

# High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee



## Agenda

Wednesday 30 March 2022, 10.30am

Missing Link Brewery, The Old Dairy, Selsfield Rd, West Hoathly, RH19 4QS

1. Introduction from Ross Symonds  
To note a presentation on Chiddinglye Farm Diary
2. Presentation on the High Weald Heroes education programme  
To note a presentation from Rachel Bennington, AONB Education Officer
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 last meeting of the JAC held on 24 November 2021 (page 3)
7. Minutes of the Management Board Meeting  
To note the matters arising from the Management Board meeting held on 9 March 2022 (page 9)
8. Minutes of the Officer Steering Group  
To note the minutes of the last meeting of the OSG held on 9 February 2022 (page 14)
9. High Weald Management Plan 2024-2029  
To note a presentation and report from AONB Landscape Advisor on start of the new Management Plan 2024 -2029 (page 19) and Scoping Review (page 21)
10. Revenue Budget for 2022/23  
To consider and approve a report by the Treasurer on the draft Revenue Budget 2022/23 (page 24) and to consider a briefing note on the need for an increase in local authority contributions over 5-year period.
11. Government Consultation on its Response to the Glover Review  
To consider a report by the AONB Co-Director on work with the National Association for AONBs on the Government's Consultation on its Response to the Glover Review (page 29)
12. Risk Management  
To consider a report by the AONB Co-Director on risk management (page 33); Appendix A: High Weald JAC - Key Risks

13. 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  
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Agenda item: 6

# High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

## Minutes of Meeting



Held on the 24 November 2021 at 1pm at the Woodland Enterprise Centre, Main Hall.

Samantha Nicholas

Clerk to the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell, East Sussex TN5 7PR

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Members present:

Cllr P Bradbury	West Sussex County Council/Mid Sussex District Council (Chairman)
Cllr P Dixon	Wealden District Council (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr A Pickering	Ashford Borough Council
Cllr Mrs S Carey	Kent County Council
Cllr Mrs E Kirby-Green	East Sussex County Council
Cllr M Dickins	Sevenoaks Borough Council
Cllr Mrs M Evans	Hastings Borough Council
Mrs J Davison	Community Cooptee
Mrs S Tidy	Farming Cooptee
Ms J Hull	Forestry Commission

Officers:

Mr J Lavender	AONB Co-Director
Ms G Sherwin	AONB Business Manager
Ms C Tester	AONB Planning Adviser
Mrs E White	Communication Officer
Mr R Wingfield	Land Management Project Advisor
Ms S Brotherton	AONB Research Advisor
Ms C Gardener	AONB Meadow Makers Trainee
Mr A Fowler	Finance Manager, East Sussex County Council
Ms J Hollingum	Planning Officer, Mid Sussex District Council
Mr M Davidson	Hastings Borough Council

### **1. High Weald Walking Festival 2021**

1.1 Emma White presented a summary of High Weald Walking Festival 2021

1.2 The presentation covered:

- The Festival was launched in 2018 supporting the AONB Management Plan and the Glover Review objectives on health and wellbeing
- It is in partnership with four divisions of the Ramblers Mid-Sussex; Rother; High Weald and Battle.
- In 2021 the programme had a mixture of 30 of the most popular self-guided walks from 2020 program and 34 guided walks. There was a booking system in place as it was felt this gave the best protection for the Guides with Covid 19. The benefit was that it allowed us to access feedback more easily.
- There was some excellent feedback especially for some of the more specialised walks such as Dark Skies.
- In 2022 the Walking Festival will run from 10 to 18 September 2022 and there will be a mixture of booked walks and open walks and nature walks.

1.3 It was requested that it would be good to have more walks where dogs are welcomed and that this could be highlighted on the website.

1.4 Cllr Evans informed the Members that Hastings BC are setting up a similar walking festival and whether they could seek guidance or look to combine the two festivals if appropriate for 2022. Emma White confirmed that this would be a great way of widening the variety of walks and reaching different audiences.

## **2. Election**

2.1 The following Members were elected to the High Weald JAC Committee and Management Board

- Cllr P Bradbury – Chairman
- Cllr P Dixon – Vice-Chair
- Cllr J Vine-Hall – Member
- Cllr E Kirby-Green – Member
- Cllr S Carey – Member
- Cllr L Hall – Member
- Mr S Tidy – Farming Cooptee
- Mrs J Davis – Community Cooptee

## **3. Apologies**

3.1 Apologies for absence were Cllr Lockwood; Cllr Hall; Cllr Hogden; Sally Marsh; Tim Bamford, Laura Newland, N Bumpas; H French; V Pullan.

## **4. Members Interests**

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

**5. Urgent Matters**

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5.1 It was noted that there were no urgent matters.

**6. Minutes of the JAC Meeting**

6.1 RESOLVED to note the minutes of the JAC meeting, held on 31 March 2021

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

7.1 RESOLVED to note: The Minutes of the Management Board meeting held on 13 October 2021

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

8.1 RESOLVED to note the minutes of the Officer Steering Group meeting held on 15 September 2021

**9. Revenue Budget for 2022/23**

9.1 The Committee considered a report by Finance Manager, Andy Fowler, on the draft Revenue Budget for 2022/23. The Members were taken through the key areas of the budget.

9.2 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.

9.3 It was 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

9.4 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.

9.5 It was confirmed that the reserves are cash reserves, and the Management Board can utilise these reserves for long term investment. However, using the reserves to support shortfalls due to the lack in core budget increasing over the past 10 years is not advised, and it should be used for long term investment.

9.6 It was confirmed that the original contributions from the local authorities were set up by a National formula and based on area within the AONB, hence the low amount for some of the Local Authorities.

9.7 **RESOLVED that:**

- I. **the draft budget for 2022/23; and to start the commencement of budget consultation with the local authorities and Defra.**
- II. **An agenda item will be placed on the Management Board Meeting in March to look over the long-term position to consider spending patterns.**

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

10.1 The Committee considered a presentation and report by Gerry Sherwin on Farming in Protected Landscapes. The Members were made aware of the key risks associated with the programme.

- Recruitment of new staff to meet FiPLs requirements, including part-time Administrative Officer and Project Manager; full-time Land Management Advisor and Deer Coordinator.
- The calibre of staff may not be recruited easily, and it will take time for them to get up to full speed which puts pressure on existing staff to run this programme alongside their core programmes.
- Risk to not being able to increase grant awards to support shortfalls in the core budget.

10.2 Cllr Carey suggested the Unit might be able to have QR code on our website which asks for donations covering a wider action. The Members were informed that the Unit were developing their website and this approach is being built into the new platform.

10.3 Jane Hull welcomed the additional of a Deer coordinator in partnership with Woodland Trust and enquired if there had been many collaborative farming applications to FiPL. It was confirmed that the Unit had over 120 expressions of interest and there are applications in the pipeline that are collaborative.

10.4 **RESOLVED to note:**

- i. **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.**
- ii. **Note the risks associated with the programme and their proposed management.**

**11. Westdown Project**

11.1 Ross Wingfield presented the Members an overview of the Westdown Project supported by the Meadows Maker funding. This was to move from traditional farming practices to rotational grazing system; and to enhance unimproved grassland. Ross highlighted that:

- The regenerative farming process focuses on improving soil health due to the methodology of cattle grazing in smaller areas and being moved around the site continually.
  - The site is surrounded by SSSI Meadows but where it has been over grazed there are several areas that need to be enhanced. With the support of Dawn Brickwood, High Weald Landscape Trust, undertook baseline soil sampling and used seeds from another of the meadow sites to enhance the unimproved grassland.
- 11.2 A discussion took place on how cattle farming is perceived as an issue for climate change. Jason Lavender confirmed that grass fed cattle produce a much lower amount of methane and this methane is absorbed by the bacteria in the grass enhancing carbon capture. The issue is with how meat or plant-based products are grown.
- 11.3 Cllr Pickering enthused about this presentation and asked for more information. Jason offered all Members to come and visit Shaw Farm to see regenerative farming in practise.

## **12. Risk Management**

- 12.1 The Committee considered a report by Jason Lavender on risk management including staffing updates and the associated risk management matrix. Jason highlighted:
- 12.2 .2.7, The greater expectation against the Units time due to increase planning applications and other organisations as well as the transition through FIPL.
- 12.3 A discussion took place on how staff succession and recruitment for the future could be an issue under the paygrades. It is hard to attract full-time staff and to gain better diversity in the team for the future.
- 12.4 Cllr Bradbury confirmed that he would take up this issue with Becky Shaw CEO of West and East Sussex.
- 12.5 **RESOLVED to note the reports and request that the Management Board continue to meet to review significant risks as required and develop options for their management**

## **13. Glover review update**

- 13.1 Jason Lavender informed the Members of the report 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.

- 13.2 The National Associations' 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.
- 13.3 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 were listed in Appendix 1 of the Report.
- 13.4 Mrs Tidy reminded the Members that many years ago, the Committee had a president who was a local MP and maybe we should consider this again.
- 13.5 RESOLVED to note:**
- I. Jason Lavender to draft a response to the Green Paper consultation, reflecting the key points and highlighting other areas of concern, which will be signed by the JAC Members.**
- II. Requested the partnership members individually respond to the Green Paper consultation to be launched on 13 December 2021**
- 14. A.O.B**
- 14.1 The Next High Weald JAC Meeting will be held on Wednesday 30 March 2022.



## **Agenda item: 7**

### **HIGH WEALD JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE – Management Board**

Minutes – Wednesday 9 March 2022, 1.30pm, at Acorn Tourism and Microsoft Teams

Samantha Nicholas  
Clerk to the High Weald AONB  
Joint Advisory Committee

#### **Present: Members:**

<b>Cllr P Bradbury</b>	<b>West Sussex County Council/Mid Sussex District Council (Chairman)</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>Mrs S Tidy</b>	<b>NFU Co-optee</b>
<b>Mrs J Davison</b>	<b>Community Co-optee</b>
<b>Cllr P Dixon</b>	<b>Wealden District Council</b>
<b>Ms J Hollingum</b>	<b>OSG Chairman, Mid-Sussex District Council</b>

#### **Also Present:**

<b>Jason Lavender</b>	<b>AONB Director (job share)</b>
<b>Gerry Sherwin</b>	<b>AONB Business Manager</b>
<b>Claire Tester</b>	<b>AONB Planning Advisor</b>
<b>Sarah Brotherton</b>	<b>AONB Landscape Advisor</b>
<b>Stephanie Mason</b>	<b>AONB FiPL Administrator</b>
<b>Samantha Nicholas</b>	<b>AONB Clerk to JAC</b>

### **Actions**

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <b>Paragraph 8</b>  | <b>The timetable and changes to the Plan will be presented at the JAC meeting to be held on 30 March where a formal decision will be made whether to begin the Management Plan process.</b>                    |
| <b>Paragraph 18</b> | <b>The Unit will circulate to JAC members a copy of the final NAAONB reply to the Government's response to the Glover review once this has been agreed.</b>  |
| <b>Paragraph 23</b> | <b>As part of the budget report to JAC there would be a recommendation to produce a briefing note on the value of the AONB Unit's work to inform a proposed increase in contributions from LAs in 2023/24.</b> |

### **Apologies**

1. Apologies were received from, Cllr S Carey; Cllr L Hall, and Sally Marsh
2. Cllr P Dixon, Jennifer Hollingum and Samantha Nicholas joined the meeting by Microsoft teams

### **Members' Interests**

3. Members had no declarations of interests at the meeting.

### **Minutes of the Management Board meeting held on 13 October 2021**

4. The minutes of the last meeting, held on 13 October 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

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

5. There were no matters arising from the minutes

### **High Weald Management Plan 2024- 2029 timetable and changes**

6. Sarah Brotherton presented to the Management Board the scope and timetable for the High Weald Management Plan for 2024-2029. The following work will be carried out during 2022:
  - The evidence gathering stage has begun and consultations to the many audiences will be started during the summer months.
  - The OSG has already been sent a consultation questionnaire and an additional meeting is to be held on 14 July to present the new structure and more detailed information on the new components
  - The Plan is aimed to be launched in March 2024.
7. The following enhancements to the Plan were then presented to the Members:
  - There will be two new key landscape components in the Management Plan:
    - Dark Skies - The Unit has the evidence both from literature and data from work with CPRE, South Downs National Park Authority and local dark skies groups and there is a better understanding of the importance of preserving the Dark Skies.
    - Perceptual and Aesthetic Qualities - this a review of the previous Other Qualities in the current Management Plan.
  - The physical qualities currently in 'Other Qualities' are proposed to be relocated in the Plan, including the objectives relating to access being moved to the Routeways component. The contents of the current 'Land-based Economy and Related Rural Life would also be accommodated elsewhere within the Plan.
  - In addition, there could be a new 'Part 2' of the Plan which would cover the implementation landscape strategy for cross-cutting areas such as Soil; Climate Change; Nature Recovery; People (Health and Wellbeing and Social Justice) and Planning.
  - This section will also recognise that the actions we take today have an impact on future generations that currently don't have a voice. It will also reference 'shifting baseline syndrome' which is about being aware that we are losing knowledge

about past environmental conditions which impacts our expectations about the future.

8. **Action: The timetable, scope and changes to the Plan will be presented at the JAC meeting to be held on 30 March where a formal decision will be made whether to begin the Management Plan process.**
9. Cllr Bradbury thanked Sarah for a very informative presentation and agreed with the proposed enhancements to the Plan, especially inclusion of Soil. The next 20-year strategy was discussed, and it was agreed that the AONB may face the greatest threats to its ability to remain special.
  - The Members felt that the Land Based and Related Rural Life section is important, and it should be retained within the Plan.
  - Covid 19 and working from home may also have a far more reaching impact on the landscape in the future and should be recognised within the Plan.
10. It was confirmed that sufficient data is available for Dark Skies from the CPRE latest satellite data which compares 2019 and 2015 data and from the data that AONB communities had collected as light meter readings in the darkest areas of the AONB, and the Unit will continue to build on this base. The Unit has also encouraged many of the Local Authorities to put their own Darks Skies policies within their Local Plans and Ashford BC has had such a policy and guidance since 2014.

#### **Officer Steering Group update**

11. Jennifer Hollingum updated the Members on the OSG Meeting held on 9 February 2022.
12. Jennifer confirmed that the OSG had received the same presentation from Sarah Brotherton and they were asked two key questions in the meeting:
  - How do the Group currently use the Management Plan; and
  - What is missing from the Plan that would make it easier to use.
13. The officers indicated that the Plan was mainly used by the DM and Policy Managers; the key components mainly used were Settlement, Woodland and Grassland and they were used for planning applications and planning appeals. They also recognised the wider purpose of the Plan. The Group will meet again on 14 July to discuss the Management Plan 2024-2029 changes in more detail.

#### **Government's Response to Glover review update**

14. Jason Lavender handed out a summary of the Government's response to the Glover review.
15. The review was commissioned by Michael Gove MP when he was Secretary of State for Defra and Julian Glover's findings were published in September 2019. Government published its response along with a consultation on its proposals in January 2022. Since then, the National Association for AONBs has held a series of workshops to produce the initial draft response to the consultation. It has been

decided that there will be one unified response from the National Association due to time limitations,

16. The workshops focussed on purpose, powers, governance, resources, and brand. The key emerging areas that many of the AONB partnerships agree require focussing on are:
  1. Double the current core funding for AONB teams over the life of this parliament and establish a fair and forward-looking funding formula reflecting ambitions
  2. Strengthen the legal framework relating to AONB designation by giving the statutory duties greater weight to ensure all relevant authorities meet their duties, when exercising their functions and contributing to AONB management plan implementation.
  3. Give AONB bodies a stronger voice in planning including statutory consultee status in planning applications and development plans
17. A discussion took place around the consultation response and the Members were concerned that:
  - Any further demands on the Unit's time could not be made without the appropriate funding moving forward.
  - Changing the branding to National Landscape diminishes why the AONBs were unique and that other landscapes outside of these areas would also demand similar funding.
18. **Action: The Unit will circulate to JAC members a copy of the final NAAONB reply to the Government's response to the Glover review once this has been agreed.**

### **JAC Agenda – 30 March 2022**

Topics to be included:

- Management Plan 2024-2029 presentation initiating the process to be signed off by JAC
- Introduction to the Missing Link-Brewery site from the owner and presentation from Gerry on their FiPL application
- Presentation from Rachel Bennington on the High Weald Heroes programme
- Introduction of recommendation in the budget reports to Members on initiating 5- year plan to potentially increase local authority contributions.

### **Work plan, budget & staffing update**

19. Gerry Sherwin reported to the Members that all but one of the LAs had agreed to support the budget for 2022/23. It was highlighted that Kent CC do not agree budgets until March but there is no indication that this will be an issue.
20. The 2022 workplan is focusing on:
  - Management Plan 2024-2029
  - Various consultations including Government's response to the Glover Review, Biodiversity Net Gain and Nature Recovery, as well as involvement with woodland creation schemes, water company and highways group projects; plus, Local Plans and planning applications.

- The team are operating a new Deer Management Project in partnership with the Woodland Trust. Sandy Williamson has joined the team working three days a week. The project will focus on addressing the ever-growing pressure that the expanding deer population is placing on habitat and farmland within the High Weald. Natural England is potentially expanding the programme, with three new staff to be recruited to support these objectives.
  - The High Weald Heroes programme continues to thrive with partnership working with English Heritage during 2022.
  - The Unit has secured an increase to the administration budget for Sussex Lund from £25,000 to £50,000. The timetable and objectives for Sussex Lund have changed recognising that FiPL will divert potential applicants away from this fund. It will now focus on community groups and urban habitat restoration, as well as an added dimension of celebrating the High Weald in various forms.
  - The Unit has taken on two new staff members to operate FiPL; Tobias Jackson as an advisor, full-time, and senior administrator, Stephanie Mason, on the equivalent of three days a week. However, this will not wholly free Gerry to return to and fulfil her core role including project development and fundraising, as the Unit were unable to recruit a suitable person to project manager FiPL. This now may not be possible with only two years to run on the FiPL contract.
21. At the JAC held on 24 November 2021 it was raised that the Members should consider a 5-year budget plan to consider the expanding demand for the Partnership's input and the increasing budget deficit.
22. The AONB core budget has been cut by 36% in the last ten years and the Unit is facing inflationary rises on staff costs and other partnership costs which has led to a £10,000 budget gap in 2022 and this will increase to 17,000 in 2023.
23. A discussion took place on how best to manage this deficit. **It was agreed that:**
- It would be discussed at the JAC on 30 March as part of the budget report recommendations:
  - The Unit will write a briefing note to the local authorities highlighting the statutory requirement to work together to produce a Management Plan, and the value that the Unit's work adds to other priorities such as climate change policies. The briefing note will be agreed at the next Management Board meeting to be held in June 2022.
  - This briefing note would be circulated during the summer months so that the local authorities would have time to discuss this internally before the next budget setting process for 2023/24.

#### A.O.B

24. Next Management Board Meeting will in June date TBD

Agenda item:8



## High Weald Officer Steering Group

Notes of a meeting of the High Weald Officer Steering Group held on Wednesday 9 February, at 10.00 am on Microsoft Teams

Samantha Nicholas  
Clerk to the High Weald AONB  
Joint Advisory Committee

### PRESENT:

Jennifer Hollingum	Mid Sussex DC
Diane Russell,	Rother DC (Vice-Chairman)
Claire Marchant	Ashford BC
Alan Sime	Ashford BC
Sophie Gilbert	Crawley BC
Virginia Pullen	East Sussex CC
Tom Jackson	Hastings BC
Rebecca Fry	Horsham DC
Vivienne Riddle	Tandridge DC
Jenny Knowles	Tonbridge & Malling BC
David Scully	Tunbridge Wells BC
Natalie Bumpus,	Wealden DC

### High Weald Unit:

Claire Tester	AONB Planning Advisor
Sarah Brotherton	AONB Landscape Research Advisor
Samantha Nicholas,	Clerk to the JAC

### Summary of Actions:

<b><u>Pt</u></b>	<b><u>Information</u></b>	<b><u>To be actioned by</u></b>
5.5	To set up an additional Management Plan meeting in July to communicate the next steps and send quarterly emails when required to the Group updating them on progress	Unit
3.2	Unit to email the draft of Responsible Planting; Eco-camping and Tree Establishment to the Group for comment:	Unit
7.2	Date to be set in June for Weald Meadows Training morning and Eventbrite to be circulated to officers	Unit
6.3	It was agreed that a simple work programme matrix would be updated and circulated to	Unit

**the officers so they could keep in touch with the Units many workstreams.**

## **1. Apologies**

- 1.1. Jason Lavender; Sally Marsh; Helen French; Don Baker; Mark Daly and David Greenwood

## **3. Minutes of the meeting of 15 September 2021**

3.1 The Minutes of 15 September 2021 were agreed to be an accurate account of the meeting. The following on-going actions were reviewed:

- 5.2, It was confirmed that if any applications were received for FiPL for Eco-camping or any development requiring planning permission they would be advised to contact their local planning authorities.
- 3.2, Tree Establishment Guidance; due to the heavy workload of the Unit they do not have the capacity to follow up the additional guides, Responsible Planting, Camping and Glamping and Tree Establishment. It was agreed that as there were new members to the Group it would be useful to send these documents again so OSG could consider how they could help finalise these documents.

**3.2 Action: Unit to email the draft of Responsible Planting; Camping and Glamping and Tree Establishment to the Group for comment again:**

## **4. Timetable and changes to the Management Plan 2024-2044**

- Sarah Brotherton presented to the Group the start of the work that needs to be undertaken to produce the next Management Plan. The 2004 Management Plan included a 20 year strategy for the AONB which will finish in 2024.
- The Management Plan for 2024-2029 will include a new 20 year strategy as well as the objectives and actions for the first five years of that strategy.
- Local authorities with land in the AONB are legally obliged under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to work jointly together to produce an AONB Management Plan. The Plan is formally adopted by the relevant local authorities as their policy for the management of the area and how they carry out functions relating to it.
- The Management Plan also has a wider role as it provides a means by which all public bodies demonstrate how they have met their duty to have regard to conservation and enhancement of the AONB. It also provides a guide for residents, businesses, visitors on actions they can take to help safeguard this special area.
- There will be two new key landscape components in the Management Plan:
  - i. Dark Skies - The Unit has the evidence both from literature and data from work with CPRE, South Downs National Park Authority and local

dark skies groups and there is a better understanding of the importance of preserving the Dark Skies.

- ii. Perceptual and Aesthetic Qualities - this a rebrand of the previous Other Qualities in the current Management Plan.
- iii. The physical qualities currently in 'Other Qualities' are proposed to be relocated in the Plan, including the objectives relating to access being moved to the Routeways component. The contents of the current 'Land-based Economy and Related Rural Life could also be accommodated elsewhere within the Plan.
- iv. In addition, there could be a new 'Part 2' of the Plan which would cover the implementation landscape strategy for cross-cutting areas such as Soil; Climate Change; Nature Recovery; People (Health and Wellbeing and Social Justice) and Planning.

4.2 The next steps are to gather evidence to update the Plan and support new subject areas. The Unit has commissioned consultants to carry out a public survey to inform the Perceptual and Aesthetic Qualities chapter. The Management Plan will be discussed at Management Board on 9<sup>th</sup> March and a report will be prepared for Joint Advisory Committee on 30<sup>th</sup> March to formally start the review process.

## **5 Management Plan discussion**

5.1 Two questions were asked at the meeting:

- How do the Group currently use the Management Plan; and
- What is missing from the Plan that would make it easier to use.

5.2 Through the chat function the officers responded, and the summary was as follows:

- Development Management and Planning Policy officers tend to use the Management Plan most often,
- Those who currently use the Plan utilise the Settlement, Woodland, Grassland components more frequently,
- The Plan is used in support of Planning applications and Planning Appeals.

5.3 The officers welcomed the introduction of the new components and focus on landscape strategies. There was a concern that separating the actions from the objectives will make the document less useful. It was noted that the Government's response to the Glover Review included the proposal for Natural England to produce guidance for Management Plans, and there was a risk that this would be produced during the review process.

5.4 It was suggested that the Unit consult separately with the County Councils and Highways departments on their understanding and use of the Management Plan.



- 5.5 **Action: To set up an additional Management Plan meeting in July to provide early input on the draft Plan and to send regular emails when required to the Group updating them on progress with the Management Plan.**

## **6 Historic Routeways Report**

- 6.1 Claire Tester informed the Group of the Historic Routeways report produced by Jeremy Lake and Nicola Bannister which was initiated 5 years ago.
- 6.2 Some officers thought it was a very interesting document with good research, but that it would be difficult to apply to planning applications. One option would be to produce a short summary of how impact on routeways could be assessed, and it was agreed that this could be included within the new Management Plan.
- 6.3 **Action: It was agreed to help with communications to the Group that a simple Unit's work programme could be produced and circulated to the officers so they could keep in touch with the Unit's many workstreams.**

## **7 Update on local authority training**

- 7.1 Dark Skies training at local authority level – further discussions need to take place with Dan Oakley. It was suggested that Samantha Nicholas and Diane Russell could discuss a structure that would suit the officers and set up online training course for those authorities that would be interested in attending.
- 7.2 Weald Meadows Training for grassland to help support decisions on Tree establishment and other alternative uses for fields. A draft outline of this training event was circulated to the officers prior to the meeting. It was agreed that this would be a good area to focus on as well as an opportunity for OSG to meet up in person in June.
- 7.3 **Action: Unit to set up date in June for Weald Meadows Training morning and to circulate an Eventbrite link for officers to book on.**

## **8. Item for the Management Board to be held on 9 March 2022**

- 8.1. To focus on the review of the Management Plan.

## **9. A.O.B**

- 9.1 Claire Tester informed the Group that another way of keeping in touch with the Unit's workstreams and events would be to sign up the enews:  
<https://www.highweald.org/news/e-news.html>
- 9.2 David Scully informed the Group that Tunbridge Wells BC (TWBC) are making progress on Biodiversity Net Gain and they are working with Kent Nature Partnership and Kent

Wildlife Trust. The TWBC Local Plan, including a BNG policy, is progressing and starts its examination phase at the beginning of March. TWBC will also prepare a Supplementary Planning Document which he will be able to share the Group in due course.

9.3 David also Informed the officers that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is seeking a meeting with AONB Directors to resolve outstanding concerns that they raised last March with the decision-making process for the Turnden application. The Council has also raised an issue about the Unit's role as a Rule 6 party at the public inquiry and wish to discuss that with the AONB Directors.

9.4 TWBC had two significant appeals being heard:

- Hawkhurst former golf course, which the Council refused, and has been upheld at appeal. The Inspectorate did seem to have some acceptance of potential for development on part of the land, but overall, the harm to the AONB was considered too great to approve.
- Turnden at Cranbrook public inquiry which was completed in November 2021. It is anticipated that the Inspector's recommendation will be passed to the Secretary of State at the end of March, so no decision expected soon. TWBC was surprised by some of the Unit's stance at that inquiry, particularly its opposition to Biodiversity Net Gain in relation to Natural England's and to some of the proposals for landscape restoration. It would be useful to understand the Unit's position on certain matters but will wait and see what the outcome of that inquiry is.

9.5 The officers were asked if we could move the meetings to a Tuesday or Thursday as Wednesday is difficult for the Unit due to the number of other essential ongoing meetings on that day of the week.

9.6 The JAC Meeting will be held on Wednesday 30 March 2022 at Missing Link Brewery The Old Dairy, , Selsfield Rd, West Hoathly, RH19 4QS.

Agenda Item: 9

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

**Date:** 23 March 2022

**Title of Report:** AONB Management Plan Review Timetable 2022 - 2024

**By:** AONB Landscape Officer

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are recommended to agree the commencement of the next review of the AONB Management Plan, its scope and its indicative timetable.

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### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to launch the review of the AONB Management Plan due by March 2024 and set out the scope and indicative timetable.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1 The AONB Management Plan is a statutory document under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Section 89 of this Act requires local authorities to prepare, publish and review the Management Plan every 5 years.
- 2.2 The current Plan will be the first edition of a new 20-year strategy, the first of which was published in 2004. This approach was designed to be robust and future-proof, resulting in an objective led Plan rooted in an understanding of landscape pattern, and structured around AONB purpose and character. To allow for cost-effective review, the published Plan was kept concise with supporting evidence, data and guidance available online. This approach has allowed for 'light touch' reviews in 2009, 2014 and 2019, minimising the staff resource and budget needed. The next review is now due with a requirement to publish the revised Plan by 2024. Substantive work will be tailored towards the new 20-year strategy within the next Management Plan.

### **3. Supporting information**

- 3.1 Continuing budget and resource pressures exist across AONB teams and local authorities. These restrict the scope of the review that will be possible without additional resources. A proposed scoping report has been appended to this report and an indicative timetable is below. Decision points are highlighted in red.

### **4. Risks**

- 4.1 As with all AONB Unit projects one of the biggest risks is staff retention throughout the lifetime of the project. In this case the Management Plan project may be impacted by the Planning Advisor post which will be vacated in mid-May and it may take some time to recruit a replacement.

4.2 In addition, one of the recommendations of the Government's response to the Glover Report is that Natural England should produce new guidance for preparing AONB Management Plans. Depending on the timing of this guidance this may delay this generation of plans. The recommendation is to progress as set out in this report but for officers to stay involved in national discussions on the guidance to avoid abortive work.

## **5.0 Conclusions and Recommendation**

5.1 Members are asked to agree the commencement of the next review of the AONB Management Plan, its scope and its indicative timetable.

Contact: Sarah Brotherton [sarah.brotherton@highweald.org](mailto:sarah.brotherton@highweald.org)

## AONB Management Plan Review 2022 to 2024 Timetable

Feb-22		Management Plan launch discussed at OSG
Mar-22		Management Plan launch discussed at MB
Mar-22	X	Management Plan launched by JAC and scope and timetable agreed
Apr-22	X	Natural England formally notified
May-22		
Jun-22		
Jul-22		Meeting with OSG on new strategy
Aug-22		
Sep-22		Progress and draft strategy section to OSG
Oct-22	X	Progress report to MB & JAC
Nov-22		
Dec-22		
Jan-23		Consultation Draft discussed by OSG
Feb-23	X	Consultation Draft discussed by MB & approved by JAC
Mar-23		Public consultation
Apr-23		
May-23		
Jun-23		Scope of revisions discussed by OSG and MB
Jul-23		Amendments & modifications
Aug-23		
Sep-23		Final draft discussed by OSG & MB
Oct-23	X	Final draft agreed by JAC & recommended adoption by individual partners
Nov-23		Local Authority adoption processes
Dec-23		
Jan-24		
Feb-24		
Mar-24	X	Plan sent to Secretary of State for formal adoption
Apr-24		
May-24		Dissemination and distribution

Agenda item: 9

# HIGH WEALD AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN: SCOPING REVIEW 2024

## SCOPING REVIEW

March 2022

### 1. Introduction

The AONB Management Plan was first published in 2004. It is written as a 20-year strategy which is reviewed every five years. It is designed as a future-proofed objective led plan, rooted in an understanding of landscape pattern and formative process, and structured around AONB purpose and character. To facilitate access to the plan and allow for cost-effective updating and review the plan was designed so that its primary usage would be on-line, enabling easy access to supporting evidence, data, and guidance.

A 'light touch' review was undertaken in 2019. The next Plan is due in 2024 and will also begin a new 20-year strategy, and therefore a more substantive moderate scale review is planned than the previous review. Given that the present Management Plan is considered in general fit-for-purpose, the majority of the time will be dedicated to focusing on developing a new 20-year Landscape Strategy section of the Plan. The High Weald AONB Unit does not envision undertaking any specific research projects for the intended new sections, due to both budget and time constraints, but also because the new sections and content all fall into academically well researched areas e.g., climate change, soil science and the health, dark skies, and wellbeing benefits of accessing natural environments.

### 2. Components of the review

What will remain unchanged?

- The High Weald AONB Units approach to, and philosophy of natural beauty, and majority of its key components will remain unchanged.
- The majority of the overall structure of the 2019-24 Management Plan and content will remain unchanged. Specifically, there are no changes planned for the chapters on The High Weald (facts and figures, landscape, brief history), About the Plan and AONB Policy and Legal Framework other to ensure they are up to date.

What will be deepened and/ or enhanced?

- The JAC Commitment and Vision will be strengthened.

- What is Natural Beauty is to be updated with contemporary research.
- The Key Characteristics: will be reviewed to ensure a good understanding of what characterises each key component. The individual component vision statements will be removed / incorporated into the overall vision.
- The Routeways component will be reviewed to consider including specific objectives regarding public access to the countryside, taken and rewritten from the current 'Other Qualities' component.
- The Settlement component will be reviewed to consider including iconic buildings and sites such as Battle Abbey for their cultural qualities.

#### What will be reviewed and refreshed?

- All key facts and figures within the Management Plan will be checked and updated as required, this includes High Weald and natural and cultural capital facts and figures, as well as maps throughout the document.
- The 'Land-based Economy and Related Rural Life', and 'Other Qualities' sections will be reviewed and may be relocated where appropriate into the other components, whilst other parts will be used in the new Landscape Strategy section.

#### What will be added?

- A new key component 'Dark Skies' will be added. This will build on substantial work that the High Weald Unit has been undertaking regarding dark skies over the past few years, including work with CPRE and the South Downs National Park Authority, and several local dark skies groups.
- A new key component 'Perceptual and Aesthetic Qualities' will be added. This will address the qualities that are perceived from moving through the natural and cultural landscape of the High Weald, but which cannot be addressed through the characters of physical features alone. For example, long views, quietude, tranquillity, rurality and other experiential qualities.
- High Weald Landscape Strategy – this constitutes the largest change and forms an additional part of the Management Plan (key components and other existing sections making up the other part). This section sets out the threats and issues to the High Weald for the next 20 years and will present a set of principles and visions to conserving and enhancing the functional landscape and natural beauty of the High Weald underpinned by an aspirational investment plan for the next five years.
- This section is broken down into:
  - An introduction to the landscape strategy which will also present the values of Future Generations and Shifting Baseline Syndrome which will underpin the 20-year strategy.
  - 1. Soil – addressing the neglected importance of soil health with a soil-up strategy based around holistic land management approaches.
  - 2. Climate change – coupling the ranging threats from climate change with sustainable, nature-based solutions to creating a climate resilient landscape.
  - 3. Nature Recovery – addressing the ecological crisis and how delivery of recovery strategies may be expected to look across the High Weald.

4. People - tackling the loss of relationship with nature incorporating health, inequality, social justice and education.
5. Planning –with a dedicated section to providing guidance specific to Local Authority planners using the Management Plan.

### 3 Layout overview:

This overview presents the current thinking of the layout, however there may be some structural changes to the layout in draft versions

#### Forward

High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

The High Weald

About the plan

AONB policy and Framework

What is natural beauty?

HW AONB statement of significance

Natural beauty (key components)

Twenty year Plan introduction

Landscape strategies

High Weald charter

References

### 4 Additional work

We are undertaking some public engagement work this spring, funded by Defra on three specific topics, which we will use to guide aspects of the next Management Plan:

1. Understand what aspects of natural beauty residents and visitors value, what detracts from natural beauty in the High Weald, and how do people perceive the High Weald landscape as they move through it.
2. Within the next twenty years many carbon neutral targets set by local authorities will expire, we want to understand what the public thinks this will look like in the High Wealds Rural landscape.
3. How the AONB is perceived with regards to access, and which barriers prevent access to the High Weald.

Further consultancy work may be undertaken at later stages, as and when more understanding of Management Plan needs, and direction become clear.



## **Agenda Item: 10**

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

**Date:** 30 March 2022

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

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

**Purpose of Report:** To approve the Revenue Budget 2022/23

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### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to:

1. approve the Revenue Budget for 2022/23;
  2. agree a review of local authority contributions and a revised budget proposal for presentation to the November 2022 JAC meeting.
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### **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 This report sets out the budget for 2022/23 following a consultation approved by the committee at its last meeting of 25 November 2021.
- 1.2 The budget supports the work plan for 2022/23 which sets out how the High Weald AONB Partnership will deliver its core functions and enable implementation of the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019 to 2024.

### **2. FINANCIAL APPRAISAL**

- 2.1 Appendix A presents the forecast out-turn for 2021/22, the budget for 2022/23 and an indicative budget for 2023/24. Appendix B summarises the project budgets.
- 2.2 The Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) contribution for 2022/23 has not yet been confirmed. The budget assumes a standstill figure of £277,500.
- 2.3 The allocation of £232,500, equivalent to 83.8% of the Defra single pot contribution, to core activities, other income of £9,800, and £11,100 from the JAC reserves, will achieve a balanced budget for 2022/23.

### **3. BUDGET 2021/22**

- 3.1 The Defra contribution has increased to £305,500 to reflect an additional one-off contribution of £28,000 (advised January 2022, confirmed February 2022).
- 3.2 The High Weald core budget is forecast to have a surplus of £6,500 in 2021/22. The surplus arises from savings due to the allocation of core staff time the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. The forecast reserve at 31 March 2022 is £217,700. The forecast reserve at 31 March 2022 is £217,700.

### **4. BUDGET 2022/23**

#### Core Budget – Expenditure

- 4.1 The budget for 2022/23 is presented in Appendix A. It is based on the 2021/22 figures with inflation at the ESCC applied rate of 2% for salaries and 0% for other costs. The budget allows for:
- (i) Staff costs: a budget for a core team of 5FTE staff which includes incremental progression and contributions to the pension fund.
  - (ii) Accommodation/office equipment costs: rent, rates, office equipment, office running costs and the website.
  - (iii) Partnership running costs: NAAONB membership fees, JAC and partnership meetings, annual review production and miscellaneous public relations costs.
  - (iv) Support services: East Sussex County Council's charges for IT, HR and Finance support and a lump sum contribution to the pension fund.

#### Core Budget – Income

##### **Defra**

- 4.2 The agreement with the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) typically provides a flexible 'single pot' contribution for core and projects from a dedicated protected landscape budget.
- 4.3 Defra have yet to confirm the funding settlement for 2022/23. The budget assumes a standstill figure of £277,500.
- 4.4 Defra's total contribution for 2022/23 is shown in appendix A. It shows the same allocation of the £277,500 contribution with £232,500 to Core and £45,000 to Projects.

## **Local Authority Contributions**

- 4.7 The levels of support from each authority are shown in Appendix A.
- 4.8 All authorities have confirmed that their contribution to core costs will be maintained at 2021/22 levels.

## **Self-funding projects**

- 4.9 JAC expenditure on self-funding projects is presented at Appendix B and is estimated to be £1,101,100 in 2022/23.
- 4.10 The project budget reflects the Partnership is now operating three grant programmes: the Farming in Protected Landscapes Grant Programme (supported by 1.6FTE); Sussex Lund and the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative.
- 4.11 The Community Outreach programme includes High Weald Heroes (supported by an 0.6 FTE) and the High Weald Walks Festival. The Land Management programme includes the Deer Initiative project (supported by an 0.6 FTE) and the Cuckmere and Coombe Slow the Flow project (supported by 1 FTE). A sum of £45,000 has been allocated to Projects from the Defra single pot contribution.
- 4.12 Appendix B indicates the contributions from local authority partners to Partnership-led management plan delivery.
- 4.13 All projects have a balanced budget over the total life of the project. Income is allocated on a pro rata basis over the relevant number of financial years to give a net balance of zero.

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

### Income

- 5.1 Support from Defra beyond 2023 will depend on the government's spending reviews and the weight placed by government on the environment and the Glover Review recommendations.
- 5.2 Local authority contributions were reduced in 2009 and have not increased since. One authority has reduced their core contribution.
- 5.3 Contributions from external bodies for managing grants and projects have generated an income that has balanced the budget in the short term. However these contributions are unpredictable and may not balance the budget in the long term.

## Costs

- 5.4 The CPI for 2022/23 has risen from 1.89% to 4.9% and RPI from 2.03% to 7.8% and this will have an impact on some costs.
- 5.5 Inflationary pressures linked to salaries may be an issue in 2023/24 and beyond.
- 5.6 A five-year budget, assuming rising costs and a static income, highlights the budget challenge. The budget assumes inflationary increases of 2.5% for pay, 50% increase in electricity cost for the first year and 5% thereafter, and 5% increases for all other costs. There is no assumed increase for income.

<b>5 Year Budget Projection</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>2026/27</b>
<b><u>Expenditure</u></b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Staff costs	264.3	269.6	276.3	283.2	290.3
Electricity	1.0	1.0	1.5	1.6	1.7
Accommodation/office equipment	33.3	34.0	35.7	37.5	39.4
Partnership running costs	6.8	6.9	7.2	7.6	8.0
Support services	31.7	31.7	33.3	35	36.8
<b>Total Core Expenditure</b>	<b>337.1</b>	<b>343.2</b>	<b>354.0</b>	<b>364.9</b>	<b>376.2</b>
<b>Total Core Income</b>	<b>(326.0)</b>	<b>(326.0)</b>	<b>(326.0)</b>	<b>(326.0)</b>	<b>(326.0)</b>
Surplus/(deficit) transfer to/(from) reserves	(11.1)	(17.2)	(28.0)	(38.9)	(50.2)
Reserves Balance	199.9	182.7	154.7	115.8	65.6

## Business Plan delivery

- 5.7 Issues affecting the landscape: climate change, agricultural transition and development means there is increasing demand on the AONB Partnership to provide advice and guidance on conserving and enhancing the AONB; furthering and understanding and enjoyment of it; and supporting its land-based economy.
- 5.8 With responsibility for three large grant schemes the Partnership is now also offering a new service. The schemes are welcome and will enable shared objectives for climate, nature recovery, people and sustainable businesses to be met. The grant expenditure is likely to be invested in the local economy. Setting up and managing these programmes is placing a strain on the AONB's core resource.
- 5.9 The pressure on the core team (5 FTE) means there is limited staff capacity to develop and manage new projects. The Partnership's project activity, and the associated staff, is reliant on the AONB team having project development capacity.

## Reserves

- 5.8 In a worst case scenario of all staff being made redundant, 50% of the estimated reserves of £206,600 at 31 March 2023 will be required.
- 5.9 The JAC reserves are sufficient for balancing the budget in the short term, but not the mid to long term.
- 5.10 At the JAC meeting in November 2021 members requested a long term budget and a review of local authority contributions. At the March Management Board meeting members agreed that this review should be undertaken in 2022/23.

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

- 6.1 The 2022/23 core budget is a balanced budget.
- 6.2 The AONB Partnership is providing services within a challenging context. A review of the budget underpinning these services is required.
- 6.3 These conclusions form the basis of the report recommendations.



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

HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
 OUTTURN for 2020/21, BUDGET & FORECAST for 2021/22 AND INDICATIVE BUDGET 2022/23

Appendix A

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	238.5	255.9	3.9	0.0	4.5	264.3	269.6
28.7	Accommodation/office equipment	34.3	45.5	34.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	34.3	35.0
4.0	Partnership running costs	8.7	4.4	8.7	0.0	0.0	(1.9)	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>320.1</b>	<b>330.6</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>2.6</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)	(10.4)	(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>(326.6)</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)	6.5	(4.6)	(3.9)	0.0	(2.6)	(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	621.5	486.1				1,101.1	1,101.1
(50.2)	Defra contribution to self-funded projects (Excluding FiPL)	(45.0)	(72.8)	(45.0)				(45.0)	(45.0)
0.0	Defra contribution to FiPL Project	0.0	(164.3)	0.0				(709.8)	(709.8)
(2.8)	Local authorities contributions	(32.8)	0.0	(32.8)				(30.2)	(30.2)
(294.9)	Other contributions to self-funded projects	(408.3)	(384.4)	(408.3)				(316.1)	(316.1)
<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	941.6	816.7	3.9	0.0	2.6	1,438.2	1,444.3
(654.9)	Total core and project income	(816.7)	(941.6)	(816.7)	(3.9)	0.0	(2.6)	(1,438.2)	(1,444.3)
<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	6.5
Reserves at 31 March 2022	217.7
Transfer to/(from) reserves 2022/23	(11.1)
Reserves at 31 March 2023	206.6

**HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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

Appendix B

2020/21 Outturn £'000		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>									
<b>0.4</b>	<b>JAC expenditure</b>	<b>9.7</b>			<b>0.0</b>			<b>9.4</b>		
(0.4)	Defra		(8.6)			0.0			(8.5)	
0.0	Local authorities		(0.4)			0.0			0.0	
0.0	Other		(0.7)			0.0			(0.9)	
<b>0.0</b>	<b>Total Community Outreach</b>			<b>0.0</b>		<b>0.0</b>				<b>(0.0)</b>
	<b>High Weald Heroes</b>									
<b>25.6</b>	<b>JAC expenditure</b>	<b>26.6</b>			<b>26.9</b>			<b>26.7</b>		
(24.3)	Defra		(13.3)			(18.9)			(13.4)	
(1.3)	Local authorities		(13.3)			0.0			(13.3)	
0.0	Other		0.0			(8.0)			0.0	
<b>0.0</b>	<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>									
<b>4.8</b>	<b>JAC expenditure</b>	<b>12.0</b>			<b>19.8</b>			<b>12.0</b>		
(4.8)	Defra		(12.0)			(12.0)			0.0	
0.0	Defra Increase to Core Grant Funding		0.0			(7.8)			(12.0)	
0.0	Other		0.0			0.0			0.0	
<b>(0.0)</b>	<b>Total Management Plan Evidence and Guidance</b>			<b>0.0</b>		<b>(0.0)</b>				<b>0.0</b>
	<b>3 Landscape Enhancement</b>									
<b>324.0</b>	<b>JAC expenditure</b>	<b>431.8</b>			<b>410.5</b>			<b>337.2</b>		
(16.7)	Defra		(11.1)			(20.0)			(11.1)	
	Defra Increase to Core Grant Funding		0.0			(14.1)			0.0	
(5.2)	Defra (ELMS advocacy)		0.0			0.0			0.0	
(39.0)	Environment Agency		(34.0)			(32.5)			(32.5)	
0.0	Water Catchment Partnership (KWT)		(4.0)			0.0			0.0	
3.4	Local authorities		(13.1)			0.0			(10.9)	
(167.5)	Other		(90.1)			(61.8)			(20.8)	
(19.0)	Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund		(30.8)			(8.3)			0.0	
117.4	National Grid Grant programme		(93.7)			(103.6)			(81.9)	
(197.4)	Sussex Lund Grant programme (Charities Aid Foundation)		(155.0)			(170.2)			(180.0)	
<b>0.0</b>	<b>Total Landscape Enhancement</b>			<b>0.0</b>		<b>0.0</b>				<b>0.0</b>
	<b>5 Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme</b>									
<b>0.0</b>	<b>JAC expenditure</b>	<b>0.0</b>			<b>164.3</b>			<b>709.8</b>		
0.0	Defra		0.0			(164.3)			(709.8)	
<b>0.0</b>	<b>Total Project Development</b>			<b>0.0</b>		<b>0.0</b>				<b>(0.0)</b>
	<b>4 Project Development</b>									
<b>0.0</b>	<b>JAC expenditure</b>	<b>6.0</b>			<b>0.0</b>			<b>6.0</b>		
0.0	Defra		0.0			0.0			0.0	
0.0	Other		0.0			0.0			0.0	
0.0	Local authorities		(6.0)			0.0			(6.0)	
<b>0.0</b>	<b>Total Project Development</b>			<b>0.0</b>		<b>0.0</b>				<b>0.0</b>
<b>354.8</b>	<b>JAC expenditure (to Appendix B)</b>	<b>486.1</b>			<b>621.5</b>			<b>1,101.1</b>		
(51.4)	Expenditure funded by Defra (to Appendix B)		(45.0)			(237.1)			(754.8)	
2.1	Expenditure funded by LAs (to Appendix B)		(32.8)			0.0			(30.2)	
(305.5)	Expenditure funded by Other (to Appendix B)		(408.3)			(384.4)			(316.1)	
<b>0.0</b>	<b>TOTAL JAC expenditure/income</b>	<b>486.1</b>	<b>(486.1)</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>621.5</b>	<b>(621.5)</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>1,101.1</b>	<b>(1,101.1)</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Agenda Item: 11

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

**Date:** 30<sup>th</sup> March 2022

**Title of Report:** Consultation on the Government's response to the Landscapes (Glover) Review: National Parks and AONBs in England - update

**By:** AONB Director

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

1. Note the report
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### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 In 2018 the Government stated that England's designated landscapes (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) have been a great success and that England is a more beautiful and more diverse place because previous generations had taken care to campaign for and set up designated landscapes.
- 1.2 Recognizing this success, the Secretary for State for the Environment announced the independent Review of Designated Landscapes of England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks. The Glover Review was asked to find out what might be done better, what changes could help, and whether definitions and systems - which in many cases date back to their original creation in the 1940s - are still sufficient.
- 1.3 In 2019 the findings of this Review were published following a wide consultation. As part of this process, we hosted a visit by the Review Panel, submitted our own detailed set of written recommendations, and contributed to a response by the Southeast and East of England Protected Landscapes group.

### 2.0 Government response to the Landscapes (Glover) Review

- 2.1 In January 2022 the Government published its response to the Glover Review providing an indication of their intentions and preferred options for the future of the English designated landscapes. It announced a 12-week consultation period and invited the public to comment on its response before the 9<sup>th</sup> of April.

### 3.0 High Weald AONB Unit – initial thoughts on the Government response to the Landscapes (Glover) Review

- 3.1 The High Weald AONB Unit broadly welcomes the Government's response. Much of it chimes with the evidence we and our colleagues elsewhere in England submitted to the Glover Review panel.



- 3.2 We welcome the opportunity to reinvigorate the status of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty with new purposes and powers, and the resources for the teams advising on and supporting the conservation and enhancement of these special places.
- 3.3 However, we believe the Government's response and its proposals fall short of the ambitious and transformational change that Julian Glover and his independent panel envisaged. Central to Glover's recommendations was a clear recognition of the enormous potential and frustrated ambition of the AONB network – 34 designated landscapes, covering 15% of England's land area – to deliver so much more for nature, climate, farming and the rural economy, and people at this critical time.
- 3.4 The successful and proven track record of AONB teams across the country speaks for itself. AONB teams use a unique collaborative approach to advise on the conservation and enhancement of these valued landscapes and promote and support practices to address the challenges and threats these landscapes face.

#### 4.0 Next steps

- 4.1 We are now working closely with our colleagues in the other English AONB teams and with the National Association for AONBs to develop and agree a collective response to the Government's consultation in time for the 9<sup>th</sup> of April.
- 4.2 Our response aims to ensure the Government recognizes and adequately addresses the need for urgent action to secure the future of AONB landscapes and the viability of the local AONB teams advising on their conservation and enhancement.
- 4.3 Our emerging response is divided into a series of themes:
- **Purpose** – the priorities and challenges AONB landscapes and AONB bodies are expected to address, an extension and revision of AONB purposes to reflect contemporary priorities for AONBs, natural beauty with a strengthened link to nature recovery on a landscape scale and the importance of cultural heritage. A second purpose to promote understanding and enjoyment of the area
  - **Powers** – what teeth does an AONB designation fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century need? Strengthening the 'duty of regard' linked to strengthening the status of AONB management plan, a formal role in planning and development management
  - **Governance** – what is needed to drive this work and provide assurance? Robust minimum governance standards which provide sufficient independence to guarantee the integrity of the designation, a need to reconcile the national and local governance with appropriate oversight
  - **Resources** – what does a resilient funding model look like? Address the 'private finance' angle. At least doubling of the core funding over the course of this parliament leading to a dynamic and progressive funding formula that reflects ambition and future needs
  - **Brand** – Renaming AONBs as National Landscapes – what is this, what does it mean, and how will it contribute to the new expectations and demands placed on AONB landscapes and teams?

4.4 We will test the ideas and thoughts being put forward and draft a final proposition before submitting a final response in April. And although we're still formulating the response, three priorities have begun to emerge:

*1. Double the current core funding for AONB teams over the life of this parliament and establish a fair and forward-looking funding formula reflecting ambitions and future needs*

The Glover Review recommended the funding for AONB bodies to be doubled. Funding, which has always been inadequate, has been cut by 36% over the last ten years and the average size of each AONB core team is now only 4 people (most AONB teams also have temporary project staff using funds raised elsewhere). The total annual Government funds provided to all 34 English AONB teams is roughly the same as the budget of one medium-sized secondary school or around half that given each year to our nearest National Park Authority, the South Downs.

An increase in Government funding and a new and fair funding formula is essential to secure the financial and operational viability of the High Weald AONB Unit and our work.

*2. Strengthen the legal framework relating to AONB designation by giving the statutory duties greater weight to ensure all relevant authorities meet their duties when exercising their functions and contributing to AONB management plan implementation*

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities to 'have regard' to the purposes of conservation and enhancement of the AONB while performing their functions. The Glover Review called for this duty to be strengthened to "further" these purposes and to implement protected landscapes' management plans.

Relevant authorities is the term used for all public bodies (unitary and county councils, borough, district, and parish councils, joint planning boards, and other statutory committees), statutory undertakers (such as energy and water utilities, nationalised companies), government ministers and civil servants.

*3. Give AONB bodies a stronger voice in planning including statutory consultee status in planning applications and development plans*

The High Weald AONB is facing an unprecedented level of development which threatens to fundamentally change its distinctive character. The responsibility for determining planning applications remains with the 15 local authorities of the High Weald. The AONB Unit is not a statutory consultee on planning matters, and it remains each local planning authority's decision whether they consult us on a particular planning application or development plan.

The Glover Review recognized that AONB bodies need to be given a stronger voice in planning and recommended statutory consultee status. The Government response suggests a strengthening of the role of AONB teams by making them statutory consultees in the planning process.

## **5.0 Conclusions**

5.1 The primary aim of this joint English AONB partnerships' response to the consultation is to persuade the Government to ensure England's statutory designated landscapes are fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century – delivering more for climate, food and the rural economy, nature, and people. It is essential any proposed changes not only look to the future but are built on and

informed by the legacy and the learning from the last 70 years of AONB designations across England.

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Agenda Item: 12

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

**Date:** 30<sup>th</sup> March 2022

**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 2022/23 and beyond

#### COVID-19

- 2.1 COVID-19 still represents a significant 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 two years, and this is likely to continue into 2022. Inevitably 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 and 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. This will be exacerbated should the government require us to undertake further duties as part of their response to the Landscapes (Glover) Review but fail to provide adequate, commensurate, and sustained resources. The government's intentions continue to be 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 and most of the staff continue to work from the office with the option to work at 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 with appropriate measures.

#### 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 2022-23 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.

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**Appendix A High Weald JAC - COVID-19 Key Risks 30.03.22.**

**Sponsor: Sally Marsh/Jason Lavender**

**Author: Jason Lavender**

**Date: March 2022 - November 2022**

## Risk Log

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

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

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

Unit ref	Risk no	Risk What can go wrong	Root Causes How it can go wrong	Owner	Inherent Risk			Controls / Mitigating Actions Preventative & reactive control measures	Control Owner	Residual Risk			
					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	2	Amber	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	2 Amber	



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