



Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Advisory Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 15th October, 2015 at 2.00 pm in Barley Village Hall, Cross Lane, Barley

Present:

Chair

County Councillor Albert Atkinson, Lancashire County Council

Committee Members

County Councillor Mrs Susie Charles, Lancashire County Council
Councillor Jane Parkinson, Lancaster City Council
Councillor James Starkie, Pendle Borough Council
Councillor Ian Thompson, Craven District Council
Alderman Roger W Brooks, Wyre Borough Council
Michael Helm, LALC
Mr Andrew Taylor, Bowland Land Managers Forum
David Kelly, Ramblers Association
Jeremy Duckworth, The Moorland Association
Barrie Tyrer, Bowland Experience Ltd

Officers

Hetty Byrne, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit
Cathy Hopley, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit
Sandra Silk, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit
Tarja Wilson, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit
Mike Williams, Pendle Borough Council
Martin Putsey, Preston City Council
Alison Boden, Wyre Borough Council
David Porter, Lancaster City Council
Sarah Robinson, Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust

Apologies

County Councillor Richard Welch, North Yorkshire County Council
Councillor Mrs Rosemary Elms, Ribble Valley Borough Council
Councillor Colin Price, Yorkshire Local Councils Association

Helen Dix, Environment Agency
Geoff Morries, Friends of Bowland
David Padley, Lancashire County Council
David Hewitt, Ribble Valley Borough Council

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence

The current Chair for 2014/2015 Municipal Year, County Councillor Albert Atkinson, welcomed all to the meeting. Round the table introductions were made and members of the public were welcomed.

Apologies for absence were noted as above.

The Committee was advised that Councillor Ian Thompson, Craven District Council had replaced Councillor Lin Barrington.

2. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

Resolved: County Councillor Albert Atkinson and County Councillor Mrs Susie Charles were appointed Chair and Vice-Chair respectively for the 2015/2016 Municipal Year.

3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interests

None declared.

4. Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference

Resolved: The Committee approved the Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference for 2015/2016, after the amendment to Roger Brooks by adding the title 'Alderman' to his name.

5. Minutes of the Meetings held on 23 April 2015 and 16 October 2014

Resolved: The minutes of the meetings held on 23 April 2015 and 16 October 2014 were agreed as an accurate record.

Resolutions from these minutes have either been included on this agenda or have since been resolved.

6. AONB Partner Updates

Alison Boden, Wyre Borough Council

The Discover Bowland brochure which has been devised has been well received by everybody. Volunteers and full-time rangers have done a good job.

Garstang Walking Festival

The Garstang Walking Festival again was a huge success this year. Plans for next year's event are well underway, with around 50 walks and events having been organised. The Festival dates will be 2-15 May 2016.

The Walks from Garstang is a project linked with Healthy Streets and Alison shared the leaflet with the Committee. The leaflet has been funded and the photo on the back is of the volunteers who have created it and also walked the routes. It has been found to be a useful piece of literature and it will be going on the website too. Partnership working with Thornton and Caldervale is also taking place to promote it further. It has been a great success.

The River Wyre Catchment Project (as reported at the last meeting on 23 April 2015), is still on-going and reports are being produced from it. It is hoped that the project will continue next year as there is still a lot more work to do. River Lune and the River Ribble have similar projects also.

Helen Dix, Environment Agency (EA) (presented by Elliott Lorimer)

EA are working with United Utilities (UU) and other partners to formalise a way of preventing UU abstraction points from holding back sediment in the River Langden. At the moment an intake for raw drinking water provides a barrier for gravel which would otherwise move naturally down the river in times of high flow. The gravel blocks up the intake and would otherwise provide important habitat for invertebrates and fish downstream. A group of organisations, also including the Ribble Rivers Trust and the Hodder Fisheries Consultative trialled an approach of reintroducing the gravel (digging it out of the intake and moving it downstream of the barrier) so it could continue to move downstream with the flow. This was successful, so the EA are now supporting UU and working on an agreement for this to become a long-term way of working.

A weir and ford on Kettles Beck (NE corner of the AONB) was recently removed in a partnership between the EA, Amey (construction company), United Utilities and the Lune Rivers Trust. The weir and ford were impeding the passage of fish so it was removed and replaced by a bridge.

EA unfortunately had to investigate a few fish kill incidents in the AONB over the Summer – one on Waddington Brook at Waddington and one on West Bradford Brook. EA think these were due to intense rainfall following a period of hot, sunny weather which resulted in warm water flushing into the watercourses. Many species of fish are intolerant to high water temperatures and it holds less oxygen than cold water. As EA couldn't find any evidence of pollution, they think the temperature change was the cause.

Ribble Life Together –The Ribble Rivers Trust (on behalf of the Ribble Life Catchment Partnership) were recently successful in securing funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the development of a programme of improvements across the Ribble Catchment. The EA is supporting this development phase and there are several projects which are being developed within the AONB, including some farm advisor training and river walks which Hetty would be able to elaborate on if required.

The Wyre and Lune Catchment Partnership are also making progress and have delivered some fencing and tree planting projects aimed at reducing diffuse pollution from agriculture. I believe these have been outside of the AONB boundary, but other representatives (e.g. Alison Boden) may be able to elaborate if required.

David Porter – Lancaster City Council

David gave an update on the North West Coastal Connections project that is happening in southern Cumbria and North Lancashire, which will also create around 1000 jobs. National Grid are proposing building a tunnel and infrastructure to reduce visual intrusion around Morecambe Bay. The new grid connection will end at Heysham and will therefore have little or no effect on the Forest of Bowland AONB.

A consultation by Lancaster City Council is about to commence on a plan outlining potential sites for future development in the district, including commercial and residential sites. Significant development sites are proposed for Dolphinholme and east of the M6, near Caton on the western side of AONB. Details are available on the City Council website.

Michael Williams – Pendle Borough Council

The Pendle Walking Festival took place between 15-23 August 2015 and a large number of the 68 walks were in Bowland. A competition was held to encourage families to take part in the festival and this proved to be popular. It will be held again in 2016 in the school holidays and the week before the Blues Festival.

The Tour of Britain bike race covered lots of AONB and coverage was streamed to over 100 different countries, so hopefully this will have a positive outcome and see an increase in visitors to the area.

Resolved: That the Committee note the AONB Partner update.

Networks 4 Nectar

Dr Sarah Robinson from the project presented the aims of the project from April 2014-October 2015 which were:

- to create 'stepping stones' of nectar rich grassland and 'mini meadows'
- to encourage planting and management of high nectar value plants
- to provide advice and guidance on management
- to involve businesses, community groups, schools and the public

The methods were as follows:

- Add species to existing grassland
- Start from bare ground
- Use seed
- Use plug plants
- Use trees and shrubs
- Provide bug houses

And the results:

- A total of 25 sites created & managed
- 'Flagship' sites created
- Schools project underway 'Wildflowers into the Meadows'
- Private land, public open spaces, businesses, schools & church groups involved
- Public events

Sarah also presented case studies to the Committee from Lancaster Beekeepers and Stirk House Hotel. Wildflowers for the Meadows involved around 110 children from five schools in the Ribble Valley.

Next steps for the project are:

- Hay Time work continues on two new sites with funding from Coronation Meadows project (BIFFA)
- LEF application to grow specific species to enhance nectar patches and meadows
- Link established with Kew Gardens Millennium Seed Bank
- Species work continues on Bowland's scarcest plant species
- Further funding being pursued

Cllr Ian Thompson asked as to whether Network 4 Nectar could help with the hedges as this is something that North Yorkshire County Council can no longer provide. It would need volunteers and risk assessments, but felt that negative could be turned into a positive situation here and involve this project.

Resolved: This proposal be discussed further between Cllr Thompson and Sarah and that the Committee thank her for this presentation.

7. Revised Estimates 2015/16 and Revenue Budget 2016/17

Elliott Lorimer presented a report on the Revised Estimates 2015/2016 and Revenue Budget 2016/2017. He stated that the Defra grant offer is expected before Christmas following the Government's announcement of the Comprehensive Spending Review planned for 25 November 2015.

Given the uncertainty this poses, it is proposed that the Committee meets in January 2016 to consider again the Revenue Budget 2016/17.

Elliott drew the Committee's attention to page 19 of the agenda papers and the following points:

Gross Expenditure
Income
Net Expenditure
Additional resources

Resolved: that the Committee agreed to

- i) note the 2015/16 Revised Estimates with the amendment to Column 3 figure from £357,813 to £358,888
- ii) approve the 2016/17 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
- iv) hold a special 'budget' Committee meeting in January 2015 (date to be confirmed) to review 2016/17 Revenue Budget, following confirmation of the Defra AONB grant offer.

8. AONB Team Report

The Committee received the AONB Unit report which provided updates on a whole range of issues and projects, as attached to the agenda and also verbally presented at the meeting by Hetty Byrne.

Cathy Hopley agreed to inform the Committee of the outcome of the bid made by the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership as soon as it was received.

With regards the Dark Sky Discovery Site accreditation, Hetty Byrne agreed to speak to Michael Williams with regards an alternative site for Pendle to put forward and as soon as accreditations for the other sites have been received will inform the Committee.

Information on the Underground for Visual Amenity programme has been sent to Parish Councils and the Committee requested that they also be sent a copy of the letter.

Resolved: i) That the report be noted.

9. Planning and Development and the Forest of Bowland AONB

The report attached to the agenda papers outlines two planning and development matters for consideration by the Committee in relation to the Planning and Development Protocol between Natural England and the AONB Partnership and also the FoB AONB Obtrusive Lighting Position Statement and Guidance.

Following a brief discussion it was:

Resolved: that the Committee agreed to

- i) consider the draft Protocol, offer comments and if minded, approve adoption of the by AONB Partnership.
- ii) consider the draft AONB Obtrusive Lighting Position Statement and Guidance, offer comments and if minded approve adoption of the policy by the AONB Partnership

10. Hen Harriers in the Forest of Bowland

Elliott Lorimer gave a verbal update which had been received from James Bray, RSPB Bowland Project Officer.

There were a total of seven nesting attempts in Bowland in 2015. Six of these failed and one was partially successful with one surviving juvenile.

The season started very optimistically with four pairs laying eggs. However, four males disappeared in unexplained circumstances from these active nests soon after the females had laid full clutches, which resulted in these nests failing.

Lancashire Police appealed for information about the disappearances of the males.

Highlander, who was born in Bowland in 2014 (and was satellite tagged just before she left the nest) was one of the birds that returned to breed in Bowland this year. Her first attempt failed when her first partner disappeared. She laid a second clutch in the same nest but this also failed. We think this might have been due to the adopting male being a young bird who lacked the experience to provision her well enough. Her third attempt in a different valley with a third male was predated by a stoat on the day that her last egg hatched. The RSPB are following her movements, and she is still in Bowland.

One other nest hatched chicks with four chicks fledging from this nest. However, soon after three of them were found dead nearby, leaving only one surviving juvenile. The corpses were sent off for post mortem analysis but the tests were inconclusive. We suspect that they succumbed to either starvation or disease or a combination of both.

Last year, two pairs of hen harriers bred successfully in Bowland, fledging a total of nine chicks.

Only one pair of Peregrines bred successfully in Bowland this year. In the recent past the number of pairs nesting was in the double figures.

Over 20 people volunteered to watch the harrier nests in Bowland this year, with employees of United Utilities, the AONB and the local police all giving their time to help. The RSPB are very grateful for the volunteers' help, as well as to the shooting and farming tenants on the United Utilities Bowland estate for their help.

Resolved: the Committee noted the report.

Following discussion, Jeremy Duckworth from the Moorland Association commented that it would be useful to invite the Wildlife Crime Police Unit to discuss further at a meeting as this is a number one priority across the board. This requires Government involvement and currently there is a Joint Recovery Plan awaiting Ministerial approval. Jeremy also reported that all partners have signed up to the Joint Recovery Plan, except the RSPB.

11. Any Other Business

Cllr James Starkie raised the issue again regarding the replacement of the AONB boundary signs in Pendleside. The signs are ready, but are yet to be installed.

Resolved: That Elliott agreed to speak with Cllr Starkie and Dave Padley (LCC officer, who has the replacement signs) to seek to resolve this and also to discuss repainting old signs.

12. Urgent Business

There was no urgent business received.

13. Date of Meetings in 2016

The dates and locations of the next meetings are Thursday, 21 April 2016 in Wyre District and Thursday, 13 October 2016, in Preston District.

As discussed there will be a special 'budget' Committee meeting in January 2016 (date and venue to be agreed).

Samantha Gorton
Democratic Services

Lancashire County Council
County Hall
Preston