

(18 March 2005)

MENDIP HILLS AONB PARTNERSHIP

Minutes of a meeting of the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership held in Ubley Village Hall, Ubley on Friday 18 March 2005 at 2.00pm

Present

Mr R Wills	Mendip District Council (In the Chair)
Mrs G M Cawood	Somerset County Council
Mr K Maddock	Somerset County Council
Mr D W Joslin	Sedgemoor District Council
Mr P Harley	Mendip Society
Mr J Bateman	CLA
Mrs R Wyke	Parish Representative
Mrs G Hogarth	Parish Representative
Dr B Robinson	Parish Representative

Officers/Working Group Representatives

Sarah Diacono	Somerset County Council
Vicky Breeze	Somerset County Council
Sue Murtagh	Bath & NE Somerset Council

Associate Members

Mark Courhons	National Trust
Mary de Viggiani	CPRE

AONB Staff

Sarah Jackson
Jim Hardcastle
Les Davies
Liz Payne

Apologies were received from Mrs A Harley (North Somerset Council), Mrs D Burgess (Parish Rep), Ms H McBeth (GOSW), Mr S Lee (English Nature), Ms K Lawrence (Somerset Wildlife Trust), Mr G Withers (North Somerset Council), Ms A Grundy (Countryside Agency), Mr S Cave (Mendip District Council) and Ms J Burton (Sedgemoor District Council).

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

97. The Chairman and Members of the Partnership congratulated Les Davies on the award of the MBE in the New Year Honours List.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

98. There were no Declarations of Interest made.

MINUTES

99. The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2004 were taken as read and signed as a correct record. It was agreed that the AONB Manager would circulate a list of action points to members following meetings until such time as the Clerk can make available draft minutes 2 weeks after meetings.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

100. (1) Mr Bateman asked who took responsibility for the sheep in Cheddar Gorge as many had sheep scab. It appeared that the National Trust will not accept any responsibility for the sheep. There were concerns that the sheep will stray onto other land. Kate Lawrence (SWT) has tried to treat the sheep. Mr Bateman felt that the current situation was unacceptable. Mr Courhons responded for the National Trust indicating that the sheep were also on Longleat Estate land, they were feral sheep that had been dumped on the land and no one owned them. There had been attempts to round them up and treat them.

(2) Mr G Thomas spoke with concerns about light pollution especially at the Charterhouse Centre, post and rail fencing, posts on footpaths and highway verge encroachment. The AONB Manager responded that these issues were all mentioned in the Management Plan; that she would speak to the Charterhouse Centre Manager to see if blinds can be installed at the centre to reduce light pollution at night; and that issues concerning types of fencing were commented upon and views given. Mrs de Viggiani said that she had CPRE documentation and information on light pollution that she would send to the AONB Service for consideration.

"BENEATH THE LAKE"

101. The Partnership received a presentation by Lesley Ross, a local author, concerning the history of the Chew Valley before and after the construction of the reservoir in the 1950's. A number of slides were shown showing some of the old farmhouses and buildings from the 30's and 40's before they were demolished for the construction of the reservoir. An exhibition on the history of the Chew Valley would be taking place on 23 April at Bishop Sutton Village

Hall. The Chairman thanked Lesley Ross for her most interesting presentation.

MANAGEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

LA Initiatives

102. (1) The Partnership received a presentation by Vicky Breeze, Somerset County Council, about Open Access Rights and the Open Access Management Grant Scheme. Leaflets produced by the Countryside Group, SCC were available for members.

(2) Sue Murtagh, Bath & NE Somerset Council, informed the Partnership about a Dormouse Project in conjunction with South Glos Council looking at areas and habitats supporting Dormice. An application for Heritage Lottery funding had been made.

AONB Projects Update

(3) The Partnership considered an update report by Jim Hardcastle, on AONB projects. The report contained items on Communication and Interpretation, Landscape, Quarrying, Community Settlement and Development and Biodiversity. The Partnership noted the report.

Volunteer Support

(4) Les Davies updated the Partnership on the activities undertaken by the Voluntary Rangers who had contributed some 832 hours of support during the last year. They had assisted in 2 missing persons incidents and had undertaken 44 hours work in fixing brown disc markers. Training weekends had been held with instruction on group control, navigation and first aid. The Nationwide Building Society had sponsored some conservation work for volunteers and Radstock College was providing a course on land structure.

PLANNING UPDATE

103. (1) The Partnership considered a report by Liz Payne, Planning Liaison Officer, about comments made on planning applications referred to the AONB, the Annual Forum held on 11 February, planning documents currently under consultation and Draft Guidance on Strategic Waste Facilities.

(2) In response to questions from members it was agreed that Planning Liaison Officer would look at ways of providing information on planning applications supported/applications referred to the AONB but not commented on. It was also agreed that Parish Councils would receive on an

annual basis the AONB Supplementary Planning Guidance Publication. The report was noted by the Partnership.

DELIVERY OF THE MENDIP HILLS AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN

104. (1) The Partnership considered a report by the AONB Manager which sought approval to the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership Business Plan April 2005– March 2008 and the Management Plan Action Plan 2004–2009. Copies of both documents had been circulated to the Partnership members.

(2) The AONB Manager responded to questions concerning gateway costings, visitor information surveys and the dry stone wall survey. The Partnership **RESOLVED** to approve the Business Plan for April 2005 – March 2008 and the Action Plan for 2004–2009.

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL AONB UPDATE

105. (1) The Partnership considered a report by the AONB Manager on a number of national and regional issues which included the Countryside Agency consultation for undertaking a review of a National Park or AONB boundary. The Mendip Society is interested in submitting a case for extending the Mendip Hills AONB Boundary and is currently looking at the draft criteria the Countryside Agency is proposing to adopt for any proposals submitted to change boundaries. A paper setting out the Countryside Agency position on the matter was circulated.

(2) Mr Harley explained the Mendip Society's views on changes to the boundary to include an area on the eastern part of the Mendips around Butcombe, Nempnett Thrubwell and Cramore Ridge. It was felt that the proposed criteria could be met and a case submitted. He sought the Partnership's endorsement to an application being submitted.

(3) After debate the Partnership by 5 votes to 1 vote **RESOLVED** that a letter be sent to the Countryside Agency to welcome the fact that the Mendip Hills AONB is included on the Countryside Agency list of AONB/National Parks where there has been an expressed interest in a review of their boundary taking place should the Countryside Agency undertake a programme of such work in the future.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

106. The Partnership agreed to hold their next meeting on Thursday 22 September 2005 at 10.00am. The venue would be Shipham Village Hall.