



<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership  22 June 2010
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<u>Item</u>  2
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## Minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2010

10.00am – 12.00pm

**Responsible Officer**     Tim Ward  
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### Present

#### Shropshire Council

Shropshire Council  
Shropshire Council  
Shropshire Council  
Shropshire Council

Cllr Tim Barker (Vice Chair)  
Cllr James Gibson  
Cllr Heather Kidd  
Cllr Cecilia Motley

#### Statutory/Voluntary Agencies & Individual members

Individual member  
Individual member  
Individual member  
Individual member  
Individual member  
Individual member  
LEADER Panel Chair  
Parish Council representative  
Parish Council representative  
Parish Council representative  
Parish Council representative  
Advantage West Midlands  
Butterfly Conservation  
Caring for God's Acre  
Government Office for the West Midlands  
Institute of Chartered Foresters  
Long Mynd & District Bridleways Association  
National Farmers Union  
National Trust  
Natural England  
Ramblers Association  
Shropshire Wildlife Trust  
Teme Catchment Fisheries Association  
Upper Onny Wildlife Group/ Shropshire  
Ornithological Society  
Walford & North Shropshire College

Alison Caffyn (Vice Chair)  
George Chancellor (Chair)  
Lee Chapman  
Tom Eyre  
David Gibbon  
David Francis  
Elizabeth Thomas  
Glynn Barratt  
Jenny Collingridge  
Dr Keith Bartlett  
Pat Fairclough  
Bob Welch  
Amanda Cunningham  
Nick Williams  
Michael Whithouse  
Simon West  
John Voysey  
Sue Lee  
David Watson Jones  
Peter Carty  
Sally Powell  
David Shelley  
Veronica Cossons  
Tony Bostock  
  
Leo Smith  
Jon Parry

#### Observers/Officers

Shropshire Council

Mark Blount  
Tim Ward

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership staff team

Brian Barker  
Clare Fildes  
Phil Holden

## Welcome and Apologies for Absence

1. The Chair welcomed Tom Eyre to his first meeting as an Individual Member and also Brian Barker the AONB Partnership's Woodlands Officer.
2. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Tracy Hope (Borough of Telford & Wrekin), Rev. Nick Read (Hereford Diocese), Mr Paul Cobbing (GOWM), Ian Kemsley (South Shropshire Tourism Ltd), Bill Klemperer (English Heritage), Michael Watney (CLA) and John Winterbourne (Forestry Commission).

## Note of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

3. The Committee Officer informed the meeting that unfortunately Mrs Kidd and Mr Shelley's names had been omitted from the list of those that had submitted apologies for absence.
4. It was resolved that subject to the above the note of the meeting held on 20 October 2009 be approved.
5. The AONB Partnership Manager informed the meeting that Ian Kemsley had been co-opted to fill one of the three vacancies on the Management Board, but that there were still two places unfilled and that any member who was interested in one of the unfilled seats should contact to him.
6. The Chair asked any member who had not completed the Membership Accord to do so as soon as possible.
7. The AONB Partnership Manager informed the meeting that it was hoped that the proposed half day briefing for new members would be held in the spring.
8. The AONB Partnership Manager informed the meeting that the final draft of the new Shropshire Community Strategy was at the end of its consultation period. Following the detailed comments made by the AONB Partnership on the previous consultation, he was not intending to make further comments this time.
9. Mr Shelley asked what had happened regarding the appointment of a Planning Officer. The AONB Partnership Manager said he was pleased to inform the meeting that Glynn Barratt had been appointed to the position and would be starting work imminently. He went on to say that Glynn would therefore be stepping down as a member of the Partnership and there would also be a vacancy for Chair of the LEADER Approvals Panel.
10. Mr Welch asked whether the AONB Partnership would be making a response to the latest Core Strategy consultation. The AONB Partnership Manager said he had not looked at the documents yet, but he expected that a response would be made.

## Draft Communications Strategy

11. A report outlining a draft communications strategy had been circulated. The AONB Partnership Manager informed the meeting that the Strategy was based on one prepared in 2004 which had become outdated. He went on to say that the Strategy would be finalised taking into account comments made at the meeting and would then be published on the AONB website.

12. Mr Shelley commented that there was no mention of the vast amount of work that had been done on the improvements to the Shropshire Way. The AONB Partnership Manager accepted this, while noting that he felt that the opportunities to raise the profile of the AONB through the Shropshire Way had not been fully taken up, and that the focus of the actions in the strategy was looking to the future.
13. Ms Caffyn commented that there was a need for work on education and that whilst she appreciated that the AONB team did not have capacity to deal with a large amount of work with schools it may be possible to work with partner organisations through their educational programmes or it may be possible to bid for external funding to enable more work with schools. The AONB Development Officer informed the meeting that there were some opportunities for schools work through the community priorities of LEADER. Cllr Barker felt that clarifying the key messages and really pushing them across was a priority. Mr Carty informed the meeting that the National Trust was currently reviewing branding, including the possibility of 'co-branding' certain properties. He said that Cardingmill Valley attracted 26,000 school children a year on organised visits, and that Natural England had asked the Trust to renew the interpretation at Cardingmill Valley in the light of the new Stewardship agreement for the Long Mynd. Mr Williams mentioned the grants to support educational visits to farms under Environmental Stewardship.
14. Mr Smith suggested an audit of volunteering in the AONB, and the AONB Partnership Manager responded that this had been done a few years ago and the list was on the website. Mr Bostock said that AONB publications were excellent and highlighted the recent Teme Rivers leaflet, which other groups around the country were now wishing to adapt and use. He asked whether all partners had reciprocal website links with the AONB. He went on to say that it may be useful if the AONB attended events such as Burwarton Show. The AONB Partnership Manager commented that several partners did have links to the AONB website but that this was something that needed to be pursued further. He went on to say there had been an AONB presence at events such as shows but it involved a lot of staff time.
15. Mr Gibbon asked who had been involved in drawing up the SWOT analysis, and suggested use of stakeholder analysis methods. The AONB Partnership Manager said the draft had been discussed among the Team. Mrs Collingridge mentioned the possibility of a Shropshire Hills Festival, and Lady Cossons suggested that the timescale of actions be clarified further.
16. Members suggested other events that may be worth attending and also the use of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Mr Chapman commented that issues relating to this had been raised at the recent Discovery Centre Advisory Board.
17. Mr Barratt also raised the point about reciprocal website links, and commented that the Friends of the Shropshire Hills could be used to give the AONB a presence at events, and that a generic display could be created for them to use. The Chair referred back to the recommendation that members consider how they could contribute. He felt that giving talks to groups or attending shows would be an excellent way and asked that if anyone would be willing to do this to contact him after the meeting.
18. It was **resolved** that subject to changes from the comments made at the meeting the Communications Strategy should be published on the AONB website, and that the Chair with the AONB Partnership Manager would co-ordinate support for those members willing to help with talks, etc.

### Shropshire Hills Woodlands Project

19. The meeting received a presentation from the AONB Partnership Woodlands Officer (copy attached to signed minutes and available at

<http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/partnership/Pshipmeetings.htm>) on the recently established Woodlands Project. He outlined the advisory work to landowners focussing on small woodlands and plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS), developing management plans and encouraging uptake of other grant schemes.

20. Mrs Fairclough enquired about activity within Telford and Wrekin. The AONB Partnership Manager replied that the project covered the whole AONB, but that woodland activity was also an important element of the Wrekin Forest Project's work in the Telford area, supported by the AONB.
21. Mr Chapman asked how long the project was funded for. The AONB Development Officer informed him that funding was in place for two years from October 2009, but some income had been gained from fee earning work related to the project, and it was hoped that further funding would be available to extend the project.
22. Mr Voysey asked how the Woodlands Officer liaised with commercial woodland advisers who were already giving advice to woodland owners. The Woodlands Officer informed him that he was aiming to work with woodland owners who had no existing management in place, and that often the plots of woodland he was working with were not big enough to be of interest to commercial advisers. The AONB Partnership Manager commented that the value of the project filling a 'gap' in relation to small woods had recently come up in a visit he had been invited to by the CLA, and he didn't anticipate any problems with overlap.
23. Mr West commented that the Forestry Commission had helped with establishment of the project and were very supportive of it. He went on to ask how members of the Partnership could help in its delivery. The AONB Development Officer commented that a leaflet was currently being produced, and that help from members to distribute these or promote the project to woodland owners would be appreciated. She also said that if any member would like to go with Brian on a woodland site visit they should contact him.
24. Mr Gibbon commented that there was an increasing demand for firewood and asked whether this could be taken advantage of. Mr Shelley reiterated the strength of demand and rising price of firewood. The Woodlands Officer said that supply chain development was an important part of the project, and that the sale of firewood was an important option for small woodlands. Mr Barratt mentioned the importance of archaeological features in woodland, which were often overlooked.
25. The Chair thanked the Woodlands Officer for his presentation.

## Low Carbon and Resilience

26. The meeting received a presentation (copy attached to signed minutes and available at <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/partnership/Pshipmeetings.htm>) from the AONB Partnership Manager, which recapped on the AONB Management Plan approach on Low Carbon and Resilience (or Adaptation), summarised some key areas of activity in the Shropshire Hills, and outlined a proposed integrated approach to this work by the AONB Partnership for the future.
27. Mr Eyre asked whether the AONB Partnership was promoting biomass as a source of energy and what role short rotation coppicing may have to play. He also commented that the local individual carbon footprint was higher than average and asked whether this was due to the majority of people having to use their cars to travel to work. The AONB Partnership Manager replied that the AONB Management Plan was supportive of biomass energy, especially from existing woodlands. Short rotation coppice was not at all common in the AONB and issues had not yet therefore been fully understood, potentially including intensity of management affecting water quality, wildlife and visual amenity. He said that

some AONB grants and projects had supported woodfuel development. He agreed with Mr Eyre regarding the per capita carbon footprint, and understood that this was to do with the nature of relatively energy inefficient nature of many rural properties and lack of mains gas as well as high use of vehicles.

28. Mr Barratt commented that there was a lot of work to be done to get messages over regarding climate change and that there was a lot of inertia. The AONB Partnership Manager said he felt that it was important to see climate change as part of a range of environmental and sustainability issues rather than in isolation. Mr Gibbon commented that there was a need to engage people and move away from old methods of consultation. He felt that the Partnership should make greater use of small group work and less in full plenary session.
29. The Chair commented that there was need to identify "what was in it" for the individual and to target this. The Chair commented thanked the AONB Partnership Manager for his presentation and commented that there was a lot of work to be done.

### **Draft Sustainability Policy**

30. A report outlining a renewed and updated Sustainability Policy and Action Plan had been circulated. The AONB Partnership Manager informed the meeting that with the development of work on the Sustainable Development Fund and the Sustainable Business Scheme it was felt that there was the need to have a good policy in place and that hopefully the policy could be used as a model to encourage other organisations to adopt something similar. He then talked briefly through some key points of the paper.
31. The Chair asked members to feed any comments to the AONB Partnership Manager.
32. **Resolved** that subject to comments made by partners the updated Policy be approved.

### **LEADER in the Shropshire Hills Update**

33. A report updating the Partnership on the progress with the Shropshire Hills LEADER programme had been circulated. The AONB Development Officer highlighted the fact that things were moving on well despite a lack of clarity from above on some aspects of the programme. She said that the LEADER Business Plan for 2010 was currently being prepared and would be seeking to take a more strategic approach, looking at how aspirations in the AONB Management Plan could be delivered. The aim was to get the available LEADER money allocated relatively early to improve security and maximise the impact of the programme.
34. Ms Caffyn asked that an item be placed on the agenda of the next meeting to enable the Partnership to look in more detail at LEADER and its own roles as the Local Action Group.
35. The AONB Partnership Manager thanked Mr Barratt for the work he had done as Chair of the LEADER Approvals Panel.

### **Brief Updates**

36. The AONB Partnership Manager informed the meeting that Natural England had provided a new Partnership Agreement for signing with the local authorities regarding funding and management arrangements for the AONB Partnership, and that it was hoped to conclude this shortly.
37. The AONB Partnership Manager mentioned the request from members at the last meeting about an update on Shropshire Council's new Demand Responsive bus services. He had

enquired about this and been referred to a [report of the Development Services Scrutiny Panel](#) in November 2009 which included the results of a review of the Shropshire Link bus service. The main action arising was stronger action on marketing, and several members expressed agreement on the need for this.

38. The AONB Partnership Manager informed the meeting the Sustainable Development Fund Panel had met in January to review past projects and future priorities. It had been agreed that the Fund should focus on attracting new applications from different areas of the AONB.
39. The AONB Partnership Manager informed the meeting that the Farming Working Group had met on 26 January and had received updates on a range of activity including FWAG Farmers' Dens, Natural England advice workshops, the second phase of the AONB's Farmer Engagement project focused on the Clee Hills, farm energy surveys and the Bishop's Castle abattoir.
40. A public meeting of the Wrekin Forest Partnership was held on February 1<sup>st</sup>, and had been well attended. Presentations were made on the Wrekin hillfort restoration project, the Huntington Lane surface mine and Shropshire Wildlife Trust project activity.
41. The AONB Development Officer gave a brief update on the Shropshire Hills Shuttles for 2010. She informed the meeting that the Long Mynd - Stiperstones bus would be running as usual from the 3 April to the end of September, and that the Secret Hills Shuttle would run on a new circular route through Craven Arms, Clun and Bishop's Castle on Saturdays and also on Sundays and Mondays of bank holiday weekends. She went on to say that the Wenlock Wanderer pilot would not be running due to lack of funding. The AONB Development Officer expressed concern at the effect of the change in the reimbursement of concessionary fares imposed by central government, and thanked Natural England and the National Trust for their continuing financial support.
42. The AONB Development Officer informed the meeting that research work was being undertaken into sustainable tourism, and that Sula Rayska and Alison Caffyn had been appointed consultants to develop sustainable tourism projects and funding bids relating to Offa's Country, working in partnership along the Welsh border.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

43. The dates of future meetings of the Partnership were confirmed as Tuesday 22 June 2010 and Tuesday 19 October 2010.

### **Other Business**

44. The Chair asked that if any member had any items that they wished to see on future agendas they should feed them to him or the AONB Partnership Manager.
45. The Chair commented that members' contact details had been distributed to encourage car sharing, and he urged members to take these opportunities as much as possible.