

**Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Joint Committee
Annual Meeting**

Monday 7th June 2010, 10:00am

St Thomas Priory Golf Club, Armitage Lane, Rugeley, WS15 1ED

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 14th September 2009, Cllr Tony Williams was appointed Chairman and Cllr Doug Davis Vice Chairman up to the annual meeting of the Joint Committee in 2010.

2. Apologies

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 14th September 2009 to be formally accepted

4. Matters Arising

5. Declaration of Interests

6. Action Plan Progress

Report of the Chairman of the Officers' Working Group

7. Funding Strategy

Report of the Assistant AONB Officer

8. Financial Update

Report of the Treasurer to the Joint Committee

9. Cannock Chase Fire 2010 - Presentation

Andy Goode – Staffordshire County Council

10. Partners' News

Item for Members to update all from their own part of the AONB

11. Any Planning Items that may require consideration

Relevant papers will be tabled

12. Any Other Business

13. 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 – 7 June 2010
Report of the Chairman of the Officers' Working Group
Agenda Item 6

Management Plan Delivery Progress

1 Recommendations

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

2 Progress

- 2.1 Since the last meeting, the work for 2009/10 has been completed and 2010/11 work has commenced with the Natural England grant confirmed, enabling an efficient start to programme delivery.
- 2.2 Some programme slippage was experienced at the end of 2009/10 but was addressed through the bringing forward of programmed work from 2010/11, enabling continued maximisation of spend. Individual projects affected are identified in section 4.

3 Constitutional Delivery

- 3.1 The **Partnership Agreement** between the Cannock Chase AONB Partnership and Natural England has been agreed and signed by all Partners. This was the first to be achieved nationwide and was formally confirmed by Natural England on 8 April. The completion of the Partnership Agreement ensures that a priority grant condition for 2010/11 has been met. Press coverage was received on the signing ceremony.
- 3.2 Details of the Natural England **grant award** are set out in the finance report later in the meeting. The offer was agreed by Staffordshire County Council, as the lead authority, on 6 April 2010.
- 3.3 The **Advisory Partnership** meeting held the annual conference as a study tour to the Peak District National Park on 26 May 2010. Focus was on visitor management, with a particular emphasis on cycling and car parks. Hosts included the Peak District National Park, Staffordshire Moorlands Council and the Tea Junction (private sector organisation), as well as the National Trust. A verbal up-date on the day will be given at the meeting, should Members require.
- 3.4 Members have been notified about the **National Association of AONBs annual conference** 12-15 July. Opportunities for learning will include an address from a ministerial representative and from the Chief Executive of Natural England.

4 Project Delivery

- 4.1 The Phase 2 bid for **Access to Nature funding** submitted to Natural England has been turned down. Reasons cited were at a detailed level. The overall bid was praised and it was noted that the grant had been heavily subscribed. However concerns identified by the Panel related to specific numbers of outputs for each of the target areas and the way in which outputs were described. There is no opportunity to re-submit the bid, as the fund has now been closed.
- 4.2 To replace the planned delivery relating to volunteering and community involvement that was in the Access to Nature bid, the Assistant AONB Officer will be seeking to offer more awareness and involvement sessions, at the lowest cost possible. These sessions now receive income from community members who take part, if expenditure is incurred. However the Officers' Working Group remains keen that her priority is to target other funding sources to ensure sustainability for the overall delivery programme.
- 4.3 Seeking new funding therefore remains a priority. Action has already been taken to investigate opportunities for Natural Assets, European funding and develop refreshed relationships with other grant funders and potential partners.
- 4.4 Projects delivering against a range of Management Plan delivery targets have been completed via the **Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)** in 2009/10, attracting an administration fee earned by the AONB Unit. These are shown in detail in the financial report at this meeting. For 2010/11, the Officers' Working Group is currently reviewing whether a proportion of the SDF should not be offered immediately for grants, in order that it might be used to "pump prime" larger funding bids. One grant has been awarded this year, totalling £2,000.
- 4.5 A number of the issues arising from the points made in 4.1 – 4.4 above are also addressed in the separate agenda item on a **Funding Strategy**.
- 4.6 The **peace and tranquillity monitoring** report has been completed by community volunteers and Red Kite consultants. It is now available on the AONB website. Its findings identify that "hot spots" are principally around visitor centres and that there are a wide range of tranquil areas to be found across the AONB. As an additional positive outcome, volunteers would be willing to take part in future surveys again.
- 4.7 The **State of the AONB** report has been completed. It up-dates the original report completed in 2003/04, using survey data gathered over the period of the 2004-09 Management Plan. The report identifies where there are gaps in condition monitoring and makes recommendations for forward monitoring. A key finding is that Cannock Chase AONB appears to be well

advanced in the holistic approach to monitoring that has been taken since this Partnership has been formed.

- 4.8 Completion of work to address the **dog owning community** was not achieved during 2009/10 but has been successfully delivered early in 2010/11. A number of focus groups were held with members of the public. These were led by Stephen Jenkinson and sponsored by the dog food manufacturer Arden Grange. The groups tested proposed consistent messages for the Partnership to give to dog owners. They also identified more than one person who was willing to represent this user group on the Advisory Partnership. The Advisory Partnership had previously agreed that this representation would be appropriate.
- 4.9 A groundbreaking initiative to make the delivery of responsible behaviour self-led was also launched at the groups. A "Freda" brand reminiscent of the New Zealand Rifles Regiment mascot whose grave is sited in the AONB was launched alongside a social networking site. Discussion and involvement can be seen on the Fredasfootsteps Facebook site which is linked to the **Cannock Chase AONB Facebook site**. Activity is increasing and the site can also be found on www.fredasfootsteps.org.uk. The intention is that AONB messages for dog owners can be disseminated via this site. In addition, contact has been with Sheila Harper who is a locally based and internationally renowned dog behaviour expert. She works within the AONB and has agreed to meet the team to discuss potential links.
- 4.10 To replace the delayed dog project work, the **visitor centre staff training** project was brought forward and commenced early in 2009/10. Losehill Hall trainers have developed a programme for frontline staff in the 6 visitor centres in and around the AONB. This is to ensure that a consistent and appropriately prominent message about the AONB and its needs is used by all Partners. Training commenced on 20 May and has attracted enthusiastic support from all Partners, with around 40 delegates attending three sessions. The project will ensure on-going knowledge is maintained through the generation of training materials for future new staff and establishment of on-going information up-dates into the visitor centres. These will be developed using advice from frontline staff about the most appropriate media for them.
- 4.11 Also brought forward into 2009/10 was the additional installation of **gateway boundary signs** to the AONB at Wolseley. The installation attracted unsolicited press attention. Positive coverage was received about the awareness raising work of the Partnership.

5 Awareness Raising and Community Involvement

- 5.1 Three further **awareness days** have been held. The first was a litter pick on 11 February under snowy conditions. Another examined the biodiversity

along the canal area, led by Nick Mott of Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and travelling on an historic narrow boat. Sufficient requests have been received to repeat this session which only allowed limited numbers. A third group visited the bluebell woods at Beaudesert.

- 5.2 Members of the AONB Unit have attended a number of the monthly **business breakfasts** organised by the Cannock Business Exchange. This has enabled awareness of the AONB to continue to reach a different audience, as well as making useful links with local businesses.
- 5.3 There has been a high demand for **talks** from educational and other organisations. A visit was hosted by Partners for **students** and tutors from Birmingham City University on 28 April. A total of 550 **pupils** have taken part in presentations delivered by the Assistant AONB Officer. In addition, 4 **other groups** have received presentations about the AONB from Unit staff.
- 5.4 Two other key **recreational user groups** have been targeted in the period. Around 4000 **mountain bikers** attended the Forestry Commission's formal opening of the Monkey Trail on 17 April. In addition, 3000 **orienteers** had AONB information available at a stand at the British Orienteering Championships event throughout the May Bank holiday weekend. The opportunities to reach people at this event were maximised through community volunteers helping to man the stand. From both events, a number of useful contacts for forward Partnership work were established.
- 5.5 Refreshed discussions have been undertaken with representatives from the **Destination Management Partnership (DMP)** about continued awareness and representation of the AONB in its work. As a result, the membership of this Partnership has been renewed to ensure opportunities to make representations to this sector continue.

6 Regional Issues

- 6.1 The regular meetings of the **West Midlands Protected Landscapes Forum** continue. The region is well represented at a national level on the NAAONB board and links between the regional and national contacts are ensuring regular dialogue on key issues.
- 6.2 The bi-annual meetings of the regional group established to deliver projects funded by Ofgem in protected landscapes for the **undergrounding** of overhead lines have continued. The group discusses and approves project proposals. It has the AONB lead officers and representatives of Natural England and Central Networks (E.ON) as its members. Following the meeting in January, it has been confirmed that the scheme at Brocton is moving towards its implementation phase and that the stalled scheme at Tixall has also achieved further wayleave agreements and is appearing to be possible now.

7 PR and Communications

- 7.1 The file showing the press coverage received since the last meeting will be available for Members to view at the meeting.
- 7.2 A contract for the supply of a communications service has been placed with Lichfield District Council who will now be handling the communications requirements of the Partnership through the AONB Unit.

8 Planning

- 8.1 Natural England has strongly suggested that it would be appropriate to engage a suitably qualified consultant to act on behalf of the Partnership in relation to planning matters. Further, it is recognised that the increasing amount of time being spent by the AONB Officer on planning related work would be better spent focusing on the core business of the Partnership. Consequently, it was intended to let a contract for the provision of planning services to a suitably qualified firm on a retainer basis. However, only two tenders have been received and both are very significantly over the allocated budget for the work. The decision has therefore been taken to seek other, possibly smaller firms that may be able to provide the service required at a lower cost. Should this approach be unsuccessful, a rethink in terms of the budget and/or the way forward will need to be discussed with Natural England.

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee – 7th June 2010
Report of the Assistant AONB Officer
Agenda Item 7
Funding Strategy

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 The Joint Committee approves the principles and processes for obtaining funding and other resources set out in the paper below.

2 Background

- 2.1 The continued management of Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty beyond 2011 may rely on the Partnership's ability to identify and secure funding and other resources from a range of sources.
- 2.2 Additional sources of funding are likely to become increasingly necessary for the successful achievement of the AONB's Management Plan aims and objectives, whilst at the same time becoming increasingly difficult to obtain.
- 2.3 A detailed Funding Strategy 2010-2014 is being prepared in line with the Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan and Business Plan to create a formalised operational approach to obtaining funding and other resources. To date, this activity has been done on a piecemeal approach and has not always enabled the best practical delivery desired. In order to achieve a more efficient operation and speed of response to opportunities, an agreed framework needs to be established.
- 2.4 It is therefore key that the Committee approves strategic issues in relation to this activity.
- 2.5 The Officers Working Group is currently working up detailed papers to underpin the principles below. These will expand on the principles and be at a detailed operational level for the Officers Working Group.
- 2.6 The principal items in relation to obtaining funding and other resources for the Committee to approve are:
- The overarching principles
 - The strategic principles
 - The process including delegated approvals

3 Overarching Principles

- 3.1 The following three principles should always be adhered to when applying for funding or any other resources:

- The activities for which funding and other resource is sought should reflect the HLO7, SP10 of the CCAONB Management Plan and the projects identified within the Annual Action Plan.
- The Partnership should aim to recover full cost of its funded activities where appropriate.
- Preference for bids and other resources shall be for the longer term projects that create a greater return to the Partnership.

4. Strategic Principles

- 4.1 The activities for which funding and other resource is sought should reflect priorities in the Management and Business plans.
- 4.2 Funding applications will only be made to appropriate funding sources whose criteria most match those of the AONB Partnership. In addition, the Partnership will ensure that it is confident that the project can be delivered.
- 4.3 Individual project partners involved will be consulted when making specific bids for resources.
- 4.4 Opportunities for collaborative projects, sharing of resources or partnership working will be developed where possible, in order to make best use of limited resources.
- 4.5 In order to promote stability and certainty, funding should be agreed for longer time periods (e.g. three years) where it represents good value for money.

5 Priority Levels and Targets

Primary	Grants
Secondary	Membership
Tertiary	Earned income

- 5.1 As a lower Partnership priority but also a target, the Partnership could also obtain funding from the following sources:

- Sponsorship
- Legacies
- Donations

6 Approving Bids

- 6.1 The approval limits for pursuing bids are set out below. Individual organisations will be asked to confirm their involvement prior to submitting bids.

Value of Bid	Approval Process
£25,000 and below	Agreement from the Chair of the Officers Working Group and the Vice Chair in absence of the Chair
£25,000 to £500,000	Approval required from the Officers Working Group
£500,000 plus	Approval required from the Joint Committee

- 6.2 The Partnership should aim to recover full cost of its funded activities where possible e.g. by including a proportion of its overheads in funding bids.
- 6.3 It is proposed that the Officers Working Group oversees the detailed operational side of the delivery of the Funding Strategy, as it would normally do for other Partnership activity.
- 6.4 The Funding Strategy will be produced on a five year basis in line with the AONB Management Plan. An action plan will be produced annually with a list of projects for that year and potential funding opportunities.

Local Members Interest
N/A

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee- 7th June 2010

**Financial Update
Final Outturn 2009-10 and Budget 2010-11**

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

Recommendations

1. The Joint Committee is asked to approve the final outturn position for 2009/10 and approve the proposed budget for 2010/11 for the Core and Project Costs.

Part A

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

2. The Joint Committee in its role under the Partnership Agreement is responsible for:-
 - Approving the final accounts for the year as soon as possible after the year has ended and this report sets out the accounts for consideration.
 - The approval of budget provision for the year ahead. This report sets out the budgets for next year which have been submitted to Natural England for their approval and provides an update on the approvals received so far.

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. Financial Outturn 2009/10

- a) The detailed outturn for 2009/10 for the core budget and action projects is set out in Appendix 1 and is compared with the budget originally approved by Natural England. The overall outturn of £170,800 is very much in line with the approved budget of £170,700. Donations and sales income of £955 have been transferred to reserve during the year.
- b) The individual projects which were supported from the Sustainable Development Fund are set out in Appendix 2 and cover a range of activities and providers. This budget has come in over the target of £61,666 at £62,467. It was agreed with Natural England during the year that some of the core budget underspend could be reallocated to SDF in line with the single pot guidance.

5. Budgets 2010/11

- a) The proposed core budget and action projects for 2010/11 were presented to the committee at the last meeting for inclusion in the bid to Natural England for grant aid. An up-dated bid was

circulated around members and approved by correspondence since the date of the last meeting. The final budget is set out in Appendix 3. This represents 100% of the 09/10 allocation less £2,500. We have now accepted the grant offer from Natural England. The grant award is £188,467 and comes as a single sum leaving the AONB flexibility to allocate the sum within the context of their Strategic Business Plan. £61,666 of this is allocated as Sustainable Development Fund. As noted in the Chairman of the Officers' Working Group's report, the practical use of this Fund is being assessed to ensure its maximum effect. The remaining £126,801 will be used for core funding in addition to £41,840 from the five local authority partners (remaining at the same level as 2008/9 and 2009/10) and reserve funding of £760. The Joint Committee is requested to approve the proposed core and action projects budget for this year.

7. Audit Commission

The annual requirement by the Audit Commission to complete an annual return has been adhered to and passed to internal audit for signature. An advert has been placed showing the dates for inspection of the accounts from 28.06.10 to 26.07.10.

8. Reserve

The reserve stood at £16,732.76 at the start of 2009/10. The balance is now £23,854.04 at the end of the financial year 2009/10 as various sales and donations have been added plus 09/10 admin fees for SDF of £6,166 were also added. However, it is anticipated that £760 will be required from reserve during 10/11 to support the core budget.

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 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:

Authors Names:

Juliet Hands Development Services Department 01785 276580
Ruth Hÿtch AONB Unit 01889 882613

APPENDIX 1

CANNOCK CHASE AONB JOINT COMMITTEE

Final Outturn for 2009/10 for
Cannock Chase AONB Core and Project Costs

	Approved Budget	Final Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£
<u>AONB Core Budget</u>			
Staff Salaries and Associated costs	106,500	105,285	-1,215
Accommodation /Office Equipment	13,150	13,779	629
Transport	4,950	4,997	47
Partnership budget for PR events	5,800	6,304	504
Partnership running costs (In kind)	6,600	6,600	0
	137,000	136,965	-35
<u>Core Action Projects</u>			
AONB Website	200	150	-50
AONB Annual Action Plan	1,500	1,033	-467
AONB Newsletters	700	784	84
Partner Awareness Raising Events	1,500	2,123	623
Annual Report	1,500	2,324	824
Management Plan	0	2,406	2,406
Annual Conference	2,000	2,083	83
Peace & Tranquillity	7,575	7,569	-6
Interpretation Strategy	5,000	2,901	-2,100
Dog Projects	5,000	1,772	-3,228
Implement Signs Programme	2,000	4,000	2,000
State of AONB Reporting guidelines	6,725	6,690	-35
	33,700	33,835	135
TOTAL BUDGET	170,700	170,800	100
FUNDED BY:			
Natural England	129,300	128,809	-491
Lichfield District Council	2,050	2,092	42
South Staffordshire District Council	2,050	2,092	42
Cannock Chase District Council	8,300	8,368	68
Stafford Borough Council	8,300	8,368	68
Staffordshire County Council	20,700	20,700	0
Transfer to reserve		-955	-955
Donations/Sales etc		1,326	1,326
	170,700	170,800	100

CANNOCK CHASE AONB JOINT COMMITTEE

Budget Update for 2009/10 for
Sustainable Development Fund

	Final outturn 2009/10 £
AONB SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND	
Approved Projects	
Beaundesert Park – Compost toilets	13,640
Beaundesert Trust	7,700
Mammal Group – Phase 2	9,999
Sustainable Transport Project	1,500
Riverwoods sustainable project	5,300
Photo history on Cannock Chase	360
Residential trip for urban school children	2,000
Chase the seasons	6,873
Sculpture Trail phase 1	2,500
Surveying the Depressed River Mussel in the AONB	2,471
SAC mitigation benches	3,958
Admin	6,166
	62,467
Total approved	62,467

APPENDIX 3

CANNOCK CHASE AONB JOINT COMMITTEE

**Budget for 2010/11 for
Cannock Chase AONB Core and Project Costs**

AONB Core Budget

Staff Salaries and Associated costs	117,670
Accommodation /Office Equipment	12,850
Transport	4,115
Partnership budget for PR events	2,500
Partnership running costs (In kind)	6,600

**Budget
2010/11
£**

143,735

Action Budget Awareness Projects:

Visitor Management Projects	5,500
AONB Website	150
AONB Annual review	1,100
AONB Newsletters	2,000
Monitoring Projects (Visitor Survey and horsiculture)	5,000
Implement Signs Programme	2,000
Annual Conference	2,500
Community Involvement and awareness events	1,500
Planning Consultant	5,915

25,665

TOTAL BUDGET

169,400

AGREED FUNDING:

Natural England	126,800
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
Contribution from reserve	760

169,400