

Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Friday, 5 April 2019, Elgar Room, Malvern Hills DC - 10.00 am

Present:

Minutes

Mrs G Rees (Chairman), Dr K A Pollock (Vice Chairman), Mr W Barnes, Prof. D Bryant, Mr J Fryman, Mr J Hervey-Bathurst, Mr P Houlbrook, Prof J W Raine and Mr P A Tuthill.

Also attended:

David Armitage, James Bisset, Rachel Datlen, Paul Esrich and Kate Griffiths

664 Apologies and Substitutes

Apologies for absence had been received from Jim Burgin, Hazel McDowall and Richard Williams.

665 Declaration of Interests

James Hervey Bathurst declared that he was land owner and ran a business within the AONB.

666 Confirmation of the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 7 December 2018 were agreed to be a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

667 The Malvern Hills AONB Sustainable Development Fund in pictures

David Armitage gave brief details of some of the projects which had been supported by the AONB Partnership in previous years. The extensive list of projects can be seen at:
<http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/funding-grants/sdf-projects-previously-undertaken/>

668 The Ecosystem Approach and Natural Capital checklist

AONB Partnerships were centrally funded from Defra and there was an expectation that the AONB Units would assist in the delivery of the Government's environment plan – A Green Future: our 25 year plan to improve the environment. Natural Capital was a key part of the plan. Natural Capital can be defined as 'the stock or elements of nature that directly or indirectly produce value for people'.

Malvern Hills AONB was one of twelve AONBs to get support from a company being funded by Natural England to help with Natural Capital Planning. A Natural Capital checklist had been completed which looked at what the Partnership knows about its Natural Capital and what it was doing to improve it. Within the checklist it

was noted that a Natural Capital Scoping Study had been produced in 2017; that the new Management Plan was not based on Natural Capital but it did refer to it and that the Management Plan did prioritise actions to 'enhance and improve the resilience of local Natural Capital'. Paul Esrich stressed that there was a need now to talk to and engage with partners in relation to the work of improving Natural Capital.

The following comments were made:

- It was felt that a lot of work was already taking place to improve or maintain Natural Capital, even if it was not described as such
- Landowners were grateful that the Unit was continuing with its monitoring work as the evidence could be used to justify what had been improved with funding already received. It could perhaps be used to attract money in the future. New funding mechanisms such as a New Environmental Land Management (NELM) scheme were not quick to become established but this work helped to quantify the value that nature provided so may be helpful to gain and direct funds
- Natural England had launched a system of Natural Capital Accounting for all of its National Nature Reserves (NNRs). This was worth exploring
- The completed checklist could be used as a basis for annual monitoring
- The idea of apportioning funding to landowners in response to monetising various benefits provided by different parcels of land was likely to be very difficult. Such government support had long been predicated on helping to grow cheap food, which people valued.
- It was suggested that funding for improving Natural Capital could be justified by opening footpaths
- Reverse incentives could be employed whereby more money was given to help landowners in areas where Natural Capital was declining, rather than rewarding those whose Natural Capital was in good condition
- It was suggested that most members of the public would feel that the concept of Natural Capital was too academic and would be of little interest to them.

669 An Assessment of the economic health benefits of (part of) the Malvern Hills AONB

RESOLVED: that the Committee

- a) **Noted the Government's expectations with regard to Natural Capital and the work of AONB Partnerships;**
- b) **Considered the contents of the checklist completed in draft at Appendix A of the Agenda; and**
- c) **Considered how the organisations they represented, as key members of the AONB Partnership could best be engaged to participate in and contribute to this process.**

Green space played an important role in fostering health and Well-being both for physical and mental health and the Malvern Hills have long been associated with promoting health and well-being. A project had been undertaken to assess the economic benefits to physical and mental health from the land owned by the Malvern Hills Trust within the AONB. Oliver Holzinger from the Consultancy for Environmental Economics and Policy (CEEP) had carried out the study using the principles of Natural Capital Accounting to produce an estimated monetary value for these services. Information gathered from studies in other areas was transferred to the area but some results from a 2018 visitor survey of the users of the Malvern Hills and Commons had also been used. The study was not an end in itself but rather a way to help to demonstrate the health and well-being benefits of the AONB and to better engage with health professionals.

Various comments were made:

- The study helped to show how people benefit from the area, especially given that it had fewer overnight stays than some other AONBs
- As the figures in the report were estimates they should just be shown to 3 or 4 significant figures
- It was being increasingly recognised that positive health improvements were associated with access to and even sight of green spaces and nature
- It was suggested that in Worcestershire the report should be sent to John Smith, Cabinet member with Responsibility for Health and Well-being and to Dr Frances Howie as Director of Public Health, Worcestershire. It was also suggested that it be sent to the Director of Public Health in Herefordshire
- Oliver Holzinger would be giving a presentation to the Malvern Hills Health and Well-being Partnership meeting in May.

RESOLVED: that the Committee

- a) **Noted the study undertaken;**
- b) **Commented on the draft results;**
- c) **Made suggestions as to how the results/ the final report could be best utilised with a view to engaging others in health-related work in the AONB; and**
- d) **Would await publication of a final report before quoting from the study.**

670 AONB Budget and Work Programme 2019/20

Paul Esrich explained that the budget received from Defra for 2019/20 was subject to an inflationary uplift and was the last year of a four-year funding agreement. The SDF would receive the same amount of funding as last year and County Councils and District Councils were also making the same contributions. Some Parish and Town Councils had made voluntary contributions.

It was mentioned that some Parish Councils may not remember being asked for a contribution so it was agreed that the launch of the new Management plan may be a good time to ask again.

RESOLVED: that the Committee

- a) **Noted the budget for 2019/20; and**
- b) **Commented on the overall direction and work priorities for the year ahead.**

671 Sustainable Development Fund

David Armitage highlighted a couple of projects, including the Shire Ditch Survey which was hoping to resolve the query about why the ditch had been created. Aerial photographs had been taken by Historic England (at no cost to the AONB) and were currently being analysed.

RESOLVED: that the Committee

- a) **Noted and commented on the report; and**
- b) **Should contact David Armitage with project ideas for 2019/20.**

672 Information Items

Paul Esrich explained that the new AONB Management Plan had come into force on 1 April 2019 following a big piece of work to review and update it. He thanked members again for their help with this work.

Paul gave a brief update regarding the Glover Review of

**673 Verbal Reports
from Partners**

National Parks and AONBs. The report was expected later in the year but following visits by the Review Team to AONBs, it appeared that they were impressed by what was being achieved by AONB Partnerships across the country.

Following two attempts to tender for a contractor for the Highways Verges Management Pilot Project no acceptable bids had been received. It was felt that this project could not be taken on by Parish Lengthsmen as they were only able to work in 30 mile per hour areas for insurance reasons. Paul Esrich explained that verge management work would now be focused on more intensive management of a small number of verges such as near Little Malvern Court.

A study by Malvern Hills District Council, with AONB Unit input, had looked at how sensitive land around Malvern was to different forms of development and a study to identify key view-points around Colwall had been completed. The studies would be useful for future development plans.

Consultation had recently closed on two consultations – one for guidance on lighting and one regarding respecting landscape in views.

2019 marked the 60th anniversary of the designation of the Malvern Hills AONB – suggestions were sought for how the anniversary could be marked and help raise awareness. It was suggested that David Armitage's presentation regarding projects which have been supported within the AONB could be turned into a brochure or book.

Paul Esrich wished to thank Karen Humphries for her work on the Three Counties Orchard Project – 99% of the available funding of £332,00 had been claimed and the project had been a success.

RESOLVED: that the Committee noted the information report and would contact the AONB Unit if they wished to be involved in any consultations or to receive further information on any of the information items.

James Bissett reported that an Ash Dieback Toolkit had been launched nationally with more local launches planned. The toolkit had been produced by the Tree Council working with Defra and other partners. The toolkit

674 Dates of Future Meetings

was available on their website and a frequently asked questions section would be produced.

Dick Bryant gave information about a Geology app that he had authored entitled Voyager – Deep Time. The app was available on IOS and Android platforms and had been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Would a new app walk be a suitable product to mark the 60th anniversary of the AONB designation?

The Forestry Commission was marking its centenary this year. No events were yet planned for Worcestershire or Herefordshire.

Ken Pollock mentioned that there had been talk about a proposal for a National Park designation for the Abberley area of Worcestershire. Paul Esrich explained that this suggestion had not originated or been supported by the AONB Unit and was likely to have been made in response to the perceived opportunity presented by the Government’s review of National Parks and AONBs.

The next meeting of the Malvern Hills AONB JAC would take place on **Friday 8 November 2019** at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at 12.10pm.

Chairman