

Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Friday, 23 April 2021, - 10.00 am. Online.

Minutes

Present:

Mrs G Rees (Chairman), Prof J W Raine (Vice Chairman), Prof R Bryant, Mrs B Behan, Ms S Faulkner, Mr J Fryman, Mr J Hervey-Bathurst, Mrs H l'Anson and Dr K A Pollock

Also attended:

James Bisset, Jim Burgin, Rachel Datlen, Paul Esrich and David Armitage

702 Apologies and Substitutes

Apologies had been received from Hazel McDowall, Paul Tuthill and Duncan Bridges.

The Chairman noted that the Worcestershire County Councillors, Ken Pollock and Paul Tuthill were standing down at the upcoming elections so this would be their last meeting as the Worcestershire County Council representatives on the AONB Joint Advisory Committee. She thanked them for their support of the AONB and their contributions to the Committee. She thanked Ken for the support he had given her during his time as Vice-Chairman.

703 Declaration of Interests

James Hervey Bathurst declared an interest in that he lives, farms and works in the southern part of the AONB.

704 Confirmation of the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting on 6 November 2020 were agreed to be a correct record of the meeting and would be signed by the Chairman.

705 Advising and Supporting Landowners and Managers in Protected Landscapes

Paul Esrich introduced the item and explained that the AONB Unit was getting increasingly involved in advising and supporting landowners and managers in the area. Some short-term advocacy funding had been made available by Defra in relation to Countryside Stewardship and the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme and there would also be a Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme. Details of that programme were still awaited.

Various points were made by members regarding this issue:

- The ELM was still in development so details of the new scheme were not yet known. There was concern regarding whether future payments would cover the basic costs of land management. It was not known how the assessment of land would take place but Defra apparently wanted it to be more straightforward than the previous system. It was also suggested that it was likely that landowners may be more interested in looking for alternative forms of income such as holiday accommodation.
- It was hoped that ELM would address some of the past difficulties with the timing of payments. A national pilot was expected before the scheme was fully implemented in 2024.
- Reductions to the Basic Payment Schemes were now taking effect
- It was timely for the AONB Unit to step in to offer advice
- It was expected that there would be increased access to private land in the future.
- Details of how the FiPL scheme would be structured and what funding would be available were not yet known.
- It was unusual that the announcement about FiPL had come out of the blue. Normally communication was good between Defra and the AONB world, especially via the National Association for AONBs
- There were queries about what would happen after the three years of the FiPL programme and how would land that straddled the boundary of the AONB be eligible.
- The three-year programme was to support landowners and managers during the transition stage
- The AONB Unit was looking to continue its work with clusters of landowners around the AONB and to further improve collaborative working to benefit the area,
- There was a comment that planning advice provided by the AONB Unit may not reach new landowners. It was explained that in the recent past a leaflet had been produced and made available to local estate agents and solicitors to give to all new residents in the AONB explaining how planning rules may vary in an AONB.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- a) Noted the report; and**
- b) Raised and discussed any issues arising.**

706 National Arts Strategy

David Armitage gave a brief introduction to the National Arts Strategy proposed by the National Association of AONBs. It was a project designed to engage the emotions rather than being data or science led. It was hoped that if all AONB Partnerships supported the idea then funding could be gained from the National Arts Council England.

Members found the idea interesting and wished to support the Strategy. They believed that specific events would be needed to introduce and lead people to the project. It was mentioned that Grayson Perry had an Exhibition planned at Herefordshire Museum in the Autumn and other artwork from members of the public would be displayed. It was suggested that some art work could be produced about the Malvern Hills, perhaps by involving schools.

In response to a query about what various acronyms and terms in the paper were referring to it was clarified that BAMER referred to Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic, Refugees. (After the meeting it was later clarified that D/deaf referred to people who were deaf before they could speak, whilst d/deaf refers to those who become deaf after they have learnt to speak.) The use of the term National Landscape was now used by the Cotswold AONB to describe its area but the term had not been adopted by the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership.

When asked about how landowners would cope with increased visitors, it was explained that it depended on the nature of the business or landholding. Problems with littering, dogs and barbeques could arise and it was recognised that resources and infrastructure were needed to manage access-related issues. It was suggested that poetry or photography could be encouraged following walks in the AONB, although there was a view that a more permanent structure might be needed. The flat geological map of the Forest of Dean was mentioned as a possible idea which could be transferred to the Malvern Hills as an art installation.

From a geological point of view the erosion caused by increased visitor numbers on the footpaths of the Malvern Hills had been noticeable over the last twelve months so it was suggested that if a semi-permanent art installation was to be considered it should be constructed away from the hills to try to diversify the visitor pressure.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

707 AONB Budget and Work Programme 2021/22

- a) Adopted the Arts in the Landscape Strategy and supported participation in coordinated national and local action resulting from the strategy;**
- b) Supported the principle of using arts to help join up climate change mitigation and adaptation and nature recovery work; and**
- c) Agreed to contact David Armitage if members have artistic ideas or indeed experience of running successful 'arts' projects.**

Paul Esrich introduced a report on the budget and work programme for 2021/22.

In a couple of amendments it was noted that Gloucestershire County Council's contribution to the AONB budget was now £630; in paragraph 7 there was an extraneous 'not' and the sentence should read '...it is unlikely that a replacement support officer will be appointed'. Overall, the contributions from Defra and the County Council's remain the same (apart from Gloucestershire's as mentioned).

Members were pleased that the Sustainable Development Fund was continuing. It was felt that AONB officers achieved a great deal from a small amount of money. It was clarified that the financial contribution made by each local authority to the Partnership was calculated by a funding formula which took into account the size of the area of AONB within each county as well as the population.

It was asked whether the work of the AONB Unit was highlighted to Parish Councils and whether they were asked for a contribution each year and it was suggested that the relevant County and District Councils should be asked for at least an inflationary increase on the amount they paid as the amount had been the same for a number of years. It was explained that Parish Councils were sent the AONB Partnership's Annual Review each year and were asked if they would like to make a voluntary contribution to the Partnership's work at that time. County, Unitary and District Councils had previously been asked if an uplift would be considered but nothing had been forthcoming. It was suggested that a request could be sent to contributing Councils in the autumn for consideration for next year's budget setting. It was appreciated that some Councils contained part of more than one AONB and so the financial implications of an uplift in funding could be more significant.

708 Sustainable Development Fund

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- a) Noted the budget for 2021/22; and**
- b) Commented on the overall direction and work priorities for the year ahead.**

David Armitage gave a brief update on the Sustainable Development Fund. There had been a reduced uptake of grants in the last year due to Covid but thanks were given to the Earth Heritage Trust, especially John Payne and Dick Bryant who had organised volunteers to maintain sites within the area and had received a grant of £1500 towards the work.

A project to re-introduce the Pearl Bordered Fritillary to the hills had received £500 and the Metal detectorist display was highlighted. It was explained that the money given for Meat Marketing was to promote Malvern Lamb at Christmas as an alternative to turkey.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- a) Noted and commented on the report; and**
- b) Agreed to bring any project ideas to the AONB Unit for 2021/22.**

709 Information Items

Paul Esrich asked Members to note the items for information. He clarified that the results of visitor survey work would be fed back to the South Worcestershire authorities in time to inform the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review.

A Member mentioned that she was very disappointed in the outcome of the Ledbury Viaduct appeal at TRP6.

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

710 Verbal Reports from Partners

Jeremy Fryman- There had been a delay to the improvements of Castlemorton Village Hall but hopefully these would be completed by June.

Helen l'Anson – the Herefordshire 'Youth Can' conference will take place in July 2022 and would include information on jobs, careers and apprenticeships.

Ken Pollock thanked the Chairman for her earlier comments. As he was not standing in the upcoming elections he would no longer be able to represent Worcestershire County Council on the AONB JAC but he

felt that the AONB was in very good hands.

James Hervey-Bathurst would be Chairing a project for Herefordshire called the Queen's Green Canopy to encourage people to plant trees for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022. Schools, landowners, churches and parishes would all be encouraged to plant at least one tree.

Eastnor would be opening a kiosk at the entrance to the park which would encourage visitors to the Southern end of the hills.

There would also be some new interpretation panels.

Jim Burgin – Malvern Hills District Council have appointed Matt Barker to manage the delivery of the Carbon Reduction Plans across Malvern Hills and Wychavon.

Rachel Datlen – Worcestershire County Council were taking on a new Nature Reserve to the East of Evesham with a focus on tree planting and creation of pollinator sites and wetlands. It would be the largest site that the Worcestershire Countryside Team managed.

James Bissett – There were currently various vacant posts within the Planning and Built and Natural Environment Team at Herefordshire Council which were on hold due to budget constraints due to Covid. This could impact on the Council's work, including with AONBs.

Richard Bryant – The Earth Heritage Trust was contracted by Natural England to assess the state of various SSSIs in the Midlands including the Malvern Hills. The AONB office and Malvern Hills Trust should receive a copy of the report in due course and this may help with the condition monitoring work done for the AONB.

711 Dates of Future Meetings

Dates 2021
5 November 2021

The meeting ended at 11.20am

Chairman