

High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee



Agenda

**Monday 25 November 2019, 10.00am, Boathouse Bistro, Bewl Water
Bewlbridge Lane, Tunbridge Wells TN3 8JH, followed by lunch.**

1. Apologies
2. Members' Interests

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

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

To elect the Chairman, Vice-chairman and Management Board Members for period of November 2019-2021, election information attached (page 3)
5. Minutes of the JAC meeting

To consider the minutes of the last meeting of the JAC held on 27 March 2019 (page 4)
6. Minutes of the Management Board Meeting

To note the matters arising from the Management Board meeting held on 16 October 2019 (page 10)
7. Minutes of the Officer Steering Group

To note the minutes of the last meeting of the OSG held on 18 September 2019 (page 16)
8. AONB Design Guide for New Developments

To note a report from AONB Planning Advisor and approve the final version of the AONB Design Guide (page 24)
9. Draft Revenue Budget for 2020/21

To consider the draft Revenue Budget 2020/21 by the Treasurer, and agree it as a basis for consultation with contributing bodies (page 27); Appendix B: Core Budget Monitoring 2019/2020; Appendix C: Project Budget Monitoring 2019/2020
10. Risk Management & Staffing

To consider a report by the AONB Co-Director on risk management (page 33); Appendix 1: High Weald JAC - Key Risks
11. Glover Landscape Review Recommendations & Partners response

To discuss a report by the AONB Co-Director on the key recommendations from the Glover Landscape Review (page 35); Appendix 1: Landscape review summary; Appendix 2: HWJAC response to recommendations; Appendix 3: Landscape review SEPL Planning response; Appendix 4: The Colchester Declaration

12. A.O.B

13. High Weald AONB Partnership Anniversary presentation

Presentation on the 30 year Anniversary of the JAC Partnership

This will be followed by an informal photo-call to celebrate 30 years of the High Weald AONB Partnership & 70 years of protected landscape designation and a celebration lunch

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

Samantha Nicholas
Clerk to the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell, East Sussex TN5 7PR
E: s.nicholas@highweald.org; T: 01424 723011



**High Weald Joint Advisory Committee
Election of Management Board Members
November 2019- November 2021**

Election of Management Board Members

Nomination List:	
Nomination for Chairman:	CLlr Sylvia Tidy, East Sussex County Council
Proposed by:	CLlr Bradbury
Seconded by:	Mrs Davison
Nomination for Vice Chairman:	CLlr Pete Bradbury, West Sussex County Council & Mid Sussex District Council
Proposed by:	CLlr Balfour
Seconded by:	CLlr Tidy
Nomination for Board Member	Mrs Jill Davison, Community Cooptee
Proposed by:	CLlr Bradbury
Seconded by:	CLlr Tidy
Nomination for Board Member	CLlr Matthew Balfour, Kent County Council
Proposed by:	CLlr Bradbury
Seconded by:	CLlr Tidy
Nomination for Board Member	CLlr Jonathan Vine-Hall, Rother District Council
Proposed by:	CLlr Bradbury
Seconded by:	Mrs Davison
Nomination for Board Member	CLlr Phil Dixon , Wealden District Council
Proposed by:	CLlr Tidy
Seconded by:	CLlr Balfour

Agenda item: 5

High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Minutes of Meeting



Held at 10.30am on Wednesday 27 March 2019, at Kilndown Village Hall, Kilndown, Kent

Members present:

Cllr B Kentfield	Rother District Council, Vice Chairman
Cllr M Balfour	Kent County Council
Cllr A Pickering	Ashford Borough Council
Cllr C Hersey	Mid Sussex District Council
Cllr M Dickens	Sevenoaks Borough Council
Cllr L Lockwood	Tandridge District Council
Cllr J Soyke	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Cllr P Bradbury	West Sussex County Council
Cllr M Evans	Hastings Borough Council
Cllr I Irvine	Crawley Borough Council
Mr T Bamford	CLA
Mrs J Davison	Community Co-optee

Officers present:

Mr J Lavender	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
Ms J Hollingum	Planning Officer, Mid Sussex District Council
Mrs D Russell	Design Officer, Rother District Council
Mr M Davidson	Natural Resources Manager, Hastings Borough Council

1. APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Apologies were received from the following Members and officers:
Cllr S Tidy, Cllr L Steeds, David Scully, Virginia Pullan, David Greenwood, Sally Marsh.
- 1.2 The Members were informed that Alison Fields, Forestry Commission, has retired. Alison was thanked for her support to the AONB. Matthew Woodcock has been asked to attend JAC Meetings whilst her position is being recruited.

2. MEMBERS INTERESTS

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

3. URGENT MATTERS

3.1 No urgent matters were raised by the Members.

4. MINUTES OF THE JAC MEETING – 27 November 2018

4.1 It was noted on 4.1 that needed to remove the words ‘not all’.

4.2 RESOLVED to amend the minutes and note the minutes of the Management Board held on 27 November 2018 as a correct record

5 MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD– 6 March 2019

5.1 RESOLVED to note the minutes of the Management Board held on 6 March 2019.

6 MINUTES OF THE OFFICER STEERING GROUP – 30 July 2019

6.1 Jennifer Hollingum informed the Members that the OSG meeting had focussed on the adoption of the Management Plan by the local authorities, future training for local authorities and the AONB Design Guidance for New Builds.

6.2 Cllr Irving, Crawley BC, and Cllr Lockwood, Tandridge BC, confirmed that the Management Plan had been adopted. Jennifer confirmed that all local authorities have taken the plan to the relevant committees and the AONB is awaiting confirmation of their formal adoption.

6.3 In 2017 the Unit held an AONB training day for Mid Sussex DC planning officers. Wealden DC planning department participated in a similar training session in March 2019. Tunbridge Wells BC is also hosting a similar training course for their officers and other local authorities that wish to attend in June 2019.

6.4 The local authorities have received the updated Service Level Agreements which follow the timeline of the revised Management Plan and are in the process of being returned.

6.5 There was a further discussion on the progression of the AONB Design guidance for New Builds. The officers agreed that even if their local authority did not want to take the document as a supplementary planning document that the consultation process should ensure that this was possible.

6.6 RESOLVED to note: The Minutes of the Officer Steering Group held on 30 January 2019 as a correct record.

7 AONB DESIGN GUIDANCE UPDATE AND PRESENTATION

7.1 Claire Tester gave the background to the development of the AONB Design Guidance for New Builds. The scale of housing approvals and buildings in the AONB is at unprecedented level. A sub-group of the OSG which was chaired by Jennifer Hollingum. The framework of the document was set up to produce an AONB Design Guide for New Builds which will give clarity to Planners and Developers understanding of the unique characteristics of the AONB.

7.2 In June 2017 Design South East was appointed to help develop the appropriate guidance document. Claire Tester thanked the sub-group for the amount of extra work that had been

carried out and especially to Diane Russell, who had undertaken the task to write the guidance.

- 7.3 Diane Russell presented to the Members the outline of the AONB Design Guidance highlighting that this document focussed on places and spaces which sit within the rural context from a Macro to a Micro Scale. The Guide is broadly based on the Building for Life 12 along with the design guidance in the National Planning Policy Guidance and is adapted to be locally specific to the High Weald. The Guide covers ten key areas; responding to site & context; connecting beyond the site; layout & structuring the site; using buildings to define streets & spaces; the right built form; parking strategies; local details; ancillary & storage; street character & details and reinforcing local planting character & habitats.
- 7.4 Cllr Bradbury congratulated the sub-group on the clear and comprehensive guide. He enquired whether there was a hierarchy of importance when developers are trying to balance the key areas. It was confirmed that although there was not any hierarchy of importance the design guidance moves the developers to think about the layout and structure of the new development from an AONB perspective which gives consideration to the longer term impacts of new builds.
- 7.5 Cllr Balfour enquired if the guidance could be strengthened to reduce poor architecture such as 'mock Tudor styles'. Diane Russell explained to the Members that if the design responds to the site and existing features often the architecture becomes less significant.
- 7.6 Cllr Hersey was concerned about how amenity areas for rubbish bins were built into the development plans as often they were an after-thought and had a huge impact on the aesthetic qualities of the site.
- 7.7 Cllr Irvine asked whether invasive species could also be part of the reinforcing local planting character and habitats.
- 7.8 Cllr Evans asked whether eco-housing with carbon neutral considerations should have greater weight in the guidance. It was clarified that this aspect is extremely important but the guidance is specifically highlighting the unique qualities of design within the High Weald and this area was part of building regulations. However, Claire Tester agreed that this question could be part of the consultation questionnaire.
- 7.9 Cllr Lockwood thanked the group for developing the guidance and informed the Members that Lindfield, which is on the border of the AONB, has had its own design guidance in place. This has been very useful when developers wish to use materials which are not common place in the area such as flint.
- 7.10 Cllr Dickins enquired whether any of AONB styles and features caused conflict with building regulations. It was confirmed that this was not the case.
- 7.11 Tim Bamford enquired whether the guidance would lead to additional costs for the developers and therefore lead to a reduction in affordable housing being built. Diane Russell confirmed that if the developers build these criteria into their early financial models there

would be no increase cost implications and that the criteria discussed should be set as a minimum when building in a protected landscape.

7.12 RESOLVED to approve the draft High Weald AONB Design Guide for Public consultation subject to any minor changes to be agreed by the Management Board

8. AONB 5 YEAR BUSINESS STRATEGY

- 8.1 The Committee considered a report by Jason Lavender, Joint Director, on the Five Year Business Strategy. Jason explained that the Strategy is informed by the AONB Management Plan and it sets the direction of the work programme of the AONB Unit.
- 8.2 The Business strategy is influenced by three main areas the Glover review, which may lead to a change in the direction of workflow; funding, due to the five year funding contribution from DEFRA coming to an end in March 2020; and potential retirement of JAC Members and Unit staff. The Members were shown Appendix A which indicated the sources of income for each financial year since 2009/2010, showing the total amount of income derived from four main sources: grant, project funding, commercial and philanthropic.
- 8.3 The Unit will continue to build on the AONB partnership strengths and will focus on how they communicate the vast amount of research which has been carried out to date. The Unit is looking to:
- work in partnership with demonstration sites to provide real world data
 - strengthen the successful facilitation group for landowners
 - support local community groups through Sussex Lund
 - support Parishes through Neighbourhood Plans
 - reduce the divide between urban and rural approaches to support health and wellbeing.
- 8.4 Mrs Davison agreed that it was important to identify individuals within the team to ensure that succession took place whilst retaining the expertise within the Units staff.
- 8.5 Cllr Evans asked how the Unit might improve the urban rural divide as there are over 756 children 'living in poverty' in the Honington area of Hastings which could benefit from engaging with the landscape. A discussion took place on how High Weald Heroes may benefit these areas as well as engaging with the High Weald Walking Festival.
- 8.6 Cllr Pickering confirmed that he was working towards securing further core funding for the Unit as well as working with the Unit to look at a capital funded project.
- 8.7 Cllr Dickins enquired whether the Unit had looked into charging for the services it offers. Jason Lavender confirmed that the Unit had at various times charged for hosting collaborative projects and administering grant schemes and that at the moment it was receiving payment for managing Sussex Lund and National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative. However for the Unit's advice to remain independent and because we do not wish to take work away from private consultants, we do not charge for our advisory work.

8.8 RESOLVED to note the report and approve the Business Strategy 2019-2024 direction for the work of its staff unit for the next five years.

9. DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2019/20

9.1 The Committee considered a report by Finance Manager, Andy Fowler, on the Revenue Budget for 2019/20.

9.2 The High Weald core budget is forecast to have a surplus of £12,300 in 2018/19 arising primarily from a rate reduction and additional income.

9.2 There was an increase in staff costs to accommodate incremental progression and maternity cover.

9.3 The 2018/19 contribution of £269,000 was allocated to Core £222,200 and Projects £46,800. DEFRA's total contribution to 2019/20 is £232,500 to Core £232,500 and Projects £41,000.

9.4 £5,700 was transferred to Core t to ensure a balance Budget.

9.5 RESOLVED to note the report and:

(1) approve the Draft Revenue Budget for 2019/20.

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

10. ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

10.1 The JAC considered a report by Gerry Sherwin, AONB Business Manager, recommending the plans to celebrate 70 years of protected landscape designation and 30 years of the AONB Partnership.

10.2 Gerry Sherwin informed the Members that this year marks the 70th anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, as well as the Year of the Green Action (YoGA). The AONB Partnership has a wide range of stakeholders and it was a good opportunity to be able to engage with these groups through a series of events aimed at:

10.3 Communities by launching the AONB Management Plan at an event for parish council representatives and community groups in July 2019 and the annual Sussex Lund celebration in September 2019.

10.5 Planners and developers with a consultation event focussed on the draft of High Weald Design Guide.

10.6 Residents and visitors through a regional 70th Anniversary Travel Campaign and the second High Weald Walking Festival with the Ramblers in 14-22 September.

- 10.7 Landowners with a one-off 'Meadows Question Time' and an event for farmers and landowners introducing regenerative agriculture, which will feature well-known national farming pioneers.
- 10.8 Schools through the High Weald Heroes Education Programme aimed at supporting teachers in developing their school grounds for environmental education.
- 10.9 Key partners through an awards event which will be a celebration with JAC Members and key organisations and individuals that have worked closely with supporting the AONBs objectives.
- 10.10 Cllr Evans asked whether permaculture could be one of the main topics at the farming event. Jason Lavender confirmed that permaculture falls under the umbrella of regenerative agriculture, and this may be reflected as part of the conference.
- 10.11 Tim Bamford offered support from the CLAs with these events.
- 10.11 RESOLVED to note the reports

11. RISK MANAGEMENT AND STAFF UPDATE

- 11. The JAC considered a report by Jason Lavender on risk management and staffing updates and the associated risk management matrix.
- 11.2 Jason Lavender explained that the greatest risk has always been retaining staff with exceptional skills. At present the Unit has been able to recruit and retain a highly skilled team.
- 11.3 Mrs Davison asked whether it would be appropriate to show on the risk assessment a clearer movement indicator.
- 11.5 **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.**

12. A.O.B.

- 12.1 There was no any other business.

Agenda item: 6

HIGH WEALD JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE – Management Board
Minutes – 16 October 2019 at 10.30 am, Acorn Tourism, WEC, 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 Matthew Balfour Kent County Council
 Cllr Peter Bradbury West Sussex County Council
 Mrs J Davison Community Cooptee

Also Present:
 Sally Marsh AONB Director (job share)
 Jason Lavender AONB Director (job share)
 Claire Tester AONB Planning Advisor
 Gerry Sherwin AONB Business Manager
 Cllr Jonathan Vine-Hall Rother District Council
 Cllr Phil Dixon Wealden District Council
 Jennifer Hollingum Mid-Sussex District Council (OSG Chairman)

Apologies

1. There were no apologies given.

Members' Interests

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

Minutes of the Management Board meeting held on 6 March 2019

3. The minutes of the last meeting, held on 6 March 2019, were agreed as a correct record.

Matters arising from the minutes

4. There were no matters arising.

Election of Management Board Members

5. Samantha Nicholas explained that the Management Board Members are elected bi-annually and this election process was due for the period of November 2019 to November 2021. Normally all Members would be issued with an election paper to join the Board, however it was felt that due to the many changes in personnel from the local authority Members this process would not be suitable on this occasion.
6. It was therefore proposed for the Chairman and Vice-chairman and standing Members of the Board at this meeting would be proposed and seconded. The nominated Members will then be put forward at the JAC Meeting on Monday 25 November 2019 for election.

7. It was agreed:

- **Chairman - Cllr Tidy was proposed by Cllr Bradbury and seconded by Mrs J Davison**
- **Vice- Chairman - Cllr Bradbury was proposed by Cllr Balfour and seconded by Cllr Tidy**
- **Existing Board Members – Cllr Balfour and Mrs J Davison were proposed by Cllr Bradbury and seconded by Cllr Tidy**

OSG update

8. Jennifer Hollingum informed the Members that at the Officer Steering Group, held on 18 September 2019, the first task was to elect a Chairman and Vice-Chairman. The Members were informed that David Greenwood, due to work commitments, had decided to step down as Chairman. Jennifer Hollingum thanked David for all his hard work over the past two years. Jennifer Hollingum, Mid Sussex DC was elected as Chairman (previously Vice-chairman) and Diane Russell, Rother District Council was elected as Vice-chairman.
9. The Members were informed that the Group had had discussions on major developments within the AONB and the inconsistency of planning appeals. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council highlighted the inconsistency of the system through appeals in Lamberhurst and Sissinghurst which had contrasting results dependent on the Inspectorate.
10. The Group also discussed that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council was developing a Net Biodiversity Gain Methodology to assess planning applications within their Borough. This guidance has been circulated to the local authorities.
11. It was confirmed that 60 planning officers and Members have attended training provided by the Unit. This training was mainly on the AONB Management Plan review and the draft Design Guide. Cllr Bradbury enquired about how we could encourage more Members and officers to be participating in this type of training. Claire Tester informed the Members that she was undertaking further new Member training in November 2019 at East Sussex County Council and in December at Rother District Council. Sally Marsh welcomed any support the Members could provide with encouraging AONB training within their local authorities.

Design Guide Consultation update

12. Claire Tester reported to the Members on the update to the Design Guide Consultation that had been held from Wednesday 19 June until Wednesday 14 August 2019. On 15 July 2019, twenty developers and architects participated in a Design Guide consultation workshop. This was run in conjunction with the local authority officers and the Unit. Although the Design Guide consultation was managed centrally through the Unit, Claire confirmed this process also met the requirements of the local authorities to be able to adopt the AONB Design Guide as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
13. There were 80 respondents to the Consultation and the recommendations for changes from these responses to the draft Design Guide had been circulated with the full responses to the Members. The Chairman stated that the responses were very constructive and the Members should encourage their local authorities to adopt where possible.
14. The next steps are to present the updated draft with the recommended changes to the JAC.

- 15. It was agreed by the Management Board that the recommendations for changes to the Design Guide should be made and reported to the JAC Meeting on Monday 25 November 2019.**

Review of the Glover recommendations

- 16.** Sally Marsh led a discussion with the Members on the summary of the recommendations from the Glover review. Sally explained that the High Weald AONB Partnership, the National Association of AONBs and other AONBs had all put in responses to the review. The AONB had also been visited by the review team. Jason Lavender said it was a pity that the role of regenerative agriculture and its potential to address the range of farming, nature recovery, and rural social issues of the day had not been recognized as part of the review.
- 17.** Sally Marsh emphasised that Defra require a quick response from the AONBs and National Parks to assess their high level opinions of the recommendations. The Unit had started writing a response which required further input from the Management Board.
- 18.** The key recommendations highlighted that diversity of governance structure required some change; increased funding may be provided; and the AONB and National Parks need to build more cohesive links to tackle nature recovery.
- 19.** Sally Marsh explained that a National Landscape Service had been recommended to be reinstated, on a very small budget of £170,000 across the AONBs and National Parks. This would cover the areas that have not been effectively supported through Natural England.
- 20.** The report highlighted that AONBs came out more favourably than National Parks for a range of reasons including that many partnerships have been working closely together for many years and AONB partnerships have more flexible organisational structures. More importantly, the AONBs have had to use their limited funding in more creative ways and with much success. However, it does identify challenges for the recovery of nature and the need for a more diverse and democratic representation on partnership boards/committees.
- 21.** It was explained that the report recommends nature recovery should be at the core of the AONBs' objectives. The Unit is well placed to deliver this through its work with the Farm Cluster Group and regenerative agriculture. The considerable amount of work that the Unit has already achieved on Ancient woodland inventory, PAWS and Weald Meadows Initiative could be pulled together to support a wider nature recovery programme.
- 22.** Sally Marsh welcomed the idea of a natural health service which underpins the 1949 Act and the proposal of a 'mission' to actively connect people to these special places as well as participating in furthering economic vitality. Again the Unit are well placed to provide this through the High Weald Walking Festival and the High Weald Heroes programme which connects primary school aged children to their natural environment through Welly Walks.
- 23.** A discussion took place on the potential change of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty brand to 'National Landscapes'. Sally Marsh explained that this title had arisen from a report from the Welsh Government on National Landscapes. The Members felt strongly that a rebranding of the name would not be beneficial as it did not reflect differences between the outstanding landscapes and other landscapes. The current branding had taken many years for it now to be recognised nationally.

24. The Members discussed the additional resources it would require to meet these recommendations especially if were to become a statutory consultee. There was a concern that there would be an expectation that the additional funding would come from local sources, which is just not available. The Members felt that if a planning committee was formed its primary purpose should be to focus on the strategic direction of planning within the AONB. This would help to create a more consistent approach between local authorities across the AONB which is lacking at present.
25. It was highlighted that there was an unprecedented level of Major Development being placed within the AONB. The Members agreed that this was a key issue across the all local authorities in the South East. They welcomed the positive measures to build affordable homes within the recommendations and look to supporting more Community Landscape Trust allocations.
26. **It was agreed that wording should be added to the response:**
 - i. **to reflect that the AONBs are only able to deliver the above recommendations if the additional resource is provided and that significant thought needs to be given to a re-branding exercise to show the benefits it might provide**
 - ii. **Sally Marsh would update the response which would come from the JAC Chairman to include the points the Members have raised. This will be electronically circulated to the Board for approval**
 - iii. **The Unit would invite The Rt Hon Theresa Villiers to visit the AONB.**

Housing Position Statement on Major Development

27. Claire Tester explained the background to the producing the Housing Position Statement. The new national formula for calculating housing need has significantly increased the amount of housing that local authority areas in the south east 'need', partly because the formula applies a multiplier in areas of high house prices on the assumption that a bigger supply will reduce these prices. Whilst there is support in the NPPF for local authorities with a large amount of AONB or other constraints to take a lower number of houses, most authorities are planning to meet their whole need. This will have a significant impact on the AONB.
28. Cllr Balfour asked whether there was the required evidence to support this position statement. Claire Tester confirmed that there was evidence both in the NPPF itself and from Inspector's decisions, and that this has been gathered across the region's AONBs by the South East and east of England AONB Protected Landscapes planning group. References to this evidence are included in the Housing Position Statement.
29. The Statement will emphasise that there is only a requirement to have major development should only be planned within an AONB in under exceptional circumstances and the overall scale of development should be limited.
30. The draft Position Statement is currently being considered by the National Association of AONBs for their adoption.
31. **It was agreed that the Position Statement for Major Developments in AONBs should be reported to the JAC Committee once it has been endorsed by the National Association of AONBs.**

AONB Land Management Projects

32. Gerry Sherwin gave an update on the work of the AONB land management advisors (1.6 FTE) and the land management programme. This includes the Upper Rother and Dudwell Farmers'

Cluster; Sussex Lund grant programme, National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative; and Rother & Romney Water Catchment Partnership .

33. In July 2019, as there was no Management Board due to not having a quorum of Member's available, the 2019 Sussex Lund applications were approved by the Members electronically. The Lund fund has offered £193,000 grants to 60 individuals and organisations.
34. The National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative's "Beautiful Boundaries" project for hedge restoration is being implemented successfully. The Unit has secured a further £220,000 for a Beautiful Boundaries 2 project which will support more landowners to plant and restore hedges and protect ancient woodland. A grant of £88,000 has been secured for another project – Wonderful Woodlands - a project that will support works on Sussex Wildlife Trust, RSPB, and Forestry Commission sites.
35. The Unit delivered a contract, working with the Weald Meadows Network, which explored an approach to developing a nature recovery network as one of the front runners for the Government's Nature Recovery programme. This led to a visit by senior members of the DEFRA wildlife team to learn more about the work of the AONB Partnership and took away the value of advice and guidance, and the need to ensure the importance of an integrated approach to Nature Recovery is fully recognized and incorporated into any future land management scheme.
36. The Unit held a very successful Weald Meadows Question Time at Wakehurst in partnership with Kew Botanical Gardens. In 2020 the Weald Meadows Network is hoping to develop a national event with Plantlife for National Meadows Day.
37. The Unit's work on promoting deer liaison groups has made great progress. The 63 Members of the Farm Cluster recognise the importance of managing the growing deer population which is having a major impact on our woodland and species-rich grassland across the AONB.

The Unit has also held two community outreach events. A Parish Councillors meeting was held on 2 July at Crowborough Community Centre which has led to an increase in support for the Dark Skies project, as well as support with parish communications and Sussex Lund applications. 80 landowners attended the Farming Futures Conference, held on 25 October 2019, with inspiring speakers from the regenerative agriculture sector.

38. The second year of the High Weald Walking Festival was a great success featuring a more diverse range of walks. Over 600 people took part on the 50 walks that were available across the High Weald. This year the formal launch of the festival was held at Bodiam Hut's Hub restaurant.
39. The High Weald Heroes school education programme remains very popular with over 90 schools taking part. In partnership with The Keep, new historical toolboxes have been produced up to modern day. Schools year 5 and 6 classes have been participating in John Muir projects and the Unit continue to develop new Welly Walks for primary schools of all abilities.
40. Gerry Sherwin confirmed that current land management contracts run for another two years but that the Unit need to secure more funding to maintain the excellent standard of advisory visits for landowners and local communities.

Budget & Staffing update

41. Gerry Sherwin made the Members aware that ESCC finance has recommended that we put aside 2.5% (£7,000) for inflation on salaries. This may have to be taken from our reserves fund to ensure a balanced budget.
42. The Unit still has a vacant post and to hire the right person at the correct grade the reserve fund may have to be accessed.
43. To support financial management, which has become increasingly difficult to due to the changing systems within ESCC, Trish Tiltman who used to work for the Unit-led Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme is joining the team in November 2019.
44. Emma White, Communication Officer, will be returning from maternity leave in November 2019 and Sarah Watson will be retained until March 2020 to support on-going communication projects.

JAC agenda for March 2019

45. The next JAC meeting is on Monday 25 November 2019. Looking back over the 30 years Partnership and looking forward with the Glover review. It will also cover the AONB Design Guide and the New Housing Position Statement.
46. It was requested that the meeting start at 10am as our Chairman has another meeting in the afternoon.

A.O.B

47. The Chairman invited the guests Cllr Vine-Hall and Cllr Dixon to join the Management Board. Both Councillors wished to be nominated and seconded to be put forward for election in November 2019.
48. **It was agreed that the Management Board proposed and seconded both Cllr Vine-Hall and Cllr Dixon and it was agreed they should both be put forward for nomination for Management Board at the November JAC Meeting.**

Agenda item: 7

High Weald Officer Steering Group

Notes of a meeting of the High Weald Officer Steering Group held on Wednesday 18 September 2019, at 10.30am Acorn Tourism, Woodland Enterprise, Hastings Road, Flimwell, TN5 7PR

Clerk to JAC: Samantha Nicholas

PRESENT:

David Greenwood, Surrey CC (Chairman)
Jennifer Hollingum, Mid Sussex DC (Vice-Chairman)
Mark Daly, Horsham DC
David Scully, Tunbridge Wells BC
Helen Page, Kent County Council
Natalie Bumpus, Wealden District Council
Bethan Moore, Ashford BC
Claire Tester, High Weald AONB
Gerry Sherwin, High Weald AONB

	Agenda Item	Action
1.	MINUTES	
1.1	The Minutes of the meeting on 30 January 2019 was agreed to be accurate.	
1.2	David Greenwood thanked the officers for all the support in producing the Management Plan as well as their support in making sure that their internal teams understood its requirements.	
2.	Apologies	
2.1	Murray Davidson, Helen French, Kerry Culbert, Marie Killip, Jenny Knowles, Don Baker, Richard Mosinghi, Sally Marsh, Jason Lavender, Diane Russell, Vivienne Riddle and Carly Pettit.	
3.	Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman	
3.1	The current Chairman, David Greenwood and Vice-Chairman, Jennifer Hollingum has been in position for two years. David Greenwood who is the current Chairman has decided to step down due to work commitments.	
3.2	It was agreed: Jennifer Hollingum was voted in as Chairman and Diane Russell as	

Vice-Chairman for the period of September 2019-September 2021

3.3 David Greenwood handed the meeting over to Jennifer Hollingum. Jennifer thanked David for his time as Chairman and David confirmed he is remaining as a member of the Officer Steering Group for Surrey CC.

4.0 Design Guide Consultation responses

4.1 Claire Tester thanked all the officers that had spent so much time pulling together the High Weald Design Guide. The consultation was set up in such a way so that each of the local authorities can choose to adopt the Design Guide as a SPD. The responses had been collated by the Unit into a reference document. A summary of the key recommendations for updating the Guide had been discussed by the Design Sub-group on 4 September. These recommendations had also been circulated to the officers for approval.

4.2 The Chairman informed the officers that a developer/architects workshop was also held on 15 July 2019 at the Woodland Enterprise Centre. This was managed in partnership with the Unit and members of the officer steering group. The workshop had 20 attendees with a mix of consultants, developers and architects. The feedback gathered from the workshop has been fed into the consultation process and has helped support the promotion of the Guide.

4.3 Claire Tester informed the group that the name of the Guide had caused a certain amount of confusion for the public and therefore it was proposed that it might be changed to The High Weald Housing Design Guide with a strapline of 'Building better, building beautiful in the AONB'. The officers agreed that this was an excellent idea and that the year 2019 should also be added.

4.4 The officers were informed that the AONB website is in the process of being updated. The aim is to have an easier to use planning section which will be able to hold additional information such as case studies, a glossary and supporting reports such as the

Responsible Planting Guide.

- 4.5 A discussion took place on the use of local materials for affordable housing. Claire Tester informed the officers that Hastoe Housing Association had sent in a response to the consultation but this did not reflect the concern about local materials.
Claire Tester informed the officers of pre-treated weatherboard with a 50 year guarantee which is being used on an affordable housing development.
- 4.6 It was agreed that the pre-treated weatherboard information would be circulated to the officers.** Claire Tester
- 4.7 David Scully requested that a consultation statement with responses to be circulated to the officers. This will ease the process of adoption for material consideration or as an SPD.
- 4.8 It was agreed that the recommendations to the amendments to the Design Guide should be carried out; and the Unit would produce a consultation statement with the full responses to be circulate to the local authorities with the updated Design Guide.** The Unit
- 4.9 It was also agreed to put the subject of case studies and examples as a rolling agenda.** The Unit
- There will also be an agenda item on progress of adoption and promotion of the Design Guide for the next meeting in February 2020.** Officers
- 5.0 Update on major development in the AONB**
- 5.1 Claire Tester informed the officers that the new housing calculator is resulting in significantly higher housing numbers in the South East, due mainly to the affordability multiplier applied, and local authorities Local Plans are indicating unprecedented major developments within the AONBs.

Claire is working with the South East Protected Landscapes Planning

Group to produce a position statement on major development in AONBs which will set out the national approach on how designation as an AONB should be taken into account when deciding housing numbers to be provided in an area and the scale and location of allocated sites. This statement is likely to be badged as a National AONB Association document and the intention is to report this document to the Joint Advisory Committee on 25 November, to be noted or endorsed subject to comments from the OSG.

- 5.2 It was agreed to circulate a draft document to the officers when available for their information, review and comment prior to the JAC meeting.** Claire Tester
- 5.3 David Scully confirmed that TWBC had produced a methodology to calculate major development. This is based on paragraph 172 taking into account scale and context of the site to define whether it is deemed to be a major development.
- 5.4 It was agreed that David Scully would send links to methodology and reports to the Unit to circulate to officers** David Scully
- 5.5 At the Wealden DC Local Plan hearing there was a robust discussion led by the Inspector on what was understood to be major development and about the justification for such development in the AONB. The outcome of the hearing is expected imminently.
- 5.6 Mark Daly confirmed that although there were no allocations for Horsham in the AONB there is a potential 3,500 plus additional 6,500 along the setting of the AONB west of Ifield.
- 5.7 Claire Tester informed the group that she had provided site assessments of the AONB impact for the 50 Mid Sussex SHELAA sites in the AONB, but due to the amount of time this had taken, she would not be able to do this for future local plans. There are several proposed allocated sites around Horsted Keynes, Ardingly showground, and Ashurst Wood.
- 6.0 Planning inspectorate inconsistencies in appeals**

6.1 TWBC had two cases, one where a swimming pool and very large dance studio had been approved. However, in contrast the Inspectorate dismissed the application on a site adjacent to the Conservation Area in Lamberhurst focussing on the linear settlement development, the importance of the conservation areas, as well as citing policies from the High Weald Management Plan 2019-2024. There was also an appeal for a site in Sissinghurst, Kent which was dismissed due to biodiversity net gain not being demonstrated.

7.0 Item 6. Local Plan policies and strengthening of section 85 was deferred to the next meeting as Sally Marsh was not present.

8.0 Local Authority Training

8.1 The officers were informed that there had been several training sessions including those for Wealden DC, Tunbridge Wells BC and a joint event with Rother DC and Hastings BC.

8.2 A discussion took place on PROW training as there has been an issue with a particular case in TWBC area where an extension to a property had been given permission over an historic routeway and Kent CC PROW officers were reluctant to take into account Management Plan objectives when deciding diversion applications. Helen Page, Kent CC said that she would take this back and discuss future in-house training to make the officers more aware of these important issues.

8.3 A discussion took place on a need for more Members training as there are several new Members on Planning Committees and as part of the Joint Advisory Committee. Claire Tester reported that two Member training sessions had already been booked, one with Rother Members and one with East Sussex Members.

8.4 Gerry Sherwin informed the officers that Forestry Commission is looking to develop training on woodlands for local authorities which may include issues such as illegal felling. The officers agreed that it would be good to have the involvement of the Unit with this training so that it can meet a broader requirement needed by the

local authorities.

9.0 Core activities being carried out by the AONB Unit

9.1 Gerry Sherwin took the officers through the Unit's core projects:

9.2 Sussex Lund a grant programme which is in its third year with over £200,000 involving 57 applications from schools, local communities, and landowners.

9.3 National Grid Landscape enhancement Initiative: Beautiful Boundaries Project for hedge restoration has been successful and two more projects have just improved looking at access to the public. This will also support Sussex Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission and RSPB objectives.

9.4 The Unit has a Nature Recovery Area for Meadows – one out of five national projects. This has allowed the Unit to look at the information we currently have through the past Weald Meadows Project. This project ran for 15 years and left a strong legacy. However, the legacy of advisor networks and landowners is growing older and has the potential to lose the experts experience, so the next steps is to look at harnessing this knowledge and inspiring for the future.

9.5 Nationally the AONB has put in the Colchester declaration to achieve the targets set out in the Plan which is very ambitious. Sally Marsh and Gerry Sherwin are now fellows of the Landscape Institute.

9.6 The Deer coordination programme is in its second year. Gerry explained that woodland and grassland across the AONB are under threat by a booming population of fallow deer. This programme looks at more effective deer control across the AONB. Small groups of landowners are encouraged to meet to discuss deer stalking across boundaries and to help with managing deer stalkers contracts.

9.7 Claire Tester has also presented three more undergrounding projects to UK Power Networks for low voltage lines. There are two live projects in Bedgebury and Sheffield Park. The new areas are Witherenden Valley, Robertsbridge/Salehurst and Newenden area. Gerry Sherwin asked if the officers knew of any areas that the Unit can survey to see if they are able to undergo this scheme.

9.8 The High Weald Walking festival with the Ramblers has been running this week for the second year. The festival had 50 guided walks, led by the Ramblers, The Unit and other organisations. The Walking Festival was launched on Saturday 14 September at The Hub on Quarry Farm, Bodiam, where over 120 walkers attended.

9.9 High Weald Heroes programme is still going strong, with a teachers review on 23 September to look at its future direction. The archaeology handling boxes have been extended to include artefacts to modern times. And the scheme now has over 90 schools involved.

9.10 Samantha Nicholas informed the officers that the Dark Skies project has continued to be developed with the ongoing support of the local Parishes. The Unit is encouraging more community groups to conduct light meter readings. The information is being mapped through QGIS to show the darkest areas or the AONB as well as the areas that light pollution is spilling into.

9.11 Glover review recommendations are about to be published and the Unit is looking at some of the recommendations. One of the areas under review maybe the Governance structure.

10.0 Agenda for JAC on Monday 25 November 2019

- 10.1
- Design Guide
 - Housing Position Statement for Major Development
 - Glover review
 - Presentation of JAC successes over the past 30 years

11.0 A.O.B.

- 11.1 David Scully informed the officers that the Tunbridge Wells BC has developed a Net Biodiversity Gain Methodology to assess specific nature areas in Pembury. These will be assessed through Kent Wildlife Trust to ensure that they are monitored effectively. Payment to manage these sites will potentially through CIL or section 106.
- 11.2 **Agreed to circulate link to policies and report to officers, and to share more detailed guidance with AONB** David Scully
- 11.3 David Greenwood informed the officers that although most of the rural development funding through Leader has been spent there may opportunities to obtain further funding. £200,000 maybe available for rural food and drink businesses and the strategic prosperity fund may also provide future funding for rural businesses.

Agenda item: 8

Committee: High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Date: 25 November 2019
Title of Report: **High Weald AONB Design Guide**
By: AONB Planning Advisor
Purpose: To approve the draft Design Guide for Public Consultation

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to

- a) approve the final High Weald AONB Housing Design Guide subject to minor editorial changes to be delegated to the Co-Directors; and
 - b) promote the Design Guide within their own organisations and encourage its adoption and use.
-

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The scale of housing approvals and building in the High Weald AONB is currently at an unprecedented level; the High Weald is experiencing the highest level of housing growth of any AONB in England, from an average of 186 units per year 2001-2011; to 895 units per year 2015-2017¹.
- 1.2 Housing development within the High Weald is necessary and desirable to meet local need and create thriving and successful places, but it is also a responsibility and privilege to make long-lasting interventions in such a special and protected landscape. Past development has shown how this special opportunity has often been squandered on generic housing developments failing to capitalise on the true character of the place, often referencing local distinctiveness merely in superficial detailing or vernacular ‘styling’ of individual buildings, but without understanding or deploying deeper locally characteristic urban design or place-making elements in layout, grain and massing for example.

2.0 Developing a High Weald AONB Design Guide

- 1.3 In 2017 work started on developing a Design Guide to help balance this current development pressure with the statutory duty on local authorities to conserve and enhance the AONB, and setting the standards expected of new housing development in the High Weald. This work was coordinated by a sub-group of the Officer Steering Group chaired by Jennifer Hollingum from Mid Sussex District Council and including the AONB Unit’s Planning Advisor.

¹ An Independent Review of Housing in England’s Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty 2012-2017 NAAONB and CPRE

1.4 In June 2017 a procurement exercise was carried out which resulted in the appointment of consultants Design South East to assist with developing the Guide. This contract has been funded and managed by the High Weald AONB Unit. Since that time there have been a number of discussions with the sub-group and the wider OSG to gain consensus on the main issues to be covered in the Guide. The High Weald AONB Unit has also fed into this process to try and ensure that the character of the AONB is correctly reflected in the Guide. The drafting of the Guide has been led by Diane Russell of Rother District Council with other members of the sub-group making contributions.

3.0 Consultation on the Draft Design Guide

3.1 The Guide is broadly based on 'Building For Life', a widely accepted national industry standard, along with the design guidance in the National Planning Policy Guidance and the recently issued National Design Guide, but then explains how these national design principles should be applied in the specific context and distinctive character of the High Weald AONB, and in the context of the Management Plan objectives. Included within this Guide are questions and design prompts to help ensure new developments capture the essential character of the High Weald at every scale of design, from the way new streets are set out, to the grain and massing of development, the treatment of the public realm, green space and natural features, and the character and appearance of buildings themselves.

3.2 At its March 2019 meeting JAC approved a draft Design Guide for public consultation. This was undertaken from 19 June until Wednesday 14 August 2019. The consultation was carried out jointly by all the Local Planning Authorities and in accordance with their Statements of Community Involvement to ensure that they could adopt the Guide as a Supplementary Planning Document at the end of the process. This would give the Guide significant weight in the planning process.

3.3 A consultation workshop was also hosted by the High Weald Unit and supported by Local Authority officers on 15th July 2019. This was attended by 19 people, 7 of which were developers; 9 Architects and 3 Housing Associations. A report was produced summarising the outputs from this workshop.

3.4 There were 80 respondents to the public consultation and these were summarised on a spreadsheet by the High Weald AONB Unit together with recommendations for responses / amendments to the Design Guide. These were discussed and agreed by the Officer Steering Group in September.

3.5 The Design Guide was then amended taking into account the consultation responses and updated as necessary. The main changes to the Guide are as follows:

- Additional material provided on sustainable design and climate change;
- Annotations added to all the images explaining what point they are making;
- Addition of references to the need for designs to be accessible to users with disabilities;
- Clarification that the Guide applies to all housing schemes, small and large, open market and affordable, in villages and on the edge of towns;
- Addition of references to designated heritage assets such as conservation areas and listed buildings;
- Additional references to further information on habitats including the Wildlife Trust Guide 'Homes for people and wildlife';

- Addition of emphasis that access to green and opens spaces supports a broad spectrum of health and wellbeing; and
- Additional support for contemporary design solutions.

4.0 Next Steps

- 4.1 The Design Guide has been desk-top published by a local company and the latest version has been circulated to JAC alongside the agenda. Some images remain to be finalised and a final proof-read carried out, so it is suggested that these minor matters are delegated to the Co-Directors to finalise the Guide for formal publication.
- 4.2 Alongside this finalising of the Guide, the feedback from the public consultation and workshop will be incorporated into a formal Consultation Statement. This will sit alongside the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for the Guide as the formal documents needed to accompany a Supplementary Planning Document. The existing consultation feedback reports and the SEA can be accessed at www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/design-guide-consultation
- 4.2 It will then be for the Local Authorities to decide whether to adopt the Guide as a formal Supplementary Planning Document, or support it in some other way. The High Weald AONB Unit would prefer that the SPD route is followed as this would give the document most weight in planning decisions, but this is ultimately for the individual Local Authorities to decide.
- 4.3 There will then need to be a programme of training / promotion activities to make sure that everyone involved in designing, commenting on and making decisions on housing developments in the AONB are aware of the Guide and how to use it.

5.0 Recommendations

- 5.1 The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to:
- a) approve the final High Weald AONB Housing Design Guide subject minor editorial changes to be delegated to the Co-Directors; and
 - b) promote the Design Guide within their own organisations and encourage its adoption and use.

Contact: Claire Tester, High Weald Planning Adviser claire.testers@highweald.org

Agenda Item: 9

Committee: High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Date: 25 November 2019

Title of Report: Draft Revenue Budget 2020/21

By: Treasurer to the Joint Advisory Committee

Purpose: To consider the draft Revenue Budget 2020/21 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 2020/21; and
 2. the commencement of budget consultation with the local authorities and Defra.
-

1. FINANCIAL APPRAISAL

- 1.1. A draft budget for 2020/21 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 2020/21. This has been achieved through salary savings and maintaining the proportion of Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) funding allocated to core.
- 1.3. There are a number of key financial issues and risks which are detailed in this report.
- 1.4. Following consultation with contributing bodies/authorities, a final budget for 2020/21 will be presented to the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) for approval at its March 2020 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 statutory duties 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. Despite reductions in public spending, and the subsequent savings that have to be made, it is important that the core funding of the JAC remains sufficient to deliver statutory duties in a co-ordinated way.

- 2.3. It should be noted that local authority contributions in the region of £119,500 in 2020/21 are likely to generate additional funds for core activities and projects of at least £546,600.

Defra Core Funding	£232,500
Other Core Income	£ 9,800
Defra Projects Funding	£ 45,800
Non-Defra Projects Funding	<u>£258,500</u>
Total External Funding	£546,600

Local Authority Funding	£ 83,700
Local Authority Projects	<u>£ 35,800</u>
Total Local Authorities	£119,500

Total contributions **£666,100**

The High Weald Unit's Work Plan 2020/21

- 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 Service Level Agreement 2019-2014 which has been signed by each local authority and High Weald JAC's host authority, East Sussex County Council.

Defra Contribution

- 2.6. The budget has been developed within the context of the 25-Year Environment Plan and the Glover Review recommendations. Defra's contribution to AONB Partnerships for 2020/21 has yet to be advised but the interim advice is that Defra's contribution to the High Weald AONB JAC's budget in 2020/21 will be maintained in real terms. An inflationary increase of 1.7% (in line with the last four years) has been assumed, increasing the Defra contribution from £273,632 in 2019/20 to £278,284 in 2020/21.

High Weald JAC Budget 2019/20

- 2.7. The forecast outturn for 2019/20 is a surplus of £5,600 arising from salary savings. The forecast reserve at 31st March 2020 is £164,800.

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 2020/21 is presented.
- 3.2. The draft budget assumes an allocation of the Defra contribution between core and projects of 84% to core and 16% to projects. The draft budget assumes that local authorities will strive to maintain their contributions at the 2019/20 level.

Core Budget – Expenditure

Summary

- 3.3. Inflation has been applied at rate of 2.5% for staff and 0% for all other costs.
- 3.4. The budget is a standstill budget.

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), Team Support Officer (0.8FTE); and a budget for finance support.
- 3.6. Staff costs are subject to inflation of 2.5%, amounting to a £4,600 increase. There are no planned maternity leave cover costs, achieving savings of £4,600.
- 3.7. The budget assumes contributions to the East Sussex Pension Fund of 17.85% in 2020/21.

Accommodation/Office Equipment

- 3.8. The standstill budget covers the cost of office rent and maintenance, office running costs and office supplies.

Partnership running costs and support services

- 3.9. Partnership running costs is a standstill budget that includes the NAAONB membership fee and the costs associated with JAC meetings, representing the partnership at regional and national forums, producing the annual review and PR costs.
- 3.10. Support service costs is a standstill budget that includes ESCC IT, personnel and financial support and the annual lump sum contribution of £4,400 into the ESCC pension scheme. Costs assume the JAC's clerk service will continue to be provided by the High Weald JAC's Team Support Officer.

Core Budget – Income

Summary

- 3.11. The draft budget shows contributions from local authorities at the same level as 2019/20. The proportion of the Defra contribution allocated to the core budget has been maintained to balance the core budget.

Defra

- 3.12. The 2020/21 core contribution is assumed in this report to be £232,500.

Local Authority Contributions

- 3.13. 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 2019/20 level.

Other Contributions

- 3.14. 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

- 3.15. The JAC reserves at 31st March 2021 are estimated to be £164,800, the same as the forecast for 31 March 2020.

Self-Funding Projects

- 3.16. 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.
- 3.17. The project budget allows for 2.2FTE project officers: Land Management Project Officers (1.6FTE) and an Education Officer (0.6FTE).
- 3.18. Local authority contributions are primarily those made in prior years through the Project Enabling Fund or to specific projects, for example High Weald Heroes.
- 3.19. The indicative budget reflects the Committee's role in managing non-government grants landscape enhancements on behalf of Sussex Lund and National Grid. In July 2019 Management Board members approved new grant awards of £441,839.
- 3.20. National Grid and Sussex Lund will make annual contributions towards the management of the Schemes (approximately £7,000 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 and management project officers to support potential and successful applicants, enabling project success.
- 3.21. The majority of grant awards are paid retrospectively on project completion. The self-funding projects budget and outturn is therefore indicative as some external partner's project completion dates are unpredictable.
- 3.22. The Defra grant contribution allocated to Partnership Projects is £45,800.

4. FINANCIAL ISSUES 2020/21 AND BEYOND

- 4.1. Between 2011 and 2015 the annual Defra contribution reduced by £71,020. Between 2016 and 2020 the contribution increased by £13,647. As yet there is no formal advice on likely contributions beyond April 2020.
- 4.2. A balanced position has been achieved for 2020/21 assuming local authorities maintain their core contribution at the 2019/20 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. Allocating a greater % of the Defra contribution to core costs and office relocation remain 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 2020/21 assumes that:
 - Defra continues to protect National Park and AONB funding, and maintains its contributions to the High Weald JAC in real terms.
 - Local authorities maintain their core contributions at the same level as 2019/20 to provide the cash match required to meet Defra requirements.
 - Employer's pension costs for 2020/21 will be 17.85%.
 - Salary inflation for 2020/21 will remain unchanged at 2.5%.
 - Inflation for other costs for 2020/21 will be 0%.
 - There is no rent review by Woodland Enterprises Limited in 2020/21.
 - That business rates will not be reintroduced.
 - Job evaluation of the job description for the vacant post grades the post at the current level.

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 2020/21.
- 6.4. Support for the draft budget will provide the JAC with the capacity to deliver most of its core functions in 2020/21.

Jill Fisher
Treasurer to the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Appendix A

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 JAC, 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.

2018/19 HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Actual FORECAST OUTTURN 2019/20, BUDGET 2020/21 AND INDICATIVE BUDGET 2021/22

£'000	2019/20		2020/21				2021/22	
	Budget	Forecast	Original	Budget			Indicative	
			Budget	Inflation	Pressures	Other	Budget	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Actual Core Budget								
Expenditure								
235.9 Staff costs	251.3	245.7	251.3	4.6	0.0	(4.6)	251.3	256.3
31.5 Accommodation/office equipment	31.5	31.5	31.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	31.5	32.1
7.9 Partnership running costs	11.5	11.5	11.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.5	11.7
31.7 Support services	31.7	31.7	31.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	31.7	32.3
306.9 Total Core Expenditure	326.0	320.4	326.0	4.6	0.0	(4.6)	326.0	332.5
Income								
226.9 Defra	(232.5)	(232.5)	(232.5)	0.0	0.0	0.0	(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)
9.0 Kent County Council	(9.0)	(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)
16.1 Other income	(9.8)	(9.8)	(9.8)	0.0	0.0	0.0	(9.8)	(9.8)
326.7 Total Core Income	(326.0)	(326.0)	(326.0)	0.0	0.0	0.0	(326.0)	(328.2)
19.8 Surplus/(deficit) transfer to/(from) reserves	0.0	5.6	0.0	(4.6)	0.0	4.6	0.0	(4.3)
0.0 Net Core Budget	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Self Funding Projects

See Appendix C for detail

279.5 JAC expenditure on self-funded projects	346.4	355.7	340.1				340.1	340.1
42.1 Defra contribution to self-funded projects	(41.1)	(41.1)	(45.8)				(45.8)	(45.8)
Local authorities contributions	(45.1)	(26.6)	(35.8)				(35.8)	(35.8)
Other contributions to self-funded projects	(260.2)	(288.0)	(258.5)				(258.5)	(258.5)
321.6 Net Self-Funded Project Budget	0.0	0.0	0.0				0.0	0.0

Total High Weald JAC

648.3 Total core and project expenditure	672.4	676.1	666.1	4.6	0.0	(4.6)	666.1	672.6
648.3 Total core and project income	(672.4)	(681.7)	(666.1)	0.0	0.0	0.0	(666.1)	(668.3)
0.0 Total High Weald JAC Budget	0.0	(5.6)	0.0	4.6	0.0	(4.6)	0.0	4.3

Defra Funding	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Reserves	£000
	£000	£000	£000	Reserves at 1 April 2019	159.2
Defra funding on core budget	(232.5)	(232.5)	(234.7)	Transfer to/(from) reserves 2019/20	5.6
Defra funding on projects budget	(41.1)	(45.8)	(45.8)	Transfer to/(from)reserves 2020/21	0.0
Total Defra Funding	(273.6)	(278.3)	(280.5)	Reserves at 31 March 2021	164.8

HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SELF FUNDING PROJECTS OUTTURN 2019/20 & INDICATIVE BUDGET 2020/21

	Budget 2019/20			Forecast 2019/20			Indicative Budget		
	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000
<u>1 Community Outreach</u>									
JAC expenditure	10.3			5.5			9.7		
Defra		(8.9)			(4.0)			(8.6)	
Local authorities		(0.7)			0.0			(0.4)	
Other		(0.7)	(0.0)		(1.5)	0.0		(0.7)	0.0
High Weald Heroes									
JAC expenditure	25.8			25.8			26.4		
Defra		(12.9)			(12.9)			(13.2)	
Local authorities		(12.9)			(12.9)			(13.2)	
Other		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0
<u>2 Management Plan Evidence and Guidance</u>									
JAC expenditure	10.0			8.4			12.9		
Defra		(10.0)			(8.4)			(12.9)	
Other		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0
<u>3 Landscape Enhancement</u>									
JAC expenditure	290.3			313.3			285.1		
Defra		(9.3)			(13.8)			(11.1)	
Environment Agency		(10.0)			(33.3)			(4.5)	
Water Catchment Partnership (KWT)		0.0			(3.0)			(3.8)	
Local authorities		(21.5)			(13.7)			(16.2)	
Other		0.0			0.0			0.0	
Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund		(30.8)			(30.8)			(30.8)	
National Grid		(93.7)			(93.7)			(93.7)	
Sussex Lund (Charities Aid Foundation)		(125.0)	0.0		(125.0)	0.0		(125.0)	0.0
<u>4 Project Development</u>									
JAC expenditure	10.0			2.7			6.0		
Defra		0.0			(2.0)			0.0	
Natural England		0.0			(0.7)			0.0	
Local authorities		(10.0)	0.0		0.0	0.0		(6.0)	0.0
JAC expenditure (to Appendix A)	346.4			355.7			340.1		
Expenditure funded by Defra (to Appendix A)		(41.1)			(41.1)			(45.8)	
Expenditure funded by LAs (to Appendix A)		(45.1)			(26.6)			(35.8)	
Expenditure funded by Other (to Appendix A)		(260.2)			(288.0)			(258.5)	
TOTAL JAC expenditure/income	346.4	(346.4)	0.0	355.7	(355.7)	0.0	340.1	(340.1)	0.0

Agenda Item: 10

Committee: High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Date: 25 November 2019

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 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.

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 but as we enter the final months of the protected funding period and given the 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. Also, given the imminent General Election, there is a significant risk the next Chancellor of the Exchequer may choose not to re-new a stable and predictable funding settlement for AONB partnerships from April 2020.

2.3 Members will be aware the independent review (the Glover Review) into England's National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty was published at the end of September. In view of the scale and nature of the review and the inevitable hiatus caused by the General Election and other matters, it will take some time not only to understand the review's full implications for the work of the AONB Partnership but also time for it to take effect.

However, there is much to welcome and it does represent a positive outcome and one that will set the stage for a different future.

2.4 The key risks to the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) are set out in Appendix A.

3.0 Risk mitigation

3.1 The High Weald AONB Unit's business strategy 2019 – 2024 will respond to the risks to the work of the JAC caused by the constraints on both the financial and personnel resources of the AONB Unit. It will also be adapted to accommodate the findings of the Glover Review as soon as these are better understood. This strategy will be tailored to the local circumstances and specific needs of the High Weald and the High Weald AONB partnership.

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 likely that 2020 will also 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. The findings of the Glover Review are unlikely to come into effect until mid-2020 at the earliest and as such, they are unlikely to have a significant influence on the work of the AONB partnership in the immediate future.

4.3 The measures in the business strategy for 2019 – 2024 will ensure the JAC remains 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

Agenda Item: 11

Committee: High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Date: 25 November 2019

Title of Report: Glover Review of Designated Landscapes

By: Treasurer to the Joint Advisory Committee

Purpose: To note the recommendations of the Glover Review and agree it as a basis for future JAC discussion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to:

1. note the recommendations;
 2. agree the recommendations should form the basis of JAC discussions during 2020; and
 3. encourage local authorities to submit individual responses.
-

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Undertaking a review of protected landscapes was a key commitment of Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan which sets out what the Government will do to improve the environment within a generation.
- 1.2. Nearly 70 years after the country's National Parks were first established, opening up the countryside and allowing more people to connect with nature, the independent Designated Landscapes Review was launched by Michael Gove in May 2018.
- 1.3. An independent panel was established, led by Julian Glover, and with 5 other members: Dame Fiona Reynolds, Sarah Mukherjee, Jim Dixon, Ewen Cameron and Jake Fiennes.
- 1.4. The Panel's main role was to explore how our iconic landscapes could meet our needs in the 21st century.
- 1.5. The findings and recommendations were shaped by views and evidence gathered from visits to partnerships in designated and non-designated landscapes; conversations with people who live, work in, visit and care for them; a public call for evidence which received around 2,500 responses; and video ethnography to hear the perspectives of those who might otherwise not have been reached.
- 1.6. The AONB Partnership hosted a visit from Jim Dixon and submitted a response to the Review's questions following consideration at its November 2018 meeting.

2. REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. A summary of the Review and its 29 recommendations are attached as Appendix 1. The 29 recommendations are presented under five themes:

- Landscapes alive for nature and beauty
- Landscapes for everyone
- Living in landscapes
- More special places
- New ways of working.

2.2. AONBs are generally referred to favourably through the Review. The summary states *“We also think what are now AONBs should be strengthened, with increased funding, governance reform, new shared purposes with National Parks, and a greater voice on development”*.

3. NAAONB AND PARTNERSHIP RESPONSE

3.1. The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) has advised that early responses to the consultation would be welcomed by Defra and will shape Government’s response to the Review which may take up to a year and is likely to co-incide with the next 4-year spending review and subsequent funding agreement with protected landscapes.

3.2. The NAAONB and the High Weald AONB Partnership have welcomed the recommendations. The Partnership’s response, agreed by the Management Board, is attached as Appendix 2 and the South East Protected Landscapes Planning Group response to recommendation 6 is attached as Appendix 3.

3.3. The Campaign for National Parks, in partnership with Defra, has hosted an event entitled *‘Protected landscapes - what does the nation need from them today?’* which has provided an opportunity for the Panel to present and discuss their recommendations with protected landscape lead officers and a range of other organisations.

3.4. The Glover Review will also be on the agenda of the NAAONBs AGM, attended by Partnership Chairs and AONB Lead Officers.

3.5. After the election local MPs will be informed of the findings and recommendations of the review.

3.6. Other organisations have submitted responses to the Review and local authority partners are encouraged to submit their own response.

4. NEXT STEPS 2020/21 AND BEYOND

4.1. Since the launch of the Review the NAAONB and AONB Lead Officers have been preparing for early adoption of some of the review’s recommendations, demonstrating a willingness to work towards a new national vision, subject to resources.

4.2. At the annual AONB conference in July the NAAONB announced the Colchester Declaration (Appendix 4) setting out how the AONBs unique network and partnership model will aim to significantly increase the scale and pace of nature conservation activity in AONBs.

- 4.3. The Declaration recognises the unprecedented concern for the future of the natural world and chimes with the Designated Landscape Review recommendation which is clear that more needs to be done to recover nature in protected landscapes.
- 4.4. The Colchester Declaration sets out nature recovery targets for AONBs with two short term targets to be achieved by July 2020: to enable an approach that creates opportunities within AONBs for people to make an emotional connection with nature; and prepare a Nature Recovery Plan for each AONB.
- 4.5. A national steering group, of which the AONB Business Manager is a member, has subsequently been established to lead AONB Partnerships on delivery of these targets.

5. RISKS

- 5.1 The AONB Partnership has a track record that demonstrates its ability to implement many of the Glover Review's recommendations. However significant additional resources will be required if the recommendations are to be implemented in their entirety, as advocated by the Designated Landscape Review Panel.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1. The JAC Partnership has operated for 30 years, successfully evolving to respond to landscape, policy and financial changes. The Designated Landscape Review and the recently launched AONB Management Plan provide an opportune context in which to review the AONB Partnership during 2020, to set a direction for 2021 and beyond.

Gerry Sherwin
AONB Business Manager

Landscapes review: final report - summary of findings

Updated: 25 September 2019

Content

- 1.0 Summary findings
 - 2.0 Summary 1: Landscapes alive for nature and beauty
 - 3.0 Summary 2: Landscapes for everyone
 - 4.0 Summary 3: Living in landscapes
 - 5.0 Summary 4: More special places
 - 6.0 Summary 5: New ways of working
-

1.0 Summary Findings

- 1.1 The underlying argument of our review, which covers England, is that our system of national landscapes should be a positive force for the nation's wellbeing. Big ambitions are made possible by these 44 areas working together in new ways to become more than the sum of their parts.
- 1.2 We want this to happen not as an end in itself but because more must be done for nature and natural beauty. More must be done for people who live in and visit our landscapes. And a lot more must be done to meet the needs of our many fellow citizens who do not know the countryside, or do not always feel welcome in it, but should be able to enjoy it. Our landscapes are open and free to all, but can seem exclusive.
- 1.3 We think this can only happen if we are honest about what doesn't work at the moment and put in place a system which can do better.
- 1.4 Today, we have a system which is fragmented, sometimes marginalised and often misunderstood. Indeed it is not really a system at all, but 10 National Parks, who do not always work together effectively, and an entirely separate network of 34 less powerful Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). They have different purposes from National Parks, vastly less money, but sometimes greater pressures. Yet they cover areas that are more visited, sometimes more biodiverse and are just as beautiful.
- 1.5 We believe this duplication wastes resources and diminishes ambition.
- 1.6 That is why our central proposal is to bring National Parks and AONBs together as part of one family of national landscapes, served by a shared National Landscapes Service (NLS). This will give them a bigger voice, bigger ambition and a new way of working to meet new challenges.
- 1.7 Within this family, of course not every member will be the same. Local identity matters. National Parks need to keep their titles, at least their current levels of funding, and local autonomy, especially over planning.

- 1.8 The current system of governance for National Parks (and, as we'll explore later, AONBs) should be reformed substantially. Time after time we have heard and seen that National Park boards are too big, do not do a good job in setting a strategic direction and are deeply unrepresentative of England's diverse communities.
- 1.9 Of the almost 1,000 people on National Park and AONB boards today, the great majority are male, many are of retirement age and a tiny fraction are of black, Asian or minority ethnicities. This is wrong for organisations which are funded by the nation to serve everyone.
- 1.10 We also think what are now AONBs should be strengthened, with increased funding, governance reform, new shared purposes with National Parks, and a greater voice on development.
- 1.11 We think the current cumbersome title 'AONB' should be replaced. Our suggestion is that they should be called National Landscapes.
- 1.12 We would also like to see the encouragement of a wider range of non-designated systems of landscape protection, which should be members of the national landscapes family and served by the NLS.
- 1.13 This ought to include new areas of forest, along the lines of the successful National Forest in the East Midlands. We give our strong support for proposals for new urban National Parks, such as the one proposed for the West Midlands and the one already underway in London. We also praise the impressive work being done to bring the South Pennines together as a regional park and to create a marine park in Plymouth.
- 1.14 Our overriding conclusion is that without structural reform and greater shared ambition and status, our national landscapes will always struggle to do more than make an incremental difference.

2.0 Summary 1: Landscapes alive for nature and beauty

2.1 National Parks were created in part to provide a healing space, both mentally and physically, for the many who had given so much to protect our country during the Second World War. They were meant for everybody. Much has changed in the 70 years since. Modern Britain is a very different place socially and demographically. Today we recognise diversity as the mark of a healthy and resilient society. However, many landscape bodies have not moved smartly enough to reflect this changing society, and in some cases show little desire to do so.

2.2 We want our nation's most cherished landscapes to fulfill their original mission for people, providing unrivalled opportunities for enjoyment, spiritual refreshment and in turn supporting the nation's health and wellbeing.

2.3 Proposals

- Proposal 1: National landscapes should have a renewed mission to recover and enhance nature, and be supported and held to account for delivery by a new National Landscapes Service
- Proposal 2: The state of nature and natural capital in our national landscapes should be regularly and robustly assessed, informing the priorities for action

- Proposal 3: Strengthened Management Plans should set clear priorities and actions for nature recovery including, but not limited to, wilder areas and the response to climate change (notably tree planting and peatland restoration). Their implementation must be backed up by stronger status in law
- Proposal 4: National landscapes should form the backbone of Nature Recovery Networks – joining things up within and beyond their boundaries
- Proposal 5: A central place for national landscapes in new Environmental Land Management Schemes
- Proposal 6: A strengthened place for national landscapes in the planning system with AONBs given statutory consultee status, encouragement to develop local plans and changes to the National Planning Policy Framework.

3.0 Summary 2: Landscapes for everyone

3.1 National Parks were created in part to provide a healing space, both mentally and physically, for the many who had given so much to protect our country during the Second World War. They were meant for everybody. Much has changed in the 70 years since. Modern Britain is a very different place socially and demographically. Today we recognise diversity as the mark of a healthy and resilient society. However, many landscape bodies have not moved smartly enough to reflect this changing society, and in some cases show little desire to do so.

3.2 We want our nation’s most cherished landscapes to fulfill their original mission for people, providing unrivalled opportunities for enjoyment, spiritual refreshment and in turn supporting the nation’s health and wellbeing.

3.3 Proposals

- Proposal 7: A stronger mission to connect all people with our national landscapes, supported and held to account by the new National Landscapes Service
- Proposal 8: A night under the stars in a national landscape for every child
- Proposal 9: New long term programmes to increase the ethnic diversity of visitors
- Proposal 10: Landscapes that cater for and improve the nation’s health and wellbeing
- Proposal 11: Expanding volunteering in our national landscapes
- Proposal 12: Better information and signs to guide visitors
- Proposal 13: A ranger service in all our national landscapes, part of a national family
- Proposal 14: National landscapes supported to become leaders in sustainable tourism
- Proposal 15: Joining up with others to make the most of what we have, and bringing National Trails into the national landscapes family
- Proposal 16: Consider expanding open access rights in national landscapes

4.0 Summary 3: Living in landscapes

4.1 Our system of national landscapes works best when it works with people on its side. We can all agree that a village that is lived in, with an active school, people who work, and who are part of a living tradition, is better than a sterile place that is full of shuttered homes, empty pubs and derelict shops.

4.2 If we are serious about demonstrating the value of ‘lived in’ landscapes to the global family of national landscapes, then we need to be serious about the people who live in them, and show how it’s possible to offer meaningful social and economic support for them.

4.3 **Proposals**

- Proposal 17: National landscapes working for vibrant communities
- Proposal 18: A new National Landscapes Housing Association to build affordable homes
- Proposal 19: A new approach to coordinating public transport piloted in the Lake District, and new, more sustainable ways of accessing national landscapes

5.0 **Summary 4. More special places**

5.1 Almost a quarter – 24.5% – of England is already covered by national landscapes.

5.2 We think there is a case for several larger AONBs to take on National Park candidate status, as well as for a new AONB (or National Landscape as we propose they are called in future).

5.3 The success of the National Forest is also a model which should be replicated.

5.4 We also think that a changing nation needs new ways to come together to support natural beauty and access.

5.5 **Proposals**

- Proposal 20: New designated landscapes and a new National Forest
- Proposal 21: Welcoming new landscape approaches in cities and the coast, and a city park competition
- Proposal 22: A better designations process

6.0 **Summary 5. New ways of working**

6.1 We want our landscapes to focus on enhancing natural beauty, supporting communities and visitors. But to do it better, we think they need to change and work together more

6.2 **Proposals**

- Proposal 23: Stronger purposes in law for our national landscapes
- Proposal 24: AONBs strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, renamed as National Landscapes
- Proposal 25: A new National Landscapes Service bringing our 44 national landscapes together to achieve more than the sum of their parts
- Proposal 26: Reformed governance to inspire and secure ambition in our national landscapes and better reflect society
- Proposal 27: A new financial model – more money, more secure, more enterprising

High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

Woodland Enterprise Centre
Hastings Road
Flimwell
East Sussex TN5 7PR

Tel: 01424 723011
Email: info@highweald.org



www.highweald.org

Working together to care for one of England's finest landscapes

The Rt Hon Theresa Villiers MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

29 October 2019

Dear Secretary of State,

Landscapes Review: National Parks and AONBs – Response from the High Weald AONB Partnership

The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers 1500 square kilometres across four counties and 11 districts. It lies within 50 km of London yet is considered to be one of the best surviving Medieval landscapes in North West Europe. This wonderful legacy, left to us by past generations, is something we at the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) seek to preserve. This year we celebrate our 30th anniversary as a partnership and we are delighted that during this special year we are able to welcome this independent review into the future of England's finest landscapes.

We welcome the report from the landscape review panel, and we welcome the challenges it sets for national landscapes.

We support the report's focus on nature recovery. Despite our best efforts biodiversity has continued to decline across our finest landscapes. But with a revised statutory purpose, and strengthened AONB Management Plans setting measurable progress supported by a more effective duty of regard, we can do more. We look forward to continuing to build on our work with farmer clusters to promote sustainable land management and regenerative agriculture that can deliver healthy local food, healthy soils and more biodiversity.

We wholeheartedly support the creation of a National Landscape Service. We can see the value in central coordination and shared services which will support us and enable us to focus on re-energising the protection of natural beauty.

Anglesey
Arnsdale and Silverdale
Blackdown Hills
Cannock Chase
Chichester Harbour
Chilterns
Clwydian Range
Cornwall
Cotswolds
Gower
Cranbourne Chase and Dee Valley
West Wiltshire Downs
Dedham Vale
Dorset
East Devon
Forest of Bowland
Howardian Hills
High Weald
Isle of Wight
Isles of Scilly
Kent Downs
Lincolnshire Wolds
Llyn
Malvern Hills
Mendip Hills
Nidderdale
Norfolk Coast
North Devon
North Pennines
North Wessex Downs
Northumberland Coast
Quantock Hills
Shropshire Hills
Solway Coast
South Devon
Suffolk Coast and Heaths
Surrey Hills
Tamar Valley
Wye Valley

**Landscapes
for life**
.org.uk

HIGH WEALD
One of the
AONB Family

The High Weald AONB is facing an unprecedented level of development which threatens to fundamentally change its distinctive character. We particularly welcome the recognition that AONBs need a stronger voice in planning, including statutory consultee status and the opportunity to consider the preparation of a dedicated local plan for the area.

Our AONB has one of the highest differentials between average cost of housing and average wages. The proposal for a new National Housing Association together with other positive measures to build affordable homes would help us meet our ambitions to support vibrant local communities.

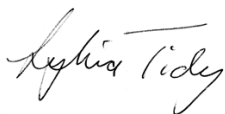
We recognise that the idea of a natural health service underpins the 1949 Act and we support the proposal of a mission to 'actively connect' people to these special places, with a night under the stars for every child an example of the many experiences AONBs can offer. Our team has been working with schools and young people for the last 20 years to co-create a 'welly walk' from each school and provide opportunities for children to immerse themselves in nature. Extending the second purpose to AONBs will help us to do more, and reach out further to communities outside of our boundary.

The broad scope and forward-looking approach of the report is refreshing. We understand the comments made about current structures and ways of working, and feel that we can accommodate the changes envisaged. Recognition of the enterprising and partnership-building nature of AONBs is appreciated, as is the proposal for new resources to reflect enhanced purposes and responsibilities.

Our partnership has been working tirelessly over the past 30 years to promote the value of AONBs for all. The High Weald AONB is a brand now recognised and well-regarded locally. We look forward to a rigorous debate about any benefits that a change in title may bring.

We ask that the Government expedites the implementation of the report, bringing forward primary legislation where necessary, and providing the additional resources promised so that we can deliver the report's recommendations. We think the detail is important and would like to work with you to get the detail right. With our experienced directors, and an established partnership that has been working together for 30 years, we feel we have a lot to offer.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Sylvia Tidy

Chairman, High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

Copied to:

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

Julian Glover, Landscapes Review Panel

Dan Jones, Defra

Response to Landscapes Review Planning Recommendations (Proposal 6)

Endorsed at officer level by Cotswolds; Cranborne Chase; High Weald; Isle of Wight; Kent Downs; Norfolk Coast and North Wessex Downs AONB Units

Proposal 6: A strengthened place for national landscapes in the planning system with AONBs given statutory consultee status, encouragement to develop local plans and changes to the National Planning Policy Framework

The group strongly supports Proposal 6 in the Landscape Review which seeks a strengthened place for national landscapes in the planning system. The South East of England is under substantial pressure from development, the scale of which is evidenced in 'An Independent Review of Housing In England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty 2012-2017' jointly commissioned by the National Association of AONBs and the CPRE and published in November 2017¹. This pressure will increase due to the Government's new method of calculating housing need, which was brought in by the NPPF in November 2018 and significantly increases projected housing needs in the South East. The proposal to strengthen the place of national landscapes is necessary to ensure that the proposed levels of growth do not damage the purposes for which AONBs were designated.

Detailed Proposals

In the body of the Landscapes Review report a number of detailed recommendations are made to support Proposal 6. These are reproduced in italics below together with the group's comments in red.

AONBs – statutory consultee status

AONBs need a stronger voice in planning. The pressures on AONBs are often greater, especially in the south east, and their voice is not always heard.

They should not become responsible for day to day decisions on planning as National Parks are. Most AONBs don't want this power, and very few argued for it in our call for evidence.

But AONB bodies should become statutory consultees in the planning system. They need to be formally consulted on planning cases, and have a formal voice in the decision making process.

At present, statutory consultee status for AONBs sits solely with Natural England which, as a national body, cannot be expected to know every area in the way a dedicated local AONB team does.

We are aware that local planning authorities are already required to prepare policies specific to AONBs. They must meet new rules on a 'Duty to Co-operate', and 'Statements of Common Ground' are expected to support this. But we heard repeatedly and convincingly in the course of this review that this is not sufficient.

Statutory consultee status should encourage developers to consult AONB bodies before making a formal planning application, to facilitate good design and mitigation and – with net gain soon to be mandated – helping secure this. It is better to have a partnership approach than an adversarial one.

This does not mean AONBs should become consumed with putting in advice on every single planning application; they don't do this now, nor would they be expected to. They should agree with their local

¹ <https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/landscapes/item/4707-beauty-betrayed>

planning authorities what they should be consulted upon and be free to comment if something of significance appears.

Some additional resource and expertise is likely to be necessary too, but the vast majority already employ officers with planning expertise. There is also expertise across the wider family of national landscapes that can be better shared and some additional resource could be provided at a national level through the new National Landscapes Service we propose, reducing duplication across all 44 bodies.

We strongly support these recommendations as it will help ensure that we are consulted on applications that have the potential to impact on the AONB and will give our comments more weight when they are considered by local planning authorities. The proposal will result in an increased volume of work and additional resources to manage this will be required, particularly in those AONBs that cover a large area or do not have dedicated planning support. However, we are working together to share best practice on how to focus efforts on those applications likely to have the greatest impact on our designated landscapes.

AONBs – local plans

Single local plans for AONBs do not exist. They are prepared at local authority level so AONBs can be subject to different plans and policies for each of the constituent local authorities they sit within.

We heard repeatedly that planning policies and decisions, especially in large AONBs, can vary immensely between authorities. There is often no shared vision for the landscape as a whole, with different local authorities taking different approaches, inconsistent with the AONBs' purpose and character.

This can be done better. We heard in the Arnside and Silverdale AONB how two local authorities came together to support a single Development Plan for the AONB.

This is a good model. We want AONBs to work with local authorities to develop local plans and policies which set out a vision, explain how conservation and recreational purposes will be implemented and how the needs and requirements of the local community will be met within the broader context of achieving sustainable development appropriate to these nationally important landscapes.

We understand that not all AONBs will have the capacity to produce one soon – but they should work towards one together with their constituent local authorities, and be supported to do so. We also accept that AONBs with especially small planning loads, or single local authorities may not feel this is necessary, and we agree different approaches should be tried.

In the case of the Chilterns and the Cotswolds which already have Conservation Board Status and with aspirations to become National Parks, we think a single statutory local plan is required for the entirety of their area. This could also apply to other especially large AONBs which cross multiple local authority boundaries and under particular development pressure, for instance, the High Weald and the Kent Downs.

We strongly support these recommendations which will particularly help AONBs with multiple local authorities to have strong and consistent planning policies across their area. Whilst the larger and more administratively complex AONBs probably have the greatest need for such single

local plans, they will also have the most challenges in achieving agreement between the component local authorities, both to the principle of preparing such a local plan and to its contents. It is recommended that AONB Local Plans be made mandatory for the larger AONBs and that AONB partnerships, local authorities and the new National Landscape Service work together to create governance models that will allow efficient democratic decision-making for such local plans. These AONB Plans will also need additional resources since the planning resources for AONBs are normally one part-time officer and local authorities will still need to produce Local Plans for the parts of their districts outside the AONB.

Strategic planning

Some of the most controversial developments in national landscapes are not local issues at all, but subject to national policy and we think there are several areas where the place of all national landscapes needs clarifying in the planning system.

We welcome the recent revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which have strengthened the place of National Parks and AONBs. But guidance should make clearer that developments proposed in the areas buffering national landscapes' boundaries must avoid detrimental impacts on them.

We think that the NPPF should make a reality of its promise that 'great weight' should be given to national landscapes by issuing new advice that will secure confident delivery of this aim by both public and private sector players. In situations where such cases are determined with the expert advice of the National Infrastructure Commission, we urge the government to give the strongest emphasis to its commitment to our national landscapes. They should not be the place for major intrusive developments unless, as is stated in the NPPF, they are truly in the national interest without any possible alternative locations being available.

Such guidance should also help ensure that our proposed new third purpose (social and economic development which enhances the first two purposes; (see the Living in Landscapes chapter for our recommendation on this) will be effectively implemented and that this applies to all national landscapes and not just National Parks as currently.

Guidance should also ensure that care is taken around the boundaries of our national landscapes to prevent a situation where inappropriate developments are tactically sited on beautiful and important areas just outside.

The current Permitted Development Rights (PDR) system should also be reviewed and, if necessary, further PDRs should be added to the list of those currently withdrawn within national landscapes to ensure that the full application process applies before determining planning approval.

For example, forestry and agricultural changes allowed under permitted development can have significant impacts on landscape quality, and the South East and East Protected Landscapes forum has made a convincing case that these should be reviewed.

We also welcome the development of net gain during the course of this review and hope it is adopted in our national landscapes as soon as possible.

Finally, national landscapes should have the flexibility to use funds collected through Section 106 agreements and, where relevant, the New Homes Bonus raised by the constituent authorities, to support locally needed affordable housing, services or community infrastructure.

We strongly support these recommendations. Some clarification has already been provided in Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) updates in July 2019, but it is still not clear how AONB impacts should affect housing provision figures in these areas. The group has drafted a paper setting out how it thinks national planning policy should be interpreted when planning for housing in AONBs and recommends that this be used as the basis for further PPG updates, or preferably a Circular for AONBs such as the National Parks benefit from.

Reduction of permitted development rights in AONBs and National Parks would also be supported to allow proper scrutiny of the impacts of development on these protected landscapes. It is noted, however, that the Government is currently seeking to further increase such permitted development rights, including for telecommunications equipment.

The use of section 106 funds and New Homes Bonus by AONBs and National Parks to support affordable housing, services or community infrastructure is also supported in principle, although AONB partnerships do not currently have the resources to run such projects. If additional resources were provided such projects would fit well with Proposal 23 for new purposes including fostering the economic and community vitality of the area.

The Colchester Declaration 2019

Set against a backdrop of unprecedented concern for the future of the natural world, and intergovernmental reports that the current global response to the effects of human impact on nature is insufficient – the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty believes that now is the time to significantly increase the scale and pace of nature conservation activity in AONBs. Using our unique network and partnership model, we are making a collective Declaration on Nature in AONBs, setting out our strategy for change.

With many AONB host authorities having taken the step of declaring a Climate Emergency we are demonstrating our readiness to act to redress declines in species and habitats within the context of a wider response to climate change.

We believe

1. Natural Beauty has intrinsic value and means so much to people
2. AONBs should be places of rich, diverse and abundant wildlife
3. Nature recovery is central to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty
4. Climate change is the biggest threat to humanity and one of the greatest threats to biodiversity. Designated landscapes offer some of the most powerful solutions to the challenges of climate change
5. The network of AONBs and National Parks, their teams, partnerships, authorities and stakeholders offer a unique solution to tackling environmental challenges

We pledge

By July 2020

1. To enable an approach that creates opportunities within AONBs for people to make an emotional connection with nature.
2. To prepare a Nature Recovery Plan for each AONB

By 2024

1. To embed an ecosystems services approach into all AONB Management Plans
2. To ensure all AONB management plans include meaningful measures around climate change mitigation and adaptation, including clear, measurable targets to support Net Zero

By 2030

1. That at least 200,000 ha of SSSIs in AONBs will be in favourable condition
2. That at least 100,000 ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected sites will have been created/ restored in AONBs to further support the natural movement of plants and animals
3. That at least 36,000 ha of new woodland will have been planted or allowed to regenerate in AONBs following the principle of the right tree in the right place
4. That, by each AONB immediately adopting a species on the threatened list and by preparing and delivering a Species Action Plan, at least thirty species relevant to AONBs will be taken off the list by 2030

We call on Westminster and Welsh Governments to provide the power and resources to make these targets achievable