

## Minutes

### Cornwall AONB Partnership Meeting

Thursday 2 May 2019 - 2pm

Trebah Garden, Mawnan Smith

## In Attendance

### Members:

Gill Pipkin	Chairperson, Cornwall AONB Partnership
Jim Flashman	Cornwall Councillor
Martyn Alvey	Cornwall Councillor
Dominic Fairman	Cornwall Councillor
Ian Kemp	National Trust
Nik Ward	Natural England
Jimmy Scobie	Cornwall Land & Business Association
Helen Rawe	Cornwall Heritage Trust
Cathy Woolcock	Cornwall Heritage Trust
Patrick Aubrey-Fletcher	National Farmers' Union
Catherine Leyshon	Exeter University
Ann Preston-Jones	Historic England
Ainsley Cocks	Cornish Mining World Heritage Site

### Supporting officers:

Ann Reynolds	Cornwall Council, Historic Environment
Stephen Horscroft	Cornwall Council, Economic Growth
Colette Beckham	Cornwall AONB Partnership Manager
Jim Wood	Cornwall AONB Planning Officer
Charlotte Goodship	Cornwall AONB Wheal Buzzy Project Officer
Karen Johns	Cornwall AONB Office & Finance Manager

## 1. Apologies

Loic Rich, Cornwall Councillor; Cheryl Marriott, Cornwall Wildlife Trust; Sarah Mason, CALC; Mark Camp, Visit Cornwall; David Marshall, Natural England; Ian Jones, Volunteer Cornwall; Rupert Hanbury-Tension & Will Langer, CLA; Peter Marsh & Rachael Bice, Cornwall Council, Environment; Hannah Harris, Cornwall Council, Transportation;

Louise Wood, Cornwall Council Planning; Gary Lewis, ERCCIS; Grace Twiston-Davies, Cornwall AONB & University of Exeter - Environment & Sustainability Institute; David Rodda, Cornwall Agri-food Council; Simon Browning, Westcountry Rivers Trust; Jane Davies & Chris Coldwell, Cornwall AONB Unit

	Actions
<p><b>2. Minutes of last meeting (11 Dec 2018)</b> – minutes were AGREED to be a true and accurate record. The following matters were arising:</p> <p><i><b>Page 3, item 3, Glover Review of Designated Landscapes</b></i> – AONB Unit has not received copy of Natural England's Evidence to the Glover Review. N Ward AGREED to check if it is publicly available and forward to AONB Unit if it is.</p> <p><i><b>Page 4, item 4, Bodmin Moor Peatlands Project</b></i> – C Beckham and A Reynolds yet to meet regarding Historic Survey work, they had been waiting for the Cornwall AONB Water Environment Grant bid outcome but this was unfortunately not successful, so they will now arrange to meet to discuss.</p> <p><i><b>Page 4, Item 4, Management Plan Review</b></i> – this was not on the agenda for this meeting due to other more priority items needing to be discussed. Management Plan Review will be an item for the next Exec Board on 16 July 2019.</p> <p><i><b>Page 4, item 4, Partners/AONB Unit 1-1 meetings</b></i> – C Beckham has held several 1-1 meetings with partners, but not all – partners to contact AONB Unit if a 1-1 would be welcomed.</p> <p><i><b>Page 4, item 4, Business Plan and 2019-20 funding application</b></i> was submitted to Defra. Funding offer letter is expected from Defra in the next few weeks.</p> <p><i><b>Page 5, Item 5, Agreement between the Cornwall AONB Partnership and Cornwall AONB Trust</b></i> - G Pipkin will sign the Agreement if she has not already done so.</p> <p><i><b>Page 6, Item 6, Health and Well-being</b></i> – AONB Unit are meeting with Public Health tomorrow (3 May) to discuss next steps for a potential AONB health and well-being project.</p> <p><i><b>Page 6, Item 6, Kerdroya project</b></i> - H Rawe asked for an update on the Kerdroya labyrinth at Colliford Lake. C Beckham confirmed that funding is 75% approx. achieved for the large labyrinth project. But the smaller part of the project – Cornwall AONB Community Hedge Restoration in each of the other areas of the AONB has already commenced.</p>	<p>N Ward</p> <p>AONB Unit/ A Reynolds</p> <p>AONB Unit</p> <p>All partners</p> <p>Chairperson</p> <p>AONB Unit</p>
<p><b>3. Contingency Planning for future funding uncertainty</b></p> <p>The Cornwall AONB Unit is currently working under a 4 year funding settlement from Defra which ends on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. Beyond this, there is no committed core funding. Defra cannot confirm future funding until the Government Spending Review which is expected in Autumn 2019 but could also be delayed due to Brexit discussions.</p> <p>The Exec Board discussed this at its meeting in March 2019 and agreed that a Draft Impact Assessment should be produced for the May Partnership meeting. It is felt prudent to plan for a worst-case scenario of funding uncertainty with respect to planning ahead with Cornwall Council Employment Support regarding potential redundancies for AONB Unit staff and the withdrawal of funding or significantly being reduced could also impact on current AONB project commitments e.g. Penwith Landscape Partnership project.</p> <p>C Beckham has not yet worked with Tamar Valley AONB as they have a new Manager who has recently started in post, but Tamar Valley AONB will be involved in discussions going forward.</p> <p>The Draft Impact Assessment was included as Appendix 1. This sets out the more major functions</p>	

of the AONB Unit that may be affected as a consequence of the loss of the AONB Unit such as commitment to the Penwith Landscape Partnership Project, Planning advice service to Cornwall Council, and other planning roles such as the AONB pre application advice service and Reviewing, preparing and publishing the Management Plan.

C Beckham presented this item in more detail and the proposed activity of action points (Table 5 of the agenda paper).

Partners were asked to note that there was a typo error in the first Recommendation (para 3.12) which incorrectly stated Option 3 and it should read Option 2.

A Reynolds stated that R Bice from Cornwall Council Environment Service was not able to attend the meeting but is in favour of approving Option 2: which is to request to Cornwall Council that the Council considers and budgets for a contingency option 2, which is to plan for a 1 year bridging arrangement for the Cornwall AONB Unit.

Philip Hygate, Chair of National Association of AONBs is meeting with G Pipkin and C Beckham on 21 May 2019 so it is hoped more will possibly be known then.

Partners asked about Cornwall becoming a National Park. C Beckham stated that this would mean the creation of a new authority for Cornwall and during Task and Finish Group discussions on the Glover Review evidence in 2018, Cornwall Council could not agree to support the vision of Cornwall becoming a National Park.

- **Partners unanimously AGREED the recommendations 1 and 2, including the amendment of the typo that it was meant to read Option 2 not Option 3. Namely, 1. it was AGREED to request to Cornwall Council that the Council considers and budgets for contingency option 2, which is to contingency plan for a 1 year funding bridging arrangement (to March 2021) for the Cornwall AONB Unit and that this option be incorporated into the Council's budget if the worst case scenario becomes a reality, or a decision on the budget is delayed, and 2. Partners AGREED to implement the action plan outlined in Table 5 of the agenda paper.**

#### **4. Cornwall AONB Management Plan 2016-2021: Actions update**

**N Ward, NE** – the take up of new agri-environment schemes is due to commence and NE has an advisory role in the schemes and will have more involvement in mid-tier schemes.

**Catherine Leyshon, Uni of Exeter** – looking at list of actions there are several that University of Exeter are involved in and C Leyshon will check with colleagues and provide update to AONB Unit.

**P Aubrey-Fletcher, NFU** – mentioned the severe delays in payments being made to farmers and landowners for the Countryside Stewardship schemes. There is a new Environment discussion group – bringing farmers and other stakeholders together to improve discussions and greater understanding of topics together as a group. It may be relevant for the AONB Unit to be invited to attend the meetings in future. The NFU Vision is to become Carbon neutral by 2040.

**Stephen Horscroft, Cornwall Council Economic Growth** – has a role in supporting communities such as in diversifying their current tourism business. New 'Shared Prosperity Fund' – 2 themes within that is around inclusive growth and environmental sustainability. Cycle connectivity – Cornwall Council are looking into future of our towns and access into those towns and interaction into the countryside from those towns. Lots of sensitive built heritage assets in Cornwall and looking into how to include these assets.

A Reynolds, Cornwall Council Historic Environment – Action E – Historic Environment Local Distinctiveness Study is expected to be launched in July.

All Partners

G Pipkin/  
C Beckham

C Leyshon

Action M - tours have been held with CC Historic Environment and Historic England around sites in Cornwall that may fit into Heritage Action Zones and High Streets Action Zones.

Action M – Cornish hedges – there is so much interest in hedges and desire for adequate protection. New Frontiers – a Cornwall Council project will include the Cornish hedge. Definition of Cornish Hedges and Hedgerows needs consideration and clarification – P Aubrey Fletcher and Ann Reynolds agreed to discuss.

A Reynolds/  
P Aubrey Fletcher

Action O – Penwith Landscape Partnership (PLP) – the projects within the PLP project link to this action in management of the natural capital, rights of way and heritage of the AONB.

**A Preston Jones, Historic England** – Coastal towns may be addresses through the current government funding for town centres. Action N – working closely with AONB Unit to deliver the Cornwall AONB National Lottery Heritage Fund Monumental Improvement project.

Farmers put in expression of interest for agri-environment schemes and HE is consulted on these and many have biodiversity benefits but not seeing many historic environment benefits to schemes.

**National Trust** – Actions G & O – NT Penrose is hosting the 3 day South West Outdoors Festival in Sept 2019 – the festival focusses on health and well-being and the first day is aimed at schools to get children involved in outdoor activities in the landscape. The Cornwall AONB Unit is also involved in the Festival with the Wheal Buzzy Project.

Action B – Undergrounding at Trevoze Head – this scheme is almost complete and most of the overhead cables have now gone. Opportunity of joint press release with AONB and NT.

I Kemp/  
AONB Unit

Pentire Farm and a farm at Gunwalloe, The Lizard – NT is working with tenant farmers to manage land in a more traditional way to enhance existing habitats and wildlife and encourage new habitats and species.

NT been working with AONB Unit to agree sites for the Cornwall AONB Community Hedge Restoration project to restore hedges with the community in all sections of the AONB.

**C Woolcock, Cornwall Heritage Trust** – undertaking more activities such as healthy walks at their sites. H Rowe, Cornwall Heritage Trust – Action C - mentioned more affordable way of providing homes.

**Ainsley Cocks, World Heritage Site** – WHS has produced a document adopted by Cornwall Council and West Devon Borough Council and is currently in the process of developing a flow diagram and would be happy to share experience/info of this if it would help work up a similar supplementary planning document for the AONB.

**J Scobie, CLA** – supports the view of NFU regarding the importance of farmers/landowners being paid for the agri-environment schemes. Also reaffirmed the importance of the Cornwall AONB role in Planning development management due to some decisions being made recently.

## 5. Review of Cornwall AONB involvement in Planning

C Beckham presented this item and summarised the current role of the AONB Unit in providing advice in development management responses, providing a pre application advice service (this service is growing rapidly and generates income for the AONB Unit) and providing advice and guidance on policy at a local and national level.

J Wood, Cornwall AONB Planning Officer presented the paper in more detail by addressing some

of the more pertinent points detailed in the table (para 5.6.1) which is an initial scope of potential changes to deliver improved outcomes and stressed that improving outcomes for the AONB should be core to any review.

AONB Unit and Natural England engagement could be improved. Length and content of AONB planning responses have been shortened at request of Cornwall Council Development Management Officers, but this removes assessment against NPPF and Cornwall Local Plan policy. Feedback from parish councils is that the shortened response is much less welcomed by them as the detailed response previously being undertaken was more valuable to them.

AONB capacity is an issue as AONB Planning Officer role is only 3 days per week. There is a significantly large number of development management applications being received on a weekly basis that need to be triaged to determine if a response is required. The AONB pre application advice service uptake is increasing so whilst being welcomed as it also generates income, the capacity to manage the advice service in timely manner is difficult.

S Horscroft stated that CC is good at looking at economic value, but not good at monitoring and evaluating its work and services, projects etc and more could be done by CC to improve this. As an example, regarding the Pydar re-development in Truro consultation, S Horscroft was asked a question on what the Environmental Impact Assessment is on any proposed development, so maybe CC is beginning to think about this.

D Fairman raised the issue of the Cornwall Council's Planning Service currently not being in a positive financial position and that this posed a risk to the proposed third party review so is therefore mindful to suggest options 3 and 4.

M Alvey stated that he is aware of the number of applications that are put to Committee being recommended for approval by Officers, so more liaison by AONB Unit with Planning Officers would be welcomed. The Partnership and Unit needs to stress the importance of taking into account the advice from Jim Wood as the landscape AONB aspect. The need for training and education for planners would be beneficial but at present Planning Officer capacity this could dilute the number of responses provided as time would be spent on providing training and education to planners, so finding the balance is the issue.

Under para 5.7, Options for making improvements - Option 3 in the agenda paper suggests the instigation of a joint AONB and LPA third party review to provide a means to look into the risks and opportunities to help understand the benefits to both parties of making changes to the current system to reach the desired outcome of conserving and enhancing the landscape.

Partners were asked to vote on the options 3 and 4 as these were the 2 favoured options. The vote was in favour of option 3 – to instigate a joint AONB and LPA review led by an independent third party such as the Planning Advisory Service.

There was further discussion about what would happen if the Planning Service were unable to progress such a review due to budgetary pressures. The recommendation was therefore amended to instigate option 4 - a Member led inquiry if a third party review was not feasible. A discussion was held on which scrutiny panel might lead this if it was to take place. Cllrs Fairman and Alvey thought that this might be a joint piece of work between Economy and Planning and Neighbourhoods scrutiny.

- It was AGREED that the Cornwall AONB Partnership should make a request to Cornwall Council Planning that feasibility work be undertaken on a third party review and that the recommendations of any review should be agreed by members.
- It was AGREED that if a third party review was not feasible, the Partnership request that Cornwall Council Scrutiny committee takes forward a process of member led

AONB Unit

scrutiny. This potentially being a joint piece of work between economy & planning and neighbourhoods scrutiny. The recommendations of the third party review, if feasible, should be taken through the democratic process.”

**6. Local Industrial Strategy** – S Horscroft presented this item as D Rodda had given his apologies for the meeting. Stephen highlighted the opportunity to build natural capital and ecosystem services principles into the new Local Industrial Strategy to 2030, as it is developed this year.

A robust evidence base is going to be important. Local Industrial Strategy Manager post vacancy is currently being advertised, closing date is Mon 6<sup>th</sup> May. Productivity in Cornwall is slipping down the table. Spatial impact to be included and how to become less reliant on funding from national taxes.

The Cornwall AONB Partnership can hopefully be involved by having an input in the climate change aspect and community engagement.

## **7. Cornwall AONB Unit Work Programme Projects/Activities Update**

An update report on projects and activities being undertaken by the Cornwall AONB Unit was included in the agenda paper.

**Wheal Buzzy** – Charlotte Goodship provided a more detailed update on the Cornwall AONB Wheal Buzzy Project. The project has already doubled the area of hectares improved for solitary bees. Lots of events coming up including Bee Healthy Walks which are being held every Weds morning in St Agnes. Bee Healthy Walks Leaders are being sought to enrol walk leaders to undertake more walks in other parts of the AONB – Walk Leader training is being held on 14<sup>th</sup> June if any partners are interested or know of anyone who may be, were asked to let Charlotte Goodship know.

All Partners

## **8. Any Other Business**

S Horscroft – Mentioned Economic Development’s plans for a VAT escalator– suggestion of businesses pay 5% in first year, 10% in second year and S Horscroft is looking into this further with a group of accountants and if this takes place.

**Partnership Manager recruitment** – C Beckham has handed in her resignation as Partnership Manager and the post has been advertised. Will Langer, CLA has requested if the Partnership could have sight of applications prior to the acceptance of a candidate. Due to data protection rules etc the applications cannot be widely available to all partnership members, and it would not be appropriate for the Partnership to confirm acceptance of preferred candidate after the rigorous shortlisting, recruitment and selection process has taken place. But it was suggested that the CLA or another partner should be on the shortlisting and/or interview panel to provide a balance of partnership view in addition to G Pipkin as AONB Chairperson and Cornwall Council representative.

- It was AGREED that the interview panel would consist of the Partnership Chair, a Partnership Representative and a representative from Cornwall Council (likely to be either Rachael Bice or Peter Herring). Jimmy Scobie will sit on the interview panel on behalf of the CLA as the Partnership representative.

J Scobie

This is the last Partnership meeting that Colette will attend before she steps down as AONB Partnership Manager. Colette was thanked for her hard work during her time with the AONB Unit and presented with a leaving card and gifts, and wished well in her future endeavours.

**9. Date of Next meeting** – Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2019

