



# Arnside & Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Executive Committee Meeting

18/5/2022

Arnside Education Institute

## MINUTES

### Attendees:

#### Members of the Executive Committee:

Cllr Brian Meakin (Chair)	Beetham Parish Council
Fiona Allan	Landscape Trust
Sarah Wilson	Natural England
Glen Swainson	Natural England
Liz Cheslett-Davey	Environment Agency
Cllr June Greenwell	Lancaster City Council
Cllr Helen Chaffey	South Lakeland District Council
Dan Taylor	National Trust
Jarrold Sneyd	RSPB
Cllr James Ferguson	Silverdale Parish Council
Julian Oston	Landowner Rep – Dallam Tower Estate
Brian Jones	User Group Rep – Ramblers
Ann Kitchen	Business Rep – BCCIC
Laura Partington	Friends of the Lake District/ CPRE
Craig Russell	Business Rep – Beetham Holiday Homes

#### In Attendance:

Damian Law	Officer Rep – SLDC
Adam Briggs	NFU
Lucy Barron	AONB Manager
Sue Hunter	AONB Officer
Dougie Watson	AONB Countryside Officer
Tonia Armer	Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer
Caroline Howard	AONB Communications & Funding Officer (minutes)

### Apologies

Cllr Phillippa Williamson	Lancashire County Council
Cllr Pete McSweeney (Vice Chair)	Cumbria County Council
Sam Stalker	National Trust
Rachel Whaley	Officer Rep – Cumbria County Council
Richard Camp	Officer Rep – Lancaster City Council
Elliott Lorimer	Officer Rep – Lancashire County Council

Helen Rawlinson  
Belinda Barclay  
Richard Park

AONB Countryside Officer  
Local Nature Reserves Warden  
Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer

### **Did not attend**

David Harpley	Cumbria Wildlife Trust
Cllr Kevin Briggs	Warton Parish Council
Cllr Iain Harbison	Yealand Redmayne Parish Council
Cllr Jane Panton	Yealand Conyers Parish Council
Cllr James Keith Halford	Arnside Parish Council
Ailsa Gibson	User Group Rep – Bridleways Association
Joan Jackson	NFU Representative

### **1. Welcome, apologies and introductions**

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone, and each person present introduced themselves. Apologies received are listed above.
- 1.2 The Chair thanked Sue Harrison, Maggie Robinson, Andrew Frankish and Craig Russell, who have stepped down or are stepping down from the AONB Executive Committee.
- 1.3 Sarah Wilson has joined the Executive Committee in place of Maggie Robinson, as a representative for Natural England.
- 1.4 Liz Cheslett-Davey has joined the Executive Committee in place of Andrew Frankish, as a representative for the Environment Agency.
- 1.5 A Business Representative will be advertised for to replace Craig Russell, and a representative for CLA will be proposed by CLA.

### **ACTION: CH to advertise for a new Business Representative.**

### **2. Presentation on the Arnside & Silverdale AONB Volunteer Programme (DW)**

DW gave a summary of recent activities and reported that the programme has been developing well over the last year.

Activities have included:

- management of the Sandside cutting orchid verge,
- management of the historic lime kilns,
- installation and maintenance of footpath waymarkers,
- works on roadside verges (plug planting & seeding) in both Arnside & Beetham,
- coppice works (predominantly at Dobshall Wood),
- pond management in Silverdale,
- hedgelaying,
- fencing,
- making hazel hurdles,
- site management at Ashmeadow,
- hedge planting at Waterslack (200m in a day),
- works on the Local Nature Reserves (Trowbarrow and Warton Crag) – dealing with storm damage and footpath access, ash dieback, making pockets and glades for butterflies, and managing health and safety for public access of the reserve,
- dry stone walling at Hyning Scout Wood,
- creation of wildflower growing nursery at the AONB warehouse.

Voluntary work is providing benefits to local people in terms of getting out into green space, making connections and social interaction. This provides important mental health benefits.

There was a lot of public engagement at the Hedgelaying Competition – over 100 people found out about the competition by engaging with the AONB team & volunteers.

A record 24 volunteers attended the post-Hedgelaying Competition tidy up (the AONB team are not infrequently seeing volunteer numbers of over 15!).

The Litter Pickers are gathering for a monthly litter pick, rotating around the parish. There are 16 volunteers at present and they usually collect ½ trailer of rubbish to take to recycling.

There is a local provenance tree nursery set up at Trowbarrow LNR, being managed by volunteers.

Volunteers have contributed over 2000 hours of time to the programme already this year.

There have been 54 new volunteers inducted, with a more even male/female split.

The AONB is now supporting a wider range of volunteer programmes, including monthly Friends of Warton Crag sessions, weekly Habitat & Access Management sessions, monthly Communications volunteer sessions, a monthly Photography volunteers mailout, regular Events volunteering opportunities and the monthly Litter Pickers sessions.

Friends of Warton Crag has proved successful following on from the Gateway to Warton Crag project. They are meeting each month on a Saturday morning.

CR asked if the wildflower growing be commercialised and sold to the private sector locally to allow people to purchase local seeds (difficult to source otherwise). There would be plenty of interest!

DW responded that current capacity is not likely this year, but going forward, dependent upon resources and funding this could be expanded. The current project is a trial, with seed collected last year as part of Meadow Makers, thanks to a funded project.

The committee applauded the work of the AONB volunteers in the various parishes – their ongoing efforts are much appreciated in conserving and enhancing the AONB.

### **3. Mins of last meeting**

Points of discussion:

6.3 – Silverdale Parish Council have produced a video on Safety on the Sands. However, the Silverdale tide timetable in google can come up with the wrong location. JS and the AONB team had involvement in the video (during the later stages), which was beneficial as it was possible to discourage the use of drone footage and steer the video to use high vantage points and stop motion.

**ACTION: CH to include link to Silverdale tide timetable on web page with the Silverdale Safety Video.**

AK raised a question about the DPD with the change to the new Unitary Authority. The DPD should not be affected. DL confirmed that the plan will remain in place until it is superseded by a replacement document. The new Unitary Authority is likely to adopt the documents adopted by its predecessors (e.g. SLDC) until they are reviewed. The committee agreed that it is important to emphasize the importance of the AONB during this transition.

Minutes approval Proposed – AK

Minutes approval Seconded – FA

### **4. Budget – Report Circulated**

CH presented the budget report.

Budget approval Proposed – AK

Budget approval Seconded – JS

LB has had a meeting with Cllr Pete McSweeney and agreed a route to take regarding approaching other Local Authorities with regard to future funding. There is a letter being drafted by Lancaster City Council to ask the other Local Authorities to increase their contributions, highlighting the benefits of supporting the AONB and the AONB's work. This is in process.

#### **5. AONB Work Programme Update – Report Circulated**

LB thanked the Committee for support throughout the pandemic.

LB encouraged all Executive Committee members to get in touch with the team at any point to discuss our activities, not just at the Executive Committee Meetings.

Highlights of the Work Programme Update:

- Undergrounding for visual amenity (led by Electricity Northwest) is progressing. There has been a long stretch of line between Warton and Barrow Scout undergrounded for landscape enhancement purposes. The team hope that the long-term benefit will be valued.
- Meadow Makers, a Plantlife-led project funded by the National Lottery's Green Recovery Challenge Fund, has led to habitat restoration of species rich grassland at 11 sites in the AONB. This project has had legacies in terms of the wildflower nursery and engagement with private landowners to be part of a landscape scale approach with the network of habitats across the AONB.
- Bee on the Verge has been working with the Parish Councils in Arnside and Beetham to plant wildflowers in verges in the AONB. The AONB Team would love to work with some of the other parish councils on the project.
- The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme has completed Year 1. This is a National Programme 100% funded by Defra and is being implemented in National Parks and AONBs across the country. The AONB team recruited Tonia Armer and Richard Park in August 2021 to work on the programme, which is now in year 2 of 3. The AONB Team would like to thank Adam Briggs for chairing the assessment panel, and to thank the other panel members for their work in assessing applications. The AONB Team are keen to hear from anybody who has ideas or would like to discuss possible Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme projects.
- The AONB Grants Fund, run jointly with the Landscape Trust, is a small grant for up to £2500. The panel have reviewed the documentation and issued an updated guidance document and application form. A summary of funded projects has also been produced to help promote the grants fund and guide applications.

There was a discussion about carbon auditing within the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme. The team confirmed that they would be interested in supporting further carbon audits and hosting further events to discuss carbon auditing – Defra are keen to support discussion about carbon auditing. It was raised that there is inconsistency in carbon auditing models, depending upon precise location, time of year etc. TA stated that it is likely that there will be guidance from the government soon that will set a standard which everyone should use.

It is important to feed back to Defra that the uncertainty of different processes is impacting the interest in uptake. Carbon Metrics who ran the recent event stated that the precise figures may be

variable, but that they do highlight areas for improvement and/or work. Multiyear projects are necessary to see the impact and benefit of carbon auditing. There is a network of Farming in Protected Landscapes Officers to discuss this type of issue.

**ACTION: LB / FiPL Officers to feed this discussion back via the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme.**

*CR raised a discussion point regarding Lakeland Wildlife Oasis' planning application.*

CR has been lobbied by Lakeland Wildlife Oasis on a planning issue with their application SL/2021/0647. The AONB Team initially raised some concerns about this application but following amended plans being submitted, responded that concerns had been largely addressed. The decision then sits with SLDC as the relevant local planning authority, and they determine the planning application based on their interpretation of the Local Plan and AONB DPD. It is to be noted that the AONB Team is a consultee in planning, not the decision maker. The AONB rarely 'supports' an application – there are either no concerns, concerns or an objection. In this instance the planning permission was refused by SLDC.

There are key distinctions between the AONB as a designation, the AONB DPD and the AONB Team – SLDC can take a different view from the AONB Team as they have a greater number of issues that must be considered.

Recommended advice for the applicant was given: to discuss the issue direct with the SLDC Planning Officers who can advise them about the decision and what amendments need to be made to their proposal. The AONB Team does not provide that kind of advice to applicants because they are not the decision-making body. HC offered to assist the applicant in contacting the SLDC.

The AONB DPD is an adopted planning policy and is applied in all cases so an application would not be routinely referred to the Planning Committee unless specifically requested by a Local Councillor.

## **6. Communications Report (circulated)**

CH gave an update on Communications and Events in the AONB (report circulated).

Visitor demographic data were discussed; the AONB has access to some demographic data about followers, depending upon the platform. The use of volunteer support for social media posting was discussed, which has been successful largely due to the high competence of Sandy Felton, the primary social media volunteer, and the use of the Hootsuite content management system.

CR asked if the Wyrms of Trowbarrow could be brought to Kendal Torchlight – CH will approach Arnside School to ask if they would like to attend, as they did not attend Light Up Lancaster as a group. The lanterns are still available (although some need repair works).

**ACTION: CH to contact Arnside School / organise taking Wyrms of Trowbarrow to Kendal Torchlight.**

## **7. Planning Protocol Update**

SH presented several amendments to the Arnside & Silverdale AONB Planning Protocol (circulated). These were:

Section 2. Additional section on developments in the setting being sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated area

Section 2. Additional policies included regarding the Marine Plan & other policies.

## Section 7. addition of 'archaeologists'

Questions:

*SW: Will this be changed if following the Glover Review / Levelling Up Bill etc. impact this?*

Response: Yes

*HC: What constitutes a major development?*

Response: The concept of what is a major development is dealt with in the AONB DPD. LB happy to discuss with HC separately.

*JG: Will there be any change to the DPD following on from this?*

Response: Not from these amendments. When National Policy changes this will need to be taken into account.

RC sent notes in his absence that he is in support of the planning protocol updates.

Planning Protocol approval Proposed – Julian Oston

Planning Protocol approval Seconded – Brian Jones

JS raised that there is a discussion to be had about planning policy and the withdrawal of resources from local authorities (e.g. ecologists) impacting the ability for pragmatic assessments.

### **8. Planning Report (circulated)**

SH gave an update on planning matters in the AONB.

AK stated that it is important to retain a balance between conserving and enhancing the AONB landscape and providing the affordable housing that the area needs. LB confirmed that the DPD strongly advocates for the delivery of the affordable housing that the wider area needs on the small sites within the AONB that are suitable for development.

JG noted that Silverdale Parish Council has identified that holiday rentals are causing loss of local population in the area.

### **9. Partner Updates**

#### **GS – Natural England**

At Gait Barrows following the reintroduction of hazel dormouse into the reserve 19 dormice were found during the box checks on the 17/5/2022. A further introduction is planned later in the year.

There is a Festival of National Nature Reserves this year, because the first National Nature Reserves were designated 70 years ago. There will be some events at Gait Barrows – e.g. guided walks.

**ACTION: GS to send information about events at Gait Barrows to AONB to promote.**

The Summerhouse has been restored, and the team will tie re-opening in to 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of national nature reserves. The Cow Barn is due for restoration as a shelter / picnic area. Natural England are considering developing engagement potential at their current reserve base to include toilets, kitchen facilities and possibly a classroom, whilst continuing to including storage facilities for onsite work.

Gait Barrows has been selected as one of the chosen sites for the Queen's Green Canopy – 70 ancient woodland sites are being highlighted. Gait Barrows was first designated for the Silver Jubilee in 1977.

**RSPB – JS**

The RSPB team have been dealing with incidences of Recreational Disturbance – there are a range of complex issues, many of which are national. LB is on the Morecambe Bay Local Nature Partnership subgroup on recreational disturbance. There is a project manager within the RSPB doing work on Recreational Disturbance, looking to escalate this nationally with Natural England. There is a need to understand what the impacts are and how we manage the impact. JO stated that Hazelslack Marsh suffers with recreational disturbance. Birders report a substantial reduction of waterfowl and wading birds. Microlites, drones etc. are impacting birds. There needs to be a national conversation about the impact of airspace use on wildlife, especially in Special Protection Areas. There are also issues with sheep worrying and responsible dog ownership.

### **Beetham Holiday Homes - CR**

CR has been on the committee for 16 years as a voice from the private sector and is stepping down from the AONB Executive Committee. He emphasized that it is vital to include the voice from the private sector on the committee, and therefore it is important to recruit a new business representative.

CR also works with the Kendal Torchlight – this year the theme is ‘Scrap Legends’, and the 2023 theme is ‘Beck to Bay’.

### **Landscape Trust – FA**

The Landscape Trust had a face-to-face meeting earlier this month and the AGM is on 20<sup>th</sup> July at the Heron Theatre at Beetham. The Trust has ~960 members at present and a robust group of volunteers happy to do practical tasks but is struggling to attract trustees. The Trust are working closely with the AONB and working to promote the Landscape Trust through social media.

## **10. Glover Review Update – LB**

LB gave an update on the National Landscapes Review. The Review was a 2019 independent review about National Parks and AONB. The Review made a suite of recommendations including strengthening the powers, purposes and resources of AONBs. The government response was given in late 2021, and there was then a government consultation in March / April 2022.

The government are considering changes to statutory purposes of AONBs to give them a greater role in Nature Recovery. This is a longer-term process as it requires legislative change.

One recommendation is to ensure that AONB partnerships have statutory consultee status in planning. Currently AONBs are a consultee, but Natural England are the statutory consultee. This would have a series of implications around resourcing, staffing and relationship with Local Authorities. There are many issues to be considered, but the NAAONB are in principle supportive of this recommendation as long as it comes with the resources required to provide a professional service.

Additionally, AONBs might have a greater role within supporting recreation, although this also needs to be resourced. AONBs are not currently resourced to carry out that type of work.

A further element was to work more closely with Farmers and Landowners. This is starting to come to fruition through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme – the AONB Team hopes to take a greater role with the new Environmental Land Management schemes when they come in (2024). The relationship building through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme is providing a base for this.

There has also been a proposal to rename AONBs as ‘National Landscapes’. Defra are currently considering this actively as an option. The NAAONB is making the case that if that was to go ahead it

would need to be more than a re-brand / name change. A suite of measures to strengthen AONB would also need to be delivered.

The NAAONB is working with Defra on a daily basis to inform and guide these discussions with lead officers (including LB) taking part in workshops and discussions to inform decision making but there are still a lot of questions.

#### Questions

*JO: If you are a statutory consultee would you need to respond to each application?*

Response: There may be an agreement as to which kinds of applications the AONB would be responding to. Arnside & Silverdale AONB Team currently review all applications.

CR raised a concern that if AONBs take on a statutory role they would risk undermining the democratic process. LB stated that the governance process is one of the issues Defra are considering as part of this.

### 11. AOB

As part of upgrading the educational facilities at Trowbarrow LNR there has been some work done on the track. This does not include parking for visitors as there is no vehicle access for the general public.

It was asked whether Morecambe Bay Partnership are part of the AONB Executive Committee. Whilst they are not represented on the Executive Committee, the AONB Team work with them on various forums.

An update was requested on the Arnside Viaduct route. Currently there are feasibility works being undertaken to assess options, and a draft report is imminent. Once this comes through it will be available to partners to comment on.

#### Table of Actions

Action	Assigned to	Deadline
Advertise for a new Business Representative	CH	Next Meeting
Include link to Silverdale tide timetable on web page with the Silverdale Safety Video.	CH	Next Meeting
Feedback discussion on Carbon Auditing via the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme.	TA / RP	Next Meeting
Contact Arnside School / organise taking Wym of Trowbarrow to Kendal Torchlight	CH	September
Send information about events at Gait Barrows to AONB to promote.	GS	As Available

**Next Meeting: October 19<sup>th</sup> 2pm**