



<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership  21 October 2008	<u>Item</u>  <b>4</b>	<u>Paper</u>  <b>A</b>
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## SHROPSHIRE HILLS AONB PARTNERSHIP

### NOTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 18 JUNE 2008

**Responsible Officer**      Tim Ward

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#### PRESENT:

##### Local Authorities

Bridgnorth District Council

Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council

Shropshire County Council

Cllr William Parr

Cllr Tim Barker

Cllr James Gibson

##### Statutory/Voluntary Agencies & Individual members

Individual member (Chair)

Individual member

Individual member

Parish Council representative

Advantage West Midlands

Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)

Institute of Chartered Foresters

Long Mynd & District Bridleways Association

Natural England

National Farmers Union

Ramblers Association

Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Shropshire Geological Society

South Shropshire Tourism Association

Upper Onny Wildlife Group/Shropshire

Ornithological Society

Peter Norman

Alison Caffyn

George Chancellor

Dr Keith Bartlett

Amanda Cunningham

Claire Cox

John Voysey

Sue Lee

Sally Powell

John Povall

David Shelley

Colin Preston

David C Smith

Ian Kemsley

Leo Smith

##### Observers/Officers

Shropshire County Council

South Shropshire District Council

Shropshire Hills AONB Team

Tim Ward

Neil Willcox

David Francis

Ian Dormor

Clare Fildes

Phil Holden

Joy Tetsill

## 1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Dennis Allen (Borough of Telford & Wrekin), Cllr Lee Chapman (SSDC), Jenny Collingridge (Parish Council Rep), Pat Fairclough (Parish Council Rep), David Gibbon (Individual Member), Karen Jones (SABC Officer), Stewart Minton-Beddoes (CLA), Jon Parry (Walford & North Shropshire College), Amanda Pearce (GOWM), Donald Pearse (BHS), Elizabeth Thomas (Individual Member), and Bob Welch (Parish Council Rep (Sub))

## 2. Note of Last Meeting and Matters Arising.

Mr Leo Smith pointed out that he had tendered his apologies for the last meeting but that they were not recorded in the minutes.

Ms Cox pointed out that she had not seconded Mr Shelley's proposal as stated in the minutes.

It was resolved that subject to the above amendments the note of the meeting held on the 7 February 2008 be approved.

The AONB Manager informed the meeting that the Partnership had received the grant offer from Natural England which included funding for the Sustainable Development Fund and other project activity. He went on to say that he had received a letter from the Chief Executive of Natural England informing AONBs that funding would be maintained to at least 95% of current levels for the next two years.

The AONB Manager informed the Partnership that a report was being submitted to the County Council Corporate Management Team regarding Local Authority funding, the Management Plan review and governance.

Mr Shelley commented that the District Council Planning Committee had totally ignored the comments made by the AONB Partnership when considering the planning application for housing in Church Stretton and that in hindsight the Partnership should have objected to the application which would have added strength to the comments made. The Chair commented that this was the thrust of the comments in the email sent by the AONB Manager following the decision. The AONB Manager said that the comments he had received in response to the email were generally in agreement. He went on to say that it was hoped that the AONB Partnership could still have some influence over the landscaping and tree planting through improved contact with the Housing Association. Mr Chancellor commented that that the Partnership should learn from this experience and that there was a need to take a position that would give maximum effect.

## 3. Projects

The Partnership received a presentation from Clare Fildes, AONB Development Officer which outlined current and future project work led by the AONB Partnership. She described three areas of work:

- **The Shropshire Hills Sustainable Business Scheme** which aimed to encourage businesses and their customers to become more sustainable and

was backed by a new website which promoted members businesses. Ms Fildes informed the Partnership that funding of £12,250 had been secured to develop the scheme and went on to outline the activities that would be taking place.

- **Freshwater Pearl Mussel Project** which was aiming to restore freshwater pearl mussel habitat on the River Clun
- **LEADER** – Ms Fildes informed the meeting that funding of £250,000 per annum until 2013 had been provisionally secured, pending the completion of the LEADER Local Development Strategy. She went on to say that an action plan for 2009 would need to be submitted with the strategy and project ideas would be welcomed.

Ms Fildes then outlined future planned projects. She advised members that currently this list was very aspirational and that she was unsure how many of the projects would proceed.

- **Sustainable Tourism in the Shropshire Hills** – Ms Fildes informed the meeting that an application for some funding had been made to the Shropshire Destination Management Partnership for a three year sustainable tourism project to develop the tourism sector whilst limiting impact on the natural beauty and tranquillity of the Shropshire Hills. She went on to say that the project would work closely with Herefordshire and Powys to ensure an integrated approach to marketing and promotion.
- **Offa's Dyke Country** – a potential 3 year project for funding by RDPE to develop the economy of the borders by developing the sustainable tourism product including local food & drink promotion, e tourism, development of green tourism. Ms Fildes informed the meeting that there were a number of organisations involved with this project which was backed by the Cross Border Working Group which was responsible for the Memorandum of Understanding between the West Midlands and Mid Wales.
- **Less Favoured Area (LFA) Livestock Supply Chain Project** – a project possibly funded by the RDPE which would develop 3 producer groups of upland farmers from the LFA areas of the AONB, working with a number of organisations such as the Rural Hub, Green Futures and EBLEX. The project would also do market research into supply chains, potential markets and consumers to identify opportunities. Work would also be carried out on the development of a Carbon footprinting online tool and the possible connection of the "Buy Local – Be sustainable" brand to market Shropshire Hills Meat through the Bishop's Castle Abattoir. Ms Fildes informed members that the project was currently being developed and that it may be led by the Dairy Group with the AONB Partnership being a member of the steering group. Mr Chancellor commented that he thought that this was a very good way of taking the project forward. Ms Caffyn commented that there was a need to look at the carbon footprint of different businesses to gain evidence to enable good comparisons to be made.
- **Friends of the Shropshire Hills** – a project aimed at increasing opportunities for community engagement in the Shropshire Hills including running an events programme, volunteering opportunities and the

development of a new membership organisation. She went on to say that a workshop would be held in September 2008 to establish the direction of this work.

- **River Management** – Ms Fildes informed the Partnership that it was intended to develop the Rivers project, with community engagement in and understanding of water quality and land management implications for river habitats.

The Chair thanked Ms Fildes for her presentation.

#### **4. AONB Management Plan Review**

A report containing the draft of the new AONB Management Plan had been circulated. The AONB Manager took members through the draft plan. He explained that one change to the plan had been to include the 'State of the AONB' Report material into the Plan, as there would have been a lot of duplication if the two documents had been published separately. He then informed Members that the draft Plan would need to go out for a period of 10 – 12 weeks public consultation in early September to allow time for updates following the consultation, formal observations by Natural England prior to final approval by all funding authorities. Several members commented that they felt it may be better to wait for the formation of the new Unitary Authority as there would be only two councils rather than the current five. The AONB Manager said that he had been advised by Defra that there was no provision to derogate from the CRoW Act deadline of March 2009. Mr Francis commented that it may be easier to get approval from the existing councils as they were aware of and may be more sympathetic to the aims of the AONB.

Mr Preston commented that a lot of information was taken as read but that there was need to make reference to this and relate how it would be dealt with. Mr Barker commented that if the issues were not addressed fully there may be difficulties getting Local Authority approval.

Mr Barker commented that he felt that it would be better to have all the policies listed in one place as this is what people would want to look at. The AONB Manager said that the rationale behind the policy was in the body of the text, but they could be repeated as a summary at the end.

A workshop session was held, with members splitting into small groups to discuss aspects of the management plan.

#### **5. Date of Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership would be held on Thursday 21 October 2008.