

High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee



Minutes of Meeting

Wednesday 16 November at 10.30am

Holy Cross Priory, Lewes Road, Cross-in-Hand, Heathfield, TN21 0DZ

Members present:

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| Mrs J Davison | Sevenoaks District Council, Chairman |
| Cllr B Kentfield | Rother District Council, Vice Chairman |
| Cllr L Kitchen | Horsham District Council |
| Cllr M Sydney | Surrey County Council |
| Cllr Mrs L Lockwood | Tandridge District Council |
| Cllr M Balfour | Kent County Council |
| Cllr Mrs J Soyke | Tunbridge Wells Borough Council |
| Cllr A Pickering | Ashford Borough Council |
| Cllr R Street | Hastings Borough Council |
| Mrs L Newland | Natural England |
| Mr T Bamford | CLA |

Officers present:

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| Mr J Lavender | AONB Co-Director, High Weald AONB Unit |
| Ms G Sherwin | AONB Business Manager, High Weald AONB Unit |
| Ms C Tester | AONB Planning Adviser, High Weald AONB Unit |
| Mr C Winchester | AONB Landscape Adviser, High Weald AONB Unit |
| Mrs V Pullen | County Landscape Architect, East Sussex County Council, Vice-Chair OSG |
| Mr T Alty | Finance Manager, East Sussex County Council |
| Mr M Davidson | Environmental and Natural Resources Manager, Hastings Borough Council |

1. PRESENTATION: Using Medieval Field Information in Planning

Due to the absence of Sally Marsh, AONB Co-Director, the presentation was deferred to the next meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

2.1 Apologies were received from the following Members and officers:

Cllr Mrs S Tidy, Cllr B Acraman, Cllr C Hersey, Cllr H Rogers, Mrs A Field, Mr J Leggett.

Ms S Marsh, Mr T Dyer, Mr D Marlow, Mr D Greenwood, Mrs H French, Mrs J Hollingum, Mr D Scully, Mrs J Hollingum, Mr M Nouch, Ms M Killip.

3. MEMBERS INTERESTS

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

4. URGENT MATTERS

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

5. **MINUTES OF THE JAC MEETING – 23 March 2016**

5.1 RESOLVED to agree the minutes of the meeting of 23 March 2016 as a correct record.

6. **MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD – 12 October 2016**

6.1 RESOLVED to note the minutes of the Management Board held on 12 October 2016 as a correct record.

7. **MINUTES OF THE OFFICER STEERING GROUP – 28 September 2016**

7.1 The Committee considered a verbal report on the Officer Steering Group (OSG) by the OSG Vice Chairman, Virginia Pullen.

7.2 Virginia Pullen highlighted that the presentation on Environmental Colour Assessment had been well received and would be of interest to development control staff.

7.3 It was confirmed that the OSG had agreed to develop a more informal design group to discuss design principles and research which would meet before the next OSG meeting in February.

7.4 RESOLVED to note:

The Minutes of the Officer Steering Group held on 28 September 2016 as a correct record.

8. **REVENUE BUDGET 2017/2018**

8.1 The Committee considered a report by Finance Manager, Thomas Alty, who presented the Draft Revenue Budget for 2017/18.

8.2 Thomas Alty advised that maintenance of the Defra contribution at the 15 /16 levels with an annual inflationary increase enabled a balanced budget for 17/18.

8.3 Budget pressures, from increases in office rent and salary inflation and increments, were highlighted.

8.4 Thomas Alty reminded members that local authority contributions were essential for maintaining the Defra contribution.

8.5 It was confirmed that the reserves of £113,100 would, in a worst case scenario, cover all staff redundancies.

8.6 Cllr J Davison asked members whether the local authority contribution requests would be considered favourably. Cllr L Kitchen confirmed that Horsham District Council was committed to supporting the Partnership to enable cost-effective production of the AONB Management Plan. Cllr Mrs L Lockwood advised that Tandridge District Council as a small authority was struggling financially but that she would request ongoing support. Jason Lavender highlighted the value of a single management plan rather than multiple plans for the AONB.

8.7 RESOLVED to note the report and:

(1) approve the Draft Revenue Budget for 2017/18.

(2) commence budget consultation with the local authorities and Defra.

9. AONB PLANNING ADVICE

9.1 The JAC considered a report by Claire Tester, Planning Advisor, on AONB Planning Advice.

9.2 Jason Lavender advised that the guidance was a response to the Unit's experience with planning related matters over the last three years and the need to provide more guidance, in addition to the Management Plan, on what aspects of the High Weald's landscape need to be conserved and enhanced.

9.3 Cllr J Davison stated that she had found Appendix 2 particularly useful in clarifying what aspects of the National Planning Policy Framework were relevant to the AONB.

9.4 Cllr L Kitchen stated that in her experience Planning Inspectors seemed to be ignoring AONB and local authority experts, who were working to Government guidance, at appeal. This was an issue that needed to be addressed. Cllr M Balfour agreed that there was an increasing need to raise the profile of AONBs as there was an increasing desire amongst some decision makers to ignore or dismiss their value. Cllr Mrs L Lockwood stated that a glossy brochure with simple messages produced by the Gatwick Airport Community Group had been a good tool for communicating with MPs about the impact of a second runway. Cllr M Balfour advised that grass roots lobbying was the way forward. Cllr M Sydney confirmed that a large local action group had gained significant support at recent Tandridge District Council elections.

9.5 RESOLVED to note the proposed publication and the intention to produce more advice notes to support the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan.

10. MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW TIMETABLE

10.1 The JAC considered a report by Jason Lavender, AONB Co-Director.

10.2 Jason highlighted that the approach to the Plan would again be light touch but still involve a considerable amount of work.

10.3 RESOLVED to note the report.

11. WORK PLAN UPDATE

11.1 The JAC considered a report by Jason Lavender on the Unit's work programme with a presentation by Charles Winchester on Historic Routeways and Gerry Sherwin on the developing Fields of Dreams Landscape Partnership Scheme.

- 11.2 The Historic Routeway's presentation was well received by the JAC who recognized the value of historic routeways and the potential threats to them. There was a discussion around the causes of 'lost routeways'. Cllr M Balfour advised that they had been lost because they were no longer used and therefore an outcome of the work shouldn't be their designation as public rights of way. Charles Winchester advised that lost routeways weren't identified as part of the project.
- 11.3 Cllr M Balfour stated his support for the developing Fields of Dreams Scheme and highlighted a new Sport England report/initiative that highlights the value of the country parks for well-being. He also referred to the issue of Ash Dieback and the impact that would have on land management and resources in the coming years.
- 11.4 RESOLVED to note the report.

12. AONB SIGNAGE

- 12.1 The JAC considered a report and presentation by Charles Winchester on AONB Sign Guidance.
- 12.2 The guidance was well received by Committee members and there was clear support for consistent signage/branding. There were questions and suggestions on signage material and lettering font with concerns raised about the theft of metal signage and the long term appearance of timber signs. Adding the web address, trade marking the signs and considering the scope to extend the guidance to include sustainable transport modes were also suggested as areas for consideration.
- 12.3 There was a consensus that parishes were most likely to find resources for sign installation. Cllr M Sydney stated that he had provisionally allocated funds for the installation of signs in his area.
- 12.3 RESOLVED to note the report.

13. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 13.1 The JAC considered a report by Jason Lavender on risk management and the associated risk management matrix.
- 13.2 Jason highlighted that though Defra had offered secure contribution until 2020 funding was still an issue, and that Rory Stewart, the MP who had played a part in this decision, had a new role and there was a need to develop a relationship with his successor.
- 13.3 Gerry Sherwin highlighted that the other key risk was not having skilled staff in place to deliver the work programme and that the Land Management Officer, Tamara Taylor, had tendered her resignation after a year in post due to relocation to Sheffield. Recruitment to the vacant post was planned but the land management programme would be affected.
- 13.4 RESOLVED to note the report and;

request that the Management Board continue to meet to review significant risks as required and develop options for their management.

14. AOB

- 14.1 There will be a Management Board Meeting on 1 March 2017 and the next JAC meeting is to be held on 29 March 2017. The Chairman apologised for being unable to attend the March meeting.