

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
SOUTH DEVON AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE**

**HELD VIA REMOTE VIDEO MEETING
ON FRIDAY 12th MARCH 2021**

1. INTRODUCTIONS & APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Those present were:

Cllr Jonathan Hawkins	JH	Devon County Council
Peter Chamberlain	PC	Devon County Council
Cllr Rosemary Rowe	RR	South Hams District Council
Cllr Bernard Taylor	BT	South Hams District Council
Graham Swiss	GS	South Hams District Council
Cllr Anne Brooks	AB	Torbay Council
Tracy Brooks	TB	Torbay Council
Rob Price	RP	Environment Agency
Eamon Crowe	EC	Natural England
Richard Snow	RS	National Trust
John Martin	Vice-chair	Plymouth University
John Green	Chair	Independent
Geoffrey Osborn	GO	Representative: amenity groups
Peter Sandover	PS	Representative: community/voluntary groups
Lynne Maurer	LM	Representative: parishes
Roger English	RE	AONB Manager
Vanessa Gray		AONB Office Manager – minute taker

Also attending:

Sarah Gibson	South Hams District Council
Debbie Board & Richard Boyt	presentation on The Primrose Trail

Attending to make public statements

Nick Cotter
Gill Stone
Jonathan Wigg
Leslie Pengelly

Apologies for absence were received from:

Cllr Roger Croad	Devon County Council
Ed Parr Ferris	Representative: environmental organisations (NGOs)
Samantha Dennis	Representative: tourism community

Observers

Observers were requested to follow the meeting live via YouTube

2. PUBLIC STATEMENTS

- 2.1 Four public statements were made at the meeting, all regarding the village of Bantham and Bantham Estate, in particular the Estate Office application approved at a recent SHDC Development Management Committee meeting on 3rd March and why no objection was lodged by the AONB unit.

The Chair and the AONB Manager welcomed the statements and thanked the four speakers. The AONB Manager added that Lower Aunemouth Quay was not the subject of a live Enforcement case so should be reported via the South Hams District Council's website to enable this to be looked at.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

- 3.1 No interests were declared.

4. MINUTES OF THE 27 NOVEMBER 2020 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING FOR APPROVAL & ANY MATTERS ARISING

- 4.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

- 4.2 The Chair summarised the seven steps raised in the Amenity Groups paper:

4.2.1 Annual Forum. A separate meeting has taken place.

4.2.2 Friends of group. East Devon AONB will be invited to the next meeting scheduled to take place in June to talk about their Ambassadors programme.

4.2.3 Parish Representatives – the suggestion that each of the Parishes and Towns within the AONB nominate a representative for the AONB. The representatives for parishes and amenity groups are working together to progress this.

4.2.4 Map of parishes in the AONB. Able to determine the border of the AONB however Google now shades the AONB and the heritage coast the same.

- i. Peter Chamberlain advised that an option for providing clarity on the detail of the AONB boundary in map form is to direct people to the DCC Environment Viewer that can zoom in to see detail at a very local scale:

www.devon.gov.uk/environment/environmental-maps

- ii. Tracy Brooks added that Torbay Council shows the AONB boundary on Find My Nearest: www.torbay.gov.uk/gis/findmynearest

4.2.5 AONB gateway signs. Necessary road safety measures limit where installation of new gateway signs can occur. Instead, parishes and towns are encouraged to add a symbol onto existing signage.

4.2.6 Flag planning applications that fall within the AONB. This is not currently possible but South Hams District Council are exploring options.

4.2.7 Website wording on the formation of the AONB. The AONB unit invites comment to improve the current wording.

5A SOUTH DEVON AONB TOURISM TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The representative for the tourism community, Samantha Dennis, was unable to attend the meeting given the high workload planning for lockdown easing. The paper prepared by Samantha was presented for information only. The topic will be brought back to the June meeting.

5a.1 The Chair highlighted the influx of visitors is an important issue for the AONB and encouraged Committee members to consider the recommendations contained in the papers.

5B FUTURE FARMING IN SOUTH DEVON

The AONB Manager went through the update provided in the papers. The AONB Manager added:

- 5b.1 AONBs and National Parks are involved in a small contract with Defra providing Environmental Land Management advocacy work.
- i. The AONB has been running a programme of activities with the ELM advocacy payment received last October focussed around: transition planning, carbon and countryside stewardship opportunities now and how these will change and what clean air strategies mean for farming in particular the role of hedges.
 - ii. The AONB have run a series of online workshops to explore carbon toolkits, partnering with Dartmoor National Park with their farmers also attending.
 - iii. The AONB has a developing database of contact information and mapping work looking at expiry dates of schemes and land that has not recently been part of a scheme.
- 5b.2 Collaboration with partners has been a very important factor in this project. The AONB does not have direct advisory staff so relies very heavily on the partnerships in place. The National Farmers Union and the AONB Farm and Land Management Advisory Group have both been crucial in helping get messages out and to assist farmers and land management businesses over the difficult transition period.
- i. The AONB has a developing database of contact information and mapping work charting expiry dates of schemes and land that has not recently been part of a scheme.
- 5b.3 The anticipated Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.
- i. Due to launch in 2021/22, the scale of funding over three years shows this is a significant investment programme.
 - ii. This initiative positions AONBs and National Parks centrally in the delivery Environmental Land Management, contributing to Glover review proposal 5.
 - iii. Further clarification and detail is expected imminently from Defra and we will have to move quickly to implement this programme in accordance with Defra requirements matched to the needs and circumstances in the South Devon AONB.
- 5b.4 AONB Partnership Committee members are requested to inform the AONB Manager of their view on principal areas for investment should an element of the fund be made available to address Management Plan priorities.
- 5b.5 Observations and in discussion
- i. Eamon Crowe, Natural England:
 - a. Sustainable Farming scheme launch information:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-scheme-pilot-launch-overview
 - b. With the scheme being fronted by Rural Payments Agency, Natural England are looking forward to re-engaging with South Devon AONB
 - ii. The representative for community/voluntary groups, Peter Sandover, informed Committee members that he is also vice Chair of South Devon Coastal Local Action Group who have some experiences relating to operating a grants panel that could be useful to share with the AONB staff unit.

5C WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE UPDATE

Rob Price, Environment Agency, gave a presentation to provide a Water Framework Directive update to AONB Partnership Committee members.

5c.1 The Environment Agency catchment data explorer for South Devon, that presents information on the status of the various water bodies, can be accessed here: <https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/ManagementCatchment/3081>.

5c.2 **ACTION 1 (RP)**: Forward a copy of the presentation to the AONB Manager for circulation with the minutes.

5D SOUTH DEVON AONB / DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK COLLABORATIVE WORKING

The AONB Manager provided an update on collaborative working with Dartmoor National Park.

5d.1 Following the Glover review, collaborative working has been taking place between Dartmoor National Park (DNP), South Devon AONB and also Tamar Valley AONB. For South Devon AONB collaboration with DNP includes:

- i. ELM advocacy
- ii. Links with Facilitation Groups
- iii. Shared catchment interests through South Devon Catchment Based Approach, benefitting water quality matters
- iv. A number of emerging projects focussed on the A38 corridor
- v. Nature Recovery
 - a. DNP recently appointed Simon Pryor as their Land Management Advisor specialist bringing knowledge on Nature Recovery
- vi. Shared interest in mitigation hierarchy with regards to planning and Joint Local Plan DEV25 National Landscapes Policy – clause 8ix deals with an avoid/mitigate/compensate hierarchy approach
 - a. In South Devon AONB have had the opportunity to explore a test case, with LPA support, around Wembury Point. DNP, Natural England and Devon Landscape Policy Group are looking at this test case which has emerged as an exemplar case.

5d.2 The Chair requested that Partnership Committee members advise the AONB Manager of any other key areas of activity, priorities or opportunities in relation to collaborative working with DNP.

5E THE PRIMROSE TRAIL

Debbie Board and Richard Boyt of The Primrose Trail Group, gave a presentation on their proposal for a non-motorised route from moor to sea, South Brent to Kingsbridge, following as closely as possible the route of the old Primrose Line railway. An introduction to this project was included in the papers.

5e.1 The feasibility study for The Primrose Trail can be found here <https://primrosetrail.org/>.

5e.2 Observations and in discussion

- i. Devon has a network of multi-use trails and DCC receives many ideas for developing more trails. A key consideration is the practicality of developing and maintaining the routes. The Primrose Trail were commended for their approach, taking on the responsibility to look at the feasibility and develop a plan to provide a model to help develop the trail.

- ii. DCC have a number of other priorities that although including further development of this type of multi-use trail, do not presently include The Primrose Line. DCC are keen to provide guidance and practical support.
- iii. The draft Neighbourhood Plan for Kingsbridge, West Alvington and Churchstow is supporting of The Primrose Trail proposal, aligning closely with the health & wellbeing, sustainable transport and green environment policies.
- iv. Would like to see how potential conflicts on the route between walkers and horse riders & cyclists will be addressed.
- v. Suggest the Group contact Adam Williams, SHDC climate change officer, to explore alignment with SHDC policies such as enhanced recreation opportunities and the health and wellbeing agenda.
- vi. South Brent station will hopefully be reopened, and this together with the proposed Primrose Trail could create a connection into the AONB.

5e.3 The Chair requested that Partnership Committee members send their views on the scheme to the AONB Manager.

6A CHAIRMANSHIP, ELECTION OF COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES AND ANNUAL FORUM

The AONB Manager introduced a number of time sensitive matters covered in the papers regarding Chairmanship, election of Community Representatives and the Annual Forum.

6a.1 Chairmanship

- i. The papers provided further information including an extract of the South Devon AONB Terms of Reference that relates to the Appointment of a Partnership Committee Chairman.
- ii. Chairs are usually appointed for a two year period. At the June meeting the current Chair will have been in position for two years.
- iii. Partnership Committee members are requested to consider the options for AONB Partnership Chairmanship put forward and vote on the two options. The Chair did not feel it appropriate to take votes during the video meeting.

IT WAS DECIDED

Committee members will vote via email.

ACTION 2 (all): Vote on the two options below via email to the AONB Manager, by 31st March 2021

- a. Option 1
Invite the current Chairman to extend his term by up to two years.
- b. Option 2
Express interest in becoming Partnership Chair.
- iv. If any Committee Member expresses an interest in becoming Chair:
 - a. If one person comes forward, Committee Members will be asked whether they support the proposal during April.
 - b. If more than one person comes forward, an election will be held during April.
 - c. If no one comes forward but more than 50% wish to have a new Chair, a process will start to look for an independent Chair.

6a.2 Annual Community Forum

- i. The papers provided further information including a brief summary of outcomes from the workshop held in February with proposals for this year's Annual Community Forum.
- ii. The proposal is to split the normal event into two providing one open public event and one invited community conference, enabling targeted audiences to be attracted to each.
 - a. Public event: open to all - as part of the 60th anniversary finale celebrations – to be held in October.
 - b. Community conference: by invitation to Peers, partners, organisations, businesses – to be held in September.

6a.3 Election of AONB Community Representatives

- i. The three year term Community Representatives serve, is drawing to a close and elections will be required in October 2021.
- ii. To give as wide an opportunity for engagement and inclusivity as possible, the proposal is to move the elections for Community Representatives online and announce the results at the Community Conference.
- iii. Further information was provided in the papers, including an Appendix containing a draft of the updated community elections procedure.

IT WAS PROPOSED THAT

Elections for Community Representatives are moved online.

THE PROPOSAL WAS SUPPORTED

The Chair directed that no responses would be taken as support.

6B NATIONAL MATTERS

The AONB Manager provided Partnership Committee members with a brief overview of a small selection of national matters pertinent the South Devon AONB, details and signposting were contained in the papers.

6C ROUND TABLE PARTNER UPDATES

6c.1 Peter Chamberlain, Devon County Council

- i. The board of the Devon Local Nature Partnership are meeting next week. Agenda items include:
 - a. Consideration is being given to develop a framework to support community action for wildlife. Idea is to develop a Parish and Town Wildlife Network – a framework for advice and support and a means for developing a network for communication between groups.
 - b. Planning is taking place for 'Naturally Healthy May'

For more information visit www.naturaldevon.org.uk

6c.2 Cllr. Rosemary Rowe, South Hams District Council

- i. Expressed support for The Primrose Trail initiative.
- ii. Looking forward to the Annual Community Conference.

6c.3 Cllr Bernard Taylor, South Hams District Council

- i. Expressed support for The Primrose Trail initiative.

- 6c.4 Cllr. Anne Brooks, Torbay Council
- i. Decision awaited on Land South of White Rock (Inglewood) inquiry. Thanks was expressed to the AONB Manager for his work and support on the inquiry held in January.
- 6c.5 Tracy Brooks, Torbay Council
- i. National Planning Policy Framework and National Model Design Code: consultation proposals deadline is 27th March 2021: www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals
 - ii. Also expressed thanks to the AONB Manager for his work and support on the inquiry held in January.
- 6c.6 Eamon Crowe, Natural England
- i. New team member Louise Riley recruited for South Devon and Dartmoor focussing on SSSIs' and ELM matters. Looking forward to engaging with South Devon AONB staff unit.
 - ii. Expressed support for The Primrose Trail initiative.
- 6c.7 Richard Snow, The National Trust
- i. Apologised for missing the start of the meeting due to other commitments.
 - ii. Expressed support for The Primrose Trail initiative.
 - iii. The National Trust experienced a number of challenges arising from COVID-19 and sites were heavily impacted by the high number of visitors. The National Trust anticipate an extremely busy summer, further impacting the AONB and scheduled projects. Everyone is encouraged to plan as far as is possible for this.
- 6b.8 John Martin, Vice chair
- i. Thanked AONB Partnership Committee members for their input into the Community Shaping Landscape project and completing the questionnaire. This is an ongoing project
 - a. Anyone interest in being involved is encouraged to contact John Martin j.martin-2@plymouth.ac.uk or Hanna Elisabet Åberg hannaelisabet.aberg@unibo.it.
 - b. Free online presentation taking place on Tuesday 13 April at 7pm, further information at www.southdevonaonb.org.uk/events
- 6b.9 Geoffrey Osborn, representative for Amenity Groups
- i. South Hams Society has recruited a new Chairman, Richard Howell.
 - ii. Carole Box update
 - a. complimented the AONB Manager for his contribution to the Land South of White Rock (Inglewood) inquiry
 - b. pleased to hear the presentation on design review panels the representative for community and voluntary groups, Peter Sandover gave at the last meeting. Torbay Council hold these for major commercial developments
 - iii. Encourages a Friends of AONB initiative and would like East Devon AONB to present at a future Partnership Committee meeting.
 - iv. Would like further engagement with AONB Gateway signs, with signs erected at points of entry to the AONB.
 - v. Raised the issue of the papers being circulated late.
 - vi. Revised Planning Protocol requests:
 - a. Would like confirmation that each of the four Local Planning Authorities have adopted the revised Planning Protocol
 - b. To put the Revised Planning Protocol on the AONB website

The AONB Manager responded: the revised Planning Protocol has been shared with the Local Authorities. As pointed out at the March meeting, adoption varies from Council to Council as well as the nature of adoption. The AONB Manager understands that the particular focus from Amenity Groups is on South Hams District Council and added that the Protocol was developed with a great deal of support from Pat Whymer, Head of Development Management at SHDC, and is in place with his backing. Graham Swiss, SHDC and Tracy Brooks, Torbay Council, have both been discussing the new Protocol with their colleagues. In the run up to AONB Partnership Committee that adopted the revised Planning Protocol, the final draft Protocol was shared with Development Management Officers at SHDC, one of whom, Wendy Ormsby, is now Head of Development Management at Torbay Council. Training will take place as the opportunity arises.

ACTION 3 (RE): Publish the revised Planning Protocol on the AONB Website.

- vii. Public Statement session
 - a. Requests Cllrs. Rowe and Taylor's views on the Bantham Estate Office planning application, noting their support of it at the recent Development Management Committee meeting where the plans were approved

6b.10 Peter Sandover, representative for community and voluntary groups

- i. Neighbourhood plan referendums were not being held due to COVID-19 however at least two are now coming to referendum in May:
 - a. Strete
 - b. South Huish
- ii. Two Neighbourhood Plans: Kingsbridge, West Alvington & Churchstow and the Dartmouth Neighbourhood Plan are now close to regulation 14 submission.

6b.11 Lynne Maurer, representative for parish councils

- i. With the representative for Amenity Groups, Geoffrey Osborn, has been discussing a proposal to have a nominated representative within each parish and town council for the AONB. This would improve communications which are currently difficult due to a number of factors.

The AONB Manager responded: happy to support this initiative and will work with Lynne to put information together to send to parish and town councils

- ii. Supports John Graham's idea for producing separate maps showing parish and town councils wholly or partly in the AONB

The AONB Manager responded: warrants further discussion. There may be existing resources that could be utilised.

2021 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING DATES

Locations and themes for meetings will be announced nearer the time.

25th June 2021 at 10am, venue TBC

26th November 2021 at 10am, venue TBC

These minutes remain as draft until approved at the next meeting of the South Devon AONB Partnership Committee.