



Cornwall AONB Partnership Meeting
Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 23rd March 2006
at 2.00 pm at Kingsley Village, Fraddon

Present:

Peter Mansfield Chairman, Cornwall AONB Partnership

Members:

Cllr Val Newman North Cornwall District Council
Cllr Neil Hatton Cornwall County Council
Cllr Robb Lello Penwith District Council
Peter Bowden DEFRA Rural Development Service
Ron Daniel Cornwall Association of Local Councils (CALC)
Sue Wearing SW RDA
John James Cornwall Commercial Tourism Federation
John Holmes English Nature
Alastair Cameron The National Trust

Supporting Officers:

Mike Hawkey Cornwall County Council
Al Collings Caradon District Council
Charlie David North Cornwall District Council
Marcus Healan Kerrier District Council
Robert Lacey Carrick District Council
Ann Reynolds Historic Environment Service, Cornwall County 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

Also in attendance/Observing:

Charlotte Maunder Tamar Valley AONB Service (to observe)
Mike Eastwood Cornwall County Council (gave a presentation (item 5))
Rob Poole Penwith District Council (attended Partner presentation session only)

1. Apologies

Members:

Cllr Jim Flashman, Caradon District Council; Cllr Fred Greenslade, Carrick District Council; Heather McBeth, GOSW; Nick Lawrence and Phil Dyke, The National Trust; Sarah Manning, Countryside Agency.

Supporting Officers:

Rodger Dewhurst, Kerrier District Council; Veryan Heal, Historic Environment Service, Cornwall County Council; Steve Crummay, Cornwall County Council; Katherine Uren, Penwith District Council. (Katherine Uren has been unwell).

Welcome and Introductions

Cllr Robb Lello, Penwith District Council and Sue Wearing, SW RDA were welcomed to their first Partnership meeting. Mike Eastwood, Cornwall County Council and Charlotte Maunder, Tamar Valley AONB Service were both welcomed. Mike Eastwood attended to give a presentation on the County Council's Countryside Access Strategy (Agenda Item 5). Charlotte Maunder attended to observe the meeting to gain ideas to feedback to the Tamar Valley AONB Partnership.

2. Discussion on issues arising from the Partners' Presentation

The Presentations held prior to the meeting (12.30pm – 1.45pm), provided Partners with an opportunity to explain what work, projects and activities their organisation is doing in relation to the policies and actions in the AONB Management Plan. Presentations were given by the following Partner representatives:

John Holmes, English Nature – the Cornwall Heath Project
Rob Poole, Rural Economy Officer, Penwith District Council
Alastair Cameron, Countryside Manager, The National Trust – South West Cornwall area

Copies of the slides from the presentations are attached as Appendix 1.

Information from Partners presentations at this meeting and the December 2005 Partnership will be included in the Partnership Annual Report for 2005/06.

3. Minutes of last meetings and matters arising

3.1 Partnership meeting (8th December 2005)

Agenda Page 2, item 3.2, Cornish hedges – a briefing paper written by DEFRA RDS to explain the current legislative protection for hedges was included as an appendix for Partners information (agenda item 3.1.1). Cornish hedges are not adequately protected under current Hedgerow regulations; nor under the rules relating to cross compliance from which Cornish hedges can be excluded. DEFRA RDS and Cornwall County Council are currently campaigning for Cornish hedges to be given adequate protection – if this does not provide a satisfactory outcome, Partners suggested that the Partnership should lobby the MPs.

A supplementary consultation is currently underway on the Hedgerow Regulations. While this is limited in scope it may provide an opportunity to highlight the anomalies in the case of Cornish hedges.

- **It was AGREED that all interested Partners should liaise to provide combined comments on the consultation document.**

Agenda Page 2, item 3.2 Under-grounding of electricity wires in the AONB – the AONB Unit has been in contact with Ofgem who confirmed they will be monitoring the progress of the undergrounding of overhead wires schemes by supply companies. The AONB Unit raised the issue at a SWPLF meeting, where other AONBs agreed they have had similar experiences with their Western Power equivalents. The SWPLF agreed to form a small group (which P Walton agreed to lead as Cornwall AONB have commenced dialogue with Ofgem) to pursue the issue further as a collective voice for SW protected landscapes.

A separate Distribution company, EDF, have a working model and it is hoped that Western Power will do the same.

Actions

All interested Partners/
AONB Unit

Agenda Page 3, item 4.2, Proposed Ship to Ship transfer of crude oil in Falmouth Bay
– the AONB Unit wrote to the 4 statutory consultees and Kerrier District Council to express the Partnerships concerns if the proposal was approved.

3.2 Officer Meeting (15th February 2006)

Agenda Page 10, item 3, World Heritage Site (WHS) Partnership: Governance Review
– representatives from Cornwall AONB and Tamar Valley AONB Units attended the WHS Review meeting. The work of both Cornwall AONB and Tamar Valley AONB Partnerships were highlighted to the consultants, undertaking the review, as examples of successful partnership working.

Cornwall County Council reaffirmed the importance of the Cornwall AONB Partnership and WHS Partnership working together. It was noted that D Boden (WHS Bid Co-ordinator) attends the Cornwall AONB Officer Group meetings and P Walton attends the WHS meetings.

Partners were informed that the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Landscape Character Study currently being undertaken is focussing on both the AONB and WHS so that the policy documents developed as a result of the Study will be appropriate for both protected landscapes.

Partners suggested that Adam Sharpe from the County Council's Historic Environment Service, be invited to give a presentation at a future Partnership meeting.

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Agenda Page 11, item 4.1 – Cornwall AONB Project Funding: SDF and strategic projects – the Partnership Grant Panel met on 1st March 2006 to consider and approve projects for SDF for 2006/07. Cllr Neil Hatton; John James and John Holmes were thanked for their involvement in the Grants Panel.

The AONB Unit propose to provide a full presentation on 2005/06 SDF projects at the next Partnership meeting in June 2006.

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4. Reports for Decision

4.1 Review of the Cornwall AONB Partnership Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) and Statement of Intent (SoI)

There is a commitment within both the MoA and SoI to review the working of the Partnership within an initial three year period (March 2006). The Partnership Sub Group was established at the last Partnership meeting to review the MoA and SoI and met on 17th February 2006. The minutes of the SoI/MoA Review Sub Group meeting of 17th February were included in the agenda papers for Partners information.

The main findings of the Sub Group concerned the following:

Para 2.1 Extension of the MoA and SoI for a further 3 year period:

The Countryside Agency suggest that a satisfactory review of the MoA and SoI should result in a commitment to extend the existing arrangements for a further 3 year period (up to 2012), maintaining a 6 year rolling basis. However, the Sub Group felt that due to possible Local Government Review and local authority budgetary constraints, it is not an appropriate time for a major review.

Partners were also informed that the Cornwall AONB Partnership Core Offer of Grant letter from the Countryside Agency for 2006/07 includes a condition that states that Partners should sign up to the Partnership for a new 6 year period.

Taking all the above into consideration:

- **It was AGREED that the SoI and MoA be reviewed again in 18 months time (September 2007) when Partners will be in a better position to undertake the review.**
- **It was AGREED the AONB Unit will write to the Countryside Agency to explain the reasons for the Partnership not being able to accept the particular condition in the Core Offer of Grant. Any consequent implications for the core funding of the Partnership will be reported back to the Partnership for further consideration.**

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Para 2.2 Merging of the MoA and SoI into one document:

The majority of AONB Partnerships have one document to cover the issues identified in the MoA and SoI and the Review Sub Group considered whether the two documents should be merged into one. Having two documents means there is some duplication of wording.

- **It was AGREED that this is a minor issue and not worth considering at this stage given the procedural work it would generate for partners. The separate MoA and SoI documents will be retained for the time being.**

Para 2.3 Changes to the text of the two documents:

- **It was AGREED that some text needs to be updated to reflect changes in emphasis since the Partnership was created. The Cornwall AONB Unit will prepare the draft changes for consideration at a future Partnership meeting. If endorsed by the Partnership, the changes can be included as addendums to the existing MoA and SoI.**

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Para 3.1 Grading of existing staff posts:

The 2004/05 review of pay and grading of Cornwall County Council employees included the AONB staff Unit (with the exception of the Project Officer which will be reviewed before the current contract expires in November 2006). The review resulted in a reduction in salary of the AONB Partnership Manager and Assistant AONB Officer. Although there is a salary protection scheme in place for staff affected, concern was expressed that the new salary levels may have an effect on retention and future recruitment of staff.

- **It was AGREED that the AONB Unit should compare other AONB staff salaries to assess whether a review of existing salaries for the Cornwall AONB Unit should be carried out.**

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Para 3.2 Business Planning for the AONB Partnership/Unit:

The initial work of the AONB Partnership has been the production and delivery of the AONB Management Plan and the establishment of the Partnership. Now there is a need to develop a forward business plan. A three year business plan 2007-2010 will enable the Partnership to consider where it can be most effective and what level of resources will be needed.

- **It was AGREED that the AONB Unit, in conjunction with the Officer Group,**

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will prepare a 3 year business plan for endorsement by the AONB Partnership to accompany the core funding bid to Natural England in December 2006.

Para 3.3 Representation of interests on the Partnership:

There have been changes in the representation of different interests on the Partnership throughout the last three years and the Review Sub Group broadly agreed that the current structure of the Partnership is about right. However it was suggested that the Partnership might benefit from greater representation of the farming/land management and community sectors.

- **It was AGREED that the Cornwall Rural Community Council, and after discussion with the NFU/CLBA, the Cornwall Agricultural Council be invited to join the Partnership.**
- **It was AGREED that the AONB Unit should contact Natural England now to set out what the Partnership would ideally expect from the Natural England representative who is nominated to join the Partnership.**
- **It was AGREED that Partners should let the AONB Unit know of any other organisations/individuals that they think should be invited to join the Partnership.**

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All Partners

CALC mentioned that their website is currently being redeveloped to ensure it is more user-friendly to all its visitors, and it was suggested that the AONB Unit should apply any relevant changes to the Partnership website.

Feedback to parent bodies:

As an example, Cornwall County Council stated that the AONB Partnership minutes as included as an item 'for information only' to the Environment Committee, but the minutes do not get reported to the Full County Council meeting unless there are particular issues to be raised.

- **To improve the reporting mechanism of issues discussed and agreed at Partnership meetings to Partner organisations, it was AGREED that the AONB Unit should produce a summary of the main points of the minutes of each Partnership meeting so that each Partner organisation could circulate this to relevant Committees, meetings and colleagues for information. The summary is more likely to be read than the full minutes.**

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4.2 Cornwall County Council Heritage Assets Single Issue Panel (SIP)

Cornwall County Council held the first exploratory meeting of the Heritage Assets Single Issues Panel last week. P Walton has been invited to attend the Single Issue Panel meeting on 20th April 2006 to provide evidence of inappropriate signage, traffic calming etc and to give examples of good practice. C David, North Cornwall District Council will be invited to a meeting later in the summer.

It was suggested that Cornish hedges and their importance be highlighted in the AONB Unit presentation to the SIP.

5. Cornwall County Council Countryside Access Strategy

Mike Eastwood, Cornwall County Council provided a presentation on the Draft Strategy. It

is a statutory requirement under the CRoW Act 2000 that a Rights of Way Improvements Plan is produced. The County Council have entitled it 'Countryside Access Strategy' as it covers more than just Rights of Way.

M Eastwood showed several slides which emphasised that there are many countryside access opportunities provided to the public by numerous organisations e.g. English Heritage, South West Coast Path, Cornwall Wildlife Trust, SW Lakes Trust.

The County Council are currently at the stage of working on drafting a statement of action, which sets out the actions and lead organisation for each action. The County Council is the lead organisation for several, but not all actions.

The current Cornwall Local Transport Plan is coming to the end, and the Countryside Access Strategy will link with the revised Local Transport Plan.

Likely delivery mechanisms for the Strategy actions include – Cornwall County Council capital and revenue funding, Local Transport Plan funding and funding from Department for Transport.

The next steps are to agree the current approach; complete the draft document; and undertake a 13 week consultation exercise.

North Cornwall District Council stated that it spends a great deal of time and resources on promoting Rights of Ways in its District. C David attended one of the Strategy workshop sessions but had reservations whether the District Council were adequately involved in the process.

- **It was AGREED that a copy of the slides from Mike Eastwood's presentation be circulated with the minutes for Partners information (Appendix 2).**

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6. Reports for information and discussion

6.1 AONB Partnership funding

- **2005/06 Budget Monitoring Statement** – the latest budget monitoring statement was included in the agenda papers (agenda page 33) for Partners' information. The additional income received from the Countryside Agency strategic projects fund and Sustainable Development Fund has seen an increase in the Variable Overheads resulting in the Total Expenditure budget increasing from £210,000 to £347,550.

There is likely to be a budget underspend of between £8,000 to £10,000. £2,000 of this is the contribution from local authorities – which as in previous years will be transferred to the Cornwall AONB budget reserve fund for use in future years.

- **Cornwall AONB Partnership Budget 2006/07** – the AONB Unit confirmed that the Offer of Grant for the Core Budget (staff costs and activities) for 2006/07 has been received from the Countryside Agency.

6.2 Cornwall AONB Conference May 2006

The Annual Cornwall AONB Conference will be held on Saturday 13th May 2006 at the

Cape Cornwall Golf and Country Club, St Just, Penzance from 10.30 am until 4.30 pm.

Partner organisation support in attending the Conference is needed, and as with all delegates, Partners can attend all or just part of the day. Partners were asked to let the AONB Unit know if they have any suggestions for the content of the morning presentations or afternoon site visits.

All Partners

All Partners

7. NAAONB/SWPLF

7.1 Report on the SW Region meeting of AONB Chairs/Officers

The Chairman reported on the above meeting that he and P Walton had attended on 1st March 2006. It was a good meeting with workshops held in the afternoon. Of particular note was the advice on future funding.

In future years, funding for AONBs will come from Natural England; funding for National Parks will come from DEFRA. Core costs for AONB Partnership budgets is guaranteed and ring fenced at 40%, but there is no guarantee at present for future years funding for SDF and Projects funding.

- **It was AGREED that any notes of the SW Region meeting of AONB Chairs/Officers produced by the NAAONB will be circulated to Partners.**

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8. Any Other Business

- On 21st February 2006, the UK signed the Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention – the first international convention for the management and protection of landscape. However, the UK Government have yet to ratify the Convention.
- Cllr Hatton informed Partners that he has been involved in a planning enquiry regarding the siting of a Tetra mast in the AONB near the Helford. Despite the site being within the AONB, Kerrier District Council has withdrawn the refusal decision of the planning permission on the grounds that it felt it did not have the resources to fight the case. The AONB Unit confirmed that it has received a copy of the decision notice in respect of this.
- **Sue Wearing, SW RDA AGREED to provide a presentation on the work of the SW RDA at a future Partnership meeting.**

AONB
Unit/
S Wearing

9. Date of next meeting

Thursday 29th June 2006, 12.30 pm in Caradon – to include a site visit to a farm (as agreed at the June 2005 Partnership meeting) - venue to be confirmed. The AONB Unit will check that this date does not clash with any local authority committee meetings, and other meetings already scheduled e.g. World Heritage Site meeting.

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Cornwall AONB Partnership Meeting

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Presentations by Partners (minute item 2):

Copies of slides and handouts



Cornwall AONB Partnership Meeting

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**Copy of slides of Cornwall County Council Countryside Access
Strategy Presentation (minute item 5)**