

Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Advisory Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday, 17th October, 2011 at 1.30 pm in Main Hall - Slaidburn Village Hall

Present:

Chair

County Councillor Albert Atkinson, Lancashire County Council

Committee Members

Councillor Lin Barrington, Craven District Council
Jon Beavan, Bowland Experience Ltd
Councillor Roger W Brooks, Wyre Borough Council
Councillor John Browne, Preston City Council
Councillor Mrs Rosemary Elms, Ribble Valley Borough Council
Andrew Gouldstone, RSPB
Michael Helm, LAPT
David Kelly, Ramblers Association
Councillor Colin Price, Yorkshire Local Councils Association
Mr Andrew Taylor, Bowland Landowners and Farmers Group

Officers

Hetty Byrne, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit
Cathy Hopley, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit
Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit
Nick Osborne, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit
David Padley, Lancashire County Council
Mike Pugh, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit
Tarja Wilson, Lancashire County Council
Graham Megson, North Yorkshire County Council
Vaughan Jones, Pendle Borough Council
Martin Putsey, Preston City Council
David Hewitt, Ribble Valley Borough Council

1. Appointment of Chair / Vice Chair

Nominations were presented, and seconded, to appoint County Councillor Albert Atkinson as Chair of the Committee, and County Councillor Susie Charles as Vice-Chair. The Committee agreed to appoint County Councillor Albert Atkinson as Chair and County Councillor Susie Charles as Vice-Chair for the 2011/12 municipal year.

County Councillor Albert Atkinson assumed the role of Chair from this point forward.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor Susie Charles, County Councillor David Smith, Councillor James Starkie, County Councillor Richard Welch, Alison Boden, Edwina Miller and Terry Norris.

3. Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None disclosed.

4. Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference

A report was presented outlining the Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference for the Forest of Bowland AONB Joint Advisory Committee for the 2011/12 municipal year.

Resolved: The Committee approved the Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference for the 2011/12 municipal year, as set out in the report.

5. Proposal of appointment of new members to the Forest of Bowland AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Elliott Lorimer and Nick Osborne presented the report (circulated) which outlined proposals to formally appoint two additional members to the Committee.

Resolved: The Committee was agreed to the appointment to the Joint Advisory Committee of Jonty Collinson (Chair of Trustees for Bowland Tourism Environment Fund) and Jon Beavan (Chair of the Board of Directors for Bowland Experience Ltd) respectively.

6. Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 April 2011

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 April 2011 were presented.

Resolved: Subject to some minor amendments to the officer representation, the minutes of the meeting held on 11 April 2011 were agreed as an accurate record.

7. Revised Estimates for 2011/12 and Revenue Budget for 2012/13

Nick Osborne presented this report regarding the revised estimates for 2011/12 and revenue budget for 2012/13.

Nick explained that 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).

The Committee discussed the budget and Committee members and officers agreed to follow up with their authorities any outstanding agreement on payment amounts.

Resolved

The Committee agreed to: -

- i. note the 2011/12 Revised Estimates,
- ii. approve the 2012/13 Revenue Budget as set out in the report, and;
- iii. agreed to request the funding authorities to make appropriate provision in their revenue budgets.

8. Forest of Bowland AONB Memorandum of Agreement

Nick Osborne presented a report regarding the Forest of Bowland AONB Memorandum of Agreement.

Nick explained that the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 placed a duty on local authorities to act jointly to produce and review management plans for the AONBs within their administrative boundaries. By agreement with the local authorities this duty is being performed by the Forest of Bowland AONB Joint Advisory Committee. A staff unit for each AONB carry out the work for the management partnerships and core costs are covered by the relevant local authorities and Defra. Management Plans for each AONB were adopted by the Council in 2009/10. At this time a new Memorandum of Agreement was entered into which indicated the level of funding the County Council would provide from 2008/9 - 2010/11.

In order for the AONB Partnerships to draw down Defra's funding the Memorandum of Agreement must be agreed and signed by all relevant authorities.

Defra has requested that local authorities enter into a 4-year Memorandum of Agreement that includes a commitment to funding the AONB Partnerships for the 4-year period. The term of the Agreement is for the period of four years (FY2011/12, FY2012/13, FY2013/14 and FY2014/15). It is intended for the term to run from 1st April 2011, rather than from the date they are actually signed. Although a 4-year commitment is being sought through the Memorandum of Agreement, it is worded to enable funding for 2012/13 onwards to be subject to annual reviews for both Defra and the relevant local authorities in recognition of the current financial climate.

Resolved

The Committee agreed to:

- i. note the report and provided comments on the revised national Memorandum of Agreement template for AONBs, and
- ii. ask funding authorities to seek approval within their own authorities to sign a new Memorandum of Agreement for Forest of Bowland AONB, based on the national template.

9. Forest of Bowland AONB Business Plan 2011 - 2014

Nick Osborne presented the AONB Business Plan for 2011 – 2014. Nick explained that at the Joint Advisory Committee meeting in April 2011, the AONB Officer outlined the intention to draft an AONB Unit business plan to guide the work of the Unit; particularly in light of the reduced partnership budget and staffing arrangements.

This commenced in April 2011, with all members of the team and LCC Countryside Officers taking part in review to prioritise key objective and actions of the AONB Management Plan to be delivered over the next three years. This prioritisation process formed the basis for the business plan.

In addition, the AONB Officer consulted with officers from AONB funding partners on the draft business plan, receiving comments and suggestions on how the plan can best reflect local authority priorities for the AONB over the next three years.

The plan sets out how the AONB Unit will contribute to the work of the Partnership in achieving the long-term vision for the AONB:

'...the Forest of Bowland retains its sense of local distinctiveness, notably the large-scale open moorland character of the Bowland Fells, traditional buildings and settlement patterns of villages, hamlets and farmsteads. Natural and cultural resources are sympathetically managed and contribute to a sustainable and vibrant local economy. The management of the Forest of Bowland AONB has improved the quality of the landscape for all stakeholders.'

The AONB Unit is working towards four key outcomes:

1. An outstanding landscape of natural and cultural heritage
2. Resilient and sustainable communities
3. A strong connection between people and the landscape
4. A dynamic and effective AONB partnership

This plan will guide the work of the AONB Unit from 2011 to 2014. The actions within it link directly to the implementation of the statutory AONB Management Plan and links are shown against each action. It is designed to be a rolling 3-year plan, which will be reviewed and updated annually.

Resolved

The Committee agreed to:

- iii. note the report, provided comments and, approved the AONB Business Plan 2011 – 2014, and;
- iv. approved the suggested approach to address gaps in delivery of the AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014 as detailed in the report.

10. Presentation on Forest of Bowland 'Nature Improvement Area' Bid

Cathy Hopley gave a PowerPoint presentation on the 'Nature Improvement Area' bid, Cathy explained that following a Government white paper on securing the value of nature, AONB's had the opportunity to apply for funding, and explained how the process of applying worked and what stage the process was up to.

The Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) Programme with funding of £7.5 million has been established by Defra as announced in the Natural Environment White Paper (2011). Nature Improvement Areas are large, discrete areas that will deliver a step change in nature conservation, restoring and creating wildlife habitats, connecting local sites and joining up local action.

The Forest of Bowland AONB Team has recently established a working group to develop and deliver a bid to the NIA Programme on behalf of the Forest of Bowland AONB. Focussing on those habitats identified as being most vulnerable to climate change, through our study earlier this year, we have identified a potential nature improvement area covering 300 km² of the AONB. The aim will be to ensure the best management of important sites (SSSIs and BHSs) and to enlarge, buffer and connect these by creating, enhancing and restoring other sites in between to create more resilient networks of habitats.

The NIA bid is for £655,000 of Defra monies, which will be matched 50:50 by contributions from the various partners in officer time, HLS grant and a small amount of AONB project funds: totalling £1.3m over the period April 2012-March 2015.

It was noted that this national programme is likely to be very competitive, with only 20 applicants entering the second round of bids in November, and only 12 being awarded funds in February 2012, further updates will be provided in due course.

Resolved: The Committee noted the presentation and the progress made with the Nature Improvement Area bid.

11. Forest of Bowland AONB Projects Activity Report

Hetty Byrne and Dave Padley presented an update report (circulated) on Forest of Bowland AONB Project Activities. In addition to the Nature Improvement Area bid, the highlights of the report included:

- Electricity Undergrounding
- Traditional Boundaries: Diploma students build up their drystone walling skills
- Lancashire Green Tourism Project
- Bowland Experience Ltd.
- Bowland Tourism Environment Fund
- Parish Lengthsman Project
- Communications & Branding
- Education Commission
- Festival Bowland 2011
- Royal Visitor to Bowland
- Uncovering Bowland's Past
- Tramping across Bowland and Beyond
- Evaluating the Parish Lengthsman Scheme and Taking it Forward

- National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) and Joint-working
- EUROPARC Charter Award
- Forest of Bowland AONB Annual Report 2010/11

Resolved: Following an update on each section of the report, the Committee agreed to note the report and progress made on each project.

12. Urgent Business

None

13. Proposed Date of Next Meeting

It was suggested that the next meeting be held on 17 April 2012 at a venue in Lancaster (TBC).

Ian Fisher
County Secretary and Solicitor

County Hall
Preston