

# High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee



## Agenda

**12.30 (for lunch) Wednesday 24 November 2021 at the main hall,  
Woodland Enterprise Centre, Hastings Road, Flimwell TN5 7PR**

1. Presentation on 2021 High Weald Walking Festival  
Presentation by Emma White, AONB Communication Officer.
2. Election of Management Board Members 2021-2023  
Members and Cooptees for the Management Board, including Chairman and Vice-Chair, will be elected for the period November 2021 to November 2023 (page 3)
3. Apologies
4. Members' Interests  
Members and officers are invited to make any declarations of any interest that they may have in relation to items on the agenda and are reminded to make any declaration at any stage during the meeting if it then becomes apparent that this may be required when a particular item or issue is considered.
5. Urgent matters  
Members are asked to raise any urgent matters at this stage and not at the end of the meeting. The Chairman will decide whether the JAC should discuss any items so raised but asks members to give him prior notification of such matters unless urgency prevents it.
6. Minutes of the JAC meeting  
To consider the minutes of the JAC meeting held on 31 March 2021 (page 4)
7. Minutes of the Management Board Meeting  
To consider the minutes of the Management Board meeting held on 13 October 2021 (page 10)
8. Minutes of the Officer Steering Group (OSG)  
To consider the minutes of the OSG meeting held on 15 September 2021 (page 14)
9. Revenue Budget for 2022/23  
To consider a report from the Treasurer on the revenue budget for 2022/23 (page 19)
10. Protected Landscapes (FiPL) – a new £2 million grant programme for the High Weald  
To consider a report and presentation on FiPL by Gerry Sherwin, AONB Business Manager (page 26)
11. Case study – Westdown Farm  
Presentation by Ross Wingfield, AONB Land Management Project Officer
12. Landscapes (Glover) Review. An update  
To consider a report by Jason Lavender, AONB Co-Director (page 34)
13. Risk Management  
To consider a report by Jason Lavender, AONB Co-Director (page 39); Appendix A: High Weald JAC - Key Risks

14. Any other business

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

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

**High Weald Joint Advisory Committee  
Nomination of Board Members  
November 2021 – November 2023**



<b>Position</b>	<b>Name</b>
<b>Nomination for Chairman:</b>	<b>Cllr Pete Bradbury</b>
<b>Proposed by:</b>	<b>Cllr Phil Dixon</b>
<b>Seconded by:</b>	
<b>Nomination for Vice Chairman:</b>	<b>Cllr Phil Dixon</b>
<b>Proposed by:</b>	<b>Cllr Pete Bradbury</b>
<b>Seconded by:</b>	
<b>Nomination of Members</b>	<b>Cllr Jonathan Vine-Hall</b>
<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green</b>
<b>Seconded</b>	
<b>Nomination of Members</b>	<b>Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green</b>
<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Cllr Jonathon Vine-Hall</b>
<b>Seconded</b>	
<b>Nomination of Members</b>	<b>Cllr L Hall</b>
<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Cllr P Bradbury</b>
<b>Seconded</b>	
<b>Nomination of Cooptees</b>	<b>Mrs J Davison</b>
<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Cllr P Bradbury</b>
<b>Second</b>	
<b>Nomination of Cooptees</b>	<b>Mrs S Tidy</b>
<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Cllr P Bradbury</b>
<b>Seconded</b>	

Agenda item: 6

# High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

## Minutes of Meeting



Held on the 31 March 2021 at 10.30am using Microsoft Teams

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

### Members present:

Cllr S Tidy	East Sussex County Council (Chairman)
Cllr P Bradbury	West Sussex County Council/Mid Sussex District Council (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr P Dixon	Wealden District Council
Cllr J Vine-Hall	Rother District Council
Cllr M Dickins	Sevenoaks Borough Council
Cllr L Lockwood	Tandridge District Council
Cllr J Soyke	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Cllr L Levane	Hastings Borough Council
Cllr L Steeds	Tandridge District Council
Mr T Bamford	CLA
Mr J Harrison	East Sussex County Council

### Officers:

Ms G Sherwin	AONB Business Manager
Ms C Tester	AONB Planning Adviser
Mr J Lavender	AONB Co-Director
Mr A Fowler	Finance Manager, East Sussex County Council
Ms J Hollingum	Planning Officer, Mid Sussex District Council
Mrs D Russell	Design Officer, Rother District Council
Mr D Scully	Officer, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Ms R Fry	Senior Planning Officer, Horsham District Council
Mr M Davidson	Natural Resources Manager, Hastings Borough Council
Ms K Sharpe	Policy Manager, Wealden District Council
Ms R Osinuga	Planning Officer, Ashford Borough Council
Mr R Mosinghi	Planning Officer, Crawley Borough Council

## 1. Dark Skies presentation

- 1.1 Samantha Nicholas presented an update on the Dark Skies project, which covered:  
the All Party Parliamentary Dark Skies Consultation; The Unit's work on the practical

support for local community groups and Parishes for data gathering; Dark Skies policies, community guidance; and the future of this project.

1.2 There was a discussion on how the Unit can engage further with local communities and Parishes to raise the profile of light pollution, with the support of the Officer Steering Group:

- It was suggested that Community Safety officers should be involved especially with the concerns about the safety and well-being of women;
- Tim Bamford raised a concern with lighting regulation for agriculture buildings which could preclude any development, and suggested that there should be greater clarity within any guidance;
- A discussion took place on the effects of different colour lights on wildlife confirming that red light is better for wildlife than bright white. In the Chat function David Scully confirmed that there is a Defra study on green lighting around oil rigs and its effect on migratory birds.

1.3 Samantha welcomed the opportunity to talk to schools or Parishes to communicate the issues around light pollution and further data gathering. The Unit is continuing to work with the Officer Steering Group to produce further guidance and further training for local authorities. It is also looking at opportunities to obtain more project funding as there are currently only limited resources for this important area.

## **2. Tree establishment presentation**

2.1 Gerry Sherwin gave a presentation to the Members about how tree establishment can be carried out in a way that is sympathetic to the landscape. The key messages were:

- To ensure the right trees are planted in the right place;
- To design projects using historic maps and analysis on lost hedgerows and trees/woodland;
- To consider how to protect valued views;
- To consider natural regeneration rather than planting of trees as this results in the right native species for the conditions and avoids importing diseases;
- To consider provenance and the mixed native species depending on where you are planting and be follow planting standards.

2.2 Gerry also informed the Members that:

- The Unit have established a Deer Management scheme with the support of the Woodland Trust;
- The Unit can give advice on alternatives to tree establishment to support climate change such as regenerative agriculture;

- The Unit manages grant programmes such as Sussex Lund and National Grid Enhancement programme which extensively support tree establishment schemes;
  - High Weald Heroes has a school grounds programme to support tree establishment;
  - The Land Management Advisors are available to help landowners to navigate through the information and maps to support tree establishment schemes.
- 2.3 Gerry also encourage the local authorities to involve the Unit in any future street tree projects for towns or villages which could be supported through Sussex Lund.
- 2.4 The Unit is producing guidance on The High Weald Tree Establishment which will sit alongside the Responsible Planting guidance and is working with many organisations that have a similar agenda to utilise wider reaching media resources.
- 2.5 Gerry informed the Committee that the Unit set up a local seed harvesting initiative through Agrifactors for High Weald wildflower meadows seeds which is an established business. English Woodlands is based in Heathland and has a good reputation for providing appropriate tree stock.
- 2.6 Jason Lavender informed the Members that he has been working with Rother DC Environmental Manager and a specialist in establishing trees in Urban settings on a scheme to increase the number of trees in the urban areas of Rother.
- 2.7 Jason reiterated his invitation to Members and Officers to visit to a farm in the High Weald to discover more about regenerative agriculture.

To view the full presentations: <https://youtu.be/dlmRuvIHLdw>

### **3. Apologies**

- 3.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr T Hogden, Cllr Pickering, S Marsh, L Newland, D Greenwood, H French, N Bumpas and C Harrison.

### **4. Members Interests**

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

### **5. Urgent Matters**

- 5.1 Cllr Soyke read out a statement concerning a letter of complaint to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council from the AONB Directors concerning the report on the application for development at Turnden under Section 85 (1) of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. David Scully then continued with a further statement which confirmed that the Council had received legal advice that it was not in breach of section 85(1). It was also recognised that this complaint arose from a genuine

concern for the AONB and there will a future meeting between the Council and the Co-Directors to discuss these concerns.

5.2 This was followed by a statement read out by The Chairman from the AONB Directors, please see attached Appendix 1 for the full statements. The Chairman confirmed that this matter would not be discussed in the meeting but there will be opportunities for Members to discuss the issue of major development in the AONB at a future meeting.

**6. Minutes of the JAC Meeting**

6.1 RESOLVED to note the minutes of the JAC meeting, held on 25 November 2020

**7. Minutes of the Management Board Meeting**

7.1 RESOLVED to note: The Minutes of the Management Board meeting held on 10 March 2021.

**8. Minutes of the Officer Steering Group**

8.1 RESOLVED to note the minutes of the Officer Steering Group meeting held on 10 February 2021.

**9. Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)**

9.1 The Committee considered a report by Gerry Sherwin on Farming in Protected Landscapes as well as the Defra guidance which was circulated with the report. Gerry explained that:

- FiPL is one of many new schemes to support farmers and land managers through a transition away from the basic farm payment to public payments for public good schemes;
- The National Association for AONBs has been in consultation with Defra and the discussions are on-going. However, there is an expectation that this scheme will be managed through a grant programme;
- When the full details of FiPL are announced the Unit will set up a governance structure and look at administrative systems so that it will work for our landscape. There is an expectation that it will run from April 2021, for 3 years until 2024.

9.2 The Members discussed how to better promote the schemes to ensure that farmers and landowners have a greater understanding of their importance. There was also a concern from Members that if the new schemes are not clarified there will not be a smooth transition from the old scheme and the important work started by Countryside Stewardship may be lost. Gerry confirmed that the Unit are liaising with farmers and landowners to encourage them into the current scheme as this will make it an easier transition to the Environment and Land Management (ELM) Scheme.

9.3 **RESOLVED that:**

- i. **The JAC welcomes the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) Farming in Protected Landscapes grant programme;**
- ii. **It requests that East Sussex CC as the JAC's host authority, take relevant actions, including but not limited to, entering into contracts and other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the programme;**
- iii. **The JAC delegates authority to the Management Board to consider Defra's proposal when the details are available, including the risks and their proposed management.**

**10. Revenue Budget for 2021/22**

- 10.1 The Committee considered a report by Finance Manager, Andy Fowler, on the Revenue Budget for 2021/22. The Members were taken through the key areas of the budget.
- 10.2 The budget presents in line with draft budget proposed in the November 2020. The Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) contribution for 2021/22 has been confirmed as a standstill figure of £277,500.
- 10.3 The High Weald core budget, Appendix A, is forecast to have a surplus of £22,600 in 2020/21. The surplus arises from savings due to a vacant post and reduced travel and meeting costs, and increased income from hosting and managing a new partnership project. The forecast reserve at 31 March 2021 is £204,100.
- 10.4 In the 2021/22 Budget there is a small increase in expenditure due to pay awards and staff. This will give a planned deficit of £4600 which will be balanced through drawing down from the reserves. The 22/23 budget indicates that there will be an overall deficit of £17,000, which could also come from reserves. ESCC Finance will continue to work with the Unit to present sustainable balanced budgets going forward.
- 10.5 JAC expenditure on self-funding projects is presented at Appendix B and is estimated to be £486,100 in 2021/22. Appendix B indicates contributions from local authority partners to projects, including High Weald Heroes.
- 10.6 A sum of £45,000 has been allocated to Projects from the Defra contribution. The Land Management Programme includes the following projects: Sussex Lund; National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative; Upper Rother and Dudwell Farm Cluster; Cuckmere and Coombe Slow the Flow; and Meadow Makers.



10.7 The Chairman thanked the AONB team for their involvement at all levels to ensure that we can achieve a balanced budget.

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

- i. **Approve the Draft Revenue Budget for 2021/22.**
- ii. **Thank Defra and partner authorities for maintaining their contributions.**

**11. Risk Management**

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

11.2 Jason confirmed that the team was looking forward to being back in an office environment as we work more effectively as a team within the High Weald community.

11.3 Jason highlighted that the funding sources are unpredictable, and that through the Glover Review there was a hope that AONB partnerships may have more equitable finance status in relation to National Park Authorities. He thanked the local authorities for supporting the financial budget.

11.4 FiPL might be a risk or opportunity dependent on the outcome and we will have to set up the internal structure to manage this in a short period of time.

11.5 A discussion took place around many of the team being in position for a while and that succession planning for officers and Members within the JAC needs to be considered.

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

**12. CPRE Request to Natural England (NE) to Extend AONB Boundaries**

12.1 The Committee considered a verbal report by Claire Tester on the correspondence between CPRE and NE on the extension of the AONB Boundaries (appended to the agenda). This confirms that at present NE are unable to pursue this request due to the 19 other applications already in the system. Claire commented that the request highlighted the amount of positive support that the AONB has from CPRE and the wider community.

12.2 **RESOLVED to note the correspondence between CPRE and NE on the proposed extension to the AONB Boundary.**

**13. A.O.B**

- 13.1 Jason Lavender informed the Members of a report in the most recent BBC Countryfile programme on a leak from the Government suggesting a complete overhaul of the current approaches to advising on and supporting the management of AONBs and National Parks and the rumours of a centralized service run from Westminster taking the place of locally based organizations and partnerships. This information was new to the AONB Unit and in the two days since the programme, it has not been possible to find out how accurate this report really is.

What is known is that one of the 27 recommendations of the 2019 Glover Review of designated landscapes was to set up a National Landscape Service (NLS), which appears to be strongly supported by the Government and who have instructed DEFRA to design and test a suitable model. To date the model believed to be under consideration was the setting up of a NLS to bring together the staff of AONB partnerships and National Park Authorities (NPA) into a single 'Arm's Length Body' with local organizations working in individual designated landscapes.

To date, there are no details, no confirmed timings or functions or anything on how this new body will either relate to the existing locally based AONB partnerships/NPAs or the many local authorities. At the moment, there is a small group drawn from AONB partnerships and NPAs feeding the thoughts and concerns from the wider group to DEFRA in an effort to influence the shape and remit of the NLS but it remains unclear how well this is being received.

- 13.2 Cllrs Tidy, Balfour, Soyke, and Levine have decided not to stand for re-election at the May council elections and will be leaving the JAC. Jason Lavender thanked them all for their work and support and particularly recognised the long standing and hugely valuable commitment to the High Weald shown by Cllr Tidy and Cllr Balfour.
- 13.3 The Next High Weald JAC Meeting will be held in November 2021. Date and location to be decided.

Agenda item: 7

**HIGH WEALD JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE – Management Board**  
Minutes – Wednesday 13 October 2021 at 10.30 am, at Acorn  
Tourism.



Samantha Nicholas  
Clerk to the High Weald AONB  
Joint Advisory Committee

**Present: Members:**

<b>Cllr Peter Bradbury</b>	<b>West Sussex County Council/Mid Sussex District Council</b>
<b>Cllr J Vine-Hall</b>	<b>Rother District Council</b>
<b>Cllr Mrs E Rigby-Green</b>	<b>East Sussex County Council</b>
<b>Cllr Mrs S Carey</b>	<b>Kent County Council</b>
<b>Cllr Mrs L Hall</b>	<b>Tunbridge Wells Borough Council</b>
<b>Mrs S Tidy</b>	<b>NFU Co-optee</b>
<b>Mrs J Davison</b>	<b>Community Co-optee</b>

**Also Present:**

<b>Jason Lavender</b>	<b>AONB Director (job share)</b>
<b>Gerry Sherwin</b>	<b>AONB Business Manager</b>

**Actions**

- Paragraph 19** It was agreed the AONB Unit will prepare a briefing note for Cllr Bradbury to send to Mims Davies MP on the need to ensure the government provides adequate core funds for the work of the AONB Unit
- Paragraph 17** The Clerk to inform the JAC that the election to the Management Board (for the period November 2021 to November 2023) will take place at the next JAC meeting
- Paragraph 20** It was agreed the AONB Unit would work with the Management Board to set out an ideal and indicative five-year budget to present at future JAC meetings. It was also agreed this would be discussed at the next Management Board meeting

**Apologies**

1. Apologies were received from, Cllr P Dixon, Sally Marsh, Jennifer Hollingum, and Claire Tester.

**Members' Interests**

2. Sylvia Tidy is on the board of Ashdown Forest Conservators.
3. Cllr Vine-Hall is a landowner and has an interest in FiPL.

## **Minutes of the Management Board meeting held on 10 March 2021**

4. The minutes of the last meeting, held on 10 March 2021, were agreed as a correct record.

### **Matters arising from the minutes**

5. The AONB Unit has held several events for members of the community (including Parish Councils) to introduce them to the range of possible projects community groups may want to consider for Sussex Lund support. The support community groups could give to the High Weald Dark Skies work has also been outlined at these events.

### **Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) - a new £2 million grant programme for the High Weald**

6. Gerry Sherwin gave a detailed presentation on the Farming in Protected Landscapes grant programme including a review of the potential operational and implementation risks associated with the programme. A report outlining FiPL was given to the Management Board before the meeting.
7. As part of the presentation, Members learnt that a local advisory panel has been formed and its membership reflects the scope and the objectives of the programme. There are nine panel members, most of whom are farmers/land managers. There are three places still available and the AONB Unit is still seeking representatives based in Kent with land management experience, and those with woodland management or community access experience.
8. The AONB Unit has received just over 100 enquires in the three months since the scheme was launched. Following a site visit and a discussion, those that meet the criteria are invited to make a full application.
9. To meet some (but not all) of the additional demands placed on the AONB Unit by FiPL, a proportion of the programme's funds can be used to recruit a programme manager, an administrator (both part-time), and a land management advisor. These posts are to be advertised in late October.

### **Officer Steering Group update**

10. On behalf of the OSG Chair, Jason Lavender gave an update on the recent OSG meeting. It was a 'virtual' meeting and the attendance from the 15 local authorities was good.
11. Dan Oakley (South Downs National Park Authority) gave a presentation on dark skies lighting policy and guidance. The OSG were keen to attend any future training events on lighting and dark skies. Presentations: <https://youtu.be/dlmRuvlHLdw>

12. Samantha Nicholas gave a presentation on the recently published CPRE dark sky satellite data and outlined the extent of changes in light pollution recorded between 2015 and 2019. The data will be made available to the OSG members.
13. Gerry Sherwin gave a presentation on the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.
14. The AONB Unit's Tree Establishment guidance was given to the OSG for comments.
15. In response to a question from Cllr Vine-Hall, Samantha confirmed that the AONB Unit is continuing to encourage and support community groups and Parish Councils collecting SQM light meter readings for Neighbourhood Development Plans and to support the AONB evidence base for the Management Plan.

### **Election of Members to Management Board – November 2021 to 2023**

16. Samantha Nicholas reminded the Members that the elections to sit on the Management Board for the period November 2021 to November 2023 will take place at the next JAC meeting. Members wishing to sit on the Management Board will need to secure a proposer and complete the election form before the JAC meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> November.
17. **Action: The Clerk to inform the JAC of the election to the Management Board (for the period November 2021 to November 2023) will take place at the next JAC meeting.**

### **Resources**

18. Gerry Sherwin reported on some recent staff and project developments:
  - Charlotte Gardner, recruited as part of the Meadows Maker trainee project and in partnership with Plantlife for six months, has had her contract extended to the end of the year.
  - Andrew Goswell, a recent MSc graduate, is supporting the AONB Unit one day a week on GIS.
  - Christine Meadows, Land Management Project Officer, will be reducing her work hours to one day per week owing to non-AONB Unit commitments.
  - Caroline Lingham has been appointed as the interim part-time Farming in Protected Landscapes Manager to assist with the FiPL grant programme. Caroline managed a LEADER programme for many years and farms in Kent.
  - Deborah Barker has been recruited on a part-time contract to develop an AONB events programme. Deborah also has a farming background and is Co-Director of Fibreshed.
  - The AONB Unit has secured funds from the Woodland Trust to support the recruitment of a part-time High Weald Deer Management Coordinator.
19. A discussion took place on the increasing demands placed on the AONB Unit's core resources. Members were interested in how this issue, and the inadequate

resources available to support the work of the core AONB team, could be brought to the attention of the government and the local authorities.

20. **Action: It was agreed the AONB Unit will prepare a briefing note for Cllr Bradbury to send to Mims Davies MP on the need to ensure the government provides adequate core funds for the work of the AONB Unit**
21. Jason Lavender informed the Members that Cllr Dickens had anticipated this issue earlier in the year by suggesting the AONB Unit prepare a five-year indicative budget to identify a desirable level of reserves, the time this would take to be reached, and the likely deficit at that time. This would allow the JAC to take an informed approach on what increases in contributions would be required to rectify that deficit.
22. **Action: It was agreed the AONB Unit would work with the Management Board to set out an ideal and indicative five-year budget to present at future JAC meetings. It was also agreed this would be discussed at the next Management Board meeting.**

#### **Any Other Business**

23. Cllr Bradbury encouraged Members to join Jason Lavender for a walk and talk to learn more about the High Weald. He also thanked the AONB Unit for their hard work during the Covid restrictions.

Agenda item: 8

## High Weald Officer Steering Group



Notes of a meeting of the High Weald Officer Steering Group held on Wednesday 15 September 2021, at 10.00 am on Microsoft Teams

Samantha Nicholas  
Clerk to the High Weald AONB  
Joint Advisory Committee

### PRESENT:

Diane Russell,	Rother DC (Vice-Chairman)
Claire Marchant	Ashford BC
Sophie Gilbert	Crawley BC
Elizabeth Brigden	Crawley BC
Catherine Denning-Johnson	Hastings BC
Helen Shulver	Kent CC
Jeff Pryah	Rother DC
Helen French,	Sevenoaks DC
Louise Wesson,	Tandridge DC
Jenny Knowles	Tonbridge & Malling BC
Nichola Watters	Tunbridge Wells BC
Natalie Bumpus,	Wealden DC

### High Weald Unit:

Samantha Nicholas,	Clerk to the JAC
Jason Lavender,	Co-Director (Job Share)
Gerry Sherwin	Business Manager

### Guest presenter:

Dan Oakley	South Downs NP Dark Skies Ranger
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### Summary of Actions:

<u>Pt</u>	<u>Information</u>	<u>To be actioned by</u>
2.6	The Dark Skies presentation link will be circulated to the Group for onward circulation within their local authorities.	Sam Nicholas
3.2	The Unit will update the Tree Establishment guide (once responses received) and circulate a draft version for interim use (until the Unit has resources to produce the final version).	Samantha Nicholas
4.2	The CPRE satellite datafiles will be distributed to the local authorities when available.	Samantha Nicholas

**8.1 Deadline for responses to the Tree Establishment draft from Las is Friday 5 November 2021. Officers**

**1. Apologies**

- 1.1. Jennifer Hollingum, David Scully, Mark Daly, David Greenwood, Vivienne Riddle, Virginia Pullan, Claire Tester, Sally Marsh.
- 1.2. Jason Lavender chaired the meeting as Diane Russel, Vice-Chair was unable to join the Group from the beginning. It was noted that Richard Mosinghui Crawley BC and Carly Petit Ashford BC have left their organisations and Jason welcomed to the Group Sophie Gilbert, Crawley BC and Claire Marchant Ashford BC.

**2. Presentation from Dan Oakley – Dark Skies**

- 2.1. Dan Oakley, Dark Skies Ranger from the South Downs National Park gave a talk to the Group covering:
  - The background to how the South Downs NP achieved its Dark Skies Reserve status;
  - How the latest technical advice notes support the reduction of light pollution with regard to planning applications.
  - The latest guidance 'Towards a Dark Sky Standard', a local guide to protect dark skies from local need to landscape impact. This contains dark sky lighting principles, basic lighting design flow charts, and lighting purchasing requirements.
- 2.2. Dan informed the Group that an online website is being developed showing IDA approved domestic lighting products, with a choice of suppliers.
- 2.3. There was a concern with a few over cautious developers that the Dark Skies Guidance will not meet NHBC standards. Dan Oakley agreed that this is an area that could be improved upon as the British standards do not reference dark skies at present. He explained that this is why the standards have been introduced to work towards these changes. **The Towards a Dark Sky can be found at:** [Towards-A-Dark-Sky-Standard-V1.1.pdf \(southdowns.gov.uk\)](https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/towards-a-dark-sky-standard-v1.1.pdf)
- 2.4. In the chat function Claire Marchant directed the Group to the Ashford BC Dark Skies Policy Guidance. <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/planning-and-development/planning-policy/adopted-development-plan-documents/other-planning-guidance/dark-skies-spd/>
- 2.5. Kent CC, Rother DC and Wealden DC agreed that further training within the organisations would be useful on lighting policies. It was suggested that with the support of Dan Oakley, a Dark Sky training roadshow for the individual local authorities could be set up.



2.6. **Action: It was agreed that the Dark Skies presentation link would be circulated to the Group for onward circulation within their local authorities.**

### **3. Minutes of the meeting of 10 February 2021**

3.1 The Minutes of 10 February 2021 were agreed to be an accurate account of the meeting. The following on-going actions were reviewed:

- 4.8, The Dark Skies sub-group will be delayed until the end of the year due to the Turnden Inquiry. The sub-group will review the CPRE light emission data and report and the 'Towards a Dark Sky Standard' and how it might be potentially adapted to meet High Weald AONB requirements.
- 10.5, The draft Tree Establishment guidance was circulated to the Group prior to the meeting.

### **4. Dark Skies and CPRE data**

4.1 Samantha Nicholas informed the Group that in January 2021 CPRE Sussex commissioned LUC to undertake a study examining the change in light emission in Sussex between 2012 and 2019. The study was later widened to include Kent and Hampshire. The study was funded by CPRE, South Downs National Park and the High Weald AONB. This highlighted that:

- The study looked at the year-on-year change in light emission from 2012 - 2019.
- The results indicated that the overall pattern is fairly consistent over the eight years, with between 62% and 66% of the area falling within the darkest category, and less than 1% falling within the brightest
- As part of this study, a longer-term comparison was also undertaken. This was both to show the general trend over the long term between 2015-2019.
- The results suggest that urban areas are getting slightly darker over time, although generally not enough to move out of the brightest category.
- Rural areas are much more sensitive to small changes in light emission, and this is also shown in the analysis. In these areas it only takes a slight increase in emission for them to appear significantly brighter, and many rural and peri-urban areas have moved into brighter categories
- **Kent and Hampshire story maps:**  
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/1f72ebb75695454691c094c0fd8dae13>

4.2 **Action: the CPRE satellite datafiles will be distributed to the local authorities.**

### **5. Farming in Protected Landscapes**

5.1 Gerry Sherwin presented to the Group an introduction to Farming in Protected Landscapes Grant programme. This covered:

- This is a national scheme for all protected landscapes which is Defra funded but managed by the AONBs and NPs.

- It is part of the Government's agricultural transition and there are several other programmes running at the same time.
- It recognises the Glover review for protected landscapes and that farmers in protected landscapes require specific support.
- The grant scheme runs from July 2021 to March 2024. The AONB has been allocated £783,000 to be spent by March 2022.
- The AONB has been allocated this amount because of the formula that considers the size of the protected area. The High Weald is one of the largest in the country. It is also calculated on the number of landholdings and within the AONB the landholdings are much smaller than the national average.
- The Unit was notified of the programme's details a week before launch, so the current team is managing the project. The Unit are in the process of recruiting an administrator and project manager. In the interim, Caroline Lingham has been appointed to support the start-up of the programme. Caroline has experience in managing Leader programmes and has a farming background.
- The programme supports projects that recover nature; tackle climate change; provide opportunities for people to discover the landscape; support sustainable farm businesses, and has a wider remit than the current Sussex Lund grants programme that the Unit currently manages.
- Only Farmers and land managers are eligible for this scheme. Community Green space projects would be better placed applying to Sussex Lund.
- A local advisory panel is being set up with representation from a broad range of interests which will be farmer led.
- Within the first six week period the Unit has received 81 enquiries.
- The High Weald website has examples of the type of projects that can be submitted at [Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme \(highweald.org\)](https://www.highweald.org).

5.2 Gerry Sherwin informed the Group that FiPL may generate an increase in specific planning applications:

- Glamping sites may apply but a strong application will need to show how other programme outcomes are met e.g. habitat extensive enhancement around the site.
- The current Countryside Stewardship scheme doesn't provide enough financial incentive for creation of ponds, however under this scheme the AONB are able to make a case for more public investment.

## **6 Update on local authority activities that impact on AONB**

6.1 Wealden DC has engaged LUC to look at their landscape character assessment and sensitive landscape guidance and will be seeking advice from the Unit in November.

6.2 The group were informed that Jennifer Hollingum is in the process of setting up a sub-group meeting on major development. Jennifer will update the Group at the

next meeting in February. However, if any other officers are interested in joining, please liaise directly with Jennifer.

## **7 Item for the Management Board to be held on 13 October 2021**

- Major Development policy guidance update
- Dark Skies CPRE data

## **8 AOB**

8.1. Diane Russell asked in relation to the draft Tree Establishment Guidance when feedback is required by. It was also suggested an introduction might be inserted explaining the importance of Right Place/Right Tree and Right Plan and a link to the Responsible Planting Guidance when published. Gerry confirmed that the Unit would welcome comments back on this by early November 2021. Gerry explained that the guidance had been produced in a certain style as the audience it was aimed at often struggles with time to read lengthy guidance. This guide will also sit alongside the Responsible Planting Guide which has been previously circulated to the Group in a draft format.

**8.1 Action: Responses to the Tree Establishment draft from local authorities should be submitted 5 November 2021.**

## **9 Date for next Meeting**

- 9.1 This will be held in February 2021, date to be decided
- 9.2 The JAC Meeting will be held on 24 November 2021.

**Agenda Item: 9**

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

**Date:** 24 November 2021

**Title of Report:** Draft Revenue Budget 2022/23

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

**Purpose:** To consider the draft Revenue Budget 2022/23 and agree it as a basis for consultation with contributing bodies

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to approve:

1. the draft budget for 2022/23; and
  2. the commencement of budget consultation with the local authorities and Defra.
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**1. FINANCIAL APPRAISAL**

- 1.1. A draft budget for 2022/23 is attached in Appendix B. It is recommended that the draft budget be approved as a basis for consultation with contributing bodies/authorities.
- 1.2. A balanced core budget has been drafted for 2022/23. This has been achieved through a planned drawdown of £11,100 from the JAC reserves.
- 1.3. There are a number of key financial issues and risks which are detailed in this report.
- 1.4. Following consultation with contributing bodies/authorities, a final budget for 2022/23 will be presented to the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) for approval at its March 2021 meeting.

**2. CONTEXT**

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

**Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000**

- 2.2. The JAC carries out statutory duties on behalf of local authorities under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. These statutory duties are set out in Appendix A of the report. Despite reductions in public spending, and the subsequent savings that have to be made, it is important that the core funding of the JAC

remains sufficient to deliver statutory duties in a co-ordinated way that offers excellent value and maximises opportunities for efficiency.

- 2.3. It should be noted that local authority contributions in the region of £114,800 in 2022/23 are likely to generate additional funds for core activities and projects of at least £1,334,500.

Defra Core Funding	£232,500
Other Core Income	£ 9,800
Defra Projects Funding	£ 45,000
Defra FiPL Funding	£709,700
Non-Defra Projects Funding	<u>£337,700</u>
Total External Funding	£1,334,700
Local Authority Funding	£ 83,700
Local Authority Projects	<u>£ 31,100</u>
Total Local Authorities	£114,800

#### **The High Weald Unit's Work Plan 2022/23**

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

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

- 2.5. The budget has been developed within the context of the Service Level Agreement 2019-2024 which has been signed by each local authority and High Weald JAC's host authority, East Sussex County Council.

#### **Defra Contribution**

- 2.6. The budget has been developed within the context of the 25-Year Environment Plan and the Glover Review recommendations. Defra's contribution to AONB Partnerships for 2022/23 has yet to be advised but the interim advice is that Defra's contribution to the High Weald AONB JAC's budget in 2022/23 will be maintained at 2020/21 levels. It has been assumed that the Defra contribution will be the same as 2021/22 at £277,500.

#### **High Weald JAC Budget 2021/22**

- 2.7. The forecast outturn for 2021/22 is a surplus budget resulting from savings on staff costs. This has arisen from the allocation of core staff time to the operation of the Farming in Protected Landscapes budget, savings on office rental costs (the new lease is on hold), and some saving on partnership running costs. The forecast reserve at 31 March 2022 is £216,000.

### **3. FINANCIAL ISSUES**

- 3.1. The draft budget is presented to the JAC for consideration. Appendix B shows the Core Budget and Appendix C shows an indicative Project Budget. A deficit of £11,100 for 2022/23 is presented and this will be balanced with a planned draw from reserves.
- 3.2. The draft budget assumes an allocation of the Defra contribution between core and projects of 83.78% to core and 16.22% to projects. The draft budget assumes that local authorities commit to maintain their contributions at the 2021/22 level.
- 3.3. If the Defra grant is at a different level to the assumed figure, or the partner authorities contributions are not sustained at the level then the draw on reserves will need to be adjusted accordingly in order to maintain a balanced position.
- 3.4. The AONB Partnership's external funding levels fluctuate. The deficit may be addressed by unplanned savings and contributions to the core budget arising from the management of new projects (as in 2021/22).
- 3.5. Whilst the use of reserves is a legitimate financial decision, this will only be sustainable for a limited period without further remedial action being required.
- 3.6. There may be a need for partners to increase their contributions (there has been no inflationary increase for over 10 years) to continue supporting the operation at the desired level.

#### Core Budget – Expenditure

##### **Summary**

- 3.7. Inflation has been applied at rate of 2% for staff and 0% for all other costs. It should be noted however the CPI for 2022/23 having risen from 1.89% to 3.88% and RPI from 2.03% to 4.82% and this may have an impact on some costs.
- 3.8. The budget is a deficit budget.

##### **Staff Costs**

- 3.9. The draft budget allows for a small core team of 5 FTE: Director (1FTE); Business Manager (0.8FTE); Strategic Planner (0.8FTE); Landscape Advisor (0.6FTE); Land Management Project Officer (0.4FTE), Communications Officer (0.6FTE), Team Support Officer (0.8FTE); and an allowance for finance support.
- 3.10. Staff costs are subject to inflation of 2%, amounting to a £3,900 increase and incremental increases of £4,500, in part arising from vacant posts being filled.
- 3.11. The budget assumes contributions to the East Sussex Pension Fund of 17.60% in 2022/23.

### **Accommodation/Office Equipment**

- 3.12. The budget covers the cost of office rent and services, office running costs, office supplies and software licences.
- 3.13. The budget assumes that the rising costs of any goods and services can be accommodated through savings arising from a transfer to a new web host and service provider.

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

- 3.14. Partnership running costs includes the NAAONB membership fee and the costs associated with JAC meetings, representing the partnership at regional and national forums, producing the annual review and PR costs.
- 3.15. The reduced budget assumes there will be less communication activity in 2022/23 with savings on PR materials.
- 3.16. Support service costs is a standstill budget that includes ESCC IT, personnel and financial support and the annual lump sum contribution of £4,400 into the ESCC pension scheme. Costs assume the JAC's clerk service will continue to be provided by the High Weald JAC's Team Support Officer.

### **Core Budget – Income**

#### **Summary**

- 3.17. The draft budget shows contributions from local authorities at the same level as 2021/22. The proportion of the Defra contribution allocated to the core budget has been maintained to balance the core budget.

#### **Defra**

- 3.18. The 2022/23 core contribution is assumed in this report to be £232,500 which is the same as it was for 2020/21 and 2021/22.

#### **Local Authority Contributions**

- 3.19. The draft budget assumes no inflationary increase to the core contributions of local authorities and assumes that they will commit to maintain contributions at the 2021/22 level.

#### **Other Contributions**

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

## Core Budget - Reserves

- 3.21. The JAC reserves at 31 March 2023 are estimated to be £204,900, a reduction of £11,100 from 31 March 2022. The JAC continues to consider ways of reducing costs or increasing income. Office relocation, reduced working hours and redundancies remain options for reducing costs. Allocating a greater % of the Defra contribution towards core services and focusing on contracts/projects that contribute towards management and administration costs remain options for increasing income.

## Self-Funding Projects

- 3.22. The indicative Self-funding projects budget is attached at Appendix C. The Partnership's project budget is presented as 5 programmes; Community Engagement (including High Weald Heroes); Management Plan Research and Evidence; Landscape Enhancement; Project Development and Farming in Protected Landscapes.
- 3.23. The project budget allows for an increase in project staff from 3.4FTE to 5.2FTE: Land Management Project Officers (3.2FTE), Deer Co-ordinator (0.2FTE), Project Manager (0.6FTE), Senior Administrator (0.6FTE) and an Education Officer (0.6FTE).
- 3.24. Local authority contributions are primarily those made in prior years through the Project Enabling Fund or to specific projects, for example High Weald Heroes.
- 3.25. The budget reflects the Committee's developing role in managing grant programmes on behalf of others and includes indicative expenditure under the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme.
- 3.26. The majority of grant awards are paid retrospectively on project completion. The self-funding projects budget and outturn is therefore only indicative as grantees project completion dates can be unpredictable.
- 3.27. The Defra grant contribution allocated to Partnership Projects is £45,000.

## **4. FINANCIAL ISSUES 2023/24 AND BEYOND**

- 4.1. Between 2011 and 2015 the annual Defra contribution was reduced by £71,020. Between 2016 and 2019 the contribution included an inflationary increase and rose by £13,647. The contribution in 2020/21 was at the same level as 2019/20. As yet there is no formal advice on likely contributions beyond April 2022.
- 4.2. A balanced position has been achieved for 2022/23 by drawing down £11,100 from reserves, assuming local authorities maintain their core contribution at the 2021/22 level. This figure will be adjusted accordingly when there is more certainty around the income assumptions outlined in this report.
- 4.3. The Defra contribution is conditional on match funding equivalent to 25% of the core funding in cash terms being secured from local authorities, such that Defra funding



does not exceed 75% of the total Defra and local authority contribution. Maintaining match funding levels is therefore essential.

- 4.4. The JAC continues to consider ways of reducing costs or further increasing other income. Allocating a greater % of the Defra contribution to core costs and office relocation remain options for balancing the budget.
- 4.5. The JAC needs to retain a minimum reserve of £95,000 to meet redundancy costs.

## **5. RISKS**

- 5.1. The risks and financial implication that the JAC will wish to note are that the core budget for 2022/23 assumes that:
  - Defra continues to protect National Park and AONB funding, and maintains its contributions to the High Weald JAC at at least 2021/22 levels.
  - Local authorities maintain their core contributions at the same level as 2021/22 to provide the cash match required to meet Defra requirements.
  - Employer's pension costs for 2022/23 will be 17.60%.
  - Salary inflation for 2022/23 is estimated at 2%.
  - Woodland Enterprises Ltd do not require the High Weald JAC to contribute to any additional one-off building maintenance costs.
  - That business rates will not be reintroduced.

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

- 6.1. The JAC should note that the draft budget contains a number of budget assumptions which may be affected by the financial environment created by Brexit and Covid-19.
- 6.2. The Management Board continues to consider savings options, and alternative contribution sources, so that a balanced budget can continue to be achieved.
- 6.3. The draft budget for self-financing projects assumes operation of five programmes in 2022/23.
- 6.4. Support for the draft budget will provide the JAC with the capacity to deliver most of its core functions in 2022/23.



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

## Appendix A

### Statutory purpose of the High Weald AONB

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

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

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

**HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**SELF FUNDING PROJECTS OUTTURN for 2020/21, BUDGET, FORECAST for 2021/22 & INDICATIVE BUDGET 2022/23**

Appendix C

	Budget 2021/22			Forecast 2021/22			Indicative Budget 2022/23		
	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000
<b>1 Community Outreach</b>									
JAC expenditure	9.7			0.0			9.4		
Defra		(8.6)			0.0			(8.5)	
Local authorities		(0.4)			0.0			0.0	
Other		(0.7)			0.0			(0.9)	
<b>Total Community Outreach</b>			<b>0.0</b>			<b>0.0</b>			<b>0.0</b>
<b>High Weald Heroes</b>									
JAC expenditure	26.6			26.5			26.7		
Defra		(13.3)			(13.3)			(13.3)	
Local authorities		(13.3)			(5.3)			(13.3)	
Other		0.0			(8.0)			0.0	
<b>Total High Weald Heroes</b>			<b>0.0</b>		<b>(0.0)</b>				<b>0.0</b>
<b>2 Management Plan Evidence and Guidance</b>									
JAC expenditure	12.0			11.2			12.0		
Defra		(12.0)			(11.2)			(12.0)	
Other		0.0			0.0			0.0	
<b>Total Management Plan Evidence and Guidance</b>			<b>0.0</b>		<b>0.0</b>			<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
<b>3 Landscape Enhancement</b>									
JAC expenditure	431.8			436.1			328.7		
Defra		(11.1)			(20.5)			(11.1)	
Defra (ELMS advocacy)		0.0			0.0			0.0	
Environment Agency		(34.0)			(32.5)			(32.5)	
Water Catchment Partnership (KWT)		(4.0)			0.0			0.0	
Local authorities		(13.1)			(11.8)			(11.8)	
Other		(90.1)			(67.9)			(36.3)	
Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund		(30.8)			(7.5)			0.0	
National Grid		(93.7)			(103.6)			(81.9)	
Sussex Lund (Charities Aid Foundation)		(155.0)			(148.0)			(155.0)	
<b>Total Landscape Enhancement</b>			<b>0.0</b>		<b>44.3</b>				<b>0.0</b>
<b>5 Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme</b>									
JAC expenditure	0.0			300.0			709.7		
Defra		0.0			(300.0)			(709.7)	
<b>Total Project Development</b>			<b>0.0</b>		<b>(0.0)</b>				<b>(0.0)</b>
<b>6 Project Development</b>									
JAC expenditure	6.0			0.0			6.0		
Defra		0.0			0.0			0.0	
Other		0.0			0.0			0.0	
Local authorities		(6.0)			0.0			(6.0)	
<b>Total Project Development</b>			<b>0.0</b>		<b>0.0</b>				<b>0.0</b>
JAC expenditure (to Appendix B)	486.1			773.8			1,092.5		
Expenditure funded by Defra (to Appendix B)		(45.0)			(345.0)			(754.7)	
Expenditure funded by LAs (to Appendix B)		(32.8)			(17.0)			(31.1)	
Expenditure funded by Other (to Appendix B)		(408.3)			(367.5)			(306.6)	
<b>TOTAL JAC expenditure/income</b>	<b>486.1</b>	<b>(486.1)</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>773.8</b>	<b>(729.5)</b>	<b>44.3</b>	<b>1,092.5</b>	<b>(1,092.5)</b>	<b>0.0</b>

2020/21	Outturn £'000	Core Budget	2021/22		2022/23					2023/24
			Budget £'000	Forecast £'000	Original Budget £'000	Inflation £'000	Budget Pressures £'000	Other £'000	Budget £'000	Original Budget £'000
		<b>Expenditure</b>								
242.7		Staff costs	255.9	251.0	255.9	3.9	0.0	4.5	264.3	269.6
28.7		Accommodation/office equipment	34.3	34.3	34.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	34.3	35.0
4.0		Partnership running costs	8.7	5.2	8.7	0.0	0.0	(0.8)	6.8	6.9
31.7		Support services	31.7	31.7	31.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	31.7	31.7
<b>307.1</b>		<b>Total Core Expenditure</b>	<b>330.6</b>	<b>322.2</b>	<b>330.6</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>337.1</b>	<b>343.2</b>
		<b>Income</b>								
(232.5)		Defra	(232.5)	(232.5)	(232.5)	0.0	0.0	0.0	(232.5)	(232.5)
(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)
(20.5)		Other income	(9.8)	(10.8)	(9.8)	0.0	0.0	0.0	(9.8)	(9.8)
<b>(336.7)</b>		<b>Total Core Income</b>	<b>(326.0)</b>	<b>(327.0)</b>	<b>(326.0)</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>(326.0)</b>	<b>(326.0)</b>
29.7		Surplus/(deficit) transfer to/(from) reserves	(4.6)	4.8	(4.6)	(3.9)	0.0	(3.7)	(11.1)	(17.2)
<b>0.0</b>		<b>Net Core Budget</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
		<b>Self Funding Projects</b>								
		See Appendix C for detail								
347.9		JAC expenditure on self-funded projects	486.1	0.0	486.1				486.1	486.1
(50.2)		Defra contribution to self-funded projects	(45.0)	0.0	(45.0)				(45.0)	(45.0)
(2.8)		Local authorities contributions	(32.8)	0.0	(32.8)				(32.8)	(32.8)
(294.9)		Other contributions to self-funded projects	(408.3)	0.0	(408.3)				(408.3)	(408.3)
<b>(0.0)</b>		<b>Net Self-Funded Project Budget</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
		<b>Total High Weald JAC</b>								
654.9		Total core and project expenditure	816.7	322.2	816.7	3.9	0.0	3.7	823.2	829.3
(654.9)		Total core and project income	(816.7)	(322.2)	(816.7)	(3.9)	0.0	(3.7)	(823.2)	(829.3)
<b>(0.0)</b>		<b>Total High Weald JAC Budget</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Defra Funding	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000
Defra funding on core budget	(232.5)	(232.5)
Defra funding on projects budget	(45.0)	(45.0)
<b>Total Defra Funding</b>	<b>(277.5)</b>	<b>(277.5)</b>

Reserves	£000
Reserves at 1 April 2020	181.5
Transfer to/(from) reserves 2020/21	29.7
Reserves at 1st April 2021	211.2
Transfer to/(from)reserves 2021/22	4.8
Reserves at 31 March 2022	216.0
Transfer to/(from) reserves 2022/23	(11.1)
Reserves at 31 March 2023	204.9

Agenda Item: 10

**Report to:** High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

**Date:** 24 November 2021

**Title:** Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme

**By:** AONB Business Manager

**Purpose:** To consider local delivery of the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme.

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to:**

1. Welcome the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and the allocation of £2,009,000 to the High Weald AONB.
  2. Note the risks associated with the programme and their proposed management.
- 

### **1. Background information**

- 1.1 In the Agricultural Transition Plan (ATP) the Government announced a new Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (FIPL) for AONBs and National Parks.
- 1.2 The new programme recognises that protected landscapes are unique and special, and that there are both opportunities and challenges for land managers and farmers based within them.
- 1.3 Outline information on the programme was presented to the JAC at its meeting in March 2021. It was agreed that the AONB Partnership would operate the programme, with scrutiny of the risks by the Management Board.
- 1.4 In late May/mid-June further details on the programme were provided by Defra to protected landscape teams. The Programme was launched by Defra on 23 June.
- 1.5 Since June the AONB team have liaised with other protected landscape staff and key officers within East Sussex County Council to set up the programme, with some training from Defra.

## 2. Policy framework

- 2.1 The national policy framework for the programme was presented to the JAC meeting in March.
- 2.2 Defra's programme guidance makes it clear that projects should deliver AONB management plan objectives as well as national goals.

## 3. Key details

- 3.1. The Farming in Protected Landscape Programme started on 24 June April 2021 and will last until 31 March 2024.
- 3.2. Defra has allocated £2,009,018 to the High Weald programme. The allocation is based on a formula that considers the size of farming area, number of farm holdings, the size of surrounding populations, and local deprivation.
- 3.3. The programme will fund projects that:
  - support nature recovery
  - mitigate the impacts of climate change
  - provide opportunities for people to discover, enjoy and understand the landscape and its cultural heritage
  - support nature-friendly, sustainable farm businesses.
- 3.4. A sum of £94,271 per annum is available for management of the programme (£60,271 on programme advice, £34,000 on administration).
- 3.5. The grant spend forecast is as follows.

Year	£
July 21 – 31 March 22	200,000
1 April 22 to 31 March 23	615,476
1 April 23 to 31 March 24	905,000
	1,726,205

- 3.6. All farmers and land managers can apply, as well as organisations collaborating with one or more farmers/land managers.
- 3.7. There is no minimum grant and a maximum grant of £250,000.
- 3.8. Applications less than £5,000 are determined by a senior officer and those over £5,000 by a Local Assessment Panel.

#### **4. Programme delivery**

- 4.1 Since receiving the programme details from Defra a week before the programme's launch the High Weald AONB team has worked hard to set up and run the programme with existing resources.
- 4.2 A farmer-led Local Assessment Panel has been established according to Defra guidelines. Panel membership and terms of reference are attached as appendix 1. The Panel has met twice and three more meetings are planned before 31 March 2022.
- 4.3 A system for managing enquiries and processing, assessing and awarding grant applications has been established.
- 4.4 A contractor is providing interim project management support and a Programme Manager (0.6FTE), Programme Administrator (0.6FTE) and a Project Officer (1FTE) are being recruited.
- 4.5 There have been 97 enquiries so far and eight grant awards. It is hard to forecast the future interest in the Programme and the likely number and scale of the applications.

#### **5. Risks**

- 5.1 The AONB Partnership has extensive experience of grant management. The AONB Partnership is therefore skilled in identifying and managing the risks associated with grant schemes.
- 5.2 A risk log is attached as Appendix B. It highlights the current risks and sets out proposals for their management.
- 5.3 The highest risk is that the funds available will be unspent. Unspent funds in year 1 will not be carried forward to years two and three.
- 5.4 Risks arising from the uncertain context in which land managers and farmers are operating cannot be mitigated.
- 5.5 There is also a high risk that the time-limited posts do not attract the calibre of candidate required. The AONB team are unable to manage the programme long term with existing staff.
- 5.6 Setting up and delivering the programme has affected the team's other work, for example an opportunity to facilitate the Upper Rother and Dudwell Farm Cluster for another year has not been pursued.
- 5.7 The impact on the core team's other work activity will be ongoing. Although the programme covers the cost of project staff, core staff will still be involved in overall management, PR and grant assessments, drawing the Partnership's limited resources away from other important activities.

- 5.8 This time limited programme therefore does not address the Glover Review recommendation that “AONBs should be strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources”.

## **6. Legal implications**

- 6.1 The High Weald AONB team are working with Defra and other protected landscapes to ensure that due diligence is taken in the management of the grant scheme and that the Defra grant conditions and criteria are met.

## **7. Conclusions and reasons for recommendations**

- 7.1 The FIPL scheme is a positive opportunity for West Sussex, East Sussex, Surrey, and Kent. It should assist with social, economic, and environmental recovery and help deliver the objectives of many local authority strategies and plans, including new climate change strategies.
- 7.2 The FIPL scheme is an early part of substantial changes to farm support in England, which will have a significant impact on farmers and land managers in the High Weald and the landscape.
- 7.3 The delivery of a successful programme in the High Weald could demonstrate how a locally-led support scheme could add value to national support schemes.
- 7.4 The AONB Partnership’s small team is experienced in evolving to changing policy and funding contexts and once new staff are recruited is equipped to manage the programme.
- 7.5 Risk management is in place to enable successful delivery of the programme.

### **Contact details**

Gerry Sherwin, AONB Business Manager [g.sherwin@highweald.org](mailto:g.sherwin@highweald.org)



## High Weald Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme

### Local Assessment Panel



### Panel members – September 2021

Faustina Bayo, Action in Rural Sussex

Dan Burdett, Farmer

Don Cranfield, ex-WARR Leader Partnership

Jo Hughes, Farmer

Jason Lavender, AONB Co-Director, and Bellhurst Trust

John Marland, Farmer

Laura Newland, Natural England

Iain Parkinson, Living Collections and Conservation Manager, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew

Sylvia Tidy, Farmer, and High Weald AONB Partnership (farmer representative)

### Terms of Reference – September 2021

#### Purpose of the Panel

To consider and decide on applications for projects (with a total fund request of over £5,000) submitted to the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, according to the agreed criteria for the programme as published in the information for applicants and in accordance with the scoring system provided. The Protected Landscape Partnership is responsible for appointing the panel.

#### Role of Local Assessment Panel (LAP)

The panel shall:

- Refer all enquiries for the Farming in Protected Landscapes grant to the Protected Landscapes FiPL officer(s) without prejudicing their decision making
- Receive a report and recommendation on all valid applications from the FiPL officer(s) and should consider all applications along with the FiPL officer report and recommendations
- Assess applications, giving regard to the FiPL National Framework and other guiding documents, and marking applications to achieve the desired outcomes of the FiPL programme
- Assess applications using the scoring system provided
- Award, partially award, request more information or refuse applications
- Give precise reasons for decisions - these reasons should refer to the guidance documents and scheme criteria.
- Treat decisions as confidential until notice has been issued by the Protected Landscape to the applicant.

- Review and make recommendations for alterations the Panel's Terms of Reference; these recommendations will be considered by the Chief Officer or their nominee and the Chair of the panel
- Champion the FiPL programme with farmers, land managers and other relevant organisations
- Have regard to the [Nolan Principles](#) in all its affairs.

### **Membership of the LAP**

- The Panel will be appointed rather than subject to recruitment processes.
- The Panel will be made up of a good geographical and thematic spread across the PL.
- The Panel will have a mind to equality and diversity. The panel should as far as practical, represent the diversity of the people who live, work and spend time in the High Weald.
- Interests across both the environment and access and engagement related causes will be represented on the panel.
- Panel members will be selected for their excellent specialist knowledge in their field, good knowledge of the local area and the respect and support of their peers.
- The panels will have at least 5 panel members, ideally 9-12.)
- The quorum of the panel should be 50% (at least 3) + 1 of the agreed panel size.
- The panel must consist of representatives of:
  - the High Weald AONB Landscape Team
  - Natural England
  - the farming and land management community (several members).
- 'One off' advice from the RPA and further representatives from the Defra network (Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, and Historic England) e will be sought when necessary as part of the assessment process and they will be invited to attend panel meetings if appropriate.
- The panel will include representatives from organisations with a focus on nature recovery, rural development, public access/engagement and existing agri-environment support and provision.
- The panel will keep its membership under review and may, at the discretion of the Chair and the Director of the High Weald Partnership or their nominee, invite additional members or remove members.
- The Panel will appoint a chair from among its membership at the first meeting.
- The secretariat will be provided by the Protected Landscape.
- The Panel membership will be available to the public, if requested.

### **Organisation of LAP meetings**

- The Panel will meet on a regular basis to consider applications. This may be every 6-8 weeks. The schedule of meetings will be determined by the secretariat. Additional meetings may be called at a minimum of 5 working days' notice.
- Meetings should be considered quorate where at least 50% +1 of the membership is present.
- All members of the panel will have equal voting powers and decisions will be taken by a majority of those present. In the event of no clear conclusion the Chair should have a second and casting vote.

- Where it is considered (by officer or panel member) that a member has a conflict of interest in matter under discussion, that member will be excluded from that part of the meeting (they will have to leave the meeting or disconnect from a video link), they will have no vote on such applications and the conflict of interest noted in the minutes. Panel members will have a responsibility to declare an interest in any application under discussion.
- All applications and matters discussed at grants panel meetings will be treated in the strictest confidence, though it should also be noted that all communication in relation to the fund is on the public record and subject to Freedom of Information legislation.

## **Administration**

- All meetings will be scheduled where possible to suit most members, meetings can be called at a minimum of 5 working days' notice.
- The agenda, supporting papers and report will be issued at least one (1) week before the date of a meeting, by email.
- Panels can choose to meet virtually and can decide by correspondence by local agreement.
- All administration of the panel including minute taking will be the responsibility of the High Weald AONB team. This includes reasons for decisions made at the meeting.
- Decisions of the panel including the reasons for those decisions should be issued in writing to applicants within 2 weeks of the date at which it was agreed.
- Minutes of the panel meeting should be circulated to members within two (2) weeks of a meeting. They shall include:
  - Attendance
  - Matters arising from previous meetings (e.g. progress on deferred applications)
  - A decision record for each application
  - Financial information (committed and spent funds)
- Farmer and land manager representatives to the panel and those from organisations with charitable status can be reimbursed expenses for preparation for and attendance at panel meetings at the discretion of the secretariat. This spending will come out of programme's admin budget.

## **Conflicts of interest**

All members of the Local Assessment Panels will be required to adhere to the Nolan Principles of conduct in public office<sup>1</sup>. Panel members will be expected to declare any pecuniary interest or other conflict of interest in projects being assessed. Where there is such a conflict of interest, the panel member must withdraw from the meeting while the rest of the panel deliberate on those matters.

Panel members may apply to the fund but, will not be involved in assessing their own applications nor may they lobby other panel members for support. Where it is considered (by officer or panel member) that a member has a potentially compromising interest in a matter under discussion, that member should be excluded from that part of the meeting, must abstain from voting on the

application, and the conflict of interest noted in the minutes. This includes the FiPL officer or members of the Protected Landscape if there is an application from the Protected Landscape to the programme.

## **Appeals**

Appeals on decisions made on applications will be made to the High Weald AONB Partnership (East Sussex County Council)

Applicants can only query a funding decision if they think that the Local Assessment Panel has:

- made a mistake with the application
- made a processing error
- got the law wrong.

Applicants must set out to the High Weald AONB Partnership the reason for their appeal under one (or more) of these 3 criteria. Information on how to appeal should be included in the written decision from the panel as a matter of course.

Applicants will be provided with the following advice for making an appeal:

- An appeal must be made within 10 working days of receiving your application decision
- The PL will aim to communicate with you about your appeal within 15 working days from when you submitted your appeal.

Appeals will be dealt with locally in the first instance by the High Weald AONB Partnership. Where necessary the AONB Partnerships and its host authority will escalate the appeal to Defra for advice and further management of the appeal.

## **Complaints**

Complaints (separate to appeals on applications) should be directed to the High Weald AONB Partnership. The AONB Partnership will follow the complaints procedures of its host authority, East Sussex County Council.

Applicants should be provided with the following advice for making a complaint:

- The High Weald AONB Partnership will aim to communicate with you about your complaint within 15 working days from when you submitted your complaint, although if the matter is complex this may need to be extended, within a reasonable period, after explaining why.

The High Weald AONB Partnership will address the complaint in the first instance. Should an applicant think their complaint is not being dealt with adequately, the High Weald AONB Partnership and its host authority may refer the complaint to Defra for further investigation.

Like other Protected landscape bodies, the High Weald has a formal complaint and compliment procedure in place and falls under the jurisdiction of the independent Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman which is the final stage for complaints about the local authorities (i.e. protected landscapes).

## **Reviews**

Defra and the LAP will undertake an annual review of these expectations.

# Farming in Protected Landscapes Risk Log

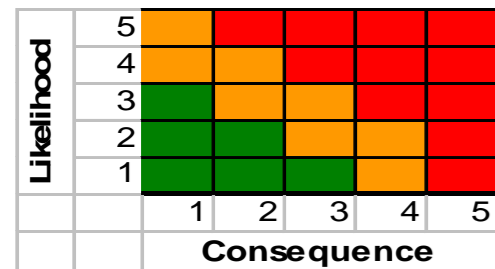
Date: 23/06/2021

Sponsor: Sally Marsh/Jason Lavender

Author: Gerry Sherwin

Date: April 2021 - March 2022

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



### 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.                           |

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						Format: What action; How frequent				
1	<b>High Weald allocation unspent</b> - funding cannot be reallocated. Reputational damage to Defra and to PL partnerships.	July start date and requirement for funds to be spent by 31 March 2024. Insufficient time to advertise, guide and develop and deliver good projects. Poor weather may delay delivery.	JAC	3	4	High	High Weald comms materials ready for launch; existing staff deployed to FiPL from start date; existing systems reviewed and changed to reflect FiPL; comms sent to all land managers registered with the RPA (if available); existing land manager contacts targeted; farming press proactively contacted; team proactive in identifying and supporting large projects; Unit-led projects developed and proposed; Defra made aware of level of risk based on Sussex Lund; Defra kept up to date with risk level. JAC identifies additional resources to help run scheme successfully.	AONB Director	3	2	4
2	<b>Land managers unaware of scheme</b> - farmers/land managers do not receive/see info from Defra or in the farming press	Farmers do not see initial FiPL comms; repeated PR/reminders required; PR material is not farmer-facing/tailored to local needs; indirect PR does not reach farmers; AONB Partnership unable to contact direct (no contact details).	JAC	3	4	High	Request for contact details submitted to RPA/Defra; regular reminders planned highlighting specific projects that may be of value to farmers/High Weald e.g. regen ag. infrastructure. AONB team to promote scheme at farmer network events e.g. Hailsham market.	AONB Director	3	2	4

3	<b>Low no of applications</b> – farmers/land managers owners do not engage or engagement does not lead to funding applications	Land managers too busy; programme outcomes not understood; programme outcomes not a business priority; no of Defra grant programmes causing confusion; guidance and application form off-putting. Other Defra schemes meet farmers needs better e.g. the Farming Investment Fund.	JAC	3	4		Shorter and simpler versions of the guidance provided; guidance highlights business benefits of achieving programme outcomes; events programme set up Yr1 to help farmers understand actions that would meet outcomes; emphasis in comms that locally (not Defra) led and therefore more 'friendly'; AONB team advice aimed at demystifying guidance/form. Land managers directed to project managers and other specialists who can assist with project delivery; Defra asked to simplify form or make it more accessible.	AONB Director	2	2	4	
4	<b>Low quality applications</b> - projects do not meet outcomes or may not be delivered well.	Applicants don't have skills to manage and deliver suitable projects; applicants unable to present their project well in an application form.	JAC	3	4		Land managers directed to project managers and other specialists who can assist with project delivery. Team to give feedback on draft application forms and assist with completion for strong projects if needed. Videos accepted as supplementary information.	AONB Director	3	2	4	
5	<b>Projects not delivered well, or as outlined in the application, or at all</b>	Projects haven't been considered thoroughly; circumstances change; material costs increasing or materials unavailable; weather affects delivery; land managers have other more urgent priorities.	JAC	3	3		High risk projects identified and monitored more regularly; grant recipients asked for regular updates; further assistance provided with project delivery if required; budget reprofiled to accommodate project delays. 'Backup' projects identified. Payment subject to sign-off by land management advisers.	AONB Director	2	2	2	
6	<b>Grant panel not farmer-led, ineffective at scrutiny and unable to assess projects in a timely manner</b> with delays to approvals and poor quality projects approved causing reputation damage to AONB Partnership/Defra.	Hard to recruit suitable panel members; panel workload too onerous (no of meetings and applications); members unable to comment on applications outside their knowledge/expertise.	JAC	3	3		Panel members chosen to reflect scope of programme and land manager diversity; panel members provided with clear guidance on requirements; clear terms of reference setting out role and commitment and criteria/scoring for projects; training available for panel members; payment based on time sheets; effective admin support; specialist advisory support provided (where needed). Commitment only required for 1 year. More formal recruitment process operated for year 2 with applicants vetted and approved.	AONB Director	2	2	2	
7	<b>Programme team; project manager, advisers and administrators not suitably qualified/experienced</b> to deliver scope and scale of programme	AONB a small team and unable to 'stretch' to set up and deliver programme, particularly the support that land managers may require to develop and deliver good projects. Applicants not attracted by time limited contracts. Strong competition from other environmental bodies recruiting staff e.g. NE.	JAC	2	4		Most experienced staff deployed to programme; new staff and/or consultants recruited to backfill/assist; additional staff recruited using JAC reserves if required. Specialist advisers recruited for project advice/assessments outside team's knowledge/expertise e.g. building restorations. Scrutiny from other ESCC officers/teams sought on systems/processes.	AONB Director	3	2	2	
8	<b>Financial management onerous</b> and not customer-facing.	Advance payment approach (programme and projects) complicates management and causes confusion. ESCC financial systems inaccessible to land managers.	JAC	3	3		Retrospective payments the default except in exceptional circumstances; non-order payment used for grant payments; opportunities to simplify adding 'vendor' to system sought; vendor added early to ensure no payment delays; clear protocols for communication re claims/payments set up.	AONB Director	3	2	2	
9	<b>Monitoring and reporting not timely or comprehensive</b> and doesn't meet Defra requirements	Land management knowledge required to complete forms; advisers time focused on supporting land managers; advisers and administrators unable to complete without help.	JAC	2	3		Skilled administrator recruited; applicants supported to provide clear information in application form and claims; staff training provided.	AONB Director	3	2	2	

10	<b>Programme doesn't help achieve a high profile for the High Weald AONB and High Weald Partnership</b> and opportunity to raise understanding of the contribution farming can make to the environment lost.	AONB team have limited comms resource; AONB team have limited experience of developing campaigns and campaign-specific messages.	JAC	3	3	Programme PR built into comms plan; LA press officers briefed and asked to assist; JAC members/officers to promote with their LAs; consultants recruited to assist with PR if required. Clear timetable of report requirements produced.	AONB Director	3	2	2	
11	<b>Programme attracts negative press</b> with reputational damage to Defra/JAC Partnership.	Grants don't provide a long term income for farmers (unlike BPS), unsuccessful applicants create unfavourable press, scheme not perceived as farmer-led/farmer focused; projects cause harm/are disliked by some members of the public; parallel land management activity incompatible with AONB management plan objectives.	JAC	2	4	Value of potential projects to farm business highlighted in comms material/advice; communication with unsuccessful applicants managed; appeal process clearly communicated; resources allocated to proactive positive press; panel farmer-led. Advisory visits use to identify any harmful parallel activity.	AONB Director	3	2	2	



Agenda Item: 12

**Report to:** High Weald AONB Management Board

**Date:** 24 November 2021

**Title:** Glover Review update

**By:** AONB Joint Director

**Purpose:** To set out the Government’s current position on the Glover Review and the action that the AONB Partnership and its supporting authorities need to undertake.

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The JAC is recommended to:**

1. Write to the High Weald’s MPs reflecting the points raised with Defra Minister, Richard Benyon.
  2. Submit a response to the Green Paper consultation, reflecting the key points and highlighting other areas of concern.
  3. Request that partnership members individually respond to the Green Paper consultation to be launched on 13 December 2021.
- 

### **1. Background information**

- 1.1 In May 2018, Secretary of State at Defra, Michael Gove, commissioned a panel of experts led by Julian Glover to make recommendations on the future of Designated Landscapes (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) in England.
- 1.2 On announcing the Review, which formed part of the Government’s work to implement its 25 Year Environment Plan, the Secretary of State said: “Amid a growing population, changes in technology, and a decline in certain habitats, the time is right for us to look afresh at these landscapes. We want to make sure they are not only conserved, but enhanced for the next generation.”.
- 1.3 The Landscapes Review or ‘Glover Review’ was published in September 2019 and, since then, Defra has met regularly with a small number of representatives of AONBs and National Parks through its ‘Glover Contact Group’.
- 1.4 AONB representatives on the Group have strived to support Defra to develop an ambitious government response to the Glover Review, while also responding to the

opportunities and challenges presented by the Covid pandemic, addressing the need to connect more people with nature, and to urgently reverse declines in nature and tackle the effects of climate change

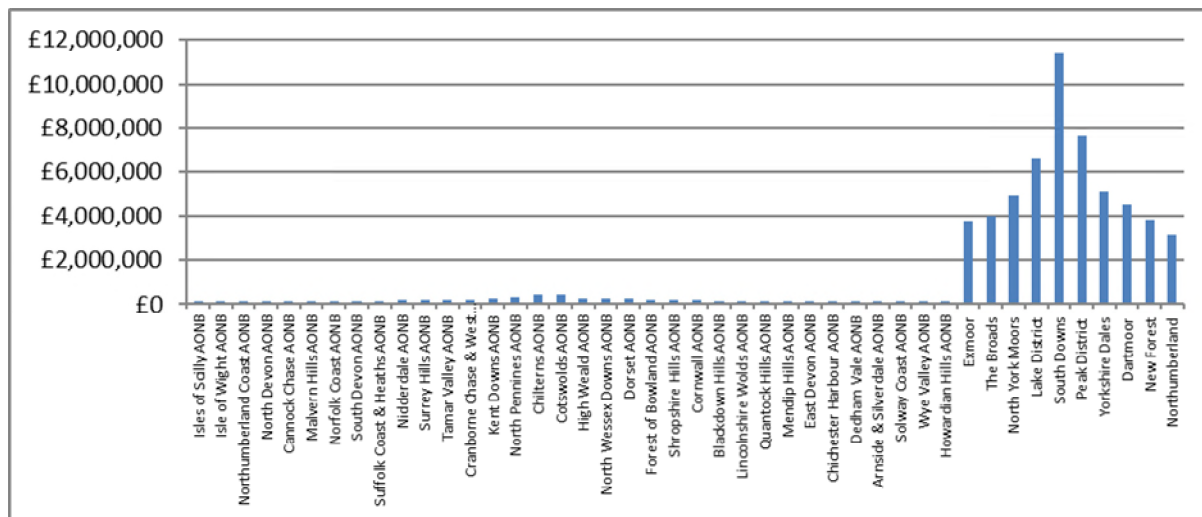
- 1.5 The Government response to the will be published in a Green Paper for public consultation on 13 December 2021.

## **2. Update**

- 2.1 Although the Glover Contact Group have had the opportunity to comment on a draft of the response they do not know whether these comments have been accepted.
- 2.2 The Group's overall view of the draft response was that it fell way short of the step-change it claimed to be and does not set out the ambitious, transformational change that Julian Glover and his team envisaged, it fails to match the Government's own ambition for nature, people and climate, and it does not offer a secure future for England's 34 AONBs.
- 2.3 Proposal 24 of the Glover Review recommended that: 'AONBs be strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, renamed as National Landscapes'.
- 2.4 The Glover review, and other reviews before it, recognised the vast resourcing disparity between AONBs and National Park Authorities.
- 2.5 That AONBs should be properly resourced is the single most important issue underpinning the future success of the protected landscape network and National Association for AONBs members are very concerned that the response paper fails to address this fundamental issue.
- 2.6 There are 34 AONBs in England covering 15% of the land. The 10 National Parks in England cover 8% of the land of England. Yet, a huge disparity exists between the funding allocated by Defra to AONBs and National Parks, despite managing landscapes of the same quality, attracting the same statutory protection, and delivering the same public service per unit area.
- 2.7 In 2013/14 the government commissioned a review of the resourcing of AONBs and National Parks. At that time Defra allocated £61.6m to AONBs and National Parks with only 16% (£6.7m) directed towards the 65% of land that is designated AONB, while 84% (£54.9m) was directed towards the 35% of land designated National Park.
- 2.8 Since that time, the proportion of funds allocated has remained the same, but the funding situation has become worse, with cuts of 36% and reductions in local authority spending. AONB teams are therefore under immense pressure, trying to deliver more for nature and for people, with less.
- 2.9 The Glover Review found that the disparity in funding between AONB and National Park is in part because of "a funding formula that is fossilised and complex", and that they were "unable to find a clear and concise explanation of it anywhere during the

review.” A response to the Glover Review which fails to acknowledge and address this issue is incomplete.

*Defra funding allocations to AONBs and National Parks 2013/14:*



- 2.10 The National Association for AONBs has therefore written to the Rt Hon Lord Benyon in his role as Minister for Rural Affairs. The key points made are listed in Appendix 1.
- 2.11 While the focus of this letter from the National Association is on appropriately resourcing the teams charged with looking after AONBs, several other aspects of the response paper give cause for concern and more detail will be available once the Green Paper is published.

### 3. Conclusions and reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 There has been a significant investment in the Glover review. The majority of its recommendations have secured cross-party support, the support of protected landscape partnerships, and the support of wider group of stakeholders.
- 4.2 It is essential that the opportunity to secure greater recognition and support for the country’s nationally important landscapes and their dedicated Partnerships.
- 4.3 The Green Paper paper consultation is the final opportunity to give Government feedback on its protected landscape policy and legislative proposals.

#### Contact details

Jason Lavender, AONB Joint-Director [Jason.lavender@highweald.org](mailto:Jason.lavender@highweald.org)

## Appendix 1

### Points made in a letter sent to Defra Minister, Richard Benyon, from the Chair of the National Association for AONBs on 10 November

- We are gravely concerned at what appears to be a continuing failure to match expectations with resources or to grasp the serious financial predicament facing AONB partnerships across England. Overall core funding has reduced by 36% over the past ten years.
- The Landscapes Review called for urgent and focussed action by Government to secure the viability and resilience of the local AONB teams. Their passion, commitment and innovation in delivering public goods for the nation against a backdrop of chronic under-funding was lauded by the Review.
- The Review was also unequivocal that on the ground the vast majority of AONBs are indistinguishable from National Parks. Their total area is 50% greater than that of the Parks, they contain just as much important nature and are even more popular with visitors. They also do vital work to restore nature, promote understanding and enjoyment of these outstanding places and support the local economy. But all this is without full recognition in law or support in resources.
- The total core funding from Government for all 34 AONB partnerships in England now stands as equivalent to only half the core funding provided to a single National Park Authority. The resourcing disparity between AONB partnerships and National Parks Authorities is the single most important issue underpinning the future success of the protected landscape network.
- Currently on the table for AONBs as a result of the Review, are: proposals for new purposes and powers; new governance which is representative and dynamic; the search for innovative and broad engagement approaches to programmes and plans; discussions regarding 'improving' the designation process; and better and consistent staff development and support.
- There is also a proposal that they are re-named as National Landscapes. Alongside this there is huge, and understandable, public expectation that we will respond effectively to the twin primary challenges of our age – the global climate and biodiversity crises.
- With support from Defra, the National Association is undertaking a rapid national conversation with key audiences on the proposed renaming. What is emerging from this is a strong sense that any name change must be representative of a step change for AONBs with the ambitious new title encompassing new purposes and strengthened powers delivered by skilled teams, sustainable funding, and robust governance.

- Pulled together as a package and tied to strengthening of resourcing, these proposals have the potential to deliver a transformational approach to AONB leadership and management during this Parliament.
- Glover's recommended immediate fix for AONB core funding, which can be tied to a progressive reform package, could be delivered over the course of this Parliament for a total additional investment of £12 million, spread over three financial years.
- There has been time and energy poured into this process by AONB teams already stretched to breaking point. The damage from a whimper of a conclusion with no new resources will be immense and long-lasting.
- We are calling for a modest, yet fundamental, package of reform for AONB and have provided contributions throughout to demonstrate how such a simple package could be both transformative, uncontested and deliverable. We are keen to grasp the opportunity for a step-change in ambition and delivery. Meaningful change here would have a huge impact at relatively little actual cost. If not now, then when?

Agenda Item: 13

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

**Date:** 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021

**Title of Report:** Risk Management

**By:** AONB Director

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

1. Note the report and;
2. Request that the Management Board works with the AONB Unit to consider the risks and identify measures and options to manage and mitigate the effect of these risks.

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### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 The JAC is a strong partnership supported by the AONB Unit, a small specialist team providing advice and guidance on the conservation and enhancement of a nationally important landscape.
- 1.2 The work of the JAC relies on three things: partnership contributions to the core budget; success raising external funds to the project budget; and retaining/recruiting staff with the appropriate skills and experience to do this work. While not wishing to downplay the significance of the on-going COVID 19 crisis, the most significant risk to the High Weald AONB partnership remains the increasing constraints and demands placed on both the financial and personnel resources of the AONB Unit.
- 1.3 The key risks to the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) are set out in Appendix A.

### 2.0 Key risks 2021/22 and beyond

#### COVID-19

- 2.1 COVID-19 represents a significant and current risk to people's health, and it is still a priority to ensure the staff and those we work with are kept safe and the opportunities for passing on the virus and its variants are kept to an absolute minimum.
- 2.2 COVID-19 has disrupted our business planning and working arrangements over the last nineteen months and this will continue into 2022. This has had an impact on our work programme and the AONB Unit staff.

- 2.3 COVID-19's influence on the government's priorities remains considerable. This is very likely to have consequences for the future funding and support provided by government and the government's policies and priorities for the sector.

#### Core budget funding settlement

- 2.4 Members will be aware that since 2010 the English AONB partnerships have accommodated a 36% cut in the government contribution to the core budgets. The total core funding from the government for the 34 English AONBs is only half the core funding provided to a single National Park Authority. During this same period most of the local authority partners on the High Weald AONB partnership have maintained their contributions to the core budget, albeit without an increase in line with inflation.
- 2.5 There is a very significant risk to the work and the success of the High Weald AONB partnership should the current funding situation continue and should the government choose not to re-new a stable, predictable and an increased funding settlement for AONB partnerships. The government's current intentions remain unclear.
- 2.6 No inflationary increase for the government's current contribution to the core budget or to staff salaries has been proposed. This will lead to an increase in the shortfall of the AONB partnership's core budget and continue to put local authority contributions to the core business under considerable pressure.

#### New and greater expectations and demands

- 2.7 The last two to three years have seen a greater pressure on the High Weald landscape along with several increasing and new expectations placed on the AONB Unit. These extra and new demands requiring the AONB Unit's attention present a significant risk to the existing core work and remit of the AONB Unit. New demands include:
- The considerable rise in the numbers of housing development applications (particularly for major developments) affecting the AONB. Residents, consultants, and local authority officers and Members are increasingly seeking our specialist advice, guidance, and input
  - Greater efforts by public organisations, the statutory undertakers, and others to meet their statutory duties towards the conservation of the AONB and their emerging climate change and biodiversity policies has resulted in an increasing demand for our advice and guidance
  - The transition to the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELM) will require farmers to change their practices and demand is increasing for our guidance to help them achieve the multiple objectives ELM will expect
  - The changing nature of landownership in the High Weald is a growing factor and new and inexperienced owners need tailored and integrated guidance and longer-term assistance to help them manage their farms and woodlands responsibly, and to prevent harm to the High Weald
  - The expectation that more needs to be done to encourage a wider and more diverse range of people, and better public access to and enjoyment of the countryside requires our input and involvement

- Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL) has placed considerable demands on our existing resources - the setting up and managing a suitable governance structure and a grant administration system and the use of existing AONB staff to implement the scheme's objectives and support farmers and land managers submit strong grant applications

#### Staff succession planning

- 2.7 The majority of the AONB Unit staff are aging and staff succession planning is becoming a more important issue. The recruitment and retention of younger people and those with the relevant skills and experience is increasingly difficult for a variety of reasons. A failure to address this will be a risk to the future success of the AONB partnership and the work of the AONB Unit.

### **3.0 Risk mitigation**

#### COVID-19

- 3.1 We continue to monitor the situation closely and have put in place a range of appropriate measures to ensure the AONB Unit staff and those we work with are as safe as possible. Measures are in place to keep our key functions running and to manage the team, and to allow partners, residents, and others to continue to work with us.
- 3.2 The office at Flimwell has remained open for limited use and some of the staff continue to work primarily from home. Meetings and events are held either in-person or on-line, and school visits have been resumed where the teachers are happy to do so. Site, farm, and woodland advisory visits have continued and under strict controls.

#### Core budget funding settlement & new and greater expectations and demands

- 3.3 The continuing financial and resources predicament facing the English AONB partnerships has yet to be grasped by the government. By necessity, the need for an adequate, long-term, and stable funding settlement is the primary concern of the High Weald AONB partnership.
- 3.4 Our experience following the funding cuts over the last decade reminds us that all members of the High Weald AONB partnership will need to continue to demonstrate at the local and national government level the value and the worth of the work the AONB partnership does and lobby for adequate and stable long-term funding.
- 3.5 The development of secure and alternative long-term income streams to support the core remit of the AONB partnership may be possible. However, the difficulties achieving this are often under-estimated and any funds raised are unlikely to address any longer-term shortfall in contributions to our core budget. The focus is to remain a governmental and local authority supported partnership with a close relationship to government bodies whose policies influence management of the AONB landscape.
- 3.6 The High Weald AONB Unit's business strategy 2019 – 2024 aims to respond to the risks caused by the constraints on both the financial and personnel resources of the AONB Unit. It will be adapted to accommodate the emerging risks associated the greater pressures placed on the High Weald and the newer expectations and demands. The specific risks



associated with the larger projects and grant schemes (e.g. FiPL) will continue to be assessed.

- 3.7 However, the assumption that the current and inadequate resources available to the High Weald AONB partnership can continue to cover the current and emerging demands while also meeting the government's vision that AONB partnerships are at the heart of nature recovery, landscape conservation, and climate change mitigation will need to be challenged. Asking the AONB partnership to do more with less is no longer a viable option.

#### Staff succession planning

- 3.8 Identifying and implementing a process and strategy for succession planning should allow us to develop existing and new members of staff who can move into leadership roles when they become vacant. Succession planning will also help us attract, recruit, and retain younger people and those with the appropriate skills to work for the AONB Unit.

#### **4.0 Conclusions**

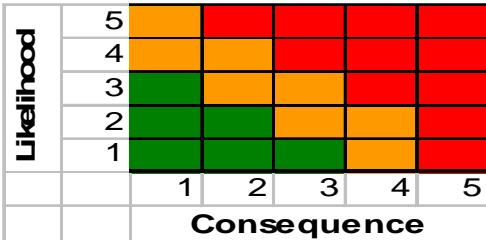
- 4.1 Risk management systems are in place and conform to the appropriate East Sussex County Council policy.
- 4.2 It's clear that 2021-22 will continue to be characterised by the challenges outlined above. The constraints on both the financial and personnel resources of the AONB Unit remain the most significant risk to the core work of the High Weald AONB partnership.
- 4.3 The High Weald AONB Unit's current business strategy is tailored to the High Weald's local circumstances and specific needs. It aims to address the risks to the work of the High Weald AONB partnership, but this is no longer enough. The expectation that the partnership can continue to absorb the existing and additional demands without adequate resources needs to be challenged and addressed.

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

Appendix A High Weald JAC - COVID-19 Key Risks 24.11.21.  
 Sponsor: Sally Marsh/Jason Lavender  
 Author: Jason Lavender  
 Date: November 2021 - March 2022

### 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



**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	Matrix Zone
		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 3.1 of the COVID-19 Risk Management report.	AONB Director	2	4	3	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	3	3	Amber	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	3	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	2	2	Green	Consult with the grant recipients and third party funders, review and change timescales, offer technical advice and moral support.	AONB Director	2	1	1	Green
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	2	3	Green	Technical advice sought and recommendations/solutions implemented.	AONB Director	2	2	2	Green
5	Failure to secure/receive adequate, stable, and long-term funding to the core budget. A reduction or loss of national and local government political and financial support to the AONB partnerships.	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