger, better and more joined up species-rich grasslands. Defra awarded £30,000 towards this project to be spent before the end of March 2019. It will be managed through the Weald Meadows Group, which was set up in 2017. Iain Parkinson is managing the Group. He has been on secondment to the Unit for the past year from Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew.

26. The objectives are to look at past lessons learnt involving case studies to evolve a bottom up approach. This will engage with community groups to manage a wide range of projects including verge management.
27. The funding will also support core funding for existing staff. Cllr Balfour offered examples of best practise in Kent High Weald as potential case studies.

#### **Budget & Staffing update**

28. Gerry Sherwin informed the Members that Kent County Council has reduced their funding again to 9,000. It was initially set at £13,200. The Members were informed that if local authority funding continues to fall it will be harder to get 75% funding for projects such as Nature Recovery Network.
29. Staffing costs have increased due to the pay award, but Projects such as National Grid, Sussex Lund and Nature Recovery Network are covering the deficit at present.
30. Jason Lavender updated the Members on staffing changes. William Jones has started as GIS intern, on a 3 month contract with the potential to extend the contract.
31. Sarah Watson, who was working with East Sussex CC in the waste management division, will be covering Emma White's maternity leave from November 2018.
32. Matt Moss has been employed as a Deer Management consultant. This is one of the key objectives for the Upper Rother & Dudwell Farm Cluster. This initiative will develop a deer management structure across the AONB with guidance to support the landowners and stalkers.

#### **JAC agenda for November 2018 and March 2019**

33. The JAC meeting will be held at Kew Botanical Gardens, Wakehurst on 28 November 2018. It was confirmed that the Members will not have to pay for parking.
34. Agenda items are Management Plan approval; Review of Designated Areas; Nature Recovery Network.

#### **AOB**

35. The 30th year anniversary of the JAC Partnership and 70<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of AONBs will coincide with the launch of the Management Plan in Spring 2019. Special events will be held to celebrate individuals and partnerships that have been outstanding in supporting the AONB.
36. Jason Lavender showed the Members the book produced as part of the Ash project. This was set up to highlight the projected loss of thousands of ash trees across Kent. As part of this celebration Kent Downs, Woodland Trust and High Weald have funded 'Ash' by Archie Mills.
37. Dates will be sent round for the next Management Board Meeting and JAC in March 2019.

Agenda item: 6

## High Weald Officer Steering Group

Notes of a meeting of the High Weald Officer Steering Group held on Wednesday 26 September 2018, at 10.30am Acorn Tourism, Woodland Enterprise, Hastings Road, Flimwell, TN5 7PR

Clerk to JAC: Samantha Nicholas

### PRESENT:

David Greenwood, Surrey County Council (Chairman)  
Jennifer Hollingum, Mid Sussex District Council (Vice-chairman)  
Virginia Pullan, East Sussex County Council  
Natalie Bumpas, Wealden District Council  
David Scully, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council  
Jenny Knowles, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council  
Diane Russell, Rother District Council  
Sally Marsh, Co-Director High Weald AONB Unit  
Jason Lavender, Co-Director High Weald AONB Unit  
Claire Tester, Planning Advisor High Weald AONB Unit

	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>	
	The Minutes of the meeting held on the 18 April 2018 was agreed as a correct record. David Greenwood thanked Jennifer Hollingum for chairing the meeting in his absence. There were no matters arising from the Minutes.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Apologies</b>	<b>The Unit</b>
2.1	Elizabeth Brigden, Murray Davidson, Helen French, Helen Forster sent their apologies. The Group were informed that Tim Dyer was no longer working for West Sussex CC and Matthew Nouch was no longer at Ashford Borough Council. Replacement officers are yet to be allocated for the group. Kerry Culbert will represent Hastings Borough Council working alongside Murray Davidson.	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Management Plan Consultation Responses</b>	
3.1	The officers were taken through the changes in the Management Plan which related to the consultation responses.	
3.2	Sally Marsh brought to the Groups attention the response from CPRE Sussex which expressed that the AONB should consider	

adopting conservation board status and to have robust planning policies such as the Cotswold's Management Plan. It was confirmed that conservation board status has previously been rejected by the Joint Advisory Committee. It was noted that the Management Plan is not a development plan and does not include planning policies.

Due to the pressure of building within the South East, Kent Downs AONB are delaying their Management Plan process until they have a definitive answer to whether planning policies can be included. It was agreed that the design guidance moves some way to addressing planning issues.

The officers discussed that through their local plans they were trying to push major development away from the AONB but with the numbers being allocated this was becoming much harder to achieve. Therefore, significant number of housing developments may be positioned within the AONB.

- 3.3 Claire Tester enquired whether the Design Guidance could be put forward as an SPD. The officers agreed that this would be a positive process to go through. .
- 3.4 The officers went through the updated Management Plan in detail:  
The following changes were agreed by the officers:
- p.5, Introduction to High Weald has been moved to the front - consultation from Cllr Soyke
  - p.5, What is an AONB wording has been clarified to include 'majority of the land is privately owned'
  - p.5, Who prepares the Management Plan included wording 'the local authorities individually adopt the Plan'
  - p.6, inclusion of 'Neighbourhood Planning' due to Parish feedback
  - P.7, inserted research reports that the AONB holds
  - p.8, Implementing action on the ground – additional comments made by Natural England to include 'cognisant of local character' and 'Net Biodiversity Gain' – positive action to improve diversity and biomass of characteristic species supported by base line evidence

and monitoring.

P.8, additional wording for Commitment from Joint Advisory Committee partners and public bodies section

**Action: officers agreed changes**

3.5 p.18, Vision: changed to 'avoiding poor development' and to add in regenerative agriculture with a definition into the glossary.

**Action: Sally Marsh to update and all other changes agreed for 'Vision' section**

3.6 p.20, Statement of Significance: A discussion took place on definitive wording for the 'Other Qualities' paragraph.

'Intrinsically dark landscape' was also agreed to be included.

**Action: It was agreed that Sally Marsh would reword this paragraph and email to the officers to be agreed.**

3.7 p.20, Objective G1, David Scully requested that as well as other water bodies that important geological sites (RIGs) were also included.

**Action: All other changes agreed**

3.8 p.26, Settlement added into key characteristics 'absence of large scale settlement extensions since the designation.....'

**Agreed to change Key Characteristics text:**

3.9 p. 26, Settlements Key Characteristics

Sally Marsh

The Group discussed re-wording and agreed to modify text to 'Absence of large towns and post-1980's settlement extensions', as a separate bullet point.

**Action: all other settlement changes agreed**

3.10 p.31, Objective R2: to include 'Produce guidance on the use of Historic Landscape Characterisation'

**Action: all changes for Routeway section were agreed**

3.11 P.35, Woodlands:

Sally Marsh explained that Kent County Council had requested to have a target for afforestation. Further investigation revealed this comment was aimed at woodland planting in flood zones. The officers agreed that it would not be appropriate to have this sort of target in the plan as the AONB already had 30% coverage of



woodland in the AONB, and it may impact on other component characteristics.

- 3.12 p. 40, Field and Heath: Sally Marsh  
An additional 'Top 5 Issue' was discussed relating to the impact of nitrogen deposits on grass and heathland. This issue largely focusses on Ashdown Forest area.  
**Action: It was agreed that this should be added into the Vision with an additional action and aim within FH3.**
- 3.13 p.47, Land based economy LBE2: Diane Russell  
A lively discussion took place on the viability of including the terminology live-work units and how they can be managed with the advent of new technology.  
**Action: It was agreed that Diane Russell would look at the wording of this and respond to the group by early October 2018.**
- 3.14 p.49, Other Qualities: Aircraft noise was added into Other qualities. Glossary to include terminology for 'Intrinsically dark landscape' and dark landscape.  
**Action: all other changes were agreed**
- 3.15 Claire Tester requested that the JAC report should be written to a wider audience. David Scully confirmed that he would look at a previous report that was written at the last review to help the process. David Scully
- 3.16 Next steps: Majority of officers confirmed that they can meet the timetable. David Scully, Tunbridge Wells BC was concerned that the Cabinet meeting could fall into April. Officers  
It was agreed that local authorities will send their internal sign off processes to adopt the management plan to the Unit.  
The Unit will endeavour to send out a final desktop version to the authorities by the mid -December 2018.
- 4.0 Designated Landscapes 2018 Review**
- 4.1 Sally Marsh informed the officers that Julian Glover is the leading of the Review of the Designated Landscapes, which forms part of the commitment of the Government's 25-Year Plan for the

Environment. The other Review Panel Members are: made up of Dame Fiona Reynolds, Sarah Mukherjee, Nicola Blackwood, Jim Dixon, James Rebanks, and Lord Cameron.

The Kent Downs, Chilterns, and High Weald, Chair of the National Association of AONBs, Philip Hygate and Howard Davies, Chief Executive, were involved with a discussion were asked to join the sub-group with Julian Glover in June 2018.

The Review will make observations on how effective National Park AONB designation has been.; how aligned the AONBs are with the Defra 25 year plan; the extension or creation of new designated areas; how to improve individual and collective governance of National Parks and AONBs; how well they connect people with the environment and community groups; and which financial model will take the designated areas into the future.

The review group has encouraged the AONBs and National Parks to put forward ambitious changes. The written review has been extended to Autumn 2019.

It was discussed that it would be good to have policies which differentiate protected landscapes from the wider landscape and to focus on development required in the area rather imposed for the whole housing target needs.

4.2 **It was agreed that the officers would pull together a group response to go towards the review and this would be an agenda item for the February meeting**

The Unit

5.0 **Update from local authorities officers**

5.1 Rother District Council:

Diane Russell informed the Group that Rother DC is preparing the submission draft for the DASA to go to cabinet.

5.2 Surrey County Council:

David Greenwood updated the Group on the Leader programmes. If there is any underspend the Leaders have been asked to offer back the funds so that they can be re-bid for. Surrey is requesting a further £400,000.

However this sector is under review And future funding may be sort through the Strategic Prosperity Fund.

**6.0 Service Level Agreement**

6.1 The officers will receive their own updated Service Level Agreement which follows the timespan of the Management Plan 2019- 2024.

This will be sent to the officers to manage through their internal sign off process.

**7.0 AONB Design guidance update:**

7.1 The AONB Design Guidance was to be discussed in detail in the afternoon, however, Claire Tester wanted to bring to the attention of the officers other guidance being produced - the 'Responsible Planting Guide' and the 'Eco-camping' Guide. The officers welcomed this guidance and look forward to seeing the reports.

The design guidance consultation process requires further discussion. The officers agreed that this guidance could be produced as a SPD, but this would require consultation to be carried out by the LPAs. The responses could be pooled so that any amendments were jointly agreed to produce the final document for adoption by the LPAs.

**8.0 Management Board Agenda:**

8.1 Areas to be put on the agenda are as follows:

Consultation responses and updated Management Plan; Gove review; potential first draft of design guidance if available.

**9.0 A.O.B**

9.1 Nature Recovery Network:

The Unit has successfully bid for a £25k grant to develop a Nature Recovery Network. This will be led by Iain Parkinson, Kew Royal Botanic Gardens, Wakehurst, through the Weald Meadows Group to gather grassland data for classification purposes. The officers agreed for the AONB it is essential to have an understanding of the semi-improved grassland which are overlooked in the planning process.

- 9.2 A discussion took place on ensuring the local authorities received the same character component map GIS layers as the Parishes. This was highlighted by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council who had noted that the field systems maps produced for parishes on the High Weald AONB website had been simplified, and there was concern they did not mirror the HLC used by TWBC. Claire Tester confirmed that the maps were based on the same HLC but just simplified the period information to medieval and other field systems. The Unit
- 9.2 Next meeting will potentially be on 30 January.

Agenda Item: 7

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

**Date:** 28 November 2018

**Title of Report:** AONB Management Plan Review 2019-24: Final Plan for Sign-Off

**By:** AONB Director

---

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

1. Agree the final Management Plan 2019-2024 and its supporting papers and recommend that individual local authorities formally adopt the Plan before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.
- 

### 1. Background

1.1 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires local authorities with land in an AONB to prepare and publish an up-to-date plan which ‘formulates their policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it’ (S89 (2)). Where AONBs cross administrative boundaries, local authorities are required to act jointly to prepare the plan (S89 (11)(b)). In the High Weald this requirement is delivered through the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC). Following a formal consultation process, the High Weald JAC recommends the joint Plan to individual local authorities who each adopt the Plan. The Plan is reviewed every five years.

1.2 Originally published in 2004 as a 20-year strategy, the High Weald Management Plan (HWMP) was deliberately concise and structured around the statutory purpose – to conserve and enhance natural beauty. It defined what natural beauty means in the High Weald in a ‘Statement of Significance’ which included identifying the key landscape character components which make the High Weald outstandingly beautiful and different to other landscapes. It then set objectives for these components and identified actions that would help to conserve and enhance them.

1.3 It was envisaged that major revisions of the Management Plan would not be necessary during this 20-year period. Indeed, despite significant changes to planning policy, sustained public spending cuts and the abolition or ‘transformation’ of many public sector functions, AONB purpose endures and currently remains supported at the highest level in government. The decision to limit HWMP reviews to relatively minor revisions in 2009 and 2014 was taken with this context in mind. Similarly in March 2017 the Joint Advisory Committee agreed to restrict the 2019-2024 version to a minor review.

1.4 Nonetheless the review has needed to take account of the potential impact of Brexit on agri-environmental policy and the significant increase in development pressure on the AONB since the last review. While the character components and management policy objectives, the most important aspects of the HWMP, remain broadly appropriate other aspects of the Plan have needed a more substantive re-consideration.

## 2. Summary of the Plan and Supporting Documents

### **The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 (appended to this report)**

#### 2.1 The Management Plan incorporates the following sections:

- A foreword by Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- A message from the Chairman of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee, including the JAC's commitment and vision
- A section on the High Weald including key figures, a description of the landscape and a brief history of the High Weald
- A section explaining what a Management Plan is, how it was prepared and how it should be used. Also how it will be implemented and monitored and the documents that accompany it.
- A section setting out AONB Policy and Legal Framework
- A section explaining what Natural Beauty includes
- The Statement of Significance
- Chapters on the High Weald's Natural Beauty:
  - Geology, landform, water systems and climate
  - Settlement
  - Routeways
  - Woodland
  - Field and heath
  - Land-based economy and related rural life
  - Other qualities
- High Weald Charter for Residents and Visitors
- Definition of terms and Glossary

### **Supporting Papers (can be accessed at on the [Joint Advisory Committee](#) webpage)**

#### Monitoring the Condition of the AONB and Performance of the AONB Management Plan

- 2.2 The Monitoring Report assesses the condition of each of the AONB landscape components using a qualitative approach which includes national and local datasets but supplements this data with expert judgements from individuals and organisations. The performance of the Management Plan is assessed by looking at performance against the indicators of success between 2009 and 2017. The information in this report was used to inform the review of the Management Plan.

#### The Consultation Statement

- 2.3 The Consultation Statement documents all the consultation activity carried out to inform the Plan and its supporting documents, the responses received and how they were taken into account. It includes links to detailed reports on the consultation events and the responses received.

#### The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

- 2.4 Consultation on the scoping report for the SEA took place between 26th April and 31st May 2017 and comments received from that consultation informed the environmental report. Objectives were taken from the SEA of the previous Management Plan with some slight variation in wording as recommended by Natural England at the scoping stage. These objectives were then used to assess the proposed objectives in the draft Management Plan

against their reasonable alternatives. Consultation on the draft Environmental Report took place alongside the Consultation Draft Management Plan between 13th June and 25th July 2018. Comments were received from Natural England and were addressed in the final version.

- 2.5 In all cases the SEA concludes that the proposed objectives in the Management Plan Review have the most or equal positive environmental effects compared to their reasonable alternatives. Some minor changes to proposed actions in the Management Plan were recommended to avoid any potential adverse affects, and these changes were incorporated in the final Management Plan.

### Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 2.6 The European Union has designated a group of protected sites, known as the Natura 2000 network, for their exceptionally important (rare, endangered or vulnerable) species and/or habitats. Sites within or close to the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are:
- Ashdown Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
  - Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA)
  - Dungeness to Pett Levels Special Protection Area (SPA)
  - Hastings Cliffs Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
  - Pevensey Levels Special Area of Conservation and Ramsar (SAC and Ramsar).
- 2.7 A Stage 1 (screening) assessment was carried out. This includes:
- 1) Determination of whether the AONB Management Plan is directly connected or necessary to the management of the Natura 2000 sites;
  - 2) Description of the AONB Management Plan;
  - 3) Characteristics of the Natura 2000 sites; and
  - 4) Assessment of the significance of any effects.
- 2.8 The assessment concluded that
- the AONB Management Plan is not directly connected or necessary to the management of the Natura 2000 sites;
  - The Management Plan does not determine the amount or location of development but rather sets objectives that should be taken into account by those taking decisions that affect the AONB. Since these objectives are intended to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB, provided the objectives themselves do not conflict with the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 sites, then the Management Plan will not have a significant effect on these sites.
  - The Management Plan objectives were assessed against the conservation objectives and, where there were considered to be potential conflicts or uncertain effects, measures were proposed to avoid these potential adverse effects. These measures have been incorporated into the Management Plan.
  - Overall, the assessment concludes that the Management Plan review 2019-2024 will not result in a significant effect on the integrity of the European sites either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. There is therefore no requirement to carry out a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

### Equality Impact Assessment

- 2.9 An Equality Impact Assessment screening has been carried out using the East Sussex County Council standard template. This concludes that the High Weald AONB Management Plan Review 2019-2024 complies with equalities legislation, including the duty to promote race,

disability and gender equality. This assessment was consulted on alongside the other documents in June and July 2018 and no comments were received.

### 3. Process and Consultation So Far

- 3.1 Formal notice of the intention to review the HWMP was sent to Natural England on 22nd March 2017 as required by Section 90, Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. A paper setting out the main issues to be considered in the review was considered by JAC on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2017, and the scope of the review was agreed. The scope of the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the HWMP Review was also agreed.
- 3.2 A series of technical workshops based around the key components of natural beauty were held in summer 2017 with outputs analysed and included in a Consultation Report which accompanies the revised Plan. Early public engagement was developed through an on-line questionnaire promoted to AONB contacts and via social media. Nearly 400 people completed the questionnaire and analysis of their responses has helped shape the list of other qualities and the proposed actions of the Plan.
- 3.3 In November 2017 the JAC received an update report which included a schedule of proposed changes to the HWMP. The changes proposed and agreed include expansion of the character statements with a page of detailed characteristics to reflect the extensive evidence developed since the last Plan; specific focus on farms and land based activities; a refreshed section focusing on other qualities, and a revision of the AONB policy section. The latter would be drafted by the National Association of AONBs to ensure national consistency of approach and counter the loss of historic AONB information from Government websites.
- 3.4 The JAC also received updates on the supporting papers being produced alongside the Plan, including:
- Strategic Environmental Assessment
  - Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report
  - Equality Impact Assessment Screening Report
  - Monitoring the Condition of the AONB and Performance of the AONB Management Plan
- 3.5 Drafting of the revised Plan text was initiated in December 2017 with the first draft of the first section circulated to the Officer Steering Group (OSG) members on 22nd January 2018 and a full draft circulated on 13th February to both the OSG and Management Board. Comments were discussed by Management Board on 7<sup>th</sup> March and OSG on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2018 and 18<sup>th</sup> April 2018. On 28<sup>th</sup> March 2018 JAC agreed the consultation draft version of the HWMP 2019-2024 subject to delegation of any final text changes to Management Board.
- 3.6 Public Consultation on the Management Plan and its supporting documents was carried out between 13<sup>th</sup> June and 25<sup>th</sup> July 2018. This included consultation with all the local authorities, coordinated by the OSG members as well as with statutory bodies and publicised via e-news and social media. 143 responses were received, 115 from individuals and 28 from organisations. 82% of the respondents 'strongly agreed' with the AONB Vision and 84% of the respondents 'strongly agreed' with the Statement of Significance. There were 34 comments on the overall Plan and 234 comments on the character components, with the highest numbers on the Geology and Settlement components. The comments and proposed actions as a result are set out in the Consultation Statement.
- 3.7 These responses were discussed by OSG on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2018 and the subsequent amendments to the Management Plan were agreed subject to some minor amendments circulated by email subsequently.



3.8 A further statutory (sec 90) consultation was carried out with Natural England in October 2018 on the final Plan, the Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Habitats Regulations Assessment. Natural England confirmed on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2018 that:

- It considers that the Plan meets the statutory requirement. That the constituent local authorities for the High Weald AONB and wider project area have, by acting jointly, produced a plan that formulates their policy for their AONB and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it.
- It considers that the Plan has broadly followed the national guidance and therefore represents a comprehensive strategy for the management of the AONB. The AONB Plan also represents good practice in the following areas:
  - Recognition of and policies that will allow actions towards the delivery of the 25 Year Environment Plan, including development of nature recovery networks and the need for measurable biodiversity net gain;
  - A clear and detailed vision for the AONB;
  - The use of local landscape character assessments as a strong evidence base for the Plan and information about the local landscape;
  - Recognition of the High Weald National Character Area profile; and,
  - Proposed action tables that clearly describe the actions required to achieve each objective and provide an indication of who should have regard for each of these actions.
- It recommends that, during implementation of this Plan and production of the next, the JAC:
  - Considers how the plan can further contribute to the achievement of environmental net gain from development. This would complement the aim to achieve net gain through agri-environment schemes detailed in the aims and actions of Objective FH4;
  - In line with the 25 Year Environment Plan, strength could be added to the Management Plan and some of the individual objectives by taking a Natural Capital approach.
- It notes that the Habitats Regulations Screening Report has been produced by the High Weald AONB Unit and assumes that the competent authorities intend to adopt this Report to fulfil their duty under the Habitats Regulations. It concurs with the conclusions of the Report that the Plan can be screened out from further stages of assessment because significant effects are unlikely to occur, either alone or in combination.
- It is pleased to see that comments made by Natural England on the Strategic Environmental Assessment have been incorporated.
- It recognises that the production of this final draft represents the culmination of many months of intensive work on the part of the High Weald AONB Unit and congratulates the JAC on the huge effort, and for the significant contribution the review makes to ensuring that 15 per cent of the land area of England is under the protection of a statutory AONB management plan.

#### 4. Conclusion

4.1 The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 has completed all of the statutory stages of a review and has been subject to significant public and expert engagement and scrutiny. It is therefore recommended that the JAC agrees the final version of the Plan and recommends individual local authorities to adopt it according to their own procedures over the next few months. The Plan and its supporting documents will then be submitted to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Agenda Item: 8

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

**Date:** 28<sup>th</sup> November 2018

**Title of Report:** The Government (Glover) Review of Designated Landscapes (National Parks and AONBs)

**By:** AONB Director

---

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

1. Note the report and;
  2. Approve the draft High Weald AONB JAC response to the Review of Designated Landscapes
- 

### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 The government has recently stated that the England's National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty have been a great success and that England is a more beautiful and more diverse place because previous generations took the care to campaign for the creation of designated landscapes.
- 1.2 In 1949, the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act designated landscapes in Britain to preserve and enhance their natural beauty and provide recreational opportunities for all members of the public. This legislation created a statutory framework for National Parks and AONBs. For National Parks, the purposes are to conserve and enhance natural beauty and to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of national parks. For AONBs, the primary purpose is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area.
- 1.3 As the oldest National Park approaches its 70th anniversary next year, the government decided it was the right time to renew this mission by instigating a Review of English designated landscapes. The government has stated that the Review will not diminish the character or independence of England's designated landscapes and it does not aim to impose new burdens on them or on the people who live and work in the areas they cover.
- 1.4 Instead, the Review has been set up to ask what might be done better, what changes could assist this, and whether definitions and systems - which in many cases date back to their original creation - are still sufficient. The government have also made it very clear that the Review will not propose reductions in either the geographic extent or the protections given to England's designated landscapes.

## **2.0 Context and objectives of the Review**

2.1 In January 2018 the Government published a 25-Year Plan for the Environment (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan> ). This Plan outlines the government's vision for improving the environment over a generation by connecting people with nature and helping wildlife to thrive. And in setting out an approach to protect landscapes and habitats in England, it also committed to undertaking a review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In the context of meeting both local and national priorities and wider environmental governance, the Review is looking into and will make recommendations on:

- The existing statutory purposes for National Parks and AONBs and how effectively they are being met
- The alignment of these purposes with the goals set out in the 25-Year Plan for the Environment
- The case for extension or creation of new designated areas
- How to improve individual and collective governance of National Parks and AONBs, and how that governance interacts with other national assets
- The financing of National Parks and AONBs
- How to enhance the environment and biodiversity in existing designations
- How to build on the existing eight-point plan for National Parks and to connect more people with the natural environment from all sections of society and improve health and wellbeing
- How well National Parks and AONBs support communities

2.2 The Review is being led by Julian Glover and he is being supported by an experienced advisory team. This team will draw on existing evidence and opinions submitted by interested groups and individuals during the course of the Review. The Review team have also visited people and places in a range of designated landscapes and they are expected to report their findings in 2019.

## **3.0 The High Weald AONB JAC response to the Review of Designated Landscapes (National Parks and AONBs)**

3.1 At its most recent meeting in October and following a 'workshop' session, the High Weald Management Board outlined their views and thoughts on designated landscapes in the context of the Review. It was agreed that this discussion would be used to inform the JAC's response to the Review consultation and that this draft response would then come to this JAC meeting for approval.

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

# Review of Designated Landscapes (AONBs and National Parks)

## High Weald AONB Partnership Response



The High Weald AONB Partnership welcomes the attention the Government is paying to the beauty of the English landscape. As the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1949 legislation establishing designated landscapes approaches, pressures on these landscapes is great and increasing. This Review comes at a very opportune time as there is a need for new thinking and innovative approaches to strengthen the collective and local management of England's finest landscapes.



### Background to the consultation

On 27 May 2018 Environment Secretary, Michael Gove, announced the Review of Designated Landscapes, a commitment of the Government's 25-year plan for the Environment. The Review aims *"not to diminish the character or independence of our designated landscapes, or to impose new burdens on them and the people who live and work in the areas they cover. Instead, its purpose is to ask what might be done better, what changes could assist them, and whether definitions and systems - which in many cases date back to their original creation - are still sufficient."*

Further information

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/national-parks-review-launched>

## What the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty offers the Nation

The High Weald AONB is a nationally important landscape. It is the product of a long history of human collaboration with the natural environment and it is rightly celebrated for its stunning scenic beauty. The High Weald is one of the best preserved medieval landscapes in North-West Europe and this is why it is considered worthy of protection and celebration: it has remained a unique, distinct, and recognisable area for at least the last 700 years.

As a nation, we instinctively want to look after our beautiful and much loved landscapes, buildings, and special places. We intuitively understand the importance of our built and natural places and their capacity to inspire and also the unique combination of qualities that makes the High Weald a wonderful place to live, work, and visit.

The High Weald AONB extends over 1500 km<sup>2</sup> and across four counties at the heart of the UK's only global super-region, London and the south east of England, and at 30 miles from inner London, it offers within easy reach millions of people access to the natural beauty of a vibrant working countryside.

The High Weald AONB has been crafted over generations by land-based activities such as agriculture and woodland management. This landscape has and continues to provide our essential needs, public benefits such as clean air, clean water, and wildlife habitats along with food, building materials, and an extensive network of public rights of way and open space for people to enjoy.

Nearly 200,000 people live either within the AONB boundary or in the towns entirely surrounded by the AONB with a further one million on its doorstep just beyond. The High Weald AONB is a unique, cherished and valuable natural asset but is facing huge challenges including climate change, urbanisation, declining profitability of small-scale livestock farming and increasing demand for the services it provides, particularly recreation.

The High Weald's 400km<sup>2</sup> of trees and woodland, mostly ancient, provides vital habitats for characteristic wildlife, a sustainable building material, and along with the High Weald's 655km<sup>2</sup> of grassland, a valuable carbon sink. The lakes and reservoirs and the 4,600km of water courses and the aquifers below provide water and the 13,400 ponds and the river's floodplains provide water storage and flood management. It's the High Weald is blessed with 2,500km of footpaths and bridleways, along with extensive and interconnected open spaces, and these offer opportunities for the millions of people living on its doorstep to experience the beauty of nature.

The review of National Parks and AONBs gives a once in a generation opportunity to consider how the High Weald AONB and other designated landscapes can collectively be managed to ensure they continue to provide a full range of benefits to the nation while protecting and enhancing their distinctive character and delivering the ambition of the government's 25 Year Environment Plan.

## **Current governance arrangements for the High Weald AONB**

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Parks together represent the nation's finest landscapes. Partnerships of local representatives exist for each AONB and they employ small multi-disciplinary teams (AONB Units) to write, publish, and regularly review AONB Management Plans to bring together a set of locally prepared and agreed policy statements for managing these national assets.

The advice and guidance on the conservation and enhancement of the High Weald AONB landscape is co-ordinated by the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee. This is a partnership of 15 local authorities with some or all of their area lying within the AONB along with representatives of landowning, farming, forestry, and land management, community and business interests. This partnership manages an annual core budget of approximately £320,000, 25% of which comes from the local authorities and 75% from DEFRA under a multi-year funding agreement (currently 4 years), and employing a small staff unit of 5 FTEs.

In 2019 the High Weald AONB Partnership will celebrate its 30<sup>th</sup> birthday alongside the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. For 30 years the Partnership has been working collectively at a local level to:

- prepare the AONB Management Plan. The fourth edition of the current Management Plan (2004 – 2024) will be published in March 2019.
- coordinate development planning and landscape management policy guidance across the 15 partner authorities through a dedicated working group promoting and implementing shared approaches such as the High Weald Design Guide.
- take an integrated and natural capital approach to the conservation and enhancement of the High Weald landscape.
- promote national policy at a local level and provide guidance back to national and regional decision- and policy-makers on the reality of the implementation of policy at the local level..
- take a lead on and work collaboratively with agencies, NGOs, farmers, landowners, businesses, and communities to deliver integrated initiatives such as the Natural England funded Rother and Dudwell Farmers' Group
- operate non-countryside stewardship grant schemes that deliver environmental outcomes e.g. the Weald Landscape Partnership Scheme, the Sustainable Development Fund, the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative, and Sussex Lund.
- develop and implement strategic landscape scale initiatives demonstrating innovative habitat restoration and enhancement schemes such as the Weald Meadows Initiative.
- take the lead in celebrating the beauty of the landscape and inspiring young people to lead healthy and happy lives through a greater understanding and enjoyment of the countryside e.g. establishing and managing the well respected and long running High Weald Heroes primary school education programme.

## **The High Weald JAC Partnership's response to the Review:**

### **Status and recognition**

The High Weald AONB is the same size as the North York Moors National Park but it has a population that's six times greater. The High Weald's resident population is more than a third of that of the combined total population of residents in all of England's ten National Parks.

In terms of providing public goods, the High Weald AONB, with 8% of England's Ancient Woodland resource on less than 1% of England's total land area, has the largest coverage of ancient woodland of any designated landscape. The High Weald AONB protects the headwaters of seven main river catchments and supports 13,400 ponds – five times the national average. Despite its large population, one quarter of the AONB is provides for enhanced carbon sequestration in its undisturbed soils. The interconnectedness of the landscape for wildlife and people is enhanced by its 12,500 km of hedgerows and 2,500 km of rural public rights of way.

However, despite Government recognition that AONB landscapes are equivalent in value to those of National Parks, the status of AONBs in decision and policy making, and the tools available to secure landscape conservation and enhancement are not the same. While AONB partnerships and local

authority partners have worked hard to protect AONBs, the range and intensity of pressures on the landscape is increasing and the policy, legislative, and practical mechanisms available are not fit for their purpose.

**The Partnership asks that:**

- **Section 85 of the CROW Act 2000 is strengthened by replacing the Duty of Regard with a Duty of Due Regard based on the principles of proportionality and relevance.**
- **The status of the AONB Management Plan is strengthened by placing a duty on relevant organizations to implement AONB Management Plans.**
- **Recognition that AONBs have the ‘highest status of protection’ in relation to the conservation and enhancement of landscape beauty, natural heritage, and cultural heritage and that this is reflected in law.**
- **Parity of designated landscapes is recognised by aligning the purposes of England’s Designated Landscapes and through a single designation category which may be supported by different governance structures appropriate to individual circumstances.**
- **Natural England significantly raises the profile of the Duty of Due Regard.**

## **Planning and development**

The cumulative impact of development happening now and proposed for the future is putting at risk the distinctive character of the High Weald landscape and its ability to provide vital public goods. The High Weald has seen the highest growth of housing development of any AONB in England rising from 186 units approved per year in 2001-2011 to 895 units per year 2015-2017. Major developments of typically 40-600 houses per site represent the most significant threat to the character of this essentially small-scale medieval landscape.

Rural incomes in the High Weald AONB are slightly lower than the south east of England average whereas house prices are 42% higher. Affordability is a key issue for residents and over 80% of land-based workers express concern that affordability of housing and workspace limits the viability and growth of their businesses in the High Weald. Only a handful of smaller developments deliver truly affordable housing. Yet, with better design, stronger planning control and an increase in community-led housing, growth could be accommodated and housing could be truly affordable without damaging the High Weald’s distinctive landscape character.

Unlike National Park Authorities, AONB partnerships do not have legal or executive powers or their own planning or development control functions; this responsibility remains with the constituent local authorities – 15 in the case of the High Weald AONB. The High Weald AONB partnership is not a statutory consultee on planning matters and it remains each local planning authority’s decision whether or not they seek our advice on planning matters.

While the AONB Management Plan can provide some coordination in terms of objectives, it is not a planning document and it cannot replace an overarching strategic plan for the AONB. When it comes to housing matters the difference between the level of protection given to National Parks and AONBs is very stark. National Parks benefit from their own Circular (English National Parks and the Broads 2010) which states in paragraph 78 “The Government recognises that the Parks are not suitable locations for unrestricted housing and does not therefore provide general housing targets

for them. The expectation is that new housing will be focused on meeting affordable housing requirements, supporting local employment opportunities and key services". This level of protection for National Parks was reinforced recently by the White Paper 'Right Homes in the Right Places' by deliberately excluding National Parks from the Government's new standard methodology for calculating housing need.

In contrast, all of the local planning authorities with land in an AONB are expected to follow the new methodology, which in the south of England significantly increases housing numbers due to the affordability multiplier applied. Whilst AONBs are mentioned as a potential constraint to the provision of these numbers, there is no consistent approach to how these numbers should be constrained by local planning authorities or the Planning Inspectorate, with some authorities with large proportions of their area in an AONB being expected to meet not only their own housing needs but also those of adjacent urban areas. This creates a context where local planning authorities feel pressured to accept significant levels and scales of development within an AONB which would not be permitted if it were a National Park.

**The Partnership asks that:**

- **The extent of provision of public goods in designated landscapes is recognised as a constraint to absorbing development and as a limiting factor in the standard method for calculating housing need.**
- **Permitted development rights are removed in designated landscapes where development may compromise the conservation and enhancement of the landscape or the provision of public goods.**
- **Community-led housing and development schemes in designated landscapes are provided with additional support, especially where they provide for the needs of rural land-based workers.**
- **The role of planning in supporting the conservation and enhancement of the AONB landscape and associated public goods is recognised. Also AONB partnerships should be afforded statutory consultee status on Town and Country planning matters.**
- **AONB partnerships are mandated and supported to coordinate the establishment of green infrastructure from the AONB and into and across neighbouring land villages, towns, and cities.**

## **Land management and nature recovery**

The report of the National Parks Committee in 1947 stated that AONB boundaries were drawn so as to include land of high scientific value, important geologically and containing complex communities of plant and animal life. It was to farming and forestry that the Committee looked to maintain this value.

AONBs tend to be valuable areas for biodiversity either because they represent the survival of small scale farmed and wooded landscapes with a high degree of complexity and connectivity or because they protect extensive tracks of natural and semi-natural habitat.

The biodiversity value of these iconic and distinctive landscapes is largely the result of the long collaboration between people and nature, which has been underpinned by land-based activities such



as agriculture and woodland management. The continuation of these activities in an environmentally responsible way is vital for biodiversity and the continued conservation and enhancement of these landscapes.

The High Weald AONB has 3500 surviving historic farmsteads from which the area's pastoral mixed farming landscape was traditionally managed. Farm sizes and fields are typically small with a high proportion of woodland, hedges and shaws (wide wooded strips). This intimate mix of farmed landscape and woodland still supports a wealth of biodiversity, and has the potential to underpin a well-connected nature recovery network.

The High Weald landscape is at a human scale and it requires people, retaining a strong rural tradition with small family farms and intergenerational woodland workers. Evidence of its cultural heritage is ubiquitous with over 70% of the fields medieval in origin and over 12,500 km of, mostly historic, field boundaries. Maintaining this beautiful landscape is expensive. The new environmental land management scheme offers opportunities both to support traditional management and encourage regenerative agriculture and land management, utilising new technology and bringing new entrants to land management with the aim of providing both healthy food and the recovery of nature.

The High Weald AONB partnership has long believed the future of food, farming, and the environment depends on the acceptance that England's distinct countryside is the most efficient and environmentally responsible means of supplying our food and forestry needs. This future depends primarily on the continued involvement of people throughout the country working in the land-based sector.

Any reforms to the current system of farm payments and support should look to design a system that complements the existing efforts of the High Weald AONB partnership to ensure that the management and use of land incorporates the needs of farming and forestry, wildlife, landscape and cultural conservation, natural capital and ecosystem services, food and other land-based products. A more flexible, responsive and adaptive land management system based on regenerative agriculture is critical to improving and maintaining biodiversity, producing high quality and ethically produced food, and ensuring the High Weald is more resilient to threats such as climate change.

**The Partnership asks that:**

- **AONB Management Plans are recognised as providing the strategic landscape objectives for future environmental land management programmes.**
- **AONB Management Plans have a central role in the restoration of nature and ecosystem services and that AONB partnerships are properly resourced and supported to lead a Nature Recovery Network within their area and which also extends across non-designated landscapes.**
- **AONB Management Plans play a strong role in setting the framework for the delivery of a new Environmental Land Management Scheme.**
- **Clarification is provided to ensure that the role of cultural heritage is clearly recognised as part of natural beauty.**

## Health and wellbeing

Concerns over widespread industrialisation, the expansion of towns and cities and their effect on people's health and wellbeing, was a key factor in the establishment of National Parks in 1949 as places to experience the beauty of nature. Both AONBs and National Parks collectively provide this same service to the urban populations today. The numbers of people visiting these landscapes for the recreation opportunities they provide and the spiritual renewal they offer has never been greater.

A carefully framed, common second purpose for Designated Landscapes, to take in health and wellbeing should be considered as part of the Review. This must not be to the detriment of the primary purpose to conserve and enhance the landscape.

### The Partnership asks that:

- **The Government considers a carefully framed second purpose for the Designated Landscapes emphasising benefits to people such as health and well-being (drawing from the second purpose of National Parks and AONB Conservation Boards).**
- **Designated landscapes are properly resourced to promote opportunities for health and well-being through experiencing the beauty of nature, to people living within and outside the AONB boundaries.**
- **Local authorities with responsibility for AONBs are encouraged to develop joint access investment and management plans to enhance and manage recreational demand within AONBs.**

## Governance, operations and expertise

The High Weald partnership has been a successful partnership with a strong track record for the last 30 years. It brings local democratic accountability to the delivery of national policy. Fifteen local authorities work together along with Natural England, Forestry Commission, and representatives of landowners, recreation groups and the community.

The JAC manages a small budget, with Defra contributing 75% and local authorities 25%, which funds the AONB Unit, a small team with expertise in landscape and nature conservation, planning, land management, education and communication.

The High Weald partnership currently receives a contribution of approximately £270,000 each year (this is the equivalent to the cost of a 2-bedroomed flat within the AONB) from DEFRA. The contribution is based on a formula that considers size and administrative complexity. The AONB Unit raises external funding from a wide range of bodies including the Heritage Lottery Fund for the delivery of projects which help support delivery of the AONB Management Plan.

The High Weald partnership does not aspire to the current National Park governance model as we recognize that the mechanism by which the AONB's purposes are delivered vary according to local requirements; AONB governance models should therefore continue to reflect local requirements. However, along with other large and administratively complex AONBs facing similar challenges,

there is an increasing need for a stronger and better resourced governance model to ensure the on-going conservation and enhancement of the High Weald AONB.

**The Partnership asks that:**

- **The High Weald AONB is recognised as a large and administratively complex AONB facing a wide range and considerable number of challenges within the south east of England requiring additional resources to tackle pressures and coordinate enhancement of the AONB. An expanded specialist team could, for example, support local authorities with assessing the increasing impact on the High Weald’s landscape character and so achieving better and appropriate development in more suitable locations.**
- **AONB governance structures are strengthened to enable them to oversee and run better integrated and more cost effective delivery of public services that achieve the AONB purposes of designation.**
- **Training and increased awareness of and about AONB designation is recommended for all relevant organizations to assist them in meeting and discharging their statutory obligations and responsibilities in respect of the AONB designation.**
- **Local governance models ensure the AONB national status is recognized, possibly through improved terms of reference for members of the AONB partnership, support to build their skills and expertise and/or the use of appropriate appointees.**
- **The need for a national statutory advocate for landscape to champion the role of AONB partnerships across government is recognized and implemented.**

Agenda Item: 9

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

**Date:** 28 November 2018

**Title of Report:** Draft Revenue Budget 2019/20

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

**Purpose:** To consider the draft Revenue Budget 2019/20 and agree it as a basis for consultation with contributing bodies

---

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to approve:

1. the draft budget for 2019/20; and
  2. the commencement of budget consultation with the local authorities and Defra.
- 

### **1. FINANCIAL APPRAISAL**

- 1.1. A draft budget for 2019/20 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 2019/20. This has been achieved through an increase in the portion of Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) funding allocated to core.
- 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 2019/20 will be presented to the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) for approval at its March 2019 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 £128,800 in 2019/20 are likely to generate additional funds for core activities and projects of at least £629,300.

Defra Core Funding	£232,500
Other Core Income	£ 9,800
Defra Projects Funding	£ 41,100
Non-Defra Projects Funding	<u>£345,900</u>
Total External Funding	£629,300
Local Authority Funding	£ 83,700
Local Authority Projects	<u>£ 45,100</u>
Total Local Authorities	£128,800

**Total contributions** **£758,100**

#### The High Weald Unit's Work Plan 2019/20

- 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 new 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.

#### High Weald JAC Budget 2018/19

- 2.7. The forecast outturn for 2018/19 is to break-even. The forecast reserves at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 are £139,500.

### **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 2019/20 is presented.
- 3.2. The draft budget assumes an allocation of the Defra contribution between core and projects of 85% to core and 15% to projects. The draft budget assumes that local authorities will strive to maintain their contributions at the 2018/19 level.

## **Core Budget – Expenditure**

### **Summary**

- 3.3. Inflation has been applied at rate of 2% for staff and 0% for all other costs.
- 3.4. The budget has increased by £7,400 due to costs related to maternity cover.

### **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); Communications Officer (0.6FTE) including maternity cover, Team Support Officer (0.8FTE); and a budget for finance support.
- 3.6. Staff costs are subject to inflation of 2%, amounting to a £4,200 increase, and incremental progression amounting to a further £2,300 increase. The current budget assumes contributions to the East Sussex Pension Fund of 17.85% in 2019/20.

### **Accommodation/Office Equipment**

- 3.7. The reduced budget covers the cost of office rent and maintenance, office running costs and office supplies. It has been reduced by £5,700 as business rates are no longer charged.

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

- 3.8. 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.
- 3.9. The Support services budget has increased from £27,300 to £31,700. In 2018/19 ESCC made the decision to increase the lump sum contribution payment into the pension fund thereby reducing the salary based employee's pension contributions rate. The £4,400 increase in support service cost is the JAC's contribution to the increased lump sum. There is a net nil cost to the JAC budget. It assumes IT, personnel and financial support will continue to be provided by ESCC and the JAC's clerk service will continue to be provided by the High Weald JAC's Team Support Officer.

## **Core Budget – Income**

### **Summary**

- 3.10. The draft budget shows contributions from local authorities at the same level as 2018/19, with the exception of Kent County Council. The Council has advised that its contribution will reduce from £10,000 to £9000. The Defra contribution to core has been increased to balance the core budget.

### **Defra**

- 3.11. The 2019/20 core contribution is assumed in this report to be £232,500. The contribution includes the inflationary increase of £4,627 and an increased allocation of £5,673.

### **Local Authority Contributions**

- 3.12. 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 2018/19 level.

### **Other Contributions**

- 3.13. The draft budget assumes other contributions to the core budget of £9,800 from charges to projects for management, administration and office costs.

### **Core Budget - Reserves**

- 3.14. The JAC reserves at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 are estimated to be £139,500, the same as the forecast for 31 March 2019.

### **Self-Funding Projects**

- 3.15. 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.
- 3.16. The project budget allows for 2.2FTE project officers: Land Management Project Officers (1.6FTE) and an Education Officer (0.6FTE).
- 3.17. Local authority contributions are primarily those made in prior years through the Project Enabling Fund or to specific projects, for example High Weald Heroes.
- 3.18. 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 20 June 2018 members approved grant awards of £176,456.
- 3.19. National Grid and Sussex Lund will make annual contributions towards the management of the Schemes (£16,000 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.
- 3.20. 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.
- 3.21. The Defra grant contribution allocated to Partnership Projects is £41,100.

## **4. FINANCIAL ISSUES 2019/20 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 2019/20 assuming local authorities maintain their core contribution at the 2018/19 level.
- 4.3. The Defra contribution is conditional on match funding equivalent to 25% of the core funding in cash terms being secured from local authorities, such that Defra funding does not exceed 75% of the total Defra and local authority contribution. 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 2019/20 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 2018/19 to provide the cash match required to meet the Defra contract requirements.
  - That employer's pension costs for 2019/20 will be 17.85%.
  - That salary inflation for 2019/20 will be 2%.
  - That inflation for other costs for 2019/20 will be 0%.
  - That business rates will not be reintroduced.

## **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 2019/20.
- 6.4. Support for the draft budget will provide the JAC with the capacity to deliver most of its core functions in 2019/20.

Jill Fisher  
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.

£'000	2018/19		2019/20					2020/21	
	Actual	Core Budget	Original	Budget			Indicative		
			Budget	Inflation	Pressures	Other	Budget	Budget	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
<b>Expenditure</b>									
236.0	Staff costs	239.7	240.1	239.7	4.2	7.4	0.0	251.3	250.8
35.4	Accommodation/office equipment	37.2	31.5	37.2	0.0	0.0	(5.7)	31.5	32.1
11.2	Partnership running costs	11.5	12.4	11.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.5	11.7
27.3	Support services	27.3	31.7	27.3	0.0	0.0	4.4	31.7	31.7
<b>309.9</b>	<b>Total Core Expenditure</b>	<b>315.7</b>	<b>315.7</b>	<b>315.7</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>(1.3)</b>	<b>326.0</b>	<b>326.3</b>
<b>Income</b>									
222.2	Defra	(222.2)	(222.2)	(222.2)	(4.6)	0.0	(5.7)	(232.5)	(234.7)
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)	(9.0)	(9.0)	0.0	0.0	0.0	(9.0)	(9.0)
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)
17.5	Other income	(8.8)	(9.8)	(9.8)	0.0	0.0	0.0	(9.8)	(7.9)
<b>324.4</b>	<b>Total Core Income</b>	<b>(315.7)</b>	<b>(315.7)</b>	<b>(315.7)</b>	<b>(4.6)</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>(5.7)</b>	<b>(326.0)</b>	<b>(326.3)</b>
14.5	Surplus/(deficit) transfer to/(from) reserves	0.0	(0.0)	0.0	0.4	(7.4)	7.0	0.0	(0.0)
<b>0.0</b>	<b>Net Core Budget</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

**Self Funding Projects**

See Appendix C for detail

150.3	JAC expenditure on self-funded projects	419.2	419.2	432.1				432.1	432.1
61.0	Defra contribution to self-funded projects	(46.8)	(46.8)	(41.1)				(41.1)	(41.1)
	Local authorities contributions	(33.2)	(22.6)	(45.1)				(45.1)	
	Other contributions to self-funded projects	(339.2)	(349.8)	(345.9)				(345.9)	(391.0)
<b>211.3</b>	<b>Net Self-Funded Project Budget</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>(0.0)</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>			<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

**Total High Weald JAC**

535.7	Total core and project expenditure	734.9	734.9	747.8	4.2	7.4	(1.3)	758.1	758.4
535.7	Total core and project income	(734.9)	(734.9)	(747.8)	0.0	(4.6)	0.0	(5.7)	(758.4)
<b>0.0</b>	<b>Total High Weald JAC Budget</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>(0.4)</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>(7.0)</b>	<b>(0.0)</b>

Defra Funding	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
	£000	£000	£000
Defra funding on core budget	(222.2)	(232.5)	(234.7)
Defra funding on projects budget	(46.8)	(41.1)	(41.1)
Total Defra Funding	(269.0)	(273.6)	(275.8)

Reserves	£000
Reserves at 1 April 2018	139.5
Transfer to/(from) reserves 2018/19	0.0
Transfer to/(from) reserves 2019/20	0.0
Reserves at 31 March 2020	139.5

**HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**SELF FUNDING PROJECTS OUTTURN 2018/19 & INDICATIVE BUDGET 2019/20**

Appendix C

	Budget 2018/19			Forecast 2018/19			Indicative Budget 2019/20		
	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>4.7</b>			<b>6.4</b>			<b>10.3</b>		
Defra		(3.7)			(5.2)			(8.9)	
Local authorities		0.0			0.0			(0.7)	
Other		(1.0)	(0.0)		(1.2)	0.0		(0.7)	0.0
<b>High Weald Heroes</b>									
<b>JAC expenditure</b>	<b>26.2</b>			<b>25.4</b>			<b>25.9</b>		
Defra		(13.1)			(12.7)			(12.9)	
Local authorities		(13.1)			(12.7)			(13.0)	
Other		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0
<b><u>2 Management Plan Evidence and Guidance</u></b>									
<b>JAC expenditure</b>	<b>20.0</b>			<b>18.8</b>			<b>10.0</b>		
Defra		(20.0)			(18.8)			(10.0)	
Other		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0
<b><u>3 Landscape Enhancement</u></b>									
<b>JAC expenditure</b>	<b>358.3</b>			<b>343.7</b>			<b>375.9</b>		
Defra		0.0			(10.1)			(9.3)	
Environment Agency		0.0			(7.0)			(10.0)	
Water Catchment Partnership (KWT)		0.0			(5.0)			0.0	
Local authorities		(20.1)			(9.9)			(21.4)	
Other		0.0			(3.3)			0.0	
Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund		(21.5)			(29.6)			(21.5)	
National Grid		(102.2)			(84.7)			(93.7)	
Sussex Lund (Charities Aid Foundation)		(214.5)	0.0		(194.1)	0.0		(220.0)	0.0
<b><u>4 Project Development</u></b>									
<b>JAC expenditure</b>	<b>10.0</b>			<b>24.9</b>			<b>10.0</b>		
Defra		(10.0)			0.0			0.0	
Natural England		0.0			(24.9)			0.0	
Local authorities		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0		(10.0)	0.0
<b>JAC expenditure (to Appendix A)</b>	<b>419.2</b>			<b>419.2</b>			<b>432.1</b>		
<b>Expenditure funded by Defra (to Appendix A)</b>		<b>(46.8)</b>			<b>(46.8)</b>			<b>(41.1)</b>	
<b>Expenditure funded by LAs (to Appendix A)</b>		<b>(33.2)</b>			<b>(22.6)</b>			<b>(45.1)</b>	
<b>Expenditure funded by Other (to Appendix A)</b>		<b>(339.2)</b>			<b>(349.8)</b>			<b>(345.9)</b>	
<b>TOTAL JAC expenditure/income</b>	<b>419.2</b>	<b>(419.2)</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>419.2</b>	<b>(419.2)</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>432.1</b>	<b>(432.1)</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Agenda item: 10

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

**Date:** 28 November 2018

**Title of Report:** High Weald Nature Recovery Area Project

**By:** AONB Director

**Purpose:** To outline partnership work to develop a grassland-focused High Weald Weald Nature Recovery Area to meet the objectives of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and the AONB Management Plan.

---

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to note:

1. Action being taken to start to deliver the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024.

---

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Natural England has awarded the High Weald AONB Partnership a £30,000 contract to:

- outline a model for a High Weald Nature Recovery Area (NRA) focused on grassland restoration at landscape level, led by farmers and land managers
- highlight grassland restoration evidence, and recommend techniques and support for potential take up through the national Nature Recovery Network (NRN) and future agri-environment schemes.

1.2 The proposal is one of five national 'front runner pilots' being supported by Natural England.

1.3 The contract will be completed by 31 March 2019. It is anticipated that the proposal may lead to a trial of some of the recommendations in 2019.

## 2. CONTEXT

### 25Year Environment Plan and post-Brexit agricultural policy

2.1 The loss of flower-rich grassland and decline in pollinators, and the subsequent need to restore and connect habitats at scale, are well documented. An opportunity to implement solutions is provided by the Nature Recovery Network ambition of the 25 Year Environment Plan. Alongside a new post-Brexit agriculture policy, there is a once in a lifetime prospect to

design and support an approach to enable farmers and land managers to restore flower-rich grasslands at scale and get pollinators back to a steady state.

#### High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2014

- 2.2 The High Weald AONB is a known refuge for unimproved, species-rich grassland. They are not concentrated in one area but scattered across the AONB in small patches - jewels in a medieval landscape that cover less than 3% of the AONB. Many of these grasslands are designated as SSSIs or local wildlife sites. Research in support of the AONB Management Plan suggest there is also a significant amount of non-designated, species-rich grassland which may extend to up to 40% of grassland in the AONB.
- 2.3 The AONB Management Plan identifies these grasslands as the High Weald's rarest and most threatened habitat with huge potential for restoration and enhancement. The Field and Heath section of the Plan has an objective 'to enhance the ecological function of field and heath as part of the complex mosaic of High Weald habitats' and sets out actions by which this objective could be achieved.

#### Weald Meadows Initiative and Weald Meadows Group

- 2.4 The High Weald AONB Partnership has a track record in driving actions that support species-rich grassland management and managed the Weald Meadows Initiative, which had a dedicated meadows officer, from 1996 to 2009.
- 2.5 Recognising a renewed need to drive greater recognition and support for the area's grasslands the Partnership re-formed the Weald Meadows Group in November 2017. The Group aims to protect and enhance botanically-rich grasslands in the High Weald AONB by: co-ordinating conservation action; advancing scientific knowledge; promoting best practice; and advocating more effective regulation.
- 2.6 Group members currently include: Royal Botanic Gardens Kew (Chair), the High Weald AONB Partnership, Sussex University, Natural England, Sussex Biological Records Centre, High Weald Landscape Trust, Buglife, East Sussex Highways and independent grassland experts.

### **3 THE PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 The contract has several components and will provide recommendations on:
- how net environmental gain can be achieved for a rare and threatened habitat
  - how a network of recovery sites can function in a landscape-scale way
  - a targeting approach that recognises the need for public benefits from nature recovery
  - how to evaluate success - ecological and wider, in an easy and meaningful way
  - successful grassland restoration techniques
  - building a sustainable partnership to support a NRA
  - financial and other incentives required for land managers to be involved
  - a land manager support package of advice, training and other practical help
  - lessons learnt to inform the design of future agri-environment schemes.
- 3.2 The recommendations are being produced collaboratively through a number of project groups, each involving a range of local and national stakeholders, led by either High Weald AONB Partnership officers or a Meadows Group member.

The final report will include case studies of grassland restoration projects from across the area, highlighting the factors which are critical to recovery success.

The report will also include a costed proposal for trialling the recommendations, with a view to developing a larger- scale project in future.

#### **4 CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 The High Weald's species-rich grasslands continue to be at risk and there is a need for renewed local action to highlight this risk and work proactively to mitigate it.
- 4.2 The Weald Meadows Group has re-formed in recognition of this need.
- 4.3 The contract award by Natural England is welcome, and evidence that the High Weald's grasslands, and local expertise in their management, is recognised and valued.
- 4.4 The JAC is recommended to welcome the action that is being taken to start to deliver the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024.

Gerry Sherwin  
Business Manager for the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Agenda Item: 11

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

**Date:** 28<sup>th</sup> November 2018

**Title of Report:** Risk Management

**By:** AONB Director

---

## **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 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 remain the 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 majority of the local authority partners on the JAC have maintained the local authority contributions to the core budget, albeit without an increase in line with inflation.

## **2.0 Key risks 2019/20 and beyond**

- 2.1 Towards the end of January 2016 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the funding in real terms for Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty partnerships (and National Park Authorities) would be protected for the four years until the end of the year 2019/20.
- 2.2 This decision was welcomed at the time and it has ensured the necessary breathing space to continue to innovate with a degree of greater certainty. However, as we approach the final year of the protected funding period and given the backdrop of increasing uncertainty owing to a number of factors, it should be noted that local authority contributions towards the core business of the JAC are going to remain under pressure during this period. It should also be noted that there is a significant risk the Chancellor of the Exchequer may choose not to re-new a stable and predictable funding settlement for AONB partnerships from April 2020.

## **3.0 Risk mitigation**

- 3.1 The High Weald AONB Unit's current business strategy 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.
- 3.2 Unlike previous business plans, which proposed ambitious work programmes and sought external funds to realize them, the current 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.
- 3.3 The AONB Unit have enjoyed considerable success raising external funds to support the work of the AONB partnership but raising funds remains difficult, it takes time, and the competition for funds is strong. We took the pragmatic approach and during 2015-2016 moved to a smaller, more resilient core team competent across a range of disciplines. However, the AONB Unit also 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.
- 3.4 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 is to remain a local authority supported partnership with a close relationship to government bodies whose policies influence management of the AONB landscape.
- 3.5 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 and it remains relevant today.
- 3.6 This report and the range of measures it outlined has continued to inform and shape 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. For example, 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 It's clear that 2019-20 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 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 2019 and beyond.
- 4.4 The business strategy ensures that 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)

## 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 owing 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 Secretary of State & Ministers.	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 S of S & Ministers directly and in conjunction with NAAONB and SEEPL. Active engagement of High Weald AONB Patrons and supportive High Weald	AONB Director	2	3	5	Red

