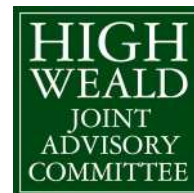


HIGH WEALD JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE



A meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee will be held at 10:30 am on Friday 27 March at The Llama Park, Wych Cross, Forest Row, East Sussex RH18 5JN.

- Tea and Coffee available from 10.00 am. Lunch will also be available.
 - Presentation: Joseph Ratcliffe, Kent County Council Officer: Gatwick
1. Apologies
 2. Members' Interests
Members and officers are invited to make any declarations of any interest that they may have in relation to items on the agenda and are reminded to make any declaration at any stage during the meeting if it then becomes apparent that this may be required when a particular item or issue is considered.
 3. Urgent matters
Members are asked to raise any urgent matters at this stage and not at the end of the meeting. The Chairman will decide whether the JAC should discuss any items so raised but asks members to give his prior notification of such matters unless urgency prevents it.
 4. Minutes of the JAC meeting
To confirm the minutes of the last meeting of the JAC held on 12 November 2014 (page 3)
 5. Minutes of the Management Board
To note the minutes of the Management Board meeting held on 5 March 2015 (page 7)
 6. Minutes of the Officer Steering Group
To note the minutes of the Officer Steering meeting held on 24 February 2015 (page 10)
 7. Matters arising from Minutes
 8. Revenue Budget 2015/2016
To consider a report by the Deputy Treasurer (page 17) and approve the revenue budget
 9. Service Level Agreements
To consider a verbal report by the AONB Director
Copy for Information attached at (page 21)
 10. Living Woods end of programme report
Presentation from Living Woods Advisor Matthew Pitts
 11. Future work programme
To consider a verbal report by the AONB Director
 12. Risk Management
To consider a report by the AONB Director, Risk Log attached at (page 26)

13. Any other business

To decide Joint Advisory Committee Meeting dates for 2015/2016.

To: ALL MEMBERS OF THE HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY
COMMITTEE

Samantha Nicholas

Clerk to the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell, East Sussex TN5 7PR
E: s.nicholas@highweald.org; T: 01424 723011

Agenda Item No: 4

HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE



12 November 2014 Meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee held at the Crowborough Centre, Crowborough, East Sussex.

Present:

Cllr B Kentfield	Rother District Council, Chairman
Cllr Mrs J Davison	Sevenoaks District Council, Deputy Chairman
Cllr Mrs S Tidy	East Sussex County Council
Cllr B Acraman	West Sussex County Council
Cllr L Dunbar	Tandridge District Council
Cllr L Kitchen	Horsham District Council
Cllr M Sydney	Surrey County Council
Mr J Seymour	Natural England

Officers:

Mr T Alty	Finance Manager, East Sussex County Council
Mr T Dyer	West Sussex County Council
Ms R Childs	Kent County Council
Mr D Greenwood	Surrey County Council
Mr D Scully	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Ms S Marsh	AONB Director (job share)
Ms G Sherwin	AONB Business Manager
Mr C Johnson	County Archaeologist, East Sussex County Council

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies were received from the following Members and officers:

Councillor R Street, Councillor M Balfour, Councillor J Soyke, Councillor G Thomas, Councillor R Taylor, Councillor Mrs R Moore, Councillor Mrs S Murray, Councillor C Hersey, Mr P Newdick, Mr M Davidson, Mrs Alison Field, Mrs V Pullen, Mr R Edwards, Mrs K Sharp. Mrs H French

2. MEMBERS INTERESTS

2.1 It was noted that there were no declarations of interest raised by the Members.

3. URGENT MATTERS

3.1 It was noted that no urgent matters were raised by the Members.

4. MINUTES OF THE JAC MEETING – 26 March 2014

4.1 RESOLVED to agree the Minutes of the meeting of 26 March 2014 as a correct record.

5. **MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD** which were tabled at the meeting– 5 November 2014

5.1 RESOLVED to note the Minutes of the Management Board held on 5 November 2014 as a correct record.

6. MINUTES OF THE OFFICER STEERING GROUP – 25 September 2014

6.1 RESOLVED to note the Minutes of the Officer Steering Group held on 25 September 2014 as a correct record.

7. AIRSPACE AND NOISE MANAGEMENT OVER AONB

7.1 Airspace and noise management issue was raised at the Management Board meeting of 5 November. The Members had a wide ranging discussion around the impact of changes to flight paths over the AONB. It was highlighted that there had been a marked increase in complaints about aircraft traffic noise especially in Kent and Tunbridge Wells constituencies.

7.2 RESOLVED to note the Members agreed that the Unit will draft a response to the Airport Commissions consultation for the Chairman to sign. It will be circulated to the Members prior to being sent:

- I. The principle of airport expansion
- II. Relative tranquillity and the impact of noise on the quiet enjoyment of the High Weald AONB
- III. The impact of any further development at Gatwick airport or of supporting infrastructure on the High Weald AONB.

8. CONSTITUTION

8.1 RESOLVED to note the report and the Members agreed to the amendments of the constitution for the election process for Management Board Members to a bi-annual process.

8.2 Councillor Mrs J Davison announced that she would be retiring in May 2015 and has requested to remain on the Joint Advisory Committee as Sevenoaks appointed Member. The Members welcomed an independent Member if they have been appointed with the same level of authority as an elected Member.

8.3 RESOLVED to note the Members agreed that the process of appointing Members would remain the same.

9. REVENUE BUDGET 2015/2016

9.1 The Finance Manager, Thomas Alty, reported to the Members the key areas of the draft Revenue Budget 2015/16:

- The draft revenue budget would be presented as a balanced budget.
- The budget confirmed that Defra contribution will be remain at £214,700 for 2015/16, and it assumes the local authority contributions would remain at £84,700.
- Staff budget will increase by £5,000 with the expected pay-rise of 1%
- The Unit are confident that they will be able to generate additional income of £10,800 to meet the shortfall in the budget.

- 9.2 The key risks and financial implications:
- Inflation will remain at 0% and accommodation costs and service costs will not increase
 - Government policy changes indicate that redundancy costs arising from reducing Defra contributions will not be considered eligible for grant aid. The JAC therefore needs to retain a minimum reserve of £95,000 to meet redundancy costs.
 - The forecast reserves at 31 March 2015 are £103,900 and this will not allow much flexibility with utilising the reserves if a shortfall in the budget occurs in the future.
 - Beyond 2016/17 there is no clarity around the level of Defra funding.
 - Thomas Alty thanked Gerry Sherwin, AONB Business Manager, for her excellent support with managing the budget.

9.2 RESOLVED to note the report and:

- I. Approve the draft Revenue Budget for 2015/16
- II. To commence the budget consultation with the local authorities and Defra.

10. HIGH WEALD AONB WORK PROGRAMME FROM APRIL – SEPTEMBER 2014

10.1 Gerry Sherwin presented to the Members the High Weald AONB work programme which is submitted to Defra every 6 months. The presentation was divided into the key High Weald audiences: landowners, young people, visitors, policy and decision makers, community and income generation.

10.2 Gerry Sherwin welcomed the Councillors to submit any work programmes that the Unit should focus on so this can be part of the programme for 2015/16 which will be submitted to Defra early in 2015.

10.2 Councillor Tidy asked whether with the Brede and Battle Habitat Fund if there are any grounds work they would also look to instigate an archaeological watching brief. Jim Seymour confirmed that where it is appropriate they would suggest this type of activity during the application process.

10.3 Councillor Kitchen asked whether the Unit had any contact with Buchan Park and Leechpool Nature Reserve in the past six months. Councillor B Acraman confirmed that since Phil Haskell's death, the education officer role had not been replaced. The Unit has discussed working with Buchan County Park to address any education requirements.

10.4 The Members thanked Gerry Sherwin for presenting such a comprehensive presentation, highlighting the depth and breadth, of the Unit's work over the past 6 months.

10.4 RESOLVED to note the report and;

- I. The presentation will be available to Members and Officers.

11. HIGH WEALD AONB UNIT STAFFING UPDATE

11.1 Rachel Bennington has been recruited as the Education Officer working on the High Weald Heroes project and Georgina Strapp is working two days a week on an internship with the AONB Unit to cover the work of the vacant communication post.

11.2 RESOLVED to note the report on staffing update.

12. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

12.1 RESOLVED to note the report on risk management and the associated risk management matrix.

13. **AOB**

13.1 The National Grid has announced that the High Weald AONB is one of the 8 locations to potentially receive funding from a project to reduce visual impact of overhead lines. Jim Seymour confirmed that the project was derived by an independent consumer survey which confirmed that consumers wanted funds to be utilised to reducing the visual impact of power lines across the landscape. If the High Weald AONB is successful the National Grid has set aside funds to support any AONB core work on this project.

13.2 Councillor Sydney enquired about the Units progress on the alternative funding options that were discussed at the Management Board Meeting on 5 March 2014.

13.3 Sally Marsh reassured the Members that the Unit is looking at all options to maximise income generation for core and project work. Sally Marsh confirmed that they had previous experience with running a High Weald Business, Friends Society and the High Weald Landscape Trust. The Unit is increasing the 'Friends' support through social media and has been successful in generating additional income through Surrey Hills Management Plan and development of Wealden Walking Festival website.

14. **PRESENTATION**

14.1 Casper Johnson East Sussex CC Archaeologist presented to the Members highlights from the archaeological discoveries at the excavation sites around the Bexhill bypass.

- The drier colder period of birch and pine was right at the end of the last ice age before temperatures and sea levels began to rise.
- A possible trackway or timber structure found at one of the excavation sites is likely to be of Neolithic and Bronze Age date but the survey team are awaiting the detailed results of C14 and dendro dating.
- Evidence shows Farming started in the Neolithic period and more importantly the key aspects of farming are likely to have been taken up slowly amongst essentially Mesolithic hunter-gatherer-fisher communities after c.4000BC (i.e. during the period we call the Neolithic).
- Several Bronze Age Barrows and a major iron-workings has been surveyed which has led to a greater understanding of these sites operated in the High Weald AONB.

HIGH WEALD JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE – Management Board Minutes – 5 March 2015 at 10.30 am, at Acorn Tourism, WEC, Flimwell



Samantha Nicholas

Clerk to the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Present: Members:
 Cllr B Kentfield Rother District Council (Chairman)
 Cllr Mrs J Davison Sevenoaks District Council (Vice-chairman)

Also Present:
 Jason Lavender AONB Director (job share)
 Gerry Sherwin AONB Business Manager

Apologies

1. The following persons gave their apologies for absence:

Cllr B Acraman, Cllr C Hersey, David Marlow, Cllr Mrs S Tidy, Cllr M Balfour, Thomas Alty, Sally Marsh.

Members' Interests

2. There were no declarations of interest from the Members of the Management Board.

Minutes of the Management Board meeting held on 5 November 2014

3. It was agreed to amend to p.6 to clarify that Councillor Soyke was not in attendance at the meeting but had contacted the Unit concerning changes to Gatwick flight-paths.
4. It was noted that the Members present agreed that in their opinion the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2014 are a correct record.
5. It was agreed that an email should be sent to Management Board Members who were unable to attend highlighting the points of interest arising from this meeting.

Budget overview

6. Gerry Sherwin reported on the budget information for 2015/16. Defra has indicated, but not confirmed, that their contribution to the core budget is likely to continue to decrease after 2015/16. No figure has been given by Defra but should they follow the pattern of the last five years, it would be at a rate of 5% each year (this would be cumulative i.e. 20% reduction of the 2015/16 contribution at the end of four years).
7. The budget for 2015-2016 has been submitted to the local authorities and to date no issues have been raised.
8. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) is re-structuring the finance department teams and it will be known by June which finance team will be responsible for the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee.

9. It has been confirmed that the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee will not be required to use an external auditor from 2015/16 onwards and this saves £4,000. The AONB Unit needs to consider whether the current internal ESCC mechanism will be robust enough for its needs and whether we can move to a 3 year external audit cycle. A paper will be presented to the Management Board in June to be taken to the JAC in November 2015.

Officer Steering Group update

10. The OSG met on the 24th February. The Planning and Design sub-group of the OSG has been looking into the merits of establishing a design review panel for the High Weald to consider significant development proposals and provide advice to local authorities and applicants on design matters. The sub-group has looked at existing design panels in the south-east and the OSG is keen to investigate further how an independent High Weald Design Panel, facilitated by the AONB Unit, could be established. The Members present thought it was an ambitious idea but it would be beneficial to pool and involve a wider range of expertise, particularly in the current financial climate.
11. The sub-group has also proposed a series of succinct planning and design advice notes jointly prepared by the AONB Unit and the LPAs to highlight AONB-specific issues associated with development and using local and national research and evidence. Jason Lavender felt that the AONB Unit's limited resources need to focus on areas where they are likely to be most beneficial and advice notes can be a good way of providing consistent advice across a wider number of planning applications. The OSG will propose issues of the greatest priority so that the AONB Unit can begin work on the advice notes.
12. The AONB Unit is exploring the use of a web-based GIS system to allow AONB data to be shared with members of the OSG, which would be accessible to the OSG using a desktop application.
13. The AONB Unit has offered to organize and run relevant training for the JAC and the OSG on wide ranging topics of interest including the natural environment, rural economy, live/work opportunities, land use statistics, solar farms, self-build and AONB landscape components. The Members agreed that this would be useful especially for any new Councillors that may join the JAC after the general election.
14. The Members were informed that the Service Level Agreement (SLA) has been given to each OSG member to be signed by the appropriate person at each local authority.

Restructuring the AONB Unit

15. The Management Board was reminded of the background to the AONB Unit restructure. Since 2010, the AONB Unit has accommodated cuts of £70,000 to Defra's contribution to the core budget by not recruiting to vacant posts, reducing costs, and generating new income. It is likely a further £50,000 (at least) reduction to the contribution will be made during the years 2015 to 2018. In response to this a report was presented to and approved by the Management Board in March 2014, and this considered the impacts of the cuts to the core budget and proposed a number of options to safeguard the service the AONB Unit provides.
16. One of the options proposed is a restructuring of the AONB Unit and a business case supporting this has been submitted to the host authority ESCC for scrutiny. It is hoped

that this proposal can be shared with the staff in April and a formal consultation with the staff will run during the summer with the aim of implementing the proposals in the autumn.

Current projects

17. Rachel Bennington joined the AONB Unit in September 2014 working three days a week and has continued the well-received High Weald Hero primary school programme.
18. The feasibility and implementation report on 'Restocking in the High Weald' is completed and will be issued shortly. This work has built on the recommendations of the first report and the AONB Unit continues its work to secure the funds and the political support to set-up and implement a 30-month pilot scheme. Over the autumn and winter the Brede Farm Habitat Project has contributed £40,000 to support habitat creation and improvement works on farms in the Brede Valley. A further five applications requesting support have been received and will be assessed by the grant award panel on the 20th March.
19. 250 people attended the Wadhurst Star Party held at Uplands Community College on 25 February 2015. This was initiated and organised by the AONB Unit in partnership with Wadhurst Astronomical Society, Wadhurst Primary School, the Parish Council, Uplands Community College, and the South Downs National Park Authority. The next stage is to support Wadhurst Community to become an International Dark Skies Community.
20. A section of existing electricity transmission line near Battle Abbey, the site of the 1066 Battle of Hastings was shortlisted, out of seven AONBs, as part of National Grid's Visual Impact Provision (VIP) project. The Unit was involved with National Grid consultation workshops on 24 February 2015 at Battle Abbey Memorial Hall.
21. English Heritage has invited the AONB Unit to move to the 'Field Systems in the Weald' second stage of a bid for funds to understand better the field systems in the Weald – historic character, significance, and sensitivity to change. This work will, among other things, provide guidance and information for planners, land managers, and farmers.
22. The AONB Unit will be leading and supporting a range of public and community events in 2015/16 such as the Coast to Countryside Walking Festival and the Into the Trees woodland festival.
23. The Living Woods project is nearing the end of its third and final year and there has been a flurry of interest from landowners asking for advice and guidance before the project closes.

JAC meeting to be held on 27 March 2015

24. Unfortunately the venue for the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee meeting has had to be changed. It will now be held at the Llama Park, Wych Cross, Forest Row, East Sussex RH18 5JN.
25. There will be two presentations – one on Gatwick Airport and the other on the Living Woods project: Gatwick and Living Woods presentation.

Next Management Board meeting

26. 24 June 2015 at Flimwell precise time and venue to be confirmed.

High Weald Officer Steering Group

Notes of a meeting of the High Weald Officer Steering Group held on Tuesday 24 February 2015, at Crowborough Town Council.



Clerk to JAC: Samantha Nicholas

PRESENT:

David Marlow, Rother District Council (Chair)
David Scully, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (Vice-chair)
Natalie Bumpas, Wealden District Council
Tim Dyer, West Sussex County Council
Ruth Childs, Kent County Council
David Greenwood, Surrey County Council
Jennifer Hollingum, Mid Sussex District Council
Jenny Knowles, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Sally Marsh, Co-Director High Weald Unit
Virginia Pullan, East Sussex County Council
Aeron Rees, Horsham District Council
Sarah Thompson, Tandridge District Council

Action

1. MINUTES

- 1.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on the 25 September 2014 were agreed as a correct record.
- 1.2 1.2 Rebecca Bishop, Natural England (NE), was invited to the meeting but was unable to attend. There may be an opportunity to invite her to the next meeting to go through the setting data that NE has developed.
- 1.3 The officers were informed that Andrew Shaw, High Weald Planning Officer, is currently on long-term sick-leave. Jason Lavender is currently covering this role which may impact on work schedule and response timings for planning enquiries.

2. APOLOGIES

- 2.1 Apologies for absence were received from; Helen French, Sevenoaks DC, Marina Brigginsshaw, Wealden DC and Murray Davidson, Hastings BC

3 Service Level Agreement(SLA) and Budget

- 3.1 David Marlow explained the background to the initiation of the Service Level Agreement (SLA).The SLA has the value of providing a

clear framework setting out what functions will be provided by their funding and how monies will be use. This will act as a statement of intent under the duty to cooperate in the absence of a more formalised agreement such as the previous Memorandum of Understanding. The wording of the SLA, which states that councils ‘will endeavour to make an annual contribution for 4 years’, allows for it to be used either in association with a funding commitment for just 2015/16 or where Councils wish to commit to funding over the life of the Management Plan, a four year period.

- 3.2 The Service Level Agreements for the Local Authorities present were circulated. Each Authority received two copies of the agreement which have been approved and signed by East Sussex County Council. It was requested that the officers seek the appropriate sign off in their local authority and send back one of the Service Level Agreements to Samantha Nicholas using the pre-paid envelope provided.

Action: Officers to return one of SLA agreement in pre-paid envelop

Officers

- 3.3 It was confirmed that Defra is maintaining the Unit’s funding for 2015/16. Initially Defra had indicated that there would be a potential reduction in budget.
- 3.4 The officers confirmed that there were no issues with budget sign off for 2015/16 within their authorities to date.

4 Planning and design sub-group

- 4.1 David Scully took the officers through the key topics discussed at the sub-group held on 24 November 2015.

4.2 Review of design panels relevant to the AONB:

David Scully thanked Virginia Pullen for producing the paper reviewing the various design panels presented the different options available within the AONB.

A discussion took place around the different options outlined and how a High Weald design panel might be established.

Tim Dyer informed the officers that the South East Design Panel had a large pool of experts which could lead to high costs . It was also agreed that any design panel established must be perceived as independent .

- 4.3 Sally Marsh informed the group that resources may be available to support the facilitation of an independent design panel as part of re-configuring the Unit's activities if this was considered a priority by OSG. .
- 4.4 **Action: To report on other AONBs' experiences of design panels.** **Unit**
- 4.5 **AONB planning and advice and protocols:**
 The sub-group discussed how the data or evidence could be developed into advice for specific subjects. Standing advice or standard letters referring to available information could be the most effective way of delivering more consistent advice across a wider number of applications.
 Diane Russell was thanked for preparing a list of potential planning advice subject areas for discussion. The Eco-camping in the High Weald research paper was used as an example of a paper that could be developed into an advice note. There was a discussion around which topics would be most effective to develop.
 Sally Marsh welcomed direction from the officers on which advice notes should be prioritised. It was agreed that this could be the basis to develop a work programme for the AONB Research Officer, which may be placed as a rolling agenda item for future meetings.
- 4.6 **Action: The officers are to allocate priority ratings to the development types presented and feedback to David Scully by Friday 20th March.**
High – meaning the 3 most pressing topics
Medium – meaning the 3 next most pressing topics
Low – meaning the 3 least pressing topics
A 'Low' rating is not an indication that it is not worth pursuing, but that it is not the first (or second) most pressing guidance that LPAs think would add value. **Officers**
- 4.7 **Policy information and status:**
 It was suggested at the sub-group that a paper should be prepared on AONB policy across partner authorities .
Action: Marina Briginshaw will prepare a high level scoping paper look at the consistency of policies relating to the AONB for **Marina Briginshaw**

discussion at the next OSG Meeting.

4.8 Website support:

A protected section of the AONB's website has been provided for uploading OSG papers for discussion.

Action: when papers are ready to upload the Unit will re-issue usernames and passwords to all OSG Members Unit

4.9 Data sets that local authority use across the AONB:

David Scully circulated a summary of the data that Tunbridge Wells and Kent County Council can access using systems such as KentGIS and K-Lis and highlighted opportunities for data sharing through INSPIRE .

Action: Officers to update David Scully on which data sets they can access and in what format. Officers

4.10 The Unit informed the group that it is exploring the use of a web based GIS system to share AONB data with partners. This will then be accessible to the local authorities through a desktop application for viewing and data queries. The Unit would like to pilot this system with one of the local authorities.

4.11 It was agreed that the sub-group should meet again to discuss recommendation to take to the JAC.

Action: Sub-group will aim to meet in March to develop a series of recommendations to be presented at the JAC on 27 March 2015. David Scully

5 Training on AONB issues

5.1 The Unit would like to facilitate a series of training events to support local authorities. Jenny Knowles informed the group that Kent Wildlife Trust have offered similar opportunities through a biodiversity roadshow. It was agreed that fewer larger training events in the east and west of AONB covering several topics may be most useful. Topics of interest discussed included the natural environment, rural economy, live/work opportunities, land use statistics, solar farms, self-building and AONB components.

Action:

Sally Marsh to circulate a list of information topics which the Unit could potentially facilitate through these training days aimed at Members and officers. Unit/Sally Marsh

6 Local Plan Programmes

6.1 The officers present updated the Unit on their local plan programmes. Local Authorities are at various stages of information gathering and consultation.

- Rother DC has 80% of its area within the AONB, which was a significant factor when the inspector confirmed that the full need for housing would not be required to be met.
- Tunbridge Wells BC is in the consultation period of site allocations DPD.
- Wealden DC has begun early work on the new Wealden Local Plan, including employment, with the SHLAAs moving to SHE(Economic)LAAs.
- Horsham DC has an increased housing target of 750 units per annum and has moved to SHELAA with 2 Neighbourhood Plans going to referendum.
- Tonbridge & Malling BC is evidence gathering with current housing target of 665 units per annum.
- Mid Sussex DC has completed a Draft Plan consultation and has 20 Neighbourhood Plans, two of which are going to referendum Ardingly and West Hoathly .
- Tandridge DC is currently consulting on a draft methodology for undertaking a new SHLAA, a Call for Sites exercise and a Green Belt Assessment.

It was also highlighted that developers are very confident and are not waiting for plans to be confirmed. It was recognised that the work-plans are constrained by purdah during the general election process. The Unit thanked the officers for this information

7. PROJECT UPDATES

7.1 Sally Marsh updated the group on projects the Unit are working at present.

Greater London Plan:

The South East AONBs have been working with the London Authority to raise awareness of the importance of protected landscapes in the hinterland around London .

Sarah Thompson informed the group of the Strategic Spatial Planning Officer Liaison Group is held on 19 March 2015.

Action: Information to be circulated to officers

Sarah Thompson

7.2 Field Systems in the Weald:

This is at the second stage of funding bid through English Heritage. The aim of the project is to better understand the field system resource in the High Weald. To inform protection of the distinctive landscape character of the High Weald through identifying the historic character, significance and sensitivity to change, of its field systems -and understanding their relationships to other structural and heritage features of the Weald. There will be 3 case study areas within the High Weald. The Unit asked the officers to suggest areas that would be of most use. David Scully suggested Goudhurst as a potential case study area. This information would also be useful for Neighbourhood Plans.

Action: The Unit will issue a brief to the officers.

Unit/Sally Marsh

7.3 Samantha Nicholas updated the group on Wadhurst Star Party, Dark Skies community event on 25 February 2015 at Uplands Community College. Over 200 people attending and working towards a Dark Skies Community award for Wadhurst. The Unit are interested if any other Parishes would like to hold a similar event.

8. ITEMS FOR MANAGEMENT BOARD AND JAC

8.1 Items suggested were:

- SLA update
- Design Panel update

9. AOB AND DATES FOR NEXT MEETING

9.1 David Greenwood updated group on Leader programme. Kent, Surrey and Sussex have been successful and in March the contracts will be awarded with a launch date for June 2015. The main focus will be on farming, forestry and job growth. The group were also informed of the Surrey Rural Conference is to be held on 26 March, £50 per person.

9.2 David Marlow asked the group on the issue of government announcement on affordable housing and minimum thresholds except for AONBs and National Park. Overall feedback was that the same approach for all rural settings was taken and it was not differentiated.

9.3 Jennifer Hollingum emailed group with regard to a setting issue

which was highlighted to her in the consultation process.

Action: officers and Unit are to feedback examples how local authorities and other AONBs are managing setting issues.

Officers/Unit

9.4 Next meeting to be held at Tunbridge Wells Borough Council preferably on a Wednesday.

Action: Unit to circulate doodle poll

Unit

Committee: **High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee**

Date: **27 March 2015**

Title of Report: **Revenue Budget 2015/16**

By: **Treasurer to the Joint Advisory Committee**

Purpose of Report: **To approve the Revenue Budget 2015/16**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to:

- 1. approve the Revenue Budget for 2015/16;**
 - 2. thank Defra and partner authorities for maintaining their contributions.**
-

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report sets out the budget for 2015/16 following a consultation approved by this committee in November 2014.
- 1.2 The budget supports the High Weald AONB Business Plan 2014-2017 which sets out how the High Weald AONB Unit will deliver its core functions and enable implementation of the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2014-2019.

2. FINANCIAL APPRAISAL

- 2.1 This report details the forecast out-turn for the current financial year and the proposed budget for 2015/16. Appendix A summarises the forecast out-turn for 2014/15, the proposed budget for 2015/16 and the indicative budget for 2016/17.
- 2.2 The Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) contribution will be maintained at £255,588 for 2015/16 which is 77.5% of their 2010/11 contribution (£329,700).
- 2.3 An increase in Other Income of £4,600 to £10,800 and allocation of 84% of the reduced Defra single pot contribution to core has been required to achieve a balanced budget.

3. BUDGET 2014/15

- 3.1 The High Weald core activities budget is currently forecast to break even in 2014/15. The forecast reserves at 31st March 2015 are £97,700.

4. BUDGET 2015/16

Core Budget - Expenditure

- 4.1 The budget for 2015/16 is presented in Appendix A. It is based on the 2014/15 figures with inflation at the ESCC applied rate of 2.2% for Single Status salaries, 1.19% for LMG salaries and 0% for other costs, although there could still be inflationary pressures to costs in 2015/16. The budget allows for:
- (i) Staff costs: a core team of 5.5 FTE staff with incremental progression as a result of revised grades following the Single Status Review, contributions to the pension fund of 20.30% and inflation at 2.2% for Single Status and 1.19% for LMG.
 - (ii) Accommodation/ office equipment costs: a standstill budget that covers rent, rates, office equipment, office maintenance and running costs.
 - (iii) Core communications: a standstill budget that covers the production of the annual review and minor public relations costs.
 - (iv) Partnership running costs: a standstill budget that covers JAC meetings, events, training and audit fees.
 - (v) Support services: East Sussex County Council's charges for IT, personnel and financial support.
- 4.2 In order to achieve a balanced budget, incremental staff cost increases of £4,600k have been met by additional income from ...

Incremental staff costs	£4,600
Additional Other Income	<u>-£4,600</u>
Total Net Savings	£Nil

Core Budget - Income

Defra

- 4.3 The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has a funding agreement with AONBs which provides for a flexible 'single pot' contribution for core, projects and the sustainable development fund (SDF).
- Defra has reduced its funding to AONBs by 22.5% over five years from 2011/12 to 2015/16, compared with the 2010/11 levels.
- 4.4 The 2014/15 contribution was £255,600 which has been allocated as follows:-
- £214,700 to core expenditure
 - £40,900 to the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Projects.
- 4.5 Defra's total contribution for 2015/16 is shown in appendix A. It has been maintained at £255,600 (£214,700 to Core and £40,900 to SDF and Projects), to reflect 77.5% of the 2010/11 contribution.

Local Authority Contributions

- 4.6 The respective levels of support from each authority are shown in Appendix A.
- 4.7 In respect of core costs, most authorities have confirmed their contributions at 2014/15 levels. Three authorities have provisionally approved their contributions, totalling £12,900, subject to formal approval of their budgets.

Self-funding projects

- 4.8 JAC expenditure on self-funding projects is presented at Appendix B and is estimated to be £138,000 in 2015/16. Appendix B indicates contributions from local authority partners to projects, including High Weald Heroes.
- 4.9 It is proposed to allocate £40,900 from the Defra 'single pot' to the Sustainable Development Fund (£25,100) and other projects (£15,800).
- 4.11 All projects have a balanced budget over the total life of the project. Income is allocated on a pro rata basis over the relevant number of financial years to give a net balance of zero.
- 4.12 Decisions on grant applications with a total value of £60,000 are awaited and not indicated in the 15/16 budget. If successful, expenditure on self-funding projects could increase significantly.

5. FINANCIAL ISSUES 2016/17 AND BEYOND

- 5.1 To achieve a balanced budget for 2015/16 an additional income of £4,600 has been secured.
- 5.2 Based on 2015/16 assumptions it is forecast that the contributions from Defra and local authorities will result in a deficit of £13,600 in 2016/17.
- 5.3 However it is likely that following the election there will be further reductions in Defra contributions from 2017/18 onwards. Inflation will increase the potential annual deficit.
- 5.4 In the short term Defra funding is being allocated from projects to core functions in order to meet the core budget deficit, with a sufficient project budget being retained to ensure there is a capacity to deliver smaller partnership projects.
- 5.5 Work to identify further savings options and income streams is ongoing, in particular a restructuring of the AONB Unit which may require redundancies.
- 5.6 From 2016/17 Defra will not contribute to redundancy costs. All of the estimated reserves at 31 March 2016 of £97,700 would be required in a worst case scenario of all staff being made redundant.
- 5.7 There are opportunities to develop new self-financing projects. However without funds are insufficient for employing project officers and are dependent on core staff having the time to develop and deliver project in addition to their core advisory and other activities.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The 2015/16 core budget is a balanced budget which provides the JAC with the capacity to deliver its core functions; albeit with some activities at a reduced level.
- 6.2 The project budget reflects the fact new projects are more modest in scale with their development and delivery dependent on core, not project staff.
- 6.3 On this basis the JAC is recommended to agree the budget.

MARIE NICKALLS

Treasurer to the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

2013/14 <u>Actual</u>	<u>2014/15</u>		<u>2015/16</u>					<u>2016/17</u>
	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Outturn</u>	<u>Original</u>	<u>Inflation</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Indicative</u>
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Actual Details								
Expenditure								
223.3 Staff costs	232.6	231.5	232.6	4.6	0.0	0.0	237.2	240.1
36.8 Accommodation/office equipment	34.2	41.1	34.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	34.2	34.2
2.5 Communication costs	3.5	2.1	3.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.5	3.5
7.1 Partnership running costs	8.0	7.6	8.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.0	8.0
27.3 Support services	27.3	27.3	27.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	27.3	27.3
297.0 Total Core Expenditure	305.6	309.5	305.6	4.6	0.0	0.0	310.2	313.1
65.5 JAC expenditure on self-funding projects	113.5	109.3	113.5	0.0	0.0	(27.5)	86.0	150.0
62.5 Defra expenditure on self-funding projects	40.9	40.9	40.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	40.9	36.4
1.3 Project Enabling Fund expenditure on self-funding projects	9.1	8.7	9.1	0.0	0.0	2.0	11.1	20.0
129.3 Total JAC expenditure on self-funding projects	163.5	158.9	163.5	0.0	0.0	(25.5)	138.0	206.4
426.3 Total Gross Expenditure	469.1	468.4	469.1	4.6	0.0	(25.5)	448.2	519.5
Core Contributions								
214.8 Defra	214.7	214.7	214.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	214.7	204.0
22.4 East Sussex County Council	22.4	22.4	22.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.4	22.4
10.0 Kent County Council	10.0	10.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0	10.0
9.3 West Sussex County Council	9.3	9.3	9.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.3	9.3
2.9 Surrey County Council	2.9	2.9	2.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.9	2.9
7.2 Wealden District	7.2	7.2	7.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.2	7.2
7.2 Rother District Council	7.2	7.2	7.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.2	7.2
5.6 Mid Sussex District Council	5.6	5.6	5.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.6	5.6
6.7 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	6.7	6.7	6.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.7	6.7
4.7 Horsham District Council	4.7	4.7	4.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.7	4.7
3.6 Sevenoaks District Council	3.6	3.6	3.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.6	3.6
0.8 Ashford Borough Council	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.8
1.5 Hastings Borough Council	1.5	1.5	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	1.5
2.2 Tandridge District Council	2.2	2.2	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	2.2
0.3 Crawley Borough Council	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.3
0.3 Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.3
6.0 Other Income	6.2	10.1	6.2	0.0	0.0	4.6	10.8	10.8
305.5 Total Core Contributions	305.6	309.5	305.6	0.0	0.0	4.6	310.2	299.5
1.3 Project Enabling Fund: (to)/from balances	9.1	8.7	9.1	0.0	0.0	2.0	11.1	20.0
1.3 Total Local Authority Project Enabling Fund Contributions	9.1	8.7	9.1	0.0	0.0	2.0	11.1	20.0
62.5 Defra contributions to self-funding projects	40.9	40.9	40.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	40.9	36.4
65.5 JAC contributions to self-funding projects	113.5	109.3	113.5	0.0	0.0	(27.5)	86.0	150.0
434.8 Total Contributions	469.1	468.4	469.1	0.0	0.0	(20.9)	448.2	505.9
8.5 Transfer (from)/to reserves	0.0	0.0	0.0	(4.6)	0.0	4.6	(0.0)	(13.6)
(8.5) Total (surplus)/deficit for year	2.3	(0.0)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.6
89.2 Reserves Brought Forward	92.1	97.7	97.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	97.7	97.7
8.5 Transfer (from)/to reserves	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	(0.0)	(13.6)
97.7 Reserves Carried Forward	92.1	97.7	97.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	97.7	84.1

HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

APPENDIX B

SELF FUNDING PROJECTS BUDGET 2014/15 & INDICATIVE BUDGET 2015/16

	Budget 2014/15			Outturn 2014/15			Indicative Budget 2015/16		
	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000
<u>1 Weald Meadows</u>									
JAC expenditure	0.0			2.7			1.2		
Defra		0.0			(1.3)			(1.2)	
JAC Partnership Enabling Fund		0.0			(1.3)			0.0	
Other		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0
<u>2 Historic Settlements</u>									
JAC expenditure	8.0			2.4			2.0		
Defra		0.0			(1.2)			0.0	
Local Authorities		(4.0)			0.0			0.0	
Other		(4.0)	0.0		(1.2)	0.0		(2.0)	0.0
<u>3 Weald and Downs Ancient Woodland Project</u>									
JAC expenditure	1.2			4.0			1.5		
Defra		0.0			(1.1)			0.0	
Local Authorities		(1.2)			(2.9)			0.0	
Other		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0		(1.5)	0.0
<u>4 Sustainable Development Fund</u>									
JAC expenditure	25.1			23.0			25.1		
Defra		(25.1)			(23.0)			(25.1)	
Other		0.0	0.0			0.0		0.0	0.0
<u>5 Living Woods</u>									
JAC expenditure	31.8			34.0			24.0		
Defra		0.0			(0.0)			0.0	
Heritage Lottery Fund		(15.9)			(17.0)			0.0	
Other		(15.9)	0.0		(17.0)	0.0		(24.0)	0.0
<u>6 High Weald Heroes Phase III</u>									
JAC expenditure	18.3			17.9			19.2		
Defra		(9.1)			(9)			(9.6)	
JAC Partnership Enabling Fund		(9.1)			(9)			(9.6)	
Other		0.0	0.0		0	0.0		0.0	0.0
<u>7 Brede Habitat Enhancement Project</u>									
JAC expenditure	60.0			35.0			60.0		
Defra		0.0			0.0			0.0	
Environment Agency		(10.0)			0.0			0.0	
Local authorities		(50.0)	0.0		(35.0)	0.0		(60.0)	0.0
<u>8 Our Land</u>									
JAC expenditure	6.6			5.2			0.0		
Surrey County Council		0.0			0.0			0.0	
Defra		(6.6)	0.0		(5.2)	0.0		0.0	0.0
<u>9 Weald Restocking Feasibility Study</u>									
JAC expenditure	12.5			17.7			5.0		
Defra		0.0			0.0			(5.0)	
Local Authorities		(12.5)	0.0		(17.7)	0.0		0.0	0.0
JAC expenditure (to Appendix A)	163.5	(113.5)		142.0	(92.2)		138.0	(86.0)	
Project Enabling Fund expenditure (to Appendix A)		(9.1)			(9.0)			(11.1)	
Expenditure Funded by Defra (to Appendix A)		(40.9)			(40.9)			(40.9)	
TOTAL JAC expenditure/income	163.5	(163.5)	(0.0)	142.0	(142.0)	0.0	138.0	(138.0)	(0.0)

High Weald Joint Advisory Committee Service Level Agreement Example



This Service Level Agreement is made between

A. East Sussex County Council (Host Authority for the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee)

and

B. Local Authority Title as a member of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee.

1. Agreement Purpose

- 1.1 This Agreement provides a framework for the delivery of the duties and obligations arising from Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as set out at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 An AONB Management Plan is central to meeting Local Authorities statutory duty under Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 for the conservation and enhancement of the AONB. The current High Weald AONB Management Plan, approved by all the constituent Local Authorities, covers the period 2014-2019.
- 1.3 This Agreement indicates how the Authorities intend to co-operate to achieving the objectives set out in the Management Plan demonstrating that they are, collectively, meeting their continuing obligations in pursuance of the purposes of AONB designation.
- 1.4 This Agreement sets out the services to be provided by and through the Partnership, primarily through the activities of the High Weald AONB Unit.

2. Duration

The Agreement is for the duration of the Management Plan, that is, over the next 4 years to 31 March 2019.

3. The Partnership

- 3.1 The High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) was formally established in 1996 and is composed of Defra and the 15 local authorities whose areas are covered by the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designation: Ashford Borough Council, Crawley Borough Council, East Sussex County Council, Hastings Borough Council, Horsham District Council, Kent County Council, Mid Sussex District Council, Rother District Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Surrey County Council, Tandridge District Council, Tonbridge and Malling District Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Wealden District Council and West Sussex County Council.
- 3.2 The Partnership's current constitution and terms of reference were agreed on the 13 July 2005

(with minor amendments agreed 19 October 2009).

4. Partnership Purpose

- 4.1 The primary purpose of the High Weald JAC is to: conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the High Weald AONB. The JAC will also: increase understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the AONB; and seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the AONB.
- 4.2 The Staff Unit works on behalf of the JAC to achieve these purposes through the following activities:

A. Acting jointly to produce and review the AONB Management Plan as required by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

- Undertaking the statutory process required to review and publish the AONB Management Plan including preparation of the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment.
- Monitoring the condition of the AONB landscape as required to inform the MP review
- Promoting the AONB vision and management plan to help distinguish the AONB from adjacent countryside.
- Advising upon, facilitating and co-ordinating implementation by others of the Management Plan.
- Accessing resources for the delivery of AONB management activities.
- Developing an involvement by the community in the management of the AONB.
- Providing a management role to co-ordinate AONB protection through the actions of the AONB unit, the AONB Partnership and other partners at a local and strategic level
- Problem solving with the Staff Unit acting as co-ordinator and facilitators.

B. Providing technical AONB advice and acting as an advocate for the High Weald AONB

- Advising local authorities and other public bodies on compliance with Section 85 of the CROW Act 'duty of regard'
- Facilitating cooperation between local authorities on areas of common interest concerning the AONB
- Advising local authorities and other partners on their activities within the AONB, to encourage them to attain the highest possible standards
- Supporting and enabling the JAC, it's Management Board, Officers Steering Group and individual members to fulfil their purpose and act as advocates for the AONB
- Providing landscape related planning advice (to local planning authorities and in conjunction with Natural England as appropriate in line with, and underpinned by, protocols).
- Working with and contributing to the NAAONB activities at national and regional level, including sharing advice and best practice nationally and providing financial support for this in line with an agreed business plan
- Supporting and contributing to regional activity between AONBs and protected landscapes to strengthen the status of AONBs individually and collectively.

C. Monitoring and reporting on progress

- Monitoring and reporting on progress against AONB Management Plan and annual business plan targets.
- Providing monitoring and reporting information to Defra, and any other funding bodies, as required.

4.3 The level of each activity is guided by High Weald AONB Management Plan objectives and the Unit's 3-year business strategy. It is subject to available resources.

5. The Host Authority

5.1 East Sussex County Council as Host Authority will be responsible for exercising its duties in relation to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and for: line managing the AONB Director, acting as employer for the Staff Unit, providing human resources and IT support and exercising responsibility for the financial management of the Partnership.

6. Local Authority Partners

6.1 Local Authority Partners will be responsible for exercising their duties in relation to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, and for: contributing to the costs of the Partnership in accordance with item 8; working with the Host Authority, Defra, Natural England and a range of other parties in relation to the management of the AONB; providing senior officer and member representation as set out in the constitution to support Partnership activity; and working with local government members to promote the role and value of AONBs to society and our natural environment.

7. Defra

7.1 Though not party to this SLA, Defra will remain responsible for exercising its duties in relation to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, and for: contributing to the costs of the Partnership working to the principles set out in the tri-partite Memorandum of Understanding between Defra, Natural England and the NAAONB, supporting the work of the Partnership; and working across Government and with national organisations to promote the role and value of AONBs to society and our natural environment.

8. Funding

8.1 The 4-year indicative budget for the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee is as follows:

	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
Expenditure	395	395	395	395
Contributions				
Defra	255	242	230	219
Local authorities	85	85	85	85
Other	55	68	80	92

Appendix I

Statutory purpose of the High Weald AONB

The designation of the High Weald as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) places several statutory duties on local authorities under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000:

- **Section 82** affirms the primary purpose of AONBs: to conserve and enhance natural beauty
- **Section 84** confirms the powers of local authorities to take ‘all such action expedient to achieve the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty’.
- **Section 85** places a duty on all public bodies and statutory undertakers to ‘have regard’ to the ‘purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty’. This duty is in addition to the power under section 84 (above)
- **Section 89** creates a statutory responsibility for local authorities to produce and review AONB management plans, where appropriate acting jointly. Management Plans formulate the local authorities policy for the management of the AONB and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it.

These duties are principally discharged through the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee, acting jointly on behalf of the local authorities, although they apply to all council functions and activities where they affect the use of land, in the AONB.

Risk Log

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

Likelihood	5					
	4					
	3					
	2					
	1					
		1	2	3	4	5
		Consequence				

Control Rating
 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.

Unit ref	Risk no	Risk What can go wrong	Root Causes How it can go wrong	Owner	Inherent Risk			Controls / Mitigating Actions Preventative & reactive control measures	Control Owner	Residual Risk			
					Likelihood	Consequence	Matrix Zone			Control Rating	Likelihood	Consequence	Matrix Zone
		Format: EVENT leading to CONSEQUENCE resulting in EFFECT ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES											
	1	Reduced activity/service due to declining budgets 2015/16 and beyond. JAC with a lower profile as a champion for the High Weald. Less proactive work to enable public understanding, management and enjoyment of the AONB.	Public sector spending cuts affecting Defra and local authorities leading to a further reduction in the JAC's budget.	AONB Director	5	4	Red	Unit to take into account direction of government and local authorities. JAC members and officers involved in and supportive of partnership and able to lobby robustly for funds internally and externally. JAC Chairman, on behalf of partnership, to lobby robustly for maintaining contributions. Alternative sources of core income sought. Options to reduce expenditure e.g. accommodation without adversely affecting on service explored. Planned change in scope of JAC's core work programme.	AONB Director	2	4	4	Red

2	Unit unable to attract external funding for the implementation or coordination of projects that meet AONB Management Plan objectives.	Public sector cuts resulting in difficulties securing funds to match external grants e.g. Heritage Lottery Fund. Without commitment from 'local' partners bids for external funds are rarely feasible and considered weak by potential donor organizations. Unit objectives do not align with grant-aiding bodies objectives. Increased competition for fewer and smaller grants. Target audiences for grant-aiding bodies do not exist within the High Weald.	AONB Director	4	4	Red	Partnership organizations and others consider identifying funds to ensure local matched funds can be used to attract external grants and allow partnership projects to be developed. Keep a clear understanding of grant-aiding bodies objectives. Unit to take into account direction of grant-aiding bodies. Fundraising expertise within the Unit developed and maintained. Alternative fundraising options explored.	AONB Director	2	3	4	Red
3	IT needs not met, Unit unable to work efficiently and undertake research activity, fewer outputs, direction of JAC work programme compromised	Poor links to computer network/server results in slow machine operation, inability to download GIS data, update website etc.	AONB Director	3	3	Amber	Technical advice sought and recommendations/solutions implemented.	AONB Director	3	3	3	Amber
4	Loss of grant aid due to self-financing project outputs not being met.	Project staff seeking and moving to new jobs as the current contract end date approaches. Project objectives not completed, undue workload on the remaining AONB core staff to complete project work. Adverse affect to the AONB core work remit and much reduced capacity and time to raise funds to support core work.	AONB Director	1	2	Green	Support and funding secured for retention bonuses. Longer notice periods for project staff. Projects developed and managed to ensure that the completion 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 a capacity to finish self-financing projects if required.	AONB Director	3	4	4	Green
5	AONB advice given by Unit staff not up to date and opportunities missed to ensure AONBs remain at the forefront of national policy.	A rapidly changing external policy environment in terms of planning and land use affecting the AONB.	AONB Director	4	4	Red	Retention of the Research Officer post, liaison with SEEPL colleagues in the region, NAAONB and local authority colleagues to share information. In the short term scrutinize national policy and consider and examine potential future issues, opportunities and developments.	AONB Director	3	3	3	Amber
6	Future possibility that what is being implemented and coordinated by the AONB Partnership is not valued by Defra due to the loss of the dedicated Landscape Policy Unit within Defra. National Election and/or Cabinet re-shuffle resulting in the loss of supportive Defra Minister.	Total loss or severe reduction of national government funding and commitment to AONB Partnerships.	AONB Director	4	5	Red	Continued and concerted engagement with Defra and Natural England and ongoing liaison with and reporting on NAAONB/SEEPL work programmes. Active engagement with Defra Ministers directly and in conjunction with NAAONB and SEEPL. Active engagement of High Weald AONB Patrons.	AONB Director	3	4	5	Red

Agenda Item No. 12

Committee: High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Date: 27th March 2015
Title of Report: Risk Management
By: AONB Director

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

1. Note the report and;
2. Request that the Management Board continue to meet to review significant risks as required and develop options for their management.

1.0 Background

1.1 Members are aware that as part of the process of producing the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee's annual external accounts ten control objectives are assessed. One of the control objectives is:

- Significant risks to achieving High Weald objectives are recorded and assessed and the adequacy of arrangements reviewed.

1.2 The key risks to the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) are set out in Appendix A.

1.3 The JAC is a strong partnership supported by the AONB Unit, a small specialist team providing advice and guidance on the conservation and enhancement of a nationally important landscape. The work of the JAC relies on three things: partnership contributions to the core budget; success raising external funds to the project budget and; retaining/recruiting staff with the appropriate skills and experience to do this work. Given this, the most significant risks to the work of the JAC are constraints on both the financial and personnel resources of the AONB Unit.

1.4 Since 2010 the AONB Unit has accommodated cuts of £70,000 in the Defra contribution to the core budget, which has been achieved across all budget headings and by tight fiscal management of all other activities. These losses have been partially offset by generating a modest income from the self-funded projects and charging consultation fees for some work.

1.5 Over the same period the local authority partners on the JAC have worked very hard to maintain the local authority contributions to the core budget, albeit without an increase in line with inflation.

2.0 Key risks 2015/16 and beyond

2.1 Defra has indicated that there will be continued pressure to reduce Government spending and it is likely a further £50,000 (at least) will be cut from their contribution to the core JAC budget for 2015-2018. Local authority contributions towards the core

business of the JAC could also come under pressure during this period but even if they are able to maintain the current levels of funding, the likely fall in the Defra contribution remains substantial.

- 2.2 Further reductions in the financial contributions by the JAC partnership to the core business means the JAC will be unable to maintain the current level of work preparing, monitoring and reviewing the AONB Management Plan, co-ordinating action to accomplish the AONB Management Plan by individuals and communities, and providing specialist and technical advice and guidance on a nationally important landscape.

3.0 Risk mitigation

- 3.1 The High Weald AONB Unit's current business strategy (2014-2018) responds to the risks to the work of the JAC caused by increasing constraints on both the financial and personnel resources of the AONB Unit. This strategy is tailored to the local circumstances and specific needs of the High Weald and it covers the first four years of the revised AONB Management Plan 2014 - 2019.
- 3.2 Unlike previous business plans, which proposed ambitious work programmes and sought external funds to realize them, the 2014-2018 strategy is informed by the likely budget constraints for the period and focuses on maintaining effective delivery of the JAC's core activity. Raising external funds to support the work remains difficult and has become increasingly competitive and the pragmatic approach is a move to a smaller, more resilient core team with staff that are competent across a range of disciplines. However, the AONB Unit will need to retain a capacity for responding positively to opportunities to secure new resources and develop new partnerships to achieve AONB management plan objectives and support the work of others in the AONB.
- 3.3 The development of secure and alternative long-term income streams adequate enough to support the core remit of the JAC may be possible (although the difficulties achieving this are often under-estimated) but they are unlikely to fully address any shortfall in contributions within the strategy's timescale. The potential for charitable trusts and social enterprise companies to play a role in the future have been considered and will be kept under review but the focus for this business plan period is to remain a local authority supported partnership with a close relationship to government bodies whose policies influence management of the AONB landscape.
- 3.4 During the preparation of the current business strategy a risk assessment was undertaken in 2014 to identify priorities and make further decisions on financial, staff and other resource allocation. Following this, a report considering the impacts of the cuts and options to safeguard the service the JAC provides was presented to and approved by the Management Board in March 2014.
- 3.5 This report has informed and shaped the current business strategy and the AONB Unit has actively pursued a variety of options to address the risk of declining financial and personnel resources. To date the following measures have been put in place:
- A reduction in accommodation and office costs;
 - A reduction in ESCC support service costs;
 - A reduction in the core staff by 1.5 (FTE);
 - A significant reduction in the communications budget including the loss of the High Weald Anvil magazine;

- Testing the viability of an AONB consultancy to undertake contract work eg. events management, Good Woods Project, Sussex Walks Festival;
- Charging for hosting and/or managing self-financing projects;
- The use of internships to support the core work programme and provide valuable work experience for the successful applicants;
- Continuing to apply to external sources of funds from private businesses, charitable trusts, government agencies to support community, research, and demonstration projects;
- Sharing/secondment of staff with partner organizations and other AONB Units and National Park Authorities.

The following measures are about to be put in place or considered further:

- Restructuring of the AONB Unit to ensure staff have the appropriate skills and experience to achieve the statutory AONB Management Plan and support the JAC partnership;
- Narrowing of the scope of the work undertaken by the AONB Unit;
- The use of project reserves to support a project programme that encourages financial contributions from new partnerships and organizations;
- Investigating the feasibility of establishing a 'charging policy' for pre-application advice;
- Looking at the opportunities for a closer relationship with the High Weald Landscape Trust (set up by the AONB Unit in 2004);
- Investigating further the opportunities for corporate sponsorship;
- Investigating the opportunities for encouraging philanthropic donations towards the work of the JAC;
- Investigating alternative funds to support the work of the JAC e.g. Corporate Social Responsibility, corporate investment;
- Investigating the value of setting up a company or social enterprise limited by guarantee (such as High Weald Design, established by the AONB Unit in 1994).

4.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 4.1 Risk management systems are in place and conform to the appropriate East Sussex County Council policy.
- 4.2 2015 to 2018 will impose increasing constraints on both the financial and personnel resources of the AONB Unit and this remains the most significant risk to the core work of the JAC.
- 4.3 The High Weald AONB Unit's current business strategy (2014-2018) is tailored to the High Weald's local circumstances and specific needs and aims to address the risk to the work of the JAC associated with declining financial contributions to the core work for 2015/16 and beyond.
- 4.4 The business strategy will ensure that by the end of the period the JAC will remain as a strong partnership supported by a small dedicated team providing specialist technical advice to conserve and promote the value of this nationally protected landscape. An appropriate organisational structure will be established to manage self-funded projects supporting AONB Management Plan objectives and develop income generating activities.

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