

Mendip Hills AONB Management Plan Review

Issues & Ideas Session 15/3/18 Barton Camp

Attendees:

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| Cllr Liz Richardson | Bath & North East Somerset Council |
| Ian Clemmett | National Trust |
| Liz Brimmell | Bath & North East Somerset Parishes Representative |
| Richard Frost | Mendip Society |
| Sarah Jackson | Bath & North East Somerset Council Officer |
| Georgie Bigg | CPRE Avonside |
| Pippa Rayner | Somerset Wildlife Trust |
| Cllr Nigel Taylor | Somerset County Council |
| Thomas Lane | Natural England |
| Ursula James | North Somerset Council Tourism Officer |
| Cat Lodge | North Somerset Council Archaeologist |
| Tony Rees | Mendip Hills Fund Panel |
| Tim Partridge | Mendip Outdoor Pursuits |
| Steve Egginton | Mendip Times |
| Rachel Thompson | The Trails Trust |
| Neil Watson | SWT |
| Chris Head | WERN |
| Huw Robson | Cheddar Walking |
| Matt Uren | NFU |
| Jim Hardcastle | AONB Manager |
| Cindy Carter | AONB Landscape Planning Officer |
| Andy Mallender | AONB Project Development Officer |
| Judith Chubb-Whittle | Work Placement Planning Volunteer |
| Sarah Catling | AONB Communications & Support Officer |

This document captures all the comments recorded during the session under each management plan theme. The comments were grouped at the session and afterwards then titled to summarise and enable cross-referencing with management plan themes and issues.

| Participation | AONB Unit response |
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| <p>Objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each visitor learns one thing • Fun • Emotional Connection • Level of participation – active personal action | <p>Need to maintain focus in the plan on health and wellbeing benefits. Currently addressed via 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.'</p> |
| <p>Products:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National events • Campaigns to engage people • AYR's lead junior walks • Events & festivals • Engage Bristol people eg. Bioblitz volunteering | <p>A spread of projects, ideas and initiatives both geographically and demographically between Partnership members should be a key aim in the plan.</p> |

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| <p>Methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteering • Wellbeing • Doing • Respecting • Buying • Giving & gifting • Brand ambassador • More diverse volunteers • Advocacy | <p>Need to maintain focus in the plan on health and wellbeing benefits. Currently addressed via P1 'Increase the opportunities for volunteering and the range of people participating, to benefit the environment, people's health and well being and local communities in and around the AONB.'</p> <p>AONB Unit Business Plan has volunteering development as a key theme.</p> |
| <p>Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why participate? • How to monitor • Audit current state • What does it mean • What is positive participation • How will area benefit? • Relationship between participation & AONB • Plan & timetable | <p>Maintain current recording of voluntary hours coordinated by the AONB Unit, report back on this annually and aim for an increase. This is in addition to Natural England Framework for Monitoring Environmental Outcomes in Protected Landscapes supplied statistics which should be maintained.</p> |
| <p>Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of transport • Low awareness • Barriers • Equalities audit • 'Not for me' • Access working groups | <p>Comments welcomed and noted. Comments addressed in Issues section of the Management Plan and then via Delivery Plan.</p> <p>The need for an Access Working Group should be monitored as further cuts to LA rights of way teams impact on maintenance and poor infrastructure.</p> |
| <p>Recreation, Access & Tourism</p> | <p>AONB Unit response</p> |
| <p>Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irresponsible visitors • Capacity • Erosion • Traffic problems • Litter • Dogs, livestock waste | <p>Need to maintain focus in the plan on volunteering benefits. Currently addressed via P1 'Increase the opportunities for volunteering and the range of people participating, to benefit the environment, people's health and well being and local communities in and around the AONB.'</p> <p>AONB Unit Business Plan has volunteering development as a key theme, especially volunteer rangers</p> |
| <p>Users:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walkers • Cyclists • Horse riders • Multi-user connectivity • Access to woodland for all • Public transport | <p>Comments addressed in Issues section of the Management Plan.</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strawberry Line to Wells | |
| <p>Solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigation for heavy commercial use of lanes • Quiet land initiative • Educate the public • Impact on ability to manage land – graziers put off • Balance visitors and conservation • Target more school groups • Get visitors beyond honeypots • Management of organised groups • Connecting communities • 'Friends of' groups? | <p>Comments addressed in Issues section of the Management Plan. Management Plan should include an objective to record visitor numbers and distribute the data to relevant site managers. Current indicators do not address this issue.</p> |
| <p>Products & Promotion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage & awareness • Local produce • Audit what is on offer • A Mendip hub – visitor centre • Connect food to landscape • Profile – low awareness • Honeypot vs spreading the word • Tourism on the doorstep • Sell the full experience • Brand awareness • Gateways – awareness • Network info exchange • Collaborate with nearby areas • Coordinated marketing | <p>Comments addressed in different sections of the Management Plan. Many of these need to be included in the delivery plan.</p> |
| <p>Historic Environment & Cultural Heritage</p> | <p>AONB Unit response</p> |
| <p>Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of sites • Burrington Combe/Ham damage • Impact from new development • What is cultural heritage? • What is cultural heritage for AONB? • Funding & resources • Natural capital • Heritage assessment • Jargon | <p>Current Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage and Awareness sections address these issues.</p> |

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| <p>Engaging:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness • Communicate • How to protect heritage • Coordinate research • Knowledge management | <p>Current Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage and Awareness sections address these issues.</p> |
| <p>Benefits (social, economic, environmental)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellbeing • Mendip cultural identity | <p>Current Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage and Awareness sections address these issues.</p> |
| <p>Forgotten heritage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural heritage landscape • Vernacular architecture • Link ancient to modern • Traditions - what the landscape tell you | <p>Current Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage and Awareness sections address these issues.</p> |
| <p>Delivery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common ground from past to link community in future • Know your place • Voices project • Virtual museum • Interpretation • Volunteer to conserve and enhance • Heritage walks • Pass on skills, retain, develop • Conserve & enhance cultural heritage | <p>Comments addressed in different sections of the Management Plan. Many of these need to be included in the delivery plan.</p> |
| <p>Tourism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote heritage in AONB • Tourism opportunities • Links with tourism | <p>Current management plan policy addresses this: 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.</p> |
| <p>Biodiversity & Geodiversity</p> | <p>AONB Unit response</p> |
| <p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism – Mendip Rocks • ‘Green’ tourism • Wellbeing • Human impact • Nature benefits • Pro-active vision | <p>Need to maintain focus in the plan on volunteering benefits. Currently addressed via P1 ‘Increase the opportunities for volunteering and the range of people participating, to benefit the environment, people’s health and</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspiration | <p>well-being and local communities in and around the AONB.’</p> |
| <p>Natural Capital:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecosystem services • Ecological mapping • Ecological networks AONB & beyond • What are the natural capital assets? • Landscape benefits • Water features & management | <p>Ensure the value of the landscape is considered as part of the management plan.</p> |
| <p>Engaging:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness • Communication • Understand impact • Understand geology underlies AONB • Knowledge sharing • Farming • Landowner buy-in | <p>Current Biodiversity and Geodiversity section address this.</p> |
| <p>Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agri-environment • Brexit • Human impact • SSSI standards • Resources • Tourism • Funding • Impact from new development • Climate change | <p>Current Biodiversity and Geodiversity section address this. Maintain a strong Partnership to address broad issues collectively.</p> |
| <p>Delivery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are we trying to achieve? • Partnership important • Community action • Knowledge sharing, skills, training • Appropriate location of improvements • Goals (specifics) • Common goal • Volunteering • Landscape scale restoration • Species reintroduction | <p>Current Biodiversity and Geodiversity section address these.</p> |
| <p>Development & Transport</p> | <p>AONB Unit response</p> |

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| <p>Transport: Public</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport sympathetic to landscape • Light rail system • Puffin buses • Decent bus service, small buses • Parking with electric shuttle bus • Mule train • Rock railway funicular • Convenience of buses • Community transport | <p>Current objective ‘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.’ addresses the issues here.</p> |
| <p>Impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure B&B other facilities • Impact of Bristol airport • Parking off the road • Frequency movement of smaller vehicles | <p>These comments are covered by objective 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.</p> |
| <p>Development Principle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive but prescription to deliver • Infrastructure first • Affordable housing for locals • Ageing population | <p>Latest plans and strategies to be included in the issues section.</p> |
| <p>Design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No multiple development in AONB reflect historic • Names in keeping • Building massing • Manage housing volume • Green belt areas around villages • Keep appearance • How do you house people that are in keeping locally? | |
| <p>Control:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No wind turbines • No pylon visibility from AONB | |
| <p>Sustainability:Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy efficient & sustainable • Electric car charging • Charging points at village halls | |

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| <p>Economy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of artisan skills • Local employment • Great food & drink locally | |
| <p>Tourism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strawberry Line extension to Wells • No cable car • Keep quality of cycleway • Baggage transfer for walkers and runners • Burrington visitors centre & bothy | <p>Comments noted and dealt with via delivery plan.</p> |
| <p>Landscape Quality</p> | <p>AONB Unit response</p> |
| <p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controlling threats • Tranquillity - manage threats • Bristol airport impact • Traffic effects • Parked and moving vehicles • Population – manage threats • Sustainable growth • Adherence to character assessment • Stop scrub taking over | <p>Current Development and Transport section address these.</p> |
| <p>Awareness & Understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmonious to control – how done? • Understand historic background – education • Appreciation of landscape • Local sensitive palette and stones • Shape of development • Style • VIP of character and cultural assessments | <p>AONB Unit’s planning role plays a key part in addressing these issues and raising awareness of the plan.</p> |
| <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wooded coombes – manage to enhance • Trees – how located? • Strategic planting of trees • Keep landscape open • Significant views in and out • Critical views of landscape • Skyline views | <p>Review of Landscape Character Assessments that will address these issues is underway.</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View to AONB • Dark skies • Maintain sparse areas where appropriate • Working landscape but careful of change | |
| <p>Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of heritage spots • Heritage Assets & maintenance • Maintenance of dry stone walls • Local & National tourism • Info notice boards strategically placed • Long distance walks and runs • Local companies to do work • Visitor experiences • Bothies AONB volunteer run • Hedge laying | <p>Addressed via delivery plan.</p> |
| <p>Natural Resources</p> | <p>AONB Unit response</p> |
| <p>Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio Economic Development – support rural business • Increased telecoms • Quarrying increase • Windfarm increase • Solar farms | <p>Covered in Development & Transport section.</p> |
| <p>Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New approach to issue • Explain natural resources to all • Modern response reporting procedure • Social media reporting • Sheep worrying reporting • Fly tipping – joined up strategy • Strategic Access improvements | <p>AONB Unit continue to be modern and ambitious as outlined in the Business Plan. Management Plan should contain an objective to keep a well resourced AONB Unit.</p> |
| <p>Woodland cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ash die back • After use of ash wood? | <p>Seek Forestry Commission and Wildlife Trusts advice on this.</p> |
| <p>Land Management</p> | <p>AONB Unit response</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water – theme • Catchment scale projects | <p>Seek Partnership’s view on Water becoming a separate theme in the management plan.</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve hydrology specialists – cavers • Natural flood management in plan • Address soil management – run off | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land managers sharing eg. Facilitation Fund • Stronger links with farmers • Succession planning for farms • Land ownership – directory | <p>Addressed through communications and delivery plans.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable management of scrub • Control of bracken • Verges – joined up plan • Expansion of badger cull? | <p>Continued partnership working between land managers to address scrub control across all sites.</p> <p>Verges are not specifically mentioned in the management plan but feature in 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. Plus, BG2 Promote a landscape scale approach to the conservation and expansion of coherent and resilient ecological networks within and adjoining the AONB.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentive payment system for farmers • Risk – not classified as disadvantage • Mendip – products • Payment for ecosystem services • Natural Capital – value holistically • Reverse auction • Mendip lakes project • Profitable systems for farmers | <p>Addressed via N1 Recognise and promote the benefits and relevance of the AONB as a valuable source of ecosystem services, economic and health benefits. Plus, LMI Support sustainable farming to ensure it remains as the principle land use and contributes to maintaining the special qualities of the AONB.</p> |

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