

# **Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

## **Joint Committee Annual Meeting**

**Monday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2008, 10:00am**

**The Council Chamber, South Staffordshire Council Offices, Wolverhampton  
Road, Codsall, South Staffordshire WV8 1PX**

### **M I N U T E S**

Present: Cllr Neil Roberts – Lichfield District Council  
(Chairman)

#### **Name**

#### **Representing**

#### **Members**

Cllr David Billson	South Staffordshire Council
Cllr Doug Davis	Stafford Borough Council
Cllr Tony Williams	Cannock Chase Council

#### **Officers**

Antony Lancaster	Cannock Chase Council
Andy Goode	Staffordshire County Council
John Smith	Lichfield District Council
Naomi Perry	Stafford Borough Council
Anne Walker	Cannock Chase AONB Unit, Clerk

#### **Advisors**

Cllr Pat Ansell	Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association, Chairman of the Advisory Partnership
Ian Hickman	Forestry Commission
Ruth Hÿtch	Cannock Chase AONB Unit
Lindsey Johnston	Staffordshire County Council, representing Honorary Secretary
Juliet Hands	Staffordshire County Council, Treasurer to the Joint Committee
Sally Powell	Natural England

#### **Also in Attendance**

John Bell	Staffordshire County Council
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**Note by Clerk** – Mr Johnston, representing Mrs Delrio, took the Chair for the election of the Chairman.

#### **Appointment of Chairman and Vice Chairman**

**Resolved** – Cllr Neil Roberts was nominated as Chairman by Cllr Billson, seconded by Cllr Williams and agreed by all. Cllr Roberts was therefore appointed as Chairman of the Cannock Chase Joint Committee up to the annual meeting of the Joint Committee in 2009.

## **Cllr Roberts took the Chair.**

Cllr Williams was nominated by Cllr Roberts as Vice Chairman, seconded by Cllr Billson and agreed by all. Cllr Williams was therefore appointed as Vice Chairman of the Cannock Chase Joint Committee up to the annual meeting of the Joint Committee in 2009.

## **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr John Wakefield (Staffordshire County Council), Hayden Jones (South Staffordshire Council), Lisa Delrio (Staffordshire County Council, Honorary Secretary), Geoff Unwin (Stafford Borough Council) and Jackie Biard (Cannock Chase Council).

## **Minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2007**

**131 Resolved** That the minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2007 be confirmed, proposed by Cllr Billson, seconded by Cllr Williams and signed by the Chairman.

## **Matters Arising**

**132** There were no matters arising.

## **Declaration of Interests**

**133** There were no declarations of interest

## **Presentation by John Bell, Senior Projects Officer, Cannock Chase Council, Chase Heritage Trail**

**134** The presentation is attached to the minutes for information. John Bell noted that the proposed date for the opening ceremony is 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2008. Following the presentation Cllr Roberts commented that he welcomed the introduction of the Trail and signage, which may instil confidence in walkers using Cannock Chase. He asked if the Chase Hopper was operating again this year. Ruth Hýtch replied that it was not as the usage over previous years had not been enough to justify the expenditure.

Cllr Roberts noted that Lichfield District Council were preparing to submit a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), he asked John if it was a condition of grant to prove that funding from other sources had been secured. John replied that confirmation of funding from other sources was required before drawing down funds from HLF.

Cllr Roberts thanked John for his presentation and commented that the Joint Committee had held meetings at the Museum of Cannock Chase and looked forward to using it again in the future.

## Action Plan Progress

**135** In the absence of the Chairman of the Officers' Working Group, Geoff Unwin, Ruth Hýtch presented this report. She noted that it had been a busy few months at the end of the financial year. Projects were delivered against targets in the Annual Action Plan. The framed print of the poster produced by Heath Hayes Art Group, who received a Sustainable Development Fund grant, was on display at the meeting.

Comments	Made by	Response	Made by
1. Does the Partnership gain the best PR for its achievements, eg, Young Carers Project?	Cllr Davis	Section 2.15 in the report outlined, file of press releases and coverage available at the meeting. The AONB Unit also work with officers from Natural England on press coverage.	Ruth Hýtch
		House of Lords Debate about AONBs, text available from the National Association of AONBs (circulated by email following the meeting)	Cllr Roberts
2. Young Enterprise Programme, section 2.4 of the report. Final awards due to be presented on 19 <sup>th</sup> June, will be reported in the local press. Karen Ward from Cannock Chase Council recently presented with an award to mark her involvement with Young Enterprise.	Cllr Ansell	Outward signs of Partnership involvement should be emphasised when events take place.	Cllr Roberts
3. Officers Working Group continuing to work on the Management Plan review, new sections will be circulated shortly.	Ruth Hýtch		
4. Fantastic work achieved by the AONB Unit, especially the enthusiasm of Emma. Information circulation also commended	Cllr Williams	Seconded this and commented that Emma had made a good addition to the team and engendered a good community spirit.	Cllr Ansell

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Made by</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Made by</b>
since the AONB Unit became responsible for the secretariat of the Joint Committee.			
5. Recognition of how much work is achieved by the AONB Unit, Officers Working Group and the wider partnership in making the success of the AONB.	Cllr Roberts	Thanked Members for their kind comments about the AONB Unit. Assistance from external partnerships is much appreciated. Officers' Working Group ensured that the limited resources of the AONB Unit are not overly extended.	Ruth Hýtch
6. Report of the deer statistics fulfilled the requirement of Action 3C in the Annual Action Plan	Ruth Hýtch	Figures are for the spring census, population is likely to rise to around 1200 following the birth of fawns in the next month or so.	Ian Hickman
7. Any less deer incidents in speed limitation areas?	Cllr Roberts	No detailed analysis at present, may be undertaken by a student placement. Only notable pattern when dawn/dusk corresponds with commuter traffic.	Ian Hickman

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

### **Financial Update**

**137** A report was circulated prior to the meeting. Juliet Hands, Treasurer to the Joint Committee outlined its content. The report detailed the final outturn position for 2008-09 for approval by the Joint Committee and also set out the proposed budget for 2008-09.

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Made by</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Made by</b>
1. Apologies for error in 4a of the report, should read £165,226 as the final outturn, not £164,766.	Juliet Hands		
2. Formal offer letter from Natural England			

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Made by</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Made by</b>
now received. Core funding increased by 2%, less than Partnership bid, however SDF award of £61,666 is greater than applied for.			
3. Also letter from Natural England outlining 3 year funding proposals circulated to AONB Units. Based on the combined figure of £185,968 for 2008-09, the following 2 years funding will be for no less than 95% of this figure, with the other 5% being awarded if Natural England has sufficient resources. If this is not the case other sources of funding may be required to provide this top up.	Sally Powell	This issue is affecting all AONB teams nationally. AONB teams could also be affected by similar funding pressures amongst their local authority partners. Three year indicators give some scope for the AONB Unit to be surer of their financial flexibility in future years.	Cllr Roberts
4. The combined figures for core, SDF and partner projects for 2007-08 compared to the figures for 2008-09 effectively showed a cut in funding.	Ian Hickman	At the time of bidding at the end of 2007, there was an awareness that funding would be allocated to those continuing partner projects which without funding may lead to redundancies. Although the figure for core was less than the partnership's bid, SDF had been increased.	Sally Powell
5. Any opportunity for additional funding.	Ian Hickman	Not necessarily the case.	Sally Powell
6. Budgetary pressures for Local Authorities as well as Natural England. Need to be aware of these budget constraints and consider in kind contributions along with external funding from other sources. Referred to the House of Lords debate, may be a greater understanding of funding.	Cllr Roberts		
7. Could Section 106 monies or their future equivalent could be used in the AONB.	Cllr Davis	Lichfield District Council had allocated Section 106 monies to Forest of Mercia	Cllr Roberts

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Made by</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Made by</b>
		projects. Well made observation; suggested that the Officers' Working Group looked into this. High demand from Parish Councils and others for Section 106 funding.	
8. Support from members on this issue would be very well received. The first draft of Cannock Chase Council's planning obligations paper excluded Forestry Commission land and the AONB, requested that this be amended	Ruth Hýtch	Confirmation that this had now been agreed,	Cllr Williams
9. Through the Local Development Framework process it may be useful to have a SPD in each Local Authority.	Ruth Hýtch	No reason why this could not be accommodated, each Local Authority should consider Section 106 funding for the AONB.	Cllr Davis
10. Letter to be prepared for development plans officers requesting consideration.	Cllr Roberts	Agreed	All
11. Cannock Chase Council's LDF went to Cabinet last week.	Cllr Williams	Structure levy may be included in the Planning Bill.	Tony Lancaster
12. Regional Spatial Strategy 3, which includes issues relating to landscape and tranquillity, will be circulated for consultation after June 2009. Continued influence with this is required to be aware of potential opportunities.	Cllr Roberts		
13. Any amendments required to figures in Appendix 3. The 3 year funding proposal to be circulated to Local Authority Partners to ensure that this is included in their systems.	Cllr Roberts	Slight reduction in core funding for 2008-09, will come back to the Joint Committee when the offer letter had been discussed with Juliet.	Ruth Hýtch

**138 Resolved** The proposal for the Joint Committee to approve the final outturn position for 2007-08 and the budget 2008-08 was made by Cllr Billson and seconded by Cllr Williams and agreed by all.

The meeting further agreed that a request for consideration of funding from Section 106 monies or developer contributions for projects in Cannock Chase AONB is made on behalf of the Partnership.

### **National Association of AONBs Annual Conference and Ministerial Visit to Cannock Chase AONB**

**139** Cllr Roberts outlined the background to this item. The National Association of AONBs are pleased and honoured to host Jonathon Shaw, Minister for Marine, Landscape and Rural Affairs, Defra, on the first day of the Conference on 9<sup>th</sup> July. Mr Shaw has accepted an invitation from Cllr Wakefield to visit Cannock Chase AONB following his presentation at the Conference. Detailed arrangements are to be confirmed, however it is planned to travel from Harper Adams at around 11:30am to Brocton Coppice then to Birches Valley Forest Centre, returning the Minister to Stafford Railway Station at around 2:00pm. Representatives of the Partnership will be on site to meet the Minister, a brief will be prepared prior to his visit.

Cllr Roberts informed the meeting that Dr Helen Phillips, Chief Executive of Natural England, may be visiting Cannock Chase AONB later in the year, details to be confirmed. Ruth noted that the details of the Ministers visit and the future visit by Dr Phillips will be circulated to member of the Joint Committee in due course. It was noted that both these visits will help to raise the profile of Cannock Chase AONB and will offer the opportunity for press coverage.

The deadline for Conference bookings had now passed and at the time of the meeting numbers of attendees and the representation from Cannock Chase AONB were not known. Cllr Roberts outlined the programme of the Conference and noted that while the Minister was visiting Cannock Chase AONB, other representatives of the Partnership will be leading a variety of workshops highlighting the ways that local communities can become involved in AONBs. Site visits take up the second day of the Conference, 3 of which will be to Cannock Chase AONB. The final day includes the AGM of the National Association of AONBs and presentations from representatives of Defra, Countryside Council for Wales and Natural England. Liam Byrne MP, had been invited but is unable to attend.

Cllr Davis noted that he was unable to attend as he will be at the Regional Association.

Cllr Roberts informed the meeting that he had been asked to assist with a review of the National Association of AONBs, the role they have in supporting AONBs and future funding structures. He also noted that his name had been put forward as a candidate for the National Association of AONBs Board, which is due to be voted on at the AGM.

## **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations Update**

**140** Ruth outlined the report which included Emma's work on community events to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cannock Chase AONB. A letter inviting participation for upcoming events had been circulated.

Other points raised included:

- Designation day event on 16<sup>th</sup> September will include an aerial photograph of fifty 50 year olds.
- Cllr Roberts had written to Dr Phillips inviting Natural England's Board meeting to be held at Shugborough coinciding with the designation day celebrations.
- Cllr Davis referred to bullet point 3 in 3.5 and commended the product.
- Cllr Roberts thanked Heath Hayes Art Group for their contribution in marking the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cannock Chase AONB.
- The Community Event mentioned in 4.3 will take place on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> August at the Parade Ground, Marquis Drive. Friends of Cannock Chase will be co-hosting this event, which will include a barn dance in the evening to celebrate their 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.
- Appendix 1 - summary of the Canine Community Caring for Cannock Chase Awareness Day. Thanks were extended to all in the Partnership who had either helped or taken part. Cllr Billson, who had judged the competitions, noted that everyone seemed to have had an enjoyable day. Cllr Ansell also noted that thanks should also be extended to Eleanor Pickard from Natural England who staffed the main entrance all day. Additional food outlets were suggested for next year's event.

**141 Resolved** a) The Joint Committee noted progress to date; b) Members supported the identification of sponsors for delivery of the programme; and c) Members support events through attendance and championing 50 years of success throughout their own networks.

## **Natural England Update**

**142** Sally Powell noted that the update had been covered during the discussion around Item 8 Financial Update. Cllr Roberts stated that all were conscious of the budget pressures on Natural England and the downsizing of the organisation, in part as a result of the 3 organisations who came together to form Natural England.

## **Partner News**

**143** The Joint Committee received oral reports on the following:

### **Stafford Borough Council**

The former RAF Stafford is now known as Ministry of Defence Stafford. Cllr Davis noted that there is an indication that more personnel may be based at this site and that the Ministry may look at using Cannock Chase for future training purposes, including mechanised training.

### **Staffordshire County Council**

- The deer initiative is due to be extended to look at the possible use of cameras, the impact of speed and deer deaths.
- The application for Higher Level Stewardship for Cannock Chase heathlands is progressing and due to be submitted to Natural England by the end of June 2008.
- The Great War Hut was officially opened on 27<sup>th</sup> April. The event included re-enactment societies and historical groups.

### **Forestry Commission**

- As previously mentioned a student will be engaged to look at statistical evidence of road casualties involving deer.
- Additional machinery for site work has been purchased.
- It had been announced that SSSIs on the Forestry Commission landholding are in appropriate condition.
- Go Ape! facility had been opened at Birches Valley Forest Centre.

### **Lichfield District Council**

- Comments on the Wind Farm application at Bleak House had been submitted to Cannock Chase Council. Cllr Roberts noted that concerns had been raised about the impact on Gentleshaw Common.
- Cattle had returned to graze on the heathland at Chasewater. They were first introduced last year following the success of a similar scheme on Hednesford Hills. The cattle are doing well.

### **Cannock Chase Council**

- The Wind Farm application for Bleak House was submitted at the end of December and comments are being received.
- Cllr Williams noted that problems are being encountered by the residents of Bower Lane relating to lorries leaving Rugeley Quarry damaging grass verges and some of the road signage. Ruth noted that we have contact with the quarry manager from Pottal Pool, who will deal with any reported breaches of the prescribed route. She also noted that a newly appointed representative of Cemex had attended the last Advisory Partnership meeting and offered to forward his details to Cllr Williams.

### **South Staffordshire Council**

- Shoal Hill – Cllr Billson informed the meeting that the programme of heather cutting had been agreed. He expressed disappointment that some of the scheduled work had not been completed following successful demonstrations of Forest Enterprise machinery in Autumn.
- Toposcope – the design work is continuing. Bricks for the plinth had been donated by Baggeridge Brick.
- Consent had been gained for bracken treatment by aerial spraying.
- The site is due to be inspected in June by a representative of Defra relating to the stewardship agreement.
- Walton Chasers are holding an event on Shoal Hill on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2008.

## **Any Planning Items that may require consideration**

**144** Ruth circulated copies of the update at the meeting. She outlined the comments made in respect of the Wind Farm at Bleak House. The main objections to the application are that the designation of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is not recognised for its national importance and the visual impact from Castle Ring and Gentleshaw Common. The application for a wind farm at Bagots Park is a distance away from the AONB and is not thought to have an additional visual impact.

Other planning applications relate to stables and equestrian buildings.

Ruth noted that it had been an active period of LDF comments, which are outlined in the update. The volume of work involved varies depending on individual local authority schedules. Cannock Chase Council are consulting on core issues. There is also input to regional comments from the 4 West Midlands AONBs.

Cllr Roberts declared an interest in this matter as he sits on the regional conformity panel alternating with Cllr Rex Roberts of Staffordshire County Council.

## **Any Other Business**

**145** Chase Heritage Trail official opening - Cllr Ansell requested that anyone from the Joint Committee who wished to receive an invitation to the event should notify John Bell.

Cllr Roberts thanked South Staffordshire Council for hosting the meeting.

## **Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting**

**145** The next meeting is scheduled for 10:00am, Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2008, Stafford Borough Council Offices.

## **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.