

Cornwall AONB Partnership Business Plan 2007-10

Introduction

The Cornwall AONB Partnership Business Plan 2007-10 sets out in broad terms the key areas of work for the Cornwall AONB Partnership and its staff unit for the next three years. A more detailed work programme for the AONB Unit will be produced annually as part of the bid for core funding to Natural England.

Background

The Cornwall AONB Partnership was formed in October 2002 and launched with a signing of a Statement of Intent and Memorandum of Agreement by the Partners in March 2003. Its' creation resulted from the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 which reaffirmed the importance of the AONB designation, placed a statutory duty upon local authorities to produce and regularly review a management plan for AONBs within their boundaries and a duty on all "relevant authorities" to have regard for AONB purposes. The first Cornwall AONB Management Plan was published in June 2004 and the Cornwall AONB Partnership has continued through the financial support of the local authorities in Cornwall, the National Trust and the Countryside Agency.

The main duties of an AONB Partnership are set out in the document *CA24 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – A guide for AONB partnership members*. The primary role of an AONB Partnership is to plan and implement AONB management via the AONB management plan. The make up of the Cornwall AONB, dispersed across 12 separate areas of the county, creates challenges for the Cornwall AONB Partnership.

The Partnership must maintain a strategic view of the AONB as a whole while identifying and highlighting the management needs of individual areas. Addressing those needs has to be done at the local level, through the work of the Partners and other organisations and individuals.

The key roles for the Cornwall AONB Partnership therefore are to promote the importance of the landscape of the AONB, to influence and advise others whose work might impact upon the AONB and to coordinate the protection and management of the AONB according to the purposes of designation.

Box 1

Purposes of AONB designation

- The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty
- In pursuing the primary purpose account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.
- Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met as far as this is consistent with the

conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.

Aims of the Business Plan

In delivering the 2007-10 Business Plan the Cornwall AONB Partnership will:

- Continue to facilitate the implementation of the Cornwall AONB management Plan
- Promote the qualities of the AONB and the importance of the designation to Cornwall.
- Fulfil the statutory duty of the local authorities under Section 89 of the CRoW Act 2000 to review the existing AONB Management Plan.
- Promote the protection, management and planning of Cornwall's finest landscapes and foster cooperation on landscape issues
- Develop the Cornwall AONB as a focus for sustainable tourism
- Encourage active involvement and engagement of communities in the conservation and enhancement of the Cornwall AONB.
- Maintain the AONB Partnership as an example of effective partnership working
- Work with the network of Protected Landscape management organisations at local, regional, national and international levels, including the Tamar Valley and Isles of Scilly AONBs and the Cornwall Mining World Heritage Site

Key work areas for 2007-10

The following work areas were identified as priorities for 2007-10 by the Cornwall AONB Officer working group and AONB Partnership in June-September 2006.

- Management Plan implementation, facilitation, coordination and monitoring
- Section 85 CRoW Act 2000
- Monitoring of landscape change
- Project funding
- Landscape Character Assessment
- Land Use Planning
- Communications
- Cornwall AONB Management Plan 2009-14
- Closer joint working with protected landscapes
- Legislative Change

- Partnership management and administration, liaison and strategic coordination

Management Plan implementation, facilitation and coordination; monitoring

The AONB Unit will continue to advise and facilitate the coordinated implementation by others of the management plan and to monitor progress on the targets of the plan.

Action

- Promote the Cornwall AONB management plan and its policies for action
- Monitor the activity of Partners and others that contributes to the delivery of the AONB management plan
- Publish an annual report on progress on the implementation of the management plan

Section 85 CRoW Act 2000

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 placed a duty on a range of organisations to “have regard” for the purposes of the AONB when carrying out their activities, identified as. Guidance published in 2005 identified the “relevant authorities” to which the duty applied and explained ways in which they might demonstrate how they have considered the purposes of the AONB in their decision making. Organisations outside of the AONB Partnership may not be aware of their responsibilities under the CRoW Act and the Partnership has a key role in highlighting their duties. The guidance also identified a role for AONB Partnerships to monitor compliance with the duties

Action

- Produce, effectively promote and distribute literature on the Duties of Section 85
- Hold training course and seminars on Duties of Section 85
- Devise a monitoring process for showing compliance with Section 85

Monitoring of landscape change

Monitoring of changes in the landscape is required to guide policy development, landscape management and to assess the effectiveness of the Cornwall AONB management Plan. A range of information – environmental, social and economic – is gathered to assess the continued “State of the AONB”. The AONB Unit will continue to work at the local and regional level to collect and interpret data that can be used to assess the extent of local landscape change within the AONB. This information will be made available to Partners and other organisations whose actions impact upon the Cornwall AONB. In

particular the AONB Unit will work with planning authorities to develop indicators for inclusion in local planning policy documents.

Action

- Continue to develop indicators of change for the AONB with an increased emphasis on developing an evidence base that can be used to direct resources to areas most in need of enhancement / conservation and to inform policy development by local authorities.
- Continue and extend the fixed post photography monitoring
- Further development of planning indicators (not just affordable housing)

Project funding

The availability of funding from the Countryside Agency for projects and, since 2005, the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) has proved invaluable in enabling the AONB Partnership support organisations in their efforts to deliver the AONB management plan. Being able to provide resources for small scale projects, some delivered by voluntary or community groups helps raise the profile of the AONB Partnership, renews interest in the designated area and can be the catalyst for larger projects that leverage funding from other sources.

During 2007-10 the AONB Unit will continue to administer the SDF, working with partners on the SDF Grants Panel to ensure a wide range of projects are supported.

The Unit will coordinate the identification, preparation and development of a number of strategic projects, working with partners to identify sources of funding for initiatives that will help deliver actions in the AONB management plan and complement activities such as the Natural England campaigns eg Sustainable Land Management

The AONB Unit will also support partners to develop large or complex funding bids from other sources that aim to bring a significant level of resources into the AONB.

Action

- Maintain SDF grants panel with meetings as required
- Monitor and advise projects in receipt of grant funding and facilitate spending within deadlines.
- Assist partners in preparing funding bids for projects that will implement policies in the AONB management plan

Landscape Character Assessment

The AONB is a protected landscape but the key elements that make up the landscape and how they should be managed and protected is not widely understood. Advising on the application of landscape character assessment in relation to planning policy, development control and agri-environment schemes within the AONB is a key role for the AONB Unit

Key to this work is the continued development of the Cornwall Landscape Character Project and the dissemination of its outputs. The Cornwall AONB Unit has played a major role in the Cornwall Landscape Character Project, both in securing funds and providing considerable officer time to the project. Due to be completed in 2006/07, the Landscape Character Project will need to be managed, promoted and utilised. It is anticipated that the Cornwall AONB Unit will continue to work with Cornwall County Council to develop the Project and promote its use by a range of organisations within the county.

The application of the outputs from the Landscape Character Project should also inform aspects of the Units work on planning and monitoring (see below).

Action

- Remain a key partner in Cornwall Landscape Character Project – provide a management role and secretarial support in conjunction with CCC to manage the website, update baseline information and maintain content of the database
- Participate in Stakeholder forums and meetings on Landscape Character Assessment
- Actively encourage community participation in landscape character assessment

Land Use Planning

The Cornwall AONB Management Plan identifies the capacity for inappropriate or poorly located development to erode the quality of the AONB. The preparation of the Local Development Frameworks provides an opportunity to influence the content of the core strategies and development policies of all the local authorities in the county and ensure a consistent approach is taken to the AONB.

To take advantage of this opportunity the Cornwall AONB Partnership will need to recruit planning expertise through the appointment of a part time planning officer. This post will look specifically at contributing to the preparation of the Local Development Frameworks, the development of Supplementary Planning Documents and the best means of aligning the Cornwall AONB management Plan with the LDF. In the North Cornwall and Caradon Districts this work will be done in conjunction with Tamar Valley AONB.

The AONB Unit will continue to respond to planning applications in accordance with the criteria agreed by the Partnership. Opportunities will be taken to provide planning authorities with information and advice about the Cornwall AONB through the delivery of workshops and seminars.

Within the resources available assistance will be given to Parish Councils or Forums undertaking parish plans or local landscape assessments, utilising the outputs from the Landscape Character Project.

Action

- Provide advice to Local authorities and regional bodies on landscape policies in Local Development Frameworks and regional strategies including Area Action Plans where appropriate
- Contribute to the preparation of Local Development Documents e.g. Design Guides, Area Action Plans
- Work with parish councils / forums to develop landscape appraisals for Parish Plans / MCTI plans
- Host seminars for planning staff / members
- Respond to consultations on planning applications as required

Communications

In 2005 the Cornwall AONB Partnership produced a 3 year Communications Plan with objectives aimed at helping to achieve the vision of the Cornwall AONB Management Plan. Some of the actions within the Communications Plan have been delivered but many have not been carried out as a result of having to prioritise resources onto other work. To be properly effective in communications work requires specialist skills and these will need to be found from within the existing financial resources available to the AONB Partnership.

Action

- Host an annual AONB Conference
- Maintain the Cornwall AONB Website
- Produce a quarterly E bulletin
- Provide displays at key events in the county
- Review the Communications Plan in 2008

Cornwall AONB Management Plan 2009 – 14

It is a statutory requirement for local authorities to review the existing AONB Management Plan within five years of its publication. The Cornwall AONB Partnership will consider how best to review the current plan, in conjunction with the recently published “Guidance for the review of AONB management plans” CA 221.

A key task will be to identify how the management plan can best complement the Local Development Frameworks of the local planning authorities.

Action

- Review the existing Cornwall AONB management plan
- Consult on any changes or revisions
- Publish the revised management plan in 2009/10

Closer joint working across Protected Landscapes
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The Cornwall AONB Unit will work closely with other protected landscape management groups to ensure the best use of resources, avoid duplication and provide a coordinated response to issues and at a county, regional and national level. The Partnership will play an active role in supporting Protected Landscape networks at regional, national and international levels.

Action

- Work with the Tamar Valley and Isles of Scilly AONB Partnerships and the Cornish and West Devon Mining World Heritage Site Partnership on matters of common interest
- Maintain active membership of the National Association of AONBs, the South West Protected Landscapes Forum and Europarc

Legislative Change

Proposed changes to legislation can have implications for the management of AONBs and the Partnership will need to remain abreast of any changes that could affect the Cornwall AONB. An example is the proposed Marine Bill that includes proposals for a planning framework to be applied to the inshore waters of the UK coastline. As with input into planning policy, helping to ensure a legislative framework provides protection to the AONB is an essential element in the continued conservation of the area. The Cornwall AONB Partnership is able to work with the NAAONB and SWPLF to respond to changes at both national and regional level.

Action

- Make timely responses to consultations on legislative changes that could impact upon the AONB.

Partnership management and administration, liaison and strategic coordination

To be effective the Cornwall AONB Partnership needs to be properly administered with regular meetings and sound budgetary control. The Memorandum of Agreement signed by all the Partners needs to be maintained and reviewed to ensure continuation of the Partnership beyond its current six year period – March 2003-2009.

Action

- Maintain Partnership and officer group meetings at four times a year
- Partners to sign a new Memorandum of Agreement during 2007/08

Funding and Resources

Funding for the Cornwall AONB Partnership is agreed under the terms of the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), signed by the Partners in 2003. This commits the local authorities in Cornwall to an annual contribution towards the core costs of the Partnership. The National Trust also contributes to the core costs. These local contributions make up 25% of the Partnership budget with the remaining 75% of match funding provided by Natural England (up to a ceiling determined by an applied funding formula). Income from each of the contributing partners is confirmed on an annual basis. It is anticipated that the current level of support will be maintained for the period 2007-10.

Income

Based on the MoA and the existing agreement with the National Trust the annual level of contributions towards the core work of the Partnership are set out below.

Contributions to core costs of the Cornwall AONB Partnership

Cornwall County Council	£ 25 000
Caradon District Council	£ 5 000
Carrick District Council	£ 5 000
Kerrier District Council	£ 5 000
North Cornwall District Council	£ 5 000
Penwith District Council	£ 5 000
Restormel Borough Council	£ 5 000
National Trust	£ 3 000
Natural England*	£174 000 (75% of budget)
Total	£232 000

* The maximum contribution that could be made by Natural England under the current funding formula is £180,000. To maximise the grant available from Natural England the AONB Partnership would need to obtain an additional £2000 from local partners

Expenditure

The core costs of the Cornwall AONB Partnership are:

- Staffing (- inc salary, NI, T&S, Training and hosting costs)
- Accommodation / office equipment (covered by the hosting arrangement with CCC)
- PR, events, research
- Management Plan implementation / production/ review
- Other costs (not covered by CCC hosting agreement)

It is anticipated that that these will remain the areas of expenditure for 2007-10.

To deliver its work the Cornwall AONB Partnership has established a dedicated unit of four full time staff. The staff are hosted by Cornwall County Council who act as the employers. Each year the staff Unit submits a bid to Natural England, with specific tasks identified to demonstrate how it will deliver against the core functions of an AONB staff unit.

The table below shows expenditure on core costs for 2005/06.

Staff costs	£ 144,138.00
Accommodation/office equipment	£ 28,717.00
PR, events, research	£ 5,516.83
Management plan implementation/production/review	£ 30,069.42
Partnership running costs	£ 5,780.00
Other	£ 9,052.00
Total	£ 210,604.00

Project funding

Other sources of funding are available to support projects that can deliver the primary purposes of the AONB designation and the policies of the AONB Management Plan. These include the Sustainable Development Fund (up to £100,000 per annum) and Natural England project funds which can provide up to 50% of project costs.

Action

- The staff complement of the AONB Unit will be maintained at four full time equivalent posts, the roles and duties of the officers determined by the priorities identified in this business plan.