

North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty PARTNERSHIP

Friday 29th September 2023

In-person at Caddsdow Business Centre, Bideford and online from 10am

MINUTES

Meeting Attendees

Dr Eirene Williams (Chair)
Richard Prowse (Vice-Chair)
Paul Green (Community Rep.)
Brian Butler (NFU)
Lewis Andrews (Community Rep.)
John Rous (CLA)
Jane Young (Community Rep.)
Chris Preece (Voluntary Sector – NDAS)
Rose Roberts (Community Rep.)
Cllr Malcolm Wilkinson (North Devon Council)
Andy Bell (Biosphere Partnership)
Tom Humphreys (Tourism/Community Rep.)
Emma Magee (Environment Agency)
Paula Ferris (Coastwise ND)
Ian Crawford (TTEF)
Becky Hughes (Natural England)
Kate Hind (Devon CC)

(17 voting members)

Officers

Jenny Carey-Wood (AONB Manager)
Dave Edgcombe (Projects Officer)
Laura Carolan (Communications Officer)
Joe Newberry (FNF Project Coordinator)
Lowenna Arnold (FNF Assistant)

Guest Speakers

Alex Palmer (National Trust)
James Thomas (National Trust)

Apologies

Pete Burgess (DWT)
Christine Goodall (NE)
Cllr Steve Harding (Torridge District Council)
Mel Austen (Biosphere Partnership)
Sarah Jennings (DCC)
Rob Joules (National Trust)
Penny Mills (CPRE)
Dominic Elson (Exmoor NPA)
Claire Moodie (Community Rep.)

1. Welcome and apologies - Chair Dr Eirene Williams welcomed Partnership members to the hybrid meeting including new members Tom Humphreys and Emma Magee. Thanks were recorded to Brett Grosvenor from the Environment Agency for his many years of support and enthusiasm for North Devon. Apologies were recorded.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 7th July 2023 and matters arising. Minutes agreed as accurate.
Matters arising not on the agenda:

- **Website** – welcomed comments from **Action: All** members before November refresh.
- **White Cross offshore Windfarm** – **PF** raised concerns about the community impact and lack of consultation. Who was taking their interests into account given high level of disruption from construction. **JCW** advised that now the planning application is live, there would be more opportunities. AONB and Biosphere both responding to application consultation, both had been involved in pre-application consultations and **AB** with discussions of Net Gain. **BH** advised that Peter Kavanagh from Natural England was a possible contact. **KH** advised that DCC's historic environment team responding too.

3. Governance (Richard Prowse took the Chair for this item only)

(EW left the meeting room)

- **Election of Chair of Partnership** – Dr Eirene Williams was proposed by Richard Prowse and seconded by Cllr Malcolm Wilkinson. **Vote:** 16 For, 0 Against. **Re-appointment AGREED for a further period of two years.** (EW returned to the meeting room)
RP congratulated Eirene and she thanked the Partnership for their ongoing support.

4. Presentations

A. National Trust's RIVERLANDS 2 in North Devon - Alex Palmer and James Thomas

- Work on 5 sites in the AONB – **Action: National Trust** to share monitoring data with AONB and Nature Recovery Plan team.

B. Finding Nature's Footprints – Internship Experience - Lowenna Arnold

- **JN** congratulated Lowenna, thanked her for successful work in setting up AONB Environment Group for young people and site surveys and wished her success in her travels and future career as she leaves her post today.

5. AONB Manager's Report – additional points:

- Heritage** – CP updated Partnership that archaeological works underway on proposed sites for X-Links Project's onshore infrastructure from coast in AONB at Abbotsham to Alverdiscott.
- Legislative amendment proposed to Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to change 'duty of regard' to 'must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty' - this is part of the Levelling Up Bill and awaiting Royal Consent, but it is hoped this will put a more active role on public bodies to conserve and enhance AONBs.
- Management Plan Review – draft guidance now available but awaiting final version and confirmed outcomes to inform forthcoming work. BH reminded members that this is 'guidance' and is intended to provide more consistency across all protected landscapes but that outcomes will be key influence on priorities within the Plan. **JCW** asked for interested parties to join a small bi-monthly Working Group to support the work of the team on the Review, **KH and BH** volunteered.
- Sustainable Development Fund** – 3 projects carried over from last year due to delays, 1 project approved and 8 projects applied or in pipeline. Anticipate full spend.
- Communications Report** – report accepted. **LC** reported decision to stop using Twitter/X due to minimal interaction and open a TikTok account to reach different audiences instead. This was welcomed by **TH** as a good move by the AONB. **BB** suggested involving the young members of the AONB Environment Group in social media work. Many more events this year due to FNF project activity alongside those led by DE and LC, giving good engagement numbers. **Rebranding of AONBs to 'National Landscapes'** will be launched nationally on 22 November 2023 and a small budget to cover rebranding costs provided by Defra. **BH** welcomed the rebranding to put AONBs on a par with National Parks and better represent what we do and for the nation.

6. Landscape Report and Planning Update

- AONB Planning Report noted. **DE** presented key points noting that despite reduction in overall number of applications within the AONB, over 30 responses had been made but with

time constraints and pressure from larger schemes requiring more time, not all pre-applications were responded to, but still an important part of our work.

- Dave extended his thanks to the Planning Panel members in recognition of their time and skills in advising on responses, plus thanks to the two contractors Pete Leaver and Lewis Andrews.
- **MW** noted with reference to the proposed 105 units site at Morteohoe, that the Woolacombe Community Land Trust already has a site that will meet local housing needs.
- Landscape - Power line removal – £5m is available for next phase of scheme in South-West. Chapel Hill gained £112k from National Grid and will be ready for Easter 2024; Morteohoe Phase 2 is live and received the additional £50k requested; Pickwell scheme due to start if support obtained from parish council. **DE** presented and proposed an additional undergrounding scheme for £367k at Shaftsborough Farm, Lee, Ilfracombe, subject to support from Morteohoe Parish Council. **Vote:** 13 in favour, 0 against. **AGREED** to submit proposal to WPD Steering Group.
- FiPL – **DE** reported good progress with 9 projects continuing from Years 1 & 2, plus 7 new projects approved for this Year 3 and some into Year 4. He expressed thanks to the Local Assessment Panel including new members Matt Edworthy and return of Martin Batt, and to the two FiPL contractors Phil Metcalfe and Sophia Craddock for their ongoing support and expertise over the scheme.

7. Tributes and thanks to Dave Edgcombe in recognition of his 40-year contribution to the AONB and retirement on this day were made by Eirene Williams, John Rous, Jenny Carey-Wood and Chris Preece.

8. Updates from Partners: – due to lack of time **EW** requested emailing in essential updates for the Minutes:

- Plastic Free North Devon - Ocean Explorers: 2022/23 wrapped up and evaluated, 2023/24 funding yet to secure; Looking at a change of model to focus on after school clubs.
 - Campaigning: starting 'single use coffee cup free' campaign in Braunton in November. Currently considering how we respond to the Rosebank oilfield decision locally, with members of NDWSR, NDB, AONB etc.
 - Beach cleaning: Over 400kgs cleared from Saunton at the last two Big Saunton Beach cleans with 130+ volunteers. Planning a cleanse and clean day of action again in January as well as month long campaign.
 - PFND Consortium Strategy - currently working through this with Donna Sibley alongside the Devon carbon plan as part of her North Devon Futures workstream to try and come up with some priority projects and a model for collaboration on it - there are lots of partnerships and networking groups - where does this work best fit - North Devon Futures?
 - Still running Repair Cafes - and we just got funding to deliver more, including lots of skills workshops with other organisations.

9. Date of Next Meeting - WEDNESDAY 24th January 2024, 10-12.30 in-person at Braunton Countryside Centre and on Zoom.