

Mendip Hills AONB Partnership Committee		
Committee meeting date:	22nd November 2018	Paper: D
Title:	Mendip Hills AONB Unit Update	
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Supported by presentation. To be noted.		



Mendip Hills AONB Unit

Activity Plan 2018-19

NAAONB Key Performance Indicators

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.

1. Conserve & Enhance: Project Development						
Work Area	Action	Lead	MGT Plan Obj.	NAAONB KPI	Progress report	RAG (Red, Amber, Green)

Blackmoor Reserve and Deer Leap	Produce management plans and instigate works that conserve and enhance these sites, based around existing countryside stewardship schemes. Develop Access and Interpretation Project Plans and work with SWHT HLF Project to deliver improvements. Develop bids to fund additional works outside the HLF project.	AM	L1, L2, R1, LM2, P1, P2, P3	1, 2, 3	OSG request for cost/benefit analysis and liabilities outlined. UPDATE no liabilities to be incurred as SWHT still leaseholder, AONB Unit to deliver Countryside Stewardship and take payment for this.	Amber
Chew Valley Access Trail	Assist the steering group (B&NES Council, Sustrans, Bristol Water) with the feasibility study and resulting bids.	JH	R1, R2, R3, R4	2	Provided £1500 support to feasibility study, attending steering group.	Amber
Mendip Way	Work with Mendip Society, Ramblers, Rotary and Parish/Town Councils to fund the development and installation of interpretation boards for key gateway sites: Uphill Cheddar Wells Frome	TH	R1, R2, R3, R4, P1, P2	2	Opportunity arisen for NSC s106 money to improve Uphill starting point. TH to prepare proposal. Arien & Callow Rock provided costs: See file: Access Projects/Mendip Way/ Signage Improvements. Contact John Flannigan, North Somerset Council john.flannigan@n-somerset.gov.uk TH contacted A Carroll, visiting site. Aim to redo Mendip Way guide next financial year	Red

					<p>Meet Chamber of Commerce in Wells</p> <p>Original project partners for the new waymarking and route guides: Mendip Society, Richard Frost r.e.frost100@btinternet.com Mendip Ramblers, Mike Plaskitt mikeplaskitt@blueyonder.co.uk Rotary, John Hinton john.fhinton@btinternet.com</p>	
Limestone Link	<p>Work with B&NES and North Somerset PROW and Ramblers groups to fund and implement route improvements using data from surveys. Upgrade access furniture (replace stiles with gates or upgrade to high specification 2 step stiles with dog access) Install additional signage (e.g. along road and urban sections not covered by Rights of Way waymarkers)</p>	TH	R1, R2, R3, R4, P1, P2	2	<p>Survey took place 5-9 March 2018. CAMS data has been provided to B&NES and NSC RoW teams Limestone Link guide now online 15/6/18 Survey data in the Limestone Link folder on the P Drive.</p> <p>Next phase is to identify and programme improvements in the following order: Replace any remaining stiles with gates. Install new waymarker posts on road sections. Steps or surfacing upgrades where needed.</p> <p>Contacts: North Somerset Council PROW, Andy Carroll andrew.carroll@n-somerset.gov.uk Bathnes Council PROW, Sheila Petherbridge Sheila_Petherbridge@bathnes.gov.uk Bath Ramblers, Marilyn Wright wright_marilyn@hotmail.com</p>	Amber

Kings Wood Access Project	Implement the Kings Wood Family Explorer Trail in partnership with the National Trust, Mendip Society and North Somerset Council to include: 0.5 mile easy access circular route. 2 interpretation boards. 3 outdoor natural play structures. Downloadable walk guide.	TH	R1, R2, R3, R4, P1, P2	N/A	<p>Due to time delays and other priorities a decision with the National Trust is to be made whether to pursue this or not. Stage 1 Leader Application approved Feb 2018, Stage 2 application to be developed and submitted.</p> <p>North Somerset Council re Interpretation board, Gareth Withers Gareth.Withers@n-somerset.gov.uk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Next step is to confirm permitted rights for installing a panel as an advertisement. Gareth can advise on this which will determine the size and design to go for costings. <p>National Trust – Ian Clemmett and Helen Sharp Ian.Clemmett@nationaltrust.org.uk helen.sharp@nationaltrust.org.uk</p>	Red
Community Hubs	Secure 2 new Parishes signed up to access projects. Implement programmes of improvement works (e.g replacing stiles with gates)		P1, P2	2	PROPOSAL Reassess, to form part of 5 year Delivery Plan	
Mendip Environment Centre	Work with Yeo Valley and other stakeholders to create a 'Mendip Environment Centre' in Burrington Combe.	JH	R2	NA	Initial planning meeting held with Yeo Valley/Holt Farms to help produce strategic vision for their holdings on the Mendip Hills.	Amber

Burrington Commons	Work with Langford Ct Estate and NE to identify management solutions, create and instigate an action plan	JH	L1, BG1, BG2, LM2	1, 2, 3	Progressing with Natural England. Cotoneaster control test sites in place. Aerial spraying of bracken took place 30-31/7. Unit led on local awareness with minimal negative feedback. Unit assisting with awareness	Amber
Visitor Counters	Instigate a programme of regularly downloading visitor counter data, fund and install new counters, seek data from other sources.	TH	P3	NA	New volunteer in place to look at broad question of 'How many people visit the AONB?' Creating a methodology for a volunteer survey in late summer. Methodology in place. Date tbc PRIORITY = VISITOR COUNTERS	Amber
2. Raise Awareness						
Work Area	Action	Lead		NAAONB KPI	Progress report	RAG (Red, Amber, Green)
Mendip Rocks!	Work with SESC & Mendip Society to organise a programme of events aimed at family groups and people with geological interests during August and September, seeking additional funding.	JH	BG5, BG6, P3	N/A	SC representing AONB Unit this year on the working group. Programme agreed with 30 events across 3months. Approx 1200 people engaged through this prog.	Green
	Promote the programme to achieve more visitors and more income than 2017.	SC	BG5, BG6, P3	2	4 family events as a priority for AONB Unit publicity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7/7 Launch at Burrington • 4/8 It's a Blast at Westbury Quarry • 29/8 Family Fossil And Rock Funday • 21/10 Explore Ebbor Gorge 	Green

	<p>Numbers were slightly higher (1,037 in 2016, 1,100 in 2017). Donation takings also increased from £1450.53 in 2016 to £1,587 in 2017. N.B. 30 events in 2016 and 28 in 2017 and the large Ebbor Gorge event was cancelled (previously attended by more than 200 people)</p>				<p>All events on eventbrite and AONB website Attended by 1200 people.</p>	
Top of the Gorge Festival 22-24 June	<p>Represent the AONB Unit on the steering group run by the National Trust and support the publicity of the event</p>	JH	R2, R4	N/A	<p>Attended 7 steering group meetings. AONB sponsoring speakers tent alongside information tent and leading guided walks. 2000 attended the event. Date confirmed for 2019 as 14-16 June.</p>	Green
	<p>Organise more local children from more schools to sample climbing and caving in the gorge. (90 pupils visited the gorge and site on 8/9/17)</p>	JH	R2, R4	2	<p>4 schools and 48 children attending Gorge Championship event</p>	Green
MHAONB Website	<p>Increase visitor traffic from 40474 Users & 52575 sessions to 45000 Users & 60000</p>	SC	L3, H2, R2, N1, P3	N/A	<p>Main Website April – Users 3,486/Sessions 4,324 May – Users 3,654/Sessions 4,545 June – Users 3,912/Sessions 4,791 July – Users 3,517/Sessions 4,308</p>	Amber

	<p>sessions on AONB website. Begin monitoring of Learning Zone and Discovering Black Down sites.</p>				<p>Aug – Users 3,687/Sessions 4,499 Sept – Users 2,817/Sessions 3,571 Oct – Users 3,014/Sessions 2,794 Total: Users 24,087/Sessions 28,832</p> <p>Black Down April – Users 74/Sessions 79 May – Users 72/Sessions 83 June – Users 150/Sessions 156 July – Users 127/Sessions 139 Aug – Users 155/Sessions 174 Sept – Users 70/Sessions 68 Oct – Users 286/Sessions 285 Total: Users 934/Sessions 984</p> <p>Learning Zone April – Users 189/Sessions 206 May – Users 284/Sessions 283 June – Users 301/Sessions 305 July – Users 251/Sessions 260 Aug – Users 257/Sessions 261 Sept – Users 213/Sessions 220 Oct – Users 206/Sessions 202 Total: Users 1,701/Sessions 1,737</p>	
Social media	Achieve 3000 followers on Twitter	ALL	L3, H2, R2, N1, P3	N/A	<p>April – 2,304 (+48) May – 2,337 (+33) June – 2,370 (+33) July – 2,412 (+42) Aug – 2,443 (+31) Sept – 2,488 (+45) Oct – 2,505 (+17)</p>	

	Achieve 2000 likes on Facebook	ALL	L3, H2, R2, N1, P3	N/A	April – 1,801 (+95) May – 1,839 (+38) June – 1,864 (+25) July – 1,902 (+38) Aug – 1,958 (+56) Sept – 1,982 (+24) Oct – 2,007 (+25)	
	Achieve 3500 views on YouTube channel	ALL	L3, H2, R2, N1, P3	N/A	April – 3,406 (+513) May – 3,688 (+282) June – 3,922 (+234) July – 4,024 (+102) Aug – 4,239 (+215) Sept – 4,435 (+196) Oct – 4,631 (+196)	
	Achieve 350 followers on Instagram Revised target of 800	ALL	L3, H2, R2, N1, P3	N/A	April – 350 (+62) May – 410 (+60) June – 451 (+41) July – 492 (+41) Aug – 527 (+35) Sept – 575 (+48) Oct – 632 (+57)	
Enewsletters	Distribute a minimum of 24 enewsletters (12 to the public list, 12 to the Partnership list)	JH	L3, H2, R2, N1, P3	2	April – 1 May – 1 / Partnership – 2 June – 1/ Partnership – 1 July – 2/ Partnership – 1 Aug – 1/ Partnership – 1/ MHF – 1	

					Sept – 2/ Partnership – 1 Oct – 1/Partnership – 1	
	Achieve 800 on the enewsletter database	ALL	L3, H2, R2, N1, P3	N/A	Due to GDPR related cleansing database reduced from 540 to 300. May – 307 (-233) June – 329 (+22) July – 359 (+30) Aug – 370 (+11) Sept – 402 (32) Oct – 436 (34)	
Talks & other opportunities	Deliver talks & attend relevant events	JH	L3, H2, R2, N1, P3	2	Winscombe Probus x30 11/6/18 Blagdon WI x18 12/6/18 Georgian Students x22 9/7/18 Bath NHS 25/2/19 WI Cross 15/10/18	Green
3. Landscape Planning						
Work Area	Action	Lead		NAAONB KPI	Progress report	RAG (Red, Amber, Green)
Planning liaison	Liaison with LPAs and other consultees on development management and policy (strategies and plans).	CC	D1, D4	N/A	There is on-going liaison with all the LPAs on a range of planning applications and policy/strategy documents to ensure that the purpose of the AONBs is a consideration. Planning meeting with representatives from the LPAs to inform the review of the AONB Management Plan. Liaison with consultees has included discussions with NE, WECA, Mendip Society and CPRE.	Green

Landscape Planning Guidance	Prepare, produce and distribute a planning guidance document.	CC	D1, D4	N/A	Volunteer planning officer is working on a document that will help to enable a wider understanding of the Mendip Hills AONB LCA and how to sustain rural character. Management Plan to include potential revisions to support planning and other local authority officers in the duty to conserve and enhance natural beauty within the Mendip Hills AONB.	Green
Applications	Comment on applications as and when necessary.	CC	D1	N/A	2018 to date: Policy - 20 DM - 58 Review all applications that come in. 14 full partnership comments and a range of other support to officers/develops through e-mails, telephone discussions etc.	Green
Regional	Liaise with other AONB planners and partner organisations.	CC	D1, D4	2	On-going liaison with AONB planners. In June met with Quantock Hills and Exmoor National Park Landscape Planning Officers. On-going liaison with a range of other AONB Planners. Attended training at Cranborne Chase AONB and liaison with several AONB officers. On-going liaison with NE, CPRE and Mendip Society.	Green
Training	Develop a training programme for planners and parish councillors.	CC	D4, P2	N/A	Planning and tourism related training to be put on by Somerset AONBs although this has been pushed back due to Management Plan priorities and awaiting appointment of Quantock Hills AONB Planning Officer. Held Planning Officer group to feed into the review of the Management Plan and	Amber

					opportunity for officers to liaise and upskill on the AONB.	
4. Involve the Community						
Work Area	Action	Lead		NAAONB KPI	Progress report	RAG (Red, Amber, Green)
Volunteer Rangers	Create and instigate a development plan to enhance numbers, kit/equipment, communication and involvement in AONB work. Submit funding bids and seek sponsorship to enable this.	TH	P1, P2	2	Briefing of new Development Officer has taken place. Key part of 5 year Delivery Plan.	Red
	Maintain the rota of site visits, meetings and social gatherings	TH	P1, P2, R4	2	Vol Ranger meetings organised 4/9, 16/10, 27/11, 8/1/19, 19/2/19	Green
Volunteers	Create a walks programme, >4 walks, delivered by volunteers.	JH	P1, P2, R4	2	Walks delivered: 1 x Easter Walk 1 x Cavefest 2 x Cheddar Gorge Wild Week 3 x Gorge festival 2 new walk leaders recruited and starting induction	Green
	Identify new training and volunteering opportunities	ALL	P1, P3	2	Discovery Group: 5 vols x 5hrs 17/5, 3/5, 19/4, 5/4 Bourne Leisure: 16 vols x 4hrs on 16/5/18	Amber

					Osprey: 12 vols x 5hrs 17/4/18, 8 individuals x 5hrs 8/5/18 Kelly Davies - volunteer researcher Judith Chubb-Whittle – volunteer planning officer	
Practical Task Volunteers	Maintain a programme of fortnightly tasks focussed around the special qualities. Start weekly sessions including weekend tasks.	SF	P1, P2, L2	1, 2	14 task days completed. 5 task days completed by Drystone Walling Group.	Green
Rural skills	Develop and instigate a rural skills programme, that involves AONB volunteers and the community, in the special qualities.	TH	P1, P2, L2	2	PROPOSAL Reassess, to form part of 5 year Delivery Plan	On hold
Young Rangers & Advanced	Maintain and promote the 2017-19 Young Ranger programme with activities aimed at creating environmental decision makers of the future	SF	P1, P2, L2	2	AYRs need a programme post July – mirror task programme plus involve them with YRs	Green
Mendip Hills Fund	Achieve and allocate >£10000 of grants	JH	P2, P3	1, 2, 3	Current budget £10,500 (including £3002 donation from Butcombe Trail Ultramarathon) Fund to be opened Sept- Oct for applications	Green
	Promote the fund regularly via social media and other outlets	SC	P2, P3	NA	New owl badge commissioned & delivered New awareness document created to send to prospective event organisers and businesses	Amber

	Achieve 200 likes on Facebook. Create and distribute targeted material to sign up 3 x events and 5 x business supporters.				Facebook likes: April – 160 May – 169 (+9) June – 171 (+2) July – 175 (+4) Aug – 179 (+4) Sep – 182 (+3) Oct – 188 (+6) Order Collection pots for use at events and shops as an alternative to badge boxes	
	Administer the panel to meet in November and March	JH	P2, P3	2	Panel met in March, Panel meeting on 5/12/18	Amber
5. Partnership, Management, Regional & National Work						
Work Area	Action	Lead		NAAONB KPI	Progress report	RAG (Red, Amber, Green)
Partnership	Administer 2 x meetings per year minimum.	JH	ALL	N/A	Extra meeting organised on June 13 th 2018	Green
Management Plan	Undertake the review and and successful adoption of the 2019-24 management plan.	JH	ALL	N/A	Lots done! All on track.	Amber
OSG	Administer 4 x meetings per year minimum	JH	ALL	N/A	Organised	Green
Regional representation	Attend SWPLF and Somerset AONB meetings	ALL	ALL	N/A	Training delivered for South Somerset DC staff on social media	Green

					SW AONB mini-conference on 4/9/18 Unit attending & JH leading a workshop	
National representation	Attend NAAONB meetings, contribute to responses, forums and communications	ALL	ALL	N/A	JH and Chair attended conference in July	Green
AONB Unit	Create activity plan for Unit and individuals	ALL	ALL	N/A		Green
AONB Unit project management	All to be using Basecamp project management system.	ALL	ALL	N/A		Green

Management Plan Review – Objectives/Policies

Landscape Quality Objectives:

- L1 Promote appropriate management to ensure that the distinctive Mendip Hills AONB landscape is maintained and enhanced
- L2 Provide opportunities to acquire and develop skills required to care for and promote the landscape and its special qualities.
- L3 Increase awareness and appreciation of the purposes of designation and the special qualities of the AONB
- L4 Increase awareness of the benefits of supporting local products and services that help conserve and enhance the landscape.

Biodiversity and Geodiversity Objectives:

- BG1 Ensure that there is no net loss of characteristic habitats and species.
- BG2 Promote a landscape scale approach to the conservation and expansion of coherent and resilient ecological networks within and adjoining the AONB.
- BG3 Increase monitoring and awareness of the biodiversity resource of the Mendip Hills AONB so that it is sufficiently understood to continue to guide the successful conservation of the characteristic habitats and species.
- BG4 Promote a holistic approach to implementing AONB Management Plan objectives, National Character Area Statements of Opportunity and a locally designated Nature Improvement Area's objectives
- BG5 Recognise and celebrate geological sites and features of the Mendip Hills AONB to ensure the successful conservation both of the geology and wildlife habitat they provide.
- BG6 Increase awareness of the Mendip Hills geology, particularly cave systems in relation to the importance they play in water management and water supply.

Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage objectives;

H1 Improve the recording, interpretation and understanding of all aspects of the AONBs historic environment to ensure local communities and visitors enjoy a rich experience of the sense of place.

H2 Increase awareness and communicate the significance of the high quality historic environment of the Mendip Hills AONB

H3 Promote appropriate management of sites, structures and landscapes designated for their international, national, regional or local importance in the historic environment to ensure no further loss of heritage assets.

Recreation, Access and Tourism objectives:

R1 Maintain, improve and promote public access and quiet recreational activities with measures to ensure access for all in accordance with the purposes of AONB designation.

R2 Support the development of tourism and day visits that benefits the local economy, conserves and enhances the landscape and improves understanding of the Mendip Hills.

R3 Develop and promote more sustainable methods of travel to and around the AONB for enjoyment and recreation.

R4 Support healthy lifestyles by encouraging more people to use the Mendip Hills for sustainable outdoor activities.

Natural Resources objectives:

N1 Recognise and promote the benefits and relevance of the AONB as a valuable source of ecosystem services, economic and health benefits.

N2 Promote conservation of water resources and enhance their quality taking measures to reduce low flows and flooding by appropriate management and use.

N3 Promote sustainable management of soils in accordance with best practice to minimise erosion and water pollution and maximise resilience to drought.

Land Management objectives:

LMI Support sustainable farming to ensure it remains as the principle land use and contributes to maintaining the special qualities of the AONB.

LM2 Support and promote rural land management that conserves and enhances natural resources, including biodiversity, landscape character the historic environment and aids public awareness and enjoyment of the Mendip Hills AONB.

LM3 Promote a sustainable woodland economy that enhances the Mendip Hills AONB woodlands and wider landscape with targeted woodland management and creation in appropriate locations supporting wood fuel and local community opportunities.

LM4 Influence the use, restoration and after use of all quarries to minimise the impact on the landscape and to be compatible with the purposes of designation.

Development and Transport Objectives:

D1 Working with the local planning authorities, ensure that development in the AONB and its setting is of a nature, scale, location and design that meets community need without compromising the special qualities of the Mendip Hills AONB.

D2 Working with the local highways authorities, ensure that the special qualities of the AONB are fully respected in the planning, design, provision and management of all types of transport and associated infrastructure.

D3 Encourage reduction in Carbon emissions within the AONB through reducing energy consumption, applying energy conservation measures, encouraging more sustainable patterns of development, and utilising renewable energy generation technologies that are of an appropriate type and scale for their siting.

D4 Ensure issues of importance for the management of the AONB landscape are fully reflected in strategies and plans produced by other agencies and local communities.

Participation objectives:

P1 Increase the opportunities for volunteering and the range of people participating, to benefit the environment, peoples health and well being and local communities in and around the AONB.

P2 Encourage the involvement of local people and the wider community in the management of the AONB

P3 Promote the Mendip Hills as an educational resource for all ages and encourage sharing of research and learning tools.