

Committee: High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Date: 1 November 2010

Title of Report: High Weald AONB Unit - Staffing Update

By: High Weald AONB Director

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to note the report and the operational changes.

1. GIS HABITAT MAPPING OFFICER

1.1 Matthew Grose has given notice that he will be resigning from his post at the end of the year to take up a position with Hampshire County Council to further their work on ancient woodland habitat mapping.

2. ANCIENT WOODLAND RESTORATION PROJECT OFFICER

2.1 Andrew Wright resigned from his position as Project Officer at the end of August to take up a post with a local firm specializing in woodland and forestry consultancy.

2.2 This successful national pilot project hosted by the High Weald AONB Unit and funded by the Forestry Commission and the Woodland Trust covers both the High Weald AONB and the South Downs National Park (interim arrangements). The majority of the project's objectives have been met and any outstanding work will now be completed by a forestry consultant in time for the project's end in March 2011.

3. TEMPORARY RESEARCH ASSISTANT

3.1 Charles Winchester, a 2009 Geography graduate from the University of Oxford recruited on a temporary contract to provide GIS support for the Weald and Downs Ancient Woodland Survey and the Historic Farmstead Project has returned to Oxford to begin his post-graduate studies.

4. VOLUNTEERS

4.1 Members will be aware that the High Weald AONB Unit welcomes interest from anyone who would like to volunteer their skills and experience to benefit the

AONB. Currently the AONB Unit is looking for people with good experience of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to help with the Unit's research programme, writers, editors and proof readers willing to help with the Unit's promotional work (particularly the website) and experienced fund-raisers to build on the considerable success of the last fifteen years the AONB Unit has had raising funds for its work.

4.2 In view of the above, the AONB Unit is particularly fortunate to have secured volunteer assistance, expertise and guidance from:

- Mark Perry, who has over twenty years at a high level of experience in business development, Government policy making, and winning funding bids for charitable trusts. Mark will work closely with the AONB Unit's Business Manager developing funding bids to support the Unit's work.
- Behnam Firoozynejad, who currently works for DEFRA and lectures at Hadlow College specializing in GIS and, for the AONB Unit, is currently producing 3-D imagery of the High Weald landscape using LiDAR during his spare time and for no cost. This specialized work cannot be done within the Unit for technical reasons nor by a consultancy firm as this would be prohibitively expensive.
- Isabel Smith, who is also volunteering with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council on historical mapping work, is a trained archaeologist and will be both transcribing and digitising historic data for the AONB Unit's use.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

4.1 Members are asked to: note the report; thank Matt Grose, Andrew Wright and Charles Winchester for their valuable contribution to the High Weald JAC and; welcome the support offered by the volunteers to the High Weald AONB Unit.

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