



HIGH WEALD JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee will be held at 1 pm on Wednesday 12 November at the Crowborough Centre, Pine Grove, Crowborough, TN6 1FE

- Lunch and refreshments will be available from 1 pm.
 - Presentation from Casper Johnson, East Sussex County Council Archaeologist, Recent archaeological discoveries and our understanding of the High Weald.
1. Apologies
 2. Members' Interests

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

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

To confirm the minutes of the last meeting of the JAC held on 26 March 2014 (page 3)
 5. Matters arising from the Management Board Meeting

To note the matters arising from the Management Board meeting held on 5 November 2014. (To be tabled at meeting)
 6. Minutes of the Officer Steering Group

To note the minutes of the Officer Steering meeting held on 25 September 2014 (page 7)
 7. Airspace and Noise Management over AONB

To consider a verbal report from the AONB Director
 8. Constitution Issues

To consider a verbal report on amendments to the constitution for:

 - a) Election process for Management Board Members
 - b) Election process for independent representatives
 9. Revenue Budget 2015/2016

To consider a report by the Deputy Treasurer (page 12)
 10. High Weald Work Programme

To consider a report by the AONB Business Manager (page 18)

11. High Weald AONB Unit Staff

To consider a report by the AONB Director (page 21)

12. Risk Management

To consider a report by the AONB Director, Risk Log attached at (page 22)

13. Any other business

Joint Advisory Committee Meeting - 27 March 2015.

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

Samantha Nicholas

Clerk to the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell, East Sussex TN5 7PR
E: s.nicholas@highweald.org; T: 01580 879500

Agenda Item No : 4

HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE



26 March 2014 Meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee held at Hendall Manors Barn, Nr Herons Ghyll.

Present:

Cllr B Kentfield	Rother District Council, Chair
Cllr Mrs J Davison	Sevenoaks District Council, Deputy Chair
Cllr M Balfour	Kent County Council
Cllr Mrs S Murray	Tonbridge & Malling District Council
Cllr Mrs J Soyke	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Cllr R Street	Hastings Borough Council
Cllr R Taylor CBE	Ashford Borough Council
Cllr Mrs S Tidy	East Sussex County Council
Mrs Alison Field	Forestry Commission
Tim Broomhead	CLA
Mr J Seymour	Natural England
Cllr Mrs R Moore	Wealden District Council

Officers:

Mr T Alty	Finance Manager, East Sussex County Council
Mr I Bailey	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Mr T Cookson	Hastings Borough Council
Ms R Childs	Kent County Council
Mr A Fowler	Finance Manager, East Sussex County Council
Mr D Greenwood	Surrey County Council
Mr D Scully	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Mr J Lavender	AONB Director (job share)
Ms S Marsh	AONB Director (job share)
Mr G Mee	Assistant Director CET, East Sussex County Council
Mr A Shaw	Planning Officer, AONB
Mr C Winchester	Research Officer, AONB
Mr P D'Aguiar	Communications Officer, AONB

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies were received from the following Members and officers:

Councillor Hersey, Councillor Sydney, Councillor Mrs Kitchen, Ms K Johnson, Mr P Newdick, Councillor Blake, Mr D Marlow.

2. MEMBERS INTERESTS

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

3. URGENT MATTERS

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

4. MINUTES OF THE JAC MEETING – 8 November 2013

4.1 RESOLVED to agree the Minutes of the meeting of 8 November 2013 as a correct record.

4.2 It was reported that under tourism item A3 of the minutes, the funding allocated by Defra for the Our Land programme have been reallocated to fund flood relief works elsewhere in the country. It was confirmed that a few AONBs are looking to fund the extension of the Our Land programme but this would be a smaller scale scheme. Responsible Travel and Surrey Hills AONB partnership have committed to support the website for a further two years.

5. MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD – 5 March 2014

5.1 RESOLVED to note the Minutes of the Management Board held on 5 March 2014.

6. MINUTES OF THE OFFICER STEERING GROUP – 11 February 2014

6.1 RESOLVED to note the Minutes of the Officer Steering Group held on 11 February 2014.

7. MATTERS ARISING

7.1 It was noted that there were no matters arising from the Minutes.

8. REVENUE BUDGET 2014/15

8.1 The Committee considered a report by the Deputy Treasurer which presented the Revenue Budget for 2014/15 and the Financial Issues 2015/16 and beyond.

8.2 The Finance Manager highlighted changes in the figures:

- item 2.3, it should read ‘...other income of £2,200 has been required to achieve a balanced budget.’
- Item 5.1, it should read ‘...and an additional income of £2,200 has been secured.’

8.4 It was explained that a balanced budget had been achieved with savings of £5,900 and an increase of Other Incomes of £2,200. The budget assumes that Defra contribution will be £255,588 for 2014/15.

8.5 Points to note:

- Budget 2013/14 for the current financial year showed a small surplus of £2,900.
- Within core expenditure costs of £18,800, arising from East Sussex County Councils pricing policy has been removed from the budget presented to the JAC in November 2013. The removal has been balanced by contribution to the budget by ESCC; however, their removal has reduced the JAC’s gross expenditure budget.
- Savings have been made on office accommodation and equipment provision. Plumpton College and Woodland Enterprise Limited were thanked for agreeing to temporarily reducing the annual rent for office accommodation.

- Based on 2014/15 assumptions it is forecast that the contributions from Defra and Local authorities will result in a deficit of £8,700 in 2015/16.

8.2 RESOLVED to note the report and:

- (1) approve the Revenue Budget for 2014/15;
- (2) thank local authorities and DEFRA for their contributions towards core costs and High Weald Heroes and;
- (3) thank Plumpton College and Woodland Enterprise Ltd for the temporary reduction in office accommodation costs.

9. HIGH WEALD AONB JAC PROJECTS

The JAC considered a report by Jason Lavender, AONB Co-Director, which set out the projects currently underway.

- 10.1 Samantha Nicholas presented an update on the Community Landscape Fund, (CLF) to the Members. The Fund was formerly known as the Sustainable Development Fund. The presentation explained the current CLF structure and highlighted the wide range of community projects that the Fund has supported in 2013/14. Presentation appended
- 10.2 Samantha Nicholas thanked the Panel Members for their support over the 7 years the Fund has been running and highlighted the fact that without their flexibility and responsive attitude CLF would not be able to operate so efficiently.
- 10.3 Samantha also asked for the Members to inform her of any suitable projects for 2014/15. In response to the presentation David Scully requested that the Unit inform each local authority if any projects were in their particular area so that they can give additional support if required.
- 10.2 Cllr Mrs J Davison thanked Sally Marsh and Samantha Nicholas for the on-going management of the fund.
- 10.3 Charles Winchester presented an outline of the Dark Skies project that is currently being developed by the Unit. Presentation and handout appended.
- 10.4 Charles Winchester was thanked for the presentation and in response the following was noted:
 - Kent County Council has been reducing the hours street lamps are used across the county for and this has made a saving of £70,000. There is a longer term plan to replace lights with LED technology.
 - East Sussex County Council is introducing a similar lighting scheme with a potential payback period of 10 years.
 - Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has recently been involved with a wider project which encompasses developing new light schemes which have new technology to reduce light pollution.
 - Forestry Commission have set up a dark skies observatory in Kielder Forest in Northumberland.

10.5 It was discussed that more information could be made available to inform commercial businesses and building developers on the importance of new light technology to support reduction in light pollution.

10.6 RESOLVED to note the report and:
(i) To update the Members of the Unit's progress towards achieving Dark Skies designation.

11. HIGH WEALD AONB UNIT STAFFING UPDATE

The JAC considered a report on staff by the Jason Lavender, AONB Co- Director.

11.1 RESOLVED to note the report

12. RISK MANAGEMENT

The JAC considered a report by Jason Lavender, AONB Co-Director on risk management and the associated risk management matrix.

12.1 RESOLVED to note the report.

13. AOB

13.1 Sally Marsh brought two meetings to the attention of the Members:

- The National Association of AONBs conference to be held in Penrith from 8-10 July 2014. There is a place available for a JAC Member to attend. Please inform the Clerk if you wish to attend.
- The Kent Farmsteads Guidance meeting is to be held on Wednesday 20 May. The venue location will be in the Low Weald.

13.2 Cllr Mrs J Soyke congratulated the Unit on the 'saving of the High Weald Farms' article in South East Farmers magazine.

13.2 The AONB Joint Advisory Committee meeting dates for 2014/15 to be organised via doodle poll.

14. LAUNCH OF HIGH WEALD AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN 2014-2019

14.1 Sally Marsh and Cllr Kentfield officially launched the High Weald Joint Advisory Management Plan for 2014-2019.

14.2 The Launch was followed by a 'walk and talk' presentation on the heritage of Hendall Manor buildings and site from David Martin. David is an expert in medieval and early post-medieval building construction in the South East of England.

Agenda Item No : 6

High Weald Officer Steering Group

Notes of a meeting of the High Weald Officer Steering Group held on Thursday 25 September 2014, at Mid-Sussex District Council Offices.

Clerk to JAC: Samantha Nicholas

PRESENT:

David Marlow, Rother District Council (Chair)
David Scully, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (Vice-chair)
David Greenwood, Surrey County Council
Marina Briggshaw, Wealden District Council
Virginia Pullan, East Sussex County Council
Ruth Childs, Kent County Council
Jennifer Hollingum, Mid-Sussex District Council
Jason Lavender, Co-Director High Weald Unit
Andrew Shaw, High Weald AONB Unit

Action

1. MINUTES

1.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on the 11 February 2014 were agreed as a correct record.

1.2 The following actions from the minutes were reviewed:

3.4 It was confirmed that a holding response letter had been sent by Cllr Brian Kentfield and Andrew Shaw would collate responses. No further action required at present.

4.5 Julia Coneybeer, Natural England was invited to the meeting but is currently on maternity leave. Rebecca Bishop is covering her post and it was agreed that Rebecca would be invited to the next meeting in February 2015.

7.2 The Airports commission will be reporting on the most suitable location for another runway after the election.

Updates will be provided through the sub-group.

Ruth Childs provided the link for the Kent County Councils response;

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/news/campaigns-and-events/aviation-strategy>

2. APOLOGIES

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from; Aeron Rees, Horsham DC, Paul Newdick, Tandridge DC, Jenny Knowles

Tonbridge & Malling BC; Helen French, Sevenoaks DC.

3 Planning and design sub-group

3.1 It was noted that Diane Russell, Rother District Council Conservation & Design Officer has joined the sub-group.

3.2 David Scully took the officers through the proposed actions from the planning and design sub-group meeting held on 16 May 2014.

3.3 **Action: The High Weald website will be developed to have a planning and design sub-group section. This will give officers access to background documents and policy information.** Andrew Shaw

3.4 David Scully outlined a series of options on how a High Weald design panel may be formed. The South Downs and the South East Design Panel models were discussed. It was recognised that these were architecturally driven rather than landscaped focussed and the sub-group should work towards setting up a High Weald Design Panel.

3.5 **Actions: David Scully will collate and circulate available design panel information and policy details of each authority and distribute via email:** David Scully

- **Officers to send information to David Scully on local authority design panels such as Rother and Mid-Sussex, and updates to planning protocols**
- **Sub-group meeting will be held early November date and venue to be advised.**

4 AONB consultations

4.1 Andrew Shaw updated the group on the variety of consultations the Unit have been involved with. There has been an increase of waste and minerals applications being received by the Unit. This increase had also been reflected in pre-planning applications.

It was noted that a joint pre-planning application site visit, with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, has been conducted at a major development in Cranbrook.

4.2 The Unit has had a significant number of small scale PV Andrew Shaw

applications. Andrew also discussed with the group a large scale solar panel application, at Shelley Plain, to the west of A23.

Action: Officers requested that details be sent to them.

David Scully

A discussion about temporary or permanent nature of renewable energy installation and restoration conditions. A recent appeal on 25 year lifespan was discussed. **Action: David Scully to send information to officers.**

4.3 A discussion about the Unit charging for specific services was initiated by Andrew Shaw. It was suggested that the Unit could potentially charge for pre-application site visits and for the time to produce any resulting report.

5. Memorandum of Agreement (MOU)

5.1 Jason Lavender took the group through the background of the changes to the MOU and the need to have an agreement for OSG members to use during budget setting discussions within the respective local authorities. It was reiterated that it would not be appropriate (particularly given the the current financial, time and personnel limitations) for the Unit to produce individual service level agreements for each local authority.

5.2 A discussion around the type of agreement was held. It was suggested by the group that the 'agreement' should be a maximum of two pages in length, outlining the services the Unit will be providing to the local authorities; it should coincide with the five year Management Plan timescale and the agreement can be signed individually by the local authorities rather than all local authorities signing one document.

5.3 **Action: Gerry Sherwin to prepare a draft copy of the new partnership agreement to be circulated to the OSG Members before the Management Board Meeting on 5 November.**

Gerry Sherwin

6.

6.1 It was agreed that the Unit would also produce a covering letter which introduces the new partnership agreement and budget process.

Gerry Sherwin

7. PROJECT UPDATES

- 7.1 Samantha Nicholas updated the group on Dark Skies. The Unit is developing a pilot to support the application of a Dark Skies Community for Wadhurst Parish. A dark skies community event is to be held on 25 February from 6.30pm at Uplands Community College. The event will raise awareness of light pollution issues and encourage support for the Dark Skies Community application. This event is aimed at a wide audience and has the support of the Wadhurst Astronomy Club, primary school and parish council. There will be a guest speaker, Dan Oakley, South Downs Dark Skies Officer; an indoor planetarium; the astronomy club and Uplands Community College students will have an astronomy demonstration; and there will be a display of positive lighting systems.
- 7.2 Jason Lavender informed the group that he had attended the East Sussex Economic Scrutiny Panel in September and gave a presentation on the importance of livestock agriculture and the AONB Unit's emerging work to re-vitalize this sector in the Weald.
- 7.3 The group were informed that additional funding from Defra and due for the Our Land rural tourism had been instead diverted to fund flood works associated with the Somerset Levels. The AONB partnerships involved with this project were seeking other opportunities to support the future of this project. Also, the AONB Unit has been involved in the development and implementation of an online landscape training tool to support the Our Land tourism businesses.
- 7.4 Rachel Bennington joined the Unit, in September, as the High Weald Hero Education Officer.
- 7.5 Living Woods project is managing several events building on the success of last year's programme. These include a Game Management in Woodlands event on 7 October and the History of Boat Building in the Weald by Dr Damien Goodburn on 11 October.

- 7.6 The OSG officers were informed of the research reports that can now be found on the High Weald website including, Unconventional Hydrocarbons in High Weald and the High Weald AONB Biodiversity Statement. Sam Nicholas
- Action: a direct link to these documents will be sent to the officers**
- 8. ITEMS FOR MANAGEMENT BOARD AND JAC**
- 8.1 Items suggested were:
- MOU update
 - water framework directive presentation
- 9. AOB AND DATES FOR NEXT MEETING**
- 9.1 Ruth Childs informed the group about the Kent GIS Service developed by Peter Wayne. This is offering a bespoke service to AONB partnerships and local authorities.
- 9.2 Ruth Childs invited the officers to the Kent Landscape Infrastructure presentation on the afternoon, 6 November. Ruth Childs
- Action: Ruth Childs to send full details to officers.**
- 9.3 Next meeting to be held in February 2015, doodle poll to be sent to officers. It was suggested the meeting should be held in a central location such as Crowborough. Sam Nicholas

Committee:	High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Date:	12 November 2014
Title of Report:	Draft Revenue Budget 2015/16
By:	Deputy Treasurer to the Joint Advisory Committee
Purpose:	To consider the draft Revenue Budget 2015/16 and agree it as a basis for consultation with contributing bodies

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to approve:

1. the draft budget for 2015/16; and
 2. the commencement of budget consultation with the local authorities and Defra
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Supporting information

1. FINANCIAL APPRAISAL

- 1.1 A draft budget for 2015/2016 is attached. It is recommended that the budget shown in Appendix A be approved as a basis for consultation with contributing bodies/authorities.
- 1.2 The Core budget has been balanced by allocating 84% of the reduced Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) contribution to the Core budget and other income of £10,800.
- 1.3 There are a number of key/significant financial issues and risks which are detailed in this report.
- 1.4 Following consultation with contributing bodies/authorities, a final budget for 2015/2016 will be presented to the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) for approval at its March 2015 meeting.

2. CONTEXT

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

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

- 2.2 As the High Weald is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the JAC is required to carry out many statutory functions on behalf of local authorities under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. These statutory duties are set out in detail at the end of the report. At a time of cutbacks in public spending and local authorities having to make considerable savings, it is important that the core funding of the JAC remains sufficient to deliver those statutory services. This ensures that the JAC can continue to manage statutory services in a co-ordinated way.
- 2.3 It should be noted that local authority contributions in the region of £84,700 in 2015/2016 are likely to generate external funding of at least £352,400 through Defra and other organisations:

Non-Defra on Projects	£86,000
Defra Core	£214,700
Defra Projects	£40,900
Other Income	<u>£10,800</u>
Total External Funding	£352,400

The High Weald Unit's Work Plan 2015/2016

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

High Weald JAC Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)

- 2.5 The budget has been developed within the context of the tri-partite Memorandum of Understanding between Defra, Natural England and the NAAONB and the emerging agreement between local authorities and High Weald JAC's host authority, East Sussex County Council.

Decreasing Defra Contributions

- 2.6 In December 2010 Defra advised AONB partnerships that there would be a total reduction in contributions of 21.5% based on the 2010/11 allocation. The total grant reduction of £71,020 has been made equally over the four years 2011/12 to 2014/15.

High Weald JAC Budget 2014/2015

- 2.7 The forecast outturn for 2014/15 shows a surplus of £6,200. The forecast reserves at 31st March 2015 are £103,900.

3. FINANCIAL ISSUES

- 3.1 The draft budget is presented to the JAC for consideration. Appendix A shows the Core Budget and Appendix B shows an indicative Project Budget. Increased income of £4,600 has been identified which would offset increased staff costs, resulting in a break-even budget for 2015/16.

- 3.2 The draft budget assumes the same allocation of the Defra contribution between core and projects as 2014/2015; 84% to core and 16%. The draft budget assumes that local authorities will strive to maintain their contributions at the 2014/15 level.

Core Budget - Expenditure

Summary

- 3.3 Inflation has been applied at rate of 1% for staff and 0% for all other costs.

Staff Costs	£4,600
Savings from additional income	<u>-£4,600</u>
Total Net Increase	£Nil

Staff Costs

- 3.4 The draft budget allows for a core team of 5.5 FTE staff: Director (1.2FTE); Business Manager (0.8FTE); Planning Officer (1.0FTE); Research Officer (0.6FTE); Communications Officer (0.6FTE); Team Support Officer (0.8FTE) and Administrator (0.5FTE). Staff costs are subject to inflation of 1% and incremental progression as a result of revised grades following the Single Status Review of all posts and newly appointed staff starting at the bottom of their salary scale. The current budget assumes contributions to the pension fund of 20.30% in 2015/2016.

Accommodation/Office Equipment

- 3.5 This is a standstill budget that covers the cost of rent, rates, office maintenance and running costs and office supplies.

Core Communications

- 3.6 This is a standstill budget that allows for the production of the annual review and minor public relations costs.

Partnership running costs and support services

- 3.7 This is a standstill budget that covers the costs associated with running JAC meetings and representing the partnership at relevant regional and national forums, producing the Small Bodies Annual Return and the NAAONB membership fee.
- 3.8 The budget headings assume that IT, personnel and financial support will continue to be provided by ESCC and the JAC's clerk service will continue to be provided in house by the High Weald JAC's Team Support Officer.

Core Budget - Income

Summary

- 3.9 The draft budget shows contributions from local authorities at the same level as 2014/15. The budgeted contribution from Defra also remains at the same level as 2014/15.

Defra

- 3.10 The 2015/16 core contribution is assumed in this report to be £214,700 which is the same as 2014/15.

Local Authority Contributions

- 3.11 The draft budget assumes no inflationary increase to the core contributions of local authorities and assumes that they will strive to maintain contributions at the 2014/15 level.

Other Contributions

- 3.12 The draft budget assumes other contributions to the core budget of £10,800 partly from hosted project officers contributing to accommodation costs and partly from charges for Unit services.

Core Budget - Reserves

- 3.13 The JAC reserves at 31st March 2016 are estimated to be £103,900, the same as the forecast for 31st March 2015.

Self-Funding Projects

- 3.14 The Self-funding projects budget is attached at Appendix B. The projects include the Sustainable Development Fund, Living Woods project; Brede Valley Habitat Enhancement Scheme and High Weald Heroes Phase II. Projects in development, whose budgets have yet to be confirmed, have not been detailed in the Appendix B.

- 3.15 The Defra grant contribution allocated to Partnership Projects is £40,900.

- 3.16 The Defra grant contribution to Partnership Projects includes £25,100 allocated to the Sustainable Development Fund, the same as the 2014/15 contribution.

4. FINANCIAL ISSUES 2015/16 AND BEYOND

- 4.1 There have been annual reductions made in the Defra contribution to achieve the total CSR saving of 21.5% by March 2015. The following table shows the Defra grant allocation and the budget savings of £51,300 made since 2011/12.

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Defra grant allocated to:					
Core	232.5	232.1	214.8	214.7	214.7
Projects and SDF	79.4	62.1	62.5	61.8	40.9
Total	309.9	294.2	277.3	276.5	255.6
Core expenditure	346.6	325.4	297.0	305.6	310.2
Defra core contribution	232.5	232.1	214.7	214.7	214.7
LA core contribution	105.9	101.6	84.7	84.7	84.7
Other	8.2	4.5	6.0	12.4	10.8
(Surplus)/Deficit	(2.5)	(3.8)	(8.5)	(6.2)	0.0
Budgeted Savings	18.7	28.7	1.7	2.2	0
Reserves at 31 st March	85.4	89.2	97.7	103.9	103.9

- 4.2 A balanced position has been achieved for 2015/16 assuming Defra and local authorities maintain their core contribution at the 2014/15 level and that an increasing level of income from other sources can be maintained.
- 4.3 In view of the likelihood of CSR savings from 2016/17 onwards the JAC needs to consider ways of further increasing other income for core activity and allocating a greater proportion of the Defra single pot contribution towards core costs.
- 4.4 The remaining savings options include: office relocation and reducing the hours and number of core staff.
- 4.5 Government policy changes indicate that redundancy costs arising from reducing Defra contributions will not be considered eligible for grant aid. The JAC therefore needs to retain a minimum reserve of £95,000 to meet redundancy costs.

5. RISKS

- 5.1 The key risks and financial implications that the JAC will wish to note are that the core budget for 2015/16 assumes:
- That local authorities can maintain their core contributions at the same level as 2014/15.
 - That Defra maintain their contribution at 2014/15 levels.
 - That employer's pension costs for 2015/16 will be 20.30%.
 - That salary inflation for 2015/16 will be 1%
 - That other inflation for 2015/16 will be 0%.
- 5.2 Beyond 2016/17 there is no clarity around the level of Defra funding.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The JAC should note that the draft budget contains a number of budget assumptions, many of which could change given the current financial climate.
- 6.2 The Management Board are considering the remaining savings options, and alternative contribution sources, in the context of a new 3-year Business Strategy for 2016 - 2019, so that a balanced budget can be achieved from 2016/17 onwards.
- 6.3 The draft budget for self-financing projects assumes operation of four significant projects in 2015/16.
- 6.4 Support for the draft budget will provide the JAC with the capacity to deliver most of its core functions in 2015/16.

Mo Hemsley

Deputy Treasurer to the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Statutory purpose of the High Weald AONB

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

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

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

HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

APPENDIX A

FORECAST OUTTURN 2014/15, BUDGET 2015/16 AND INDICATIVE BUDGET 2016/17

2013/14 <u>Actual</u>	<u>2014/15</u>		<u>2015/16</u>				<u>2016/17</u>	
	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Outturn</u>	<u>Original</u>	<u>Inflation</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Indicative</u>	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Actual Details								
Expenditure								
223.3 Staff costs	232.6	232.6	232.6	1.8	2.8	0.0	237.2	240.6
36.8 Accommodation/office equipment	34.2	34.2	34.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	34.2	34.2
2.5 Communication costs	3.5	3.5	3.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.5	3.5
7.1 Partnership running costs	8.0	8.0	8.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.0	8.0
27.3 Support services	27.3	27.3	27.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	27.3	27.3
297.0 Total Core Expenditure	305.6	305.6	305.6	1.8	2.8	0.0	310.2	313.6
65.5 JAC expenditure on self-funding projects	113.5	92.2	113.5	0.0	0.0	(27.5)	86.0	100.3
62.5 Defra expenditure on self-funding projects	40.9	61.8	40.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	40.9	36.4
1.3 Project Enabling Fund expenditure on self-funding projects	9.1	9.0	9.1	0.0	0.0	2.0	11.1	11.1
129.3 Total JAC expenditure on self-funding projects	163.5	163.0	163.5	0.0	0.0	(25.5)	138.0	147.8
426.3 Total Gross Expenditure	469.1	468.6	469.1	1.8	2.8	(25.5)	448.2	461.4
Core Contributions								
214.8 Defra	214.7	214.7	214.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	214.7	204.0
22.4 East Sussex County Council	22.4	22.4	22.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.4	22.4
10.0 Kent County Council	10.0	10.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0	10.0
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
6.0 Other Income	6.2	12.4	6.2	0.0	0.0	4.6	10.8	6.0
305.5 Total Core Contributions	305.6	311.8	305.6	0.0	0.0	4.6	310.2	294.7
1.3 Project Enabling Fund: (to)/from balances	9.1	9.0	9.1	0.0	0.0	2.0	11.1	11.1
1.3 Total Local Authority Project Enabling Fund Contributions	9.1	9.0	9.1	0.0	0.0	2.0	11.1	11.1
62.5 Defra contributions to self-funding projects	40.9	61.8	40.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	40.9	36.4
65.5 JAC contributions to self-funding projects	113.5	92.2	113.5	0.0	0.0	(27.5)	86.0	100.3
434.8 Total Contributions	469.1	474.8	469.1	0.0	0.0	(20.9)	448.2	442.5
8.5 Transfer (from)/to reserves	0.0	6.2	0.0	(1.8)	(2.8)	4.6	0.0	(18.9)
(8.5) Total (surplus)/deficit for year	2.3	(6.2)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	18.9
89.2 Reserves Brought Forward	92.1	97.7	103.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	103.9	103.9
8.5 Transfer (from)/to reserves	0.0	6.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	(18.9)
97.7 Reserves Carried Forward	92.1	103.9	103.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	103.9	85.0

HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SELF FUNDING PROJECTS BUDGET 2014/15 & INDICATIVE BUDGET 2015/16

	Budget 2014/15			Outurn 2014/15			Indicative Budget 2015/16		
	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000
<u>1 Weald Meadows</u>									
JAC expenditure	0.0			2.7			1.2		
Defra		0.0			(1.3)			(1.2)	
JAC Partnership Enabling Fund		0.0			(1.3)			0.0	
Other		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0
<u>2 Historic Settlements</u>									
JAC expenditure	8.0			2.4			2.0		
Defra		0.0			(1.2)			0.0	
Local Authorities		(4.0)			0.0			0.0	
Other		(4.0)	0.0		(1.2)	0.0		(2.0)	0.0
<u>3 Weald and Downs Ancient Woodland Project</u>									
JAC expenditure	1.2			4.0			1.5		
Defra		0.0			(1.1)			0.0	
Local Authorities		(1.2)			(2.9)			0.0	
Other		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0		(1.5)	0.0
<u>4 Sustainable Development Fund</u>									
JAC expenditure	25.1			23.0			25.1		
Defra		(25.1)			(23.0)			(25.1)	
Other		0.0	0.0			0.0		0.0	0.0
<u>5 Living Woods</u>									
JAC expenditure	31.8			34.0			24.0		
Defra		0.0			(0.0)			0.0	
Heritage Lottery Fund		(15.9)			(17.0)			0.0	
Other		(15.9)	0.0		(17.0)	0.0		(24.0)	0.0
<u>6 High Weald Heroes Phase III</u>									
JAC expenditure	18.3			17.9			19.2		
Defra		(9.1)			(9)			(9.6)	
JAC Partnership Enabling Fund		(9.1)			(9)			(9.6)	
Other		0.0	0.0		0	0.0		0.0	0.0
<u>7 Brede Habitat Enhancement Project</u>									
JAC expenditure	60.0			35.0			60.0		
Defra		0.0			0.0			0.0	
Environment Agency		(10.0)			0.0			0.0	
Local authorities		(50.0)	0.0		(35.0)	0.0		(60.0)	0.0
<u>8 Our Land</u>									
JAC expenditure	6.6			5.2			0.0		
Surrey County Council		0.0			0.0			0.0	
Defra		(6.6)	0.0		(5.2)	0.0		0.0	0.0
<u>9 Weald Restocking Feasibility Study</u>									
JAC expenditure	12.5			17.7			5.0		
Defra		0.0			0.0			(5.0)	
Local Authorities		(12.5)	0.0		(17.7)	0.0		0.0	0.0
JAC expenditure (to Appendix A)	163.5	(113.5)		142.0	(92.2)		138.1	(86.0)	
Project Enabling Fund expenditure (to Appendix A)		(9.1)			(9.0)			(11.1)	
Expenditure Funded by Defra (to Appendix A)		(40.9)			(40.9)			(40.9)	
TOTAL JAC expenditure/income	163.5	(163.5)	(0.0)	142.0	(142.0)	0.0	138.1	(138.1)	(0.0)

Committee: High Weald Joint Advisory Committee
Date: 12 November 2014
Title of Report: Staff Unit Business Plan Update
By: AONB Business Manager

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to note the report.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Staff Unit works to an annual business plan which is developed within the context of the High Weald AONB Management Plan and a three-year business strategy.
- 1.2 The Unit reports on its work through regular e-news, reports to the meetings of the Management Board and the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee and an annual review, which is circulated in July following approval of the statutory accounts.
- 1.3 The business plan is attached as Appendix A. Columns A set out the Unit's functions; columns B-C set out planned activities and targets; column D provides progress against planned activities. New activities that have been developed in response to external drivers are highlighted in pink.

2.0 Progress April 2014 to September 2014

- 2.1 The Business Plan has five themes under which work is delivered but progress is summarised under two themes below.

Acting jointly to review, prepare and deliver the AONB Management Plan

- 2.2 The new High Weald AONB Management Plan was published in April 2014 and an emphasis of the Unit's work in 2014/15 is developing and supporting partnership projects that deliver the Plan's objectives.
- 2.3 Key activities in the last 6 months have included:
 - Completion of the feasibility study for *Restocking the Weald: Securing the future of livestock farming in the High Weald's working landscape*. Awareness of the study has been raised at a local and national level amongst the livestock

sector and other relevant organisations, including the Prince's International Sustainability Unit.

- Grant awards of approximately £40,000, with 6 awards totalling £35,000 supporting habitat creation and management works as part of the Brede Farm Habitats Project
- Building a solar wood kiln: a pilot project to find a small-scale, cost effective solution to drying local timber more easily working with secondary students from Skinner's school
- Publication of a High Weald 'Discovery Walk' working in partnership with the Royal Geographical Society and support for delivery of 2 walking festivals in the area; the Wealden and Eastbourne Walking Festival and the 1066 Country Walking Festival.

2.4 Projects in development include:

- A Dark Skies 'Party' in Wadhurst; a community event being organised in partnership with the parish council, primary school and local astronomy society
- An interactive, web-based, High Weald history timeline with new Stone-age learning sessions for primary schools including handling boxes
- An online High Weald landscape awareness 'quiz'; a project developed in partnership with eight other landscapes as part of the Our Land project.

Providing technical AONB advice and acting as an advocate for the High Weald AONB

- 2.5 As a strong partnership organization, the High Weald JAC is an effective advocate for the AONB and it is able to play a leading role identifying and promoting a range of approaches to support the responsible and sustainable management of one of England's finest landscapes.

Key activities in the last 6 months have included:

- Commenting on over 100 policy, planning and other consultations which is significantly more than the Unit's target (based on 2013/14 activity).
- Producing a series of High Weald AONB information sheets on topical issues, for example 'Unconventional hydrocarbon resources present in the High Weald'
- Launch of the Kent Farmsteads Guidance at Halden Place, Rolvenden. The event was organised by the Unit and brought together developers, local authority officers, landowners and architects.

- Production of a report on the 'International Importance of Gill Woodland in Kent and Sussex' to promote best practice in gill management to Natural England, contractors and landowners.

2.6 Projects in development include:

- Exploration of the use of drone technology to enable landscape monitoring, with a particular focus on identifying unimproved grasslands
- Fieldscapes, a pilot project working in partnership with English Heritage to develop and communicate a better understanding of historic fields and field boundaries.

3.0 Conclusions

3.1 Work against the business plan is progressing well though the scope and scale of some areas of activity has had to be reduced, largely as a result of staff changes.

3.2 There has been a significant increase in public requests for the Staff Unit to get actively involved in and comment on issues of concern, for example Gatwick Airport airspace management. The Staff Unit is looking into ways of dealing with the range and scale of these requests.

Contact: Gerry Sherwin, AONB Business Manager, g.sherwin@highweald.org

Committee: High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Date: 12th November 2014

Title of Report: AONB Unit - Staff

By: AONB Director

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to note the report.

1.0 AONB Communication and Marketing Officer - part-time fixed term post

1.1 Members will recall that Peter d'Aguilar was recruited to this post in February on a fixed-term contract until the end of March 2015 but resigned in May to take up the post of Director of Marketing and Development at St Leonards-Mayfield School.

1.2 To fulfil the needs of the AONB communications work programme, an internship has been offered to Georgina Strapp to assist with development and promotion of the website, the implementation of communication and interpretation projects, and the promotion of the High Weald AONB to a variety of individuals and interest groups.

1.3 Georgie has grown up in the High Weald and has recently graduated from the University of York with English and Politics and has undertaken a number of jobs and work experience placements in journalism, copywriting and marketing including Editor of *York Vision*.

2.0 Education Officer - High Weald Heroes - part-time fixed term post

2.1 Janice Cooper, who was recruited to this post in February, resigned at the end of June.

2.2 In July Rachel Bennington was recruited to the post and she will work closely with schools in the High Weald to encourage children to learn about their local landscape. Rachel lives in Lewes and has worked for the Sussex Wildlife Trust, co-founded and continues to run Talking Trees Ltd, a not-for-profit company specializing in environmental education, and she also works part-time with the Ashdown Forest Conservators.

3.0 Conclusions and Recommendation

3.1 Members are asked to note the report.

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

Agenda Item No. 12

Committee: High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Date: 12th November 2014
Title of Report: Risk Management
By: AONB Director

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

1. Note the report and;
2. Request that the Management Board meet to review significant risks as required and develop options for their management.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Members are aware that as part of the process of producing the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee's annual external accounts ten control objectives are assessed. One of the control objectives is:
 - *Significant risks to achieving High Weald objectives are recorded and assessed and the adequacy of arrangements reviewed.*
- 1.2 The key risks to the Joint Advisory Committee are set out in Appendix A.
- 1.3 Given that the Joint Advisory Committee's work is reliant on partnership contributions and the need to successfully raise external funding, the cause of the most significant risks is financial.
- 1.4 Over the last four financial years, a reduction of 21.5% (i.e. £51,300) in the Defra contribution has required financial cuts to address the arising budget deficit.
- 1.5 These cuts have been achieved by planned cuts to the core budget involving: a significant reduction in the communications budget, leading to the loss of the High Weald Anvil; reductions in the staff budget made possible by not recruiting to the vacant Finance Officer and Interpretation Officer posts; ending of the contract with ESCC to provide the clerk service to the JAC; a reduction in the budget for IT development and reduction in the JAC's project/SDF budget.
- 1.6 The affect of these cuts have, in part, been mitigated through: the work of the JAC's project officers who have delivered communication activities as part of

self-financing projects; the absorption of the essential work activities of vacant posts/roles by other staff, in particular the AONB Business Manager and Team Support Officer; and the recruitment of consultants where absolutely necessary to meet the deficit in skills or resources.

2.0 Key risks 2014/15 and beyond

2.1 Further reductions in financial contributions by the JAC partnership towards the JAC's core business will mean that the JAC will be unable to maintain the current level of work under the Business Strategy 2010/14 headings, which are:

- Preparing, monitoring and reviewing the AONB Management Plan
- Co-ordinating action and enabling delivery of the AONB Management Plan by individuals and communities
- Providing advice and guidance to partners on CroW, Section 85
- Adding value to our partners' wider landscape and environmental objectives within the AONB
- Enabling the JAC to be an effective champion for the High Weald.

2.2 As a consequence, the key risks to note are:

- AONB Unit staff will continue to undertake the JAC's clerk service (to date provided in turn by West Sussex and East Sussex County Councils) and this may result in a more informal service to the JAC.
- A reduced budget for the AONB Unit's accommodation and running costs will make it more difficult for the AONB Unit to maintain its computer systems to capitalise on developments in Information Technology. This may result in less efficient ways of working.
- Existing staff will have to continue to accommodate the essential work of vacant posts within their own work programmes. Reduced budgets in 2015/16 mean there is little capacity to bring in consultants to provide support if required.
- Self-financing projects employing project officers have now all but ceased (one temporary part-time project officer remains) which limits the opportunities for project activity to fill work gaps left by a reduced core budget.
- There is currently limited 'local' match funding making it difficult to secure external funding from grant-aiding bodies for new self-financing projects.

2.3 A risk assessment of reduced activity under each business strategy heading was undertaken in the spring of 2014 to identify priorities and make further decisions on financial, staff and other resource allocation. This assessment considers whether there is scope to mitigate the risks and has been presented to and discussed by the JAC Management Board.

2.4 Funding uncertainty means that it is hard to forecast the number or scale of self-financing projects during and beyond 2015/16. This makes it harder to plan the allocation of core resources between core functions.

3.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1 Risk management systems in line with East Sussex County Council policy are in place.

3.2 Since 2010/11 the impact of reduced financial contributions to the JAC core work has been mitigated through the work of the JAC's self-financing projects and by increasing the work and remit of existing AONB Unit staff.

3.3 From 2014/15 the impact of reducing contributions to core work will be greater and further cuts in 2015/16 will require more radical changes to the JAC's operations.

3.4 The JAC will need to continue to prioritise core functions so that a direction for making further decisions about resource allocation from 2015/16 onwards can be set.

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

Risk Log

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

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

Control Rating	1. Excessive Controls exceed the level required to manage the risk 2. Optimal Controls are comprehensive & commensurate with the risk. All controls are working as intended. 3. Adequate Some shortfall in level of controls but these do not materially affect the level of residual risk. 4. Inadequate Weaknesses & inefficiency in controls do not treat the risk as intended.
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Unit ref	Risk no	Risk What can go wrong	Root Causes How it can go wrong	Owner	Inherent Risk			Controls / Mitigating Actions Preventative & reactive control measures	Control Owner	Residual Risk			
		Format: EVENT leading to CONSEQUENCE resulting in EFFECT ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES			Likelihood	Consequence	Matrix Zone			Control Rating	Likelihood	Consequence	Matrix Zone
	1	Reduced activity/service due to declining budgets 2014/15 and beyond. JAC with a lower profile as a champion for the High Weald. Less proactive work to enable public understanding, management and enjoyment of the AONB.	Public sector spending cuts affecting Defra and local authorities leading to a further reduction in the JAC's budget.	AONB Director	5	4	Red	Unit to take into account direction of government and local authorities. JAC members and officers involved in and supportive of partnership and able to lobby robustly for funds internally and externally. JAC Chairman, on behalf of partnership, to lobby robustly for maintaining contributions. Alternative sources of core income sought. Options to reduce expenditure e.g. accommodation without adversely affecting on service explored. Planned reduction in scope of JAC's work programme.	AONB Director	2	4	4	Red

2	Unit unable to attract external funding for the implementation or coordination of projects that meet AONB Management Plan objectives.	Public sector cuts resulting in difficulties securing funds to match external grants e.g. Heritage Lottery Fund. Without commitment from 'local' partners bids for external funds are not feasible and considered weak by potential donor organizations. Unit objectives do not align with grant-aiding bodies objectives. Increased competition for fewer and smaller grants. Target audiences for grant-aiding bodies do not exist within the High Weald.	AONB Director	4	4	Red	Local authorities requested to consider identifying funds to ensure local matched funds can be used to attract external grants and allow partnership projects to be developed. Keep a clear understanding of grant-aiding bodies objectives. Unit to take into account direction of grant-aiding bodies. Fundraising expertise within the Unit developed and maintained. Alternative fundraising options explored.	AONB Director	2	3	4	Red
3	IT needs not met, Unit unable to work efficiently and undertake research activity, fewer outputs, direction of JAC work programme compromised	Poor links to computer network/server results in slow machine operation, inability to download GIS data, update website etc.	AONB Director	3	3	Amber	Technical advice sought and recommendations/solutions implemented.	AONB Director	3	3	3	Amber
4	Loss of grant aid due to self-financing project outputs not being met	Project staff seeking and moving to new jobs as the current contract end date approaches. Project objectives not completed, undue workload on the remaining AONB core staff to complete project work. Adverse affect to the AONB core work remit and much reduced capacity and time to raise funds to support core work.	AONB Director	4	4	Red	Support and funding secured for retention bonuses. Longer notice periods for project staff. Projects developed and managed to ensure that the completion of key/complex outputs are not planned for the end of the contract. Flexibility built into core staff work programmes in order that there is a capacity to finish self-financing projects if required.	AONB Director	3	4	4	Red
5	AONB advice given by Unit staff not up to date and opportunities missed to ensure AONBs remain at the forefront of national policy.	A rapidly changing external policy environment in terms of planning and land use affecting the AONB.	AONB Director	4	4	Red	Liaison with SEEPL colleagues in the region, NAAONB and local authority colleagues to share information. In the short term scrutinize national policy and consider and examine potential future issues, opportunities and developments.	AONB Director	3	3	3	Amber
6	Future possibility that what is being implemented and coordinated by the AONB Partnership is not valued by Defra due to the loss of the dedicated Landscape Policy Unit within Defra. Cabinet reshuffle resulting in the loss of supportive Defra Minister.	Total loss or severe reduction of national government funding and commitment to AONB Partnerships.	AONB Director	4	5	Red	Continued and concerted engagement with Defra and Natural England and ongoing liaison with and reporting on NAAONB/SEEPL work programmes. Active engagement with Defra Ministers directly and in conjunction with NAAONB and SEEPL. Active engagement of High Weald AONB Patrons.	AONB Director	3	4	5	Red