

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

Thursday 11th September 2008, 10:00am

**Lucy Shotton Room, Stafford Borough Council Offices,
Civic Centre, Riverside, Stafford, ST16 3AQ**

M I N U T E S

Present:

Name	Representing
Cllr Neil Roberts	Lichfield District Council (Chairman)

Members

Cllr Doug Davis	Stafford Borough Council
Cllr John Wakefield	Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Tony Williams	Cannock Chase Council

Officers

Emma Beaman	Cannock Chase AONB Unit
Antony Lancaster	Cannock Chase Council
John Quigley	Staffordshire County Council
John Smith	Lichfield District Council
Geoff Unwin	Stafford Borough Council
Anne Walker	Cannock Chase AONB Unit, Clerk

Advisors

Cllr Pat Ansell	Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association, Chairman of the Advisory Partnership
Ruth Hýtch	Cannock Chase AONB Unit
Lindsey Johnston	Staffordshire County Council, representing Honorary Secretary
Phil Keeling	Staffordshire County Council, representing Treasurer to the Joint Committee
Sally Powell	Natural England

Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Billson, Cllr Edwards (substitute) (South Staffordshire Council), Hayden Jones (South Staffordshire Council), Ian Hickman, John Winterbourne (Forestry Commission), and Andy Goode (Staffordshire County Council).

Minutes of the meeting held on 9th June 2008

146 It was noted that the minutes had been circulated for agreement in July and signed by Cllr Roberts, so that this could be recorded as part of the Audit. Cllr Williams formally moved to accept the minutes.

Matters Arising

147 Cllr Williams and Cllr Ansell reported on the formal opening of the Chase Heritage Trail. Although the weather was not good, it did not mar the enthusiasm of participants. Good coverage in the local press followed the event which also included the ceremonial opening of the refurbished Museum of Cannock Chase. Cllr Williams noted that the Trail was a good addition to Cannock Chase and the additional controlled crossings on main roads along the route were welcome for local people and visitors to the area.

Declaration of Interests

148 There were no declarations of interest.

Action Plan Progress

Report of the Chairman of the Officers' Working Group

149 The report was circulated prior to the meeting and the content was outlined by Geoff Unwin:

- 50th anniversary events and National Association of AONBs Annual Conference
- Management Plan
- Sustainable Development projects
- Access to Nature Fund
- Merchandise to celebrate the 50th Anniversary
- Natural England new funding arrangements will be reported to the Joint Committee in December
- Young People's champion had now been identified and will be at the 16th September event
- AONB Unit still subject to demands on their time from various sources, including requests for presentations and consultations.

Questions/comments:

Comment	Made by	Response	Made By
Celebration event on 9 th August – rain affected visitor numbers during the day. A great deal of effort had been made in the organising particularly from the partnership and other supporters.	Cllr Roberts		
Branding/merchandise, 'Farmers Markets' was not registered as a trademark and subsequently Heinz are now producing 'Farmers Markets' soup.	Cllr Roberts	Partnership logo may be patented. Similar issue with DMP logo which is to be copyrighted to control its use. This may also be done with the AONB logo, it may incur costs.	Ruth Hÿtch/ Lindsey Johnston
50 th anniversary press coverage. Press release earlier in the year produced TV coverage and increased the amount of interest in the AONB.	Cllr Roberts		
Appreciation of the amount of work that the Officers Working Group undertakes on behalf of the Partnership.	Cllr Davis and agreed by all	Also the work of the AONB Unit staff.	Cllr Roberts

150 Resolved The Committee noted the progress made since the last Joint Committee meeting.

Financial Update

Report of the Treasurer to the Joint Committee

151 Phil Keeling outlined the content of the report which was circulated prior to the meeting. Key points of the report:

- Allocation of core funding from Natural England was slightly less than reported at the last meeting.
- AONB Unit staff had rationalised the anticipated spend to balance the budget (Appendix 1).
- On course to achieve maximum spend.
- All Local Authority Partners had settled invoices for their contributions.
- Sustainable Development Fund – greater than applied for, also on target to achieve maximum spend.
- Audit – Small Bodies Return requested by the Audit Commission. Internal audit completed (copies circulated) with the level of assurance 'substantial'. Risk Register to be prepared and presented to the December Joint Committee meeting. There is comfort that the finances are properly managed.

Questions/Comments:

Comment	Made by	Response	Made by
Requested outline of Natural England's 3-year funding allocation.	Cllr Davis	Letter from Natural England guaranteed 3-year funding for all AONBs. Cannock Chase's allocation is £185,000, no less than 95% of this figure will be awarded in subsequent years, with the remaining 5% dependent on performance.	Sally Powell
Funding will be reduced in real terms.	Cllr Davis	Essentially correct because of inflation. Unable to accrue funding between financial years. A report to the December Joint Committee meeting will cover this.	Phil Keeling
Reserve fund may be needed to top up core funding, thus reducing the available funds.	Cllr Davis	Pleasing that there is a reserve to cover this. 10% management fee for administering SDF is saved in the reserve. Proceeds from sales of merchandise will also be deposited in the reserve.	Phil Keeling/ Ruth Hÿtch
Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer will present a report to the Joint Committee in December outlining the effects of the 3 year funding package.	Ruth Hÿtch		
Thanked Phil Keeling for explaining the external and internal audit process. Happy that the processes the AONB Unit uses are adequate. Noted the risk register to be brought forward to the next meeting	Cllr Roberts		

152 Resolved The Committee noted progress on spend for 2008/09.

Management Plan Review Progress

Report of the AONB Officer

153 Ruth outlined the process of re-drafting the next 5 year Management Plan and progress to date. It is anticipated that a 12 week consultation period will commence at the end of October with a view to completing the draft in January/February 2009. The final draft will be presented to the Joint Committee at the March 25th 2009 meeting for approval.

Cllr Roberts noted that he was aware that reviews can often take longer than expected. The timeframe issue was noted, the Officers Working Group will be working to a tight deadline to review any comments and incorporate them into the new Management Plan.

Cllr Davis offered encouragement in the task and Cllr Ansell noted that she had attended one of the early briefing meetings where the general feeling had been that the reviews would not take up too much officer time – this had not been the case.

Cllr Roberts mentioned the climate change impact on the AONB, this is also covered in the third part of the RSS.

154 Resolved The Committee noted the progress of the review and re-drafting of the Management Plan.

National Association of AONBs (NAAONB) Annual Conference and NAAONB Board

Oral Report of Cllr Roberts

155 Cllr Roberts informed the meeting that he had been nominated and elected to the Board of the National Association of AONBs. This is a first for Cannock Chase and provides a good opportunity to have a voice on the Board. The Board deals with funding issues and the inter relationship of the 49 AONBs. Cllr Roberts also outlined the Board Buddy system, we were previously buddied with North Devon. As we are now represented on the Board, we are buddy to Lincolnshire Wolds, Kent Downs and North Pennines. The contact with these AONBs is likely to be virtual, but some visits may be beneficial. Publicity material received from Lincolnshire Wolds may be of use as an example for future Cannock Chase documents.

Cllr Roberts noted that each Board member was designated an area of responsibility, his will be access and recreation. If there are any matters from any of the 5 local authority partners that should be brought to the attention of the National Association Board, he is happy to present them.

Cllr Roberts also outlined the National Association of AONBs annual conference, joint hosted by Cannock Chase and held at Harper Adams.

- Facilities at Harper Adams were very good.
- AONB team and Partnership put in a lot of effort in both the workshops and site visits.
- Around 160 delegates attended the 3 days of the conference.
- Seven site visits were arranged with around 20 people per visit. Cannock Chase and Shropshire Hills hosted 3 each with 1 excursion to the Malvern Hills AONB.
- The conference provided the opportunity to tell a wider audience of what Cannock Chase achieves with a small team in a small area. Pressures may be different to the larger AONBs, particularly with visitor management.
- Whole conference had been very successful for both learning and enjoyment.
- Planned Ministerial presentation to the conference and subsequent visit to Cannock Chase did not go ahead.
- Cllr Ansell thanked all who were involved for their hard work. Cannock Chase was presented very well.
- Cllr Roberts also thanked the many contributors from the Partnership who helped to show how proud we all are of Cannock Chase AONB.

50th Anniversary Events Update

Report of the Assistant AONB Officer

156 Emma outlined the report that had been circulated prior to the meeting. It is a landmark year for Cannock Chase AONB and events to involve the local community and businesses had been held or were planned as detailed in the report.

Planning for the final event, on 16th September, was well advanced with a range of guests and presenters confirming attendance. It is hoped that as Central News featured the call for 50 year olds earlier in the year, they may be interested in following up the piece.

Cllr Roberts thanked Emma for her report, the first that she had presented to the Joint Committee.

Cllr Davis asked if all the civic heads had been invited. It was noted that the invitation list included key members and officers from all the local authority partners.

Cllr Roberts outlined the internal transport arrangements at Shugborough and the necessity to allow enough time to transfer from car park to venue. The programme is tight for timing and as Chairman of the proceedings he will be starting on time! He thanked the AONB Unit for their work in putting the programme together and formally thanked Cllr Williams, as Vice Chairman of the

Joint Committee for the assistance that he had provided during his absence due to ill health. He also noted that thanks will be passed on to the Shugborough team for all their help. He was looking forward to the event!

157 Resolved The Committee noted progress to date.

Partners News

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

158 The Joint Committee received oral reports on the following:

Stafford Borough Council – nothing to report at present

Staffordshire County Council

- Heritage Lottery Fund bid had finally been submitted, mapping had taken from 2004 to complete. Thanks to Sue Sheppard and also Eleanor Pickard from Natural England for her assistance during the process. The Farm Environment Plan had been both interesting and difficult to compose. The funding will be a combination of annual payments and capital programme. (Sally informed the meeting that the offer is likely to be made shortly for £1.5 million over 5 years). The application for 1400ha of SSSI management includes bracken clearance.
- Draft Car Parking Strategy – joint report with Forestry Commission, had been circulated for consultation to Natural England and the AONB Unit prior to wider consultation later in the year. Ruth asked what the deadline for responses was, John replied that he thought it was the end of October, but would check this.
- 80ha of bracken spraying was undertaken over the summer and some tree clearance on the Country Park.
- Association of Professional Foresters Exhibition – 18-20 September. Expecting 12,000 visitors, based on the former RAF parade ground. Along with the tree climbers, machinery demonstrations will also be a section on biomass heaters.

Cannock Chase Council

As previously mentioned, the opening of the Chase Heritage Trail went well.

Lichfield District Council

- Heathland Harvest event due to take place at Gentleshaw Common on 21 September. This is the fourth festival, but will be smaller scale than previous years.
- 13.8ha of bracken and scrub control on Gentleshaw Common.
- Higher Level Stewardship at Chasewater – cattle are now off site following another successful grazing programme. Six cattle were on the land, but this may be reduced next year.

Any Planning Items that may require consideration

159 Ruth circulated a paper at the meeting and outlined the content. It had been a quiet period for consultations, the following were highlighted:

- Shooting Butts – raised concerns initially, second application had been submitted. There were still concerns with access track and a large building on the site. Support the use of the site for the purpose, but noted concerns about landscape impact.
- Comments on core strategy issues and options for Cannock Chase Council had been submitted. Acknowledged that Cannock Chase AONB is mentioned, but expressed concern with development pressures.

Cllr Roberts informed the meeting that the Regional Spatial Strategy Phase III will be taking place next spring. An 8 week consultation for housing in the region will take place, pressure on land next to the AONB may be indicated.

Cllr Roberts also reported on the recent visit to a wind farm in Hartlepool organised by Cannock Chase Council in relation to the application for the Bleak House Wind Farm. The weather and visibility were poor and the turbines were not turning so it was difficult to assess the noise impact. Anecdotal evidence from one landowner was that the return on his land was good, noise disturbance was not an issue, as the nearest village was some distance away. Some people had problems with TV pictures, but the issue had been resolved by the wind farm operators. No increase fatalities in bird strikes or loss of livestock had been reported. The recommended decision on Bleak House is still with planning officers, Tony Lancaster reported that it may be heard at the October planning committee.

16. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

17. Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting

Cllr Roberts thanked Stafford Borough Council for hosting the meeting.

The next meeting scheduled for Monday 15th December 2008, 10:00am at Lichfield District Council Officers, Frog Lane, Lichfield.

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"

None.