

Forest of Bowland AONB Joint Advisory Committee - Revised Estimates 2011/12 and Revenue Budget 2012/13

(Appendix 'A' refers)

Issue for consideration

- a) Revised Estimates 2011/12
- b) Revenue Budget 2012/13

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 4.3 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 (2011- 2014), on which local authorities have been consulted to ensure it reflects local authority priorities for the AONB (e.g. Community Strategies and district Commissioning Plans).

a. Revised Estimates 2011/12

The costs of the Committee are managed as part of the Lancashire County Council's Environment Directorate's Devolved Financial Management scheme.

Since the Joint Advisory Committee in October 2010 approved the 2011/12 estimates and sought support to the contributions requested from funding partners. The full requested contribution was not able to be made by Craven District Council, which resulted in a shortfall in funds available of £900.

Defra advised in December 2010, that the grant offer for 2011/12 was reduced by 5.4% on the previous year with a budget figure of £254,000; a reduction of £14,500.

Officers have been successful in obtaining the following additional funding to support AONB projects during 2011/12:

Project	£	Organisation
AONB Micro-Hydro Renewable Energy Feasibility Study	15,000	Ribble Valley Borough Council
Bowland Experience Trampler Project	7,000	Three Fishes Visitor Payback Scheme
School Lane Community Archaeology Project	5,000	United Utilities
Wildflower Meadows Project	3,000	Ribble Valley Borough Council

Scorton Village Playground	700	Bowland Tourism Environment Fund (BTEF)
Bowland by Bike Leaflet Re-print	640	LCC Sustainable Travel
Family-friendly Arts Workshops	600	LCC Arts Development
AONB/RSPB Schools Outreach Project	1,750	£250 BTEF / £1500 South Ribble Borough Council

The movement of staff pay costs to Core Employees (from Non Core Employees) reflects the acceptance by Defra that the staff are undertaking activities which are eligible to be supported at the Core grant rate up to a maximum of 75%. The net effect of these changes will allow a programme of projects to be delivered in 2011/12, totalling £128,500.

The 2011/12 Revised Estimates take account of these changes (see Appendix 'A' column 3) in comparison with the Original Estimates in Column 2, against which the funding partners were asked to provide funding in 2011/12.

The core contributions advised by the constituent local authorities for 2011/12 are as follows: -

	£
Craven District Council	5,900
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 2012/13

This section sets out in Appendix 'A' column 4, the costs associated with the Committee's projects and management service in 2012/13. The estimates are based on a continuation of the level of service agreed by the Committee at the October 2010 meeting, updated to 2012/13 estimated pay and price levels.

Provision reflects the core team of 4.3 FTE posts (AONB Manager [0.2FTE], Principal AONB Officer [0.8FTE], Development and Funding Officer, Sustainable Tourism and Website Development Officer, Business Development Officer [0.3FTE] and Project Officer), operational budgets for core activities and non-core projects.

Total Committee income from contributions has been included in the budget for 2012/13 based on estimated contributions from funding authorities, equivalent to maintaining the requested contribution for 2011/12, with a

continuation of the contribution from United Utilities matching the requested district 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 5.4% reduction in 2012/13. Advice from Defra is that the grant for 2012/13 will be one 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 £396,300 in 2012/13, which is £12,800 lower than £409,100 in 2011/12, mainly as a result of the reduction in Defra grant. 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 £240,284 reflects a reduction of 5.4% in the level of budgeted grant support.

A contribution of £6,800 from United Utilities has been included, on the basis that of the company seeking to maintain a level of contribution equivalent to that of the District Councils.

3. Net Expenditure

The £396,300 net cost of management services is based on maintaining the level of contributions from the funding authorities originally requested for 2011/12. 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 Forest of Bowland, are being sought during 2011/12 (e.g. Defra Nature Improvement Area competition), which are over and above the Joint Advisory Committee budget provision and this will continue in 2012/13. 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 2011/12 Revised Estimates.
- ii) approve the 2012/13 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