

## HIGH WEALD JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**A meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee will be held at 10.30am on Friday 6 November at the Great Dixter House and Gardens, Northiam, Rye, East Sussex, TN31 6PH.**

- Lunch and refreshments will be available from 1 pm.
  - Presentation from Andrew Shaw, Planning Advisor, National Trust.
  - Presentation from Rachel Bennington, Education Officer, on the achievements of the High Weald Heroes Programme.
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. Election of Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Management Board Members

To elect the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Management Board Members - list of nominees (page 20).
  5. Minutes of the JAC meeting

To confirm the minutes of the last meeting of the JAC held on 27 March 2015 (page 3)
  6. Minutes of the Management Board Meeting

To note the matters arising from the Management Board meeting held on 14 October 2015 (page 8).
  7. Minutes of the Officer Steering Group

To note the minutes of the Officer Steering meeting held on 30 September 2015 and a verbal report from the Officer Steering Group Chairman (page 12)
  8. Planning and the AONB

To consider a verbal report by the AONB Director on the current planning work priorities
  9. High Weald AONB staffing – 3 year direction and resourcing

To consider a report by the AONB Director (page 22)
  10. Revenue Budget 2016/2017

To consider a report by the Deputy Treasurer (page 27)
  11. Fields in the High Weald

To consider an interactive exercise on the value of fields in the High Weald

12. Risk Management

To consider a report by the AONB Director, Risk Log attached at (page 35)

13. Any other business

Joint Advisory Committee Meeting – TBC March 2016.

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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**HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

27 March 2015 Meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee held at The Llama Park, Wych Cross, Ashdown Forest.

Present:

Cllr B Kentfield	Rother District Council, Chairman
Cllr Mrs J Davison	Sevenoaks District Council, Deputy Chairman
Cllr R Taylor CBE	Ashford Borough Council
Mr R Edwards	CLA
Cllr G Thomas	Crawley Borough Council
Cllr Mrs S Tidy	East Sussex County Council
Mrs A Field	Forestry Commission
Cllr R Street	Hastings Borough Council
Cllr M Balfour	Kent County Council
Cllr C Hersey	Mid-Sussex County Council
Mr J Seymour	Natural England
Cllr Mrs L Dunbar	Tandridge District Council
Cllr Mrs J Soyke	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Cllr Mrs R Moore	Wealden District Council

Officers:

Mr T Alty	East Sussex County Council, Finance Manager
Ms R Childs	Kent County Council
Mr J Ratcliffe	Kent County Council
Mr J Lavender	AONB Director (job share)
Ms S Marsh	AONB Director (job share)
Mr M Pitts	AONB Officer, Living Woods Advisor
Mr M Davidson	Hastings Borough Council
Mr D Marlow	Rother District Council
Mr D Scully	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Mr T Dyer	West Sussex County Council

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies were received from the following Members and officers:

Councillor Mrs Murray, , Councillor Sydney, Councillor Mrs Kitchen, Councillor Blake, David Greenwood ,Virginia Pullen, Aeron Rees, Helen French, Jennifer Hollingum, James Harris.

2. MEMBERS INTERESTS

2.1 All Members declared a personal Interest in no Item 8 in that they were Members of the local authorities that contribute to the finances of the High Weald.

3. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

3.1 Cllr G Thomas, Crawley Borough Council, was welcomed onto the Committee. As an introduction to the High Weald AONB, Jason Lavender offered a guided tour for new Members

and officers. Both Cllr R Street and Cllr G Thomas hoped to take this offer up after the general election.

4. MINUTES OF THE JAC MEETING – 12 November 2014

4.1 RESOLVED to agree the Minutes of the meeting of 12 November 2014 as a correct record.

5. MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD – 5 March 2015

5.1 RESOLVED to agree the Minutes of the meeting of 5 March 2015 as a correct record.

6. MINUTES OF THE OFFICER STEERING GROUP (OSG) – 24 February 2015

6.1 OSG Chairman David Marlow provided the Committee with an overview of the OSG work supporting the AONB Unit, which includes a re-write of the Service Level Agreement (SLA). The SLA is currently with each local authority partner for signing by the appropriate person.

6.2 The OSG Design and Planning sub-group has looked into the merits of establishing a design review panel for the High Weald to consider significant development proposals and provide advice to local authorities and applicants on design matters. The sub-group has looked at existing design panels in the south-east and the OSG is keen to investigate further how an independent High Weald Design Panel, facilitated by the AONB Unit, could be established.

6.3 In recognition of the AONB Unit's limited resources, the sub-group has also proposed a series of succinct planning and design advice notes jointly prepared by the AONB Unit and the LPAs to highlight AONB-specific issues associated with development and using local and national research and evidence. The OSG will propose issues of the greatest priority so that the AONB Unit can begin work on the advice notes.

6.4 The AONB Unit is exploring the use of a web-based GIS system to allow AONB data to be shared with members of the OSG, which would be accessible to the OSG using a desktop application.

6.5 The AONB Unit has offered to organize and run relevant training for the JAC and the OSG on wide ranging topics of interest including the natural environment, rural economy, live/work opportunities, land use statistics, solar farms, self-build and AONB landscape components.

6.6 Cllr Mrs Tidy thanked the local authority officers for the additional support they have given to the AONB Unit.

6.7 RESOLVED to note the Minutes of the Officer Steering Group held on 5 March, and (1) request the OSG to present their recommendations for a series of planning and design advice notes at the next Joint Advisory Committee meeting.

7. MATTERS ARISING

7.1 There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

8. REVENUE BUDGET 2014/15

8.1 The Committee considered a report by the Deputy Treasurer, Thomas Alty, who presented the Revenue Budget for 2015/16.

- (i) The core budget 2015/16 - expenditure is reflected in Appendix A. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) contribution will be maintained at £255,588 for 2015/16.
  - (ii) An increase in other income of £4,600 to £10,800 and allocation of 84% of the reduced Defra single pot contribution to core has been required to achieve a balanced budget.
  - (iii) Expenditure is based on the 2014/15 figures with inflation at the ESCC applied rate of 2.2% for Single Status salaries, 1.19% for LMG salaries.
  - (iv) JAC expenditure on self-funding projects is presented in Appendix B. This is estimated to be £138,000 in 2015/16. Local authority contributions towards projects (including High Weald Heroes) are reflected here.
  - (v) A number of applications for project funding (total value of £60,000) to external organizations have been submitted and given that these funds are yet to be awarded they have not been shown in the 2015/16 budget. If the applications are successful, expenditure on self-funding projects could increase significantly.
- 8.2 Cllr G Thomas enquired whether the AONB Unit had a 'Living Wage' policy. Jason Lavender said he did not know but would assume the Unit did as it has to comply with ESCC's employment policy (ESCC hosts the AONB Unit). However, he will find out and inform the Committee in due course.

8.3 RESOLVED to note the report and:

- (1) approve the Revenue Budget for 2015/16;
- (2) thank the local authorities and Defra for their contributions towards core costs and High Weald Heroes.

## 9. Service Level Agreements (SLA)

- 9.1 The JAC considered a verbal report by Jason Lavender on the introduction of the Service Level Agreement. An example is attached to the Minutes.
- 9.2 In September 2014 Defra confirmed that they did not wish to continue the Partnership Agreement developed and used by Natural England. While supporting this decision, the OSG wished to establish a straight forward agreement to show their commitment to the AONB partnership and to return something more along the lines of the Memorandum of Agreement, which was in use before the changes brought in by Natural England before 2010. The new agreement (known as a Service Level Agreement) is between the host authority East Sussex County Council, who have the contract with Defra, and each individual local authority partners. The SLA provides a clear framework setting out the service the AONB Unit will provide.
- 9.3 Tim Dyer asked whether any redundancies the AONB Unit may need to make would need to be covered by the local authorities. It was confirmed that the the AONB Unit will cover the costs of any future redundancies having set aside funds should this happen.

9.2 RESOLVED to note the report.

## 10. LIVING WOODS END OF PROGRAMME REPORT

- 10.1 The JAC considered a presentation from Matt Pitts, Living Woods Advisor, on a summary of the key achievements produced through the Living Woods project. The presentation is attached to the Minutes.

- 10.2 The Living Woods project was part of a longer running programme focussed on Plantation Woodland in the High Weald sponsored by the Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust and Heritage Lottery Fund. This 3 year project (2012-2015) was completed in March 2015. The specialist support targeted landowners, communities, volunteers and secondary schools. 170 landowner visits were managed over the AONB. 2118 people attended a wide range of training and workshops for landowners and wide range of specialist advice and guidance has been produced [www.highweald.org/look-after/land-management](http://www.highweald.org/look-after/land-management). Feedback indicates that landowners have taken the advice given to further develop management plans and proceed with future work in their woodlands.
- 10.1 Cllr Mrs Tidy commented on the importance of having an advisor who can liaise between the different partners and give independent advice to landowners.
- 10.3 Jason Lavender confirmed that the AONB Unit were seeking grants from a variety of sources to ensure it can continue to provide targeted, specialist, and independent advice, guidance, and support. In addition to the local authority partners, he also thanked the CLA and Forestry Commission for their moral or financial support for the work of the AONB partnership.
- 10.4 RESOLVED to thank Matt Pitts for his excellent work over the period of the Living Woods Project.

#### 11. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

- 11.1 The JAC considered a presentation from Sally Marsh on the AONB Unit's future work programme. The presentation is appended to the Minutes.
- 11.2 The AONB Unit's work programme has been reviewed and will be divided into five programmes: advice and guidance to partners; land management; public events; education; and partnership support and business development. The AONB Unit will require a degree of staff reorganization to meet these requirements.
- 11.3 Resolved to note the verbal report.

#### 12. RISK MANAGEMENT

The JAC considered a report by Jason Lavender on risk management and the associated risk management matrix.

- 12.1 The report has been altered to reflect the recent staffing changes within the AONB Unit and to meet the future work programme and likely and further cuts to funding from 2015/16.
- 12.2 RESOLVED to note the report.

#### 13. AOB

- 13.1 Jason Lavender informed the Committee that after a long period of absence Andrew Shaw had very recently resigned from his post.
- 13.2 RESOLVED to The JAC thanked Andrew Shaw for his contribution to the AONB over the last 10 years.
- 13.3 The AONB Joint Advisory Committee meeting dates for 2015/16 to be organised via doodle poll.

#### 14. PRESENTATION

- 14.1 Joseph Ratcliffe, Kent County Council, gave a presentation on Gatwick airport and his presentation and notes are attached to the Minutes.
- 14.1 Joseph was thanked by the Committee for providing such an informative presentation on a very technical topic.



**HIGH WEALD JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE – Management Board  
Minutes – 14 October 2015, Crowborough Town Council, the Town Hall  
Broadway, Crowborough, East Sussex, TN6 1DA.**

Samantha Nicholas  
Clerk to the High Weald AONB  
Joint Advisory Committee

Present:           Members:  
                  Cllr B Kentfield           Rother District Council (Chairman)  
                  Mrs J Davison            Sevenoaks District Council (Vice-chairman)  
                  Cllr B Acraman           West Sussex County Council  
                  Cllr C Hersey             Mid-Sussex District Council

Also Present:  
                  Sally Marsh                AONB Director (job share)  
                  Jason Lavender           AONB Director (job share)  
                  David Marlow             Rother District Council (OSG Chairman)

Apologies

1. The following persons gave their apologies for absence:  
Cllr S Tidy, East Sussex CC, and Cllr M Balfour, Kent CC, Thomas Alty, Finance Manager, East Sussex CC.

Members' Interests

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

Minutes of the Management Board meeting held on 24 June 2015

3. The minutes of the last meeting, held on 24 June 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

Nominations of Management Board Members

4. Samantha Nicholas informed the Board Members of the list of nominees for Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Management Board Members that had been confirmed. The following Members will be put forward for election at the JAC to be held on 6 November 2015.
  - a. Mrs J Davison - nomination for Chairman
  - b. Cllr B Kentfield - nomination for Vice-Chairman
  - c. Cllr S Tidy, East Sussex CC, Cllr M Balfour, Kent CC, Cllr B Acraman, West Sussex CC, Cllr C Hersey, Mid-Sussex CC, Cllr M Sydney, Surrey CC and Cllr R Moore, Wealden DC - nomination for Board Members.

Officer Steering Group update

5. The Members were informed that David Marlow, Rother DC, has been re-elected as the Office Steering Group Chairman. Virginia Pullen, Landscape Architect, East Sussex CC, has been elected as Vice-Chairman. Members thanked David Scully, Tunbridge Wells, for his work as Vice Chairman over the last year.

6. David Marlow informed the Members that the Officer Steering Group (OSG) was well attended at the meeting held on 30 September 2015. There was a lot of support for the positive work that has been carried out by the officers with the Unit over the past year.
7. The OSG has been researching two main areas; development of an AONB design panel; and to prioritise design guidance materials. Natalie Bumpus, Wealden D C, has been leading on a report comparing the Local Authority planning policies across the AONB.
8. The OSG has prioritised nine of the key areas that may be developed into guidance/advice notes which can be utilised for the planning consultations process. Housing and Renewable Energy LPAs emerged as the highest priorities across all Local Authorities.
9. Sally Marsh informed the officers of the early results from the Field Surveys research project and the landscape perception focus groups. The officers recognised this was an essential piece of research which will support policy and development planning.
10. The Members held a discussion on how utilising the design guidance in a positive way can develop officer and Members understanding of those aspects that are critical to maintain the AONB character. Jason Lavender explained that since the relaxation of the planning regulations the number of applications received by the Unit for comment has increased in quantity and complexity. Submissions were often of poor quality. The Members were highly supportive of the development of further guidance material.
11. A discussion also took place about the development of an AONB design panel. It was recognised that, although this may be a longer term aim, it would be a positive route to raising the profile of the AONB and reducing the number of poor quality planning applications.
12. Sally Marsh explained to the Members that a job description for a post graduate planning position had been sent out over the summer, but responses to the advert had been limited. The Unit re-advertised, at the end of September, but for a higher-grade Principal Strategic Planner, part-time position (0.6 FTE). Applications received for the post have again been limited.
13. It was suggested that if a suitable applicant could not be found that the guidance could be produced through a series of consultant lead project steering groups.
14. The Members were informed that all Local Authorities have signed up to the Service Level Agreements. The Unit thanked the officers for their support with this process.

#### Future Funding and staffing re-structure

Sally Marsh took the Members through changes to the budget principles which will guide the Units income generation over the next few years. Assumptions include reductions in Defra funding of 40% - as a worse-case scenario with the Local Authorities maintaining funding support to the AONB at current levels. The Unit's reserves remain at a level appropriate to cover staff redundancies.

15. The project reserves have grown through income from the Battle and Brede Project, Heritage Lottery Fund and Water Framework Initiatives. However, in-order to secure future funding the Unit will need to utilise a proportion of this budget to increase staffing capacity to be able to access further funding from initiatives such as National Grid, water catchment fund projects, and Land Management funds through Natural England.

16. Sally Marsh then focused on the Unit's expenditure and staffing structure. A draft staffing structure was circulated for comment and changes proposed to support the forward business strategy explained. The decrease in core budget would lead to a core staffing cut of 0.7 FTEs, leaving an equivalent of four full-time staff.
17. To maximise future funding, two new externally funded positions have been created; the Land Management Project Officer, Tamara Taylor joined the Unit in October previously working for Natural England; and the Outreach Project Officer post, filled by Matthew Pitts, who managed the successful Living Woods Project. These roles will focus on developing projects and funding streams across the High Weald as well as focusing on key areas dictated by specific funding criteria.
18. Additional staffing changes were also discussed for post April 2016. The current Research Officer post held by Charles Winchester is to be developed into an AONB Landscape Advisor (1FTE) position. This is necessary to provide support to the AONB Director and the guidance and policy work undertaken by the proposed Senior AONB Planner which is being reduced to 0.6 FTE. A further part-time role supporting IT and Communications, will be held as a vacant post, subject to budget (0.2 FTE).
- 19. The Members agreed to the principles underlying the budget changes and staffing re-structure.**

#### Current projects

20. Jason Lavender updated the Members on the current projects the Unit is managing.
21. A 'Restocking in the Weald' proposal has been sent to the Prince's Countryside Fund for a small scale feasibility study. The outcome of this bid will be known in December 2015.
22. In readiness for the Rother and Romney Water Catchment Project the Unit have been working in partnership with the Wild Trout Trust. The Trust has a wider interest in combating water pollution, improving management of the water courses and engaging with the local communities.
23. Jason Lavender informed the Members that a new landscape enhancement community fund, Sussex LUND, has been proposed initially in the Mayfield area. Potentially the fund will have £250,000 to spend on community projects per annum.
24. The Unit has managed two High Weald walks; one for the Sussex Walking Festival from 27 September to 4 October 2015 and one for the 1066 Walking Festival from 3 to 9 October 2015. Alongside the 'Walking Festivals' the Unit managed the Whopper Welly Walk. Eight Primary Schools, over 700 children, participated from across the Wealden and Rother area.
25. The Unit have recently contacted the Parishes within the AONB to offer them support for their Neighbourhood Planning. There has been a positive response from the Parishes and the Unit's Research Officer is currently developing a pack to offer to the Parishes to assist with providing environmental data and information for the individual Parishes.
26. The High Weald Heroes education project is continuing to be very successful with 5 new schools participating on the programme and 3 new welly walks in production, Punnetts Town, Speldhurst and West Hoathly. Rachel Bennington has been working with Casper Johnson to produce an archaeological toolkit – with replicated artefacts from Stone Age to Iron Age.

27. In addition to this the Unit has secured additional funding, through Heritage Lottery, to produce a series of creative landscape workshops for primary school. These will be based on Sprange and Smart, two historical characters from Tunbridge Wells and surrounding areas, and will be rolled out from January 2016.

#### JAC Agenda Items

28. The Members were informed that the Unit has invited Andrew Shaw, now working for the National Trust, to present at the JAC Meeting in November covering the National Trust Planning Strategy.
29. Additional items:
  - A summary of the Fields Systems project and landscape perception exercise
  - A verbal report on the OSG extensive work carried out this year
  - Update on High Weald Heroes.

#### Risk Management

30. The risk management areas were covered in future funding and staffing update. A more detailed report will be presented at the Joint Advisory Committee meeting.

#### AOB

31. The Joint Advisory Committee Meeting is to be held at Great Dixter House, Northiam, Rye East Sussex, TN31 6PH, on Friday 6 November. The next Management Board Meeting Date, to be held in March, will be sent out by doodle poll.

## High Weald Officer Steering Group



Notes of a meeting of the High Weald Officer Steering Group held on Wednesday 30 September 2015, Acorn Tourism, Woodland Enterprise, Hastings Road, Flimwell, TN5 7PR

Clerk to JAC: Samantha Nicholas

### PRESENT:

David Marlow, Rother District Council (Chairman)  
David Scully, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (Vice-chairman)  
Ruth Childs, Kent County Council  
David Greenwood, Surrey County Council  
Jennifer Hollingum, Mid Sussex District Council  
Helen French, Sevenoaks Borough Council  
Virginia Pullan, East Sussex County Council  
Sally Marsh, Co-Director High Weald Unit  
Jason Lavender, Co-Director High Weald Unit

### Action

1. **OSG election of Chairman and Vice-chairman**
  - 1.1 David Marlow informed the officers that his term as Chairman has finished and thanked the Unit and David Scully for all their support during this period. The officers were also informed that David Scully (Vice-Chairman) is embarking on a two year Master's degree and although he wishes to remain as the representative for Tunbridge Wells BC he would not have time to take up the Chairman's role. David Scully also thanked the other officers and Unit for support shown whilst he was in the Vice-Chairman position. Members were invited to elect a Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

**Election outcome:**

**David Marlow will remain as Chairman for an additional two years.**

**Proposed by Ruth Childs**

**Seconded by David Greenwood**

**Virginia Pullan, East Sussex CC was elected as Vice-Chairman role.**

**Proposed by David Scully**

**Seconded by Helen French.**
2. **MINUTES**

- 2.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on the 24 February 2015 were agreed as a correct record.
- 2.2 4.4 Action: To report on other AONBs' experiences of design panels. Sally Marsh explained that a report had not been circulated to date as not all AONBs had responded. Of the AONB's who did respond the majority have adopted a design guidance strategy with a task/finish group approach. Ruth Childs informed the officers that Kent AONB has a new planning officer, Katie Miller. Katie is tasked with up-dating the Kent AONB design guidance documents and would be interested in participating in any design guidance development with the High Weald.  
**Action: Unit to produce a report on AONB's design guidance for next OSG Meeting** Sally Marsh
- 2.3 **9.3 Action: officers and Unit are to feedback examples how local authorities and other AONBs are managing setting issues to Jennifer Hollingum.**  
Ruth Childs informed the group of an example of an application which had been refused by the Inspector on the grounds of the visual impact of the development would have an impact on the AONB "setting". The Group discussed "setting issues" highlighting the value of the Landscape Character Assessment Guidance and Natural England's visibility analysis as supportive evidence.  
David Marlow informed the officers that he had recently seen a presentation at the Sussex Consortium that analysed appeal "setting" decisions looking 'into' and 'out' of the AONBs.  
**Action: to circulate presentations and "setting" examples to the officers. These should also be sent to Natalie Bumpas at Wealden DC to support the report on AONB Local Authority Landscape Policies.** Officers/Unit
- 2.4 **8.1 Action: SLA agreement**  
Samantha Nicholas confirmed that all Local Authorities had returned their signed copies of Service Level Agreement. The Unit thanked the officers for the support with this process.
- 3. APOLOGIES**
- 3.1 Apologies for absence were received from; Marina Brigginsshaw and

Natalie Bumpas, Wealden DC, Tim Dyer, West Sussex CC, Jenny Knowles, Tonbridge & Malling BC.

3.2 The officers were informed that Aeron Rees has left Horsham DC. Natasha Robinson, Technical Support Officer, will be circulating information to appropriate officers until a new representative is appointed.

3.3 Officers were informed that Brenda Fazzani has left Ashford Borough Council and Daniel Carter is the point of contact. The Unit and officers thanked Brenda for all her support with the Officer Steering Group over the years.

#### **4 Proposed planning and advice notes**

4.1 David Scully presented a list of priority areas agreed by OSG members to guide AONB Unit work planning. The officers from each local authority were asked to feedback the order of priorities for the LPAs listed High – meaning the 3 most pressing topics; Medium – meaning the 3 next most pressing topics; Low – meaning the 3 least pressing topics. A ‘Low’ rating is not an indication that it is not worth pursuing, but that it is not the first (or second) most pressing guidance that LPAs think would add value.

Housing and Renewable Energy emerged at the two highest ranked LPAs. A discussion around renewable energy and specifically solar applications confirmed this was still a priority to Local Authorities present.

Jennifer Hollingum confirmed that Mid-Sussex has received two solar applications at Balcombe and West Hoathly. David Scully also added that Tunbridge Wells has approved 3 applications in low Weald and has had many expressions of interest in High Weald. Helen French informed the officers of RTPi renewable and low carbon energy opportunity mapping process which is an essential part of the Local Plan framework.

4.2 Sally Marsh confirmed that housing has been recognised as having the greatest impact on the High Weald landscape. Ancient Woodland Inventory gives great protection to the woodlands. However there is less research on fields and historic boundaries. As part of the Field Surveys research project, Charles Winchester, is

producing a field assessments guide 'Fields in the High Weald - their value and significance'.

**Action: Guide will be circulated to officers for input beginning of November 2015.** Unit

4.3 David Marlow explained on behalf of Natalie Bumpus, Wealden District Council, who could not attend the meeting, a draft report has been prepared to evaluate the consistency of policies across the Local Authorities relating to the AONB. It has initially highlighted that each Local Authority has a different approach. The officers agreed that this report would highlight best practises and areas where cross boundary policies could be developed.

David Scully thanked Marina Briggshaw for allocating time so that Natalie was able produce the report.

**Action: The report requires further refining and then will be circulated to the officers for input.**

David Marlow

## 5. Local Authority updates

5.1 The officers present updated the Unit on their local plan programmes

- Tunbridge Wells BC has a public examination on core strategy and a public enquiry for Combewell Meadows. They have been working in partnership with Sevenoaks BC on the SHLAAs. There is a new head of Policy, Kelvin Hinton.
- Sevenoaks BC has developed the SHLAA with Tunbridge Wells BC. Also embarking on the Allocations and Development Management Plan for the Green Belt and has a call for sites, finishing on 11 November, followed by an assessment period. They have an increased housing requirement of 620 units.
- Wealden DC has just approved a new Local Plan for consultation which has substantial increase in housing numbers.
- David Greenwood updated group on Leader programme. Kent, Surrey and Sussex have a Defra launch on 14 October 2015 and the main focus will be on farming, forestry and job growth. In partnership with Forestry Commission and Coast to Capital they have a major wood processing project investing in woodland

hubs. Landscape Character Assessment is also being updated.

- Tonbridge & Malling BC has a call for sites to be found at this link [http://www.tmbc.gov.uk/services/environment-and-planning/planning/call\\_for\\_sites](http://www.tmbc.gov.uk/services/environment-and-planning/planning/call_for_sites). The revised timetable for the Local Plan is working towards completion in November 2017.
- Kent CC's mineral and waste plan is out for consultation; in order for KCC to update the FRNE (Flood Risk and Natural Environment Team) AECOM have been commissioned to carry out a 'Natural Capital Asset Check' – a precursor to getting a natural capital account for Kent – i.e. monetising the natural environment. A link to the initial report can be found: <http://www.kentnature.org.uk/rural-green-economy.html> .
- Mid-Sussex DC has completed a Draft Plan consultation and is moving to submission and adoption in Spring 2016, with a housing allocation of 656. 20 Neighbourhood plans have been submitted and Ardingly and West Hoathly have been adopted. Turners Hill and Crawley Down have recently submitted the plans.
- East Sussex CC is undertaking a county landscape assessment and has covered 15 of the areas to-date out of 30. They are also participating in an eco-service map research as part of the South Downs consultancy process which looks at areas of opportunity within the green infrastructure.
- Rother DC is working on its sites and DM policies document and a number of new neighbourhood plan proposals. Work on equestrian decisions may be of wider interest.
- **Actions: David Marlow to circulate to officers.**

David Marlow

- 5.2 Ruth Childs commented that it would be good to add Minerals and Waste onto the priority LPAs from a Kent CC perspective.
- 5.3 Chris Blandford Associates have been commissioned by Kent CC with the support of the Unit and Tunbridge Wells BC. This will address some of the discrepancies in the quality of Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) generally, and in particular how they deal with AONBs. A demonstration LVIA was developed highlighting the important elements and showing best practice in terms of dealing

with AONB Management Plans within the existing LVIA structure.

**Action: A covering report is to be produced and then will be circulated to OSG for comment.**

Ruth Childs

## **6 Sharing SPDs e.g. Historic Farmsteads ( Tunbridge Wells BC)**

6.1 David Scully informed the officers that he had commissioned the Historic Farmsteads SPD through Jeremy Lake who had created a High Weald section and then an insert for the specific Local Authority. This template could potentially allow other Local Authorities to adopt the same approach.

Tunbridge Wells have approached the Unit to revisit the rural lanes SDP looking at the supplementary planning guidance and incorporating the heritage elements. This could then again be rolled out to other Local Authorities.

6.2 Ashford BC has adopted a Dark Skies SDP and it was requested that Matthew Nouch should be asked to attend the next meeting to present this to the officers. David Scully informed the officers of the Hazeldene housing site has a Dark Skies implementation plan which differentiates the lighting the closer it gets to the wood so to reduce the impact on the wildlife. It was agreed this would be a good case study to view once completed.

**Action: Unit will approach Matthew Nouch for him to present at the next OSG Meeting in February 2016.**

Unit

6.3 A discussion around the rights of way finger posts and cost associated and that ESCC has passed on responsibility of managing signage to the Parish Councils. It was noted that there may be potential for CIL funding to be passed on to the Parishes to support funding.

## **7 Staffing update**

7.1 Sally Marsh explained to the officers that a job description for a post graduate planning position had been sent out over the Summer but responses to the advert had been limited. It was decided to re-advertise but for a higher-grade Planning Advisor, part-time position end of September.

**Action: to circulate advert to officers.**

Unit/Sam

Nicholas

7.2 A discussion took place on the Unit planning workload and how they

could work more efficiently to support Local Authorities. Natural England, currently defers planning enquiries to the AONBs. Jason Lavender confirmed that this issue has been discussed with Natural England and has asked for them to refer future planning issues directly to Local Authorities, allowing the Unit to develop guidance materials which support the Local Authorities decision making processes.

David Scully requested that he receive any emails relating to there being no formal agreement between Natural England regarding their AONBs planning remit.

- 7.3 It was agreed that developing advisory notes would be the most effective way to move forward.

**Action: Sally Marsh highlighted that the Unit is developing a Sustainable Camping Advisory Note and this will be circulated to the officers for review by November 2015.**

**Unit**

- 7.4 David Scully commented on the Unit's 'Using wood as fuel' leaflet <http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/land-management-guidance/woodland-guidance/39-using-wood-as-fuel/file.html> and how it would be useful to have this type of information linked to advisory notes.

Ruth Childs suggest that using case studies may make it easier for developers to put 'conserving and enhancing' into context.

## **8. Field Survey update**

- 8.1 Sally Marsh updated the group on the progress of the Field Surveys research that is being conducted with funding from Historic England. The research was initiated as it was recognised that the value of Fields, unlike ancient woodland, is under-recognised . Focus groups were set up at the end of July to investigate the importance of fields with planners and landowners from across the High Weald involved.
- 8.2 There are 3 case studies and several desktop studies covering the High Weald. This has involved field surveys, drone filming and utilisation of LiDAR information where possible. The example of Earlye Farm was shown to the officers and that it has already indicated that the depth of historic field patterns goes deeper than

first realised.

8.3 The officers also viewed the online website set up to engage with archaeologists and partners in the project.

84 **Action: to circulate Landscape perception report and Field Surveys website details to officers** Sally Marsh

## 9. ITEMS FOR MANAGEMENT BOARD AND JAC

9.1 Items suggested were:

- Recommendations for guidance work-planning
- Field survey update
- Project output update
- Potential presentation from Andrew Shaw, National Trust on their planning approach

## 10. AOB AND DATES FOR NEXT MEETING

10.1 Andrew Shaw, National Trust, has been invited to present at the JAC Meeting in November covering the National Trust Planning Strategy.

10.2 Samantha Nicholas explained that there would an election process for the Management Board Members and Chairman and Vice-Chairman as Councillor Brian Kentfield could not stand as Chairman for a third time. Jill Davison has recently retired as a Councillor for Sevenoaks BC but has been elected as their representative for the JAC. Additional Members will be invited onto the Management Board to ensure a Quorum for meetings. David Scully indicated that Councillor Soyke may be interested in being nominated as a Board Member.

10.3 David Marlow informed the officers that the High Weald had not been successful in the National Grid funding for the Battle site. Sally Marsh informed the officers that if further AONBs who had been successful withdrew, due to technical difficulties with the scheme, the High Weald may be revisited. It was confirmed that there is a separate fund of 24 million for over-grounding line works and the Unit would be applying to this fund for specific projects.

10.4 Jason Lavender informed the officers that although Heathrow was favoured as the preferred site Gatwick still may be revisited.

10.5 **Action: Unit to circulate doodle poll to confirm the next meeting in February 2016**

Unit



**High Weald Joint Advisory Committee  
Nomination of Board Members**

**Nomination of 6 additional Management Board Members of the High Weald Management Board November 2015 – November 2017**

**Nomination of Chairman and Vice Chairman for High Weald Joint Advisory Committee November 2015 – November 2017**

To fill in boxes, double click on the box, and fill in details in default text box

<b>Nomination for Chairman:</b>	Mrs Jill Davison
<b>Proposed by:</b>	Management Board
<b>Seconded by:</b>	
<b>Nomination for Vice Chairman:</b>	Cllr Brian Kentfield
<b>Proposed by:</b>	Management Board
<b>Seconded by:</b>	
<b>Nomination for Board Member</b>	Cllr Sylvia Tidy
<b>Proposed by:</b>	Cllr Rowena Moore
<b>Seconded by:</b>	
<b>Nomination for Board Member</b>	Cllr Matthew Balfour
<b>Proposed by:</b>	Mrs Jill Davison
<b>Seconded by:</b>	
<b>Nomination for Board Member</b>	Cllr Michael Sydney
<b>Proposed by:</b>	Cllr Matthew Balfour
<b>Seconded by:</b>	
<b>Nomination for Board Member</b>	Cllr Rowena Moore
<b>Proposed by:</b>	Cllr Sylvia Tidy
<b>Seconded by:</b>	

<b>Nomination for Board Member</b>	<b>Cllr Christopher Hersey</b>
<b>Proposed by:</b>	<b>Cllr Brian Kentfield</b>
<b>Seconded by:</b>	
<b>Nomination for Board Member</b>	<b>Cllr Bill Acraman</b>
<b>Proposed by:</b>	<b>Cllr Matthew Balfour</b>
<b>Seconded by:</b>	

**Committee:** High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee  
**Date:** 6 November 2015  
**Title of Report:** AONB Unit Staffing – 3 year direction and resourcing  
**By:** AONB Director

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are recommended to note the report.

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### **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The Staff Unit works to an annual 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 In 2015 the Staff Unit faced a number of challenges in delivering the work programme. The Communications Officer post remained vacant and after a 6 months sickness absence the Policy and Research Officer resigned in April 2015. In May our Administrator, Kerry Baldwin also moved on to a new post outside the Unit. The work load was picked up by the remaining staff but inevitably some activities have been delayed.
- 1.4 In view of the savings created through vacant posts and mindful of the pressure on remaining staff who were asked to take on additional work, the formal restructuring process was put on hold pending a review of the budget and work priorities.
- 1.4 Each stage of the review has been discussed with the Management Board. The Officers' Steering Group (OSG) has contributed to a review of AONB Unit work priorities and the outcomes have been reported through the OSG minutes.
- 1.5 The current and proposed structure charts are attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.5 This report outlines the results of that review and the principles behind a revised structure for the Staff Unit. It forms the basis of the re-worked budget forecast for 2015/16 discussed at Agenda Item 10. A 3 year indicative budget has been formulated to support the 2015/16 budget forecast but this remains as a draft until the implications of the Chancellor's Autumn Statement for AONBs are clearer.

### **2.0 Three year direction – drivers – Core Team**

- 2.1 Revision to the core team is driven by a renewed focus on supporting local authority partners in delivering their Section 85 requirements to take account of the AONB in

delivering across the breadth of their statutory functions. In the context of declining local authority budgets and increasing pressure for development, particularly housing, the OSG have asked the AONB Unit to focus on providing expert technical advice on the AONB in relation to current threats. A number of issues have been identified of which housing development and renewable energy installations have been agreed as the priority for 2016.

- 2.2 A part time Principle Planning Adviser post and full time Landscape Advisor post are being recruited. A part time web support post to replace the Administrator post is being held vacant subject to funding. Support is being offered to current staff throughout this process.

### **3.0 Three year direction – drivers – Projects**

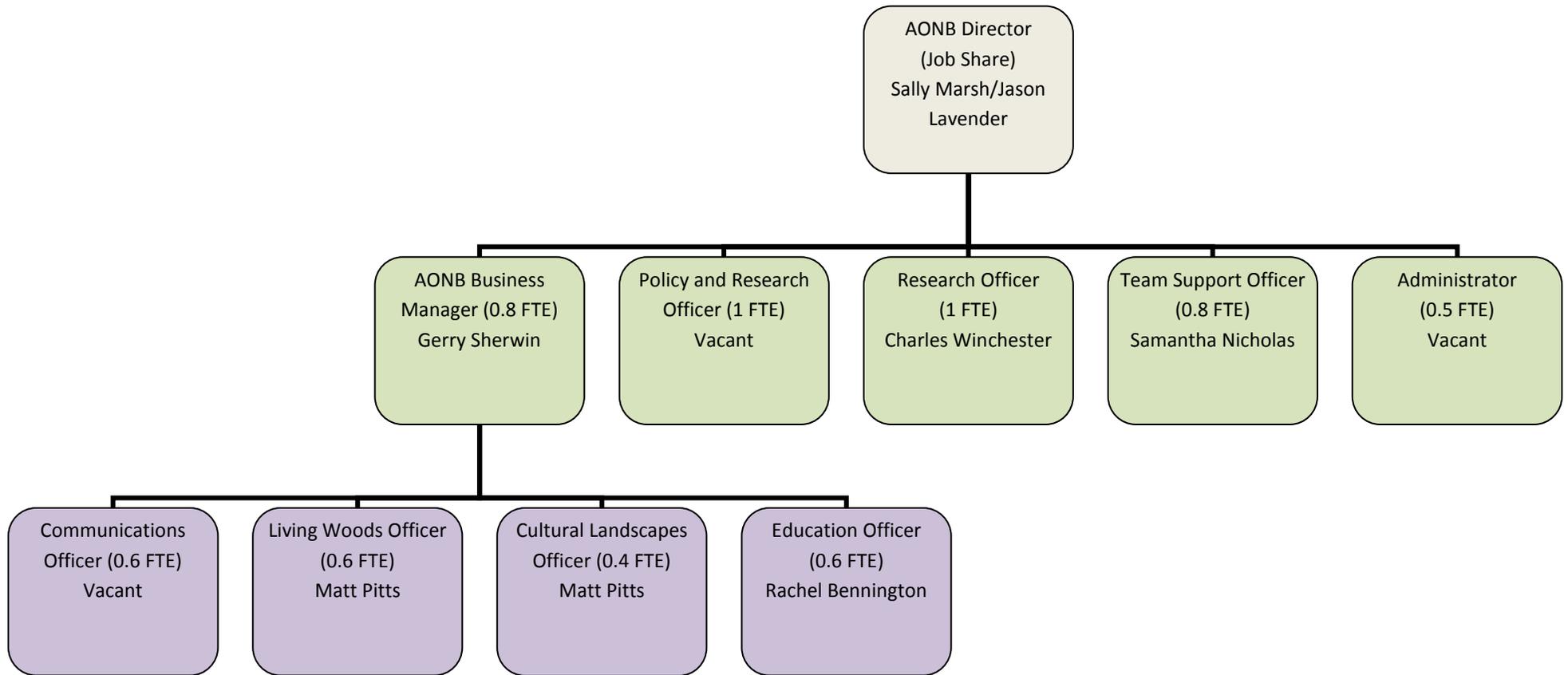
- 2.1 Competition for external funding remains intense, however, a number of funding sources exist, or are anticipated, that focus on providing support to land managers for landscape enhancement work. We are already committed to supporting water related conservation management in the eastern High Weald through a fund of £250,000 provided by East Sussex County Council as additional offsetting for the Bexhill Link Road. Work has been progressing on this project using an external consultant. This approach has had some success but, in our view, bringing the work 'in-house' and integrating this with other land management advice offered by the Unit would be more cost effective and minimise confusion amongst participating landowners.
- 2.2 Some of these new funds are also likely to be significant. They include the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative due to be launched later this year providing 24 million pounds over 6 years to mitigate the visual impact of overhead powerlines. Other potential funding sources are Natural England's Facilitation Fund for groups of landowners working together; resources available for Water Catchment Partnership action and a soon to be launched fund created by a local philanthropist for community and environmental works in selected High Weald parishes.
- 2.3 All these funds are competitive funds. Successful bids require us to secure excellent and ongoing relationships with landowners, land managers and community groups.
- 2.4 In order to continue to build effective relationships with landowners, land managers and community groups and provide capacity to develop successful bids we have, with the support of the Management Board, allocated project reserves to growing our land management advisory team. Two new posts have been created – Land Management Advisor and Outreach Advisor. We were delighted in October to welcome Tamara Taylor as Land Management Advisor. Tamara lives locally and has an excellent working knowledge of agriculture and Countryside Stewardship Schemes having previously worked for Natural England. Recruitment is underway for the Outreach Officer. Support is being offered to current staff throughout this process.
- 2.5 An operational budget is being built through allocations from current project reserves and new funding bids. We anticipate working with the Community Landscape Fund grants panel to transition to a new panel providing scrutiny of the landscape enhancement projects being developed.

### **3.0 Conclusions and Recommendation**

- 3.1 This report supports Agenda Item 10, JAC budget. We anticipate the new staffing structure being fully in place by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. The 2016/2017 work plan will be submitted to the JAC for approval in March 2016. Members are asked to note the report.

Contact: Sally Marsh AONB Co-Director, [s.marsh@highweald.org](mailto:s.marsh@highweald.org)

## High Weald AONB Unit team structure – August 2015

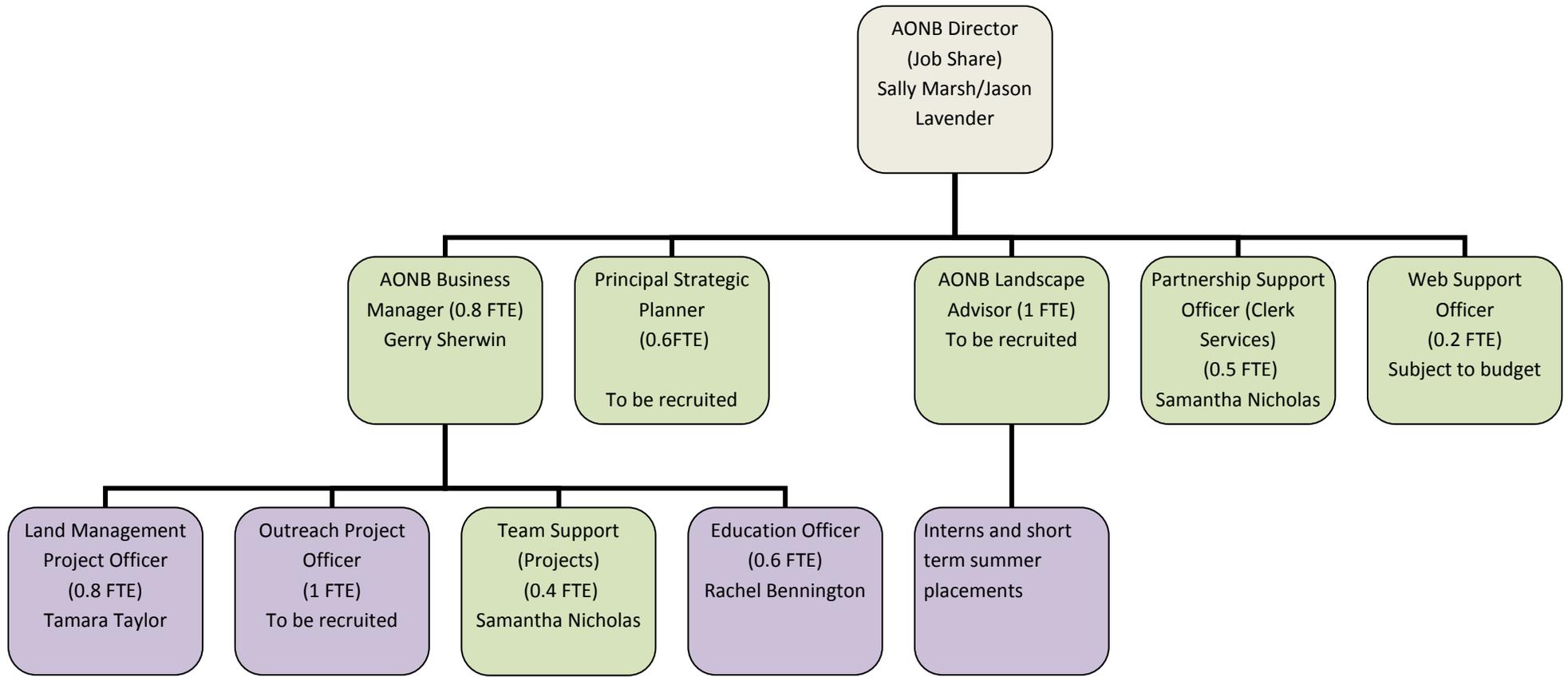


Key:

 Core programme team

 Externally funded project team

# High Weald AONB Unit – revised



Key:

- Core programme team
- Externally funded project team

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>6 November 2015</b>
<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Draft Revenue Budget 2016/17</b>
<b>By:</b>	<b>Treasurer to the Joint Advisory Committee</b>
<b>Purpose:</b>	<b>To consider the draft Revenue Budget 2016/17 and agree it as a basis for consultation with contributing bodies</b>

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to approve:

1. the draft budget for 2016/17; and
  2. the commencement of budget consultation with the local authorities and Defra
- 

## **Supporting information**

### **1. FINANCIAL APPRAISAL**

- 1.1 A draft budget for 2016/2017 is attached in Appendix A. It is recommended that the draft budget be approved as a basis for consultation with contributing bodies/authorities.
- 1.2 A balanced core budget has been set for 2016-17. This has been achieved using salary savings of £14,200 to meet inflationary pressures of £1,700, a Defra Contribution reduced by £10,700, and a reduction in other income of £1,800.
- 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 2016/2017 will be presented to the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) for approval at its March 2016 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 2016/2017 are likely to generate additional funds of at least £331,500.

Non-Defra Projects Funding	£79,700
Defra Core Funding	£204,000
Defra Projects Funding	£38,800
Other Core Income	£9,000
<b>Total External Funding</b>	<b>£331,500</b>

## The High Weald Unit's Work Plan 2016/2017

- 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 service level agreement between local authorities and High Weald JAC's host authority, East Sussex County Council.

## Decreasing Defra Contributions

- 2.6 Since 2011/12 Defra have reduced their contributions to AONB partnerships by 21.5%, resulting in a total grant reduction to the High Weald AONB Partnership of £71,020. A further reduction is likely following publication of the the 2015 Spending Review.

## High Weald JAC Budget 2015/2016

- 2.7 The forecast outturn for 2015/16 is to break-even, with net expenditure equal to budget. The forecast reserves at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 are £104,400.

## **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. Savings of £14,200 have been identified to offset reducing Defra contributions, resulting in a break-even budget for 2016/17.

- 3.2 The draft budget assumes the same allocation of the Defra contribution between core and projects as 2015/2016; 84% to core and 16% to projects. The draft budget assumes that local authorities will strive to maintain their contributions at the 2015/16 level.

### **Core Budget - Expenditure**

#### **Summary**

- 3.3 Inflation has been applied at rate of 1% for staff and 0% for all other costs.
- 3.4 Savings of £14,200 have been achieved through a reduction in staff costs.

#### **Staff Costs**

- 3.5 The draft budget allows for a smaller core team, reduced from 5.5 FTE staff to 4.4 FTE: Director (1.2FTE); Business Manager (0.8FTE); Strategic Planner (0.6FTE); Landscape Advisor (1FTE); Team Support Officer (0.8FTE); IT and Communications Support Officer (0.2FTE) and interns on short term contracts. Staff costs are subject to inflation of 1% and incremental progression as a result of revised grades following the Single Status Review of one post 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 2016/2017.

#### **Accommodation/Office Equipment**

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

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

- 3.6 This is a standstill budget that covers the NAAONB membership fee and the costs associated with running JAC meetings, representing the partnership at relevant regional and national forums, producing the annual review and miscellaneous PR costs.
- 3.7 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**

- 3.8 The draft budget shows contributions from local authorities at the same level as 2015/16. Although there has been no formal indication of a reduced contribution from Defra for 2016/17, the budget assumes that the contribution will be reduced by 5%, comparable to the annual reduction between 2011/12 to 2014/15.

## **Defra**

- 3.9 The 2016/17 core contribution is assumed in this report to be £242,800, a reduction of £12,800 or 5%, from 2015/16.

## **Local Authority Contributions**

- 3.10 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 2015/16 level.

## **Other Contributions**

- 3.11 The draft budget assumes other contributions to the core budget of £9,000 partly from hosted project officers contributing to accommodation costs and partly from charges for Unit services.

## **Core Budget - Reserves**

- 3.12 The JAC reserves at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 are estimated to be £104,400, the same as the forecast for 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016.

## **Self-Funding Projects**

- 3.13 The Self-funding projects budget is attached at Appendix B. The Partnership's project budget has been rationalised into 3 programmes; Management Plan Research and Evidence; the Landscape Enhancement Initiative; High Weald Heroes and Project Development.
- 3.14 The project budget allows for 2.4FTE project officers: a Land Management Advisor (0.8FTE), an Outreach Officer (1FTE) and an Education Officer (0.6FTE).
- 3.15 Projects in development, whose budgets have yet to be confirmed, have not been detailed in Appendix B.
- 3.16 The Defra grant contribution allocated to Partnership Projects is £38,800.

## **4. FINANCIAL ISSUES 2016/17 AND BEYOND**

- 4.1 Since 2011/12 budget savings of £51,300 have been made to achieve the total CSR saving of 21.5% required by Defra by March 2015. A saving of 5% for 2016/17 has been assumed and it is anticipated that further savings will be required in 2017/18.
- 4.2 A balanced position has been achieved for 2016/17 assuming local authorities maintain their core contribution at the 2015/16 level and use of project reserves.
- 4.3 In view of the likelihood of CSR savings from 2016/17 onwards the JAC continues to consider ways of further increasing other income.

4.4 Increasing income through charging for services is actively being pursued and reducing the number and hours of core staff further, allocating a greater % of the Defra contribution to core costs and an office relocation remain as options for balancing the budget.

4.5 The JAC needs to retain a minimum reserve of £95,000 to meet redundancy costs.

## **5. RISKS**

5.1 The key risk and financial implication that the JAC will wish to note is that there is no clarity around the level of Defra funding for 16/17 and beyond. That core budget for 2016/17 assumes Defra reduce their contribution by 5%.

5.1 Other risks and financial implication that the JAC will wish to note are that the core budget for 2016/17 assumes:

- That local authorities can maintain their core contributions at the same level as 2015/16.
- That employer's pension costs for 2016/17 will be 20.30%.
- That salary inflation for 2016/17 will be 1%
- That other inflation for 2016/17 will be 0%.

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

6.1 The JAC should note that the draft budget contains a number of budget assumptions, some of which could change following publication of the Spending Review on 25 November 2015.

6.2 The Management Board continues to consider savings option, 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 2017/18 onwards.

6.3 The draft budget for self-financing projects assumes operation of four programmes in 2016/17.

6.4 Support for the draft budget will provide the JAC with the capacity to deliver most of its core functions in 2016/17.

Marie Nickalls

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  
FORECAST OUTTURN 2015/16, BUDGET 2016/17 AND INDICATIVE BUDGET 2017/18**

2014/15 Actual	2015/16		2016/17					2017/18
	Budget £'000	Outturn £'000	Original Budget £'000	Inflation £'000	Budget Pressures £'000	Other £'000	Budget £'000	Indicative Budget £'000
<b>Actual Details</b>								
<b>Expenditure</b>								
228.9 Staff costs	237.2	228.1	237.2	1.7	0.0	(14.2)	224.7	226.9
39.1 Accommodation/office equipment	34.2	39.0	34.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	34.2	34.2
7.8 Partnership running costs	11.5	8.7	11.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.5	11.5
27.3 Support services	27.3	27.3	27.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	27.3	27.3
<b>303.1 Total Core Expenditure</b>	<b>310.2</b>	<b>303.1</b>	<b>310.2</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>(14.2)</b>	<b>297.7</b>	<b>299.9</b>
80.7 JAC expenditure on self-funding projects	87.6	121.6	87.6	0.0	0.0	(7.9)	79.7	150.0
40.9 Defra expenditure on self-funding projects	40.9	40.9	40.9	0.0	0.0	(2.1)	38.8	34.3
6.7 Project Enabling Fund expenditure on self-funding projects	9.6	6.5	9.6	0.0	0.0	18.7	28.3	20.0
128.3 Total JAC expenditure on self-funding projects	138.1	169.0	138.1	0.0	0.0	8.7	146.8	204.3
<b>431.4 Total Gross Expenditure</b>	<b>448.3</b>	<b>472.1</b>	<b>448.3</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>(5.5)</b>	<b>444.5</b>	<b>504.2</b>
<b>Core Contributions</b>								
214.7 Defra	214.7	214.7	214.7	0.0	(10.7)	0.0	204.0	193.8
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
10.4 Other Income	10.8	3.7	10.8	0.0	0.0	(1.8)	9.0	9.0
<b>309.8 Total Core Contributions</b>	<b>310.2</b>	<b>303.1</b>	<b>310.2</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>(10.7)</b>	<b>(1.8)</b>	<b>297.7</b>	<b>287.5</b>
6.7 Project Enabling Fund: (to)/from balances	9.6	6.5	9.6	0.0	0.0	18.7	28.3	20.0
<b>6.7 Total Local Authority Project Enabling Fund Contributions</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<b>20.0</b>
40.9 Defra contributions to self-funding projects	40.9	40.9	40.9	0.0	0.0	(2.1)	38.8	34.3
80.7 JAC contributions to self-funding projects	87.6	121.6	87.6	0.0	0.0	(7.9)	79.7	150.0
<b>438.1 Total Contributions</b>	<b>448.3</b>	<b>472.1</b>	<b>448.3</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>(10.7)</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>444.5</b>	<b>491.8</b>
<b>6.7 Transfer (from)/to reserves</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>(1.7)</b>	<b>(10.7)</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>(12.4)</b>
(6.7) Total (surplus)/deficit for year	0.0	(0.0)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	(0.0)	12.4
97.7 Reserves Brought Forward	104.4	104.4	104.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	104.4	104.4
6.7 Transfer (from)/to reserves	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	(12.4)
<b>104.4 Reserves Carried Forward</b>	<b>104.4</b>	<b>104.4</b>	<b>104.4</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>104.4</b>	<b>92.0</b>

**HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**SELF FUNDING PROJECTS BUDGET 2015/16 & INDICATIVE BUDGET 2016/17**

	Budget 2015/16			Outturn 2015/16			Indicative Budget 2016/17		
	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000
<b>1 Community Outreach Project</b>									
JAC expenditure	25.1			23.1			35.7		
Defra		(25.1)			(23.1)			(17.8)	
Project Enabling Fund		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0		(17.8)	0.0
<b>2 Management Plan Evidence and Guidance</b>									
JAC expenditure	4.7			27.8			5.0		
Defra		(1.2)			(2.2)			(5.0)	
Other		(3.5)	0.0		(25.6)	0.0		0.0	0.0
<b>3 High Weald Heroes</b>									
JAC expenditure	19.2			21.3			21.0		
Defra		(9.6)			(10.7)			(10.5)	
Heritage Lottery Fund		0.0			0.0			0.0	
Project Enabling Fund		(9.6)			(6.5)			(10.5)	
Other		0.0	0.0		(4.2)	(0.0)		0.0	0.0
<b>4 Landscape Enhancement Initiative</b>									
JAC expenditure	84.0			91.8			79.7		
Defra		0.0			0.0			0.0	
Environment Agency		0.0			(20.0)			0.0	
JAC Partnership Enabling Fund		0.0			0.0			0.0	
Local authorities		(60.0)			(41.0)			(79.7)	
Other		(24.0)	0.0		(30.8)	0.0		0.0	0.0
<b>5 Project Development</b>									
JAC expenditure	5.0			5.0			5.5		
Defra		(5.0)			(5.0)			(5.5)	
Local Authorities		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0			0.0
JAC expenditure (to Appendix A)	138.0	(87.5)		169.0	(121.6)		146.9	(79.7)	
Project Enabling Fund expenditure (to Appendix A)		(9.6)			(6.5)			(28.3)	
Expenditure Funded by Defra (to Appendix A)		(40.9)			(40.9)			(38.8)	
<b>TOTAL JAC expenditure/income</b>	<b>138.0</b>	<b>(138.0)</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>169.0</b>	<b>(169.0)</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>146.9</b>	<b>(146.9)</b>	<b>0.0</b>

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

**Date:** 6<sup>th</sup> November 2015

**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 continue to meet to review significant risks as required and develop options for their management.
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### 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 (JAC) are set out in Appendix A.

1.3 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. 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. Given this, the most significant risks to the work of the JAC are constraints on both the financial and personnel resources of the AONB Unit.

1.4 Since 2010 the AONB Unit has accommodated cuts of £70,000 in the Defra contribution to the core budget, which has been achieved across all budget headings and the tight fiscal management of all other activities. These losses have been partially offset by generating a modest income from the self-funded projects and charging consultation fees.

1.5 Over the same period the local authority partners on the JAC have worked very hard to maintain the local authority contributions to the core budget, albeit without an increase in line with inflation.

### 2.0 Key risks 2015/16 and beyond

- 2.1 The Government's Comprehensive Spending Review will be announced later this month and it is assumed it will result in further and significant cuts to Defra's overall budget, which are likely to result in a continued decline in their contribution to the core JAC budget for 2016-2018. Local authority contributions towards the core business of the JAC could also come under pressure during this period but even if they are able to maintain the current levels of funding, the likely fall in the Defra contribution remains substantial.
- 2.2 Further reductions in the financial contributions by the JAC partnership to the core business means the JAC will be unable to maintain the current level of work preparing, monitoring and reviewing the AONB Management Plan, co-ordinating action to accomplish the AONB Management Plan by individuals and communities, and providing specialist and technical advice and guidance on a nationally important landscape.

### **3.0 Risk mitigation**

- 3.1 The High Weald AONB Unit's current business strategy (2014-2018) responds to the risks to the work of the JAC caused by increasing constraints on both the financial and personnel resources of the AONB Unit. This strategy is tailored to the local circumstances and specific needs of the High Weald and it covers the first four years of the revised AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019.
- 3.2 Unlike previous business plans, which proposed ambitious work programmes and sought external funds to realize them, the 2014-2018 strategy is informed by the likely budget constraints for the same period and focuses on maintaining effective delivery of the JAC's core activity. Raising external funds to support the work remains difficult and has become increasingly competitive and the pragmatic approach is a move to a smaller, more resilient core team that is competent across a range of disciplines. However, the AONB Unit needs to retain a capacity for responding positively to opportunities to secure new resources and develop new partnerships to achieve AONB management plan objectives and support the work of others in the AONB.
- 3.3 The development of secure and alternative long-term income streams adequate enough to support the core remit of the JAC may be possible (although the difficulties achieving this are often under-estimated) but they are unlikely to address any shortfall in contributions within the strategy's timescale. The potential for charitable trusts and social enterprise companies to play a role in the future has been considered and will be kept under review but the focus for this business plan period is to remain a local authority supported partnership with a close relationship to government bodies whose policies influence management of the AONB landscape.
- 3.4 During the preparation of the current business strategy a risk assessment was undertaken in 2014 to identify priorities and make further decisions on financial, staff and other resource allocation. Following this, a report considering the impacts of the cuts and options to safeguard the service the JAC provides was presented to and approved by the Management Board in March 2014.

3.5 This report has informed and shaped the current business strategy and the AONB Unit has actively pursued a variety of options to address the risk of declining financial and personnel resources. To date the following measures have been put in place:

- A significant reduction in accommodation and office costs;
- A reduction in ESCC support service costs;
- A reduction in the communications budget including the loss of the High Weald Anvil magazine;
- The use of project reserves to support an expanded project programme that encourages financial contributions from new partnerships and organizations;
- Testing the viability of an AONB consultancy to undertake contract work eg. events management, Good Woods Project, Sussex Walks Festival;
- Charging for hosting and/or managing self-financing projects;
- The use of internships to support the core work programme and provide valuable work experience for the successful applicants;
- Continuing to apply to external sources of funds from private businesses, charitable trusts, government agencies to support community, research, and demonstration projects;
- Sharing/secondment of staff with partner organizations and other AONB Units and National Park Authorities;

The following measures will be put in place:

- Restructuring of the AONB Unit to ensure staff have the appropriate skills and experience to achieve the statutory AONB Management Plan and support the JAC partnership;
- Narrowing of the scope of the work undertaken by the AONB Unit;
- Investigating the feasibility of establishing a 'charging policy' for pre-application advice;
- Looking at the opportunities for a closer relationship with the High Weald Landscape Trust (set up by the AONB Unit in 2004);
- Investigating further the opportunities for corporate sponsorship;
- Investigating the opportunities for encouraging philanthropic donations towards the work of the JAC;
- Investigating alternative funds to support the work of the JAC e.g. Corporate Social Responsibility, corporate investment;
- Investigating the viability of setting up a company or social enterprise limited by guarantee (such as High Weald Design, established by the AONB Unit in 1994).

#### **4.0 Conclusions and Recommendations**

4.1 Risk management systems are in place and conform to the appropriate East Sussex County Council policy.

4.2 2015 to 2018 will impose increasing constraints on both the financial and personnel resources of the AONB Unit and this remains the most significant risk to the core work of the JAC.

- 4.3 The High Weald AONB Unit's current business strategy (2014-2018) is tailored to the High Weald's local circumstances and specific needs and aims to address the risk to the work of the JAC associated with declining financial contributions to the core work for 2015/16 and beyond.
- 4.4 The business strategy will ensure that by the end of the period the JAC will remain as a strong partnership supported by a small dedicated team providing specialist technical advice to conserve and promote the value of this nationally protected landscape. An appropriate organisational structure will be established to manage self-funded projects supporting AONB Management Plan objectives and develop income generating activities.

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## 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							
		Format: EVENT leading to CONSEQUENCE resulting in EFFECT ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES												Control Rating		Residual Risk	
														Likelihood	Consequence	Matrix Zone	Likelihood
	1	Reduced activity/service due to declining budgets 2015/16 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 change in scope of JAC's core 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 rarely 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	Partnership organizations and others 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	1	2	Green	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	Green
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	Continue the close 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. National Election and/or Cabinet re-shuffle 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 and supportive High Weald MPs.	AONB Director	3	4	5	Red

