



## **HIGH WEALD MANAGEMENT BOARD**

25 January 2011 at a meeting of the Management Board held at County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes.

Present: Members

|                    |                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Cllr Mrs S Tidy    | Chair                    |
| Cllr B Kentfield   | Rother District Council  |
| Cllr Mrs E Kitchen | Horsham District Council |
| Cllr Mrs J Fox     | Wealden District Council |
| Ms J Whitman       | Natural England          |

Also present:

|               |                            |
|---------------|----------------------------|
| Sally Marsh   | AONB Director (job share)  |
| Paul Newdick  | OSG Chair                  |
| Gerry Sherwin | AONB Business Manager      |
| Peter Wright  | East Sussex County Council |

### **Apologies**

1. The following Members of the Management Board had offered their apologies for absence:

Cllr Mrs J Davison and Cllr C Hersey.

### **Minutes**

2. The minutes of the last meeting, held on 11 October 2010, were agreed as a correct record. Sally Marsh, AONB Director, updated the Board as to the position with the new landlords, Plumpton College.

### **Budget overview and issues**

3. Gerry Sherwin, AONB Business Manager, set out the budget position to the Board. She reported that the settlement from DEFRA had been better than forecast, with an overall

21.5% reduction over four years, spread equally over the four years. This equated to a 5.4% reduction for 2011/12, whereas the Unit had prepared a budget contingent on a 10% reduction. Consequently £10, 000 had been restored to the core budget and £5, 000 to the Projects fund, which was welcomed by the Board.

4. The Business Manager also reported that the partner local authorities had, with one exception, agreed that they would continue to contribute at the previously agreed levels for 2011/12.

5. The AONB Director outlined that there was a new flexibility with the funding, as it was anticipated that unspent funds could be carried over into the next financial year, which would assist in forward planning, and that the “single pot” had been maintained, allowing the Unit to allocate funds as seemed most appropriate. The Director stressed that DEFRA still required 25% funding from the partner local authorities, and would match any reduction. She also pointed out that the method of provision of the funds would allow the Unit to seek external funding.

#### **Officer Steering Group update**

6. Paul Newdick, Chair of the Officer Steering Group, updated the Board on the discussions of the Group on the potential changes to the planning system brought about by the Localism Bill. He reported that an action point had been agreed in that a Planning Officer should attend a proposed meeting between the Unit and Greg Clark MP, Minister for Decentralisation, to provide a practical view of the potential impacts of the proposals in the Bill.

7. The OSG Chair reported that the proposed planning protocol had been discussed, but the Natural England officer involved had left NE. Janet Whitman of Natural England confirmed that she would follow up the progress of addressing the concerns of the Group in producing the protocol. The AONB Director reported that the Unit had forwarded some standard wording to Natural England for their use in responses, drawing attention to the High Weald AONB Management Plan and the expert advice available from the Unit.

8. The OSG Chair mentioned the consultation on Boundary Review and the criteria for assessing landscape and the considerable concern raised by the Group. The Board highlighted that the matter had been discussed at a recent meeting of the area Partnership Chairs, and that Natural England had been asked to withdraw the consultation paper.

9. The Board discussed the sale of Forestry Commission land, which had also been discussed by the OSG, and in particular the concern regarding leisure use in woodland and the implications for public access and the potential for applications for enabling development.

#### **Sponsorship of English AONBs by DEFRA**

10. Sally Marsh confirmed that the responsibility for overseeing AONBs had passed formally to DEFRA, and that the Unit had met with the officers of the National Parks team. She outlined that there would not be a DEFRA representative on the JAC but it was anticipated that Natural England would continue to provide one as part of a tri-partite arrangement. Janet Whitman, NE, said that a Q&A sheet had been produced regarding the change-over, which could be circulated to the Board.

## **MoU 2008-11 and new four year MoU with DEFRA**

11. Janet Whitman, NE, reported that the current Agreement was in circulation and was awaiting the final six signatories.

12. The Board reported that the matter had been discussed and the implication from DEFRA was that the new arrangement had to take the form of a legal agreement, but that the Partnership Chairs had argued for a return to a Memorandum of Understanding.

## **Changes to the planning system**

13. Sally Marsh reported that the OSG had discussed the potential impact of the Localism Bill and the conflicting drivers behind it. She stressed the importance of the definition of “sustainable development” and the need for it to refer to landscape, character and local expectations, and that this view was to be expressed to DCLG. She cited the research of Professor Owen which the Unit was building on in support of their submission.

14. Sally Marsh reported that the Unit was looking at ways of working more closely with Parish Councils, given the provision in the Localism Bill for Neighbourhood Plans and the community right to build. The Board discussed the practicalities of these provisions, given the high hurdles a community faces, and the duties of the local authorities in supporting or funding the provisions.

## **Project and staffing update**

15. Gerry Sherwin outlined a new project entered into with other AONBs in the south east, the South East Tourism Board and Responsible Tourism. The project had been granted £1 million by SEEDA to enable businesses to develop their products and promote them to a targeted audience, focussed on the use of the landscape and local products. The criteria are yet to be developed and the project is to be based at the Surrey Hills AONB. She reported that one of the Unit’s officers had already been developing ways of assisting businesses within the AONB with future bids.

16. Sally Marsh reported that continued funding had been secured for the joint project with the Woodland Trust and the Forestry Commission concerning the plantation of ancient woodland.

17. Sally Marsh also reported a joint venture with Forest Research, the Forestry Commission and a Swedish company regarding biomass research and potential for managing routeways, small woodlands and shores.

18. Sally Marsh outlined a new piece of research about energy consumption and the potential for energy generation in the High Weald. This was inspired by the increasing demands for small-scale biomass and photo-voltaic apparatus. This was discussed by the Board who requested that the research be circulated.

19. Sally Marsh reported that there were no immediate staffing issues, other than that some of the current projects were due to end in the next financial year. The Board discussed the High Weald Heroes project, and expressed a desire that this be taken into the Unit’s core work. Methods of funding this move were discussed.

## **Risk management**

20. Sally Marsh re-iterated that the key risk remained funding, which had been mitigated to some extent by the better than expected settlement. A copy of the risk log is attached to these minutes.

## **Items for JAC Agenda**

21. The following items were proposed for inclusion on the JAC agenda:
- Budget overview
  - DEFRA Sponsorship and the MoU
  - OSG report on small settlement research
  - TV Energy research paper

## **AOB**

22. The Board discussed the possibility of submitting a response, to be drafted by the Unit, to the DEFRA consultation on the sale of Forestry Commission land.

## **Next meeting**

Date in June to be arranged.

## Risk Log

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Likelihood Ranking</b>  | 1 = Improbable (<10%); 2 = Unlikely (10-30%); 3 = Less than Likely (30-50%); 4 = More than Likely (50-80%); 5 = Probable (>80%) |
| <b>Consequence Ranking</b> | 1 = Minor; 2 = Moderate; 3 = Significant; 4 = Substantial; 5 = Grave  |

|                   |   |                    |   |   |   |   |
|-------------------|---|--------------------|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Likelihood</b> | 5 |                    |   |   |   |   |
|                   | 4 |                    |   |   |   |   |
|                   | 3 |                    |   |   |   |   |
|                   | 2 |                    |   |   |   |   |
|                   | 1 |                    |   |   |   |   |
|                   |   | 1                  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|                   |   | <b>Consequence</b> |   |   |   |   |

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Control Rating</b> |  |
| 1. Excessive          | Controls exceed the level required to manage the risk  |
| 2. Optimal            | Controls are comprehensive & commensurate with the risk. All controls are working as intended.     |
| 3. Adequate           | Some shortfall in level of controls but these do not materially affect the level of residual risk. |
| 4. Inadequate         | Weaknesses & inefficiency in controls do not treat the risk as intended.                           |

| Date raised with Management Board | Risk<br>What can go wrong  | Root Causes<br>How it can go wrong  | Owner | Inherent Risk |             |             | Controls / Mitigating Actions<br>Preventative & reactive control measures  | Control Owner | Residual Risk  |            |             |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|-------|---------------|-------------|-------------|--|---------------|----------------|------------|-------------|
|                                   |  |   |       | Likelihood    | Consequence | Matrix Zone |  |               | Control Rating | Likelihood | Consequence |
|                                   | Format: EVENT leading to CONSEQUENCE resulting in EFFECT ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES |   |       |               |             |             | Format: What action; How frequent  |               |                |            |             |
| Generic                           | Loss of core funding, reduced core team and reduced JAC activities.            | Reduced financial commitment from one or more members due to public budget sector cuts or due to HWJAC's service not meeting government and partners needs. Failure to reach unanimity on NE partnership agreement. | JL/SM | 5             | 4           | Red         | Unit direction to take into account direction of government and local authorities. JAC members and officers involved in and supportive of partnership and able to lobby internally for funds. JAC chair on behalf of partnership to lobby for maintaining contributions. Alternative sources of core income sought. LA representatives provided with an opportunity to comment/amend MoA prior to NE circulation to LAs for signing. Options to reduce costs e.g. accommodation without impacting on service explored. | AONB Director | 3              | 5          | Red         |

|          |   |  |               |   |   |       |  |               |   |   |   |       |
|----------|---|--|---------------|---|---|-------|--|---------------|---|---|---|-------|
| Generic  | Unit unable to attract external funding for delivery of projects that meet AONB Management Plan Objectives                                    | Unit objectives do not align with grant-aiding bodies objectives. Competition. Target audiences for grant-aiding bodies do not exist within the High Weald. Difficulties with securing match funds given public sector cuts and therefore difficulties showing commitment from other partners. | SM/JL         | 3 | 4 | Amber | Clear understanding of grant-aiding bodies objectives developed. Unit direction to take into account direction of grant-aiding bodies. Fundraising expertise within the Unit developed and maintained. Alternative fundraising options explored. Local authorities lobbied to maintain PEF as the local match seedcorn that enables bigger projects to be developed. | AONB Director | 3 | 3 | 4 | Amber |
| 28.02.09 | IT needs not met, Unit unable to work efficiently and undertake research activity, fewer outputs, direction of JAC work programme compromised | Poor link to ESCC network results in slow machine operation, inability to download GIS data, update website etc.   | JL/SM         | 3 | 3 | Amber | Technical and financial feasibility of IT upgrade at WEC 2 explored. Alternative accommodation options explored.   | AONB Director | 3 | 2 | 2 | Green |
| 28.02.09 | Loss of HLF grant aid due to partners defaulting on WFRPS   | Poor planning by partners. Loss of partner's match funding. Lack of institutional support for partners projects. HLF policy constraints.   | WFR Board     | 4 | 3 | Red   | Clear understanding of grant-aiding bodies objectives developed. Alternative partners sought and projects proposed. Unit-led projects developed to fill gaps arising from partner underspend.  | WFR Board     | 3 | 3 | 3 | Amber |
| 08.03.10 | Loss of grant aid due to self-financing project outputs not being met   | Project staff seeking and securing new jobs as contract end date approaches.   | AONB Director | 4 | 3 | Amber | Support and funding secured for retention bonuses. Longer notice periods for project staff. Projects developed and managed to ensure that the delivery of key/complex outputs are not planned for the end of the contract. Flexibility built into core staff work programmes in order that there is capacity to 'finish' self-financing projects if required.        | AONB Director | 3 | 3 | 3 | Green |
| 28.7.10  | Loss of grant aid of 5% in 2010/11  | Public sector spending cuts to Defra of 5% leading to a reduction in JAC budget  | AONB Director | 4 | 3 | Red   | Unit to prioritise low cost projects and revise work programme to reflect loss of working budget. Additional contributions towards core activities sought.   | AONB Director | 3 | 4 | 3 | Amber |
| 7.10.10  | Loss of grant aid 2011/12 requiring significant savings and a change in the scale and nature of JAC services                                  | Public sector spending cuts to Defra leading to a 22% reduction in the JAC's budget.   | AONB Director | 4 | 4 | Red   | Savings options identified. Additional contributions to core activities sought.  | AONB Director | 3 | 4 | 4 | Red   |