



**Cornwall AONB Partnership Meeting  
Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2008  
at 2.00 pm at Kingsley Village, Fraddon**

**Present:**

Peter Mansfield Chairman, Cornwall AONB Partnership

**Members:**

Cllr David Hughes	Restormel Borough Council
Cllr Steve Chamberlain	Carrick District Council
Cllr Neil Hatton	Cornwall County Council
Cllr Val Newman	North Cornwall District Council
Cllr Roy Gill	Restormel Borough Council
Sarah Manning	Natural England
Wesley Smyth	Natural England
George Brew	Natural England
Jimmy Scobie	Country Landowners Business Association (CLA)

**Supporting Officers:**

Mike Hawkey	Cornwall County Council
Steve Crummay	Cornwall County Council
David Attwell	North Cornwall District Council
Kath Statham	Cornwall County Council
Veryan Heal	Cornwall County Council Historic Environment Service
Paul Walton	Cornwall AONB Partnership Manager
Colette Holden	Cornwall AONB Officer
Pete Maxted	Cornwall AONB Communications Officer
June Crossland	Cornwall AONB Planning Officer
Tasha Dale	Cornwall AONB Office Manager

**1 Welcome and Apologies**

**Members:**

Cllr William Maddern; Penwith District Council; Cllr Mark Kaczmarek, Kerrier District Council; Cllr Beryl Martin, Caradon District Council; Mel Barge, English Heritage; Nick Lawrence, National Trust; Ron Daniel, Cornwall Association of Local Councils; Sue Wearing, South West Regional Development Agency

**Supporting Officers:**

Deborah Boden, Cornwall County Council World Heritage Site Team; Rodger Dewhurst, Kerrier District Council; Rachel Bray, Penwith District Council; Malcolm Pinch, Restormel Borough Council; Rob Lacey, Carrick District Council; Al Collings, Caradon District Council;

**Actions**

**Welcome:** Cllr Roy Gill, new Planning Portfolio holder for Restormel Borough Council, George Brew, Natural England and Wesley Smyth, Natural England were welcomed to their first Partnership meeting.

Partners were informed that Melanie Barge is the new representative for English Heritage on the Cornwall AONB Partnership, but she had sent her apologies for this meeting.

Sarah Manning of Natural England was thanked for her long term support of the Cornwall AONB Partnership. The new representative for Natural England will be George Brew.

## **2 Minutes of last meetings and matters arising**

### **2.1 Partnership meeting (13th December 2007)**

- The minutes were **AGREED** to be a true and accurate record.

#### **Matters arising:**

**Agenda page 2, item 2.1, Sustainable Development Fund – Review of Cornwall AONB SDF Delivery** – The AONB Partnership Manager confirmed that formal notification of 08/09 SDF funding had not yet been received. It was anticipated that there would be funding available and that there would be a review of the mechanisms for the distribution of funding. Any funding allocated via the Unit would relate to the aims of the Management Plan.

AONB Unit

**Agenda Page 2, Item 2.1, The Cornwall Lecture 2008** – The AONB Partnership Manager advised that progress was underway regarding the Lecture and the workshops taking place prior to the event. There will be two workshops, on Monday June 9<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> September. Details of these workshops will be circulated when finalised. (The September workshop clashes with a Cornwall AONB Partnership meeting, which will be rearranged).

AONB Unit

**Agenda Page 3, Item 3.2, RDPE funding and the Cornwall AONB** – The AONB Partnership Manager advised that potential project bids had been developed for submission under the Sustainable Rural Tourism Investment Theme by the Cornwall Sustainable Tourism Project, CoAST, on behalf of a consortium that includes the South West Coast Path, World Heritage Site and Cornwall AONB but the South West Regional Development Agency were not yet in a position to consider formal funding bids. Expressions of Interest in the Community Development Investment Theme have exceeded the available funding. The South West Regional Development Agency is encouraging Cornwall groups to review their bids and combine where possible. The AONB Unit is working with the West Cornwall and North Cornwall groups to strengthen bids by highlighting how the AONB designation can be harnessed to provide benefits for the area. An update will be provided at the June meeting.

AONB Unit

Further to the financial support provided by the AONB Partnership to the SW Uplands Federation the AONB Unit have now been invited to join the SW Uplands Task Force established to look at the impacts of issues such as ESA closure and Single Farm Payment schemes. John Waldon of the Task Force will address our Conference in May.

**Agenda Page 5, Item 4.1 – AONB Display Materials** – Partners were advised that the completion of the display materials was likely to be in 4-6 weeks and would be available for presentation at the June meeting.

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## **2.2 Officer Meeting (14<sup>th</sup> November 2007)**

- The minutes were **AGREED** to be a true and accurate record.

### **Matters Arising:**

**Agenda Page 7, Item 2 – Carrick’s Truro & Threemilestone Area Action Plan – Regional Spatial Strategy discussion** – Further discussion was held regarding the impact on the AONB of the revised housing figures for Cornwall in the Panel Report for the Regional Spatial Strategy. Concerns were also raised over the landscape impact on villages and towns of the building of homes in back gardens (as referred to in the previous Officer Group minutes). The AONB Unit will work with the local authorities on the preparation of development strategies that may have an impact on the AONB. The South West Protected Landscape Forum is also involved in consultations regarding the Regional Spatial Strategy. It was decided that this issue would require a substantial allocation of time at a future Partnership meeting in order to fully discuss all concerns.

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**Agenda Page 8, Item 2 – Interreg Funding** – Partners were advised that the development of projects for Interreg Funding is underway with interested parties working together to prevent duplication.

**Agenda Page 8, Item 2 – HLS Targeting Update** – Concerns were raised over the proposed process for assessing Landscape Risk. The separation of the 5 strands (conservation of biodiversity; maintenance and enhancement of landscape character, resource protection (soils, air & water), promotion of public access, and conservation of the historic environment) for assessment was a key concern as it was felt that these should be looked at as a whole. The current risk assessment for the landscape strand is not producing accurate risk results for the uplands area. This would indicate that the current method is not satisfactory as areas at risk are not reflected as such. It was confirmed by Natural England officers present at the meeting that the process is at an early stage and that stakeholder consultation at a National, Regional and Local level should ensure that the process is accurate and beneficial to the areas involved.

Concern was also expressed at the lack of support for upland areas within the current Environmental Stewardship programme. Partners were advised that Natural England are addressing these concerns.

## **3. Reports for Decision**

### **3.1 Future of the Cornwall AONB Partnership – update**

Following discussion on the future management arrangements of the Cornwall AONB at the December Partnership meeting, Mike Hawkey, CCC Head of Environment and Heritage and Partnership met Chairman Peter Mansfield and Paul Walton to discuss the options in the light of the Unitary Authority proposals

It was agreed that further clarification on the structure of the Unitary Authority was required before any Partnership structure can be decided, particularly with regard to the proposed Community Networks and the Planning Areas.

In addition, the position of Natural England, as principal funder of AONB Partnerships, is an important consideration and their views had not yet been received. Mike Hawkey had a meeting with the SW Regional Director of Natural England, Janette Ward, to discuss the creation of the Unitary Authority in relation to all of Natural England’s work but there

has been no response to date from Natural England regarding the AONB Partnership. Peter Mansfield has written to Janette Ward outlining the situation and requesting an early meeting to clarify Natural England's viewpoint.

The future relationship between Natural England and AONBs nationally has been set out in the Natural England paper that was circulated at the last Partnership meeting – “Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnerships: Relationship development and operational delivery”.

Partners were reminded that the current employment contracts of the AONB Unit will shortly have only 12 months remaining on them.

Jimmy Scobie, CLA, advised that a recent CLA Committee had unanimously agreed that the Partnership should continue as an independent function. It was also felt by the Committee that it would be useful to have two CLA representatives on the Partnership to provide better geographical representation.

One of the impacts of Unitary Authority upon the Partnership is the loss of the local knowledge currently provided by the six district council representatives. This will need to be recaptured via the proposed area networks system once the changes take place.

It was suggested that the AONB would be vital in plans for the future of Cornwall, and the current successful methods/approach regarding the protection of this landscape would aim to be retained. The Cornwall AONB Partnership has strength in its engagement in tackling strategic issues and this offers a very valuable tool for the future place-shaping of Cornwall.

- It was **AGREED** to defer discussions on the future options for the Cornwall AONB Partnership until more is known about the structure of the Unitary Authority and the views of Natural England. A paper will be brought to the June meeting.

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### **3.2 Review of the Cornwall AONB Management Plan**

At the Partnership meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2007, Partners were advised that the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires the AONB Management Plan to be reviewed within 5 years of publication - June 2009 in the case of the Cornwall AONB.

At that meeting it was agreed to seek agreement from Natural England to extend the life of the current management plan in order to enable the Unitary Authority to properly endorse any changes that may arise from the review.

In February the AONB Unit received advice from DEFRA regarding the legal position. This offered two options:

- i) carry out a “light touch” review of the management plan to fit within the five year criteria and carry out a more detailed review once the Unitary Authority is in place
- or
- ii) carry out a notional initial review, giving notice to Defra and Natural England of the intention to extend the life of the present plan by one year, with the justification that this will provide the opportunity for the Unitary Authority to take a full role in the review in a years time.

Legal advice obtained from Cornwall County Council has indicated that the CROW Act does not allow for a notional review and extension of the present plan and recommends that a light touch review to conform with the CRoW Act should be carried out, with an accompanying report recommending changes to the Plan that should be made by the Unitary Authority. This would enable the new Authority to properly engage with the

AONB Management Plan once it is formally established.

- It was **AGREED** to carry out a “light touch” review of the management plan to fit within the five year criteria and carry out a more detailed review once the Unitary Authority is in place.

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### **3.3 Wind Turbines and the Cornwall AONB**

The Cornwall AONB Unit comments on wind farm applications on behalf of the Partnership, emphasising any potentially adverse impact on the AONB that might result from the development and highlighting the need for the planning authority to give weight to the AONB when determining the application.

In commenting on two current wind farm applications the views of the AONB Unit have differed from that of some Partnership members who have also commented on the proposals. This situation highlights the need for closer joint working between partners on planning matters, something that is being addressed by the AONB Unit. Appendices 1 and 2 refer.

It also raises the question of whether the Partnership should develop an agreed view on wind farm development in or near the AONB. This could take the form of a Position Statement or similar document, that could be used to inform the debate around wind energy in Cornwall and provide the context for future responses by the AONB Unit to wind farm proposals.

National planning policy states that major developments should not take place in designated areas (Planning Policy Statement 7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas) and that renewable energy projects should not compromise the objectives of the designated area (PPS22 Renewable Energy). However, the recent supplement to PPS1 – Planning and Climate Change, urges local authorities to look favourably on proposals for renewable energy as a part of a response to climate change.

This changing policy emphasis highlights the shortcomings of local guidance to inform the development of renewable energy projects, and particularly wind farms, in Cornwall. Although countywide planning guidance on renewable energy was prepared in 2003 it was not formally adopted by any of the local authorities. The guidance does not address the new generation of turbines which can be up to 120m to tip height and only provides limited guidance on addressing the cumulative impact of separate developments.

Natural England advised that there are numerous internal policies in production currently, the latest of which has been the Landscape Policy. An energy policy incorporating wind energy policy is being produced.

Public queries over protected landscape designations have been raised, questioning the value of a designation if the protection is not enforced. It was agreed that the cumulative effect of wind turbines is a concern as is the increased height of those currently subject to planning applications. It was advised that the purpose of the designation is to ‘conserve and enhance’ but the focus is not to preserve the landscape exactly as it has always been. This would need to be considered when assessing any planning application and not just wind turbines.

Planning Committees can invite interested parties to speak during the Committee’s assessment process of a planning application and it was suggested that the AONB Unit could be given the opportunity to offer guidance on the landscape impact of wind turbines at relevant planning committee meetings.

- It was **AGREED** to produce a draft Position Statement on wind turbines for

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consideration at the June Partnership meeting.

- It was **AGREED** that the AONB Partnership Manager should attend Committee meetings, if invited, to present the case for the AONB

### **3.4 Cornwall AONB Conference 2008**

Each year the Cornwall AONB Partnership hosts a conference to look back on the work of the Partnership in the previous year and to promote the purpose, importance and significance of the AONB to a wide audience.

It is proposed that the focus for the 2008 Cornwall AONB Conference should be the Bodmin Moor section of the Cornwall AONB, to be held on Saturday May 17<sup>th</sup> with the Pensilva Millennium Centre a possible venue.

The conference will follow a format that has proved successful in previous years. There will be two elements – presentations and question and answer session in the morning followed by informal site visits in the afternoon.

- It was **AGREED** to hold the Cornwall AONB Conference on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2008, with a proposed venue of Pensilva Millennium Centre. The Conference will follow the format stated above with exact topics and speakers to be discussed further. Detail of the event will be discussed with officers from CCC Natural Environment Service to ensure appropriate representation of the Caradon Hill project.

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### **3.5 2009 – Cornwall AONB 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

In 2009 it will be 50 years since the designation of the majority of the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the Camel Estuary section was added in 1981) and Partners were invited to consider how the anniversary might be celebrated.

Cornwall was the 9<sup>th</sup> AONB to be designated after the passing of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, with the Gower AONB the first in 1956 and the Tamar Valley the most recent English AONB in 1995.

This years' Cornwall Lecture, which will examine the importance of the landscape to the county, will provide a timely reminder of the significance of the protection provided by the AONB designation and could act as an introduction into a number of events during 2009.

Suggestions by the Partnership for celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary included:

- Then & Now calendar of The Lizard
- Promotion of Partners' work
- A 'look forward' session on the future of the AONB
- Successful grant funded projects in the AONB
- The design of a special 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary AONB logo which could be used to brand Partners activities relevant to the AONB during 2009.

Organising a set of events across the Cornwall AONB, with its 12 sections covering an area equivalent to Dartmoor National Park, with a team of just 5 staff would present challenges. A more realistic approach would be for Partners to agree to commit resources – finance and/or staff time - to develop a programme of events to mark the anniversary. This might be done within existing budgets if planned events programmes and publications could be used to effectively promote the AONB Including using the special logo in publicity.

Jimmy Scobie for the CLA suggested that the 50 years of the AONB might be a theme for

the CLA's Cornwall branch AGM early in 2009; partners welcomed this offer.

- It was **AGREED** that Partners would review the opportunities of providing funding from their organisations towards the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. All Partners
- It was **AGREED** that Partners would consider events that could be included as part of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary programme. All Partners

#### **4 Items for information/discussion**

##### **4.1 Heritage Assets Single Issue Panel update**

The Cornwall AONB Partnership Manager updated the Partnership on the Heritage Assets Project. A working party has been formed and is being led by Kath Statham of Cornwall County Council and includes representatives from Historic Environment, Natural Environment and the Highways department.

The CCC Heritage Assets Single Issue Panel was established to consider the management practices applied to CCC property regarding their landscape, historic and ecological value.

The AONB Unit was invited to submit views to the Panel, resulting in an agreement to target a pilot approach to the management of highway assets in two areas within the AONB – St Endellion in N Cornwall and Breage / Germoe in West Cornwall with the aim of identifying ways to improve the management and protection of the public realm.

Work to date has included:

- Desk review of the heritage assets in the selected parishes
- Site investigation to record the locations of significant features - highlighting the fact that although data is available it is not centrally held.

Detailed information on all features will be collected and recorded. Features include: Mile stones, finger and guide posts / boundary stones / crosses, general street furniture etc.

Some initial remedial work will be carried out to remove redundant / duplicated features found as part of the study and future work will concentrate on:

- Bringing together the various systems and data sets on which the different records are kept
- The cost and legal implications of reducing / replacing / removing signage and highway clutter
- A Good Practice Guidance document will be produced that can be applied to other parishes throughout the county.

##### **4.2 AONB Unit Update – January to March 2008**

The Cornwall AONB Partnership Manager referred to the Work Programme attached with the Agenda Papers detailing the Unit's current work involvement.

Colette Holden, AONB Officer, provided a more detailed update on the Landscape Characterisation Planning Workshops that had been held with DC officers recently. The AONB Unit has organised and delivered, in partnership with Cornwall County Council, and the Cornwall Wildlife Trust a programme of four Landscape Characterisation Workshops for Development Control Officers. Each workshop has been well attended with positive feedback. It is anticipated that further workshops will be held for Planning

agents and consultants. This process and the production of best practice guidance will provide a transparent and consistent method for the assessment of Landscape Characterisation in relation to Development Control.

**5. Europarc / NAAONB / SWPLF**

NAAONB – Landscape Policy - A workshop is due to be held in Reading in May regarding Natural England and DEFRA Landscape Policy.

NAAONB – Funding – There will have to be a rise in the financial contributions to the NAAONB from all of the AONBs if the present level of service and national representation is to be maintained – this was felt to be cost effective due to the service provided by the National Association.

NAAONB – Powerline Undergrounding – The current outcome of this debate suggests that Ofgem are unable to enforce the undergrounding of wires by Western Power.

SWPLF – The forum is currently involved in responding to issues arising from the Regional Spatial Strategy and development of potential European grant funded projects.

**6. Any Other Business**

AONB Office Manager – Karen Johns will be returning from maternity leave at the end of April. This will be on a part time basis. Tasha Dale is remaining with the team for a handover period until the end of June. This will assist with a busy time within the unit, including the Annual Conference, Annual Report, Cornwall Lecture workshop and Royal Cornwall Show.

September Partnership Meeting – It was noted that the date for the September Partnership meeting (25<sup>th</sup>) coincides with the September workshop for the Cornwall Lecture. A revised date of Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> September was proposed and the AONB Unit will contact Partnership Members to ascertain availability for this date.

AONB Unit

Outstanding magazine - The Connection Between Land and Sea – A recent article in the NAAONB 'Outstanding' Magazine highlighted concern over the impacts of offshore developments upon the AONB and the lack of appropriate planning controls. Progress on these issues will be dependant upon the introduction of the proposed marine Bill and its accompanying proposals for Marine Spatial Planning.

**7. Date and Time of next meeting**

Cornwall AONB Officer Group Meeting – Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2008  
Cornwall AONB Partnership Meeting – Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2008

All Partners