



**North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
PARTNERSHIP
Friday 27th January 2023
In-person at Caddsdwn, Bideford and online: 10.00 – 12.30**

MINUTES

Attendees

Dr Eirene Williams (Chair)
Paul Green (Community Rep.)
Chris Preece (Voluntary Sector - NDAS)
Brian Butler (NFU)
Lewis Andrews (Community Rep.)
Martin Batt (Community – Vice Chair)
John Rous (CLA)

Online Attendees

Paula Ferris (Coastwise ND)
Rob Joules (National Trust)
Ian Crawford (TTEF)
Laura Davies (Torridge District Council)
Pete Burgess (DWT)
Penny Mills (CPRE)
Kevin Cook (Community rep)

Guest

Andrew Butler (NFU)

14 Voting Members

1. Welcome and apologies - Chair Dr Eirene Williams welcomed Partnership members to the in-person and Zoom meeting and reported apologies.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 30th September 2022 and matters arising. Minutes agreed.

Matters arising:

- **Website Review** – LC confirmed that website will undergo development to new platform. The work will be completed by the current provider, Cosmic

3. Governance

Election of Planning Panel Members – Current panel members as follows; Dr Eirene Williams, Paul Green, Lewis Andrews, Jane Young, Kevin Cook – All Partnership members AGREED (14 present) that these representatives should stay on.

Election of SDF Grant Panel Members – Current panel members are as follows; Dr Eirene Williams, Richard Prowse, Paula Ferris, Rose Roberts and Martin Batt. - All Partnership



members AGREED (14 present) that these representatives should stay on. NB Richard Berridge has stood down

ACTION ALL email the Chair if you are interested in joining the SDF panel

4. Presentations

British Farming in 2023 - Andrew Butler, National Farmers Union – Copy circulated with notes

The NFU has approximately 600-700 members in the AONB.

The UK has one of the lowest expenditures on food in the world which allows other areas of the economy to grow. Food prices have gone up dramatically in the last 12 months due to the war in Ukraine and issues with the economy. The UK is able to absorb these increases better than other countries such as Africa however dairy, in particular is set to increase again this year.

It is more expensive to be a farmer today than at any other time. Farmers actually lose money farming cattle and sheep however basic payments help to boost this (up to 80%). However, these payments are to be phased out. There are currently 18 opportunities for farmers to engage with Defra with other schemes but still a lot of unknowns.

Farming and the food industry caters for more than 4 million jobs in the UK. The UK have always been largely self-sufficient with the food production however this is now decreasing. Self-sufficiency is important due to the unpredictability of importing goods from abroad (recent inflation is double that of UK based foods).

There are a number of competing land uses in the UK aside from farming; water storage, infrastructure, housing, industry, renewables and conservation. In the future farmers will need to think about; the digital world (skill development), housing for rural workers, tighter regulations (such as slurry storage), farm diversification, local supply chains, change in markets

Questions

Q - **LA** – There seems to be little money for agriculture and lots of carbon offsetting going on to plant trees on land leaving not much for farming. This is quite worrying

A – Some of the future issues are exciting such as the use of new technology, some are not. Going forward there will be fewer farmers, with less land, expected to produce more or the same food. Likely there will be approx. a 25% decrease in land for farming

Q – **DE** – Is there a change in dynamic towards fewer, larger farms?

A – Not at the moment as a small family run farm is a resilient business model. It is currently the larger farms with bigger costs, such as staff that are struggling.

Q – **IC** – Questioned why rape seed oil production is currently down and how farmers view the supermarket price wars?

A – Certain pesticides are banned in this country which can be used elsewhere therefore certain crops can be grown a lot cheaper elsewhere and imported. The NFU do have discussions with the supermarkets around selling local produce but a lot of them import cheap beef and lamb (New Zealand) as again different products/ chemicals can be used which are banned here in the UK. Australia are about to start exporting sugar to the UK. Again, they are allowed to use products which are banned here. Farmers can't compete therefore UK production is down. Lots of issues with dairy coming from Canada as well.

Q – **PB** – What are the NFU doing to help from an Environment Land Management Scheme perspective?

A – Public money for public goods. BPS currently equals up to 80% of income for some. This will go after 2027 completely. Agricultural transition is not currently being addressed properly which is a worry, but farmers are resilient, and the NFU is trying to help.

Q – **JR** – Agricultural runoff into rivers and streams is obviously an issue but are Defra measures to help currently sufficient?

A – Everyone has a role in water quality, not just farmers who generally get the blame. There are now lots of initiatives such as Woods for Water and Catchment Sensitive Farming however farmers really need help with things such as slurry storage as it is expensive but doesn't create any income. Defra have agreed some small pots of money for some priority areas for this but none in Devon. The NFU are encouraging farmers to apply anyway so that Defra can see the demand

Q – **BB** – If beef and lamb is likely to reduce what will happen to the land

A – Extensification likely – same land fewer cattle. There is a demand for high quality red meat and dairy around the world so more farmers may start exporting

Finding Nature's Footprints update - Joe Newberry, AONB

Lowenna Arnold, Project Assistant, introduced to the Partnership. A work experience student from Petroc is also soon to start with the project.

Overall aims of the project are to provide skills & knowledge, connect people with nature, survey and map wildlife and to take action for nature recovery.

Over the last few months, the project has engaged with 406 people including 108 under 18 years of age. Events have included attending the Sunrise Diversity World Food Day, taking Petroc students to the Skern in Appledore and moth trap building with the Westward Ho! Men's shed group. The moth trap building will continue so that there are moth traps available for groups and individuals to put out across North Devon and then record and report what they find.



The project has helped support the start-up of the Hartland Nature Society which involved an evening with 50 members of the local Hartland community who are all keen to get involved. Reptile shelters were handed out during this event which have now been put out in gardens in Hartland.

The project now has an iNaturalist group which requires two verifiers in the community. This data also gets fed into national schemes. IRecord will also be used for more formal surveying such as for moths, reptiles and plants.

We have partnered with the Ilfracombe Museum to organise a community Environment Fair at the Landmark Theatre on the 12th Feb 11am – 3pm which will bring together a host of groups and organisations and offer the community an opportunity to find out more about what's happening for nature in their community.

Lowenna has started to develop a Young Environment Group. Currently engaging with Petroc but plan to engage with 6th forms from schools such as Ilfracombe as well.

There is a Harvest Mouse Survey planned at Northam Burrows on the 10th Feb which will be led by Sarah Butcher

Questions

Q - **DE** – Have you thought about the legacy for after the project?

A – Yes. For groups such as the Hartland Nature Society they have said they don't want us doing too much as they want to be self-sufficient. We are simply supporting them in their interests and offering training. We are hoping to set up a similar group in the North Devon High Coast (Ilfracombe) area who again we will support but with the aim for them to be in control.

Q – **PG** – What is the longer-term benefit of collecting data?

A – The data collected will be going towards looking at Nature Recovery for the AONB. At the end of the project, we plan to write a "Next Steps" report to highlight the best way forward. It is likely to include suggestions such as increased habitat for certain species if the current data and the data we gather over the next 3 years supports this. Also the data is feeding into the national data bases and schemes not just locally so can be used elsewhere. For example there is currently no data in North Devon for reptiles on the Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Trust database.

Q - **IC** – Has a friend who is an insect expert. How would he get involved in the project?

ACTION IC will forward contact details

A – Currently in discussion with DBRC regarding data agreements. We need to make sure the data is suitable for them as planners and decision makers go to them for information. Likely that records will still be uploaded through either iNaturalist or iRecord as need to make sure it stays available to us/ groups.



Q – **LA** – Great that the project is starting to engage young people but how will you promote this?

A – We have the Young Environment Group and we will be going into schools to promote to 6th forms as well as using the usual social media channels. The main challenge will be time tabling activities and events they can join bearing in mind study, part-time jobs and transport issues.

PF – highlighted that **LC** is working closely with Coastwise North Devon to support them through social media and surveying

5. AONB Manager's Report

Management Plan Delivery and Outcomes Framework – **LC** attended a recent NAAONB meeting looking at the “cross pollination” between the reviews of the Management Plan guidance and Outcome Framework. They are currently looking to align the two reviews. An external contractor (previous Cornwall AONB Manager) is drafting the Management Plan guidance for all Protected Landscapes and a draft should be completed by the end of March.

AONB Rebrand to National Landscapes - National Association of AONBs/Defra – **LC** - Re-brand development ongoing. An all-staff survey has been circulated for feedback. There will be a series of workshops, likely regional, to speak with staff. The AONB geographical designation will remain but the team and Partnership will be referred to as National Landscapes therefore there will be changes relating to logos etc. to give national recognition.

Communications Reports – **LC** - Social media followers continue to increase overall however engagement on Twitter has decreased. This is likely due to issues around the Elon Musk takeover. Instagram is receiving the greatest amount of engagement. Landscape images are still proving to be popular. Website views are down but to be expected with the time of year. The last 2 years have seen increased numbers, likely due to Covid, so need to consider this when looking at the usage

Sustainable Development Fund – **LC** - summarised SDF for this year highlighting the number of projects as well as the slight bias towards the North Devon side of the AONB as opposed to Torridge. More effort has gone into promoting SDF in the Torridge area this year however this isn't showing in the value of the projects. Hoping that new community engagement through the Finding Nature's Footprints project should help with this. All projects are currently on target to be completed this financial year.

Access For All Grants – DE

Hillsborough – New Interpretation and access area underway. Will include new web pages which will be hosted on the AONB website.

Northam Burrows Country Park – Improved access via user friendly gates and new easy access path from Sandymere lake up to the visitor centre

Braunton Burrows – Funds awarded to replace boardwalk at Crow Point however the decision has now been made not to replace it therefore grant support under review.

6. Landscape and Planning Report – DE

Increase in planning applications since Covid and still remain high. A lot of applications have gone to appeal. Many are using the 5-year housing supply to justify development however this doesn't apply to developments within the AONB as there are policies within the National Planning Framework that supersede it.

Saunton Sands – Application for three self-catered apartments – refused

Croyde – Application for 5 houses – refused

MB – enquired where developments were in regard to Lee Bay hotel development. **DE** – it has been approved subject to section 106 agreement. From a landscape perspective the plan was OK, biggest drawback was lack of affordable housing

DE thanked the planning panel as well as Pete Leaver and Lewis Andrews for their input over recent months. Engagement with NDC planning department has gone well. Currently waiting for a date to meet with planners from TDC. **DE** also assisting district councils with landscape character assessment review later this year.

Line removal – Phase 2 at Mortehoe underway and should be completed by the end of March. Work at Chapel Hill has stalled due to issues with other services therefore has been deferred until April.

The southwest has £5 million over the next 5 years for undergrounding cables – **ACTION ALL please contact DE with any areas you think might benefit from line removal**

7. Farming in Protected Landscapes – DE

All money has been allocated for this year and ¾ for next year. Defra have offered more money to areas that think they may be able to spend it. **DE** highlighted 3 of the projects from this year and thanked the panel for their time

There is a farming drop-in event at Hartland on the 1st Feb. A joint event with DWT, Natural Solutions Project, us and the Biosphere. There was a large mail out to all farmers in the Hartland area at Christmas time to invite them.

8. Management Plan Delivery – Partner Updates

CM (PFND) - Received via email post meeting

- Finishing off planning for 2023 - will circulate plan once finished.
- New education coordinator employed who is running the Ocean Explorer programme - working with Ilf, Braunton, Pilton (extended pilot)
- Currently getting lots of ad hoc requests to go into primary schools/scout and WI groups, but are lacking resources to deliver – Do the AONB have spare funds? It's

hard to rely on volunteers for this type of activity but trying to build up a team. – LC suggest **CM** contact Joe or her or have discussions with **JCW** re funding

- Purchase of the Exmoor Swim/ Croyde Ocean Tri (giant step)- great platform of sharing information/best practice. Would love for the AONB to have an info stand if you have capacity. Tri 2nd July/ Swim 23rd September
- Cleanse & Clean this weekend (28th & 29th Jan) - cleans happening all over thanks to different groups - LC highlighted that the AONB team are doing one in Westward Ho!
- **Braunton to Saunton cycle route group** - Gone very quiet - will be calling for a regroup meeting in the coming weeks. Possible opportunity to see if the offshore wind farm installation could provide any additional funding/support to the structural cost of the track as part of their community compensation.
- **SAS/sewage pollution** - Heads up – Extinction Rebellion North Devon have organised a march on Saturday 28th, 10am in Barnstaple, starting at castle green, as part of wider DIRTY WATER CAMPAIGN (Surfers Against Sewage are in support and encouraging their reps to go).

RP (Tarka Country Trust) – Received via email before meeting - Tarka Trust is about to launch in the Spring the third round of their Biodiversity Awards (small grants for projects similar to SDF but on a smaller scale). They have raised money from various foundations and bodies - about 12k to give away across the Biosphere area and the first two rounds successfully happened last year. One strand is to source genuine Devon primrose plug plants for small groups or even individuals to plant where they are not abundant. Other grants are for more general biodiversity enhancement. This year they are planning to use some of the money in co-operation with the Museum with a possible project, and also hope to further the In Place of Ash theme - again with a possible Museum exhibition. So far only two applications have come from the AONB area

Dominic Elson (Exmoor National Park Authority) – Received via email before meeting - DE is the ENPA contact for climate change and is currently reviewing the draft National Park Carbon Baseline Report, which has major implications for farming. Some of the recommendations, which assume reductions in livestock numbers and a corresponding reduction in consumer demand for red meat, will need to be communicated carefully by national parks and AONBs to the farming community (as well as all the NPs, the report team is including Cotswolds AONB and Cannock Chase AONB). ENPA are planning to have an internal meeting when the report is finalised and he will share outcomes with the AONB partnership at the next meeting.

IC (Taw & Torridge Estuary Forum) – TTEF met successfully on the 16th January. 25 attendees which was encouraging. River water quality is going on the agenda

MB (Vice Chair) – The Biosphere have applied for funding for a Marine Officer

KC (ND World Surfing Reserve) – On the 12th of May at 11am the North Devon World Surfing Reserve official dedication will take place at Woolacombe. Events to install plaques



will be going on at 5 beach locations to include Braunton surf museum, Lynmouth, Saunton, Croyde, and Putsborough. **ACTION KC** to chat to **DE** regarding specific locations for plaques.

Surf reserve team have been involved in the BBQ ban, issues around sewage discharge and the White Cross development who have agreed to engage with Plymouth University to develop a wave model based. Also consulted in the re-instatement of the salt water pool at Lynmouth and impact on surf.

They are preparing a photographic book too with the dedication. Members of the Save the Waves coalition team from California will also be attending the dedication

PB (Devon Wildlife Trust) – The Two Moors Pine Marten Project Officer will start soon. Horsey Island saltmarsh restoration over the winter has been going well. There has been a breach in the otter bank, Caen side, and expecting another breach in the 6 months on the Taw side.

RJ (National Trust) – Lots of tree planting has been going on in Queens Wood involving 50-60 people. 20,000 trees have been planted on NT land and a new tramper route installed in the orchard. The seeds planted as part of the grassland restoration work have started to germinate. Their 'Slow the Flow' work in Ilfracombe to clean up the water from run off is being piloted (3 schemes). Planning has been approved for a new car park to accommodate approx 30 cars at Little Roadway corner to improve access to Woolacombe Down

CP (North Devon Archaeological Society) – They have liaised with Clovelly Dykes farmers re 2 sub square features in the NE entrance. Would need to dig a trench to allow dating. DE confirmed that NDAS have also been advised dating would be occurring at Gallantry Bower in May using Historic England Funds under the Monument Management Scheme

9. Any Other Business

PF – Would like an update on the Braunton to Saunton cycle path – **ACTION JCW** to update at next meeting

LC – The AONB are sponsoring the Hartland Hartbreaker as well as the AONB Marathon this year. **ACTION ALL** Please get in touch if you would like to take part in either event

10. Date of Next Meetings – Friday 19 May and Friday 29th September 2023 – All of those in the meeting agreed that Friday's were fine. Comment from **CM** via email that she would prefer them to be moved away from Fridays