

(17 October 2007)

Mendip Hills AONB Partnership

Minutes of meeting of the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership held in Bishop Sutton Village Hall, Bishop Sutton on Wednesday 17th October 2007 at 10.00am.

Present

Partnership Committee

Steve Pilkington	Chairman
Andrew Burns	Natural England
Kate Lawrence	Somerset Wildlife Trust
Paul Harley	Mendip Society
James Small	NFU
Cllr Harvey Siggs	Somerset County Council
Mary de Viggiani	CPRE
Richard Bartlett	Blagdon Parish Council
Cllr Brian Robinson	Ubley Parish Council
Roy Wills	Mendip District Council
Jennifer Trotman	Axbridge Town Council
John Rackstraw	Mendip Cross Trails Trust
Roy Jones	Winscombe Parish Council
Gill Davis	Cheddar Parish Council
John Agate	Shipham Parish Council

Other

Richard Parker	Compton Bishop Parish Council
Reg Chapman	
Gwynn Thomas	Priddy Resident
Linda Thomson	Priddy Resident

AONB Staff

Jonathan Richards

Jim Hardcastle
Les Davies
Tina Bath
Merryn Nisbet

Apologies were received from Sarah Jackson (Manager AONB), Ann Harley (North Somerset Council), Andy Mayled (National Trust), Helen Thompson (GOSW), Cllr Shirley Steel (Bath and North East Somerset Council), Sue Murtagh (Bath and North East Somerset Council), Neville Lee (Churchill Parish Council Representative), Trevor Wall (Somerset County Council)

CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS

163. The chairman welcomed everyone attending the meeting and explained that SJ and Sue Murtagh (B&NES) were not present as they were attending an important management plan meeting.

164. He also welcomed several new faces to the meeting including representatives of parish councils that have replaced the parish representatives who used to represent groups of parishes.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

165. There were no declarations of interest made.

MINUTES

166. The minutes of the meeting of the 22nd March 2007 were signed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

142. The second reading of the Private Members Bill on tranquillity has not yet been adopted. Harvey Siggs suggested that as Ben

Bradshaw is now a minister for the South West, maybe a visit to the AONB could be arranged.

153. (1) a) The proposals reference Cheddar Gorge have been set aside. Paul Harley stated that the cattle grids were an ongoing dispute and a meeting between the representatives of Cheddar Gorge Showcaves and National Trust is being arranged.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

167. A statement was read by Gwynn Thomas, a resident from Priddy. In brief GT detailed that he has been a resident of the Mendip Hills since the 60's and the area now was far from tranquil and serene. He stated that it was dangerous and unpleasant, especially for cyclists and horse riders because of the volume of traffic and driver attitude.

MENDIP CROSS TRAILS TRUST

168. (1) (a) A presentation was given by Jack Rackstraw, MCTT Trustee.

www.mctt.org.uk

(b) JR thanked all the councillors who supported the project.

(c) Brian Robinson asked if a route outline map was available.

(d) Kate Lawrence congratulated JR on the award and thanked him for sharing the information and conferring with landowners. She would also like to see the map at the earliest point.

(e) R Chapman asked if the routes were new routes. JR replied that some were existing routes and some were new.

(f) Gill Davies asked that route information should be made available to the public. Gareth Withers stated that OS maps are reviewed on a 5 yearly basis. There may well be a half way house to show routes in the mean time.

(g) Richard Parker asked if there were figures to show the usage of routes as Parishes would experience a higher volume of people. Jim Hardcastle explained that there are digital counters across the AONB that have been in place for 2 years so figures are available.

(h) Roy Jones asked if there were not enough paths across the Mendips. JR replied that certain areas i.e. Blackdown and Burrington are over used.

(i) SP concluded this session by highlighting the tension that had emerged at the meeting over the perception that public awareness of the new routes being funded was low. JR agreed to consider this issue. SP thanked him for his concise and informative presentation.

MENDIP HILLS PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Updates from Partnership Members

169. (1) (a) Paul Harley is looking at ways of bringing money into the rural areas. £28 million is available and he has asked councils to take advantage of this. Councils need to note their interest and state how it would be spent.

(b) Kate Lawrence is currently involved in consultation at SCC over the proposed Severn Barrage.

(c) “Gareth Withers is liaising with other groups on the Strawberry Line and the route to Shepton Mallet.”

(d) Harvey Siggs reported on the Somerset County Council Spending review. There is no reduction on funding and a 3% saving is expected at a local level, Priddy has no speed restrictions and there is a dangerous crossroads which appears to be a low priority, (until an accident occurs). Somerset Waste Partnership is working to get waste dealt with more efficiently.

(e) James Small reported that foot and mouth is causing more restrictions as is the blue tongue outbreak.

(f) Andrew Burns reported that Natural England received funding from the National Lottery of £25 million.

Local Authority Update

170. (1) (a) Richard Bartlett explained that the work on the experimental traffic ban on the A368 was ongoing.

(b) Roy Jones reported on the ongoing problem of rubbish dumping especially asbestos. Harvey Siggs explained that these people would not get charged for using the local recycling centres, it doesn't pay to fly tip. Steve Pilkington asked that if anyone does see rubbish, to report it immediately.

(c) Richard Parker reported that scrub clearing was taking place between Crooks Peak and Shute Shelf.

(d) Gill Davies explained that the Parish Council has been invited by Sedgemoor District Council to look at a survey, reference additional buildings for local people. Battscombe quarry has agreed to reduce the light at night. There is concern that the A371 through Cheddar is the alternative route to the A368. With reference to footpath maintenance JD said that there was very little in the budget for this and has suggested that Sedgemoor County Council involve the local parish as volunteers to undertake this.

(e) Linda Thomson asked if anything could be done about the 45° muddy slope at Black Rock Gate in Cheddar. *Chairmans note: a volunteer work party is undertaking repair work to the steps in November)*

AONB Service Update

Project Update from the AONB update

171. The Partnership considered a report by Jim Hardcastle.

1.1 The Lifelines project on the 29th September was a success with 150 people attending, feedback was positive.

1.3 The paragraph should end with 'Mendip Way and Butcombe Trail.'

172. Les Davies reported that 1141 volunteer rangers' hours had been recorded from March to October. Volunteers had come from Radstock and Cannington College and he has been working with the Youth Offending Teams. There had been a sighting of the Small Blue butterfly on Blackmoor Reserve. The Rangers hosted a day for the children from Chernobyl which was enjoyed by all. Livestock signs will be erected in Burrington Coombe to warn drivers of animals on the roads. These will be funded by the AONB.

MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

Draft Scoping Report and Action plan

173. (1) The partnership considered a report by Sarah Jackson.

(2) Steve Pilkington explained that the requirement was to produce a new plan by 2009. He thanked Sarah and Jonathan for their hard

work in producing the report which outlined what is a very complex process. SP then explained page by page exactly what the Scoping Report consisted of and asked for comments.

(3) Gill Davies wanted to know why the 'issue of speed' was not mentioned under the 'Traffic and Transport' section. Steve Pilkington explained that 'vulnerable road users' was the wording to include this subject.

(4) Mary de Viggiani mentioned 'Climate Change' and 'Energy Production' These issues will be addressed 6. Statement of key issues – theme of climate change.

(5) Gwynn Thomas said 'peak oil' had been omitted and Harvey Siggs suggested 'employment' should be included.

(6) SP then explained that the scoping report would be sent to English Heritage, Environment Agency and Natural England following today's meeting taking onboard appropriate changes. All members agreed.

Action Plan

174. Steve Pilkington explained that the management plan review process we are currently undertaking will produce a new Management Plan and Action Plan commencing April 2009. The current action plan is very complex including 120 actions, which made effective implementation and monitoring of Partnership activity very difficult. We would seek to avoid these difficulties in the preparation of our action plan for 2009. In the intervening period he proposed that a simplified, more focussed action plan be refined from the current one to take us from now to March 2009. This plan would of necessity be shorter focusing on those priority actions that the partnership could achieve within the timescale set. JH then led a workshop to encourage partnership members to

identify projects that were important to them. The outcomes of this session will be fed into the revised action plan.

PLANNING UPDATE

175. The partnership considered a report by Jonathan Richards. The contents were noted.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS UPDATE

176. The partnership considered a report by Jonathan Richards. The contents were noted.

PLANNING ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

177. The partnership considered a report by Jonathan Richards. The contents were noted.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND UPDATE

178. (1) The partnership considered a report by Sarah Jackson. The contents were noted.

(2) Gill Davies asked where the SW Wood initiative was. Harvey Siggs explained that the scheme was funded within the area and it was regional wide scheme.

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL UPDATE

179. The partnership considered a report by Sarah Jackson. The contents were noted.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

180. Gwyn Thomas suggested that a lot of time was spent on paperwork. SP explained that the AONB is a publicly funded body that is accountable to and had to conform to a variety of reporting requirements from the various funding bodies. If it did not then it would, quite rightly, not be funded.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

181. The Partnership agreed to hold their next meeting on Wednesday 19th March 2008. *Note: The Partnership Annual Forum will take place in the morning followed by the Partnership Committee meeting. The venue will be Shipham Village Hall – times to be confirmed.*

(The meeting closed at 12.30pm)