



**Mendip Hills AONB Partnership Committee
Minutes of the meeting at Burrington Inn
13th June 2018**

Present:

Partnership Committee

Jim Hardcastle	AONB Unit Manager
Cllr Liz Richardson (Vice Chair)	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Ian Clemmett	National Trust
Richard Frost	Mendip Society
Rob Palmer	Mendip District Council Officer
Cllr Nigel Taylor (Chair)	Somerset County Council
Steve Dury	Somerset County Council Officer
Cllr Mike Adams	North Somerset Parish Representative
Chris Lewis	CPRE
Sarah Jackson	Bath & North East Somerset Council Officer
Tom Lane	Natural England
Julie Cooper	Sedgemoor District Council Officer
Cllr Roger Dollins	Somerset Parishes Representative

Other attendees

Sarah Catling	AONB Support & Communications Officer
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Apologies

John Flannigan	North Somerset Council Officer
Cllr Liz Brimmell	Bath & North East Somerset Parishes Representative
Cllr Ann Harley	North Somerset Council
Pippa Rayner	Somerset Wildlife Trust
Cllr Dawn Hill	Sedgemoor District Council

Summary of Actions

Item	Item	Notes	Action
1	Welcome & Apologies	See previous page	
2	Minutes of previous meeting	Amendment to Item 5 Paper C – to state management of Blackmoor not Black Down. Accepted as a true and accurate record	SC
3	Declarations of Interest	No declarations	
4	Presentation of the Mendip Hills AONB Unit Business Plan 2018-21, Terms of Reference and Statement of Intent	<p>JH presented the AONB Unit's 4 key documents:-</p> <p>Statement of Intent (Sol) – Forms the agreement by each of the funding partners Somerset County Council, Bath and North East Somerset Council, North Somerset Council, Mendip District Council and Sedgemoor District Council's as intent to fund. Defra informs the AONB directly of funding, current Defra agreement runs until 2020. The Sol is signed off by all funding partners with the exception of Defra who will inform the AONB Unit directly.</p> <p>Terms of Reference (ToR) – Outlines how the partnership operates and identifies the roles and responsibility of members.</p> <p>The Business and Tourism representative member is currently vacant, JH encouraged ideas regarding future recruitment for this.</p> <p>All current partnership members are to sign the ToR Membership Accord.</p> <p>Business Plan – Forms the vision for the AONB Unit in order to deliver the management plan.</p> <p>Key issues for the business plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New hosting agreement required • Defra 25 year plan • Review of protected landscapes and AONBs • Income <p>Management Plan 2019-24 – AONB Unit statutory document.</p> <p>Current document periods are not aligned with each other, the plan moving forward therefore is to bring them in line with the new Management Plan for 2019-24.</p> <p>Defra agreement only in place until 2020, post 2020 still unknown.</p>	JC
5	Paper A – Officer Support Group Report in reference to Statement of Intent	<p>SJ presented the OSG report following the meeting on 4 June 2018.</p> <p>Main recommendations include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All partnership members to sign the Membership Accord attached to the ToR annually in March. • Partnership to endorse the Business Plan. • Declaration of interest should form an agenda item in all future partnership meetings. • Business plan should include reference to the 	

		<p>Government 25YEP, review of National Parks and AONBs and JSP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SCF should be approached with a view to drawing financial support to cover current fundraising costs for the Mendip Hills Fund, suggested level of 10%, with a further recommendation that this should be claimed now rather than when a notional £10k level has been reached. JH highlighted that most charities draw 30-40% for governance and fundraising. 	
6	Paper B – Terms of Reference	<p>Page 8 – spelling error ‘current reps were voted for’ No further comments arising from the ToR, NT requested all to sign the Membership Accord and return to SC. Proposer RD Secunder RF The ToR was adopted.</p>	<p>JH ALL</p>
7	Paper C – Business Plan 2018-21	<p>1.4 – MA suggested that the sub section numbering is confusing. JH to revise numbering to make clearer. 1.6B – MA suggested adding ‘AONB’ before Special Qualities. 3.8 – SJ commented that OSG did want to look at the SCC hosting fee before signing. Appendix 2 – spelling error ‘stationery’</p> <p>Need to check the numbering of paragraphs in the document.</p> <p>The extent of Volunteers contribution was noted with JH highlighting a current area of focus on visitor numbers to Mendip. RD asked if there is currently any indication as to the level of visitor spend in the area and how this can be assessed. JH conducted a similar assessment of Active Mendip spend 10 years ago taking figures from those people who actually booked on to activities and Vicky Banham from Sedgemoor conducted visitor research at Hinckley C, SJ suggested it may be worth contacting her to see if further updates or information is available. Natural England provides valuable data for a variety of measures that have been used to form the state of the AONB but this service under review by them. Without this the AONB unit would not be in a position to gather key information to comply with Defra’s core functions for an AONB Unit. RD suggested that this data has a real value and this needs to be communicated, LR also highlighted the importance of this as a historic record and a benchmark for future measures. JH has informally shared the partnerships concern with the NAAONB. Funding partners do appreciate that funding has been cut in real terms. NT suggested approaching Hinckley Point for funding and JC highlighted that the power lines will</p>	<p>JH JH JH JH</p>

		<p>have a large impact and Sedgemoor are still negotiating in the AONB interest.</p> <p>The Community Impact Mitigation Fund is now closed but SCF are still taking applications, whilst the AONB is not a charitable body it would be eligible based on what it provides.</p> <p>SJ suggested that there may be an impact on visitor numbers whilst works are undertaken which will have an impact on spend and needs to be considered.</p> <p>LR highlighted that Bristol Airport have just announced a new Diamond Fund that will cover parishes outside the flight zone. £60k has been made available.</p> <p>Proposer LR Seconder RD The Business Plan was adopted</p>	
8	Partnership Updates	<p><u>RD/MA Parish Representatives</u> – Met with JH for an update recently and would like to continue with those. JH is supplying updates for them to disseminate to the parishes.</p> <p><u>RF Mendip Society</u> – Mendip Rocks! festival is coming up, this year running from July through to the end of October, the event brings in many visitors. All events are on the AONB website.</p> <p>Suggestion was made to approach the Mid Somerset series for press release.</p> <p>RD formally thanked AM for all the work he has done over the years not just on Mendip Rocks.</p> <p>The Partnership concurred and wanted to thank AM for all his hard work, he will be missed.</p> <p><u>IC National Trust</u> – TOGF is next week (22-24 June), current bookings include 140 campers and 100+ day visitors.</p> <p>NT currently undertaking a review of countryside management opportunities in particular looking at improving grazing opportunities, which fits with their Land Outdoors and Nature Programme. There is the possibility of a land acquisition on the Mendips, potentially a farm that would include stock. NT also met with Simon Clark, Natural England, the extension of and connectivity to the National Nature Reserves links well with NT acquisition. The Mendip Hills Facilitation Fund workshop is currently looking at grassland management at Chancellors Farm. NT continues working with lots of land owners with a drive to look after land even better.</p> <p><u>CL CPRE</u> – New Executive now been appointed and is in post in London.</p> <p>CPRE supported and in the past initiated house building in areas, contrary to common belief, and the new planner is settled in and working well with AONB unit. Also currently sponsoring painting competition and best village store to</p>	

		<p>help improve publicity and are undertaking a study on volunteer hours and impact.</p> <p>At a recent CPRE Trustee meeting a discussion took place regarding current boundaries on Mendip, in light of the protected landscape review Trustees would support the extension to the current boundaries to the East, if the partnership wanted to take this forward.</p> <p>In response the partnership suggested a need to wait for what the review reveals in regards to key designated landscapes and what they will look like, as well as potential impact on funding before a decision could be made on this.</p> <p><u>TL Natural England</u> – Work continues with the Facilitation Fund, a core group currently involved around the Cheddar area and have links with local farmers. Simon Clark is currently reviewing amalgamating NNR's into a single body with the possibility of making new areas moving forward.</p> <p>Budget from Defra has still not been confirmed for this year. However, NE is committed to the current partnership working in the Mendip Hills having been identified as a focus area in previous years.</p> <p>NE currently has an MSc student from University of Bristol carrying out condition survey of sites, mainly SSSI's, on Mendip from a GIS perspective, if further sites would be of interest let TL know.</p> <p><u>SJ B&NES</u> – Submitted Round 2 Bathscape application to HLF Landscape Partnership Scheme. The bid addresses the decline in quality of grazing land with the intention of bringing land owners together. If successful it will achieve £1.6m for a 5 year programme.</p> <p>The Bathscape Walking Festival runs from 15th – 23rd September, with a link to Mendips through Limestone Link, etc.</p> <p>West of England JSP Green Infrastructure Plan, assessing impact of new development bringing increased recreational pressure on protected wildlife sites. SJ is co-ordinating a workshop on Monday to consider model local plan policies for green infrastructure.</p> <p><u>LR B&NES</u> – Update on Chew Valley Recreational Trail Partnership, including Mendip Hills AONB looking to create a circular route around Chew Valley Lake. A Tourism Infrastructure Bid is to be submitted for European funding and is due in by the end of September. However, planning permission needs to be in place to apply for £1 million 100% grant and would see the project to completion. There will be a chance to view the plans on 28th June at Chew Valley School 4.00 – 7.30pm TBC.</p>	
9	AOB	<p>JH gave an overview of the forthcoming review by Defra – the review of National Parks and AONB's is to be held by Julian Glover with findings due to be reported in 2019, it</p>	

		<p>will be the biggest review since designation with input from AONB's expected. The overall tone and language suggests that the review will be acted upon. JH will circulate further details shortly. CL will update the partnership on any development that CPRE are aware of in other areas around the country.</p> <p>Cllr Peter Downing has now stepped down from the partnership and Dawn Hill will be the Sedgemoor District Councillor moving forward.</p> <p>JH has been invited to a meeting with Yeo Valley to discuss the Burrington Inn site with a view to becoming the new base for the AONB Unit and visitors centre. Yeo Valley now owns the site in its entirety and the appropriate planning process will be observed. NT highlighted that the location takes it out of the Somerset County Council boundary and is something to be aware of with regard to SCC future hosting arrangements.</p>	JH
10	Date of Next Meeting	<p>JH highlighted that, given the addition of guest speakers at partnership meetings, the current timings might need to be reviewed to allow sufficient focus for both elements. Suggested timings therefore are: 10.00am -11.00am Invited speaker 11.00am – 1.00pm Main Partnership Meeting</p> <p>22 November 2018</p>	

PAPER A Mendip Hills AONB Partnership Committee - 13th June 2018

Officer Support Group Report

The Officer Support Group meeting met on Monday 4th June 2018. The OSG considered the;

1.0 Partnership Terms of Reference agreeing minor amendments to recommend to the Committee. Amendments are to:

- 1.2 recognise North Somerset as a funding partner
- 5.2 to have the Partnership Chair and Vice Chair, and remove 'may attend by invitation' with regard Natural England.
- 5.3 in recognition of the above to delete 'of the five constituent authorities' to allow NE officer to chair the meeting if required.

1.1 The OSG noting 3.14 'All Partnership members are to sign the 'Membership Accord' that is attached to the ToR, agreed that this should be re-signed by all members annually and to recommend that action to the Partnership on 13th June.

2.0 The Statement of Intent 2018-21 was agreed by the funding partners with the understanding that partners would provide an update on their 2019/20 funding contributions by the end of September 2018 in line with the requirement to give no less than 6 month's notice to withdraw or reduce funding. However it was noted that local authorities are unlikely to be able to confirm their allocations until Council budgets are agreed by Cabinet late in the current financial year.

3.0 Partnership Committee agendas – in discussing the Terms of Reference 5.1 (b) regarding the content of Partnership agendas, the OSG agreed that Declarations of Interest should be standard item on the Partnership agenda as of June 2018.

4.0 Business Plan – the OSG discussed in detail and agreed changes to be made and circulated before the Partnership meeting. Key amendments were:

- 3.0 Current funding – include table showing partner contributions, figure required for the 25% match funding of core costs and disparity figures.
- 4.0 Opportunities - include reference to the Government 25yr Environment Plan, Defra review of National Parks and AONBs and Joint Spatial Plan.
- Appendix 1- include in table risks listed under 3.11 plus risk of review of NPs/AONBs with regard funding and review of Somerset local authorities.
- Appendix 2 Budget – include 'contingency' line with allocated amounts for redundancy/vehicle replacement, and to show more clearly where income relates to specific projects eg Mendip Rocks, Young Rangers, Mendip Hills Fund.

4.1 The OSG noted 4.27 with regard the AONB Unit/Partnership in future seeking to cover costs of fundraising for the Mendip Hills AONB Fund, and fully supports the Manager in approaching Somerset Community Foundation to discuss this with a view to determining and putting this in place as soon as is possible if agreed to by the Foundation.

4.2 The Manager proposed in future aligning the periods covered by all the above documents with the period of the new Management Plan that will be 2019-2023. The OSG supported this.

Recommendations:

The Partnership

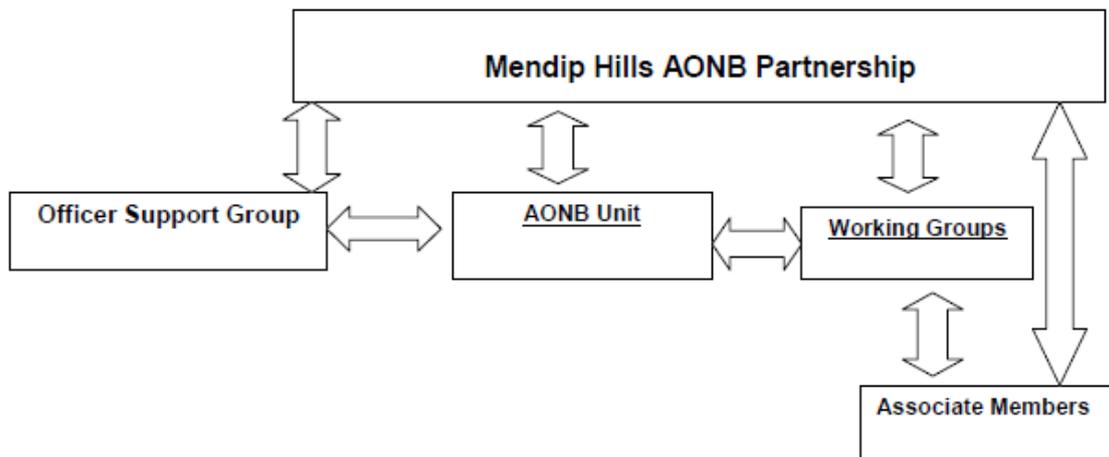
- i) endorse the Business Plan and revised Terms of Reference
- ii) each member to sign the Partnership Membership Accord, and to re-sign annually

PAPER B

Mendip Hills AONB Partnership TERMS OF REFERENCE 2018 - 21

1. Application and Context

- 1.1 These Terms of Reference apply to the governance structure of the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership:



- (a) the Partnership Committee;
 - (b) the Officer Support Group;
 - (c) AONB Unit
 - (d) Working groups
 - (e) Associate Members;
- 1.2 The term the 'constituent local authorities' applies to the five principal local authorities whose areas wholly or partly comprise the Mendip Hills AONB (i.e. Somerset County Council, Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, North Somerset Council and Bath and North East Somerset Council). These local authorities, plus Defra, are also the 'funding partners'.
- 1.3 The Committee is set up as a Joint Advisory Committee under Section 102(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to advise the constituent local authorities. The Partnership does not have executive powers over the funding partners rather it acts in an advisory and consultative capacity to the funding partners.

2. Review of Terms of Reference

- 2.1 These Terms of Reference operate alongside the identical time periods of the Statement of Intent, signed by the local authority funding partners, and are subject to review by the Partnership Committee at the same time the Statement of Intent is reviewed.

- 2.2 Subject to the agreement of all funding partners and a majority of the Partnership Committee, these Terms of Reference may be reviewed at any time.

3. The AONB Partnership Committee

General

- 3.1 The Mendip Hills AONB Partnership Committee is the body responsible for coordinating, on behalf of the constituent local authorities, the management of the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- 3.2 The principal purpose of the Partnership Committee is to enable the relevant local authorities, 'acting jointly', to fulfil their duties under Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (the CROW Act) to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Mendip Hills AONB through the production of a Management Plan. In addition, the Partnership Committee encompasses a wider membership in order to engage an appropriate range of relevant national, regional and local interests in the management of the area.
- 3.3 The Partnership Committee's principal focus is on the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Beauty as designated. However, recognising that such designated landscapes cannot be managed in isolation, the Partnership Committee also seeks to ensure that management of the AONB reflects, and is reflected in the management of the surrounding area.

Roles and responsibilities

- 3.4 The Partnership Committee:
- prepares, produces and promotes the AONB Management Plan, leads on its implementation, monitors and reviews its progress
 - seeks to ensure that the policy and practice of authorities and organisations with management responsibilities in the Mendip Hills are consistent with and complement AONB Management Plan objectives
 - develops and fosters partnership working with all appropriate bodies and organisations to assist in the effective management of the Mendip Hills AONB
 - seeks additional funds, including external finance, to assist in delivering projects and initiatives identified within the AONB Management Plan and for effective AONB management continually promotes the work of the AONB and engages the wider community in the delivery of the AONB Management Plan.

Membership and Meetings

- 3.5 There are 16 voting members of the Partnership Committee comprising:
- (a) five elected members appointed by the constituent principal local authorities (one from each):
- Somerset County Council;
 - Mendip District Council;
 - Sedgemoor District Council;

- North Somerset Council;
 - Bath and North East Somerset Council;
- (b) three members elected by the constituent Parish Councils¹ (see Appendix 1);
- (c) one representative of Natural England;
- (d) one representative of land owning and farming interests:
- National Farmers Union or Country Land and Business Association;
- (e) three representatives of non-governmental organisations:
- National Trust;
 - Mendip Society ,
 - Council for the Protection of Rural England
- (f) two representatives of wildlife interests :
- Avon Wildlife Trust
 - Somerset Wildlife Trust
- (g) one representative of local business/tourism interests
- 3.6 Each member of the Partnership committee has one vote, with the Chair having a second or casting vote if required.
- 3.7 The AONB Manager attends the Partnership Committee but does not have a vote.
- 3.8 The Partnership Committee elects a Chair and Vice Chair, one of whom will be from one of the local authorities, to each serve a term of 2 years.
- 3.9 The Partnership Committee may, at any time, co-opt onto the Committee an individual or a representative of an organisation that it feels will bring particular knowledge, expertise or experience to its deliberations. Co-option will normally be for a limited, although not necessarily predetermined, period of time. Co-opted members do not have a vote.
- 3.10 The Partnership Committee normally meets twice per year at a venue within or close to the AONB. Dates for these meetings should preferably be identified several months ahead.. Additional Partnership Committee meetings may be held, at the discretion of the Chair, as and when required.
- 3.11 A quorum for a Partnership Committee meeting comprises a minimum of five voting members, of which a minimum of three will be representatives of funding partners.
- 3.12 Whilst each member of the Partnership Committee represents an organisation or stakeholder group, such interests should be considered in context with the Committee's collective goal 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

¹ In these Terms of Reference the term Parish Councils is used as a generic term for Parish Councils, Town Councils and City Councils.

Partnership in the delivery of the Management Plan.

- 3.13 Local authority members of the Partnership Committee are subject to the following conditions:
- (a) All local authorities represented on the Partnership Committee should have regard to the desirability of appointing one member of the authority who represents a ward or electoral division situated wholly or partly within the Mendip Hills AONB.
 - (b) Each local authority elected member attending a Partnership Committee meeting may be accompanied by no more than one officer. The officer of the authority may still attend if the member is absent
 - (c) If a local authority elected member wishes to be accompanied to a Partnership Committee meeting by more than one officer, or if more than one officer wishes to attend such a meeting when the elected member is absent, this should, on each occasion, be with the prior agreement of the Chair.
 - (d) Local authority officers accompanying local authority elected members to Partnership Committee meetings do not have the right to vote
- 3.14 All members of the Partnership Committee are to sign the 'Membership Accord' which sets out the role of individual members and the way in which they are expected to contribute to the work of the Partnership Committee. A copy of the 'Membership Accord' is attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.15 The three parish council representatives elected to the Partnership are to reflect the interests of the parishes in Somerset, North Somerset and Bath & North East Somerset respectively and to ensure that the Partnership takes account of the needs of their communities (Appendix 1 contains more information).
- 3.16 If the named representative is unable to attend they can send a substitute. If they fail to attend on a regular basis membership of that organisation will be subject to review.
- 3.17 The Chairman, in consultation with the AONB Manager, will decide whether items are appropriate for inclusion on the agenda for a Partnership Committee meeting or may be considered in other ways. Items for the Partnership Committee should be appropriate to the AONB and its delivery of the Management Plan.
- 3.18 Partnership Committee papers will be uploaded to the AONB web site and the Partnership Committee members notified of this at least one week prior to Partnership Committee meetings.
- 3.19 With prior notice to the Chairman members of the public may raise a matter of relevance at the AONB Partnership Committee meeting if the Chairman agrees that it is appropriate to do so. Matters that are deemed not appropriate will be considered by the Chairman with the AONB Unit Manager or other relevant partner and responded to accordingly.

4. Financial Matters

- 4.1 The local funding arrangement for the AONB Partnership is set out in a Statement of Intent (SOI) between the five funding local authority partners², to give the Partnership a secure financial future for the period of the SOI.
- 4.2 The annual budget is agreed by the funding partners in accordance with their Statement of Intent. Decisions regarding the annual strategic priorities for this budget are the responsibility of the Partnership Committee. Day to day management of the budget is the responsibility of the AONB Manager who follows the host authority's financial standing orders. The OSG provides budgetary guidance/advice to the AONB Manager as required.

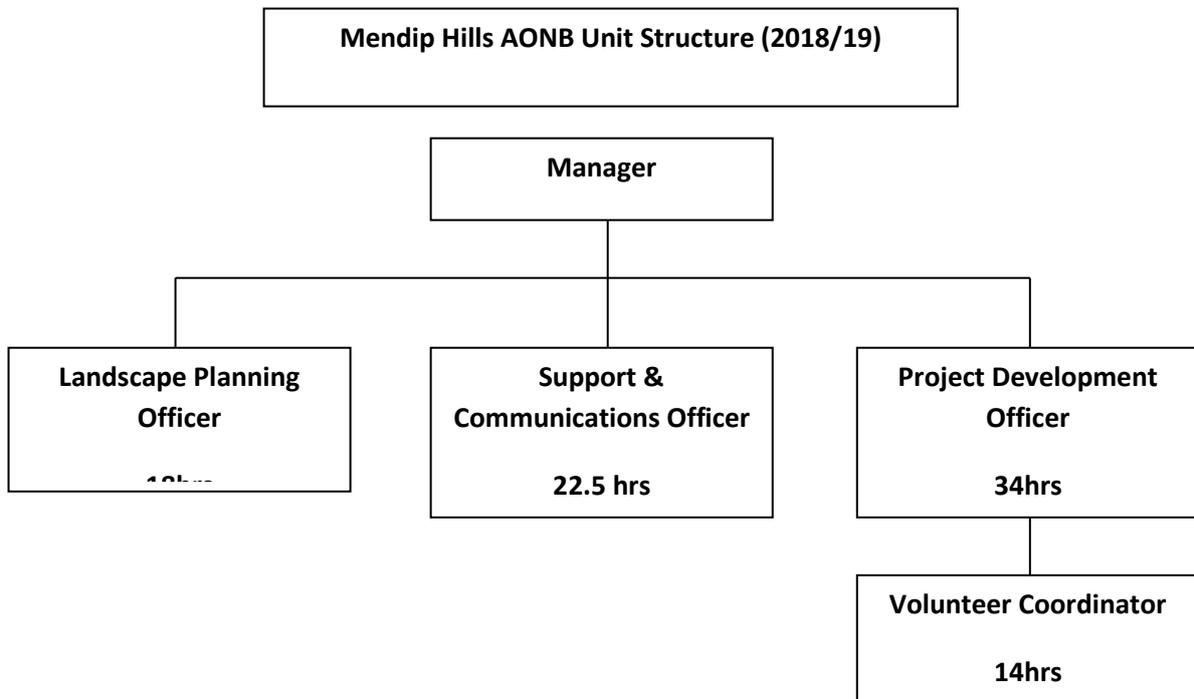
5. Officer Support Group

- 5.1 The principal roles and responsibilities of the Officer Support Group (OSG) are:
 - (a) to provide support to the AONB Unit through the AONB Manager and the Partnership Committee;
 - (b) to agree with the AONB Manager the form and content of the agendas for the Partnership Committee meetings and the process through which the decisions of the Partnership Committee will be implemented.
- 5.2 The membership of the OSG comprises:
 - (a) one officer from each of the five constituent local authorities
 - (b) the Chair of the Partnership Committee and Vice Chair.
 - (c) the AONB Manager
 - (d) An officer of Natural England
- 5.3 The OSG elects a Chair from amongst officers for each meeting.
- 5.4 The OSG meets before each Partnership meeting and as required.

² i.e. the five local authorities are Somerset County Council, Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council & Bath, North Somerset Council and North East Somerset Council

6. AONB Unit

- 6.1 The work of the Partnership is coordinated by the AONB Unit. The Unit delivers the AONB core functions as defined by Defra (see Appendix 3).



7. Working Groups

- 7.1 The Partnership establishes Working Groups, as and when required, to provide specialist advice and guidance on issues relating to:
- policy development
 - the review or delivery of the AONB Management Plan;
 - project development and implementation;
 - any other matter where the Partnership decides that it would be expedient.
- 7.2 The Partnerships approach to the establishment of all Working Groups is to:
- facilitate the development of an inclusive and participative approach to the management of the Mendip Hills AONB;
 - provide a mechanism through which the Partnership Committee, Officer Support Group and AONB Unit can actively engage with a wide range of organisations, individuals and interest groups concerned with, or interested in the management

of the Mendip Hills AONB;

- (c) enable the Partnership Committee, Officer Support Group and AONB Unit to access specialist knowledge and expertise that will assist in the production/review and implementation of the AONB Management Plan.

7.3 Working Groups are normally established on a 'Task and Finish' basis with specific and time-limited role with clear purpose(s) and goals. Current working groups are listed on the AONB web site.

8. Associate Members of the Partnership

8.1 Associate membership of the Partnership is open to any organisation or individual contributing to the delivery of the AONB Management Plan who wishes to be recognised as an Associate Member.

8.2 All Parish Councils that lie wholly or partially within the AONB automatically become an Associate member of the Partnership. Parish Councils are required to provide the AONB Unit with a current e-mail address if they wish to be included on a circulation list to receive notifications from the Partnership regarding Committee meetings and other matters.

8.3 All Associate members :

- (a) will be notified of Partnership Committee papers uploaded to the AONB website and are welcome to attend the meetings in a non voting capacity.
- (b) have the right to submit a request to the Chair of the Partnership Committee to be allowed to address a meeting of the Committee where there is an issue that is of particular interest or concern to them: any such request should be decided by the Chair.

Appendix 1

Parish Council Representatives and the Election Process

The Partnership Committee has three Parish Councils members, one elected from each of the following principal local authority areas by those parish councils that lie wholly or partially within the boundaries of the Mendip Hills AONB:

- (a) Somerset County (11 parishes)
- (b) North Somerset (9 parishes)
- (c) Bath and North East Somerset (8 parishes)

The eligible parishes within each of these three principal local authority areas are listed in Table 1 below.

Somerset County	North Somerset	Bath and North East Somerset
Axbridge	Banwell	Chew Stoke
Cheddar	Blagdon	Compton Martin
Chewton Mendip	Bleadon	East Harptree
Compton Bishop	Burrington	Hinton Blewett
Litton	Butcombe	Nempnett Thrubwell
Priddy	Churchill	Stowey Sutton
Rodney Stoke	Hutton	Ubley
St Cuthbert Out	Loxton and Christon	West Harptree
Shipham	Winscombe and Sandford	
Wells City		
Westbury sub Mendip		

The elections are administered by the Somerset Association of Local Councils.

Each candidate is required to currently hold a position as a parish councillor on one of the parish councils within their principal local authority area. Candidates should preferably not be an elected member of a principal local authority: it is hoped that this will ensure that those elected to the Partnership Committee are better able to focus on issues at the parish council level and give the necessary time and commitment to the work of the Partnership Committee.

Each of the three parish councillors elected to the Partnership Committee will hold the post for a five year term, current reps were voted for during 2015 meaning elections will need to take place in 2019.

Role of Parish Council Members on the Partnership Committee.

The role of parish council members of the Committee is to ensure that the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership takes full account of the needs of their local communities and to improve the links between the Partnership and local residents.

Parish members are appointed to reflect local concerns and to represent the wider AONB view, not just that of their own parish.

Appendix 2 Mendip Hills AONB Partnership

Membership Accord

As a member of the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership Committee, I undertake:

- to promote the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the Mendip Hills AONB;
- to respond on request to the review and preparation of the Management Plan and the Delivery Plan, signing up to key actions where appropriate.
- to champion and communicate the Partnership's vision for the Mendip Hills AONB and its communities, as set out on the AONB Management Plan and Communication Strategy;
- to contribute knowledge, expertise and experience to the work of the Committee;
- to promote, support and play a full and active part in the work of the Partnership Committee in fulfilling its 'Roles and Responsibilities' as set out in the Partnership Committee's 'Terms of Reference';
- where appropriate, to consult with the organisation(s) or interest group(s) that I represent on relevant matters being considered or addressed by the Committee;
- to assist the Partnership Committee in achieving an independent and apolitical profile in the performance of its functions;
- to ensure that no activity or decision of the Partnership may cause any member to be in breach of its constitution
- to attend Partnership Committee meetings whenever possible and to step down from the Committee if I am no longer able to attend meetings on a regular basis.
- to follow the Seven Principles of Public Life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership

Name.....

Signed..... Date.....

Appendix 3

DEFRA's AONB UNIT CORE FUNCTIONS

- a) Developing reviewing, preparing and publishing the AONB vision and the CRow Act AONB Management Plan
- b) Raising awareness of the AONB, and promoting the AONB vision and the management plan to help distinguish the AONB from adjacent countryside
- c) Advising upon, facilitating and co-coordinating implementation by others of the Management Plan
- d) Advising Local Authorities on their activities within AONBs, to encourage them to go beyond normal levels of service (attain the highest possible standards) in countryside management
- e) Monitoring and reporting on progress against AONB Management Plan targets
- f) Monitoring AONB landscape condition
- g) Accessing resources for management activities
- h) Working with and contributing to the NAAONB activities, Participating in and promoting joint working between AONBs and across protected landscapes family
- i) Providing a management role to co-ordinate AONB protection through the actions of the AONB unit, the AONB partnership and other partners at a local and strategic level.
- j) Developing an involvement by the community in the management of the AONB
- k) Providing landscape related planning advice

PAPER C

Mendip Hills AONB Unit Business Plan 2018 - 21

Contents

1.0 PURPOSE AND ROLE OF THIS BUSINESS PLAN

2.0 VISION FOR THE AONB UNIT

3.0 CURRENT FUNDING

4.0 OPPORTUNITIES

Appendix 1 Risk Assessment

Appendix 2 Budget 2018-21

Management Plan & Delivery Plan 2014-19: <http://plan.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk/>

V.2 05/2018

To be reviewed 03/2019

1.0 PURPOSE AND ROLE OF THIS BUSINESS PLAN

1.1 In order to ensure that the AONB is protected and enhanced it is essential that appropriate staffing and resources are allocated and maintained to enable effective delivery of key aspects of the Management Plan. It is important to justify the effectiveness and efficiency of the AONB Unit to existing and potential users and sponsors.

1.2 The Business Plan sets out the current position and future requirements for a core staff unit to provide an effective mechanism for implementation of the AONB Management Plan and Delivery Plan <http://plan.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk/>

1.3 Context

1.4 Four elements provide the context and strategic direction for the work of the Mendip Hills AONB Unit:

1.5 A. The **Mendip Hills AONB Partnership** brings together representatives of local communities, local authorities, national agencies, voluntary and interest groups to co-ordinate and influence management of the AONB.

The Partnership has four key aims to:

- Promote the AONB and the Management Plan to all the constituent organizations and others.
- Promote the vision for the AONB and implement the Management Plan.
- Review and monitor progress of the Plan and its objectives.
- Consider, debate and recommend courses of action on the main issues relating to the AONB.

1.6 B. The **AONB Management Plan 2014-19 (and subsequent 2019 – 21 plan)**, adopted by the five local authorities, identifies the Special Qualities with policies and objectives to protect them, and emphasizes the importance of protecting this nationally important designated landscape for its natural beauty and the wide range of benefits it brings society.

1.7 C. **Defra's 11 core functions of an AONB staff unit:**

a) Developing reviewing, preparing and publishing the AONB vision and the CRoW Act AONB Management Plan

b) Raising awareness of the AONB, and promoting the AONB vision and the management plan to help distinguish the AONB from adjacent countryside
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c) Advising upon, facilitating and co-coordinating implementation by others of the Management Plan
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d) Advising Local Authorities on their activities within AONBs, to encourage them to go beyond normal levels of service (attain the highest possible standards) in
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countryside management
e) Monitoring and reporting on progress against AONB Management Plan targets
f) Monitoring AONB landscape condition
g) Accessing resources for management activities
h) Working with and contributing to the NAAONB activities, Participating in and promoting joint working between AONBs and across protected landscapes family.
i) Providing a management role to co-ordinate AONB protection through the actions of the AONB unit, the AONB partnership and other partners at a local and strategic level.
j) Developing an involvement by the community in the management of the AONB
k) Providing landscape related planning advice

1.8 d Each AONB reports to the National Association for AONB statistics for these Key Performance Indicators. The figures are aggregated and provided to Defra.

1. **Landscapes for Wildlife (nature)** Hectares of land enhanced for nature through the work of AONB teams.
2. **Landscapes for People (wellbeing)** Number of people engaged through the work of AONB teams.
3. **Landscapes for Culture (history)** Number of Scheduled Monuments that have been protected through the work of the AONB team.

2.0 VISION FOR THE AONB UNIT

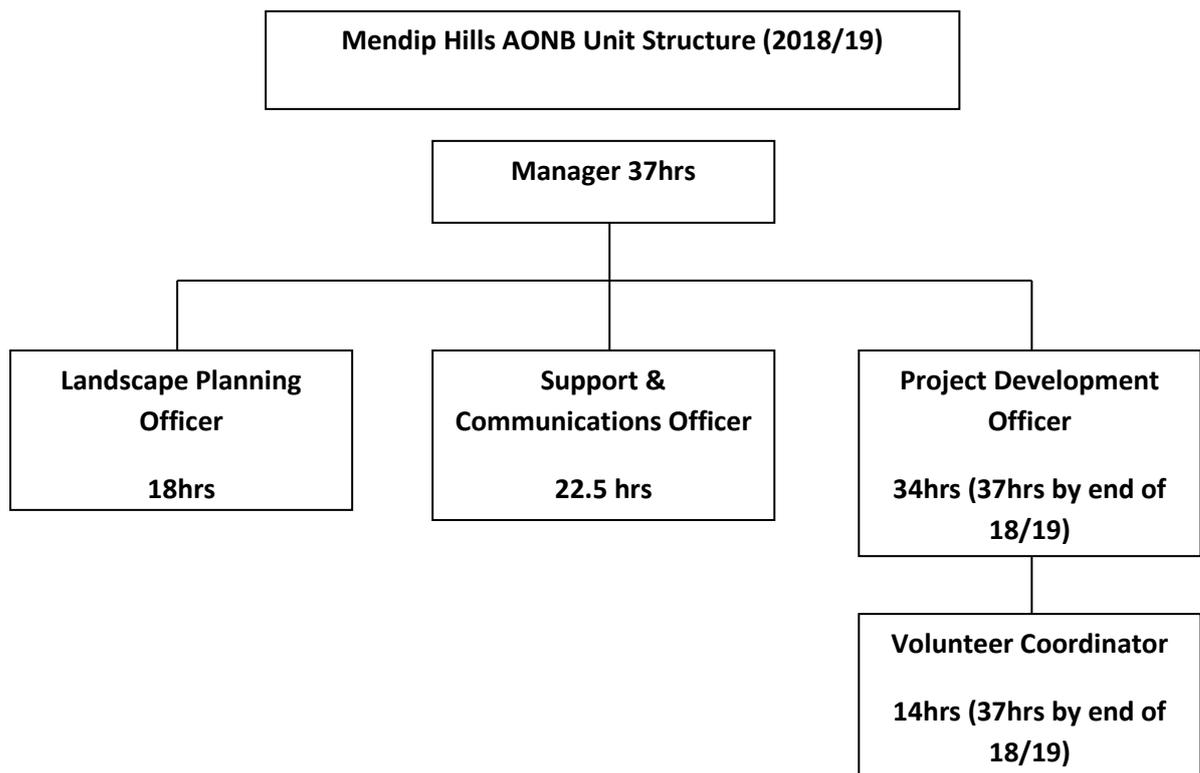
2.1 The vision for the Mendip Hills AONB Unit is to deliver the AONB management plan by:

- Engaging with people in a wide variety of ways
- Being ambitious, modern and open

2.2 Three themes run through all the roles and work of the unit to achieve the vision:

- **Special qualities**
- **Communications**
- **Volunteers**

2.3 The work of the Partnership is coordinated by the **AONB Unit**; currently Manager, Project Development Officer, Support and Communication Officer Landscape Planning Officer and the Volunteer Coordinator (shared with the Quantock Hills AONB and Blackdown Hills AONB) coordinating and running volunteer practical tasks, the Volunteer Rangers and Young Rangers. The Unit delivers the AONB core functions defined by Defra (see C).



3.0 CURRENT FUNDING

3.1 The Statement of Intent (SOI) demonstrates the ‘intent to fund’ but is not a legally binding document. It is signed by Somerset County Council, Bath and North East Somerset Council, North Somerset Council, Mendip District Council and Sedgemoor District Council.

3.2 Defra is not a signatory to the Statement of Intent. Defra informed each AONB of a funding settlement in 2016 but is unable to give an indication of funding beyond 2020. This plan assumes the same Defra contribution in 2019-20 as 2020-21.

3.3 In the Statement of Intent, Somerset County Council continues to be the host authority.

3.4 Contributions from the funding partners;

Organisation	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
SCC	£16150	£16150	£16150
B&NES	£8500	£8500	£8500
SDC	£8001	£8001	£8001
MDC	£8017	£8017	£8017
NSC	£3000	£3000	£3000
TOTAL	£43668	£43668	£43668
Defra	£156417	£158832	£158832*
Contributions required to draw down Defra £s	£39037	£39708	£39708
Surplus	£4631	£4590	£4590

3.5 The AONB Partnership has managed ongoing national and local government cuts by reducing operational costs and reducing the project budget. There continues to be pressure on local authority budgets, and the work of managing activities and resources in line with available budget will continue.

3.6 Defra state that the AONB Government grant is intended to meet only part of the AONB budget and is conditional on match funding 25% of core costs from other sources. The current small team can be afforded assuming the contributions indicated on the Statement of Intent are confirmed, income is generated from other sources and with contingency funding being allocated to be carried forward. However, the AONB Partnership is mindful that the SOI is not a legally binding document and that it is important to continue to demonstrate the value for money each pound of local authority contribution brings to the area.

3.7 Hosting arrangement

3.8 The current management fee paid to Somerset County Council is £7983. A new hosting arrangement is to be signed in 2018 and through this process we will seek best value.

3.9 The AONB Partnership in addition pay SCC via Charterhouse Centre: rent and services £7533 and ICT fees £3270. Total SCC hosting charges for 2017/18 are £18786 (based on 2017/18 figure and assuming a 3% increase).

3.10 SCC now pay the Apprenticeship Levy of £410 (17/18 figures) and pension deficit £9142 (17/18 figures) on behalf of the Partnership.

4.0 OPPORTUNITIES

4.1 Achieving the purposes of the Business Plan with reduced funding from existing partners is a major risk that threatens the future of the Partnership, Unit and delivery of the AONB Management Plan. However the value of AONB Partnerships and the opportunities for them to deliver a wide range of benefits continues to increase.

4.2 The Value of AONB Partnerships

4.3 In the current AONB Management Plans 2014-19 Lord De Mauley Parliamentary under Secretary of State for natural environment and science has written the Plan Foreword stating that *'AONB Partnerships have been the architects of a landscape scale approach to land management'* and that the plans *'makes the important connection between people and nature'*.

4.4 In July 2013 'The Value of AONB Partnerships' an independent assessment prepared for AONB Partnerships was produced by Land Use Consultants. The report played a significant part in securing the current four year Defra AONB settlement that saw an additional 1.2% increase on and no further cut when Defra faced a 30% budget cut.

4.5 In 2015 the report 'So much more than the view; England's AONBs and National Parks' (NAAONB, NPE. 2015) states that *'these dynamic, living landscapes underpin the economy and the health and wellbeing of society and that all these benefits come at a very low cost to the English taxpayer – at less than £1 per person a year'*. The report also states that every £1 of public money invested is turned into £10 by AONB Partnerships.

4.6 Other opportunities that will have an impact on the AONB Unit;

- Defra 25 Year Environment Plan, resulting in a review of AONBs and National parks as announced in May 2018
- The Joint Spatial Plan
- West of England Green Infrastructure Plan
- Local Development Plans

4.7 New models for delivery

4.8 The NAAONB is working on behalf of AONBs to identify future models and liaising with Defra on future funding. The current NAAONB Business Plan has a priority to 'Develop new ways to generate income for NAAONB and the AONB Family', supported by the action of devising a resourcing strategy in October 2018.

4.9 There is a recognition that whilst project funding and delivery could be delivered through a body/structure working alongside AONB Partnerships, delivery of the core duties of an AONB Unit and the duties placed on local authorities through the CRoW Act with regards Management Plans and current Defra funding arrangement via a host local authority may not be appropriate or easy to move away from being under the public sector umbrella.

4.10 The AONB Unit will proactively seek new ways of funding and seize opportunities as they arise to deliver their duties. These could be;

- Mitigation from development
- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Mendip Hills Fund and visitor-giving
- New income streams e.g. event bookings, sales of merchandise, landowner payment for volunteer work
- Sharing accommodation with partners
- Joint funding of posts with partners

4.11 Volunteers

4.12 In 2017/18 129 people directly volunteered their time to conserve and enhance the AONB in a wide variety of ways. Collectively they gave 3700 hours of effort with a total financial value of £26500 (using the Heritage Lottery Fund value of £50/day).

4.13 There is increased interest in volunteering opportunities, more people attend the practical tasks alongside help in the office and workshop, at events and delivering walks and talks.

Year	Total Volunteer Hours
2010-11	1,196
2011-12	1,942
2012-13	1,589
2013-14	2,077
2014-15	2,357
2015-16	2,123
2016-17	2,350
2017-18	3,709
GRAND TOTAL	17,343

4.14 Enabling more volunteers to help should be a priority for the Partnership. The Partnership has approved the volunteer coordinator's role to be full time during 2018/19. This should enable the volunteer rangers to rise in numbers, the practical tasks to be every week including weekends and an intake of young rangers every year, supported by more advanced young rangers.

4.15 The volunteers should be the subject of an ongoing development plan that seeks new opportunities and income sources for them and for them to generate income themselves.

4.16 Assets

4.17 The Partnership has a number of assets and should constantly identify other opportunities to meet its vision.

4.18 An asset should be something that conserves or enhances the area, or generates income or has the potential to do both.

4.19 Currently tangible and intangible assets are:

- The AONB Units brand for the area 'a wild land ready for adventure', supported by the website, social media and position as the only body promoting the hills in their entirety
- The AONB Units staff with tradable skills
- The Mendip Hills Fund and panel
- Volunteers and tools
- Accommodation and contents

Potential assets:

- Blackmoor and Deer Leap Reserves
- AONB Unit office and visitor centre in Burrington Combe

4.20 The Mendip Hills Fund

4.21 In January 2014 the Fund was set up between the AONB Partnership and Somerset Community Foundation. The Foundation holds the accounts with the ability to acquire gift aid on private donations, receives the applications, runs due diligence on them and supplies the applications to the panel. The Foundation takes a fee of 10% from donations for governance.

4.22 The AONB Unit promotes the fund via encouraging visitor giving schemes from businesses, events and individual donations. The Unit administers the panel of local people with backgrounds in the environment, community development and business who decide on the applications.

4.23 Since it started the fund has awarded approximately £15000 in grants.

4.24 The fund is very important as it provides a tangible link between the community and the AONB Partnership plus businesses/events that bring visitors to the area. As

the fund is a separate charity it provides a means for businesses and events to donate to a scheme that provides grants to improve the landscape and communities affected.

4.25 The fund's panel is an important asset to generate awareness and new sources of income.

4.26 The fund has the potential to grow way beyond its current levels increasing the amount of awards and potentially funding elements of the AONB Units work. For these reasons the fund should continue to be a priority for the work of the Partnership.

4.27 The Partnership should aim to claim 10% of funds available to cover fundraising costs of the AONB Unit when the Mendip Hills Fund exceeds £10,000.

Appendix 1 Risk Assessment

Risk	Action	By when	Progress
1. Failure to demonstrate effectiveness and efficiency of the AONB Partnership/Unit to existing and potential users and sponsors	Agree 2018-21 business plan	Summer 2018	Draft completed
	Deliver awareness raising activities and targets as outlined in the activity plan	March 2019	Monitored quarterly
	Volunteers need development plan	Mar 2019	To be commenced
2. Further reduction in funding from any partner seriously risks the AONB Partnership being able to deliver its obligations under the CRow Act.	Signed Statement of Intent	Annually	Sol 2018 version agreed
3. Further reductions could also impact the AONB Unit's required knowledge and skills, either through staff leaving by choice due to uncertainty or redundancy.	Signed Statement of Intent and agree 2018-21 business plan	Annually	Sol 2018 version agreed
4. The AONB Unit provides independent landscape advice and guidance to assist and influence planning decisions and land management to local planning authorities and the community. This service is at risk as if funding reduces further.	Signed Statement of Intent and agree 2018-21 business plan	Annually	Sol 2018 version agreed

5. The AONB Unit and the AONB Management plan also enable local authorities to meet their 'duty to cooperate'. The duty to cooperate was created in the Localism Act 2011 & places a legal duty on local planning authorities to engage constructively to maximise the effectiveness of Local Plans.	Signed Statement of Intent	Annually	Sol 2018 version agreed
	Review and adopt AONB Management Plan	Under review	2019
6. Reduced contributions to the AONB Partnership and AONB Unit	Draft Sol (April 2018) needs signing	May 2018	Draft distributed
	Budget and wider finance issues a standing agenda item at each OSG	Quarterly	Monitored quarterly
	Maintain active membership of NAAONB	Annually	Ongoing
7. SCC ending hosting arrangement for the AONB Unit	2018 host agreement with SCC to be signed	Summer 2018	Draft needs preparing
	Maintain good relations through a variety of means to demonstrate efficiencies and effectiveness	Ongoing	Ongoing
8. Reduced support for the Mendip Hills Fund	Meet and communicate with the fund panel to identify targets and opportunities.	October 2018	Last met March 2018

	Increase marketing opportunities that raise awareness of the fund.	June 2018	New materials being sourced for summer promotions
9. Funding not sourced for AONB core and projects through a variety of sources, the ability to bid for and secure funding for new projects is already an issue and this will be more difficult if there is no match funding or willingness to host new project staff. Plus the ability be a partner in bids including current bid for LEADER is at risk.	Production of activity plan with targets	Quarterly at OSG	Produced
10. Delivering current commitments for 2018/19 and beyond are at risk if funding reduces. This includes the Mendip Hills Fund, and the continuation of the Young Ranger Scheme, the joint Somerset AONBs Nature and Wellbeing Project. In total approx. £16,000.	Signed Statement of Intent and agree 2018-21 business plan	Annually	Sol 2018 version agreed

Appendix 2 Budget 2018-2021

Budget	2018-19	Notes	2019-20	Notes	2020-21	Notes
EXPENDITURE						
Salaries						
Sub Total	150952		144681		150626	
SCC Host fee (Line mgt, HR, Finance)	7983		8222		8387	
Charterhouse Centre ICT charge	3270		3368		3435	
Charterhouse C.Rent and services	7533		7759		7914	
Insurance	400		412		420	
Other costs						
Office Cleaning	1125		1136		1148	
Training	200		202		204	
Recruitment	1202					
Vehicle R&M	2200		2222		2244	
Vehicle fuel /tax/insurance costs	750		758		765	
Travel costs	750		758		765	
Car allowances	1500		1515		1530	
Volunteer costs	2500		3500		3535	
Tools and equip	450		455		459	
Staff clothing	300		600		606	
Stationary/digital/tel	5750		5808		5866	
Substance	200		202		204	
Partnership	4650		4697		4743	
Management Plan review	4000		-		-	
Sub Total	44763		41612		42226	
Projects	16700	Mendip Rocks £2700 Young Rangers £2500 Community Events £1000 Community Access Works £6000 Top of the Gorge £2500 Other Projects £2000	19400	Mendip Rocks £2700 Young Rangers £2500 Community Events £2500 Top of the Gorge £1000 SQ Monitoring £1000 L/Link Dev £4000 Proposed Visitors Centre £2000 Vol Development £3000 Other Projects £700	22200	Mendip Rocks £2700 Young Rangers £5000 Community Events £2500 Top of the Gorge £1000 SQ Monitoring £1000 Proposed Visitors Centre £6000 Vol Development £4000
Joint Health & Well Being project	8600		-		-	
Mendip Hills Fund	1500		1500		1500	
Sub Total	26800		20900		23700	
Mendip Hills Fund Donations	10900		13000		15000	
Total	233415		220193		231552	
Core costs (Defra criteria)	195715		186293		192852	
INCOME						
DEFRA	156147		158832		158832	
SCC	16150		16150		16150	
B&NES	8500		8500		8500	
SDC	8001		8001		8001	
MDC	8017		8017		8017	
N.Som	3000		3000		3000	
LA contribution Total	43668		43668		43668	
LA contribution required to draw down Defra Grant	39037		39708		39708	
Young Rangers			1500		1500	
SCC Public Health	8600		-		-	
	25000	Staff £1500 Volunteers £800 Grant Applications £9300 Mendip Rocks £2500 Mendip Hills Fund £10900	30050	Land Donations £1200 Staff £2000 Volunteers £800 Grant Applications £10000 Sales of Merch £500 Mendip Rocks £2550 Mendip Hills Fund £13000	44300	Land Donations £1800 Staff £3000 Volunteers £1200 Grant Applications £20000 Sales of Merch £750 Mendip Rocks £2550 Mendip Hills Fund £15000
Other Income						
Total	233415		234050		248300	
Contingency B/fwd from previous year	51000	Redundancy £8000 Vehicle £16000 Reserves £25000 National Trust £2000	62857	Redundancy £8000 Vehicle £16000 Reserves £38857	79605	Redundancy £8000 Vehicle £16000 Reserves £55605