



## **AONB PARTNERSHIP MEMBERSHIP, TERMS OF REFERENCE, STRUCTURE AND OPERATION**

updated March 2022

### **PART 1: The Purpose of the AONB Partnership**

- i. To provide a strategic lead in the protection, conservation and enhancement of the South Devon AONB.
- ii. To prepare, monitor and review the AONB Management Plan on behalf of the Local Authorities responsible.
- iii. To coordinate the implementation of the AONB Management Plan.
- iv. To promote the distinctive qualities and national status of the AONB designation.
- v. To secure the core priorities of the Partnership members in the South Devon AONB.

### **PART 2: Terms of reference and role of the AONB Partnership**

1. The AONB Management Plan
  - i. To prepare and review the AONB Management Plan on behalf of the local authorities responsible, at intervals of not more than five years.
  - ii. To co-ordinate the implementation of the AONB Management Plan Delivery Plan, with actions undertaken by a wide range of organisations as well as directly by the AONB Staff Unit.
  - iii. To monitor and publish an annual report on progress in the implementation of AONB Management Plan targets.
2. Geographical remit
  - i. To focus on the South Devon AONB while having regard for the wider hinterland and communities insofar as they interact with the AONB.
3. Staffing and resources
  - i. To provide guidance and advice to the AONB Core Funding Group concerning the direction of the AONB Staff Unit and use of resources, recognising that the Core Funding Group carries responsibility for those areas.
  - ii. To identify and secure the resources required for AONB management.
  - iii. To provide an accountable structure for the investment of government resources in the AONB.
4. The purpose of the AONB designation
  - i. To develop and promote the vision for the AONB and the objectives for its management.
  - ii. To identify, protect and conserve the distinctive environmental and cultural features of the AONB.
  - iii. To raise awareness of the AONB designation with the local community, with visitors and with all who have an influence on it.
  - iv. To identify and address the major issues affecting the AONB through the Management Plan process.

5. Consultation and liaison

- i. To hold an annual AONB conference or open forum.
- ii. To engage with a wide range of organisations in seeking consensus about AONB management.
- iii. To forge links with other relevant fora, in particular the Local Strategic Partnerships and the community planning process.
- iv. To develop links with local estuary management projects and other local environmental partnerships and initiatives.
- v. To develop and disseminate good practice in AONB management.
- vi. To establish links with other protected landscape areas including the National Parks and the wider AONB movement through the National Association of AONBs, the South West Protected Landscapes Forum, and the Devon AONB Managers' Group.
- vii. To support community initiatives which conserve and enhance the AONB and to encourage the participation of the community in the care and management of the AONB.

6. Management structures and governance

- i. To maintain a management structure that is effective and relevant to the AONB.
- ii. To review and revise the governance structures for the AONB every three years alongside the review of the AONB Memorandum of Agreement, or sooner if circumstances require.
- iii. To keep under review the membership of the Partnership, introducing change as required.

7. Influencing

- i. To promote the AONB and its purposes to a range of bodies and engage them in its management.
- ii. To act as an advocate for the AONB.
- iii. To advise other bodies about their role in the management of the AONB and in particular promote the statutory duty for all public bodies to have regard for AONB purposes in the conduct of their functions.
- iv. To influence regional, local and unitary planning policies affecting the AONB through the development plan process.
- v. To seek effective linkage between the management of the AONB and its adjoining marine areas through integrated coastal zone management.

8. Information and research

- i. To commission research and studies relevant to the AONB.
- ii. To monitor the condition of the AONB.

9. Task groups

- i. To establish task groups or technical groups as required.

**PART 3: Membership of the AONB Partnership**

The AONB Partnership will comprise the following organisations and parties:

- i. The four AONB local authorities (South Hams District Council, Devon County Council, Torbay Council and Plymouth City Council),
- ii. Four statutory agencies (Historic England<sup>1</sup>, Forestry Commission<sup>1</sup>, Natural England and the Environment Agency)
- iii. The National Trust, Plymouth University and the South West Coast Path Association
- iv. Eight members representing key communities of interest (see Part 4iii below).

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<sup>1</sup> Not expected to regularly attend meetings. Kept informed of agendas and provided with minutes

#### **PART 4: The AONB Partnership Committee**

The AONB Partnership will operate through the AONB Partnership Committee. The South Devon AONB Partnership Committee will comprise the following members:

- i. Six representatives of the local authorities, as follows:
  - Two Members representing South Hams District Council
  - Two Members representing Devon County Council
  - One Member representing Torbay Council
  - One Member representing Plymouth City Council(A local authority Member may be accompanied by an officer in an advisory capacity).
- ii. Four members representing statutory agencies, as follows:
  - One member representing the Environment Agency
  - One member representing Historic England
  - One member representing Natural England
  - One member representing Forestry Commission
- iii. Eight members appointed at the AONB Annual Conference, who will normally serve for a period of three years from the date of appointment, as follows:
  - One member representing amenity groups within the AONB.
  - One member representing the business community of the AONB.
  - One member representing the coast and marine sector of the AONB.
  - One member representing community or voluntary groups of the AONB.
  - One member representing non-governmental professional organisations active in environmental management within the AONB.
  - One member representing the landowning and farming community of the AONB.
  - One member representing parish councils within the AONB.
  - One member representing the tourism community of the AONB.
- iv. One member representing the National Trust.
- v. One member representing the University of Plymouth.
- vi. One member representing the South West Coast Path Association.
- vii. Any independent Chair appointed by invitation, under Part 7 to these Terms of Reference, for the duration of their term.
- viii. The Chair of any Technical Group established by the Partnership will be seconded to the Partnership Committee and serve as a member for the duration of that Group's work.

#### **PART 5: Attributes of AONB Partnership Committee Members**

- i. Whilst each member of the Partnership Committee represents an organisation or stakeholder group, such interests should be considered in the context of the Committee's collective purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. The principal role of individual Partnership Committee members is to bring their knowledge, skills, experience and expertise to this process and to assist the Partnership in the delivery of the Management Plan and maintaining the integrity of the designation.
- ii. It is expected that members of the Partnership Committee will:
  - bring to the Partnership a wealth of experience and expertise of their own and of their respective organisations.
  - take advice and information back to their respective organisations.

- act as an advocate for the AONB within and through their respective organisations.
  - attend the Partnership Committee meetings.
  - be active outside the scheduled Partnership Committee meetings.
  - be committed to the purposes of AONB designation and management.
  - on behalf of their organisations, arrange for the provision of relevant data sets and research material held by their organisations, in digitised format where possible, to the AONB staff unit to assist with the purpose of monitoring the state of the AONB.
- iii. Local authority Members will have an important role in reflecting the views and aspirations of their local communities on the Partnership.
- iv. The partnership will seek to have an independent and non-political profile and be actively engaged with local communities and with the implementation of the Management Plan.
- v. An induction programme will be arranged for new Partnership members by the AONB Manager.

#### **PART 6: Appointment and termination of Partnership Committee membership**

- i. It will be for each member organisation to appoint its representative to the Partnership Committee. It is expected that each organisation will provide a nominated representative who will, in the interest of continuity, normally attend meetings. Substitutes may deputise but only in circumstances which prevent the attendance of the usual nominated representative.
- ii. A member of the AONB Partnership Committee may resign his or her membership, or may be replaced by a new nominated representative of his or her organisation.
- iii. The procedure for the appointment of those Partnership Committee members appointed at the annual AONB Conference will be agreed by the Partnership Committee and implemented by the AONB Manager.
- iv. In the event of a vacancy occurring for one of the places normally appointed at the AONB annual Conference, the Partnership Committee may, at its discretion, fill that place by co-option until the next annual Conference meeting takes place.
- v. In the event of any representative failing to attend two consecutive Partnership Committee meetings, the Partnership will consider requesting the organisation to appoint a different representative to ensure a regular attendance and contribution to Partnership meetings<sup>2</sup>.
- vi. The membership of the Partnership Committee may be altered by decision of the Partnership Committee.

#### **PART 7: Appointment of Partnership Committee Chair**

- i. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Partnership Committee will be elected from the membership of the Partnership Committee, normally for a two year period.
- ii. Alternatively, the Chair may be appointed by invitation of the Partnership Committee from the wider community as an independent chair. In the latter case, it would be expected that any such independent chair would be a respected individual with significant relevant experience or skills and a good knowledge and understanding of the AONB and its issues. An independent chair, if so appointed, would serve as a full member of the Partnership

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<sup>2</sup> Historic England and Forestry Commission are not expected to regularly attend meetings

Committee for the duration of his or her period of office, but would not be entitled to appoint a substitute in the event of being unable to attend a Partnership Committee meeting.

- iii. In either case, the Chair would be expected to act as a “champion” for the AONB at local, regional and national level; to be committed to the purposes of AONB designation and management, to act as an effective chair of the Partnership Committee meetings and the AONB Annual Conference; and to provide support and guidance to the AONB Manager and staff team.

## **PART 8: Organisation of Partnership Committee meetings**

- i. The Partnership Committee will normally meet three times a year. The quorum for meetings will be eight members.
- ii. The secretariat for the Partnership Committee will be provided by the AONB Staff Unit.
- iii. Partnership Committee meetings may be held in person or via remote video meeting.
  - In person meetings may be held at Follaton House Totnes but may also be held at any other suitable location within the AONB.
  - Remote video meetings will be held online
  - Hybrid meetings, allowing participation either in person or by remote video, may also be held, where technology allows.
- iv. Notice of Partnership Committee meetings will be sent out to members at least one month in advance of a meeting at which time members will be invited to submit items for inclusion in the agenda.
- v. Agendas and papers will be sent out to members at least one week in advance of meetings.
- vi. Minutes will be distributed to members within two weeks following a meeting.
- vii. Meetings will be open to members of the public and representatives of interested organisations to attend as observers. Members of the public or interested organisations may submit questions or information for consideration by the Partnership Committee meeting, provided that the question is submitted to the AONB Manager in writing or by email at least three weeks in advance of the meeting date. The Partnership will provide a reply to any such questions through the AONB Manager within two weeks of the Partnership Committee meeting. Where the meeting is held via remote video, observers should follow the meeting live via the South Devon AONB YouTube channel. The live stream will commence after Public Statements have completed. Note that streaming to YouTube will be suspended prior to any agenda item containing privileged information that we are not entitled to make public, resuming immediately afterwards.
- viii. At the Chair’s invitation, members of the public and representatives of interested organisations are able to make a statement or comment about any matter on the Committee’s agenda. The time may also be used to present a petition on any matter within the Committee’s remit. The length of Public Statement time will be no more than 15 minutes total.
  - A slot for Public Statements will be set aside at the beginning of the meeting, prior to the formal agenda commencing.
  - Questions and comments from the presenter must be directed through the Chair; the presenter may not take direct part in the debate.
  - The Chair will decide when public participation is to finish.

- If there are many people who wish to speak for one particular item, the Chair may direct that a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.
- The amount of time for anyone wishing to speak will be restricted, normally to three minutes only.
- Presenters are requested to make their statements in a constructive and respectful manner, that refrains from making personal remarks about any one individual or organisation.
- Presenters are respectfully reminded to ensure statements are factual. Responsibility for fact checking the statement, prior to delivery, rests with the presenter.
- There is no formal response within the meeting however the Chair may clarify a point of fact, or request the presenter to clarify a point of fact, in very exceptional circumstances.

Anyone wishing to speak, should email [enquiries@southdevonaonb.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@southdevonaonb.org.uk), providing brief details on their proposed statement at least one week before the meeting.

- ix. The Partnership Committee may, at the discretion of the Chair, invite any person or representative of an organisation to address and take part in a meeting where his or her knowledge or experience would contribute to a relevant matter on the agenda.
- x. The Partnership Committee will endeavour to make decisions by agreement and consensus whenever possible. However, where a vote is required to resolve an issue, the decision will be by simple majority and members of the Partnership Committee will have equal voting powers. A local authority officer attending as an adviser to a local authority Member will not normally have voting powers; however, where a local authority Member is absent and no substitute is available, that Member's vote may be transferred to the officer if the Member's Authority so allows.
- xi. In respect of press and publicity, only the Chair and Vice Chair of the Partnership Committee, the AONB Manager, or any person with their specific authorisation, may speak on behalf of the AONB Partnership.
- xii. The travel costs and any other costs of attending Partnership meetings incurred by members will be borne by their respective parent organisations. However, any member who is unable to claim travel expenses from a parent organisation will be entitled to claim reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred, from the AONB budget.
- xiii. Alterations to these organisational arrangements may be made by the Partnership Committee, subject to the agreement of the funding authorities for any aspects relating to funding or staffing.

## **PART 9: The AONB Partnership Core Funding Group**

- i. The Core Funding Group will advise the Funding Authorities on matters relating to the staffing, pay, conditions and budget of the AONB Staff Unit on behalf of the Partnership.
- ii. The Core Funding Group will develop and approve the annual Business Plan for the AONB Staff Unit and recommend the Business Plan and annual budget to the Partnership Committee and each funding authority.
- iii. The Core Funding Group will comprise the following members who are also members of the Partnership Committee:
  - o Two Members and one officer of South Hams District Council
  - o Two Members and one officer of Devon County Council
  - o One further member of the Partnership Committee, usually the Chair, who is not a Member of South Hams District Council or Devon County Council. This member represents the Partnership Committee at Core Funding Group meetings and reports back to Partnership at the next available Committee meeting. Where the Chair is also a member of South Hams District Council or Devon County Council, another Committee member will be chosen.  
In acting in this capacity, the Partnership Chair will have a single Core Funding Group vote and will be entitled to nominate the Partnership Vice Chair as a substitute in the event of being unable to attend a meeting.
- iv. Officers of the Core Funding Authorities will meet with the AONB Manager as and when required to progress matters between Core Funding Group meetings.

## **PART 10: Organisation of Core Funding Group Meetings**

- i. The Core Funding Group will report to the Partnership Committee and to the Core Funding Authorities.
- ii. The Core Funding Group will normally meet twice a year, although additional meetings may be held as circumstances require. Meetings may be scheduled to take place on the same day as the Partnership Committee Meetings. The quorum for a Core Funding Group meeting will be when a representative of each of the Core Funding Authorities is present.
- iii. The Secretariat for the Core Funding Group will be provided by the AONB Staff Unit.
- iv. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Core Funding Group will be elected from the Group's Members and will normally serve for a period of two years. Notice of Core Funding Group meetings will be sent out to members at least one month in advance of a meeting at which time members will be invited to submit items for inclusion in the agenda. Agendas and papers will be sent out to members at least one week in advance of meetings. Minutes will be distributed to members within two weeks following a meeting.
- v. Meetings of the Core Funding Group will not normally be open to the public because of its role in dealing with staffing matters.

## **PART 11: AONB Partnership Technical Groups**

- i. The Partnership Committee may establish any Technical Group it considers appropriate, to provide a specialist focus on the implementation and monitoring of the AONB Management Plan or to undertake specific tasks. The Partnership Committee will provide clear terms of reference for any Technical Group so established.

- ii. Membership of Technical Groups may be invited from agencies, organisations or sectors of the community with special knowledge, experience, interest or influence within the identified theme. Any application from organisations or individuals wishing to join a Technical Group will be considered by the Partnership Committee.
- iii. The secretariat for any working groups will be provided by the AONB Staff Unit. The Technical Groups will report to the Partnership Committee.
- iv. A Chair will be elected for each Technical Group from the Technical Group members, and will serve for a period of two years or until the Technical Group is wound up if less than two years. The Chair of any Technical Group established by the Partnership Committee may also serve as a member of the Partnership Committee for the duration of his or her chairmanship.
- v. A Technical Group may be wound up either by decision of the Group itself, for example on completion of its work, or by decision of the Partnership Committee.

## **PART 12: AONB Annual Community Conference**

- i. A wider meeting of organisations, community groups, and the general public will be held once a year. The date and practical arrangements for holding the Conference will be agreed by the Partnership Committee with all administration arrangements thereafter being the responsibility of the AONB Staff Unit.
- ii. The meetings will be advertised and be open to anyone to attend.
- iii. The Conference will provide the opportunity for a wider exchange of information and views about the AONB and its management, and progress with the implementation of the AONB Management Plan. The Conference will discuss and recommend actions and priorities for AONB Management.
- iv. The Conference will also be an opportunity for forging closer links between the Partnership and other local partnerships such as the Estuary Conservation Fora and local community strategy groups.