



Cornwall AONB Partnership Meeting
Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 29th June 2006
at 2.00 pm at Sterts Theatre, Upton Cross, near Liskeard

Present:

Peter Mansfield Chairman, Cornwall AONB Partnership

Members:

Cllr Val Newman North Cornwall District Council
Cllr Jim Flashman Caradon District Council
Cllr Russell Bartlett Caradon District Council
Cllr Graeme Hicks Kerrier District Council
Cllr Susan Callen Carrick District Council
Andrew Burns The Countryside Agency (substitute for Sarah Manning)
Mike Robins The Environment Agency
Heather McBeth Government Office for the South West
Patrick Watson Country Landowners Association
George Brew DEFRA Rural Development Service (substitute for Peter Bowden)
John Holmes English Nature

Supporting Officers:

Mike Hawkey Cornwall County Council
Steve Crummay Cornwall County Council
Al Collings Caradon District Council
David Attwell North Cornwall District Council
Robert Lacey Carrick District Council
Paul Walton Cornwall AONB Partnership Manager
Colette Holden Cornwall AONB Assistant Officer
Ed Thompson Cornwall AONB Community Officer
Karen Johns Cornwall AONB Office Manager

1. Welcome and Apologies

Members:

Cllr Neil Hatton, Cornwall County Council; Cllr Annette Egerton, Restormel Borough Council; Cllr Owen Philp, Penwith District Council; Nick Lawrence, The National Trust; John James, Cornwall Commercial Tourism Federation; Sue Wearing, SW RDA; Ron Daniel, CALC; Veryan Heal, Cornwall County Council Historic Environment Service; Amy Dinsdale, NFU

Supporting Officers:

Rodger Dewhurst, Kerrier District Council; Malcolm Pinch, Restormel Borough Council; Rachel Bray, Penwith District Council

Cllr Sue Callen; Cllr Russell Bartlett; George Brew; Andrew Burns; Patrick Watson and David Attwell were welcomed to their first Partnership meeting. David Attwell will be attending future meetings instead of Charlie David, who has been promoted to head up North Cornwall's Street Scene services in addition to the Coast and Countryside Service. David Attwell was asked to pass on the Partnership's congratulations and thanks to Charlie David for his involvement in the Partnership to date.

2. Discussion on the morning visit to East Castick Farm, North Hill

Partners had visited East Castick Farm, North Hill on Bodmin Moor in the morning to gain an insight into a different farm than the Lobb's Farm, St Ewe they had visited in June 2005.

- It was **AGREED** that the AONB Unit should write a letter of thanks to Steve Sandercock, the farmer at East Castick on behalf of the Partnership. George Brew was also thanked for his input regarding Countryside Stewardship. Issues discussed during the morning included – possible outcome of tailing off of the Single Farm Payment Scheme; farmers opting out of agri environment schemes such as Higher Level Scheme and how the agri- environment schemes affect the appearance and habitats of the landscape. The lack of young people entering into farming was also raised and measures need to be put in place to address this when reviewing the ELS and HLS.
- Agriculture is paramount to the AONB and Partners **AGREED** to visit another farm in June 2007.

Actions

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The importance of the Partnership working closely with Cornwall Agricultural Council (CAC) was reiterated. CAC have been invited to join the Partnership as agreed in the recent Review of the Partnership Statement of Intent; and the AONB Unit has also been invited to attend CAC meetings.

3. Minutes of last meetings and matters arising

3.1 Partnership meeting (23rd March 2006)

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

Agenda Page 2, item 3.1, Cornish hedges – the AONB Unit submitted comments to the County Council to be incorporated in their response to the Hedgerow Regulations consultation.

Agenda Page 2, item 3.1 Under-grounding of electricity wires in the AONB – the AONB Unit has been in discussion with Western Power Distribution and Ofgem regarding the financing of undergrounding of electricity wires in the Cornwall AONB under the terms of Ofgem's Final Proposals of Electricity Distribution Price Control published in November 2004. Western Power Distribution has confirmed that it will not be pursuing a programme of undergrounding overhead lines in the AONB as they are under no compulsion to do so and stated their financial priority is the need to improve the reliability of the network ahead of undergrounding lines for visual reasons.

The AONB Unit will raise this with the SWPLF and NAAONB to ascertain Ofgem's position.

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Agenda page 3, item 4.1, Para 2.1 Extension of the MoA and SoI for a further 3 year period – the Countryside Agency have confirmed they accept that the Partnership will review the MoA and SoI in September 2007 when Partners are likely to know more on the possible review of Local Government arrangements in the county. Appreciation was expressed for the Agency’s response.

Agenda page 5, item 4.2, Cornwall County Council Heritage Assets Single Issue Panel (SIP) – the AONB Unit gave a presentation to the SIP in April 2006. An audit of all the issues presented to the SIP has been undertaken and two pilot project areas are being proposed – possibly Port Isaac and Mevagissey or Gorran.

The introduction of traditional finger post signs is another scheme that is being discussed by the SIP – possible pilot schemes on Bodmin Moor and Penwith.

View of the Partnership was sought on both these schemes to report back to the SIP.

- The Partnership **AGREED** it supported the proposed highways scheme to be undertaken in Port Isaac and somewhere on the Roseland.
- The Partnership **AGREED** it supported the proposed finger post scheme on Bodmin Moor and Penwith.
- The Countryside Agency’s publication (CA217) on Road schemes and mitigation of road schemes was mentioned which contains several case studies. The Countryside Agency **AGREED** to post copies to the AONB Unit.

A Burns

Agenda page 7, item 8 – SW RDA presentation – it was suggested that the SW RDA be asked to provide a presentation at the December Partnership meeting. This would be particularly relevant due to their increasing role in rural issues.

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3.2 Officer Meeting (17th May 2006)

The minutes were **AGREED** to be a true and accurate record. It was noted that Mike Hawkey did send his apologies so his name needs to be added to the list.

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Agenda Page 8, item 2, Regional Spatial Strategy – this is now out for consultation. The AONB Unit will be submitting comments through the SWPLF.

The County Council’s comments on the Strategy were reported to the County Council’s Strategic Planning Panel for consideration on 28th June 2006. The AONB Unit had requested that the Panel reconsider the comments on the Protected Landscapes Policy ENV3. Cllr Hicks confirmed that the Panel had agreed to take account of the comments of the AONB Unit and the AONB Unit is working with Cornwall County Council officers on a revised response to Policy ENV3.

Agenda Page 9, item 3, Cornwall County Council Countryside Access Strategy – following discussion at the last Officer meeting regarding new, inappropriate signs being erected on coastal paths in the AONB in West Penwith – the County Council confirmed that its programme of works at present involves installing signs on ‘gold’ awarded paths only. As the majority of paths along the coast are ‘gold’ status, there will be careful consideration of landscape issues when signing these paths.

4. Reports for Decision

4.1 Community Officer Contract Extension

Ed Thompson, the current Community Officer postholder left the meeting whilst this item was discussed.

The Community Officer post was only agreed for a 3 year fixed term which ends in November 2006; whilst the other 3 AONB Unit staff posts were fixed for 6 years until 2009. Funding is secured for the Community Officer post until March 2007. The future staffing needs of the AONB Unit will need to be considered when the 3 year Partnership Business Plan is prepared to accompany the grant bid to the Countryside Agency/Natural England in December 2006. The Business Plan will identify the level of resources needed by the Partnership for 2007 – 2010.

- Partners **AGREED** the recommendation, that the contract of the Community Officer be extended to 31st March 2007.

4.2 Cornwall AONB Partnership and Planning

The Partnership meeting of 23rd June 2005 identified areas in which the AONB Unit should seek to develop its involvement in planning matters. A consultant had been appointed to carry out an audit of existing AONB policies within current local plans, advising on how they might be improved when considered as part of the new LDF; and to identify a timetable of involvement for the AONB Unit in the Local Development Scheme for each District/Borough.

The recommendations from the consultant's report were set out in Appendix 1 of the agenda paper (page 17). A copy of the full report is available from the AONB Unit.

- Partners **AGREED** to endorse the continued involvement of the AONB Unit in planning matters in the 4 areas set out in section 4 of the agenda paper (page 15/16) - Policy Development; Consultations; Monitoring; and AONB Management Plan.

The Chairman mentioned that the World Heritage Site Partnership are also due to be looking into ways that the designation should influence the planning process so there may be opportunities to work together on developing practices.

Design Guides - the need to influence design guides was mentioned, and the comments were reinforced in Appendix 1, recommendations – *“need to address how visual impact of development on the AONB needs to be incorporated into District Design Guides, and the need to consider case studies of good design and local vernacular with good and bad examples of development in the AONB.”*

How to implement the information contained in Design Guides in practice was stressed as being the key, and it might be beneficial for the AONB Partnership to help fund a project which would aid the implementation of design guide recommendations. Partners stated that it is also important to educate developers in the need for appropriate design and what this means.

Caradon and North Cornwall District Councils have areas within both the Cornwall and Tamar AONBs and the AONB Unit should liaise with Tamar Valley AONB to find out what

they are doing with regard to design guidelines.

Involvement with the Planning Liaison Group was mentioned as a means by which the AONB Unit can influence the preparation of LDF documents.

4.3 Cornish Mining World Heritage Site - Governance Review

A recent report concerning the future governance arrangements for the proposed Cornwall and West Devon Mining World Heritage Site (WHS) identified a role for the Cornwall AONB Partnership as a possible member of a future WHS Partnership Board. Partners were asked to consider the involvement of the Partnership in a future WHS Board and the proposal that the Chair of the Cornwall AONB Partnership acts as the nominated representative. The key issue is that the Partnership could not be a funding body to any WHS Board.

Partners noted that when the consultants undertook the Governance Review, they highlighted the Cornwall AONB Partnership as a model of successful Partnership working.

- Partners **AGREED** the recommendation as set out in the agenda paper:
 - i) that the Cornwall AONB Partnership endorses the proposed governance arrangements for the candidate WHS in principle, subject to agreeing financial contributions;
 - ii) proposes the Chairman to act as the representative for the AONB Partnership;
 - iii) seeks clarification on the possible financial implications for the AONB Partnership from the WHS Office.

5. Reports for information and discussion

5.1 Feedback on Cornwall AONB Conference 13th May 2006

The AONB Unit staff were thanked for their efforts in organising the Conference which was very successful and well attended. 67 delegates attended and their feedback was very positive. A summary of the completed feedback forms was included with the agenda paper.

Partners were asked for ideas for the venue for next year's conference, and whilst a Saturday is convenient for many people, consideration needs to be given to providing another forum for those who may prefer a weekday afternoon or evening e.g. farmers and owners of tourism based businesses have indicated that a Saturday is not convenient.

The Chairman referred to feedback forms which suggested that a future conference should include marine, fisheries and harbours issues, and suggested that the next Conference could be held in the Falmouth area. Partners also suggested Rame Peninsula as a possible venue, which could also address marine issues. The AONB Unit will look into these two possibilities further.

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It was suggested that an additional event could be held in an evening, perhaps in association with CoaST (Cornwall Sustainable Tourism Network) to allow tourism business providers chance to attend. The AONB Unit to also investigate this further.

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5.2 Summary of Sustainable Development Fund and Strategic Projects 2005/06

A copy of a summary report of all the projects funded by the Cornwall AONB Partnership Sustainable Development Fund and Strategic Projects fund for 2005/06 was circulated to all

Partners with the agenda papers.

Thanks were expressed to Cornwall County Council for providing Working Capital Assistance (money in advance) to some projects at no cost to the AONB Partnership and to Penwith District Council who also provided a similar facility to one of the projects in its District. Thanks were also conveyed to the Partnership Grants Panel members – Cllr Hatton; John Holmes and John James for their help in considering and approving the projects and to the Countryside Agency for their flexibility in agreeing project changes.

A copy of the North Cornwall Geology Guide, funded through the Strategic projects fund, was circulated to Partners.

It was stressed that raising awareness of the AONB designation is important, and the SDF provides an opportunity to promote this awareness.

6. NAAONB/SWPLF

The Chairman and P Walton will attend the NAAONB Annual Conference in the Gower AONB, Swansea from 5th – 7th July 2006. They will also attend a ‘Future Landscapes’ seminar organised by the Countryside Agency on the evening of 6th July in Bristol. A report of the seminar and the NAAONB conference will be made available at the next Partnership meeting.

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7. Any Other Business

- **Reorganisation of County Council’s Living Environment Service** – organisation charts to show who is responsible for what in the newly reorganised Service will be made available to Partners.
- **Natural England** – the new agency, due to commence in October 2006 has nominated a Chief Executive, Dr Helen Phillips, and a Board, but it is not yet known how the South West Regional part of the new agency will be structured.
- **Agri-Environment Schemes** – DEFRA RDS reported that the AONB is highly regarded in HLS targeting schemes and they will continue to encourage take up of the schemes by farmers in the AONB. The AONB Unit will attend the HLS targeting meeting that DEFRA RDS has organised on 4th July 2006.
- **Fresh Start scheme** was mentioned. It is a scheme to encourage young people into farming. It was suggested that the Fresh Start Officer for Cornwall – Charlotte Wood – should be invited to give a presentation to a future Partnership meeting to tell Partners more about the initiative.
- **Affordable Housing in AONB Position Statement** – this is still in draft and it was suggested it should include coverage of housing for the farming community as that is paramount to the working and sustainability of the AONB landscape. The Affordable Rural Housing Commission was set up by DEFRA in July 2005, to inquire into the scale, nature and implications of the shortage of affordable housing for rural communities. The Commission has produced a report on the Study and the Executive Summary was available for Partners information at the meeting.
- **Housing Growth Agenda** – A Burns explained that Truro has been identified as a key growth area in the Regional Spatial Strategy and could be a focus for the Countryside Agency’s Countryside In and Around Towns programme. This offers funding to projects developing “Green Infrastructure” to link countryside and urban areas. A meeting was held in May 2006 with the AONB Unit, County and District Council officers, and English Nature to discuss the possibility of funding a project. The Group that met will be putting a draft proposal together to submit to A Burns.

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- The AONB Unit will have a coordinating role in the project if it goes ahead.
- **GOSW** – Tim Render the Environment Director of GOSW is leaving and his successor has yet to be appointed.
 - **Royal Cornwall Show** – the AONB Unit had a joint stand at the Royal Cornwall Show in June 2006, with the Tamar and Isles of Scilly AONBs. The stand attracted many visitors and was a good opportunity to promote awareness of the AONB.
 - **New Chief Executive, Cornwall County Council** – Sheila Healey has commenced her role as the new Chief Executive.

8. Date of next meeting

Thursday 28th September 2006. This will include a site visit to the AONB in the morning. The AONB Unit will confirm the details. The AONB Unit will check that this date does not clash with any local authority committee meetings, and other meetings already scheduled.

AONB Unit