



**Mendip Hills AONB Partnership Committee  
Draft Minutes of the meeting at Blagdon Village Club  
22<sup>nd</sup> November 2018**

**Present:**

**Partnership Committee**

Cllr Nigel Taylor (Chair)	Somerset County Council
Cllr Liz Richardson (Vice Chair)	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Jim Hardcastle	AONB Manager
Cllr Mike Adams	North Somerset Parish Representative
Tom Lane	Natural England
Cllr Ann Harley	North Somerset Council
Julie Cooper	Sedgemoor District Council Officer
Rebekah West	National Trust
Di Sheppard	Bath & North East Somerset Council Officer
Judith Tranter	Mendip Society
Ellie Higginson	Somerset Wildlife Trust
John Flannigan	North Somerset Council Officer
Steve Dury	Somerset County Council Officer
Cllr Tom Killen	Mendip District Council
Cllr Roger Dollins	Somerset Parishes Representative

**Other attendees**

Tim Haselden	AONB Project Development Officer
Cindy Carter	AONB Landscape Planning Officer
Sammy Fraser	AONB Volunteer Co-ordinator
Sarah Catling	AONB Support & Communications Officer
Dave Tranter	AONB Volunteer
Jean Bullen	AONB Volunteer
Royette Chapman	AONB Volunteer
John Steers	AONB Volunteer

**Apologies**

Ian Clemmett	National Trust
Pippa Rayner	Somerset Wildlife Trust
Cllr Liz Brimmell	Bath & North East Somerset Parishes Representative
Rob Palmer	Mendip District Council Officer
Richard Frost	Mendip Society
Chris Lewis	CPRE
Cllr Dawn Hill	Sedgemoor District Council

## Summary of Actions

Item	Item	Notes	Action
1	<b>Introductions</b>	Chair asked for introductions around the table Apologies as stated	
2	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	No declarations	
3	<b>Minutes of Previous Meeting</b>	Accepted as a true and accurate record Proposer RD Secunder LR	
4	<b>Paper A - OSG Report</b>	<p>JF presented the OSG report following the meeting on 5 November 2018. Main points include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tim Haselden has now started as Project Development Officer.</li> <li>• Sarah Jackson has now left the Partnership. Di Sheppard will be representing B&amp;NES and was welcomed. Sarah has been with the Partnership since 1997 and was formally thanked for her service.</li> <li>• Deadline for the formal response to the Glover review is December 18.</li> </ul> <p>JH gave clarification on the current funding arrangements highlighting the impact the announced cuts from B&amp;NES and SCC will have on the Partnership. Defra currently fund 75% with 25% coming from Local Authorities, the cuts will mean we fall below the 25% requirement to draw down the full grant. However, the 25% does not only need to come from Local Authorities, the cuts underlining the case to source additional income streams.</p> <p>NT lamented the cuts announced by B&amp;NES and asked LR to feedback to the Chair in an attempt for reconsideration.</p> <p>LR responded, it is not a situation that anyone wants to be in, councils are facing huge cuts. Every directorship has been tasked with making savings, this is not a cut in the support or commitment B&amp;NES has to the Partnership. Of note, project money may still be available.</p> <p>JF reinforced the advice on project funding with North Somerset having made a number of grants using section 106 funding.</p>	
5	<b>Paper B – Draft Management Plan 2019-2024</b>	<p>JH outlined the process for the Management Plan 2019-2024. Consultation of the previous plan finished at the end of September, this document is the draft plan formed as a result of that process. The Partnership now need to comment and sign this off before the six week formal public consultation process that will finish mid-January. OSG will meet again at the end of January to review feedback, at this meeting NT will consider if there is material change and if necessary call an extraordinary meeting.</p> <p>Comments were received back from: Ian Clemmett</p>	

		<p>Mike Adams Di Sheppard Liz Richardson Tom Lane For reference, details of all comments received are with JH.</p> <p>Amendments agreed by the Partnership: 2.1 Leave 'unpredictable and add 'under our control' 1.1.1 Add 'cultural heritage'</p>	<p>JH JH</p>
<p>6</p>	<p><b>Paper C – Draft Response to Glover Review on Protected Landscape’s Call for Evidence</b></p>	<p>The response was produced by the NAAONB and has subsequently been tailored for the Mendip Hills AONB. JH invited feedback from the Partnership. MA – 2.0 (3) after 'disappearing' insert 'so we must work to ensure substitute identifiable funding from the government.' RD suggested that the National Lottery has various revenue streams and queried the potential way of accessing the different pots of funding, JC highlighted the need to link the landscape and natural environment in accessing funds – making sure this is promoted for all. AH raised current concerns regarding site clearance by developers who don't get planning, leading to loss of trees, paths, habitats etc. Site clearance does not require planning consent. JH highlighted the current expectation on the AONB designation is mismatched with what can be achieved. IC has suggested that the Sandford principle be considered "If it appears that there is a conflict between those purposes, [the National Park Authority] shall attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area" The principle is currently applied across National Parks. JH advised the Partnership of the latest rebranding proposal from the National Association; AONBs to be named, National Landscapes. AH suggested that this ties in with the proposal to become a statutory consultee. JH asked for feedback on proposal 5.3.7 which suggests the de-coupling of the hosting arrangement of teams with Local Authorities. The Partnership felt that it was essential that Local Authorities are kept involved not just with funding, the danger would be that AONBs could end up in isolation. Further comments were shared on this point: LR – Don't see how you can sever the links. EA uses this model, it is essential to have the link as there are several Local Authorities involved. TK – this would weaken the AONB and also suggested that 5.3 is a point easy to state but difficult to deliver. TL – funding cuts could cause problems for the future Partnership, and the need to highlight the great return for a small amount of investment. The Partnership voted to delete point 5.3.7 from the proposal. JH reminded all the call for evidence is still open until 18</p>	<p>JH</p> <p>JH</p>

		<p>December. The review will include formal visits to each AONB and will finish late summer 2019. However, there will be no formal response from Government following the review.</p> <p>Agricultural Bill and Environmental Bill are still currently going through Parliament.</p>	
7	<p><b>Paper D – AONB Unit Update</b></p>	<p>CC gave the partnership an update on planning matters highlighting the need to communicate the positive impact any AONB Unit comments have had on decisions made by the Local Authorities.</p> <p>With limited resources in the Unit, planning volunteer goes through the weekly list from the Local Authorities to identify plans that would impact on the AONB.</p> <p>CC continues to work with partners to gain more weight for AONB Unit comments, of note Natural England recently deferred to AONB Unit comments in their capacity as statutory consultee.</p> <p>Moving forward the AONB Unit is looking at working with the Local Authorities with a view to offering pre-app advice, this must be carried out through the Local Authorities and will be a chargeable service.</p> <p>Current guidance provided by the Mendip Hills AONB include Agriculture Building Design Guidelines and Guidelines for Horse-related Development, both are SPG's which are a material consideration.</p> <p>A recent example of positive planning Partnership working at Herriott's Bridge, Bristol Water approached the AONB Unit for input on the new railings.</p> <p>CC is also currently also working on updating the Landscape Character Assessment for the AONB. Current Assessments are held by each of the Local Authorities and whilst still current, some date back to 1997.</p> <p>NT – reinforced the need to update this documentation as it becomes no longer credible.</p> <p>LR – went out to site with CC and had not considered that the AONB officer has no right to step foot on site in order to provide comments on an application. There is also a need to streamline the current scale of applications. The landscape document will help the triage process and hold a significant weight for appeals.</p> <p>Pre-app is a useful resource and the charge applied should ensure time is covered adequately – larger developers in particular would be happy to pay this. LR also suggested that training is useful and suggested that there may be an opportunity to roll out to Parish Council's who generally have lower staff turnover and are statutory consultees.</p> <p>Mendip Hills Fund continues to be a major success, funds available have built on previous years thanks to further local businesses coming on board. 18 applications have been received in this round.</p> <p>JH introduced TH to the Partnership, Tim will be working on volunteer development, the delivery plan, and identifying ways to draw in additional funding. He has</p>	

		<p>already started meeting with partners.  Volunteer hours continue to increase, total hours already up on last year.  Young Rangers spent an afternoon at Greenhill House in Cheddar sharing stories with residents.  Continued focus on raising awareness this year through Mendip Rocks!, Top of the Gorge Festival and the various social media platforms</p>	
8	<b>Paper E – NAAONB Update</b>	<p>JH &amp; NT attended the annual conference in July. NT suggested that the Partnership should host the conference in 2020. The National Association would still plan the programme.</p>	
9	<b>Partnership Updates</b>	<p><u>JC Sedgemoor</u> – Funding from Sedgemoor is secure for next year and they will continue to look at ways to work together.</p> <p><u>EH Somerset Wildlife Trust</u> – met this week with partners from NT, NE, AWT who will be working on producing a biodiversity plan for the Mendip Hills.  Facilitation fund – includes 14 landowners, supports collaborative working. Also offers support with stewardship applications. Currently looking at ways for AONB volunteers to carry out work on members land for a contribution. This would either provide an additional funding stream for the Unit, or act as payment in kind.  EH will be going on maternity leave shortly and recruitment is about to begin to appoint cover.</p> <p><u>SD Somerset County Council</u> – European funding will stop but there is a final call for one of the INTERREG sources of funding.</p> <p><u>TK Mendip District Council</u> – There is no proposal to cut funding from Mendip District Council for next year.</p> <p><u>TL Natural England</u> – Bob Corns has retired, NE are hoping he will be retained as a volunteer. The partnership would like to wish him well. Richard Penny may pick up West Mendip and TL East Mendip.  Currently working on the 7 HLS agreements due to expire next year. It has recently been announced that some of these could be extended for 4 years, others will be taken forward through the Countryside Stewardship scheme.  Previous work this year has seen some successful joint working with the Facilitation Fund on getting high quality Mid Tier applications submitted.  JSP work continues. Work by Bristol Uni students looking at scrub across Mendip has been completed and will be shared in due course. No major surprises. NE worked with NT, SWT and other landowners providing funding for scrub clearance but unfortunately there is no funding this year.</p> <p><u>JT Mendip Society</u> – Have been included in successful partnership working again as a result of events such as Mendip Rocks! This year invited to attend Naturally</p>	

		<p>Healthy Month. The Mendip Society has also now finally taken ownership of a local wood, this has allowed training opportunities as well as being able to host a forest school. Looking forward to further involvement and partnership working in the future. The partnership passed on their good wishes to RF.</p> <p><u>JF North Somerset Council</u> – JSP is currently out for technical consultation, draft Green Infrastructure will also be out in January for consultation.</p> <p>NT – looking to open Westbury Quarry next Jun/Jul just for the AONB before Mendip Rocks! event. The orchids are spectacular at this time of year.</p>	
10	<b>AONB Volunteer of the Year Award</b>	The Award this year went to Richard Ellis, Richard has been a volunteer with the AONB Unit since 2010 and SF has known him for over a year now. He attends every practical task and is also a volunteer ranger. He is an amazing ambassador for the AONB.	
11	<b>AOB</b>	<p>JH - Forestry Commission have requested to return to the Partnership having previously been represented. Partnership were in agreement. Proposer NT Seconder LR</p> <p>The Partnership wanted to thank to Barry James who has now moved on from Somerset County Council.</p> <p>It was suggested that it would be good to share the Yeo Valley presentation.</p> <p>JT – Mendip Society are holding a book launch at Wells &amp; Mendip Museum on 11 December.</p>	<p><b>JH</b></p> <p><b>JH</b></p>
12	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>	21 March 2019	