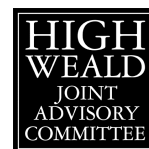


HIGH WEALD JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE – Management Board Minutes – 5 November 2014 at 10.30 am, at Acorn Tourism, WEC, Flimwell



Samantha Nicholas
Clerk to the High Weald AONB
Joint Advisory Committee

Present: Members:
 Cllr B Kentfield Rother District Council (Chairman)
 Cllr Mrs J Davison Sevenoaks District Council (Vice-chairman)
 Cllr Mrs S Tidy East Sussex County Council
 Cllr M Balfour Kent County Council

Also Present:

 Jason Lavender AONB Director (job share)
 Gerry Sherwin AONB Business Manager

Apologies

1. The following persons gave their apologies for absence:

Cllr B Acraman, Cllr C Hersey, Sally Marsh, David Marlow

Members' Interests

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

Minutes

3. The minutes of the last meeting, held on 25 June 2014 were agreed as a correct record.
4. The Management Board had a wide ranging discussion around the impact of changes to flight paths over the AONB. Cllr Balfour suggested Joseph Ratcliffe at Kent County Council could be invited to a future JAC meeting to give a presentation on matters associated with aircraft noise and Gatwick airport.
5. Cllr Balfour noted, with reference to no. 18 of the minutes, that there had been a marked increase in complaints about aircraft traffic noise in his constituency and received by Kent County Council. In part, the consultations on airspace this year appear to have raised a greater awareness of aircraft noise. It was noted that current government guidance is that aeroplanes are to follow a specified route over as few people as possible, avoiding areas of tranquillity and areas with a heritage.
6. Cllr Soyke has also raised concerns to do with aircraft noise over the AONB with the Unit and has suggested the Unit joins the High Weald Councils Aviation Action Group as an associate member. While the concerns regarding aircraft noise are both appreciated and understood by the members of the Management Board, it was felt that the AONB Unit should not join individual action groups.
7. **It was agreed that an AONB position statement on aircraft noise would be prepared and sent to the Members for their comments. The position statement would re-**

iterate the duty of demonstrating due regard to the AONB and stress that all realistic measures to limit the impact of aircraft noise over the AONB must be encouraged.

Nominations of Management Board Members

8. **It was agreed that a verbal report would be given to the Joint Advisory Committee recommending an amendment to the constitution to align the election of members to the Management Board (currently annually) with the election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to the JAC, which is biennial.**
9. Cllr Davison informed the Members that she will be retiring in May 2015. However, Sevenoaks District Council wishes to retain Cllr Davison as their formal representative on the Joint Advisory Committee. The Management Board welcomed this proposal. It was noted that written confirmation from the District Council to the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee would be required confirming that Cllr Davison would have the same authority as an elected Member.
10. It was also noted that while the JAC constitution requires a representative from each of the local authority to be on the Joint Advisory Committee, the representatives do not need to be elected local authority members. However, only elected Members can currently vote at JAC meetings so the constitution may have to be amended to reflect this.

Officer Steering Group update

11. David Scully, vice-chairman, reported on the Officer Steering Group (OSG) meeting of 25 September 2014.
12. OSG discussed the consultations on airspace and agreed that the OSG planning sub-group would consider further the potential impact to the AONB once the Airport Commission publishes its next report (due on the 11th November). The planning sub-group was established to make better and wider use of AONB data to ensure that the AONB and its special characteristics were consistently reflected in planning applications.
13. The sub-group has also looked into options to set up a High Weald design review panel following the success of the South Downs Design Review Panel and the South East Regional Design Panel. There is still much work to do but should a design panel for the High Weald be established, it would aim to encourage high quality, sustainable and well-planned landscape and building design within the AONB and the panel would have a broad range of members from different disciplines.
14. The Management Board Members welcomed the setting up of a design panel for the AONB and stressed that the panel should not be driven solely by the architectural interests but reflect the wider matters reflected by the AONB management plan, among other things. The Members felt that the AONB Unit was well placed to co-ordinate and mediate the different interests given the Unit's knowledge and range of contacts across different disciplines.
15. The OSG also reported that there has been an increase this year in the number of planning applications for solar farms. Tunbridge Wells BC has recently refused two applications. It was also noted that the AONB Unit does not have the resources to deal

with every planning issue or enquiry as it may lack the technical knowledge to consider all proposed developments that fall outside the AONB Unit's core remit.

16. The next OSG planning sub-group meeting is to be held on 24 November.
17. MOU to support the AONB Partnership
18. Jason Lavender explained that Defra has confirmed that they do not require a formal agreement (e.g. Memorandum of Understanding) to be put in place between themselves and the constituent local authorities of a particular AONB.
19. At the September OSG meeting all agreed that a straight forward agreement would be useful for individual local authorities to demonstrate their on-going commitment to the AONB. Following this advice, the AONB Unit has prepared a draft five-year AONB partnership agreement, which will tie in to the AONB Management Plan cycle. This draft is currently with both David Marlow (Rother DC) and David Scully (Tunbridge Wells BC) for comments. As the host organization, East Sussex County Council will need to approve the agreement, which will then be distributed to the rest of the OSG for comments.

Budgets and Business Strategy

20. Gerry Sherwin summarised the budget information for 2015/16 and beyond: Defra has confirmed the budget for 2015/16; there is a small increase due to the most recent single status review; beyond 2016/2017, there is an assumption that the 5% decrease each year in the core budget will continue for at least the next three years, which will result in a further cut of £35,000.
21. The draft budget for 2015/16 will be presented at the next JAC meeting as a balanced budget.
22. The AONB Unit is continuing to look at how it can sell its services to others and how it can continue to share resources with neighbouring AONB units. The High Weald Unit has undertaken some work on the Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan and also for the Coast and Country Walking Festival (website development).
23. David Scully suggested the AONB Unit should consider charging developers for the data developed by the AONB Unit.
24. Gerry Sherwin informed the Members that Defra would no longer be contributing to AONB Unit staff redundancy payments from March 2015. The Members were unhappy about this decision and have agreed that the AONB Unit should seek guidance from the Local Government Association as it appears that Defra have changed their long standing contractual arrangements with the English AONB partnerships.
25. **Jason Lavender will follow this up with Howard Davies of the National Association for AONBs.**

Current projects, project development and staffing update

26. At the next JAC meeting, Gerry Sherwin will present a detailed summary and give a presentation of the range of work undertaken by the AONB Unit since the last meeting.

27. Jason Lavender gave a brief summary of the changes to AONB Unit staff – Rachel Bennington has been recruited as the Education Officer working on the High Weald Heroes project; Georgina Strapp is working two days a week on an internship with the AONB Unit to cover the work of the vacant communication post; Andrew Shaw is currently on long-term sick leave and is due to return to work in mid-November. Jason Lavender has been covering planning matters during Andrew’s absence.

JAC Agenda

28. The following items were suggested for the JAC Agenda:
- Amendments to the JAC Constitution regarding the election of Members to the Management Board.
 - Position statement on the impact on tranquillity of increased air-traffic over the AONB

Risk Management

29. Jason Lavender presented the risk assessment, which has not changed since the previous meeting.

AOB

30. Cllr Geraint Thomas has been elected to represent Crawley Borough Council on the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee, replacing Cllr K Blake.
31. Gerry Sherwin informed the Members that the Unit has begun to use ‘High Weald AONB Partnership’ in ‘public-facing’ communications instead of the ‘High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee’. David Scully thought that this may cause some confusion with the Kent High Weald Partnership but recognized that this confusion happens already. **The Members agreed that High Weald AONB Partnership should be the used in all outward facing communications.**
32. Dates confirmed for future meetings:
Management Board: 5 March 2015
Joint Advisory Committee: 27 March 2015