

# North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty PARTNERSHIP

Friday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2023

In-person at West Down Parish Hall, Ilfracombe at 10am

## MINUTES

### Meeting Attendees

Dr Eirene Williams (Chair)  
Paul Green (Community Rep.)  
Brian Butler (NFU)  
Lewis Andrews (Community Rep.)  
Martin Batt (Community – Vice Chair)  
John Rous (CLA)  
Becky Hughes (Natural England)  
Jane Young (Community Rep.)  
Chris Preece (Voluntary Sector – NDAS)  
Brett Grosvenor (Environment Agency)  
Dominic Elson (Exmoor NPA)  
Richard Prowse (Tarka Country Trust)  
Kevin Cook (Community Rep.)  
Rose Roberts (Community Rep.)  
Claire Moodie (Community Rep.)  
Paula Ferris (Coastwise ND)  
Jonathan Fairhurst (National Trust)

Student Placement – Jesse Bunker-Wood

**(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 Project Assistant)  
Kate Hind (Devon CC)

### Apologies

Pete Burgess (DWT)  
Christine Goodall (NE)  
Rose Roberts (Community Rep.)  
Cllr Malcolm Wilkinson (North Devon Council)  
Helen Smith (Torrige District Council)  
Mel Austen (Biosphere Partnership)  
Sarah Jennings (DCC)  
Rob Joules (National Trust)  
Ian Crawford (TTEF)  
Penny Mills (CPRE)  
Charlotte Russell (Historic England)  
Matthew Odgers-Brown (Forestry Commission)

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

**2. Minutes of the meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2023 and matters arising. Minutes agreed.**

#### Matters arising not on the agenda:

- **Braunton to Saunton cycle route** – JCW reported that email from Braunton Parish Clerk indicated progress unlikely as Devon County Council team unable to support for at least ten years.

**3. Governance**

- **New member application** – Skern Lodge, Tom Humphreys to be Tourism representative on the Partnership. Vote: 16 in favour. **Application AGREED.**
- **Vice-chair of Partnership** – Richard Prowse proposed for an interim position for a period of 6 months. **Vote:** 14 in favour. **Appointment AGREED.** External recruitment to be carried out alongside new community/parish representation. **ACTION: JCW**

**4. Presentations**

**A. AONB Tourism Review (slides attached) presented by Jenny Carey-Wood. Key points:**

- Useful to have employment data for other sectors for context.
- Is there data from SW Coast Path Association on visitor numbers, views etc?
- Overseas visitors - **CP** stated that there are often visitors from Switzerland and Austria.
- **BG** reported on importance of understanding trends in employment data due to consequences for spatial planning, e.g. Through Local Plan review and fund allocations
- **KH** reported that data on Indices of Multiple Deprivation etc available from Devon CC.
- **BH** suggested looking at the Green Infrastructure Tool and the All England tool for economic/environment data and evidence
- PH added the issue of the lack of cycle hire facilities in the AONB.
- **ACTION: JCW** to obtain latest Census and other data when available to inform Management Plan Review sections on economy and tourism

**B. Finding Nature's Footprints – update from Joe Newberry and Lowenna Arnold:**

- Bioblitz at Northam Burrows Country Park in June was very successful with 270 primary school children and 190 members of the public attending. Thanks extended to the team at Northam Burrows, Coastwise and the TDC communications team (Harry Roper especially), plus other partners with stands at the Hub. 269 species were found in the 24 hours, 189 of them not previously recorded on that site although most known to the ranger team.
- AONB Environment Group – this is the group set up to target young people between 15 and 25 years old to engage with citizen science opportunities in the AONB. Following surveys and publicity, there are 16 interested members from across the patch with an offer of an activity every two weeks, but rotating days/times to be accessible to more people due to their various commitments. Attendance varies from 6 to 12 and activities covered include woodland assessments, UV rockpooling, Seawatch cetacean survey, National Trust pollinator survey and NBCP species surveys. There is a summer 2-day overnight expedition planned for late July working with Skern Lodge.

**5. AONB Manager's Report – additional points:**

- a) Heritage – bid for SDF grant to recreate the exploded Cromwell Tank by the Assault Training Centre, awaiting further grant applications.
- b) Planning – error on report, offshore windfarm section on pipeline across Saunton to Yelland should refer to White Cross not X-Links cable, which may come into Abbotsham.
- c) FiPL – **DE** reported success of FiPL engagement event in February in Hartland with partners prompting interest from 10 landowners/farmers and more bids expected to the next Grant Panel in September. Reprofiting of bids with CS rate changes in January had severe impact on team's capacity and delayed Year 3 development work. **D Elson** reported on recent Defra advice to ensure that FiPL not duplicating or replacing CS, CSF, SFI schemes or capital grant programmes, with more focus on innovation and added value. Exmoor National Park Authority had reviewed their spend in Years 1 & 2, to refocus programme. **BB** raised issue of diversifications into tourism and issues for planning and landscape, not just grant. **D Elson** said that Exmoor had not had planning issues but were now prioritising access and education, working with those embracing behaviour change rather than business as usual.

- d) Management Plan Review – proposals for content and process to be presented to September Partnership. **BH** advised she would be the lead Natural England representative supporting protected landscapes with their reviews, but Chris Goodall would still be on Partnership and Devon lead.
- e) **Sustainable Development Fund** – 3 projects carried over from last year due to delays, 3 projects under consideration by the Panel. Please promote grant scheme as few enquiries this year. (Flyer attached)
- f) **Communications Report** – report accepted. **LC** emphasised the strong partnership working with local authority communication teams such as the 10-day countdown to Bioblitz by TDC, and regular re-posting of messages. Thanks to FNF team for producing regular video stories. **ACTION: ALL** – feedback on website as review ongoing in August.

## 6. Landscape Report and Planning Update

- AONB Planning Report noted. **DE** highlighted increase in housing developments across the AONB, and how appeals had increased considerably this year. A bid for 105 housing units at Morteheo within the AONB but outside the designated development area is challenging.
- Onshore Cable from White Cross wind farm - cable is due to be undergrounded through Saunton beach and the Marsh, then down the road to White House so mostly outside the AONB. There are concerns about impacts on the hydrology of the marshes. **PF** asked about role of the Biosphere in addressing this development as of significant concern to local people even if outside the AONB, and possible impact on inter-tidal and marine areas? Concern that Biosphere's Marine Working Group had not met for years so a lack of information and opportunity to engage with these types of issues, as not covered by the AONB. Will there be a new EIA once final route agreed? **DE** advised that the MMO would cover developments up to High Water Mark and Local Planning Authority from there upwards, plus the Biosphere team are actively involved. **KC** reported the Surfing Reserve team commissioned a study considering surf zone and ecology done by University of Plymouth that showed no impact due to offshore distance. **BH** reported that Alan Kavanagh from Natural England is lead on renewables and actively involved with these schemes. **DE** said there were likely to be multiple access points required for renewables in the Celtic Seas but disappointing at lack of collaboration and sharing of infrastructure. **ACTION: JCW** to raise concerns with Biosphere
- Power line removal – the Morteheo Phase 2 scheme, and the remainder of the Morteheo-Woolacombe scheme are due to be completed in winter 2023. £5m is now available for next phase of scheme in South-West: **DE** proposed a scheme from Putsborough beach up to Pickwell in North Devon district, including the removal of the Vention transformer and improvements to important landscape around the Observation Post and views across to Baggy Point. **Vote: 15** in favour. **AGREED to submit proposal to WPD.**

## 7. Updates from Partners: –

- **Environment Agency** – **BG** reminded members of the work under the Coastal Re-Alignment programme including modelling work at Combe Martin, Environment Programme (including WEIF) to improve water quality, the North Devon Natural Solutions DWT project working in the upper Torridge around Hartland and starting in the Ilfracombe and Combe Martin areas from 2025. It has successfully improved 400ha of habitat in first years. The EA now have agriculture teams with 2 officers covering North Devon and Torridge.

- **North Devon World Surfing Reserve** – **KC** shared slides showing the Inauguration of the Reserve with the Save the Waves coalition representatives from the USA and other reserves, plus 300 people at Woolacombe event. Thanks for advice from **DE** on planning permission and plaque location. The by-line is “Waves for all, forever” indicating the ambition and approach of the reserve working through the Stewardship Council members. A potential grant is available for mitigation works and looking for shared administration support. The Surfonomics work is being updated to reflect seasonality of surfing. **BB** extended congratulations to the team behind the Reserve but why was Westward Ho! not included? **KC** replied that they focussed on the best breaks for their bidding document and left out some of the hidden sites that only local people know. **JR** said surfing was not economically significant for Clovelly. **BH** and **BG** mentioned water quality work, including a helpful workshop with SWW in East Devon and how Section 82 of the Environment Act 2021 will monitor impacts from CSOs on receiving waters, comprehensively from 2024. See [WaterFit Live map \(southwestwater.co.uk\)](https://www.waterfit.org.uk)
- **North Devon Archaeology Society** – **CP** reported on recent short dig adjacent to Clovelly Dykes with features proving to be only medieval walls with lots of pottery finds. Gallantry Bower survey of the small, square enclosure and conservation work (by DE and volunteers) on the bowl barrow mean it is much more visible to walkers on the SWCP. Unfortunately no finds but samples taken for analysis to date the enclosure.
- **Paula Ferris** reported her concern at the radical changes taking place to significant habitats within the Biosphere locally, some within the AONB, such as the Braunton Burrows Plantlife upheavals, poorer public access with the loss of the Boardwalk, the flooding of Horsey, and now the consequences for the Marsh from the wind farm proposal – has anyone got their eye on the cumulative impact of these? **ACTION: JCW** to talk to Biosphere team.
- **Coastwise North Devon** – **PF** is doing well, with a busy programme. Special thanks to Laura Carolan for her help with the citizen-science survey programme. Other issues are the number of dead seabirds (18 so far) and the scale of moon jellyfish strandings, and a lack of monitoring of such changes. **RR** reported that over 60 dead guillemots have been found at NBCP and they now need Protective clothing to remove birds due to dangers from Bird Flu. Is anyone coordinating across different beach owners? **ACTION: JCW** to liaise with LPAs.
- **Tarka Country Trust** – **RP** the Trust has launched their third phase of Awards and were promoting to parishes and communities. See [Biodiversity Awards - Tarka Country Trust](https://www.tarkacountrytrust.org.uk)
- **Devon County Council** – **written report attached including updates on:**
  1. Devon Climate Adaptation Strategy
  2. Devon Tree and Woodland Strategy
  3. Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Devon
- **Woolsery Show** – **BB** reminded people of the date 31<sup>st</sup> July and encouraged them to attend.

**Afternoon Site Visit – Seymour Barn, Woolacombe** by kind permission of the National Trust.

Jonathan Fairhurst led a walk to show the results and lessons learnt from the wilding work to create flower rich meadows, scrub areas, re-wetted fields with open ponds and scrapes, alongside tree planting. Dave Edgcombe showed members the final sites where power lines will be removed across Morteheo and potentially up from Putsborough if new proposal is successful. Everyone thanked the team for a very beautiful and informative walk.

- 8. Date of Next Meeting - Friday 29<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023, 10-12.30 (hybrid, location tbc.)**  
**Agenda –** FiPL programme and proposals for AONB Management Plan Review.  
(Future Meeting date – **WEDNESDAY 24<sup>th</sup> January 2024**)