

FOREST OF BOWLAND AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Revised Estimates 2013/14 and Revenue Budget 2014/15

(Agenda Item 8a refers)

Issue for consideration

- a) Revised Estimates 2013/14
- b) Revenue Budget 2014/15

Background

The budget provision for the Forest of Bowland AONB Joint Advisory Committee is funded by eight constituent local authority partners and grant from Defra and is enhanced by additional contributions from partner organisations, e.g. United Utilities. A core team of 4.4 full time equivalent posts is established from this budget provision, to assist in the delivery of the statutory AONB Management Plan on behalf of the Joint Advisory Committee and the local authorities. The AONB Unit is now working to a 3-year business plan (2013- 2016), on which partners are consulted to ensure it reflects local priorities for the AONB.

a. Revised Estimates 2013/14

The costs of the Partnership are managed as part of the Lancashire County Council's Environment Directorate's Devolved Financial Management scheme. Since the Joint Advisory Committee in October 2012 approved the 2013/14 estimates and sought support for the contributions requested from funding partners, the full requested contributions have been met.

Defra advised in December 2012, that the grant offer for 2013/14 was £225,116 a reduction of £14,446 (or 5.38% reduction based on 2010/11 grant funding levels).

The net effect of these changes allows a programme of projects (including Sustainable Development Fund) to be delivered in 2013/14, totalling £103,378. In addition, to date during this year, the AONB unit has been successful in obtaining the following additional funding to support delivery of projects within the area:

| Project | £ | Organisation |
|---|--|--|
| Lancashire Witches Walk | c.25,000 | Lancashire Environment Fund |
| Bleasdale Fells Moorland Restoration | c. 16,000 <i>(part of £130,000 grant to AONB)</i> | Environment Agency |
| Leap in the Park | £10,200 | Heritage Lottery Fund and Lancashire Gardens Trust |
| Dunsop Bridge Village Footpath Improvements | £10,000 | Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership |
| Gisburn Forest Mountain Bike Trails Leaflet | £600 | Forestry Commission |
| | | |

The 2012/13 Revised Estimates take account of any changes (see Agenda Item 8a Column 3) in comparison with the Original Estimates in Column 2, against which the funding partners were asked to provide funding in October 2012.

The core contributions advised by the constituent local authorities for 2013/14 were as follows: -

| | £ |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| Craven District Council | 6,800 |
| Lancaster City Council | 6,800 |
| Pendle Borough Council | 6,800 |
| Preston Borough Council | 6,800 |
| Ribble Valley Borough Council | 6,800 |
| Wyre Borough Council | 6,800 |
| Lancashire County Council | 40,800 |
| North Yorkshire County Council | 6,800 |

b. Revenue Budget 2013/14

This section sets out in Appendix 'A' column 4, the costs associated with the Committee's projects and management service in 2014/15, including estimated pay and price levels. The estimates are based on a continuation of the level of service agreed by the Committee at the October 2012 meeting.

Provision reflects the core team of 4.4 full-time equivalent posts, operational budgets for core activities and projects:

- AONB Manager [0.2FTE]
- Principal AONB Officer [0.8FTE]
- Development and Funding Officer
- Sustainable Tourism and Website Development Officer
- Projects and Events Officer
- Business Development Officer [0.4FTE]

Total Committee income from contributions has been included in the budget for 2014/15, based on estimated contributions from funding authorities, equivalent to maintaining the requested contribution for 2013/14, with a continuation of the contribution from United Utilities matching the requested district/borough council level of contribution.

Income in respect of grant support from Defra towards core costs, projects costs and sustainable development works has been included on the basis of a further 5.38% reduction in 2014/15. Advice from Defra is that the grant for 2014/15 will continue to be a single grant offer to be used in ways which the Joint Advisory Committee considers will deliver the best performance in achieving the aims of the Management Plan, without restrictions placed on the percentage of grant to each area of supported activity.

Thus, the level of provision for projects is based on the resources estimated to be available to the Committee after providing for the staffing of the AONB Unit at Dunsop Bridge, plus related core activities costs, assuming that all partners make the requested contributions.

The attention of the Committee is drawn to the following: -

1. Gross Expenditure

It is proposed that total expenditure be £366,671 in 2014/15, which is £14,446 lower than in 2013/14. This expenditure results from providing for the effect of increased pay and prices, staff increments, employers national insurance and superannuation contributions, along with general price increases, and reflecting a level of provision for projects after taking account of the estimated level of resources being sought from funding partners.

2. Income

Defra grant towards core costs, projects costs and a programme of sustainable development works of £210,671 reflects a further reduction of 5.38% based on 2010/11 grant funding levels.

A contribution of £6,800 from United Utilities has been included, on the basis that the company will maintain a level of contribution equivalent to that of the district/borough councils.

3. Net Expenditure

The £366,671 net cost of management services is based on maintaining the level of contributions from the funding authorities requested for 2012/13. It is essential that the funding authorities are notified of the approved expenditure and requested to make due provision in their own estimates.

4. Additional Resources

It should be noted that resources from local authorities/individuals/other bodies for projects in AONB will be sought during 2013/14 (e.g. Lottery Funds, EU and Lancashire Environment Fund), which are over and above the Joint Advisory Committee budget provision and this will continue in 2014/15.

Furthermore, the service contributes to the generation of additional schemes and projects in liaison with services operating in the area such as the various local authority Countryside Services.

Decision Required

The Committee is requested to:

- i) note the 2013/14 Revised Estimates.
- ii) approve the 2014/15 Revenue Budget as set out in the report,
- iii) subject to the approval of (ii) above, to request the funding authorities to make appropriate provision in their revenue budgets