

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

**HELD VIA REMOTE VIDEO MEETING
ON FRIDAY 25th JUNE 2021**

1. INTRODUCTIONS & APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Those present were:

Peter Chamberlain	PC	Devon County Council
Cllr Nicky Hopwood	NH	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
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
Ed Parr Ferris	EPF	Representative: environmental organisations (NGOs)
Roger English	RE	AONB Manager
Vanessa Gray		AONB Office Manager – minute taker

Apologies for absence were received from:

Cllr Roger Croad	Devon County Council
Cllr Jonathan Hawkins	Devon County Council
Jon Burgess	Forestry Commission
Lynne Maurer	Representative: parishes

Cllr Nicky Hopwood is welcomed to Partnership Committee, replacing Cllr Rosemary Rowe
The position of Representative: tourism community is vacant following the resignation of Samantha Dennis

Observers

Observers were requested to follow the meeting live via YouTube

2. PUBLIC STATEMENTS

2.1 No public statements were made.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

3.1 No interests were declared.

4. MINUTES OF THE 12 MARCH 2021 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING FOR APPROVAL & ANY MATTERS ARISING

4.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

4.2 CHAIRMANSHIP

The AONB Manager updated Committee members on the Chairmanship vote. All bar one eligible vote was cast; a range of positive feedback was received.

RESOLVED

On behalf of the AONB Partnership, the AONB Manager formally invited John Green to continue as Chair for a further two year period. John Green accepted.

5A THE FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES PROGRAMME

5a.1 The AONB Manager provided a presentation to highlight aspects of the programme.

ACTION 1 (RE): Share the presentation with Committee members.

5a.2 Observations and in discussion

- i. Support was expressed for the programme.
- ii. A number of Committee members raised concerns about increased workload and pressures on the AONB staff unit with the introduction of this large scale programme. In response the AONB Manager outlined there are two areas of support payments: advice & guidance and finance & admin allowing the staff unit headcount to increase for a three year period. There are challenges to be faced over the next three months, with the short lead in and rapid build up. Short term contractor support is being secured.
- iii. Eamon Crowe will represent Natural England on both the South Devon AONB and Dartmoor National Park assessment panels.
- iv. Cllr Hopwood would like to see the assessment panel include someone with no previous background or experience.

5B ENVIRONMENTAL LAND MANAGEMENT SCHEMES

5b.1 Eamon Crowe provided a presentation on the current and future range of agri-environment schemes running during the Agriculture Transition Period.

5b.2 For more information on the schemes:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-scheme-pilot-launch-overview>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-land-management-schemes-overview>
- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-farmers-in-protected-landscapes>

5C OTHER NATIONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SOUTH DEVON AONB

5c.1 The AONB Manager went through the item in the papers.

5c.2 Observations and in discussion

- i. Concern was raised over an aspect of the Ministerial statement on the Landscapes Review *“We will also be exploring opportunities to increase private investment, particularly by diversifying funding sources to include emerging markets in natural capital and other commercial opportunities”* and whether that implied additional development. The AONB Manager’s interpretation, based on the Glover Review context, is that it would be more akin to exploring different forms of green investment to support Natural Capital and actions to reach net zero. Our recent experience of this was preparing a Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund bid for a project that aims to stimulate private investment and market based mechanisms to improve and safeguard the riparian land associated with the Dart estuary.

- ii. The Natural England response to South Hams Society regarding the 2013 request for a boundary review was raised and the question asked as to what the Partnership Committee could do to assist. The AONB Manager requested and received permission to share the response.

ACTION 2 (RE): Circulate the Natural England response to Committee members.

- iii. Natural England will be developing a Green Paper on new designations and there will be a public consultation on the proposals later this year.
- iv. The AONB Manager reminded Partnership members that the primary focus is to secure action on Glover proposal 24, to ensure better resources, powers and purposes for the existing designated AONBs.
- v. Partnership Committee members requested further detail be provided on the Plymouth City Council led Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest project.

ACTION 3 (RE): Follow up with Plymouth City Council.

5D NATIONAL ARTS IN THE LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

5d.1 The AONB Manager provided an update on the National Arts in the Landscape Strategy.

- i. The item was included on the agenda at the request of the National Association for AONBs.
- ii. The Strategy helps the AONB Network achieve its Colchester Declaration aims, and those of Glover's National Landscape Review around:
 - Engaging with a wider and more diverse audience
 - Helping people to create deeper connections to nature, place and landscape
 - Inspiring pro-environmental behaviour to tackle the conjoined ecological and climate emergency

The Chair invited Committee members to vote whether to adopt the strategy.

RESOLVED

South Devon AONB Partnership agreed to adopt the National Arts in the Landscape Strategy.

6 ROUND TABLE PARTNER UPDATES

6c.1 Peter Chamberlain, Devon County Council

- i. Devon's Local Nature Partnership are launching Wild About Devon on Monday evening next week. This is a new network to encourage communities to take action for wildlife. Providing county based framework for support, information sharing, signposting advice and grant sources. The event will last 1.5 hours, sign up via the Devon LNP website www.naturaldevon.org.uk

6c.2 Cllr. Bernard Taylor, South Hams District Council

- i. Mentioned a potential project for Farming in protected Landscapes where a local farmer has expressed interest in creating a nature walk around eight acres of their land.

6c.3 Graham Swiss, South Hams District Council

- i. A new planning bill, with wide ranging changes to the planning system, is expected later this year following its inclusion in the Queens speech.
- ii. Torbay are in the early stages of a local plan review. This key stage will assess areas of land with potential for development. A panel will be set up to look at land for housing & employment

with a call for sites. Work is about to start, and Graham is representing South Hams and West Devon LPAs on the panel.

6c.4 Cllr. Anne Brooks, Torbay Council

- i. Hopes the Arts in the Landscape Strategy will use local artists from the AONB.

6c.5 Tracy Brooks, Torbay Council

- i. A Local Plan update is in progress for housing matters. A housing and economic land availability assessment (HELAA) process is currently in its early stages to examine all available sites. The first of three panels will meet in early July. Public consultation will follow.

6c.6 John Martin, Vice chair

- i. The Plymouth University led project Monitoring England's Protected Landscapes will examine current landscape monitoring practises amongst National Parks and AONBs and make recommendations to Natural England for a future data and monitoring framework.
- ii. John offered to share the report when available and present the projects findings at a future Partnership Committee meeting.

6c.7 Geoffrey Osborn, representative for Amenity Groups

- i. It is now understood that flagging planning applications as within the AONB on notices and on the District Council website is not possible with the current system.
- ii. Requests that Graham Swiss further investigates the matter of LPA adoption of the Planning Protocol within South Hams District Council.
- iii. Would like to have had the workings of the South Devon AONB Core Funding Group explained. In particular the reasons for the Partnership Committee Chair attending as observer and Sarah Gibson attending as officer advising for South Hams District Council.

The Chair responded An explanation of the Core Funding Group will be covered in a future meeting.

- iv. Would like planning cases to be discussed either in the main Committee meeting or in a separate sub-group.

The Chair responded Partnership Committee is not the forum to discuss individual planning applications.

- v. Questioned why an AONB planning response is not always submitted at an early stage.

The Chair responded It is very important the AONB submits a considered response once all required information is available. The Amenity Groups play an important role in planning as they are aware of local sensitivities.

6b.8 Cllr. Nicky Hopwood, South Hams District Council

- i. In agreement that Partnership Committee is not the forum to discuss individual planning applications and added the Joint Local Plan has stringent policies that need to be followed.

6b.9 Peter Sandover, representative for community and voluntary groups

- i. Neighbourhood Plans
 - a. Two Neighbourhood Plans have passed referendums at the recent elections and a number are progressing.
 - b. Expressed thanks to both the AONB Manager and the representative for Amenity Groups for their comments on the draft Dartmouth Neighbourhood Plan which will be going out for public consultation.
 - c. The Kingbridge, West Alvington and Churchstow Neighbourhood Plan is currently out for public consultation.

- ii. Agreed Partnership Committee is not the forum to discuss emerging planning applications but supports the suggestion for a sub-group.

6b.10 Ed Parr Ferris, representative for environmental organisations (NGOs)

- i. Local Nature Partnership is working towards a summer release of the first iteration of the Nature Recovery Network plan.
- ii. Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest was announced this week with funding from Defra. Devon Wildlife Trust are on the advisory group which is looking beyond the immediate boundary of Plymouth. There is a need for 25Ha of woodland planting this financial year and there is a call for sites. There is a bigger ambition over five years and the target for 2035 is larger still.
- iii. Sites are being put forward for designation as Highly Protected Marine Areas. Five sites within South Devon AONB and its marine setting are being considered.
- iv. Avon Valley meadow creation project update: wildflower rich seeding has taken place. Ed highlighted there is a shortage of donor sites from which to harvest local seed and this has an impact on this project and other initiatives. Partnership Committee members are invited to let Ed know of any potential donor sites.

6b.11 Richard Snow, The National Trust

- i. Land Outdoors and Nature Programme, Salcombe Project to improve farmland for nature between Bolt Head and Bolt Tail, has now been running for two years. Richard offered the opportunity for Partnership Committee members to visit the site when able, to view the positive outcomes achieved to date.
- ii. Richard echoed Ed's comments that there is a shortage of donor sites from which to harvest local seed which is impacting the LON project and other National Trust initiatives. Partnership Committee members are invited to let Richard know of any opportunity to harvest wild flower seed.

6b.12 Jon Burgess, Forestry Commission (update provided via email)

- i. A new Woodland Officer is shortly due to be appointed for South Devon who will cover the area of the AONB.
- ii. The new Woodland Creation Offer has launched which offers considerably improved grant aide to encourage woodland creation. Most will need to be native broadleaf dominated to achieve highest levels of grant aid and targeted to the areas of land most able to benefit from woodland.
- iii. Working with Devon County Council and others to create Devon specific guidance on 'Right Tree in the Right Place' which will help ensure maximum benefits are obtained.

7A LIFE ON THE EDGE – DEVON SPECIAL SPECIES ON THE SOUTH DEVON COAST

7a.1 The AONB Manager provided an update on the Life on the Edge project.

- i. Life on the Edge is a flagship project for South Devon AONB focussing on a number of critical sites.
- ii. The project is very closely aligned with Management Plan priorities, Defra requirements and Core funder strategies.
- iii. The project is aimed at the whole of the AONB. At the heart, the project aims to improve the situation of a range of special species located on the coast, however there is also the need to improve habitat away from coast.

- iv. The project will also pick up on some of the challenges around provenance for seed and plants. The AONB will work with businesses to provide locally sourced product in future.
- v. The film for this agenda item could not be shown due to time constraints. The AONB Manager encouraged partners to look carefully at the update contained in the papers, including the proposed project structure that National Lottery require a project of this size to have and to understand the scope and ambition of the project.

The AONB Manager requested that Partnership Committee members

- Undertake the simple survey that is contributing to the information and evidence needed for the NLHF application for funding:
<https://us5.list-manage.com/survey?u=5ede14ae51d5e6e05cf965eb4&id=86c9f0b288&attribution=false>
- Consider representing the South Devon AONB as a Project Board member for the lifetime of the project, from run up to submission through development and final delivery – initial meeting August 2021.

Ed Parr Ferris agreed to be on the project board.

7B EAST DEVON AONB AMBASSADOR SCHEME

7b.1 The papers summarised East Devon AONB's Ambassador Scheme. Additionally, the AONB Manager played a Zoom meeting recording with the East Devon AONB Manager Chris Woodruff, explaining the scheme in more detail.

Observations and in discussion

- i. Whether the AONB staff unit has available resource to promote a similar scheme within the South Devon AONB was questioned.
- ii. A scheme for South Devon AONB may help raise awareness of the AONB and encourage a more diverse audience.

ACTION 4 (All): Send thoughts on the application of a similar programme for South Devon and any follow up questions for Chris Woodruff to the AONB Manager by 9 July.

7C AONB GATEWAY SIGNAGE PROGRAMME

7c.1 An update on the South Devon AONB Gateway signage programme was provided in the papers.

Observations and in discussion

- i. Policy and guidance on highway signage are set out nationally through a general direction order. Signs should be kept to a minimum, be installed only where required and be sympathetic. Devon County Council, as the local highways authority, uphold this approach, looking for decluttering of signage, installing new only where necessary.
- ii. Boundary markers are accommodated in limited circumstances by national guidance however the South Devon AONB has a complex boundary with multiple entry points rendering boundary signage unfeasible due to significant cluttering. The programme is therefore focused upon existing village gateway signage.
- iii. Support was expressed for the current approach of combining the AONB logo with town/village name signs, reducing the need for a proliferation of signs on the roads.

2021 IMPORTANT DATES

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

- 7th – 8th July 2021, Landscapes for Life conference
- Subject to Covid-19 restrictions, the South Devon AONB public conference will be held in the autumn
- 26th November 2021 at 10am, Partnership Committee meeting, venue TBC

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