

High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee



Report items

Meeting postponed until 1 July 2020 due to Co-vid 19, report items to be agreed by end of March 2020.

1. Minutes of the JAC meeting
To consider the minutes of the last meeting of the JAC held on 25 November 2019 (page 3)
2. Minutes of the Management Board Meeting
To note the matters arising from the Management Board meeting held on 4 March 2020 (page 8)
3. Minutes of the Officer Steering Group
To note the minutes of the last meeting of the OSG held on 5 February 2020 (page 13)
4. Revenue Budget for 2020/21
To approve the Revenue Budget for 2020/21 by the Treasurer and thank Defra and partner authorities for maintaining their contributions (page 20) Appendix A, core budget (page 23) and Appendix B, project budget (page 24). Also note the 2020/21 Defra funding settlement letter – Appendix C appended.
5. Risk Management & Staffing
To consider a report by the AONB Co-Director on Co-vid 19, risk management (page 26); Appendix 1: High Weald JAC - Key Risks
6. Tree Establishment Positioning Statement and Regenerative Landscape discussion
postponed until meeting to be held on 1 July 2020

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

Samantha Nicholas
Clerk to the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee
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Report item: 1

High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Minutes of Meeting



Held at 10.00am on Monday 25 November 2019, at Boathouse
Bistro, Bewl Water

Members present:

Cllr I Irvine	Crawley Borough Council
Cllr S Tidy	East Sussex County Council (Chairman)
Cllr T Hogben	Horsham District Council
Cllr M Balfour	Kent County Council
Cllr P Bradbury	Mid Sussex District Council/ West Sussex County Council
Cllr J Vine-Hall	Rother District Council
Cllr L Lockwood	Tandridge District Council
Cllr J Soyke	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Cllr P Dixon	Wealden District Council
Mrs J Davison	Community Co-optee
Mr T Bamford	CLA
Mr M Woodcock	Forestry Commission
Ms L Newland	Natural England

Officers present:

Mr J Lavender	AONB Co-Director, High Weald AONB Unit
Mrs S Marsh	AONB Co-Director, High Weald AONB Unit
Ms G Sherwin	AONB Business Manager, High Weald AONB Unit
Ms C Tester	AONB Planning Adviser, High Weald AONB Unit
Mr R Wingfield	AONB Land Management Advisor, High Weald AONB Unit
Mrs C Meadows	AONB Land Management Advisor, High Weald AONB Unit
Mrs P Tiltman	AONB Finance Officer, High Weald AONB Unit
Ms S Watson	AONB Communication Officer, High Weald AONB Unit
Mrs E White	AONB Communication Officer, High Weald AONB Unit
Mr A Fowler	Finance Manager, East Sussex County Council
Ms J Morgan	Finance Manager, East Sussex County Council
Ms J Hollingum	Planning Officer, Mid Sussex District Council
Mrs D Russell	Design Officer, Rother District Council
Ms N Bumpus	Planning Officer, Wealden District Council
Mr D Scully	Landscape Officer, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Ms K Culbert	Planning Manager, Hastings Borough Council

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies were received from the following Members and officers:

Cllr M Dickins, Cllr L Steeds, Cllr A Pickering, Cllr L Levine, Cllr D Lettington, P Mayson, H Page, V Pullan, D Greenwood, M Davidson, C Pettit, R Mosinghi, M Daly, V Riddle, J Knowles, H Page, D Baker

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. ELECTION OF MANAGEMENT BOARD MEMBERS

4.1 The following Members were elected onto the Management Board from November 2019- November 2021:

Chairman: Cllr S Tidy
Vice-Chairman: Cllr P Bradbury

Management Board Members: Cllr M Balfour
Cllr P Dixon
Cllr J Vine- Hall
Mrs J Davison

4.2 The Chairman encouraged other new Members to attend one of the Management Board Meetings and to think about becoming a Member of the Board in the future.

5.0 MINUTES OF THE JAC MEETING – 27 March 2019

5.1 It was noted on pt 7.9, replace the name Lindfield with Lingfield.

5.2 RESOLVED to amend the minutes and note the minutes of the JAC held on 25 November 2019 as a correct record

6.0 MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD– 16 October 2019

6.1 RESOLVED to note the minutes of the Management Board held on 16 October 2019.

7.0 MINUTES OF THE OFFICER STEERING GROUP – 18 September 2019

7.1 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, Mid Sussex DC was elected as Chairman (previously Vice-chairman) and Diane Russell, Rother District Council was elected as Vice-chairman.

7.2 It was noted that the Chairman thanked David Greenwood for his contribution to the OSG group over the past two years.

7.3 Claire Tester informed the Members that a Housing Position Statement based on the national policy guidance on housing developments in AONBs has been developed. This has been adopted by the National Association for AONBs but was just too late to get onto this agenda so will be circulated with a link separately.

7.4 **RESOLVED to note: The Minutes of the Officer Steering Group held on 18 September 2019 as a correct record.**

8.0 AONB DESIGN GUIDANCE FOR NEW DEVELOPMENTS

8.1 Claire Tester confirmed that the purpose of the report was to approve the final Design Guide. The Members had a pdf version circulated to them and hardcopies were presented at the Meeting. The report summarises the consultation results and changes to the Guide.

8.2 There are still some images and captions that need to be modified and once these are completed hardcopies will be produced for local authority, architects, developers and Parish Councils to use.

8.3 The Guide's aim is to be a useful tool to make new development more distinctive with regards to the AONB key characteristics. Promotion of the Guide will be key to making sure it is used and therefore the recommendation asks Members to not only approve the Guide but also promote it within their own organisations.

8.4 The Chairman informed the Members that East Sussex County Council Members and officers had received some excellent training from The Unit on the Management Plan. The Chairman encouraged all local authorities to take this opportunity with the Design Guide launch.

8.5 Cllr Bradbury supported the importance of the Design Guide and confirmed that Mid Sussex DC and West Sussex CC welcomed future training in this area for Members and officers

8.6 **RESOLVED to:**

(1) approve the final High Weald AONB Housing Design Guide subject to minor editorial changes to be delegated to the Co-Directors

(2) promote the Design Guide within their own organisation and encourage its adoption and use.

9.0 DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2020/21

9.1 The Committee considered a report by Finance Manager, Andy Fowler, on the Draft Revenue Budget for 2020/21.

9.2 The forecast outturn for 2019/2020 is a surplus of £5,600 arising from salary savings, shown in Appendix B. There have been additional salary costs as maternity cover was required in 2019/20. The forecast reserve at 31 March 2020 is £164,800. It has been recommended that the reserves be maintained at £95,000 to cover any redundancies.

- 9.3 Self-funding budget, Appendix C, was presented as four programmes; Community Engagement, Management Plan Research and Evidence; Landscape Enhancement and Project Development.
- 9.4 It was 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.
- 9.5 Paragraph 2.6 of the report confirmed that Defra's contribution to the Budget for 2020/21 is still to be advised but the interim advice is that Defra's contributions will be maintained in real terms. An inflationary increase of 1.7% has been assumed increasing the Defra contribution from £273, 632 to £278,284 in 2020/21.
- 9.6 Mrs Davison enquired whether there was a contingency plan for potential wage increases and inflation. It was confirmed that inflation has been applied at rate of 2.5% for staff. Gerry Sherwin also explained that there was a level of flexibility to transfer funds from the project budget to the core budget in the short term to ensure balanced budgets. The operational costs have also remained stable mainly due to the Unit not having to pay rates.
- 9.7 Cllr Bradbury informed the Members that he has put a question to the next Budget Cabinet meeting in December, to ask that West Sussex County Council continues to support the AONB as the work it carries out is exceptional value for money.
- 9.8 RESOLVED to note the report and:**
- (1) approve the Draft Revenue Budget for 2020/21.**
 - (2) commence the budget consultation with the local authorities and Defra**
 - (3) thank the local authorities for their support and East Sussex County Council finance and the Unit for the management of the budget**

10. RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

- 10.1. The JAC considered a report by Jason Lavender on risk management and the associated risk management matrix.
- 10.2 Jason Lavender explained towards the end of January 2016 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the funding in real term for AONBs would be protected until the end of year 2019/20. The pressure on the local authority's contributions towards the core business of the JAC may remain under pressure. The General Election leads to a significant risk the next Chancellor of the Exchequer may choose not to re-new funding settlement in April 2020.
- 10.3 The Glover review recommendations although very supportive towards the AONBs may take some time not only to understand the review's full implication for the work of the AONB Partnership but also time for it to take place.

- 10.4 Cllr Vine-Hall suggested as the budget was so sensitive it might be worth the Unit approaching the 99 Parish Councils to ask for a small contribution over the next four years.
- 10.5 A discussion took place on how the Partnership needs to lobby MPs and other partnerships as the High Weald is a 'low carbon landscape in waiting'. Cllr Vine-Hall informed the Members that Rother District Council is holding a Carbon Target 2030 Meeting in May 2020 and welcomed the Units attendance to it.
- 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.**

11 GLOVER LANDSCAPE REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 The JAC considered a report by Gerry Sherwin on the Glover Review of Designated Landscapes recommendations to form a basis of discussions during 2020.
- 11.2 It was explained to the Members that the findings and recommendations were shaped by views and evidence gathered from visits to partnerships in designated and non-designated landscapes. A public call for evidence received around 2,500 responses. The AONB Partnership hosted a visit from Jim Dixon and submitted a response to the Review's questions following consideration at the JAC Meeting held on 28 November 2019.
- 11.3 The review and its 29 recommendations were circulated to the Members in the report and AONBs are generally referred to favourably. The review recommends increasing AONB funding, governance reform and becoming a statutory consultee in planning. The JAC Partnership responded to these recommendations with a letter to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on 29 October 2019.
- 11.4 Since the review the National Association (NAAONBs) and Lead AONB officers have agreed to start to act on those recommendations which don't require significant additional resources, where possible. In July the NAAONB announced the Colchester Declaration setting out how the AONBs unique network and partnership model will aim to significantly increase the scale and pace of nature conservation activities.
- 11.5 Sally Marsh confirmed that the AONBs Partnerships are already set up to meet these challenges with smaller groups for governance and non-local Members in the Partnership, but we do need to look at future diversity within our communities.

12. HIGH WEALD AONB PARTNERSHIP CELEBRATION PRESENTATION

- 12.1 Sally Marsh presented to the Members a potted history of the inception of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty areas and the JAC Partnership. Sally highlighted the Partnerships key achievements over the past 30 years including the success of the Management Plan; the evidence base for Ancient Woodland Inventory; introducing the seed harvesting scheme for Meadows with a private partnership; highly successful High Weald Heroes scheme; and more recently the Farming Futures Conference engaging with 90 landowners and the High Weald Walking Festival. The presentation also highlighted that

there were many challenges which are impacted on nature recovery such as Ash Dieback, river pollution; loss of key species such as Turtle doves; and climate change impacting on highly sensitive ecosystems such as Gills.

- 12.2 Sally Marsh presented the potential for High Weald Regenerative Programme which involves nature recovery programme; education through High Weald Heroes; public engagement; continued land management advice; leading regenerative agriculture and stronger development in carbon storage.
- 12.3 Sally Marsh thanked the officers, Members and Partners that have contributed over the 30 years to making the current Partnership so successful.
- 12.4 Jason Lavender confirmed that the AONB is in a great position for taking on the zero-carbon challenge and already has good working relationships with the forestry and farming communities.
- 12.5 A discussion took place on the Glover review on the policies that the AONBs should be prioritising. At the National Association Chairman' meeting on Thursday 28 November 2019 the AONB Lead officers and Chairpersons will have an opportunity to discuss this further.
- 12.6 The Members agreed that further partnership working to create coordinated nature recovery areas was required. Gerry Sherwin confirmed that Sussex and Surrey are already looking at county scale strategies. Cllr Vine-Hall suggested that a set of cross local authority policies would help with this process.
- 12.7 The Members fully supported the proposal 8, a night under the stars in a national landscape for every child. However, they were concerned about additional lighting that people tend to install after developments are completed.
- 12.8 A discussion took place on the use of Biodiversity Net Gain and when assessing new developments and moving towards zero carbon landscapes.
- 12.9 Cllr Vine-Hall commented on Proposal 24: AONBs strengthened with new purposes as he was greatly concerned about how the new housing numbers formulae had created a higher baseline than the AONB could sustain. Proposal 24 may give the Partnership more strength to re-address the imbalance.
- 12.10 Cllr Balfour was concerned about proposal 25, a new National Landscape Service, which may lead to another layer of bureaucracy which inhibits the agile working conditions the AONBs currently have.
- 12.11 The Members agreed that greater resources were required to meet these recommendations but that it would be difficult to find this at a local level.

Report item: 2

HIGH WEALD JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Management Board Minutes – 10.30am, Wednesday 4 March 2020, Acorn Tourism,
Woodland Enterprise Centre, Hastings Road, East Sussex, TN5 7PR**



Samantha Nicholas
Clerk to the High Weald AONB
Joint Advisory Committee

Present: Members:
 Cllr Mrs Sylvia Tidy East Sussex County Council (Chairman)
 Cllr Peter Bradbury West Sussex County Council
 Cllr Jonathon Vine-Hall Rother District Council
 Cllr Phil Dixon Wealden District Council

Also present:
 Sally Marsh AONB Director (job share)
 Jason Lavender AONB Director (job share)
 Diane Russell Deputy Chairman OSG

Apologies

1. There were apologies for absence from Cllr Matthew Balfour, Jill Davison, Jennifer Hollingum.

Members' Interests

2. There was no declaration of Member's Interests.

Minutes of the Management Board meeting held on 31 October 2018

3. The minutes of the last meeting, held on 16 October 2019, were agreed as a correct record.

Matters arising from the minutes

4. Sally Marsh updated the Members on the actions proposed by Defra in response to the Glover review recommendations. Last week, Lead Officers from the National Association of AONBs were briefed on Defra's response, which included a series of actions categorised as short, medium- and long-term actions, with the latter reflecting actions likely proposed for the next parliament.
5. In the short term, Defra was considering changing the AONB brand to 'National Landscapes', which if adopted and successful could be followed by the necessary legislation changes. Members discussed their concerns over the changes to the title 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' as it is now a successful brand and new branding takes many years to be recognised. The Members also were concerned using the term 'National Landscape' will make AONBs less distinct from other non-designated landscapes, while maintaining a difference from National Parks. The Members were keen to ensure that an additional word such as 'Outstanding'

would remain within the brand title. In the medium to long term improvements to AONB status within the planning system, possibly as statutory consultees are being considered.

6. Concern expressed by the Review about biodiversity outcomes was addressed by AONBs through the Colchester Declaration which committed AONBs to focus on nature recovery and production of species action plans. The Unit has already initiated discussions about which species to focus on in the High Weald and are looking at fungi, specifically waxcaps, and hedgehogs. Sally Marsh informed the Members that the North Pennines AONB are taking the lead on behalf of the NAAONB on a five-million-pound species recovery Heritage Lottery Fund bid developed to meet the AONBs Colchester Declaration. Members discussed the changing priorities for HLF, and the need to promote regenerative agriculture as mechanism to deliver multiple climate, biodiversity and social objectives.
7. Jason Lavender informed the Members of the importance of soil health with multiple benefits such as nutrient dense food, water retention and carbon offset. He enthused that Regenerative landscape management could be an optimistic solution to the issues we all need to address, and that this method is now being used globally. A discussion took place on how this also needs to feed into the planning process due to the pressure to build on AONBs, which is unprecedented. This ultimately will impact on the High Weald landscape which could potentially be a carbon neutral landscape in waiting.
8. Cllr Dixon enquired about inviting the Secretary of State, Rt Hon George Eustice MP to visit the AONB. Cllr Bradbury suggested inviting the environment committee. It was agreed that the JAC would make a formal invitation for a visit to the AONB.
9. Major Development housing position statement was circulated to the JAC Members and officers in December, and it was hoped that the local authorities would be able to use this to help support their cases against developments which were out of scale with the AONB landscape.
10. The Members discussed the Environment Bill and concern with the new Biodiversity Net Gain metric. Early scrutiny of prepared metrics indicates substantial flaws in the metric which minimise the value of key High Weald characteristics, especially grassland.

OSG update

11. Diane Russell, Vice-Chairman took the Members through the OSG meeting held on 5 February 2020. The officers had a presentation on Biodiversity Net Gain from Sally Marsh which highlighted how this metric can easily be manipulated to show the required 10% net gain. A sub-group of officers has been set up to review net gain practices and will meet in May to discuss how to coordinate responses, share expertise and feedback experiences to the Government.
12. The Design Guide has now been launched and the sub-group are looking at ways to publicise and help train developers and architects so that there is strong uptake on the use of this Guide. The sub group will produce targeted publicity plan and training plan to roll out next financial year. Most local authorities are considering adopting the Guide for material consideration and Rother DC have circulated their report to help with this process. This was also been encouraged through Parish and Town Councils and Neighbourhood planning process. It was suggested that the Planning Inspectorate should be made aware of the Guide along with the offer of future training.

13. Sally Marsh informed the Members that briefing from the Landscape Institute suggested that the Government was likely to introduce the concept of National Design Codes which could be supported by local codes, and that the OSG could maintain a watching brief over these developments.
14. The Members were informed that Claire Tester continues to circulate useful Appeal decisions to officers e.g. for a site in Mid Sussex had been dismissed due to its impact on the character and because it was deemed to be a very poor design.
15. The Members were advised that Members training had been conducted at East Sussex CC and Wealden DC which was well received. Sally Marsh confirmed that the Unit is available to carry out further training with Members as required.
16. **Members thanked Diane Russell and the sub group for their exceptional work in producing the Design Guide and specifically Diane for drafting the Guide. The OSG were also thanked for all their hard work during the year.**

The Environment Bill, Nature Recovery and Biodiversity Gain

17. Sally Marsh introduced the proposed Environment Bill and implications for local authorities and the AONB, including a duty to develop Nature Recovery action plans which could not cut across districts. The AONB will take the lead in encouraging collaborative working to ensure a consistent approach to nature recovery across the 15 partner authorities, particularly at a county level.
18. Members discussed the biodiversity gain objective. Planning authorities should approve Biodiversity Gain plans only if 'satisfied' that pre and post biodiversity values are as specified in the plan; that offsite gain is properly allocated and that any credits are purchased. The Local authority's role is to scrutinise biodiversity gain plans.
19. Sally Marsh informed members that the Unit had reviewed a small test sample of metrics provided in support of planning applications in Tunbridge Wells, who already have biodiversity gain policies in place. The results indicate that developer produced metrics cannot be trusted, raising concerns about the level of resourcing and increase in access to ecological skills needed across local authorities to check metrics. The Unit has approached Kent University who have been involved with the development of Biodiversity Net Gain to help assess sample metrics over the next 6 months so that evidence is produced to modify the metric and develop further training. This assistance has been offered for free.
20. A suggestion was made that local authorities pool their resources to create a shared service provided by the AONB Unit that can scrutinise biodiversity gain calculations for partners. The OSG sub-group was tasked with considering this option.
21. Sally Marsh advised Members that the Unit were looking at how a nature recovery plan and carbon budget could be integrated into the next AONB Management Plan.

Tree establishment Position Statement

22. Jason Lavender informed the Members that woodland is a much-loved and a key component of the High Weald landscape and one that is fully recognized in the High Weald AONB Management Plan. For thirty years the Unit has promoted the value and importance of woodlands and their contribution to the rural economy, biodiversity, carbon capture, flood management. However, the recent advocacy of planting trees to mitigate for carbon loss is of concern as there are other valuable habitats that should also be protected and are equally important for carbon capture such as unimproved grassland. The Unit has prepared a draft report for the JAC Meeting on 25 March to advocate tree planting in the right place and in the right way. The Unit are working closely with Natural England, Forestry Commission and Woodland Trust to make sure key messages are consistent.
23. The Members were informed that there is a meeting in Wakehurst on carbon capture in May 2020 with Sussex Nature Partnership to address some of these issues. There was a short discussion on the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow on 9 – 20 November 2020, and the opportunities for promoting messages about the role of the High Weald's landscape in storing carbon.
24. It was agreed that the tree establishment position statement should be presented at the 25 March 2020 meeting.

Regenerative Landscape update

25. Jason Lavender informed the Members that Regenerative Landscapes are a positive way to support carbon capture and that it is alternative to tree planting. The Unit has been approached by several companies in the last year that wish to mitigate their carbon offset and the Unit would like to steer them to other options rather than tree planting. One of the areas could be to support landowners move from the traditional farming methods to regenerative agriculture. This could may involve for example companies funding moveable electric fencing to support mob-grazing. A presentation will be made to next the JAC on regenerative agriculture.
26. A discussion took place on how the JAC partnership might encourage more outside organisations such as NFU to attend meetings. Sally Marsh reminded the Members that one of Glovers recommendations was in the medium term to look at a more diverse partnership. This could be encouraged through a mini conference inviting other organisations to participate in future discussions on the AONB. Jason Lavender spoke of the success of the Farming Futures conference in October 2019 where over 90 landowners attended, and the Unit is planning to follow this up with further events of this type.

AONB Projects update

27. Sally Marsh updated Members on the Unit's land management projects. Delay to the grant awards under the National Grid Beautiful Boundaries Project has led to some minor adjustments in funding. A table of grant awards and adjustments proposed was circulated for approval. It was requested that Gerry Sherwin should be given authority to amend the remaining awards up to the total sum provided by National Grid.

28. **Members agreed to sign off the grants presented and agreed that Gerry Sherwin should have the authority to amend individual landowner grant awards up to the total sum awarded by National Grid.**
29. The Members were informed that Sussex Lund 2020 application had closed, and the Unit had received to date 57 applications amounting to £290,000 worth of grants. This is the third year that the Unit has managed the Sussex Lund programme and the depth and breadth of applications has improved. This is largely due to pre-application visits and clinics that Gerry Sherwin, Christine Meadows and Ross Wingfield's have had with the applicants. This has also been supported by a Sussex Lund newsletter with case studies and YouTube videos.
30. Sally Marsh also informed the Members that Rachel Bennington education officer, was awarded a grant through Historic England Heritage Schools Programme. This will be a joint project with eight High Weald Hero schools. This will help them to research a High Weald Hero timeline and local Heritage features including natural features such as woodland archaeology and Mesolithic shelters which will be shared with a wider school community.

Budget and Resources update

31. Sally Marsh advised Members that, despite a 5% cut to Defra's budget for 2020/21, contributions to the AONB have been maintained, with some funding tied to biodiversity outcomes which are yet to be clarified. This settlement represents a real-terms rollover of the 2019/20 budget for each AONB. Members thanked Defra for their ongoing support.
32. **It was noted that the Chairman thanked all the local authorities for their continued contribution towards supporting the AONB.**
33. The Unit are looking to recruit a research officer with interviews set for 18 March, with 28 applicants applying with varied amount of experience. Sarah Watson will be leaving the team at the end of March after covering Emma Whites maternity leave as communication officer and we wish to thank her for all her hard work over the past year.

JAC agenda

34. The focus of the 25 March 2020 Meeting will be on regenerative agriculture and discussion around this approach and updating the Members on the Environment Bill. This is to be held at Wadhurst Castle, Barn which is owned by one of the Farming Cluster Facilitation Members.

A.O.B

35. It was agreed that once the OSG sub-group for Biodiversity Metric had met on 13 May they would feedback at the November JAC.
36. Future meeting dates booked, 30 September 2020 OSG, 14 October Management Board and 18 November JAC 2020.

Report Item: 3

High Weald Officer Steering Group

Notes of a meeting of the High Weald Officer Steering Group held on Wednesday 5 February 2020, at 10.30am Acorn Tourism, Woodland Enterprise, Hastings Road, Flimwell, TN5 7PR



Clerk to JAC: Samantha Nicholas

PRESENT:

Jennifer Hollingum, Mid Sussex DC (Chairman)

Diane Russell, Rother DC (Vice-Chairman)

Virginia Pullan, East Sussex CC

Kerry Culbert, Hastings BC

Mark Daly, Horsham DC

David Scully, Tunbridge Wells BC

Helen French, Sevenoaks DC

Natalie Bumpus, Wealden DC

David Greenwood, Surrey CC

Carly Pettit, Ashford BC

Claire Tester, High Weald AONB

Sally Marsh, High Weald AONB

Jason Lavender, High Weald AONB

	Agenda Item	Action
1.	MINUTES	
1.1	The Minutes of 18 September 2019 was agreed to be accurate.	
2.	Apologies	
2.1	Murray Davidson, Vivienne Riddle, Jenny Knowles, Don Baker, Richard Mosinghi and Helen Page.	
3.	Biodiversity Net Gain	
3.1	<p>Sally Marsh explained that the Environment Bill had been released and that 'Biodiversity Gain' would take effect in the next couple of years. The group was taken through a presentation highlighting the key areas of the potential metric and the implications for local authorities. The grant of planning permission will be subject to the biodiversity gain objective being met.</p> <p>The biodiversity gain objective is met if the 'biodiversity value attributed to the development exceeds the pre-development biodiversity value by 10% as calculated by a biodiversity metric</p>	

(published by the Secretary of State), and where the biodiversity value attributed to the development is the sum of:

- post-development onsite biodiversity value (based on the completed development)
- any offsite biodiversity gain
- The value of any biodiversity credits purchased from the Secretary of State

Planning authorities should approve Biodiversity Gain plans only if 'satisfied' that pre and post biodiversity values are as specified in the plan; that offsite gain is properly allocated and that any credits are purchased. Local authority's role is to scrutinise biodiversity gain plans.

- 3.2 The Group discussed the issue with the simplification of habitat metrics which do not take into account increased variety of characteristic species; increased biomass, above and below land; increased habitat diversity; increased genetic diversity; improved functioning of natural processes; and better resilience to changes with disease resilience. The metrics also do not take into account the transition of habitats and the importance of mixture of habitats within the framework of the High Weald landscape.
- 3.3 The Group were concerned that only meadows and woodland on the priority habitat inventory are given high scores, all other neutral grassland or woodlands are given medium or low scores. Gardens, derelict land are given low scores and there was no score for hedgerows.
- 3.4 A discussion took place on how local authorities will produce policies to be able to manage the nuances of the High Weald landscape. There will be a requirement for additional resources to meet the new demands as many local authorities do not have ecologists.
- 3.5 At present there is no size threshold on this metric, however the current thinking is that householders will be taken out of this process. A discussion took place on how this may need to be fed

into site allocation assessments. The group also discussed that further conversations to look at specific schemes and how they may be calculated would be useful.

3.6 Sussex and Kent and Surrey Nature Partnerships are all discussing biodiversity gain and further partnership working would be required.

3.7 **It was agreed that a sub-group should lead on Biodiversity Gain. David Scully agreed to Chair this sub-group. A meeting will be set up for May 2020.** DS and CT

The presentation will be circulated to the officers. SN

4.0 National AONB Housing Position Statement

4.1 Claire Tester informed the Group that the Position Statement had been generated through the AONB Planning Officers in the South East who had collated relevant policy and guidance to help support AONB planners and the local authorities, with regard to planning for housing within AONBs. It is intended to be a helpful tool and is not a policy document in itself that local authorities are expected to attach formal weight to.

4.2 David Scully voiced his concern that Tunbridge Wells BC had raised issues with parts of the Position Statement; namely the reference to major development harming the AONB, the support for a focus on the provision of affordable housing in AONBs and the interpretation of the Inspector's report on the West Oxfordshire Local Plan.

4.3 It was confirmed that the JAC Meeting held on November had agreed that the Housing Position Statement be circulated by email and that no further discussion by JAC was needed.
Sally Marsh confirmed that this statement was driven largely through the Glover report recommendations on affordable housing. National Parks have the remit of affordable housing being the primary driver and as AONBs have equal status this should also be reflected in AONBs housing policies.

5.0 Local Authority updates on Local Plans and Major Developments

- 5.1
- Horsham DC start the Reg 18 consultation on 17 February 2020. There are no sites within the AONB although a couple could affect the 'setting'.
 - Tunbridge Wells BC have completed Reg 18 Consultation with around 8000 responses. There are 14 major developments within the AONB and a garden village which will impact the setting of the AONB. They are undertaking landscape assessments to see the individual and cumulative effects of this on the AONB.
 - Ashford BC has the Local Plan in place and has a couple of schemes in Tenterden within the 'setting' of the AONB. At present they are working on the Gypsy and Travellers local plan.
 - Mid Sussex DC has completed Reg 18 Site Allocations DPD and is looking at Reg 19 in Spring 2020. They are currently assessing sites to see whether they might be major development. Jennifer mentioned the appeal decision at London Road Bolney. This will be circulated to officers.
 - East Sussex is working on mineral and waste plan with the South Downs and Brighton & Hove. Claire Tester has been discussing policies with Pat Randall including one on soil conservation which it is hoped to also include in other local plans.
 - Rother DC has completed the DASA which is now adopted and looking to the start the next local plan process.
 - Sevenoaks DC Inspector has dismissed their Local Plan hearing on duty to cooperate. The council has refused to withdraw and is now waiting for the report.
 - Wealden DC are going to cabinet to withdraw their Local Plan after the Inspectorate's report dismissed it on duty to

JH

cooperate, and the HRA of Ashdown Forest. They will need to restart the local plan and look at revised housing figures including potentially Eastbourne's unmet need. There also has been some staff changes within Wealden. Marina Briggins has now left the authority and Chris Bending has stepped in as Head of Policy & Economic Development. Stacy Robbins is now Head of Development Management. The next steps are to set a revised timetable for completion of the Local Plan. There is an expectation that more planning applications will be brought forward, especially now the air pollution policy around Ashdown Forest has been lifted. There is also a backlog of outstanding applications which will now be determined in an attempt to restore a five-year supply of housing. Natalie reassured OSG that inappropriate applications would still be refused if there were grounds to do so.

- Hastings BC are embarking on Reg 18 in June 2020, and they have been working closely with Rother DC on strategic housing needs with their timetables aligned.
- David Greenwood informed the Group that the Leader programme is winding up as most of the available funds have been allocated for farming forestry and rural community businesses. The shared prosperity fund may replace the EU funding for Leader, but it will have a wider remit and not just be for rural development.
- Surrey CC has been involved with a cash to capital project with the Forestry Commission. This is giving financial support of up to £100,000 to local companies to improve their ability to optimise the forestry business with wood fuel links. They have been working with Oakmasters who produce Oak frames for extensions and outbuildings and Balcombe Sawmills. There is a potential opportunity to develop frames using other locally produced wood for small housing developments such as Community Land Trusts.

6.0 Local Authority training

6.1 Claire Tester informed the group that the Unit had carried out Members training for Rother and Wealden Councillors which has been well received. Diane Russell was concerned that the Members were very enthused by tree planting and felt that more guidance in this area would be required.

Sally Marsh explained that the Unit was already looking into this and that they were happy to do short training sessions with officers and members on areas such as low carbon landscapes which encompasses responsible tree planting.

6.2 Sevenoaks BC is conducting colour study training as they have appointed an urban designer, and Ashford BC welcomed training as they have had a restructuring and would soon have new officers in place and their head of policy has also left.

7.0 Design Guide update

7.1 The Design Guide was agreed by the JAC in November and the final version is now on the website to link to. Also, on the website is the consultation statement and other supporting documents. The officers discussed whether adopting the Design Guide as a supplementary planning document was necessary or whether it should be adopted as a material consideration. It was agreed that local authorities going through some form of adoption would give the Guide more weight.

7.2 Diane Russell agreed to circulate their Design Guide report once it was published for Cabinet in March 2020. The officers were given paper copies of the Design Guide and encouraged to link their websites to the High Weald website section on the Design Guide.

7.3 Sally Marsh also informed the Group of the publication of the report of the 'Building Better Building Beautiful Commission'. Diane Russell felt that the High Weald Design Guide required wider

promoting including possibly video for key brand messages on development within the AONB.

7.4 **It was agreed that the Design sub-group would meet to discuss how to raise the profile of the Design Guide.** DR

8.0 **Management Board: Wednesday 4 March 2020**

- 8.1
- Biodiversity Gain
 - Regenerative Agriculture

9.0 **A.O.B**

9.1 Claire Tester suggested that the Group collate case studies for the colour study. A couple of sites of note had used this facility successfully and requested that officers send in photographs and information to support these. officers

9.2 Next Meeting to be held on 30 September 2020

Report Item: 4

Committee: High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Date: 25 March 2020

Title of Report: Revenue Budget 2020/21

By: Treasurer to the Joint Advisory Committee

Purpose of Report: To approve the Revenue Budget 2020/21

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to:

1. approve the Revenue Budget for 2020/21;
 2. thank Defra and partner authorities for maintaining their contributions.
-

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report sets out the budget for 2020/21 following a consultation approved by this committee in November 2019.
- 1.2 The budget supports the High Weald AONB Work Plan 2020/21 which sets out how the High Weald AONB Unit will deliver its core functions and enable implementation of the new High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019 to 2024.

2. FINANCIAL APPRAISAL

- 2.1 Appendix A summarises the forecast out-turn for 2019/20, the proposed budget for 2020/21 and the indicative budget for 2021/22. Appendix B summarises the project budgets.
- 2.2 The Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) contribution for 2020/21 includes an increase of £3,863 and is forecast to be £277,463.
- 2.3 Other income of £9,800 and an allocation of 84% of the Defra single pot contribution to core activities has achieved a balanced budget for 2020/21.

3. BUDGET 2019/20

- 3.1 The High Weald core budget is forecast to have a surplus of £8,300 in 2019/20 arising primarily from savings from a vacant post. The forecast reserve at 31 March 2020 is £167,500

4. BUDGET 2020/21

Core Budget – Expenditure

- 4.1 The budget for 2020/21 is presented in Appendix A. It is based on the 2019/20 figures with inflation at the ESCC applied rate of 2.5% for salaries and 0% for other costs. The budget allows for:
- (i) Staff costs: a budget for a core team of 5.1 FTE staff which includes any incremental progression and contributions to the pension fund.
 - (ii) Accommodation/office equipment costs: a standstill budget for office rent, rates, office equipment, office maintenance and running costs.
 - (iii) Partnership running costs: a standstill budget that covers NAAONB membership fees, JAC meetings, representing the partnership at regional and national forums, producing the annual review and miscellaneous public relations costs.
 - (iv) Support services: East Sussex County Council's charges for IT, personnel, financial support and a lump sum contribution to the pension fund.

Core Budget – Income

Defra

- 4.2 The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has a funding agreement with AONBs which provides for a flexible 'single pot' contribution for core and projects.
- 4.3 Defra have confirmed the funding settlement for 2020/21 as £277,463. They have advised that savings have been made to the AONB budget but an allocation of £17,512 from a dedicated Biodiversity Fund has been used to enable a real term increase of £3,863 (Appendix C).
- 4.4 The 2019/20 contribution of £273,600 was allocated as follows: £232,500 to Core and £41,100 to Projects.
- 4.5 Defra's total contribution for 2020/21 is shown in appendix A. It shows the contribution of £277,463 allocated as £232,500 to Core and £44,963 to Projects.

Local Authority Contributions

- 4.6 The respective levels of support from each authority are shown in Appendix A.
- 4.7 In respect of core costs, all authorities have confirmed their contributions at 2019/20 levels.

Self-funding projects

- 4.8 JAC expenditure on self-funding projects is presented at Appendix B and is estimated to be £342,600 in 2020/21. Appendix B indicates contributions from local authority partners to projects, including High Weald Heroes.
- 4.9 It is proposed to allocate £44,963 from the Defra 'single pot' to Projects.
- 4.10 All projects have a balanced budget over the total life of the project. Income is allocated on a pro rata basis over the relevant number of financial years to give a net balance of zero.
- 4.11 A significant proportion of self-funding project expenditure is made up of grant awards through the Sussex Lund and National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative grant programmes.

5. FINANCIAL ISSUES 2021/22 AND BEYOND

- 5.1 An increase in the Defra contribution for 2020/21 is welcome. Support from Defra beyond 2021 will be subject to the CSR and the weight placed by Government of the Glover Review recommendations.
- 5.2 External contributions towards the management of the Landscape Enhancement Programme continues to ensure that the Other Income target for core costs is met, enabling a balanced core budget in 2020/21.
- 5.3 The project budget is sufficient for delivering the Management Plan Evidence and Guidance Programme, the JAC's Outreach Programme including High Weald Heroes (supported by an 0.6 FTE) and the Landscape Enhancement Programme (supported by 1.6 FTE) and for new project development.
- 5.4 Inflationary pressures linked to salaries are likely to be an issue beyond 2021/22 if Defra and local authority contributions do not increase in real terms.
- 5.5 In a worst case scenario of all staff being made redundant 60% of the estimated of £167,500 reserves at 31 March 2021 will be required. If necessary reserves can be used to balance inflationary pressures in the short term.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The 2020/21 core budget is a balanced budget which provides the JAC with the capacity to deliver its core functions.
- 6.2 The project budget reflects inclusion of two large-scale grant schemes, Sussex Lund and the National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative.
- 6.3 On this basis the JAC is recommended to agree the budget.

Jill Fisher, Treasurer to the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

	<u>2019/20</u>		<u>2020/21</u>					<u>2021/22</u>
	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Forecast</u>	<u>Original</u>	<u>Budget</u>			<u>Indicative</u>	
			<u>Budget</u>	<u>Inflation</u>	<u>Pressures</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Budget</u>
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Core Budget								
Expenditure								
235.9 Staff costs	251.3	243.0	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	317.7	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	8.3	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	342.6				342.6	342.6
42.1 Defra contribution to self-funded projects	(41.1)	(41.1)	(45.0)				(45.0)	(45.0)
Local authorities contributions	(45.1)	(26.6)	(39.1)				(39.1)	(39.1)
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	0.0

Total High Weald JAC

648.3 Total core and project expenditure	672.4	673.4	668.6	4.6	0.0	(4.6)	668.6	675.1
648.3 Total core and project income	(672.4)	(681.7)	(668.6)	0.0	0.0	0.0	(668.6)	(670.8)
0.0 Total High Weald JAC Budget	0.0	(8.3)	0.0	0.0	4.6	(4.6)	0.0	4.3

Defra Funding	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	£000	£000	£000
Defra funding on core budget	(232.5)	(232.5)	(234.7)
Defra funding on projects budget	(41.1)	(45.0)	(45.0)
Total Defra Funding	(273.6)	(277.5)	(279.7)

Reserves	£000
Reserves at 1 April 2019	159.2
Transfer to/(from) reserves 2019/20	8.3
Transfer to/(from)reserves 2020/21	0.0
Reserves at 31 March 2021	167.5

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

Appendix B

	Budget 2019/20			Forecast 2019/20			Indicative Budget 2020/21		
	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000
1 Community Outreach									
JAC expenditure	10.3			5.3			12.2		
Defra		(8.9)			(3.0)			(7.8)	
Local authorities		(0.7)			(0.6)			(3.7)	
Other		(0.7)	(0.0)		(1.7)	0.0		(0.7)	0.0
High Weald Heroes									
JAC expenditure	25.8			24.8			26.4		
Defra		(12.9)			(12.4)			(13.2)	
Heritage Lottery Fund		0.0			0.0			0.0	
Local authorities		(12.9)			(12.4)			(13.2)	
Other		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0
2 Management Plan Evidence and Guidance									
JAC expenditure	10.0			10.9			12.9		
Defra		(10.0)			(10.9)			(12.9)	
Other		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0
3 Landscape Enhancement									
JAC expenditure	290.3			304.5			285.1		
Defra		(9.3)			(12.3)			(11.1)	
Environment Agency		(10.0)			(33.3)			(4.5)	
Water Catchment Partnership (KWT)		0.0			(3.0)			(3.8)	
Local authorities		(21.5)			(13.3)			(16.2)	
Other		0.0			0.0			0.0	
Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund		(30.8)			(30.8)			(30.8)	
National Grid		(93.7)			(86.7)			(93.7)	
Sussex Lund (Charities Aid Foundation)		(125.0)	0.0		(125.1)	0.0		(125.0)	0.0
4 Project Development									
JAC expenditure	10.0			3.7			6.0		
Defra		0.0			(3.0)			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			349.2			342.6		
Expenditure funded by Defra (to Appendix A)		(41.1)			(41.6)			(45.0)	
Expenditure funded by LAs (to Appendix A)		(45.1)			(26.3)			(39.1)	
Expenditure funded by Other (to Appendix A)		(260.2)			(281.3)			(258.5)	
TOTAL JAC expenditure/income	346.4	(346.4)	0.0	349.2	(349.2)	0.0	342.6	(342.6)	0.0



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Marie Southgate
First Floor Seacole
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF
Marie.Southgate@defra.gov.uk

Date: 26/02/2020

Andy Fowler

High Weald AONB
East Sussex County Council, Woodland Enterprise Centre
Hastings
Flimwell
East Sussex
TN5 7PR

Dear Andy

2020/21 Defra funding settlement

I am pleased to be able to confirm the Defra funding settlement that your Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will receive in 2020/21. As you know, this has taken longer than expected in the circumstances this year; thank you for adjusting your planning processes accordingly.

The settlement for High Weald AONB for 2020/21 is: £277,463.

This represents a real-terms rollover of the 2019/20 budget for your AONB. This settlement demonstrates the importance government places on the leadership needed from AONBs, particularly in meeting the challenges set out in the Designated Landscapes Review led by Julian Glover.

By protecting your budget in this way, there will be increased financial pressures elsewhere in the department. To offset the need to find savings on your AONB's budget, part of your settlement includes an allocation of £17,512 from a dedicated Biodiversity Fund. On that basis, I would be grateful if you could please set out how you will use this element of your settlement to carry out activities that will benefit biodiversity.

More broadly, I also ask how you will use your grant funding to deliver nature recovery, work towards net zero carbon through nature-based solutions, and support the needs of communities in modern Britain. I would like to see how you intend to work in partnership strategically with other groups, including other NPAs and

AONBs. We will set out more detail of any specific actions we would like to you to take on this basis ahead of the start of the new financial year. Please note that we will send the Grant Funding Agreement for your signature in due course.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your work and leadership at the High Weald AONB, and look forward to discussing your plans in taking forward key actions to meet the ambitions of the Landscapes Review.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marie Southgate', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Marie Southgate,
Deputy Director – Land Use Policy

Report Item: 6

Committee: High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Date: 25th March 2020

Title of Report: COVID-19 Risk Management

By: AONB Director

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

1. Note the report;
 2. Request that the Management Board continue to review significant risks as required and develop options for their management and;
 3. Request the AONB staff routinely review work practices, arrangements, and work programmes to mitigate as far as possible the consequences of COVID-19.
-

1.0 Background

1.1 Members will recognize that although the High Weald AONB Partnership has faced challenging times, particularly as a consequence of the banking crisis of 2009, it is now clear that the COVID-19 pandemic is not like anything we have faced before and it has the potential to have serious consequences for many organisations and individuals: collectively and individually everyone will need to make difficult decisions.

2.0 Key risks 2019/20 and beyond

- 2.1 The most significant and on-going risk is to people's health and the obvious priority is to try and ensure everyone is kept safe and the opportunities for passing on the virus are kept to an absolute minimum. While less important, the general implications of COVID-19 for our current business and our working arrangements in the short and medium-term will be considerable, and particularly so should AONB staff members fall ill. The impact on our work programme is further compounded by the small size of the team (six FTE) as there would be no extra capacity within the team to cover a colleague's work. Should the crisis deepen, the AONB Unit staff may be asked or required to support other areas of government or local authority public services (e.g. emergency planning) and this too will have implications for the work of the AONB Partnership.
- 2.2 We are also very aware we support a range of individuals and organisations with advice and funds and there is a risk that their work programmes and projects will be delayed should the AONB Unit staff be unable to provide the necessary support.
- 2.3 The impact of COVID-19 on the government's priorities drawn up since December's general election will be also be considerable. The range and scale of the many demands placed on

the Treasury and other government departments are now immense and will continue for the foreseeable future as the government attempts to deal with a legacy of underwriting loans, business rates relief, and health care priorities. This will have consequences not only to the funding and support provided by government for the work of protected landscape partnerships but also to current and future government policies and priorities for the sector.

2.4 The key risks to the Joint Advisory Committee are set out in appendix A.

3.0 Risk mitigation

3.1 Mitigation of the immediate risks

3.2 We have been monitoring the situation very closely. Following the significant shift in the government's advice issued on the 16th March, we have put in place a variety of measures to ensure the AONB Unit staff and those we work with are as safe as possible. We also have measures to keep our key functions up and running, to stay in touch with one another, to manage the team, and to allow partners, residents, and others to contact us when needed. The office at Flimwell has been closed for general use and all planned events, meetings, school and site/farm visits have been cancelled or postponed. All the AONB Unit staff are now primarily working from home.

3.3 We will adapt to the new situation and we will continue to support those groups and individuals with whom we work particularly closely (e.g. the Rother and Dudwell Farm Cluster and Sussex Lund applicants), with our partners, and with the public using video and teleconferencing. We will continue to use our regional and national contacts to exchange information and to identify how and where further support, guidance or action by the AONB Unit staff is needed.

3.4 This is a rapidly changing situation so we will continue to follow the government's guidance and that provided by our host authority East Sussex County Council and we will routinely review our own practices, arrangements, and work programme accordingly. The measures we have already put in place are listed below.

- The office is closed for general use. All staff are working primarily from home. For the time being any AONB Unit staff member that remains free of the COVID-19 symptoms and has not had contact with anyone with symptoms but wishes to use the office can do so but ideally one person but no more than two people at a time, recognising the risks from hard surfaces etc. and observing the government guidance on hygiene and social distancing.
- All those we work have been told (using the website, social media, newsletters etc) the office is now closed and details on how to contact us has been provided. General queries or those people that do not know who to talk to have been asked to contact info@highweald.org
- Any IT or office equipment and software has been taken home and if needed, we will investigate funding upgrades to fibre optic for the home working period so that certain software (e.g. GIS) can work effectively. We will be using Skype for internal and external meetings.
- The AONB Unit staff will follow a range of protocols while working from home. A work programme reflecting work constraints/opportunities is being agreed between staff and the

line manager, all the team are recording their time using Time Tracker or the diary system, and the need to work flexibly is recognised, given possible caring responsibilities.

- If a member of staff falls ill, they are to follow the government health guidance, inform their manager, and register using ESCC's Firstcare system.
- We will be holding virtual team meetings every Wednesday morning.
- We will be adapting and reviewing our work programme and recognising that while we will be restricted from undertaking some activities, there is an opportunity to do other things differently. Each staff member has been asked to set out revised ambitions for their work for at least the next three months and agree this with their line manager. All staff have also been asked to think about how we can collectively and individually develop our skills over this period.

3.5 Mitigation of the longer-term risks

3.6 At this stage and in view of the fast-changing situation and increasing uncertainty, it is difficult to identify the likely longer-term risks the JAC will face. Our experience following the banking crisis and subsequent government policies tells us the JAC will need to demonstrate boldly the value and worth of the work we do. And, more importantly, the JAC will need to ensure the fundamental role all landscapes (if managed responsibly) play for the welfare of society are understood in the face of competing demands and those politicians and decision-makers lacking ecological literacy. Landscapes are literally society's life support systems.

3.7 Given this, it will be imperative that the JAC, in conjunction with the other protected landscape partnerships, continues to make an energetic and unapologetic case for society's need for beautiful, resilient, and complex landscapes providing us with a secure source of nutrient-dense food, carbon storage, clean and plentiful water, jobs, places to enjoy, and abundant bio-diversity.

3.8 To support this, we will think about how the JAC can play an influential and lasting role making this case to the government and others and how we draw on our experience and strengths to define a powerful vision for a regenerated landscape providing society with its needs by working with our many contacts living in the AONB – community groups, parishes councils, farmers and foresters, and residents. This will be particularly important should the shockwaves following COVID-19 be fundamental and lasting and drive this country's population to demand genuine policies to tackle climate change, reverse ecological collapse, ensure food provenance and food security, and to protect people's health and well-being.

4.0 **Conclusion**

4.1 COVID-19 presents a range of unprecedented immediate and longer-term risks for the JAC and the country and these are difficult to predict. Risk management systems are in place and the AONB Unit will continue to follow official guidance, reviewing significant risks as required and developing options for their management whilst looking ahead to ensure we are in a strong and resilient position the moment this crisis ends.

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

High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee



Report items

Meeting postponed until 1 July 2020 due to Co-vid 19, report items to be agreed by end of March 2020.

1. Minutes of the JAC meeting
To consider the minutes of the last meeting of the JAC held on 25 November 2019 (page 3)
2. Minutes of the Management Board Meeting
To note the matters arising from the Management Board meeting held on 4 March 2020 (page 8)
3. Minutes of the Officer Steering Group
To note the minutes of the last meeting of the OSG held on 5 February 2020 (page 13)
4. Revenue Budget for 2020/21
To approve the Revenue Budget for 2020/21 by the Treasurer and thank Defra and partner authorities for maintaining their contributions (page 20) Appendix A, core budget (page 23) and Appendix B, project budget (page 24). Also note the 2020/21 Defra funding settlement letter – Appendix C appended.
5. Risk Management & Staffing
To consider a report by the AONB Co-Director on Co-vid 19, risk management (page 26); Appendix 1: High Weald JAC - Key Risks
6. Tree Establishment Positioning Statement and Regenerative Landscape discussion
postponed until meeting to be held on 1 July 2020

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

Report item: 1

High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Minutes of Meeting



Held at 10.00am on Monday 25 November 2019, at Boathouse
Bistro, Bewl Water

Members present:

Cllr I Irvine	Crawley Borough Council
Cllr S Tidy	East Sussex County Council (Chairman)
Cllr T Hogben	Horsham District Council
Cllr M Balfour	Kent County Council
Cllr P Bradbury	Mid Sussex District Council/ West Sussex County Council
Cllr J Vine-Hall	Rother District Council
Cllr L Lockwood	Tandridge District Council
Cllr J Soyke	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Cllr P Dixon	Wealden District Council
Mrs J Davison	Community Co-optee
Mr T Bamford	CLA
Mr M Woodcock	Forestry Commission
Ms L Newland	Natural England

Officers present:

Mr J Lavender	AONB Co-Director, High Weald AONB Unit
Mrs S Marsh	AONB Co-Director, High Weald AONB Unit
Ms G Sherwin	AONB Business Manager, High Weald AONB Unit
Ms C Tester	AONB Planning Adviser, High Weald AONB Unit
Mr R Wingfield	AONB Land Management Advisor, High Weald AONB Unit
Mrs C Meadows	AONB Land Management Advisor, High Weald AONB Unit
Mrs P Tiltman	AONB Finance Officer, High Weald AONB Unit
Ms S Watson	AONB Communication Officer, High Weald AONB Unit
Mrs E White	AONB Communication Officer, High Weald AONB Unit
Mr A Fowler	Finance Manager, East Sussex County Council
Ms J Morgan	Finance Manager, East Sussex County Council
Ms J Hollingum	Planning Officer, Mid Sussex District Council
Mrs D Russell	Design Officer, Rother District Council
Ms N Bumpus	Planning Officer, Wealden District Council
Mr D Scully	Landscape Officer, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Ms K Culbert	Planning Manager, Hastings Borough Council

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies were received from the following Members and officers:

Cllr M Dickins, Cllr L Steeds, Cllr A Pickering, Cllr L Levine, Cllr D Lettington, P Mayson, H Page, V Pullan, D Greenwood, M Davidson, C Pettit, R Mosinghi, M Daly, V Riddle, J Knowles, H Page, D Baker

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. ELECTION OF MANAGEMENT BOARD MEMBERS

4.1 The following Members were elected onto the Management Board from November 2019- November 2021:

Chairman: Cllr S Tidy
Vice-Chairman: Cllr P Bradbury

Management Board Members: Cllr M Balfour
Cllr P Dixon
Cllr J Vine- Hall
Mrs J Davison

4.2 The Chairman encouraged other new Members to attend one of the Management Board Meetings and to think about becoming a Member of the Board in the future.

5.0 MINUTES OF THE JAC MEETING – 27 March 2019

5.1 It was noted on pt 7.9, replace the name Lindfield with Lingfield.

5.2 RESOLVED to amend the minutes and note the minutes of the JAC held on 25 November 2019 as a correct record

6.0 MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD– 16 October 2019

6.1 RESOLVED to note the minutes of the Management Board held on 16 October 2019.

7.0 MINUTES OF THE OFFICER STEERING GROUP – 18 September 2019

7.1 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, Mid Sussex DC was elected as Chairman (previously Vice-chairman) and Diane Russell, Rother District Council was elected as Vice-chairman.

7.2 It was noted that the Chairman thanked David Greenwood for his contribution to the OSG group over the past two years.

7.3 Claire Tester informed the Members that a Housing Position Statement based on the national policy guidance on housing developments in AONBs has been developed. This has been adopted by the National Association for AONBs but was just too late to get onto this agenda so will be circulated with a link separately.

7.4 **RESOLVED to note: The Minutes of the Officer Steering Group held on 18 September 2019 as a correct record.**

8.0 AONB DESIGN GUIDANCE FOR NEW DEVELOPMENTS

8.1 Claire Tester confirmed that the purpose of the report was to approve the final Design Guide. The Members had a pdf version circulated to them and hardcopies were presented at the Meeting. The report summarises the consultation results and changes to the Guide.

8.2 There are still some images and captions that need to be modified and once these are completed hardcopies will be produced for local authority, architects, developers and Parish Councils to use.

8.3 The Guide's aim is to be a useful tool to make new development more distinctive with regards to the AONB key characteristics. Promotion of the Guide will be key to making sure it is used and therefore the recommendation asks Members to not only approve the Guide but also promote it within their own organisations.

8.4 The Chairman informed the Members that East Sussex County Council Members and officers had received some excellent training from The Unit on the Management Plan. The Chairman encouraged all local authorities to take this opportunity with the Design Guide launch.

8.5 Cllr Bradbury supported the importance of the Design Guide and confirmed that Mid Sussex DC and West Sussex CC welcomed future training in this area for Members and officers

8.6 **RESOLVED to:**

(1) approve the final High Weald AONB Housing Design Guide subject to minor editorial changes to be delegated to the Co-Directors

(2) promote the Design Guide within their own organisation and encourage its adoption and use.

9.0 DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2020/21

9.1 The Committee considered a report by Finance Manager, Andy Fowler, on the Draft Revenue Budget for 2020/21.

9.2 The forecast outturn for 2019/2020 is a surplus of £5,600 arising from salary savings, shown in Appendix B. There have been additional salary costs as maternity cover was required in 2019/20. The forecast reserve at 31 March 2020 is £164,800. It has been recommended that the reserves be maintained at £95,000 to cover any redundancies.

- 9.3 Self-funding budget, Appendix C, was presented as four programmes; Community Engagement, Management Plan Research and Evidence; Landscape Enhancement and Project Development.
- 9.4 It was 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.
- 9.5 Paragraph 2.6 of the report confirmed that Defra's contribution to the Budget for 2020/21 is still to be advised but the interim advice is that Defra's contributions will be maintained in real terms. An inflationary increase of 1.7% has been assumed increasing the Defra contribution from £273, 632 to £278,284 in 2020/21.
- 9.6 Mrs Davison enquired whether there was a contingency plan for potential wage increases and inflation. It was confirmed that inflation has been applied at rate of 2.5% for staff. Gerry Sherwin also explained that there was a level of flexibility to transfer funds from the project budget to the core budget in the short term to ensure balanced budgets. The operational costs have also remained stable mainly due to the Unit not having to pay rates.
- 9.7 Cllr Bradbury informed the Members that he has put a question to the next Budget Cabinet meeting in December, to ask that West Sussex County Council continues to support the AONB as the work it carries out is exceptional value for money.
- 9.8 RESOLVED to note the report and:**
- (1) approve the Draft Revenue Budget for 2020/21.**
 - (2) commence the budget consultation with the local authorities and Defra**
 - (3) thank the local authorities for their support and East Sussex County Council finance and the Unit for the management of the budget**

10. RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

- 10.1. The JAC considered a report by Jason Lavender on risk management and the associated risk management matrix.
- 10.2 Jason Lavender explained towards the end of January 2016 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the funding in real term for AONBs would be protected until the end of year 2019/20. The pressure on the local authority's contributions towards the core business of the JAC may remain under pressure. The General Election leads to a significant risk the next Chancellor of the Exchequer may choose not to re-new funding settlement in April 2020.
- 10.3 The Glover review recommendations although very supportive towards the AONBs may take some time not only to understand the review's full implication for the work of the AONB Partnership but also time for it to take place.

- 10.4 Cllr Vine-Hall suggested as the budget was so sensitive it might be worth the Unit approaching the 99 Parish Councils to ask for a small contribution over the next four years.
- 10.5 A discussion took place on how the Partnership needs to lobby MPs and other partnerships as the High Weald is a 'low carbon landscape in waiting'. Cllr Vine-Hall informed the Members that Rother District Council is holding a Carbon Target 2030 Meeting in May 2020 and welcomed the Units attendance to it.
- 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.**

11 GLOVER LANDSCAPE REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 The JAC considered a report by Gerry Sherwin on the Glover Review of Designated Landscapes recommendations to form a basis of discussions during 2020.
- 11.2 It was explained to the Members that the findings and recommendations were shaped by views and evidence gathered from visits to partnerships in designated and non-designated landscapes. A public call for evidence received around 2,500 responses. The AONB Partnership hosted a visit from Jim Dixon and submitted a response to the Review's questions following consideration at the JAC Meeting held on 28 November 2019.
- 11.3 The review and its 29 recommendations were circulated to the Members in the report and AONBs are generally referred to favourably. The review recommends increasing AONB funding, governance reform and becoming a statutory consultee in planning. The JAC Partnership responded to these recommendations with a letter to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on 29 October 2019.
- 11.4 Since the review the National Association (NAAONBs) and Lead AONB officers have agreed to start to act on those recommendations which don't require significant additional resources, where possible. In July the NAAONB announced the Colchester Declaration setting out how the AONBs unique network and partnership model will aim to significantly increase the scale and pace of nature conservation activities.
- 11.5 Sally Marsh confirmed that the AONBs Partnerships are already set up to meet these challenges with smaller groups for governance and non-local Members in the Partnership, but we do need to look at future diversity within our communities.

12. HIGH WEALD AONB PARTNERSHIP CELEBRATION PRESENTATION

- 12.1 Sally Marsh presented to the Members a potted history of the inception of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty areas and the JAC Partnership. Sally highlighted the Partnerships key achievements over the past 30 years including the success of the Management Plan; the evidence base for Ancient Woodland Inventory; introducing the seed harvesting scheme for Meadows with a private partnership; highly successful High Weald Heroes scheme; and more recently the Farming Futures Conference engaging with 90 landowners and the High Weald Walking Festival. The presentation also highlighted that

there were many challenges which are impacted on nature recovery such as Ash Dieback, river pollution; loss of key species such as Turtle doves; and climate change impacting on highly sensitive ecosystems such as Gills.

- 12.2 Sally Marsh presented the potential for High Weald Regenerative Programme which involves nature recovery programme; education through High Weald Heroes; public engagement; continued land management advice; leading regenerative agriculture and stronger development in carbon storage.
- 12.3 Sally Marsh thanked the officers, Members and Partners that have contributed over the 30 years to making the current Partnership so successful.
- 12.4 Jason Lavender confirmed that the AONB is in a great position for taking on the zero-carbon challenge and already has good working relationships with the forestry and farming communities.
- 12.5 A discussion took place on the Glover review on the policies that the AONBs should be prioritising. At the National Association Chairman' meeting on Thursday 28 November 2019 the AONB Lead officers and Chairpersons will have an opportunity to discuss this further.
- 12.6 The Members agreed that further partnership working to create coordinated nature recovery areas was required. Gerry Sherwin confirmed that Sussex and Surrey are already looking at county scale strategies. Cllr Vine-Hall suggested that a set of cross local authority policies would help with this process.
- 12.7 The Members fully supported the proposal 8, a night under the stars in a national landscape for every child. However, they were concerned about additional lighting that people tend to install after developments are completed.
- 12.8 A discussion took place on the use of Biodiversity Net Gain and when assessing new developments and moving towards zero carbon landscapes.
- 12.9 Cllr Vine-Hall commented on Proposal 24: AONBs strengthened with new purposes as he was greatly concerned about how the new housing numbers formulae had created a higher baseline than the AONB could sustain. Proposal 24 may give the Partnership more strength to re-address the imbalance.
- 12.10 Cllr Balfour was concerned about proposal 25, a new National Landscape Service, which may lead to another layer of bureaucracy which inhibits the agile working conditions the AONBs currently have.
- 12.11 The Members agreed that greater resources were required to meet these recommendations but that it would be difficult to find this at a local level.

Report item: 2

HIGH WEALD JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Management Board Minutes – 10.30am, Wednesday 4 March 2020, Acorn Tourism,
Woodland Enterprise Centre, Hastings Road, East Sussex, TN5 7PR**



Samantha Nicholas
Clerk to the High Weald AONB
Joint Advisory Committee

Present: Members:
 Cllr Mrs Sylvia Tidy East Sussex County Council (Chairman)
 Cllr Peter Bradbury West Sussex County Council
 Cllr Jonathon Vine-Hall Rother District Council
 Cllr Phil Dixon Wealden District Council

Also present:
 Sally Marsh AONB Director (job share)
 Jason Lavender AONB Director (job share)
 Diane Russell Deputy Chairman OSG

Apologies

1. There were apologies for absence from Cllr Matthew Balfour, Jill Davison, Jennifer Hollingum.

Members' Interests

2. There was no declaration of Member's Interests.

Minutes of the Management Board meeting held on 31 October 2018

3. The minutes of the last meeting, held on 16 October 2019, were agreed as a correct record.

Matters arising from the minutes

4. Sally Marsh updated the Members on the actions proposed by Defra in response to the Glover review recommendations. Last week, Lead Officers from the National Association of AONBs were briefed on Defra's response, which included a series of actions categorised as short, medium- and long-term actions, with the latter reflecting actions likely proposed for the next parliament.
5. In the short term, Defra was considering changing the AONB brand to 'National Landscapes', which if adopted and successful could be followed by the necessary legislation changes. Members discussed their concerns over the changes to the title 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' as it is now a successful brand and new branding takes many years to be recognised. The Members also were concerned using the term 'National Landscape' will make AONBs less distinct from other non-designated landscapes, while maintaining a difference from National Parks. The Members were keen to ensure that an additional word such as 'Outstanding'

would remain within the brand title. In the medium to long term improvements to AONB status within the planning system, possibly as statutory consultees are being considered.

6. Concern expressed by the Review about biodiversity outcomes was addressed by AONBs through the Colchester Declaration which committed AONBs to focus on nature recovery and production of species action plans. The Unit has already initiated discussions about which species to focus on in the High Weald and are looking at fungi, specifically waxcaps, and hedgehogs. Sally Marsh informed the Members that the North Pennines AONB are taking the lead on behalf of the NAAONB on a five-million-pound species recovery Heritage Lottery Fund bid developed to meet the AONBs Colchester Declaration. Members discussed the changing priorities for HLF, and the need to promote regenerative agriculture as mechanism to deliver multiple climate, biodiversity and social objectives.
7. Jason Lavender informed the Members of the importance of soil health with multiple benefits such as nutrient dense food, water retention and carbon offset. He enthused that Regenerative landscape management could be an optimistic solution to the issues we all need to address, and that this method is now being used globally. A discussion took place on how this also needs to feed into the planning process due to the pressure to build on AONBs, which is unprecedented. This ultimately will impact on the High Weald landscape which could potentially be a carbon neutral landscape in waiting.
8. Cllr Dixon enquired about inviting the Secretary of State, Rt Hon George Eustice MP to visit the AONB. Cllr Bradbury suggested inviting the environment committee. It was agreed that the JAC would make a formal invitation for a visit to the AONB.
9. Major Development housing position statement was circulated to the JAC Members and officers in December, and it was hoped that the local authorities would be able to use this to help support their cases against developments which were out of scale with the AONB landscape.
10. The Members discussed the Environment Bill and concern with the new Biodiversity Net Gain metric. Early scrutiny of prepared metrics indicates substantial flaws in the metric which minimise the value of key High Weald characteristics, especially grassland.

OSG update

11. Diane Russell, Vice-Chairman took the Members through the OSG meeting held on 5 February 2020. The officers had a presentation on Biodiversity Net Gain from Sally Marsh which highlighted how this metric can easily be manipulated to show the required 10% net gain. A sub-group of officers has been set up to review net gain practices and will meet in May to discuss how to coordinate responses, share expertise and feedback experiences to the Government.
12. The Design Guide has now been launched and the sub-group are looking at ways to publicise and help train developers and architects so that there is strong uptake on the use of this Guide. The sub group will produce targeted publicity plan and training plan to roll out next financial year. Most local authorities are considering adopting the Guide for material consideration and Rother DC have circulated their report to help with this process. This was also been encouraged through Parish and Town Councils and Neighbourhood planning process. It was suggested that the Planning Inspectorate should be made aware of the Guide along with the offer of future training.

13. Sally Marsh informed the Members that briefing from the Landscape Institute suggested that the Government was likely to introduce the concept of National Design Codes which could be supported by local codes, and that the OSG could maintain a watching brief over these developments.
14. The Members were informed that Claire Tester continues to circulate useful Appeal decisions to officers e.g. for a site in Mid Sussex had been dismissed due to its impact on the character and because it was deemed to be a very poor design.
15. The Members were advised that Members training had been conducted at East Sussex CC and Wealden DC which was well received. Sally Marsh confirmed that the Unit is available to carry out further training with Members as required.
16. **Members thanked Diane Russell and the sub group for their exceptional work in producing the Design Guide and specifically Diane for drafting the Guide. The OSG were also thanked for all their hard work during the year.**

The Environment Bill, Nature Recovery and Biodiversity Gain

17. Sally Marsh introduced the proposed Environment Bill and implications for local authorities and the AONB, including a duty to develop Nature Recovery action plans which could not cut across districts. The AONB will take the lead in encouraging collaborative working to ensure a consistent approach to nature recovery across the 15 partner authorities, particularly at a county level.
18. Members discussed the biodiversity gain objective. Planning authorities should approve Biodiversity Gain plans only if 'satisfied' that pre and post biodiversity values are as specified in the plan; that offsite gain is properly allocated and that any credits are purchased. The Local authority's role is to scrutinise biodiversity gain plans.
19. Sally Marsh informed members that the Unit had reviewed a small test sample of metrics provided in support of planning applications in Tunbridge Wells, who already have biodiversity gain policies in place. The results indicate that developer produced metrics cannot be trusted, raising concerns about the level of resourcing and increase in access to ecological skills needed across local authorities to check metrics. The Unit has approached Kent University who have been involved with the development of Biodiversity Net Gain to help assess sample metrics over the next 6 months so that evidence is produced to modify the metric and develop further training. This assistance has been offered for free.
20. A suggestion was made that local authorities pool their resources to create a shared service provided by the AONB Unit that can scrutinise biodiversity gain calculations for partners. The OSG sub-group was tasked with considering this option.
21. Sally Marsh advised Members that the Unit were looking at how a nature recovery plan and carbon budget could be integrated into the next AONB Management Plan.

Tree establishment Position Statement

22. Jason Lavender informed the Members that woodland is a much-loved and a key component of the High Weald landscape and one that is fully recognized in the High Weald AONB Management Plan. For thirty years the Unit has promoted the value and importance of woodlands and their contribution to the rural economy, biodiversity, carbon capture, flood management. However, the recent advocacy of planting trees to mitigate for carbon loss is of concern as there are other valuable habitats that should also be protected and are equally important for carbon capture such as unimproved grassland. The Unit has prepared a draft report for the JAC Meeting on 25 March to advocate tree planting in the right place and in the right way. The Unit are working closely with Natural England, Forestry Commission and Woodland Trust to make sure key messages are consistent.
23. The Members were informed that there is a meeting in Wakehurst on carbon capture in May 2020 with Sussex Nature Partnership to address some of these issues. There was a short discussion on the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow on 9 – 20 November 2020, and the opportunities for promoting messages about the role of the High Weald's landscape in storing carbon.
24. It was agreed that the tree establishment position statement should be presented at the 25 March 2020 meeting.

Regenerative Landscape update

25. Jason Lavender informed the Members that Regenerative Landscapes are a positive way to support carbon capture and that it is alternative to tree planting. The Unit has been approached by several companies in the last year that wish to mitigate their carbon offset and the Unit would like to steer them to other options rather than tree planting. One of the areas could be to support landowners move from the traditional farming methods to regenerative agriculture. This could may involve for example companies funding moveable electric fencing to support mob-grazing. A presentation will be made to next the JAC on regenerative agriculture.
26. A discussion took place on how the JAC partnership might encourage more outside organisations such as NFU to attend meetings. Sally Marsh reminded the Members that one of Glovers recommendations was in the medium term to look at a more diverse partnership. This could be encouraged through a mini conference inviting other organisations to participate in future discussions on the AONB. Jason Lavender spoke of the success of the Farming Futures conference in October 2019 where over 90 landowners attended, and the Unit is planning to follow this up with further events of this type.

AONB Projects update

27. Sally Marsh updated Members on the Unit's land management projects. Delay to the grant awards under the National Grid Beautiful Boundaries Project has led to some minor adjustments in funding. A table of grant awards and adjustments proposed was circulated for approval. It was requested that Gerry Sherwin should be given authority to amend the remaining awards up to the total sum provided by National Grid.

28. **Members agreed to sign off the grants presented and agreed that Gerry Sherwin should have the authority to amend individual landowner grant awards up to the total sum awarded by National Grid.**
29. The Members were informed that Sussex Lund 2020 application had closed, and the Unit had received to date 57 applications amounting to £290,000 worth of grants. This is the third year that the Unit has managed the Sussex Lund programme and the depth and breadth of applications has improved. This is largely due to pre-application visits and clinics that Gerry Sherwin, Christine Meadows and Ross Wingfield's have had with the applicants. This has also been supported by a Sussex Lund newsletter with case studies and YouTube videos.
30. Sally Marsh also informed the Members that Rachel Bennington education officer, was awarded a grant through Historic England Heritage Schools Programme. This will be a joint project with eight High Weald Hero schools. This will help them to research a High Weald Hero timeline and local Heritage features including natural features such as woodland archaeology and Mesolithic shelters which will be shared with a wider school community.

Budget and Resources update

31. Sally Marsh advised Members that, despite a 5% cut to Defra's budget for 2020/21, contributions to the AONB have been maintained, with some funding tied to biodiversity outcomes which are yet to be clarified. This settlement represents a real-terms rollover of the 2019/20 budget for each AONB. Members thanked Defra for their ongoing support.
32. **It was noted that the Chairman thanked all the local authorities for their continued contribution towards supporting the AONB.**
33. The Unit are looking to recruit a research officer with interviews set for 18 March, with 28 applicants applying with varied amount of experience. Sarah Watson will be leaving the team at the end of March after covering Emma Whites maternity leave as communication officer and we wish to thank her for all her hard work over the past year.

JAC agenda

34. The focus of the 25 March 2020 Meeting will be on regenerative agriculture and discussion around this approach and updating the Members on the Environment Bill. This is to be held at Wadhurst Castle, Barn which is owned by one of the Farming Cluster Facilitation Members.

A.O.B

35. It was agreed that once the OSG sub-group for Biodiversity Metric had met on 13 May they would feedback at the November JAC.
36. Future meeting dates booked, 30 September 2020 OSG, 14 October Management Board and 18 November JAC 2020.

Report Item: 3

High Weald Officer Steering Group

Notes of a meeting of the High Weald Officer Steering Group held on Wednesday 5 February 2020, at 10.30am Acorn Tourism, Woodland Enterprise, Hastings Road, Flimwell, TN5 7PR



Clerk to JAC: Samantha Nicholas

PRESENT:

Jennifer Hollingum, Mid Sussex DC (Chairman)

Diane Russell, Rother DC (Vice-Chairman)

Virginia Pullan, East Sussex CC

Kerry Culbert, Hastings BC

Mark Daly, Horsham DC

David Scully, Tunbridge Wells BC

Helen French, Sevenoaks DC

Natalie Bumpus, Wealden DC

David Greenwood, Surrey CC

Carly Pettit, Ashford BC

Claire Tester, High Weald AONB

Sally Marsh, High Weald AONB

Jason Lavender, High Weald AONB

	Agenda Item	Action
1.	MINUTES	
1.1	The Minutes of 18 September 2019 was agreed to be accurate.	
2.	Apologies	
2.1	Murray Davidson, Vivienne Riddle, Jenny Knowles, Don Baker, Richard Mosinghi and Helen Page.	
3.	Biodiversity Net Gain	
3.1	<p>Sally Marsh explained that the Environment Bill had been released and that 'Biodiversity Gain' would take effect in the next couple of years. The group was taken through a presentation highlighting the key areas of the potential metric and the implications for local authorities. The grant of planning permission will be subject to the biodiversity gain objective being met.</p> <p>The biodiversity gain objective is met if the 'biodiversity value attributed to the development exceeds the pre-development biodiversity value by 10% as calculated by a biodiversity metric</p>	

(published by the Secretary of State), and where the biodiversity value attributed to the development is the sum of:

- post-development onsite biodiversity value (based on the completed development)
- any offsite biodiversity gain
- The value of any biodiversity credits purchased from the Secretary of State

Planning authorities should approve Biodiversity Gain plans only if 'satisfied' that pre and post biodiversity values are as specified in the plan; that offsite gain is properly allocated and that any credits are purchased. Local authority's role is to scrutinise biodiversity gain plans.

- 3.2 The Group discussed the issue with the simplification of habitat metrics which do not take into account increased variety of characteristic species; increased biomass, above and below land; increased habitat diversity; increased genetic diversity; improved functioning of natural processes; and better resilience to changes with disease resilience. The metrics also do not take into account the transition of habitats and the importance of mixture of habitats within the framework of the High Weald landscape.
- 3.3 The Group were concerned that only meadows and woodland on the priority habitat inventory are given high scores, all other neutral grassland or woodlands are given medium or low scores. Gardens, derelict land are given low scores and there was no score for hedgerows.
- 3.4 A discussion took place on how local authorities will produce policies to be able to manage the nuances of the High Weald landscape. There will be a requirement for additional resources to meet the new demands as many local authorities do not have ecologists.
- 3.5 At present there is no size threshold on this metric, however the current thinking is that householders will be taken out of this process. A discussion took place on how this may need to be fed

into site allocation assessments. The group also discussed that further conversations to look at specific schemes and how they may be calculated would be useful.

3.6 Sussex and Kent and Surrey Nature Partnerships are all discussing biodiversity gain and further partnership working would be required.

3.7 **It was agreed that a sub-group should lead on Biodiversity Gain. David Scully agreed to Chair this sub-group. A meeting will be set up for May 2020.** DS and CT

The presentation will be circulated to the officers. SN

4.0 National AONB Housing Position Statement

4.1 Claire Tester informed the Group that the Position Statement had been generated through the AONB Planning Officers in the South East who had collated relevant policy and guidance to help support AONB planners and the local authorities, with regard to planning for housing within AONBs. It is intended to be a helpful tool and is not a policy document in itself that local authorities are expected to attach formal weight to.

4.2 David Scully voiced his concern that Tunbridge Wells BC had raised issues with parts of the Position Statement; namely the reference to major development harming the AONB, the support for a focus on the provision of affordable housing in AONBs and the interpretation of the Inspector's report on the West Oxfordshire Local Plan.

4.3 It was confirmed that the JAC Meeting held on November had agreed that the Housing Position Statement be circulated by email and that no further discussion by JAC was needed.
Sally Marsh confirmed that this statement was driven largely through the Glover report recommendations on affordable housing. National Parks have the remit of affordable housing being the primary driver and as AONBs have equal status this should also be reflected in AONBs housing policies.

5.0 **Local Authority updates on Local Plans and Major Developments**

- 5.1
- Horsham DC start the Reg 18 consultation on 17 February 2020. There are no sites within the AONB although a couple could affect the 'setting'.
 - Tunbridge Wells BC have completed Reg 18 Consultation with around 8000 responses. There are 14 major developments within the AONB and a garden village which will impact the setting of the AONB. They are undertaking landscape assessments to see the individual and cumulative effects of this on the AONB.
 - Ashford BC has the Local Plan in place and has a couple of schemes in Tenterden within the 'setting' of the AONB. At present they are working on the Gypsy and Travellers local plan.
 - Mid Sussex DC has completed Reg 18 Site Allocations DPD and is looking at Reg 19 in Spring 2020. They are currently assessing sites to see whether they might be major development. Jennifer mentioned the appeal decision at London Road Bolney. This will be circulated to officers.
 - East Sussex is working on mineral and waste plan with the South Downs and Brighton & Hove. Claire Tester has been discussing policies with Pat Randall including one on soil conservation which it is hoped to also include in other local plans.
 - Rother DC has completed the DASA which is now adopted and looking to the start the next local plan process.
 - Sevenoaks BC Inspector has dismissed their Local Plan hearing on duty to cooperate. The council has refused to withdraw and is now waiting for the report.
 - Wealden DC are going to cabinet to withdraw their Local Plan after the Inspectorate's report dismissed it on duty to

JH

cooperate, and the HRA of Ashdown Forest. They will need to restart the local plan and look at revised housing figures including potentially Eastbourne's unmet need. There also has been some staff changes within Wealden. Marina Briggins has now left the authority and Chris Bending has stepped in as Head of Policy & Economic Development. Stacy Robbins is now Head of Development Management. The next steps are to set a revised timetable for completion of the Local Plan. There is an expectation that more planning applications will be brought forward, especially now the air pollution policy around Ashdown Forest has been lifted. There is also a backlog of outstanding applications which will now be determined in an attempt to restore a five-year supply of housing. Natalie reassured OSG that inappropriate applications would still be refused if there were grounds to do so.

- Hastings BC are embarking on Reg 18 in June 2020, and they have been working closely with Rother DC on strategic housing needs with their timetables aligned.
- David Greenwood informed the Group that the Leader programme is winding up as most of the available funds have been allocated for farming forestry and rural community businesses. The shared prosperity fund may replace the EU funding for Leader, but it will have a wider remit and not just be for rural development.
- Surrey CC has been involved with a cash to capital project with the Forestry Commission. This is giving financial support of up to £100,000 to local companies to improve their ability to optimise the forestry business with wood fuel links. They have been working with Oakmasters who produce Oak frames for extensions and outbuildings and Balcombe Sawmills. There is a potential opportunity to develop frames using other locally produced wood for small housing developments such as Community Land Trusts.

6.0 Local Authority training

6.1 Claire Tester informed the group that the Unit had carried out Members training for Rother and Wealden Councillors which has been well received. Diane Russell was concerned that the Members were very enthused by tree planting and felt that more guidance in this area would be required.

Sally Marsh explained that the Unit was already looking into this and that they were happy to do short training sessions with officers and members on areas such as low carbon landscapes which encompasses responsible tree planting.

6.2 Sevenoaks BC is conducting colour study training as they have appointed an urban designer, and Ashford BC welcomed training as they have had a restructuring and would soon have new officers in place and their head of policy has also left.

7.0 Design Guide update

7.1 The Design Guide was agreed by the JAC in November and the final version is now on the website to link to. Also, on the website is the consultation statement and other supporting documents. The officers discussed whether adopting the Design Guide as a supplementary planning document was necessary or whether it should be adopted as a material consideration. It was agreed that local authorities going through some form of adoption would give the Guide more weight.

7.2 Diane Russell agreed to circulate their Design Guide report once it was published for Cabinet in March 2020. The officers were given paper copies of the Design Guide and encouraged to link their websites to the High Weald website section on the Design Guide.

7.3 Sally Marsh also informed the Group of the publication of the report of the 'Building Better Building Beautiful Commission'. Diane Russell felt that the High Weald Design Guide required wider

promoting including possibly video for key brand messages on development within the AONB.

7.4 **It was agreed that the Design sub-group would meet to discuss how to raise the profile of the Design Guide.** DR

8.0 **Management Board: Wednesday 4 March 2020**

- 8.1
- Biodiversity Gain
 - Regenerative Agriculture

9.0 **A.O.B**

9.1 Claire Tester suggested that the Group collate case studies for the colour study. A couple of sites of note had used this facility successfully and requested that officers send in photographs and information to support these. officers

9.2 Next Meeting to be held on 30 September 2020

Report Item: 4

Committee: High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Date: 25 March 2020

Title of Report: Revenue Budget 2020/21

By: Treasurer to the Joint Advisory Committee

Purpose of Report: To approve the Revenue Budget 2020/21

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to:

1. approve the Revenue Budget for 2020/21;
 2. thank Defra and partner authorities for maintaining their contributions.
-

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report sets out the budget for 2020/21 following a consultation approved by this committee in November 2019.
- 1.2 The budget supports the High Weald AONB Work Plan 2020/21 which sets out how the High Weald AONB Unit will deliver its core functions and enable implementation of the new High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019 to 2024.

2. FINANCIAL APPRAISAL

- 2.1 Appendix A summarises the forecast out-turn for 2019/20, the proposed budget for 2020/21 and the indicative budget for 2021/22. Appendix B summarises the project budgets.
- 2.2 The Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) contribution for 2020/21 includes an increase of £3,863 and is forecast to be £277,463.
- 2.3 Other income of £9,800 and an allocation of 84% of the Defra single pot contribution to core activities has achieved a balanced budget for 2020/21.

3. BUDGET 2019/20

- 3.1 The High Weald core budget is forecast to have a surplus of £8,300 in 2019/20 arising primarily from savings from a vacant post. The forecast reserve at 31 March 2020 is £167,500

4. BUDGET 2020/21

Core Budget – Expenditure

- 4.1 The budget for 2020/21 is presented in Appendix A. It is based on the 2019/20 figures with inflation at the ESCC applied rate of 2.5% for salaries and 0% for other costs. The budget allows for:
- (i) Staff costs: a budget for a core team of 5.1 FTE staff which includes any incremental progression and contributions to the pension fund.
 - (ii) Accommodation/office equipment costs: a standstill budget for office rent, rates, office equipment, office maintenance and running costs.
 - (iii) Partnership running costs: a standstill budget that covers NAAONB membership fees, JAC meetings, representing the partnership at regional and national forums, producing the annual review and miscellaneous public relations costs.
 - (iv) Support services: East Sussex County Council’s charges for IT, personnel, financial support and a lump sum contribution to the pension fund.

Core Budget – Income

Defra

- 4.2 The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has a funding agreement with AONBs which provides for a flexible ‘single pot’ contribution for core and projects.
- 4.3 Defra have confirmed the funding settlement for 2020/21 as £277,463. They have advised that savings have been made to the AONB budget but an allocation of £17,512 from a dedicated Biodiversity Fund has been used to enable a real term increase of £3,863 (Appendix C).
- 4.4 The 2019/20 contribution of £273,600 was allocated as follows: £232,500 to Core and £41,100 to Projects.
- 4.5 Defra’s total contribution for 2020/21 is shown in appendix A. It shows the contribution of £277,463 allocated as £232,500 to Core and £44,963 to Projects.

Local Authority Contributions

- 4.6 The respective levels of support from each authority are shown in Appendix A.
- 4.7 In respect of core costs, all authorities have confirmed their contributions at 2019/20 levels.

Self-funding projects

- 4.8 JAC expenditure on self-funding projects is presented at Appendix B and is estimated to be £342,600 in 2020/21. Appendix B indicates contributions from local authority partners to projects, including High Weald Heroes.
- 4.9 It is proposed to allocate £44,963 from the Defra 'single pot' to Projects.
- 4.10 All projects have a balanced budget over the total life of the project. Income is allocated on a pro rata basis over the relevant number of financial years to give a net balance of zero.
- 4.11 A significant proportion of self-funding project expenditure is made up of grant awards through the Sussex Lund and National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative grant programmes.

5. FINANCIAL ISSUES 2021/22 AND BEYOND

- 5.1 An increase in the Defra contribution for 2020/21 is welcome. Support from Defra beyond 2021 will be subject to the CSR and the weight placed by Government of the Glover Review recommendations.
- 5.2 External contributions towards the management of the Landscape Enhancement Programme continues to ensure that the Other Income target for core costs is met, enabling a balanced core budget in 2020/21.
- 5.3 The project budget is sufficient for delivering the Management Plan Evidence and Guidance Programme, the JAC's Outreach Programme including High Weald Heroes (supported by an 0.6 FTE) and the Landscape Enhancement Programme (supported by 1.6 FTE) and for new project development.
- 5.4 Inflationary pressures linked to salaries are likely to be an issue beyond 2021/22 if Defra and local authority contributions do not increase in real terms.
- 5.5 In a worst case scenario of all staff being made redundant 60% of the estimated of £167,500 reserves at 31 March 2021 will be required. If necessary reserves can be used to balance inflationary pressures in the short term.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The 2020/21 core budget is a balanced budget which provides the JAC with the capacity to deliver its core functions.
- 6.2 The project budget reflects inclusion of two large-scale grant schemes, Sussex Lund and the National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative.
- 6.3 On this basis the JAC is recommended to agree the budget.

Jill Fisher, Treasurer to the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

	<u>2019/20</u>		<u>2020/21</u>					<u>2021/22</u>
	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Forecast</u>	<u>Original</u>	<u>Budget</u>			<u>Indicative</u>	
			<u>Budget</u>	<u>Inflation</u>	<u>Pressures</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Budget</u>
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Core Budget								
Expenditure								
235.9 Staff costs	251.3	243.0	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	317.7	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	8.3	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	342.6				342.6	342.6
42.1 Defra contribution to self-funded projects	(41.1)	(41.1)	(45.0)				(45.0)	(45.0)
Local authorities contributions	(45.1)	(26.6)	(39.1)				(39.1)	(39.1)
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	0.0

Total High Weald JAC

648.3 Total core and project expenditure	672.4	673.4	668.6	4.6	0.0	(4.6)	668.6	675.1
648.3 Total core and project income	(672.4)	(681.7)	(668.6)	0.0	0.0	0.0	(668.6)	(670.8)
0.0 Total High Weald JAC Budget	0.0	(8.3)	0.0	0.0	4.6	(4.6)	0.0	4.3

Defra Funding	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	£000	£000	£000
Defra funding on core budget	(232.5)	(232.5)	(234.7)
Defra funding on projects budget	(41.1)	(45.0)	(45.0)
Total Defra Funding	(273.6)	(277.5)	(279.7)

Reserves	£000
Reserves at 1 April 2019	159.2
Transfer to/(from) reserves 2019/20	8.3
Transfer to/(from)reserves 2020/21	0.0
Reserves at 31 March 2021	167.5

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

Appendix B

	Budget 2019/20			Forecast 2019/20			Indicative Budget 2020/21		
	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000
1 Community Outreach									
JAC expenditure	10.3			5.3			12.2		
Defra		(8.9)			(3.0)			(7.8)	
Local authorities		(0.7)			(0.6)			(3.7)	
Other		(0.7)	(0.0)		(1.7)	0.0		(0.7)	0.0
High Weald Heroes									
JAC expenditure	25.8			24.8			26.4		
Defra		(12.9)			(12.4)			(13.2)	
Heritage Lottery Fund		0.0			0.0			0.0	
Local authorities		(12.9)			(12.4)			(13.2)	
Other		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0
2 Management Plan Evidence and Guidance									
JAC expenditure	10.0			10.9			12.9		
Defra		(10.0)			(10.9)			(12.9)	
Other		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0
3 Landscape Enhancement									
JAC expenditure	290.3			304.5			285.1		
Defra		(9.3)			(12.3)			(11.1)	
Environment Agency		(10.0)			(33.3)			(4.5)	
Water Catchment Partnership (KWT)		0.0			(3.0)			(3.8)	
Local authorities		(21.5)			(13.3)			(16.2)	
Other		0.0			0.0			0.0	
Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund		(30.8)			(30.8)			(30.8)	
National Grid		(93.7)			(86.7)			(93.7)	
Sussex Lund (Charities Aid Foundation)		(125.0)	0.0		(125.1)	0.0		(125.0)	0.0
4 Project Development									
JAC expenditure	10.0			3.7			6.0		
Defra		0.0			(3.0)			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			349.2			342.6		
Expenditure funded by Defra (to Appendix A)		(41.1)			(41.6)			(45.0)	
Expenditure funded by LAs (to Appendix A)		(45.1)			(26.3)			(39.1)	
Expenditure funded by Other (to Appendix A)		(260.2)			(281.3)			(258.5)	
TOTAL JAC expenditure/income	346.4	(346.4)	0.0	349.2	(349.2)	0.0	342.6	(342.6)	0.0



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Marie Southgate
First Floor Seacole
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF
Marie.Southgate@defra.gov.uk

Date: 26/02/2020

Andy Fowler

High Weald AONB
East Sussex County Council, Woodland Enterprise Centre
Hastings
Flimwell
East Sussex
TN5 7PR

Dear Andy

2020/21 Defra funding settlement

I am pleased to be able to confirm the Defra funding settlement that your Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will receive in 2020/21. As you know, this has taken longer than expected in the circumstances this year; thank you for adjusting your planning processes accordingly.

The settlement for High Weald AONB for 2020/21 is: £277,463.

This represents a real-terms rollover of the 2019/20 budget for your AONB. This settlement demonstrates the importance government places on the leadership needed from AONBs, particularly in meeting the challenges set out in the Designated Landscapes Review led by Julian Glover.

By protecting your budget in this way, there will be increased financial pressures elsewhere in the department. To offset the need to find savings on your AONB's budget, part of your settlement includes an allocation of £17,512 from a dedicated Biodiversity Fund. On that basis, I would be grateful if you could please set out how you will use this element of your settlement to carry out activities that will benefit biodiversity.

More broadly, I also ask how you will use your grant funding to deliver nature recovery, work towards net zero carbon through nature-based solutions, and support the needs of communities in modern Britain. I would like to see how you intend to work in partnership strategically with other groups, including other NPAs and

AONBs. We will set out more detail of any specific actions we would like to you to take on this basis ahead of the start of the new financial year. Please note that we will send the Grant Funding Agreement for your signature in due course.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your work and leadership at the High Weald AONB, and look forward to discussing your plans in taking forward key actions to meet the ambitions of the Landscapes Review.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marie Southgate', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Marie Southgate,
Deputy Director – Land Use Policy

Report Item: 6

Committee: High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Date: 25th March 2020

Title of Report: COVID-19 Risk Management

By: AONB Director

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

1. Note the report;
 2. Request that the Management Board continue to review significant risks as required and develop options for their management and;
 3. Request the AONB staff routinely review work practices, arrangements, and work programmes to mitigate as far as possible the consequences of COVID-19.
-

1.0 Background

1.1 Members will recognize that although the High Weald AONB Partnership has faced challenging times, particularly as a consequence of the banking crisis of 2009, it is now clear that the COVID-19 pandemic is not like anything we have faced before and it has the potential to have serious consequences for many organisations and individuals: collectively and individually everyone will need to make difficult decisions.

2.0 Key risks 2019/20 and beyond

- 2.1 The most significant and on-going risk is to people's health and the obvious priority is to try and ensure everyone is kept safe and the opportunities for passing on the virus are kept to an absolute minimum. While less important, the general implications of COVID-19 for our current business and our working arrangements in the short and medium-term will be considerable, and particularly so should AONB staff members fall ill. The impact on our work programme is further compounded by the small size of the team (six FTE) as there would be no extra capacity within the team to cover a colleague's work. Should the crisis deepen, the AONB Unit staff may be asked or required to support other areas of government or local authority public services (e.g. emergency planning) and this too will have implications for the work of the AONB Partnership.
- 2.2 We are also very aware we support a range of individuals and organisations with advice and funds and there is a risk that their work programmes and projects will be delayed should the AONB Unit staff be unable to provide the necessary support.
- 2.3 The impact of COVID-19 on the government's priorities drawn up since December's general election will be also be considerable. The range and scale of the many demands placed on

the Treasury and other government departments are now immense and will continue for the foreseeable future as the government attempts to deal with a legacy of underwriting loans, business rates relief, and health care priorities. This will have consequences not only to the funding and support provided by government for the work of protected landscape partnerships but also to current and future government policies and priorities for the sector.

2.4 The key risks to the Joint Advisory Committee are set out in appendix A.

3.0 Risk mitigation

3.1 Mitigation of the immediate risks

3.2 We have been monitoring the situation very closely. Following the significant shift in the government's advice issued on the 16th March, we have put in place a variety of measures to ensure the AONB Unit staff and those we work with are as safe as possible. We also have measures to keep our key functions up and running, to stay in touch with one another, to manage the team, and to allow partners, residents, and others to contact us when needed. The office at Flimwell has been closed for general use and all planned events, meetings, school and site/farm visits have been cancelled or postponed. All the AONB Unit staff are now primarily working from home.

3.3 We will adapt to the new situation and we will continue to support those groups and individuals with whom we work particularly closely (e.g. the Rother and Dudwell Farm Cluster and Sussex Lund applicants), with our partners, and with the public using video and teleconferencing. We will continue to use our regional and national contacts to exchange information and to identify how and where further support, guidance or action by the AONB Unit staff is needed.

3.4 This is a rapidly changing situation so we will continue to follow the government's guidance and that provided by our host authority East Sussex County Council and we will routinely review our own practices, arrangements, and work programme accordingly. The measures we have already put in place are listed below.

- The office is closed for general use. All staff are working primarily from home. For the time being any AONB Unit staff member that remains free of the COVID-19 symptoms and has not had contact with anyone with symptoms but wishes to use the office can do so but ideally one person but no more than two people at a time, recognising the risks from hard surfaces etc. and observing the government guidance on hygiene and social distancing.
- All those we work have been told (using the website, social media, newsletters etc) the office is now closed and details on how to contact us has been provided. General queries or those people that do not know who to talk to have been asked to contact info@highweald.org
- Any IT or office equipment and software has been taken home and if needed, we will investigate funding upgrades to fibre optic for the home working period so that certain software (e.g. GIS) can work effectively. We will be using Skype for internal and external meetings.
- The AONB Unit staff will follow a range of protocols while working from home. A work programme reflecting work constraints/opportunities is being agreed between staff and the

line manager, all the team are recording their time using Time Tracker or the diary system, and the need to work flexibly is recognised, given possible caring responsibilities.

- If a member of staff falls ill, they are to follow the government health guidance, inform their manager, and register using ESCC's Firstcare system.
- We will be holding virtual team meetings every Wednesday morning.
- We will be adapting and reviewing our work programme and recognising that while we will be restricted from undertaking some activities, there is an opportunity to do other things differently. Each staff member has been asked to set out revised ambitions for their work for at least the next three months and agree this with their line manager. All staff have also been asked to think about how we can collectively and individually develop our skills over this period.

3.5 Mitigation of the longer-term risks

3.6 At this stage and in view of the fast-changing situation and increasing uncertainty, it is difficult to identify the likely longer-term risks the JAC will face. Our experience following the banking crisis and subsequent government policies tells us the JAC will need to demonstrate boldly the value and worth of the work we do. And, more importantly, the JAC will need to ensure the fundamental role all landscapes (if managed responsibly) play for the welfare of society are understood in the face of competing demands and those politicians and decision-makers lacking ecological literacy. Landscapes are literally society's life support systems.

3.7 Given this, it will be imperative that the JAC, in conjunction with the other protected landscape partnerships, continues to make an energetic and unapologetic case for society's need for beautiful, resilient, and complex landscapes providing us with a secure source of nutrient-dense food, carbon storage, clean and plentiful water, jobs, places to enjoy, and abundant bio-diversity.

3.8 To support this, we will think about how the JAC can play an influential and lasting role making this case to the government and others and how we draw on our experience and strengths to define a powerful vision for a regenerated landscape providing society with its needs by working with our many contacts living in the AONB – community groups, parishes councils, farmers and foresters, and residents. This will be particularly important should the shockwaves following COVID-19 be fundamental and lasting and drive this country's population to demand genuine policies to tackle climate change, reverse ecological collapse, ensure food provenance and food security, and to protect people's health and well-being.

4.0 **Conclusion**

4.1 COVID-19 presents a range of unprecedented immediate and longer-term risks for the JAC and the country and these are difficult to predict. Risk management systems are in place and the AONB Unit will continue to follow official guidance, reviewing significant risks as required and developing options for their management whilst looking ahead to ensure we are in a strong and resilient position the moment this crisis ends.

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

Appendix A High Weald JAC - COVID-19 Key Risks 25.03.20.

Sponsor: Sally Marsh/Jason Lavender

Author: Jason Lavender

Date: April 2019 - March 2020

Risk Log

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

Likelihood	5					
	4					
	3					
	2					
	1					
		1	2	3	4	5
		Consequence				

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

Unit ref	Risk no	Risk What can go wrong	Root Causes How it can go wrong	Owner	Inherent Risk			Controls / Mitigating Actions Preventative & reactive control measures	Control Owner	Residual Risk		
					Likelihood	Consequence	Matrix Zone			Control Rating	Likelihood	Consequence
		Format: EVENT leading to CONSEQUENCE resulting in EFFECT ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES										
	1	Infection by COVID-19 and subsequent illness.	AONB staff and those we work with falling ill as a result of COVID-19.	AONB Director	4	4	Red	Follow government and ESCC guidance and also set up and maintain a variety of measures to ensure the AONB Unit staff and those we work with are as safe as possible. For more detail see paragraph 3.2 of the COVID-19 Risk Management report.	AONB Director	2	4	Red

2	Failure to meet current and revised work commitments and work programmes, unable to support individuals and organisations with their projects, difficulty securing funds to match external grants or to fund projects. AONB Unit staff unable to manage work commitments and caring duties. Recruitment of new staff suspended for the foreseeable future.	Reduced activity/service owing to changed working arrangements (internally and externally), inability to recruit new staff, additional caring duties for children and/or elderly relatives, and staff illness or absence (e.g. to assist with emergency planning).	AONB Director	4	3	Red	Work primarily from home, maintain contact with colleagues, partners, and others, adapt work programmes to meet existing commitments and priorities where possible, and review work programmes regularly to reflect changing circumstances. For more detail see paragraph 3.4 of the COVID-19 Risk Management report.	AONB Director	2	4	2	Amber
3	Those receiving grants from the JAC are unable to start or progress and complete their projects within the agreed timescales.	Restrictions placed on people's movements and activities, labour and material shortages.	AONB Director	4	2	Amber	Consult with the grant recipients and third party funders, review and change timescales, offer technical advice and moral support.	AONB Director	2	3	2	Amber
4	Remote IT working systems fail and/or needs not met, staff unable to work efficiently, fewer outputs, current and revised work programmes compromised.	Poor links to computer network/server results in slow machine operation, inability to download GIS data, update website etc.	AONB Director	3	3	Amber	Technical advice sought and recommendations/solutions implemented.	AONB Director	2	3	2	Amber
5	Reduction or loss of national and local government political and financial support to AONB partnerships owing to the range and scale of demands placed on government during and following the COVID-19 crisis and subsequent change in policies and priorities.	Adverse affect to the AONB core work remit and much reduced capacity and time to raise other funds to support core work and raise funds for project work.	AONB Director	4	5	Red	Continued and concerted engagement with national and local government and government agencies and ongoing liaison with the NAAONB. Active engagement with DEFRA S of S & Ministers directly and in conjunction with NAAONB and SEEPL. Active engagement of High Weald AONB Patrons and supportive High Weald MPs.	AONB Director	3	4	4	Red

Appendix A High Weald JAC - COVID-19 Key Risks 25.03.20.

Sponsor: Sally Marsh/Jason Lavender

Author: Jason Lavender

Date: April 2019 - March 2020

Risk Log

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

Likelihood	5					
	4					
	3					
	2					
	1					
		1	2	3	4	5
		Consequence				

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

Unit ref	Risk no	Risk What can go wrong	Root Causes How it can go wrong	Owner	Inherent Risk			Controls / Mitigating Actions Preventative & reactive control measures	Control Owner	Residual Risk		
					Likelihood	Consequence	Matrix Zone			Control Rating	Likelihood	Consequence
		Format: EVENT leading to CONSEQUENCE resulting in EFFECT ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES										
	1	Infection by COVID-19 and subsequent illness.	AONB staff and those we work with falling ill as a result of COVID-19.	AONB Director	4	4	Red	Follow government and ESCC guidance and also set up and maintain a variety of measures to ensure the AONB Unit staff and those we work with are as safe as possible. For more detail see paragraph 3.2 of the COVID-19 Risk Management report.	AONB Director	2	4	Red

2	Failure to meet current and revised work commitments and work programmes, unable to support individuals and organisations with their projects, difficulty securing funds to match external grants or to fund projects. AONB Unit staff unable to manage work commitments and caring duties. Recruitment of new staff suspended for the foreseeable future.	Reduced activity/service owing to changed working arrangements (internally and externally), inability to recruit new staff, additional caring duties for children and/or elderly relatives, and staff illness or absence (e.g. to assist with emergency planning).	AONB Director	4	3	Red	Work primarily from home, maintain contact with colleagues, partners, and others, adapt work programmes to meet existing commitments and priorities where possible, and review work programmes regularly to reflect changing circumstances. For more detail see paragraph 3.4 of the COVID-19 Risk Management report.	AONB Director	2	4	2	Amber
3	Those receiving grants from the JAC are unable to start or progress and complete their projects within the agreed timescales.	Restrictions placed on people's movements and activities, labour and material shortages.	AONB Director	4	2	Amber	Consult with the grant recipients and third party funders, review and change timescales, offer technical advice and moral support.	AONB Director	2	3	2	Amber
4	Remote IT working systems fail and/or needs not met, staff unable to work efficiently, fewer outputs, current and revised work programmes compromised.	Poor links to computer network/server results in slow machine operation, inability to download GIS data, update website etc.	AONB Director	3	3	Amber	Technical advice sought and recommendations/solutions implemented.	AONB Director	2	3	2	Amber
5	Reduction or loss of national and local government political and financial support to AONB partnerships owing to the range and scale of demands placed on government during and following the COVID-19 crisis and subsequent change in policies and priorities.	Adverse affect to the AONB core work remit and much reduced capacity and time to raise other funds to support core work and raise funds for project work.	AONB Director	4	5	Red	Continued and concerted engagement with national and local government and government agencies and ongoing liaison with the NAAONB. Active engagement with DEFRA S of S & Ministers directly and in conjunction with NAAONB and SEEPL. Active engagement of High Weald AONB Patrons and supportive High Weald MPs.	AONB Director	3	4	4	Red