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## **Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Advisory Committee**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 21st April, 2016 at 2.00 pm in Bleasdale Parish Hall, Bleasdale, Preston, PR3 1UY**

### **Present:**

#### **Chairman**

County Councillor Albert Atkinson, Lancashire County Council

#### **Committee Members**

Mike Burke, Natural England  
County Councillor Mrs Susie Charles, Lancashire County Council  
County Councillor Kevin Ellard, Lancashire County Council  
Alderman Roger W Brooks, Wyre Borough Council  
Martin Putsey, Preston City Council  
Michael Helm, LALC  
Helen Dix, Environment Agency  
David Kelly, Ramblers Association  
Jeremy Duckworth, The Moorland Association  
Councillor Ian Thompson, Craven District Council

#### **Officers**

Hetty Byrne, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit  
Cathy Hopley, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit  
Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit  
Sandra Silk, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit  
Alison Boden, Wyre Borough Council  
David Porter, Lancaster City Council

#### **Apologies**

Councillor Jane Parkinson, Lancaster City Council  
Councillor Mrs Rosemary Elms, Ribble Valley Borough Council  
Councillor John Browne, Preston City Council  
Councillor James Starkie, Pendle Borough Council  
Councillor Colin Price, Yorkshire Local Councils Association  
Mr Andrew Taylor, Bowland Land Managers Forum

## Presentation 1

Before the meeting started the Committee received a presentation from Tony Jackson, a Volunteer Ranger in the Wyre Coast and Countryside Service, in relation to the monitoring of 'promoted routes'.

Tony explained that Volunteers promoted routes such as the Wyre Way and recorded the condition of gates, stiles etc along the route and any obstructions. All the data collected was then collated via Dropbox and published on Google maps (both of which were free services) where it could be accessed and interrogated by others. The Committee recognised that the use of Volunteers and the process which Tony had outlined provided a low cost method of gathering information which could be used to prioritise and target resources for the maintenance and repair of routes and furniture.

## Presentation 2

The Committee also heard from Jean Fone who had received an award in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the AONB during the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations in 2014. Jean explained how after moving to Bleasdale in 1989, to work as the primary school Headteacher, her interest in local history had led to the formation of a group of volunteers who gathered information about life in and around the village which was held in a heritage room at the Parish Hall. Jean also thanked the AONB Unit for all the assistance given in the past with applications for grants which had been used to purchase an assortment of equipment for the Group.

**Resolved:** The Committee noted both presentations and thanked Tony and Jean for their contributions.

### 1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made around the table.

Apologies were presented on behalf of the Committee members and Officers listed above.

### 2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interests

No declarations of interest were made in relation to items on the agenda.

### 3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 January 2016

**Resolved:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 26<sup>th</sup> January 2016 are confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

#### **4. Matters Arising**

Elliott informed the meeting that both Tarja Wilson and Dave Padley had been given 'Landscapes for Life' long service awards by the National Association of AONB and it was hoped that these could be presented to them at a future JAC meeting..

Michael Helm expressed concern about a proposed development of 68 houses in Dolphinholme which were likely to have an impact on the AONB. In response, Elliott confirmed that he was aware of the application and had discussed his concerns with the landscape consultant and submitted a response to Lancaster City Council who as the local planning authority, would determine the application.

#### **Resolved:**

1. That Tarja Wilson and Dave Padley from the Forest of Bowland AONB Unit be congratulated on their long service awards from the National Association of AONB and be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee for a presentation.
2. That the Committee be kept informed of developments in relation to the application for 68 houses in Dolphinholme.

#### **5. Budget 2015/16 Update**

Elliott informed the meeting that in January, 2016, DEFRA had announced an allocation of protected AONB funding which was an increase on the funding from the previous year. It was reported that the increased funding would be used to enhance the Projects Budget and add £2,000 to 'core activities' which included communications which was an area where funding had been reduced in the past. It was noted that all AONBs in England had received the same funding settlement as the Forest of Bowland.

Elliott also reported that he was still in discussions with North Yorkshire County Council in relation to them supporting Public Rights of Way project delivery in Craven in lieu of their reduced core funding contribution from the Council.

**Resolved:** That the revised AONB budget for 2016/17, as set out in the report presented, is noted.

#### **6. AONB Partner Updates**

The Chairman asked representatives of partner organisations around the table to update the Committee on activities.

Alison Boden informed the meeting that Garstang Walking Festival would be held in May, 2016 and circulated a leaflet about the event which had been produced by the AONB in partnership with the Friends of Garstang Walking Festival.

David Kelly reported that the introduction of a section of flag stones as part of the route from Fiendsdale Head to Fair Snape Fell had proved effective in protecting the heather

and in places enabled regrowth. However, a muddy section was developing at the end of the existing flagged route and in the vicinity of a kissing gate. In considering the situation the Committee recognised that it was unlikely that work would be done to extend the flagged route at the present time due to limited resources. However, it was suggested that a number of smaller works along the route, including resurfacing in the vicinity of the kissing gate, could be considered for the future. Elliott agreed to progress the matter with the relevant AONB Officers.

Councillor Thompson referred to the earlier presentation on a low cost approach to monitoring and recording signs, stiles and other furniture along public rights of way and stated that he intended to adopt a similar approach in relation to routes around Bentham. Hetty Byrne informed the meeting that it was intended to put a call out in May/June for volunteers in the Bentham area which could assist with any future monitoring activities.

Jane Baddeley reported that the Friends of Bowland Group were involved in identifying specific areas where the County Council would be requested to undertake cutting of highway verges in such a way as to encourage wildlife. The Group also planned to a bee identification day in June and was working with the local Quakers to investigate the history of a local burial site.

Mike Burke informed the meeting that Natural England was looking to prioritise its work and focus attention on particular priority areas (including the Forest of Bowland AONB) and would seek to work with the AONB Unit and key estates to stimulate further partnership working on a range of key land management and conservation issues. The Committee also noted that work on establishing a coastal path between Silverdale and Cleveleys was progressing and the West Pennine Moors was to be designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

**Resolved:** That the updates set out above are noted.

## **7. Delivering the AONB Management Plan.**

Elliott presented a report on key AONB projects and activity which had been produced from the online AONB Management Plan.

Hetty Bryne gave a presentation on various projects and activities undertaken by the AONB Unit between October 2015 and April 2016, including the following.

**Hedge Laying** - Volunteers had worked through Winter/Spring to lay hedges in areas such as Grindleton and Bolton by Bowland, supervised by expert trainers from Lancashire and Westmorland Hedgelaying Association.

**Hay time** – The Wildflowers into the Meadows Project was supported by the AONB Sustainable Development Fund and Networks of Nectar Project. A meadow at Stephen Park in Gisburn Forest has been managed in order to restore it as a hay meadow which included cutting using a scythe to encourage the growth of wildflowers. The meadow had been visited by children from five schools in Ribbles Valley who were being encouraged to grow specific species and then plant them in the meadow.

**Networks 4 Nectar** – As part of the project the AONB unit were working with community groups like the Lancaster Bee Keepers in Caton to provide small pollinator patches and wildflower meadows to support local bee and pollinator populations. It was noted that the intention was to compare restored wildflower meadows with untouched meadows to see if the activity has resulted in an increased bee population. In addition seeds would be gathered from the restored wildflower meadows to be added to the Kew Gardens seed bank.

**Peat Restoration** – Environment Agency funding has supported peatland restoration work at Brown Syke on the Abbeystead estate and the AONB Unit has managed the project implementation on behalf of the Agency. A second bid for funding from Pennine Peat Life has been unsuccessful, despite having addressed feedback from the previous failed bid, and it is intended to lodge an appeal against the decision.

**Champion Bowland** – Recent grants had been used to provide a new shelter at Dunsop bridge, a moth trap for St Johns Church 'Church goes Wild' group and scythe training for the Friends of Beacon Fell to help produce a wildflower meadow.

The Sustainable Tourism Forum and Bowland Experience Ltd AGM had been held in November 2015 and provided an opportunity for representatives from local businesses to meet and share ideas/experiences.

A logo had also been produced for use by Bolton-by Bowland, Gisburn Forest and Sawley Parish Council to emphasise that they are parishes within the AONB.

**Rail Interpretation** – The AONB Unit was working with partners to produce information for display at 4 railway stations on the 'Bentham Line' to inform rail users of the variety of places to visit, eat and stay within the Forest of Bowland.

**Bowland Revealed** – The Arts Council funded project aimed at engaging populations in and around the AONB had been successful with over 1,800 participants, many of whom would hopefully visit the AONB in the future.

**Bowland Land Managers Forum** – Was currently considering areas within the AONB which potentially would be able to support populations of Black Grouse in the future. This work will be dependent on securing funding/resources and also the success of the current breeding season to allow translocation of birds from core populations within Northern England to take place in 2016/17.

**Northern Upland Chain Farmer Panel** – Work was underway to establish a panel to give Pennine upland farmers a voice at strategic levels within Government and government agencies such as Natural England (similar to the South West Uplands Federation in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset). The Forest of Bowland will be offered two places on the panel and it is anticipated that local farmer groups will be able to nominate representatives to take up these places.

A prospectus was also being developed to encourage natural capital investment from corporate interests into peatland restoration and woodland planting to help improve their carbon footprint while benefitting the AONB.

**Undergrounding** – The AONB continued to work with Parish Councils to identify locations where overhead power lines can be moved underground in order to improve visual amenity. The AONB will continue to work with Electricity NW Ltd to bring forward new schemes

**National Association of AONB** – the next scheduled Conference will be held in Shropshire in June, 2016 and will have a health and wellbeing theme.

Elliott also presented the draft AONB Unit Business Plan for 2016/17 which represented an ambitious programme of activity whilst recognising the current economic climate.

**Resolved:**

1. That the AONB Unit activity report for October 2015 to April 2016 as presented and the updates given at the meeting are noted.
2. That the AONB Unit Business Plan for 2016/17 as presented, is approved.

## **8. Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership Update**

Cathy Hopley, Development Officer, informed the meeting that the AONB had been successful in securing £156,400 grant aid from the Lottery Heritage Fund towards the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership scheme.

A Phase 1 habitat survey, traditional boundaries survey and a landscape character assessment for the Landscape Partnership were being planned together with an Audience Development Plan, aimed at attracting visitors from a wider audience.

Cathy also reported that an application had been submitted to Natural England for Countryside Stewardship Facilitation funding towards the establishment of a Pendle Farmers Network to help engage with farmers and landowners to improve collaboration and help Countryside stewardship deliver outcomes at a landscape scale.

**Resolved:** That the report is noted.

## **9. Urgent Business**

David Kelly informed the Committee that for a number of years a concessionary footpath had existed which enabled walkers travelling along the Ribble Way to avoid having to make a detour into Hurst Green. However, last autumn access to the concessionary route was suddenly withdrawn by the land agent and as a result walkers were now forced to go into Hurst Green.

While access to Marl Hill Moor was by a public right of way, other sections of the route were only available by agreement and a short gap now existed, effectively making the route onto the Moor a cul-de-sac with access only available from Crag Hill. David suggested that either a new footpath or a concessionary route needed to be established to bridge the existing gap in the network and provide access to the Moor. If the latter

approach was to be used it was suggested that any agreement should be for 20 years so that the concessionary route would appear on the OS Map.

It was noted that the issue had been raised at both the Public Rights of Way Access Forum and with the County Council Countryside Service.

**Resolved:**

1. That the Chairman raise the issue with officers at the County Council to clarify what, if any, action the County Council can take in relation to access to Marl Hill Moor.
2. That David Kelly be requested to produce a list of priority routes within the AONB for consideration by the Committee.

**10. Date of Next Meeting**

**Resolved:** That future meetings of the Committee be held at 2.00pm on the following dates:

Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2016 at a venue to be arranged in Preston.  
Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2017 at a venue to be arranged in Craven.

Mike Neville  
Democratic Services

Lancashire County Council  
County Hall  
Preston