



Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Advisory Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 20 October 2022 at 2.00pm in Over Wyresdale Parish Hall, Strait Lane, Abbeystead, Lancaster, LA2 9BQ

Present:

Chair

County Councillor Matthew Maxwell-Scott, Lancashire County Council

Committee Members

Councillor Rosemary Elms, Ribble Valley Borough Council
Councillor John Ibison, Wyre Council
Colin Price, Yorkshire Local Councils Association
Helen Dix, Environment Agency
Andrew Taylor, Bowland Land Managers Forum
Mike Pugh, Champion Bowland
Sonja Ludwig, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
James Cooper, Natural England
Chris Kynch, Lancashire Association of Local Councils (Parish Councils) (Virtual)

Officers

Alison Boden, Wyre Borough Council (Virtual)
Hugh Clear Hill, North Yorkshire County Council
Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council
Hetty Byrne, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council
Sandra Silk, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council
Sam Gorton, Democratic Services, Lancashire County Council

Observers

Jan Arger, Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), North Yorkshire

Apologies

County Councillor Shaun Turner, Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Ged Mirfin, Lancashire County Council
Councillor Joyce Pritchard, Lancaster City Council
Cllr Anna Hindle, Preston City Council
Neil Kilgour, Moorland Association

David Hewitt, Ribble Valley Borough Council
Lucy Henwood, Preston City Council
Richard Camp, Lancaster City Council
Andrew Laycock, Craven District Council

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence

All were welcomed to the meeting, introductions made, and apologies presented on behalf of the Committee members and officers as detailed.

The following new members were welcomed:

- Councillor Anna Hindle, Preston City Council
- County Councillor Simon Myers, North Yorkshire County Council
- Councillor Keith Martin, Lancashire Association of Local Councils (LALC)
- Sonja Ludwig, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

Alternatives for the meeting were:

- Jan Arger for Fran Evans, Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), North Yorkshire
- Hugh Clear-Hill for Liz Small, North Yorkshire County Council
- James Cooper for Ginny Hinton/Sam Critchley, Natural England
- Chris Kynch for Councillor Keith Martin, Lancashire Association of Local Councils (LALC)

2. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

Resolved: County Councillor Shaun Turner and County Councillor Matthew Maxwell-Scott were appointed Chair and Vice-Chair respectively for the 2022/2023 Municipal Year.

In the absence of the Chair, the Deputy Chair took the meeting.

3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosures of pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests.

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 April 2022

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB, Lancashire County Council gave an update on the Haweswater Aqueduct Resilience Programme (HARP) following the presentation that the Committee received at the meeting on 21 April 2022. Previous comments submitted by the AONB identified incomplete information particularly in relation to protected species and some additional survey work was required from the specialist ecology advisor's perspective. They felt that planning authorities could have been open to judicial review if

they had not completed it. United Utilities had now completed this survey work over the summer and the local planning authorities are now in receipt of that information.

The Committee noted that two meetings had also taken place with United Utilities on ecology at the end of July and the other on landscape in mid-August. United Utilities helped to clarify a number of issues around the information that they had supplied previously and explained about the approach to procurement of a contractor to design and build the schemes.

Supplementary environmental information was submitted by the applicant to both Lancaster City Council and Ribble Valley Borough Council and should they agree to give consent for the works, there will be a series of strict planning condition known as "Grampian conditions" on landscape and ecology which will have to be met before any work can take place. Those conditions will include consultation with the AONB on these, as the information is brought to the local planning authorities to satisfy them.

The Committee noted that there were currently no dates set for when the local authorities would be taking the decisions to committee (one application in Lancaster District to the south of Wray and two planning applications in Ribble Valley for two sections, Bowland and Marl Hill).

A further meeting with United Utilities had also taken place to discuss the potential for voluntary landscape compensation scheme and the Committee were informed that United Utilities were working on this as part of a wider Social and Community Investment Fund

Resolved: That the Committee noted the update provided.

5. Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council presented the constitution, membership and terms of reference to the Committee indicating that there had been some changes to the membership only.

With regards to North Yorkshire County Council becoming a Unitary Authority in 2023, this would affect membership and it was noted that discussions were taking place with the other two AONBs for when this happens.

Resolved: That the Committee approved the constitution, membership and terms of reference for 2022/23.

6. Brief Partner Updates

Environment Agency (EA)

Helen Dix, Environment Agency (EA) informed the Committee that throughout the summer they had been focussed on managing low flows and drought conditions. Stocks Reservoir was at a capacity level of less than 14%, and work has been carried out with United Utilities to manage the impacts that creates to river catchments downstream and on the ecology. The Committee noted that at the start of this week, the drought status had returned to "business as usual", however there were still a few reservoirs that were still very low and continue to be monitored. The Committee were asked that if they knew of

anybody experiencing environmental impacts of low flow or stranded fish to report them to the Environment Agency as this will inform how they react to dry weather in the future and what mitigation measures can be taken alongside United Utilities.

There has also been other work alongside United Utilities and the River Ribble Trust on the Langden Brook sub-catchment on sediment and gravel re-introduction. Work is continuing to overcome legislative and bureaucratic barriers to moving the sediment and gravels downstream of the intakes so that they can naturally journey downstream.

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

Sonja Ludwig, RSPB Species and Habitats Officer provided an update on the following areas:

Support for breeding waders on farmland

The year commenced with finishing the Green Recovery Challenge Fund for improving habitat for breeding curlew through rush management and wet feature creation. Work continues to try and help protect breeding waders, especially those on intensive silage ground. Funding from DEFRA to help compensate farmers for mitigation measures is proving difficult, however, this is being investigated with other possibilities.

Support and advice have been provided to the AONB and the Ribble Rivers Trust with support for putting fields into Countryside Stewardship (CS) wader options, as well as provided management advice across Bowland for farmers to improve habitat for breeding waders on their land.

It is possible an application will be made to the AONB Farming in Protected Landscape (FiPL) for a mixture of equipment including trail cameras, nest protection kits and infrared cameras that will help to continue the RSPBs work supporting farmers and waders.

Farming in Protected Landscape (FiPL) – Trial of a 'Gull Proof' sheep feeder

A successful bid has been submitted to the Bowland AONB for a Farming in Protected Landscape (FiPL) funded project to test an alternative way of feeding sheep, with the aim to prevent lesser black-backed gulls from stealing sheep feed and thus reduce conflict with farmers. These feeders appeared to have had good success in restricting food availability to gulls, with the final report in preparation, however this was only a small trial project and further research is needed at a larger scale (including looking at potential benefits to breeding waders in these fields).

Breeding wader surveys

Breeding wader surveys have been conducted on 67 farms across Bowland, 20 more than last year. This was also the second year of curlew productivity surveys on 15 farms. The Clapham cluster group was set up this spring with 12 farmers and 18 volunteers. This community has been conducting more detailed surveys to understand the reasons for curlew decline in Clapham and provide support and advice to the farmers on ways to increase curlew breeding success on their farm.

Bird of prey monitoring

Upland breeding raptors were monitored on the United Utilities estate in partnership with United Utilities and their shooting and farming tenants. This year was the most successful breeding season for hen harriers in three decades with 13 breeding females, 11 successful nests and 39 young fledged. Work is continuing on improving communication and cooperation with the private estates, who also hosted three successful hen harrier nests this year. Together, the Bowland AONB held a third of all successful hen harrier nests in England and is still of national importance for this species. For the first time in over 10 years, the Bowland Fells Special Protection Area (SPA) exceeded the minimum number of breeding hen harriers it was designated for (12 pairs).

Wyre Borough Council

Alison Boden had submitted the following report which had been circulated to members of the Committee prior to the meeting:

Garstang Walking Festival 2022 and 2023

In 2022 the Friends of Garstang Walking Festival and Wyre Council held its first full nine-day festival since the COVID restrictions were eased. 42 walks were planned, and many were fully booked with over 400 attendances during this year's festival. Many of the walks took place in Garstang and the Forest of Bowland. 80% of the activities were led by volunteers with support from Wyre Coast and the Countryside team and partner organisations. Dates for the 2023 Festival were confirmed as – Saturday 6 May to Sunday 14 May.

Wyre Green Infrastructure Strategy and Audit

The initial stages of the audit of Wyre's Green Infrastructure are taking place coordinated by the planning team at Wyre. Contractors will be undertaking site assessments this year. The audit will contribute to the development of the Wyre Green Infrastructure Strategy along with other evidence gathering.

Bleasdale Farming in Protected Landscape (FiPL) project

Working with a local farmer and contractors and the Forest of Bowland Farming in Protected Landscape (FiPL) team, the Wyre Coast and Countryside Team are supporting a project to help improve the biodiversity of a farm in Bleasdale and improve public access for people to experience the wildlife and landscape of the AONB. The aim is to create a wildlife trail which connects in with the public rights of way network. The trail is near a local parish hall and will also be enjoyed by visitors taking part in the Garstang Walking Festival. Volunteers will be helping to widen gates, improve way marking and the surfacing of the route in difficult sections along the trail.

Countryside management

The Wyre Coast and Countryside Service have worked with partners to look after the Holme Wood concessionary path and public right of ways in Grizedale Valley. Similar repair/replace old gates has taken place on routes that link into the Garstang Millennium

Green and a well-being walk from Garstang. The Volunteers repaired the shelter and viewpoint on Harrisend Fell and undertook management of the invasive non-native species Himalayan Balsam at Brock Valley and other locations. The staff and volunteers have undertaken weekly litter and engagement patrols at Brock Valley, Nicky Nook and Delph Quarry locations as well as along popular footpaths in the Bowland areas of Wyre.

Resolved: The Committee noted the updates from partners.

7. AONB Management Plan Review

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council provided an update on the planned review of the current Forest of Bowland AONB Management Plan (2019-2024) which had been circulated with the agenda pack.

The Committee were informed that owing to several ongoing policy developments arising from the Government's response to the Landscapes Review (or Glover Review) the responsible Defra Minister has offered AONB Partnerships the opportunity to delay the review by up to one year. A letter from Lord Benyon, Defra Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State was appended to the report in the agenda pack setting out that it was acceptable and would adhere to legislation. Therefore, the current plan would have a light touch review, which would be a statement that says a review has been carried out and the AONB are comfortable that the plan as it stands continues for another year. Elliott Lorimer Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council informed the Committee that he would be contacting the different local authorities to ask for their agreement to adopt the plan as is for another year.

The Committee noted that there was nothing at risk by delaying this for another year and that a scoping report for the commencement of the review would next be presented to the Joint Advisory Committee in October 2023.

A query arose with regards to the timescale for a review of Access Land and it was agreed that Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council would contact Sam Critchley, Natural England regarding this on behalf of the Committee.

Resolved: That the Committee:

- i) Noted the report and offered comments.
- ii) Approved the proposed recommendation from the AONB Manager to delay the review by 12 months and to produce a revised AONB Management plan by 1 April 2025.
- iii) Requested that the AONB Manager on behalf of the Committee contact Sam Critchley, Natural England with regards to timescales for the review of the Access to Land Plan.

8. Statement of Commitment from AONB Chairs on Climate Action

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council provided some background on the Statement of Commitment from AONB Chairs on Climate Action During 2021 which throughout 2021, a subset of AONB staff from across the country, with the support from the National Association for AONBs, had come together to develop and implement a collaborative climate change action programme. This included a production

of a Climate Action Framework and Toolkit to help AONB Partnerships to plan for and implement climate change adaptation and mitigate actions. In addition, the collaborative programme had developed a Statement of Commitment from AONB Chairs on Climate Action which was appended to the report in the agenda pack and where further details can be found which includes the five workstreams as follows:

- i) Agriculture
- ii) Nature-based Solutions
- iii) Building Design and Planning
- iv) Renewable Energy
- v) Sustainable Tourism and Transport

A Statement of Commitment from AONB Chairs was also produced, which commit the AONB Partnership to develop a Climate Action Plan during 2022/23. The AONB has previously published a Climate Change Adaptation Plan in 2011 and many of the issues and concerns remain and can be carried over into a new Climate Change Planie getting some of the key habitats as resilient to climate change as possible and looking at the rights of way network and how that is affected by increased and intense rainfall. However, some additional work will be required to ensure climate change mitigation is Included in the plan.

The Committee noted that there was also ongoing work on a National Landscape Partnership which would be a partnership between National Parks, AONBS and National Trails and it was commented that this would be a great opportunity to work with Local Authority climate change officers and show how the AONB can contribute to Local Authority climate change action plans.

Resolved: That the Committee:

- i) Noted the Statement and offered comments.
- ii) Approved the formal adoption of the Statement.

9. Revised Estimates 2022/23 and Revenue Budget 2023/24

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council, presented the report as set out in the agenda papers, on the revised estimates 2022/2023.

The report outlined that the core budget provision for the Forest of Bowland AONB Joint Advisory Committee was funded by eight constituent Local Authority partners, and a grant from Defra, which is also enhanced by an additional contribution from United Utilities.

The Defra AONB funding settlement for 2022/2023 was £259,075.25.

The revised estimates take account of any changes in comparison with the original estimates which are detailed in Appendix A of the report in the agenda pack.

The Committee also noted the Revenue Budget 2023/2024 which sets out the costs in Appendix A associated with the Partnership's projects and management service in 2023/2024 including estimated pay and prices.

It was agreed that when the AONB Manager writes to the eight Local Authority Partners, they include what the inflation figure would have been should this have been applied in order to stress the real terms cut that it still represents.

Resolved: That the Committee:

- i) Noted the 2022/2023 Revised Estimates.
- ii) Approved the proposed 2023/2024 Revenue Budget as set out in the report.
- iii) Subject to approval of Resolution (ii), requested the funding authorities to make appropriate provision in their revenue budgets for 2023/2024.
- iv) Agreed that the inflation figure should be included in the correspondence sent to the eight Local Authority partners.

10. AONB Unit Activity Report (April-October 2022)

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council presented the AONB Team Report that had been tabled at the meeting and was appended to these minutes.

The Committee were requested to contact officers as detailed in the report, if they had any questions/comments, requests for more information outside of the meeting.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

11. Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership

Hetty Byrne, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council outlined the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership report April-June 2022, Year 5 Quarter 1 which had been appended to the agenda for information. Members had also received at the meeting a copy of the Pendle Hill Story Map which had recently been developed.

The following short video was also shown at the meeting:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCR5ospEPY8>.

The Board were reminded that the project was coming to an end and the AONB Manager commented that it had been a great experience for the team to have been involved with all the different organisations and the different ways the team have worked (particularly during the pandemic). The project has also changed the way they work and the way they do community engagement, which has been reflected in that fact that a bid has been put together to the Heritage Fund to enable similar community engagement work to be carried out with other communities in and around the AONB.

Any further questions, Committee members were asked to contact officers as detailed in the report.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

12. Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council referred the Committee to Item 10 AONB Unit Activity Report where there was an update on the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme.

Since the circulation of the report there had been a further update subject to the Local Assessment Panel's approval who were meeting w/c 24 October 2022, that if all applications were approved, 94% of the funding would be allocated.

The Committee were asked to appoint to the positions of Chair and Vice Chair for the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Local Assessment Panel 2022/2023 and the following proposals to continue in their roles were:

Chairman – Colin Price, Yorkshire Local Councils Association (proposed by County Councillor Maxwell Scott, Lancashire County Council and seconded by Councillor John Ibison, Wyre Council)

Vice Chair – Andrew Taylor, Bowland Land Managers Forum (proposed by County Councillor Maxwell Scott, Lancashire County Council and seconded by Councillor John Ibison, Wyre Council)

Resolved: That the Committee appointed to the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair for the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Local Assessment Panel 2022/2023.

13. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business received.

14. Date of Next Meeting

20 April 2023 in Wyre, venue to be confirmed.

19 October 2023 in Pendle, venue to be confirmed.

Samantha Gorton
Democratic Services

Lancashire County Council
County Hall
Preston