

Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Joint Committee

Thursday 13th December 2007, 10:00am

**The Esperance Room, Civic Centre, Cannock Chase Council,
Beecroft Road, Cannock, Staffordshire WS11 1BG**

A G E N D A

1. Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

The Cannock Chase AONB Partnership Agreement states that:-

“At its annual meeting the Joint Committee shall determine from amongst its members a Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Committee for the period from the commencement of that meeting of the Joint Committee up to the commencement of the next following annual meeting of the Joint Committee”.

At the meeting of the Joint Committee on 25 July 2006, Cllr Neil Roberts was appointed Chairman and Cllr Danny Davies Vice Chairman up to the annual meeting of the Joint Committee in 2007.

2. Apologies

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 13th September 2007

4. Matters Arising

5. Declaration of Interests

6. Action Plan Progress

Report of the Chairman of the Officers' Working Group

7. Archaeological Walkover Survey Project

Presentation by Steve Dean, Project Manager

8. Proposed Meetings Schedule 2008-09

Report of the Hon Secretary of the Joint Committee

9. Job Evaluation

Report of the Chairman of the Officers Working Group

10. Financial Update

Report of the Treasurer to the Joint Committee

- 11. National Association of AONBs Annual Conference and Cannock Chase AONB 50th Anniversary Celebrations**
Report of the AONB Officer
- 12. Natural England Update**
Oral Report of Sally Powell, Regional Account Manager
- 13. Management Plan Review**
Report of the AONB Officer
- 14. Partner News**
Item for Members to update all from their own part of the AONB
- 15. Any Planning Items that may require consideration**
Relevant papers will be tabled
- 16. Any Other Business**
- 17. Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting**

Part Two

Exclusion of the Public and Press

The Chairman to move:

"That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the local Government Act 1972 (as amended) indicated below"

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee – 13 December 2007
Report of the Chairman of the Officers' Working Group
Agenda Item 6
Action Plan Progress

1 Recommendation

- 1.1 The Committee notes the progress made since the last Joint Committee meeting.

2 Progress

- 2.1 Since the last meeting, Members have endorsed the recommendations in papers presented for the 13 September Joint Committee by correspondence, as the last meeting was not quorate.
- 2.2 Effort has focused on the preparation of drafts of next year's Annual Action Plan and funding bids. In parallel, community activity and delivery of projects have continued. Separate reports at this meeting cover the draft bid and associated staffing issues. Delivery against Natural England's milestones of particular note in the period is:

Management Plan Review

- 2.3 Work to review the Management Plan has continued. A separate report is to be presented later in the agenda.

Project Delivery

- 2.4 The Project Grant funding incorporates three projects and progress is as follows.

Discovering Nature on Cannock Chase: Wild play sessions carried out and 91 children involved. Two family learning days conducted, one at the Wildlife Trust and one based at Marquis Drive with the theme of mammal trapping. Both days over achieved the expected number of families. In total 300 people attended and 160 families.

Two Valley project: A report has been produced by Riverwoods on woodland product selection within the AONB. The products produced from this report will be used to determine the coppicing work and ensure the long term viability to the management. In addition, a Management plan has been produced for the wet woodland of the Sherbrook. In

January work will commence on the two valley management and an education event will launch this.

Young Enterprise Programme: Work is currently being carried out at local schools.

- 2.5 The Sustainable Development Fund has been very well subscribed and a full list of projects is shown in the financial report later in the meeting.

Signage and Interpretation

- 2.6 Five parish councils have expressed an interest in installing village entry signs including the AONB logo. Work progresses on their exact siting and the manufacture, in liaison with the Highways Authority.
- 2.7 Work with the five visitor centres has established the need to revise a joint leaflet. Previous versions have been very popular and effective in getting the AONB message to a wide audience. Plans are being put in place to undertake this work next financial year. In addition, it has been agreed that the first new interpretation installation of a programme of updated information facilities will be installed at the Wolesley Centre.
- 2.8 Partners have contributed to the development of an interpretation strategy for the new Chase Heritage Trail and the creation of information for each of its "nodes".
- 2.9 The AONB Unit is working with Staffordshire County Council to ensure that the AONB message is incorporated into interpretation within the newly installed Great War Hut at Marquis Drive.

Website

- 2.10 The upgraded AONB website has been launched. Its administration will now be more flexible and simpler. Its look is intended to be "cleaner" and easier for the user. It also has the facility to now include new areas. The new topic areas include provision for up-dating and consulting on the Management Plan Review, community information and the 50th anniversary year. Members are requested to lodge any comments with the AONB team about the new website and register as users, if they have not already done so. This will enable them to access meeting reports and other documents via the website.

Undergrounding

- 2.8 At a meeting of the regional undergrounding group, including AONB Officers, Natural England and representatives of Central Networks further progress has been made on the implementation of a number of schemes regionally. For Cannock Chase, the Brocton scheme is currently at the wayleaving stage, whereas more technical examination is required for the Tixall submissions.
- 2.9 The meeting discussed the technical and costing constraints of the funding on offer in connection with the landscape requirements of AONBs. Experience is showing that many of the schemes with the major landscape impact are the most expensive and technically difficult for Central Networks to achieve, thus ruling them out for implementation. Both AONB and Central Networks representatives are gathering information to present to Ofgem to try to amend the potential for future funding rounds to have a better landscape impact in the Midlands area. In the meantime, it seems that schemes within villagescapes and where there is the greatest potential to underground close to roads or with other services are the most successful. Currently, there is ample funding within the potential allocation from Ofgem for more schemes to come forward. Members are requested to inform the AONB Unit of any other schemes that might come forward so that these can undergo initial assessment and be put forward to the undergrounding group.

Community Involvement

- 2.11 The fixed point photography project is proving very popular with volunteers and very fruitful in terms of the up-dated visual information being gathered. It is being led by Steve Welch who is providing photography courses for volunteers and is also a local Parish Council representative on the Partnership.
- 2.12 At the time of writing this report, two consultation events have been held about the Management Plan Review for all-comers. A third, at Walton Village Hall, will have been held by the time of the Joint Committee and a verbal up-date will be given at the meeting. The first event was held at Cannock Wood's Country Fair and drew large numbers of interested people. It was very positive to note that most people already had an awareness of the Management Plan and were generally satisfied with its content. A second event held at

Etchinghill village hall only received three attendees.

- 2.13 In a departure from its usual meeting format, the Parish Councils' meeting was held on Saturday 29th September with a presentation on potential funding sources to help support local projects and a walk from Birches Valley to Marquis Drive, taking in a visit to the newly constructed educational building at Birches Valley. It will be discussed with the meeting in March whether this format helps attendees more than the traditional meeting style and how to carry actions forward.
- 2.14 The historical awareness day held on 10 October had a large number of attendees and visited Castle Ring, Beaudesert Trust and military sites. It was led by Steve Dean from Staffordshire County Council who astounded and entranced attendees with the depth and breadth of his knowledge. It is hoped that something similar can be offered to delegates at next year's National Association of AONBs annual conference.
- 2.15 The second awareness day was held on 29 October and had a much more practical theme. Attendees were led by Steve Spackman from the Staffordshire County Council Rangers team between Birches Valley and Marquis Drive on a litter pick. Attendees learnt about how much resource it takes simply to clear the hot spot areas and the roadsides each day and year and were surprised to learn that there is never enough resource to clear the centre of Cannock Chase. This is only addressed in part by willing volunteers who work alongside the Rangers. The morning produced 17 bags of rubbish, several car parts including a bumper and windscreen, a rug, a hamster cage and a vast amount of other more "usual" litter. It also raised awareness of the problem with the general public as the group was highly visible to the passing traffic. Attendees agreed that it was a real eye-opener and enjoyed the fact that the awareness event made a positive difference to the AONB. It is planned to hold similar events in the future.
- 2.16 Two further awareness events are to be held before the end of the financial year. These will be a guided tour around the new local nature reserve – Shoal Hill and a forest activity day.

External Partnerships

- 2.13 The AONB Unit has been involved in representation with the following in order to progress their work in relation to the AONB:

- Canks Wood Civil Contingency Planning exercise
- Destination Management Partnership and Cannock Chase Council tourism events
- Lichfield District Council Biodiversity Steering Group
- North Devon AONBs
- Natural England stakeholders consultations
- West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum
- Regional Forestry Forum
- Regional undergrounding group
- Regional Spatial Strategy
- Shoal Hill Local Nature Reserve launch
- Stafford Borough Council Biodiversity Steering Group
- New management team at Shugborough estate
- Europarc

Administrative Matters

- 2.20 Partners have made good progress on advancing administrative arrangements with Staffordshire County Council.
- 2.21 Efforts are now being made to catch up slippage quickly against the Action Plan to produce the Annual Review (2006-07) and this year's Partnership newsletters.
- 2.22 Following a review of operation of the Managing the Landscape Topic Group and the Managing Visitors Topic Group by the groups themselves and the Officers' Working Group, a proposal to merge the two and task them more as a "project delivery group" is being progressed.
- 2.23 The AONB Unit will from this meeting forward provide administrative support to the Joint Committee.

Cannock Chase AONB Annual Action Plan 2007 – 2008

Theme: Managing the Landscape

Sub-theme: Landscape Character and Setting

Aims: To develop a wider understanding of the unique mix of AONB landscapes.

To ensure consistency in the management of the AONB's diverse landscapes for long-term enhancement and sustainability.

Policy 1 The opportunity will be taken, through a range of activities, to develop and promote a wider understanding of the unique nature of the landscape of the AONB and its setting in order to ensure that the management of the landscape is carried out in a consistent manner.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
<p>1B Investigate, utilise and advise on available landscape and conservation grants.</p>	<p>- Advising on available grants.</p>	<p>AONB Unit</p>	<p>NE, DEFRA, Advisory Partnership</p>	<p>- March 08</p>	<p>Up to date information available. Partners assisted in project grant applications.</p>	<p>Promotion of SDF grant. Research work carried out on funding with individual projects and for community groups. Funding seminars attended. Fundraising strategy being reviewed. Watching brief being maintained.</p>

Policy 2 Landscape change within and adjacent to the AONB will be monitored, assessed and appropriate measures supported to ensure landscape quality is maintained or enhanced.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
2A Monitor and assess overall landscape quality having regard to the periphery and recommend, where appropriate, potential AONB changes to Natural England.	-Pursue boundary proposals with Natural England.	Advisory Partnership	NE, SCC, CCDC	- April 07 – Feb 08	Extension of AONB boundary. Due regard taken of newly designated areas. Public awareness raised.	Boundary extensions remain on hold until response to Meyrick case finalised. Horsiculture monitoring in preparation. Fixed point photography update being progressed with community volunteers.
2B Consider the establishment of an AONB landscape specific grant fund to maintain and where necessary re-establish a high quality landscape.	- Agree target areas. - Establish funding sources. - Work with partners and the public to encourage bids.	AONB Unit/ Officers’ Working Group, funding sub group	NE, Advisory Partnership, other funding providers.	- April 07- Sept 07 - Sept 07	Obtain funding sources. Funding distributed. Quality landscape projects implemented.	Renewed efforts being addressed to set up new funding subgroup.

Sub-theme: Nature Conservation

Aims: To conserve and enhance nature conservation interest of the AONB, especially its most important habitat, heathland.
 To develop a wider understanding of AONB nature conservation issues.
 To reduce inconsistencies in the conservation of nature for its long-term sustainability.

Policy 3 The management of the different AONB habitats will be undertaken on a sustainable long-term basis using a range of different techniques to create a mix of habitats where heathland is the primary concern

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
3A Support AONB partners in securing funding for the continuing restoration, management and where appropriate, re-creation of heathland and other key habitats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publish Cannock Chase Country Park Management Plan. - Commence implementation of Cannock Chase Country Park Management Plan. 	SCC	NE, FC, CCDC, LDC,SSC, SWT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 – Sept 07 - Sept 07 – March 12 	Co-ordinated and agreed delivery of Country Park Management Plan.	Partners have been involved in the grazing potential research.
3C The Deer Management Partnership will be maintained to deal with deer related issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disseminate minutes of meetings. - Collate statistics of deer deaths. - Report them to Joint Committee. 	FC, Staffordshire County Council Highways	NE, FoM, NFU, Country Land and Business Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 – March 09 - April 07- March 09 - Dec 07 	Improved communication of co-ordinated approach to deer management.	Staffordshire County Council reported 165 deer casualties in the past 12 months.

Policy 4 Ensure a comprehensive and effective approach to nature conservation throughout the AONB.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
4D Adopt co-ordinated policies as Supplementary Planning Guidance/Development Plans.	- Agree appropriate method of consistent planning policy with all Partner authorities.	OWG	Local authorities	- March 08	A cohesive/clear approach to planning policy within the AONB.	Approaches have been made to Staffordshire Planning Officers Group and GOWM to establish whether a single document could be used by all local authorities. Meeting on this and cross-boundary issues arranged for 10 December.

Policy 6 Land managers within and adjacent to Cannock Chase AONB will be encouraged to investigate enhancing the value and extent of heathland and other BAP habitats and populations of BAP species.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
6A Research and monitor all habitats and species throughout the AONB providing baseline data for present and future management.	- Establish gaps in knowledge of State of the AONB in relation to Natural England's performance indicators. - Collate missing data. - Create models for future monitoring.	SWT	NE, local authorities, FC, land owners	- April 07 – March 09	Additions made to baseline monitoring. Information quality improved. Future monitoring performance improved.	Some limited survey work on streams in progress. Other projects unsuccessful in obtaining project grant but work ongoing to obtain alternative monies.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
						Review of data gaps continuing as part of Management Plan Review.
6B Investigate, utilise and advise on appropriate grant aid for partners, land owners and occupiers.	- Make information available.	AONB Unit, funding sub group	AONB Partners	- April 07 – March 09	Updated funding information. Grant applications submitted. Projects delivered on the ground.	Support being provided to individual project managers. Watching brief being maintained
6C Provide advice to land owners on species and habitat management appropriate to the AONB.	- Address actions identified in Fringe Landscapes report. - Publish and disseminate guidance.	SWT,FWAG .	AONB Unit, AONB Partners	- April 07 – Sept 07 - Oct 07 – Dec 07	Good practice guidance. Advice given.	SDF monies have been awarded to FWAG to provide advice to horse owners.

Sub-Theme: The Cannock Chase AONB Experience

Aim: To acknowledge and protect areas of peace and tranquillity within the AONB.

Policy 8 The peace and tranquillity of the AONB will be maintained and enhanced.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
8B Develop and implement guidelines for the management of peace and tranquillity within the AONB.	- Determine guidelines. - Create awareness of guidelines.	Advisory Partnership	AONB Partners, CPRE	- April 07 – March 08 - April 07 – March 08	Guidelines developed and implemented.	Further consultations undertaken at annual conference. Roll out of further work is planned for next year.

Sub-Theme: Trees and Woodlands

Aim: To encourage sustainable woodland practices that will enhance landscape character and nature conservation value of the AONB and bring social and economic benefits.

Policy 9 Woodland management practices within the AONB will be carried out in a sustainable manner in order to protect and enhance the landscape and nature conservation value of the AONB

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
<p>9B Promote the importance of woodland as a landscape character type in the AONB.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure Partnership input into Forest Design Plan. - Identify private woodland owners. - Make links to AONB with private woodland owners. 	FC, SCC	AONB Partners, West Midlands Forestry Forum, FWAG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – Oct 07 - Nov 07 – March 08 	<p>AONB designation considered in Forest Design Plan.</p> <p>Private woodland extent identified. Special features protected.</p>	<p>Next revision of FC Cannock Chase Forest Design Plan due Spring 2008. Partnership will be involved.</p> <p>Identification of woodlands in private ownership to be completed by November 2007.</p>
<p>9C Support the development of new and existing markets for local timber and woodland produce through product development, improved marketing and entry into national certification schemes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote opportunities for wood fuel boilers, local supply etc. - Forestry Commission to provide technical support and advice particularly on UK Woodland Assurance Scheme. - Promote opportunities for greater use of local wood e.g. construction. - Forestry Commission to lead by example e.g. new 	FC	AWM, SCC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 – March 08 	<p>Local business generated through good practice and high quality management.</p> <p>List of local markets generated.</p>	<p>Initial meeting of West Midlands AONBs to discuss a potential wood fuel project 03.04.2007.</p> <p>Consultancy contract to report on feasibility of whole wood fuel chain in the West Midlands placed by FC in July 2007.</p>

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
	buildings at Birches Valley.					<p>Completion of phase1 31.12.2007.</p> <p>Two privately owned woodlands have management plans produced to meet UKWA Standard.</p> <p>All public forest estate land in the AONB has FSC certification.</p> <p>New FC timber framed and clad education centre, with wood fuel heat, opened autumn 2007.</p> <p>Timber grown on Cannock Chase used in some of the construction.</p> <p>Some timber used in the Route to Health Sculpture trail from Cannock Chase woodlands.</p>

Policy 10 Management or operational plans relating to the AONB will be consistent with and meet the requirements of AONB designation.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
10A Woodland management plans to promote good practice in sustainable woodland management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote best practice (seminar). - Forestry Commission to complete one case study of good practice. 	FC, SCC	AONB Partners, land owners, FWAG.	- April 07 – March 08	Awareness generated. Good practice implemented. Three WMG applications approved. One case study completed.	Seminar on new UKWA standard planned Autumn 07
10B Continue to be involved with future reviews of the woodland management plans for Cannock Chase.	- Ensure revised Forest Design Plan links appropriately to AONB Management Plan.	FC	AONB Unit, local authorities, SWT, NE, local land owners	- April 07 – March 09	Up to date Management Plans linking to each other.	Next revision of FC Cannock Chase Forest Design Plan due Spring 2008. Partnership will be involved as well as public in the consultation process

Sub-Theme: Agriculture**Aim:** To highlight the importance of agricultural landscapes in the AONB.**Policy 12** To identify and encourage sustainable land management practices that improve agricultural viability and protect, conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
12A Disseminate information on the special qualities of AONB landscape and sustainable land management practices.	- Ensure liaison with Natural England representatives.	NE	FWAG, SWT, NFU, CLA and land owners	- March 08	Information disseminated. Land managed in accordance with good practice. Land owners accessing grants.	

Policy 13 Encourage the targeting and uptake of agri-environment schemes that protect, conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB, its context and setting.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
13A Increase uptake of agri-environment applications within the AONB.	- Promote opportunities to AONB agricultural community.	NE	NFU, FWAG, CLA, AONB Unit, AONB Partners	- April 07 – March 09	Land managed to a high environmental quality.	Project grant application unsuccessful. Ongoing support is being provided to obtain alternative funding

Theme: Managing Visitors

Sub-Theme: Information and Interpretation

Aim: To improve awareness, respect and understanding of the AONB designation thereby fostering a greater appreciation of the designation and the opportunities for more sympathetic participation and behaviours.

Policy 19 Improve awareness, understanding and appreciation of the AONB through the co-ordinated provision of information, interpretation and art in identified visitor locations.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
<p>19B Use Visitor Management Strategy to develop information and interpretation at agreed visitor locations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seek funding. - Implement agreed projects. 	<p>Five Visitor Centres Group</p>	<p>Advisory Partnership other funders</p>	<p>- April 07 – March 08</p>	<p>Funding obtained and projects successfully implemented.</p>	<p>Partners have worked to input into interpretation on the Chase Heritage Trail and in the Great War Hut. Five Visitor Centres Group has agreed to install interpretation at the first centre – Wolseley and is addressing the need for a revised joint information leaflet.</p>

Policy 20 Any promotion of the AONB will be carefully and sensitively carried out using sustainable visitor management practices.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
20A Inform AONB partners about the special nature of the AONB to create a wider understanding amongst those involved in the promotion of the AONB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree distribution list of key partners for AONB leaflet and Interpretive Strategy. - Hold awareness visits. 	Advisory Partnership Managing Visitors Topic Group	AONB Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sept 07 - April 07 – March 08 	Leaflets and strategy successfully distributed. Partners informed. Visits undertaken.	Two awareness visits took place in September and October. Hosted Europarc Annual Members Day in July.
20B Consider the role of other areas, e.g., Chasewater and the Forest of Mercia, in providing alternative visitor destinations to the AONB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify alternative areas. - Feed in to relevant Local Development Frameworks. - Consult with Destination Management Partnership. - Establish links e.g. cycle path. 	Advisory Partnership	Forest of Mercia, AONB Partners	- April 07 – March 08	Greater awareness. Pressure eased. Links made.	Initial meeting held with Innovation Centre Manager. Work ongoing in relation to LDF responses. Partnership working with Chase Heritage Trail project linking alternative visitor destinations to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Sub-Theme: Signing**Aim:** To use signing in such a way that it contributes positively to the management of visitors to the AONB.**Policy 21** Signing within the AONB will support the concept of sustainable visitor management and the protection of the visual amenity of the area.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
21B Have an agreed timetable for implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree method of implementation. - Work with partners to produce a timetable. - Establish funding sources. 	Advisory Partnership Officers' Working Group	FC, SCC, CCDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sept 07 - Dec 07 - March 08 	Signage strategy rolled out.	Signage installation work is being progressed – quotations gathered and work commenced to manufacture signs.

Policy 22 Signs will be used to provide information and also to help create a sense of identity within the AONB, whilst recognising individual needs of land owners.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
22A Ensure all appropriate organisations are aware of the strategy and the importance of the AONB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launch of good practice guide to make partners aware. 	OWG, Advisory Partnership SCC	AONB Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dec 07 	Awareness generated.	As for 19B above.
22B Implementation of signage strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation. 	SCC	AONB Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dec 07 	Good practice implemented.	As for 21B above.

Policy 23 The nature, location and provision of signing outside the AONB, where it relates to facilities within the AONB and the AONB itself, will be influenced as part of a holistic approach to visitor management

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
23A Ensure there is AONB representation at discussions about signing from outside the AONB.	- Ensure AONB representation on appropriate bodies.	SCC	DMP, FC and other local authorities	- April 07 – March 09	AONB designation considered where appropriate.	Representation from Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty at the Chase Heritage Trail Interpretation Group and input into the new Great War Hut at Marquis Drive.

Sub-Theme: Balancing Nature Conservation and Recreation

Aims: To balance the needs of recreational use with nature conservation.
 To communicate the special nature of the AONB landscape and the needs of a range of users.

Policy 24 A co-ordinated approach to visitor and recreation management across the AONB will be used to ensure that conflicts between users and the environment are minimised

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
<p>24B Develop strategies and guidelines to resolve recreational conflicts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Address any issues of conflict identified in 06/07 review. - Create fora and guidance to deal with issues. - Identify and develop practical projects required as part of the solutions. 	<p>Advisory Partnership</p>	<p>SCC, FC, NE, recreation groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 – March 08 - April 07 – March 08 - April 07 – March 08 	<p>User groups formed (if appropriate). Guidance published. Innovation piloted. Good practice implemented.</p>	<p>Discussions held at Annual Conference. Officers' Working Group and Managing the Landscape Topic Group have reviewed other existing activity and confirmed that appropriate strategies have been put into place on the ground e.g. cycling strategy. It was agreed that efforts should be focused on maintaining this existing work rather than creating further guidelines.</p>

Policy 26 Visitor use of the AONB will be managed through the improvement of access networks to minimise degradation of sensitive areas, such as heathlands.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
26A Ensure that more sensitive areas remain less disturbed by reviewing access into heathland blocks. Develop high quality access in less sensitive areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a protocol/procedure should numbers increase. - Raise awareness of this protocol. 	Staffordshire County Council, Forestry Commission	Natural England, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, West Midland Bird Club, recreation groups	- April 07 – March 08	Agreed protocol established and promoted if required.	Task continuing through the Country Park Management Plan process.
26B Consider appropriate legislative support to maintain sensitive areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investigate legislative support measures. - Decide if suitable. 	Staffordshire County Council, Forestry Commission	AONB Partners	- April 07 – Sept 07 - Oct 07 – Dec 07	Work within the findings of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan consultation.	Comments submitted as part of the consultation on the draft ROWIP.

Sub-Theme: The Local Economy

Aims: To increase the understanding and awareness of the contribution made to and by the diverse rural economy to the economic vitality of the AONB and the potential of the AONB to support that economy.
To encourage sustainable, quality tourism and highlight its role in the conservation of the AONB.

Policy 27 Develop an understanding of the importance of the AONB within local businesses and support their activities where they contribute to the long-term sustainability of the AONB.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
27A Create links with businesses to advise on AONB designation on best practice, funding opportunities etc.	- Agree future actions with AONB business network.	AONB Unit, AONB business network	AONB Partners, Advantage West Midlands	- April 07 – March 08	Greater links with business activity. Business and AONB benefits derived.	Business network being established and parameters developed.

Policy 29 Support initiatives that improve the markets for products which originate from forms of land management which enhance or protect the AONB’s distinctive landscape, wildlife and historic features and strengthens the sense of place of the AONB.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
29A Encourage businesses to become more environmentally and economically sustainable particularly in ways that sustain the natural beauty of the AONB.	- Disseminate good practice regarding initiatives that improve markets for products and enhance/protect the AONB.	Destination Management Partnership, Forestry Commission	Advantage West Midlands, Staffordshire Business Environment Network, Destination Management Partnership.	- April 07 – March 08	Improved partnership working. Better links between the economy and environment. Potential for increased revenue for local businesses.	Contact with business network maintained. Issues relating to small businesses having time to become involved being further addressed.

Policy 30 Ensure tourism is sustainable and based upon the natural beauty and local distinctiveness of the AONB, enriches the lives of visitors, operators and employees and contributes positively to the conservation and enhancement of the AONB.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
<p>30A Work closely with those engaged in the preparation and implementation of sustainable tourism strategies to ensure that the role and purpose of the AONB is taken into account.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confirm links between the Management Plan and Destination Management Partnership strategy. - Access funding from Destination Management Partnership for visitor management. 	<p>AONB Unit</p>	<p>AONB partners, Advantage West Midlands, Visit Heart of England, Managing Visitors Topic Group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 	<p>Improved working on sustainable tourism.</p>	<p>A bid was submitted to DMP and results are being pursued.</p>

Theme: Education and Awareness

Sub-Theme: Understanding

Aims: To communicate, clearly and consistently, the importance of the AONB.
To ensure AONB designation is seen as contributing to the quality of life both in terms of the environment and socio-economically.

Policy 31 AONB partners will promote a consistent understanding of the importance and significance of the AONB.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
31A Ensure that the AONB is appropriately represented in local policies, plans and strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor and review effectiveness of representation. - Identify relevant plans and strategies, considering scope and scale. - Local authorities to identify any plans due to be reviewed. - Involvement of Partnership in consultation, including Local Development Frameworks, Forest Design, Rights of Way Improvement Plan and Diversity Action Plan. 	AONB Unit, AONB Partnership	Joint Committee, AONB partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 	Two way awareness information process. AONB issues considered in plans and strategies.	Active involvement in commenting on draft plans and planning applications continues.
31B Develop a co-ordinated approach to educational visits across the AONB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visitor Centre Sub Group to agree common approach to educational visits. 	Visitor Centre Sub Group	Staffordshire County Council, Forestry Commission, Shugborough Cannock Chase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 – June 07 	Specialisms \ and themes made clear to schools and educational providers.	Work to be pursued with the Five Visitor Centres Group.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
			Council, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust			
31D Implement Interpretation Strategy Action Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seek funding. - Implement agreed projects. 	Visitor Centre Sub Group	AONB Partners, Advisory Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 - March 09 - April 07 - March 09 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New interpretation installations. Awareness raised and interpretation improved. Educational resources improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some core funding awarded. Awareness campaign with community groups continues for signage opportunities. First sign installations commencing.

Sub-Theme: Community Involvement:

Aims: To highlight the importance and relevance of AONB designation to local communities.
 To involve AONB communities in the implementation of the Management Plan.
 To value local knowledge and experience.

Policy 32 To continue to raise awareness of the importance and relevance of the AONB to its local communities and strive to increase the involvement of those communities in decisions, projects and management of the AONB.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
<p>32A Develop innovative ways to increase community action in caring for the AONB.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decide which groups to target. - Establish funding. - Establish priorities/themes. - Develop programme of projects on the ground. 	<p>Advisory Partnership</p>	<p>AONB Unit, Officers' Working Group, Parish & Town Councils, Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association, Community Council, AONB Partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 - March 08 - April 07 - March 09 - April 07 - March 09 - April 07 - March 09 	<p>Groups engaged. Aims and directions clearly communicated. Funding obtained. Projects implemented by groups.</p>	<p>Frequent visits to community and parish council meetings. Management Plan consultation days arranged for all groups to attend. Awareness visits undertaken in September and October. Fixed Point Photography project on-going with volunteers. Work developing opportunities for 50th</p>

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
						Anniversary projects continues.
<p>32B Review Topic Groups to ensure appropriate representation throughout the period of the Plan.</p>	<p>- Reconvene and update membership to deal with appropriate actions as they are timetabled.</p>	<p>Advisory Partnership</p>	<p>Parish & Town Councils, Staffordshire Parish Councils Association, Community Council, AONB Partners, voluntary sector</p>	<p>- April 07 – March 09</p>	<p>Projects delivered. Up to date and relevant advisors/representatives contacted and communication achieved.</p>	<p>Discussions at Topic Groups and Officers' Working Group have identified the need for a "project action group" comprising the members of both Topic Groups. Work to develop this has commenced. The broadening of community involvement will also enhance this process.</p>

Policy 33 To provide support to local communities for activities that will assist in achieving the aims of the Management Plan

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
<p>33A Involve community stakeholders in implementation and review of the Management Plan and explore options for further volunteer activities within the AONB.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commence previously agreed implementation programme. - Consult relevant stakeholders about Management Plan Review. - Decide and implement appropriate procedures for Strategic Environmental Assessment. - Present any redrafted options for final comment. - Feed information into final Review report/amended document. 	<p>Advisory Partnership</p>	<p>AONB partners, Community Council, Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 - May 07 - May 07 - Dec 07 - March 08 	<p>Monitoring and project activity encouraged. Management Plan reviewed with appropriate amendments identified for renewed publication.</p>	<p>Detailed reviews of the management plan and SEA scoping report have commenced. A schedule for the year as well as a consultation programme have been produced. The new website area allowing stakeholder input into the process is now live.</p>

Sub-Theme: Influencing Decision Makers

Aims: To influence policies affecting the AONB.
 To ensure organisations fulfil their CRoW Act and Habitats Directive duties.
 To raise awareness about the importance of the AONB and encourage AONB partners as well as the AONB Unit to act as its champions.

Policy 34 To actively seek opportunities to ensure that AONB designation is a key consideration in relevant future policy development

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
34A Seek to include regular reports about the AONB Partnership within the reporting structure of all partners and feedback from partners on AONB issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide relevant information on AONB issues. - Review success/frequency of reporting and feedback. - Agree partner presentations to take place at AONB meetings to provide relevant information on AONB issues. - Review success/frequency of partner presentations. 	Joint Committee	AONB Unit, AONB partners, Advisory Partnership Officers' Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 - April 07 – March 09 - March 08 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raised awareness. Better fulfilment of statutory duties. Partners carrying forward policies. 	A new system of interim updates for all partners has been implemented. All regular reports are available on the website or in hard copy.
34B Continue to progress contacts at a regional level through the Joint Statement of Intent between the AONB and Natural England, Government Office, Regional Development Agency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action taken forward from meetings. - Establish contacts. - Raise awareness of AONB issues. - Liaise at regional level. 	Natural England	Joint Committee, Advantage West Midlands, Government Office for the West Midlands, AONB Unit,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 - April 07 - April 07 – March 09 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raised awareness under new structure. 	The Protected Landscape Forum's operational remit has been revised. Representation at a regional level continues for the Regional Spatial Strategy, undergrounding overhead lines

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
						projects, the Regional Forestry Forum, development of a regional AONBs wood fuel project (AWM) and attendance at Natural England regional stakeholder meetings.

Policy 35 To communicate the importance of the CRoW Act and Habitats Directive and act as AONB champions.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
35B Identify all partners and encourage a proactive involvement in implementing the CRoW Act.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify proactive ways of involvement. - Identify contacts at statutory undertakers. - Contact statutory undertakers e.g. water, telecommunications, Highways and remind them of the importance of section 85. 	Advisory Partnership AONB Unit	Natural England, AONB partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 – March 08 - April 07 – July 07 - April 07 – July 07 	Raised awareness and activity in the Partnership from all responsible authorities. Reporting back by statutory undertakers achieved.	Protected Landscape Forum has made approaches to BT on behalf of all the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty's and the undergrounding programme of grants continues.

Theme: Quality

Sub-Theme: Development

Aims: To ensure the impact of development on the AONB is a key consideration in development decisions.
To ensure where development does take place, it contributes to the quality of the AONB and its communities.

Policy 36 In order to protect the AONB and its setting from intrusive and undesirable development and to achieve high quality development, where it is appropriate, co-ordinated policies will be prepared.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
36A Review existing planning policies and where appropriate seek changes through Development Plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop timetable for involvement in Local Development Frameworks. - Ensure involvement of Local Development Frameworks. 	Local authorities, AONB Unit	AONB Partners, Officers' Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 	AONB represented in all Local Development Frameworks.	Active involvement in commenting on draft plans and planning applications continues.
36C Review the impact that the increase in keeping horses is having on the AONB landscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undertake monitoring. - Review and act upon findings as appropriate. 	Advisory Partnership	AONB partners	- April 07 – March 08	Baseline study. Monitoring system to inform policy. Input into State of Cannock Chase AONB report. Horse owners' awareness of good practice raised.	A specification for work has been prepared and consulted upon within the Managing the Landscape Topic Group. Quotations are being sought.

Policy 37 Seek to prevent inappropriate extensions of existing quarries and obtain the highest standards of restoration for the benefit of the landscape and habitats of the AONB.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
37A Contribute to the debate on the future of quarrying within and around the AONB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain links with quarrying representatives. - Be aware of and respond to applications. - Establish most appropriate use of representatives in contributing to Partnership activity. 	Joint Committee	Advisory Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 – March 08 - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 08 	Relationships maintained. Responses to applications submitted.	Representatives of the quarries have attended the Managing the Landscape Topic Group meeting and continue to support the SDF Panel's work.

Sub-Theme: Getting Around Cannock Chase AONB

Aim: To develop an approach to transport that reconciles the needs of the AONB with businesses and visitors.

Policy 39 To ensure traffic management schemes respect the local distinctiveness of the AONB.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
39A Develop design guidelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consultations on the draft policy. - Recommend policies to local authorities. 	Advisory Partnership	AONB Partners, Staffordshire Highways, Staffordshire Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 – March 08 - April 07 – March 08 	Clear parameters set for implementation.	Close contact continues with the Highways Authority. Parish Council representatives have agreed amendments to the visual impact of newly installed signage based on its position in the AONB.

Policy 40 To further the aims of the AONB designation, initiatives to increase the use of public and non-motorised transport will be proposed.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
<p>40D Develop the Draft Cycling Strategy for the AONB to full agreement with partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree and prioritise Strategy. - Identify relevant projects. - Commence implementation. 	<p>Staffordshire County Council, Forestry Commission</p>	<p>AONB Partners, cyclists and groups</p>	<p>- April 07 – June 07</p>	<p>Strategy developed and implemented.</p>	<p>The Officers' Working Group has agreed this should be finalised and formalised within the Partnership's policies, although it is effectively already in operation with the endorsement of all Partners.</p>

Sub-Theme: Working Together

Aims: To have a co-ordinated and consistent approach to AONB management.
To effectively use available resources to ensure maximum AONB benefit.

Policy 41 Maintain and develop effective partnerships to co-ordinate the management of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
<p>41A Sustain local and national government funding and support for the AONB Unit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide information to partners on the availability of AONB funding. - Promote the successes of the AONB Unit and Partnership through an Annual Review. - Annual core bids submitted to Natural England. - Review constitutional structure of Partnership. 	<p>AONB Unit</p>	<p>Joint Committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 - Sept 07 – April 08 	<p>2 newsletters. 120 participants at Annual Conference. AONB Unit maintained. Increased AONB activity through partner working and funding. 1000 copies of Annual Review circulated. Agreed constitutional direction.</p>	<p>Some delays in contract for Annual Review and newsletters but slippage being addressed. 65 participants at Annual Conference including new parish council representatives and other partners not previously involved. Discussions at a national, regional and local level on-going within the context of emerging Natural England policies and objectives for spend.</p>

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
<p>41B Access appropriate funding regimes to implement the AONB Management Plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree priorities for seeking funding. - Coordinate bids for maximum effect. - Assess gaps on provision. - Access funding accordingly. - Monitor and review effectiveness of funding for AONB Management Plan. 	<p>Officers' Working Group, funding sub group</p>	<p>Advisory Partnership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 	<p>Management Plan implementation on target. Partner funding maximised through leverage of additional funds. Projects achieved as a result of funding obtained.</p>	<p>Renewed efforts being addressed to set up new funding subgroup. Watching brief on opportunities being maintained.</p>
<p>41C Strengthen links with other protected areas by the AONB Unit and partners through involvement with the National Association for AONBs and other relevant organisations and networks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further communicate AONB work via Cannock Chase AONB website. - Contribute to the Learning Network. - Ensure that local authorities are members of the NAAONB. - Attend West Midlands Protected Landscapes Forum meetings. - Attend NAAONB Annual Conference. 	<p>AONB Unit</p>	<p>Advisory Partnership Officers' Working Group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 	<p>Increased opportunities for sharing good practice and working together. Increased knowledge base. Attendance at NAAONB Conference. Partnership resources sustained.</p>	<p>Hosted Europarc Annual General Meeting in July. Attendance at the NAAONB conference in Winchester created liaison with other Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty's. Chairman and AONB Officer visited NAAONB Board buddy North Devon AONB, resulting in shared good practice information and on-going mutual support.</p>

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
						Website upgrade implemented. Regular attendance at Protected Landscape Forum meetings. Regional seminars hosted by Rural Affairs Forum and Defra attended. Planning continues to co-host the NAAONB Annual Conference in 2008.
<p>41D Share knowledge and information about AONB issues both locally and amongst other AONBs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop the AONB website further. - Develop in house training/networking opportunities. - Contribute to the Learning Network. - Programme meetings with regional AONBs. - Attend NAAONB Annual Conference. - Awareness Visits for Partners. - Exchange information in view of constitutional review. 	AONB Unit	Advisory Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 - Dec 08 - April 07 – March 09 	Increased understanding of AONB issues and opportunities for sharing best practice. Meetings of AONB Officers in Region. Attendance at NAAONB Conference. 4 Awareness visits attended by 80 partners.	Attendance at the NAAONB conference in Winchester created liaison with other Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty's. Chairman and AONB Officer visited NAAONB Board buddy North Devon AONB, resulting in shared good practice

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
						information and on-going mutual support. Website update in progress. Hosted Europarc Annual General Meeting in July. Europarc Preparation in progress for 2008 NAAONB National Conference which CCAONB is hosting. Two further awareness visits planned before March 08.

Policy 42 Establish a monitoring and review programme for the AONB Management Plan.

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
42A Implement monitoring and review programme for the AONB Management Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree on monitoring and review programme. - Continue to complete actions for monitoring for a future "State of the AONB" report for evidence base. - Commence review of AONB Management Plan 	AONB Unit	Advisory Partnership, Officers' Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 07 – March 09 - July 07 – June 11 - July 06 – June 11 	Quarterly reports. Annual Reports. Database developed. Management Plan Review produced.	Horsiculture monitoring in preparation. Fixed point photography planned commenced. Detailed review of

Action	Key Stages	Lead Body	Key Players	When By	Outputs	Progress
	and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment following guidance issued by Natural England. - Publish agreed Review.			- April 07 – March 09		the management plan and SEA scoping report are on-going. The implementation of the schedule for the year, as well as consultation programme have commenced.
42B Implement monitoring and review programme for the AONB Annual Action Plans.	- Agree on monitoring and review programme. - Identify sources and gaps. - Collate information and seek to fill gaps. - Regular reports from all Partners to Officers' Working Group, Advisory Partnership and Joint Committee on progress.	Officers' Working Group	Advisory Partnership	- April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09 - April 07 – March 09	Quarterly reports. Annual Reports. Annual Action Plan 2008/2009 published.	See 42A above Regular partnership reporting continues.

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee – 13 December 2007
Report of the AONB Officer
Agenda Item 8
Proposed Meetings Schedule 2008

1 Recommendations

1.1 The Committee agrees the proposed meeting schedule for 2008.

2 Background

2.1 In order for the Partnership to meet its legal obligations under the Partnership Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding, it is necessary to hold a number of formal meetings throughout the year. As these meetings inform progress of delivery across the whole Partnership, it is necessary to programme them in a specific order to ensure that they all link correctly. For this reason, they are scheduled for the whole year. All Partners have agreed that advance notice of these commitments is effective.

2.2 The proposed meeting schedule is attached at Appendix I.

**Appendix 1
Draft Calendar of Meetings 2008-09**

Advisory Partnership	Officers Working Group	Joint Committee	Parish Councils Meeting	National Conference/50th Anniversary Events
	Tuesday 22 nd January 2008			
Thursday 21 st February 2008	Tuesday 11 th March 2008		To be determined	
Thursday 24 th April 2008	Wednesday 14 th May 2008	Monday 9 th June 2008 (Annual Meeting)		9 th – 11 th July 2008 (National Association of AONBs Annual Conference)
	Tuesday 24 th June 2008 (Forward Planning Meeting)			
Tuesday 19 th August 2008	Wednesday 3 rd September 2008	w/c 8 th September 2008 (to be determined)	To be determined	16 th September 2007 (Designation Day Event)
	Thursday 16 th October 2008			
Wednesday 12 th November 2008	Thursday 27 th November 2008	Monday 15 th December 2008		
	Tuesday 20 th January 2009			
Tuesday 3 rd February 2009 (Management Plan 2009-2014 Approval)	Wednesday 5 th March 2009	Wednesday 25 th March 2009 (Management Plan 2009-2014 Approval)		

Meetings to commence at 10:00am, except for Parish Councils' Meeting and National Conference/Events.

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee – 13 December 2007
Report of the Chairman of the Officers' Working Group
Agenda Item 9
AONB Unit Staff – Job Evaluation

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 The Committee notes the commitment by the County Council to implement its new pay model
- 1.2 The Committee approves the proposals set out in 3.3 and 3.4 to fund the implementation of the new pay model.

2 Background

- 2.1 As the Lead Authority under the Cannock Chase AONB Partnership Agreement, Staffordshire County Council employs the staff of the AONB Unit on behalf of all the Partners.
- 2.2 As legal employees of Staffordshire County Council the staff of the AONB Unit have been subject to the process of job evaluation, in the same way as all other local authority staff nationally. This has been undertaken to meet legal obligations of all local authorities to ensure that staff have fair and equitable pay under a single pay system.
- 2.3 Partnership representatives, including the Joint Committee Chairman, met and corresponded with the Deputy Corporate Director (Human Resources) at Staffordshire County Council last year to ensure that the Partnership remained informed and involved as the process of job evaluation was implemented by Staffordshire County Council.
- 2.4 A pay model proposal is being presented to the Staffordshire County Council Cabinet meeting on 5 December 2007 for approval. The implications of this proposal have been discussed by the Officers' Working Group with the Staffordshire County Council Job Evaluation Manager on 13 October. At the time of writing this report, the Staffordshire County Council Cabinet has not yet met but for the purposes of this report, it will be assumed that the Cabinet has approved the proposal.

3 Implementing the Pay Model

- 3.1 The new pay model has assessed the AONB Unit Office Manager's post at a scale slightly lower than currently and the Assistant AONB Officer and AONB Officer posts at higher scales than currently held. Overall, this means an increase in

salaries for the team. Figures are attached at Appendix I.

3.2 The implementation conditions of the pay model mean two practical impacts on the Partnership financially. These are:

- A raised salaries budget from 1 April 2008
- A one-off payment of back pay for the posts identified as higher scales.

The Officers' Working Group has therefore undertaken an immediate assessment of these impacts and the potential for the Partnership to meet them. Its proposals are shown in 3.3 and 3.4 below.

3.3 The future salaries, from 1 April 2008, could reasonably be accommodated within the current assumed overall core budget ceiling, principally funded by Natural England, with a slightly reduced capacity within the core action projects budget. Budget of £32800 in 07/08 compared to a budget of £27700 in 08/09 (this figure includes £7000 for Management Plan production). It is therefore proposed that the salaries are addressed through the normal budgeting procedures with each Partner organisation providing its usual ratio of the contribution under the Partnership agreement.

3.4 A detailed assessment of continuing spend within this financial year has identified savings and underspend that would usually be allocated to additional project delivery work within the financial year. However these savings could be used to address the one-off back pay obligation within the overall core budget without impacting on this year's originally planned delivery programme. It is therefore proposed that the obligation to pay these sums could be accommodated within the overall budget without requiring any of the Partners to allocate additional funding above that already planned. A summary of the key savings discussed by the Officers' Working Group is shown at Appendix II.

3.5 It should also be noted that figures quoted for back pay commitments are in excess of the actual final figure. This is because they are gross figures, including all contributions. A revised calculation of the actual cost to the Partnership is awaited from Staffordshire County Council and may not be available until April 2008.

Item No. 10 on Agenda

Local Members Interest
N/A

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee- 13 December 2007

**Financial Update
Budget 2007-08 and Draft Natural England Bid for 2008-09**

**Report of the Treasurer to the Joint Committee
and the AONB Officer.**

Recommendations

1. a) Budget 2007/08
Progress on spend for 2007/08 is noted.

- b) Budget 2008/09

Proposals for the budget for next year are approved to be included in the draft funding bid.

- (c) Draft funding bids
The draft joint bid to Natural England for core, project grant and Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) funding in 2008/09, as well as its supporting documents (Annual Action Plan and Business Plan), is approved for final submission to Natural England on a date to be confirmed. (Any amendments to the draft will be reported at a future meeting of the Joint Committee. Any material difference will be brought forward to the Joint Committee in the relevant timescales by the Officers Working Group early in 2008).

Part A

Why is it coming here – what decision(s) are required?

The Joint Committee in its role under the Partnership Agreement is responsible for:-

- The management of the core funding from the Countryside Agency and the co-ordination of partner projects. The report up-dates the Committee on progress to date on the current year's budget.
- The approval of budget provision. The proposals for future budgets for 2008/09 are recommended to the Committee for inclusion in the draft funding bid to Natural England.
- The production of an Annual Action Plan to implement activity under the Management Plan. The draft bids incorporate both the proposed future budgets and the delivery of those actions and their approval is recommended to the Committee.

Reasons for Recommendations:

3. The recommendations represent an effective way to continue to carry forward the implementation of the Management Plan for the Cannock Chase AONB Partnership.

Part B

Background:

4. Budget Update 2007/08

The financial position which is anticipated for the end of this quarter is set out in Appendix 1 together with the overall outturn currently predicted for the year. The grant approval from the Countryside Agency expects a spend of 75% of the annual budget for the first grant claim of the year which covers the first three quarters of the year. This will not be met as expenditure to the end of December is expected to be around 53%. At the last meeting of the Joint Committee a number of variations on core action project spend were identified. Modest savings were made on the staff conference due to sponsorship by the Cedar Tree Hotel. The draft management plan came in under budget due to the carrying out of work in house rather than using consultancy. There has been a slight slippage on core action projects but they are still on track to be completed by the end of the year. Overall the predicted underspend for the year is estimated to be £10,280.

The latest position available for the approved partner projects for the current year is set out in Appendix 2.

5. Budget 2008/09

The proposed budget for next year is set out in Appendix 3 and generally reflects an annual inflationary rise of 3%. The proposed budget for 2008/09 is £167,350 of which £125,510 (75%) is requested from Natural England. The remaining 25% is split between the five local authority partners in accordance with the partnership agreement.

The salaries budget has been prepared on the basis of the implementation of Job Evaluation from 1st April 2008. (See separate paper from the Chairman of the Officers Working Group regarding Job Evaluation).

6. Draft funding bids

- a) As with last year, the application for funding bids has been assumed to be for a single application prepared by the AONB Unit on behalf of Staffordshire County Council as lead authority. It is anticipated that there will be support for core action projects. However,

confirmation is awaited on whether funding will be available for partner project grants and the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF). At this stage it does not seem likely that funding will be available for project grants. Specific information of any changes to the draft bid will be provided at a future meeting.

- b) Core funding supports 75% of the costs of the AONB partnership activity under its Management Plan and is the responsibility of the Joint Committee. Partner project grant provides the opportunity to deliver additional projects in support of the implementation of the AONB Management Plan and provides for up to 50% of the costs of those projects, administered as a single project submission by the AONB Unit. If funding is not available for these projects then other sources of funding will be explored. The SDF is funding available from Defra to support innovative and sustainable projects from the AONB community. It provides for a minimum of 50% of total projects costs. SDF funding requested is £50,000 and will be administered by the AONB Unit via administrative procedures which were agreed with the Countryside Agency (now Natural England).
- c) The Officers Working Group has approved application drafts, as they have been formulated and recommends their approval.

7. Reserve

Since the last meeting of the Joint Committee a reserve has been set up which currently stands at £10,213.68. The partnership agreement already provides for the operation of a Reserve to hold accumulated surpluses which can be made available to:-

- Meet any deficits arising on the Core Budget
- Set aside sums for future investment through the Actions Budget
- Finance any other specified use approved by the Joint Committee

8. Requirement for External Audit

Following a request from the audit commission for detailed information regarding AONB Joint Committee we have been advised that an annual return will need to be completed at the year end. This will be audited by external auditors appointed by the Audit Commission.

9. Equalities Implications

This report has been prepared in accordance with the equal opportunities policies of the County Council.

10. Legal Implications

Actions recommended in this report are in accordance with the provisions of the Cannock Chase AONB partnership Agreement.

11. Resource and Value for Money Implications

This report recommends actions to ensure the continued efficient delivery of the Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan. The matched funding requirements to make up the 25% of contributions towards the core activity are set out in the Partnership Agreement. The project grant submission

details which partners will provide 50% towards the projects costs. The SDF is a funding “pot” to be administered to partners who are able to provide the necessary matched funding for their Management Plan project proposals.

12. Risk Implications

If continuity of funding and spend are not continued as recommended to the Joint Committee, then the five authorities involved in the partnership will need to seek other methods of fulfilling their statutory obligations for the AONB under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Report authors:

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List of Background papers

Draft bid for 2008/09
Annual Action Plan draft for 2008/09
Business Plan

APPENDIX 1

CANNOCK CHASE AONB JOINT COMMITTEE

Budget Update for 2007/08 for
Cannock Chase AONB Core and Project Costs

December 2007

	Approved Budget	Spent or Committed To Date	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
<u>AONB Core Budget</u>				
Staff Salaries and Associated costs	103,800	57,452	101,450	-2,350
Accommodation /Office Equipment	15,000	9,985	12,600	-2,400
Transport	1,900	448	700	-1,200
Partnership budget for PR events	2,300	5	2,400	100
Partnership running costs (In kind)	6,500	4,725	6,500	0
	129,500	72,615	123,650	-5,850
<u>Action Budget Awareness Projects:</u>				
Annual Action Plan	2,000		2,000	0
Annual AONB Conference	4,600	1,559	3,600	-1,000
AONB Website	200	1,500	1,620	1,420
AONB Annual review	3,000	3,354	3,400	400
AONB Newsletters	2,500	2,129	2,100	-400
AONB partner awareness raising events	1,000	485	1,000	0
Management Plan Review	9,000	4,000	6,700	-2,300
Recreation Guidelines	2,000	0	0	-2,000
Horsiculture Monitoring	1,500		1,500	0
5C Projects	2,000		1,450	-550
Implement Signs Programme	3,000		3,000	0
Community Involvement Programme	2,000	979	2,000	0
	32,800	14,006	28,370	-4,430
TOTAL BUDGET	162,300	86,621	152,020	-10,280
<u>AGREED FUNDING:</u>				
Countryside Agency	121,725			
Lichfield District Council	1,902	1,902		
South Staffordshire District Council	1,902	1,902		
Cannock Chase District Council	7,610	7,610		
Stafford Borough Council	7,610	7,610		
Staffordshire County Council	21,551	21,551		
	162,300	40,575		

APPENDIX 2

CANNOCK CHASE AONB JOINT COMMITTEE

Budget Update for 2007/08 for
Partner Projects

December 2007

	Revised Budget 2007/08 £	Latest Spend 2007/08 £
APPROVED PARTNER PROJECTS		
<u>Sustainable Landscape Use</u> Two Valley Project	14,000	1,000
	14,000	1,000
<u>Engendering Understanding of the AONB</u> Discovering Nature on Cannock Chase Young Enterprise Primary Program in Cannock Chase AONB	11,200 4,000	7,812 0
	15,200	7,812
TOTAL APPROVED	29,200	8,812
AONB SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND		
Committed Projects		
FoCC		2,205
Young Carers project		6,093
Beaudesert Hall		7,194
FWAG-ownership of sustainable agricultural land		1,550
NNAS		300
		17,341
Gone to Panel		
SWT-Wolseley Bridge Visitor Centre - access imp.		1,050
SWT-The Suburban Garden		1,800
SWT-Otter Underpass		3,500
SWT-The next 10 years		1,450
SWT-Gatehouse interior fit-out		5,000
	-	12,800
Balance	35,000	4,859
TOTAL APPROVED	35,000	35,000

APPENDIX 3

CANNOCK CHASE AONB JOINT COMMITTEE

**Budget for 2008/09 for
Cannock Chase AONB Core and Project Costs**

AONB Core Budget

Staff Salaries and Associated costs	112,350
Accommodation /Office Equipment	14,200
Transport	4,300
Partnership budget for PR events	2,300
Partnership running costs (In kind)	6,500

139,650

Action Budget Awareness Projects:

Annual Action Plan	1,500
AONB Website	200
AONB Annual review	3,000
AONB Newsletters	1,000
AONB partner awareness raising events	1,000
Management Plan	7,000
Monitoring Projects (SAONB, visitors, peace & tranquility)	6,000
Signage	2,000
Community Involvement including 50th Anniversary Events	6,000

27,700

TOTAL BUDGET

167,350

AGREED FUNDING:

Natural England	125,510
Lichfield District Council	2,092
South Staffordshire District Council	2,092
Cannock Chase District Council	8,368
Stafford Borough Council	8,368
Staffordshire County Council	20,920

167,350

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee – 13 December 2007
Report of the Assistant AONB Officer and AONB Office Manager
Agenda Item 11
National Association of AONBs Annual Conference
and 50th Anniversary Celebrations

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 The Joint Committee notes progress to date.
- 1.2 Members support identification of sponsors for activity programme.
- 1.3 Members agree the programme of activity proposed to date.

2 Background

- 2.2 Tuesday 16th September 2008 marks the 50th Anniversary of the designation of Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Work is commencing to mark the event, using it as an opportunity to educate and raise awareness of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as well as celebrating the on-going success of the conservation.
- 2.3 Cannock Chase AONB has been asked to joint host the 2008 National Association of AONBs Annual Conference. The Conference will take place on 9th-11th July 2008 at Harper Adams Agricultural College. On the morning of the first day, there will be keynote speakers and project plenary sessions. During the afternoon, drop-in/market place and 'inspire me' sessions will be held. The second day of site visits is being planned. Initial response from the Partnership has been positive.

3 Principal Activity Proposed for 50th Anniversary Celebrations

- 3.1 It is proposed to hold an event to celebrate designation on 16th September 2008 at Cannock Chase Visitor Centre, Marquis Drive. Sponsorship will be sought in January 2008 for costs. 500 attendees including local people, politicians, AONB partners, local businesses, regional and national stakeholders involved. Members help for potential sponsors is requested.
- 3.2 In addition to the main celebratory event, 6 smaller scale events will be held from April 2008 to March 2009. Each event will target the variety of work which takes place within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. £6,000 has been allocated in the bid for funding to Natural England for the proposed events.

- 3.3** Memorabilia will be produced consisting of 2000 leather key rings, 2000 pens and 500 mugs. Funding for this has already been identified in the 2007/2008 budget.
- 3.4** Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Calendar 2008 has been produced to celebrate the 50th anniversary and Friends of Cannock Chase 60th Anniversary. 2000 copies were produced and are currently being distributed.

4 Other Activities Being Progressed

- 4.1 Photography competition** - Amongst the proposals is a photographic competition themed to the natural beauty of Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Categories will be age 10 and under, 11-15, 16-20, general and professional. Photographs must show something within the Cannock Chase AONB, and winners will feature in an exhibition as well as receiving prizes.
- 4.2 Invite** – We are going to invite Helen Philips, Chief Executive of Natural England, to become involved with the main celebration.
- 4.3 Publication** – A local photographer produced a series of images as part of a college course, using text from the Management Plan to accompany the images. Sponsorship to publish this as a book will be sought.
- 4.4 Involvement of Stakeholders** – Officers Working Group will seek to involve other stakeholders. Invitations to become involved will be distributed in January 2008.

5 National Association of AONBs Conference

- 5.1** The Chairman, AONB Officer and Office Manager have attended steering group meetings to progress the organisation of the Conference. A commitment to provide participants and speakers has been fulfilled and a positive response has been received from a number of partners. The AONB Unit is confident that it will be able to present a wide range of partnership working to the national audience on the first day of the Conference, followed by associated site visits on the second day.

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee – 13 December 2007
Report of the AONB Officer
Agenda Item 13
Management Plan Review Progress

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 The Committee notes the progress on the Management Plan Review.

2 Up-date on Review Progress

- 2.1 Initial assessments of the structure and overall content of the Management Plan have been completed by the AONB Unit and the Officers' Working Group. These have recently been posted on the AONB website and all stakeholders now have the opportunity to review and add to these assessments.
- 2.2 Work has been undertaken and is on-going to collate full information on the data held as supporting evidence across the Partnership.
- 2.3 A scoping report for the Strategic Environmental Assessment has also been prepared with the support of Stafford Borough Council and recently posted on the AONB website, as well as circulated to statutory consultees for comment. Again, this is open for stakeholder comments.
- 2.4 Natural England has now advised that it will be necessary, for legal reasons, to undertake an Appropriate Assessment of Management Plans in relation to the Habitats Regulations. This means that Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan will have to include an Appropriate Assessment, as the SAC falls within the categories under the Regulations. The process also requires that consideration is made of designated areas up to 10km outside the area being considered. However it is hoped to share effort with those local authorities that are already undertaking work for their own Local Development Framework purposes and not duplicate effort. Natural England circulated guidance to AONBs on the implementation of the Appropriate Assessment at the end of October.
- 2.5 The Assistant AONB Officer and AONB Officer have both attended the third of three workshops led by the National Association of AONBs (NAAONB) on the implementation of the Management Plan Review process. The sessions have been both informative and an opportunity to gather help and benchmark progress.
- 2.6 Observations on the progress to date are that the Officers' Working Group decision to conduct the process in-house on an expediency basis remains the most practicable. This is because the largest knowledge base is within the

Partnership and the AONB Unit. However because of the stretch on resources and the operational requirements of urgent matters, it has been necessary to allow the self-imposed schedule to slip so far. Nonetheless, it is still anticipated that the schedule should be met as some work areas, in particular the preparation of a draft funding bid for 2008/09 have been completed earlier than anticipated. In addition, feedback from other AONBs during the NAAONB seminars has shown that whilst Cannock Chase AONB is behind its own desired schedule, its progress does appear to be well in advance of many other AONBs.