



Arnside & Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Executive Committee Meeting

19/10/2022

2pm

The Holt, RSPB Leighton Moss

MINUTES

Attendees

Members of the Executive Committee:

Cllr Brian Meakin (Chair)	Beetham Parish Council
Cllr June Greenwell	Lancaster City Council (from 3.45pm)
Cllr Helen Chaffey	SLDC (until 3.45pm)
Cllr Pete McSweeney	Cumbria County Council
Cllr Steve Porter	Arnside Parish Council
Sam Stalker	National Trust
Glen Swainson	Natural England
Simon Waller	CLA
Laura Partington	Friends of the Lake District
Jarrold Sneyd	RSPB
Fiona Allan	Landscape Trust
Ann Kitchen	Bittern Countryside Community Interest Company
Julian Oston	Landowner Representative – Dallam Tower Estate
Brian Jones	User Group Representative – Ramblers

In Attendance:

Damian Law	Officer Representative – SLDC
Rachel Whaley	Officer Representative – Cumbria County Council
Elliott Lorimer	Officer Representative – Lancashire County Council

AONB Partnership Team:

Lucy Barron	AONB Manager
Sue Hunter	AONB Officer
Helen Rawlinson	Countryside Officer
Dougie Watson	Countryside Officer
Tonia Armer	Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer
Caroline Howard (mins)	Funding & Communications Officer

Apologies

Sarah Wilson	Natural England
Cllr Phillipa Williamson	Lancashire County Council
Dan Taylor	National Trust
Cllr James Ferguson	Silverdale Parish Council
Cllr Kevin Briggs	Warton Parish Council
Richard Camp	Officer Representative – Lancaster City Council
Belinda Barclay	Local Nature Reserves Warden
Richard Park	Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer
Julia Sier	Wildflower Nursery Co-Ordinator

Not in Attendance

Liz Cheslett-Davey	Environment Agency
David Harpley	Cumbria Wildlife Trust
Cllr Iain Harbison	Yealand Redmayne Parish Council
Cllr Jane Panton	Yealand Conyers Parish Council
Alisa Gibson	User group Rep – Bridleways Assoc
Joan Jackson	NFU Rep

1. Welcome, apologies and Introductions (BM)

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone, and each person present introduced themselves. Apologies received are listed above.
- 1.2 Simon Waller has joined the Executive Committee as a representative for CLA and Cllr Steve Porter as a representative for Arnside Parish Council.

2. Annual re-endorsement of User Groups, Business and Farming representatives and election of Chair and Vice Chairs (BM / LB)

- 2.1 The user group representatives were re-endorsed.
- 2.2 A second business representative has been advertised for, but none has come forward as yet. LB asked that anyone with suggestions for a representative contact the AONB Partnership team. Further advertising will be taken via South Lakeland District Council.
- 2.3 Cllr Pete McSweeney and Ann Kitchen are stepping down as Vice Chairs. LB gave thanks on behalf of the committee for their sterling work over many years. Cllr Pete McSweeney will be stepping down as he will no longer be a councillor following the shift to a new unitary authority.
- 2.4 Cllr Helen Chaffey offered to take on the role of Vice Chair, and was proposed by Ann Kitchen, Seconded by Sam Stalker.
- 2.5 Brian Meakin is willing to continue in his role as chair, and was proposed by Ann Kitchen, seconded by Cllr Pete McSweeney.

ACTION: CH to forward business representative advert to HC to share via SLDC.

3. Mins of the last meeting held on 18th May 2022 (BM)

3.1 The minutes of the last meeting were discussed, and proposed as an accurate record by Ann Kitchen, seconded by Brian Jones.

4. Matters Arising (LB)

4.1 Actions from the last minutes were all completed except taking the Wurm of Trowbarrow to Kendal Torchlight, which was not possible due to time constraints.

5. Budget Review – Report Circulated (CH)

5.1 Caroline Howard gave an overview of the 21-22 final outturn and the 22-23 mid-year report.

5.2 The AONB Partnership team have approached the partner authorities recently for their usual contribution, but as Defra have increased we have asked the LAs to match the increase to keep us in line with the 75% funding agreement.

Rachel Whaley discussed that Cumbria County Council may be in a position to increase the Local Authority contributions in line with the Defra uplift. Cllr Pete McSweeney offered to assist in the request for an increase.

5.3 Tonia Armer gave an update on the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme budget: This year the programme has about £127k to allocate in grants funding, and nearly £87k are approved with more in the pipeline. The application last year for Warton Crag, led by the RSPB, for gates on the crag for stock handling was rolled over from 21/22 to 22/23.

So far funded in 2022/23, with approximate values are:

- Further works to support conservation grazing at Warton Crag (AS003B, £8000)
- Training and engagement activities with the Coppice Co-op's mobile retort (AS004, £1600)
- A meadows restoration project, led by Cumbria Wildlife Trust (AS101, £25000)
- A carbon training event (AS102, £400)
- Works at Gait Barrows Farm (AS104, £600)
- Fencing at Hazelslack marsh to support conservation grazing, with a slight increase due to the need for further fencing to manage footpaths due to cattle congregating at access points (AS105A, £4000, and AS105, £1100)
- Works at Scar Close (AS106, £300)
- Further hedge planting at Arnside Tower Farm (AS108, £24300)
- The creation of some small ponds at Yealand Hall (AS110, £2000)
- The purchase of a flail mower and hurdles for Bank House (AS111, £4600)
- A regeneration farming event with Nils Corfield, focusing on soil health (AS113, £1400)

The creation of a tramper route in Eaves Wood has been approved, but is awaiting final confirmations.

There are still funds for both this year and next year and this is a time limited opportunity as it currently stands, so it is important to bring forwards applications as soon as possible. Ann Kitchen asked about the possibility of funding being spent on green energy. In general, this would be not supportable however there might be instances where this could form part of a wider project.

ACTION: CH to liaise with RW and Cllr PM regarding CCC contribution.

6. AONB Partnership Team Work Programme Update – Report Circulated (LB)

6.1 LB gave an update on the activities of the AONB Partnership team. Highlights included:

- The Meadow Makers Project, which has involved considerable work with farmers and landowners. This has helped to generate new contacts, and this has led on to a project funded by the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme. The initial project was Plantlife-led and funded by the NLHF Green Recovery Challenge Fund.
- Building from the Meadow Makers project, the AONB Partnership team has developed a small wildflower nursery to grow plug plants for future meadow projects and roadside verge projects. Cllr Steve Porter raised that Arnside Parish Council have been grateful for the support for the verges project, Cllr Brian Meakin stated the same is true of Beetham Parish Council. Bee on the Verge is currently working across three parishes, we would like to expand this in the future.
- Management of Trowbarrow and Warton Crag Local Nature Reserves continues, funded partially via Countryside Stewardship agreements. Local Nature Reserves Warden Belinda Barclay has been working hard to maintain the sites and facilitate both formal education visits and general public engagement activities. Managing these sites and juggling the competing interests of different user groups and management is a significant task.
- The AONB volunteer programme is a significant part of our work, with the 2322 hours up until the end of September across the various volunteer groups – including the weekly Tuesday Habitat & Access Management, Litter Pick, Friends of Warton Crag, Communications etc.
- The Dementia Friendly Walks for All programme has continued weekly sessions through the year. This is an important part of our work giving people the opportunity to get out into the landscape who might not otherwise be able to do so.

6.2 Cllr Pete McSweeney stated that residents of the Kent Estuary Division have contacted him as their Cumbria County Council member asking for more street lighting and asked if the AONB have a policy on this.

The AONB Partnership team are concerned about light pollution in the area and this is a growing issue. The AONB Partnership team would recommend that any new development reduce light pollution. The AONB Partnership team wouldn't say that lighting required for safety should be removed completely.

Cllr Pete McSweeney stated that residents have asked for B5282 to be lit and Milnthorpe boundary to Carnforth along A6, and commented that it would be beneficial if this was directly addressed in the management plan.

Friends of the Lake District have a Dark Skies Officer (Jack Ellerby) and the AONB Partnership team or Parish Councils could contact him to work together. A zoom or live lecture could be given to provide residents with a more nuanced understanding of the issues. Lucy Barron suggested that the AONB Partnership team could work with Jack Ellerby or support the new advisory role. Helping to shift perceptions and address safety concerns may be an important role. Simon Waller raised that updated planning guidance is available to ensure improved lighting is installed in new developments. Laura Partington raised that

both local planning authorities are due to adopt the Cumbria Good Lighting Technical Advice Note: Designing Out Light Pollution shortly.

Brian Meakin raised the point that lighting is not the responsibility of just one organisation; there may be multiple local authorities involved in the lighting and co-ordinated working is necessary.

The Bittern Sustainable Schools Programme (AONB-P / BCCIC) is currently working on a project with local schools which raises awareness of light pollution and the impact on moths in particular.

ACTION: Talking the Landscape – CH to invite Jack Ellerby from FLD / Dark Skies to deliver a talk.

6.3 Julian Oston asked what the restrictions are on the wildflower nursery.

Lucy Barron responded that the current main restriction is space. It is also necessary to create a business case for the staffing and materials etc. to ensure that the project works effectively. The AONB Partnership team are actively pursuing options and possible partners.

7. Communications Update – Report Circulated (CH)

7.1 CH gave an overview of the Communications work programme update (report circulated).

7.2 Jarrod Sneyd (RSPB) and Sam Stalker (National Trust) asked to organise meetings to collaborate with the AONB Partnership on joint events for 2023. Caroline Howard confirmed that a meeting has already been scheduled with the local National Trust Events Co-ordinator.

7.3 Lucy Barron highlighted that the national conference set the challenge of how we can improve access to nature for a more diverse range of people/groups. Funding via the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme is available for accessibility projects.

7.4 Jarrod Sneyd commented that the partnership working in the AONB and spirit of partnership was complimented during the conference field trips, two of which were hosted in Arnsdale & Silverdale AONB.

ACTION: CH to arrange meeting with RSPB Events Co-ordinator.

8. Planning Update – Report Circulated (SH)

8.1 Sue Hunter gave an overview of the planning work programme. So far there have been 43 planning responses submitted this financial year, with a total of 89 planning applications received and reviewed.

8.2 There has been an informal consultation on a development at Sandside, Quarry Lane area, featuring a contemporary urban design. We have been reviewing this and have mentioned that developments would need to be in line with the AONB DPD Policies. We also raised that 50% of new homes should be affordable housing and the potential impact of light pollution.

This development consultation was briefly discussed by the committee, who requested that if and when a proposal is submitted there be an extraordinary meeting of the Executive Committee to discuss the application.

8.3 Following on from discussions about light pollution, Sue Hunter highlighted that light pollution is considered as part of planning responses.

9. A Super National Nature Reserve for the AONB (LB)

9.1 Lucy Barron gave an update on the current discussions around a possible 'Super National Nature Reserve' (Super NNR) within the Arnside & Silverdale AONB.

The concept of a Super NNR is to bring land being managed with the primary purpose of conservation together under a collaborative, strategic and landscape scale approach.

The core purposes of NNRs are:

- Nature conservation
- Science and research
- Engagement with people

9.2 Currently the potential to declare areas of land in the AONB that are managed with the primary purpose of conservation as a Super NNS is being considered. This could incorporate a range of sites, including Gait Barrows, RSPB land, National Trust land, Landscape Trust Reserves, Woodland Trust land, and land managed by some of the estates in the AONB. The approach would mean developing a management framework for these areas at a landscape scale.

9.3 Lucy Barron and other possible partners recently visited the Somerset Levels, home to the Somerset Wetlands Super NNR. The Somerset Wetlands Super NNR is a partnership of 6 organisations bringing together ecologically linked sites to think about how they can be managed for nature conservation, science and people across the much larger landscape. The AONB Partnership team have also talked to Purbeck Heaths Super NNR in Dorset. The Dorset AONB Partnership is chairing and co-ordinating that group. Another Super NNR is being developed in the Mendip Hills AONB.

At the core of discussions about the Super NNR is the concept that we need to do things differently: work smarter and think bigger about nature conservation in the context of the nature and climate crises. Arnside & Silverdale AONB already has excellent partnership working. The development of a Super NNR could build upon that and strengthen partnership working, making a landscape approach tangible and deliverable. The aim is to be inclusive and build partnerships., working together in a tangible way on priorities such as:

- Landscape scale nature recovery and climate action
- Community engagement
- Education, learning and skills
- Visitor experience and management
- Research and monitoring
- Accessibility and inclusion

The development of a Super NNR could act as a significant lever or catalyst for funding, resources and capacity.

9.4 Committee members fed back their perspectives on the concept:

Glen Swainson – Natural England has the responsibility in terms of working on the declaration of a Super NNR. Natural England want to work in partnership with NGOs and other organisations in the area. The declaration of a Super NNR needs to be more than a rebranding exercise.

Visiting the Somerset Wetlands Super NNR offered some insight into what could be done. At this Super NNR, partners felt that there were multiple benefits, and it provided a framework for better collaboration. They highlighted that it was important not be too precious about individual sites. Not every site has to do everything for every species. The Super NNR approach can also help to manage visitors and recreational disturbance. There will be opportunities for people to join up after the initial declaration.

Jarrold Sneyd – Practical benefits could include machinery sharing, staff sharing, and coming together to generate opportunities for funding. It is important that the approach is not exclusive. It's not about driving the whole AONB to be a nature reserve or alienating those that are not part of it. There may be ecotourism benefits, particularly through management of honeypot sites and adopting a strategic approach to habitat management.

Sam Stalker – The proposal isn't to declare all land a nature reserve, it's looking at what we have already and the different land uses and how we can manage that more collaboratively. It's not necessarily about marketing sites better but how can we manage visitor flow better.

Councillor Helen Chaffey – A distinction is needed between residents and visitors when thinking about different user group needs. There would be concerns about access being reduced to locals. Glen Swainson confirmed that this would not be likely. Caroline Howard raised that there are a range of audiences to account for, some people who do not live in the area still have a connection in a similar way to locals, and new residents have often holidayed in the area prior to relocating.

Ann Kitchen – Research currently falls between the gaps and the ability to co-ordinate research effectively could be a significant improvement. There are some substantial research gaps at present – the Super NNR could be an ideal vehicle for this. Glen Swainson added that habitat and species monitoring is also disjointed and could be improved.

Elliott Lorimer – The Somerset Levels is a different situation, and might have had lower levels of partnership working prior to the Super NNR declaration. The Arnside & Silverdale AONB has excellent partnership working already. There is, however, a question to be answered in terms of 'What is the next level for the AONB?' It will be important to ensure that the project achieves this. Jarrold Sneyd raised that there are still things that we've talked about making happen but do not have the framework at present for that. Some of the other declared Super NNR sites have only recently declared but they are already seeing some of the benefits. We will have to create the structures to ensure the benefits are maximised.

Julian Oston – Lancaster university could be a partner to support the research and monitoring aspects. Glen Swainson responded that NE Gait Barrows currently has partnerships with several universities, who visit the NNR. NNRs have a role as an outdoor classroom. Caroline Howard raised that a co-ordinated research project list to offer to universities would be more efficient and could manage relationships in the long term better.

Councillor Steve Porter - The reserves on the Somerset Levels looked very isolated, the Arnside & Silverdale AONB could have a much better connectivity than was shown

in the maps of the Levels. The AONB could have wildlife corridors and make space for wildlife in a wider range of habitats.

Councillor Steve Porter asked for a definition 'landscape scale'. Lucy Barron stated that from the AONB partnership perspective it's across the landscape not site by site – considering the mosaic of landscapes.

10. AONB Management Plan Review (LB)

10.1 The AONB Management Plan is due for upcoming review. Defra have suggested that AONBs delay the review process by a year whilst changes are implemented at a national level. Local Councils would need to agree to extend the adoption of the management plan for another year.

10.2 The committee discussed this:

Laura Partington suggested it would be worthwhile undertaking a light review.

Ann Kitchen stated that the delay would allow the new local authority (replacing Cumbria County Council and SLDC) to establish before the review is necessary, which would be beneficial. It would also provide additional time to work on the Super NNR and incorporate this into the updated Management Plan.

Councillor Pete McSweeney asked if there is a there a case for looking to align the reissue of the management plan at the same time as the reissue of the DPD, which would be due for review in 2024. It would, however, be important to be clear that they are two different documents: the DPD is a planning policy document and the Management Plan is an area-based plan setting a vision for the whole landscape and considering wider issues.

There was broad agreement from the Executive Committee to postpone, dependent on discussion with the local authorities.

10.3 Following the publication of the Landscapes Review in 2019 there is a proposal to rename AONBs as National Landscapes which is now in progress at a national level. The National Association for AONBs, with the AONB network and Defra are going to be leading a rebranding exercise in 2023. The National Association have developed a prospectus to set the scene for National Landscape as a 21st Century designation. At some point there will be a job of work for this committee to do around contributing to this process. Caroline Howard is on the National Rebranding group. The change is not just a renaming exercise – it needs to also be about powers, purposes and resources for AONBs as recommended in the Landscapes Review. As part of this it is possible that AONBs will become a statutory consultee in the planning system. Defra are working on this and the NAAONBs are feeding into the process.

The committee asked if there be a wider consultation around the Landscapes Review proposals and for the timescale. The Landscapes Review and concurrent works have been delayed which will push back development, but 18 months to 2 years is a likely timescale, and information will be fed through to the Executive Committee throughout this process.

11. Partner Updates

Julian Oston, Dallam Estate – There have been significant issues recently with rural crime and trespass, including fly tipping, poaching, and livestock worrying. The head of the Neighbourhood Watch in Cumbria is setting up a scheme similar to pubwatch for land managers. This would prevent people from accessing land which they have been

banned from. There are flyers available and the AONB Partnership team agreed to get in touch to find out more.

ACTION: LB to contact new Rural 'watch' scheme.

Jarrold Sneyd, RSPB – On the 25th October at 10am – 4pm there will be drop in sessions to answer key questions or give views on nature. This is part of the People's Plan for Nature: People's Assembly. The RSPB are asking people to share what they think about nature.

Ann Kitchen, Bittern Countryside Community Interest Company – The BCCIC very pleased to be working with local schools on the Bittern Sustainable Schools Programme.

Councillor Steve Porter, Arnside Parish Council – The wildflower verges project is going well. Local schoolchildren are going out later in the week to plant seeds and plugs.

Councillor Pete McSweeney, Cumbria County Council – Recent feedback from residents is that there are not enough streetlights, there have been issues with antisocial cycling, and there is not enough parking.

Laura Partington, Friends of the Lake District - FLD have appointed a new CEO, Michael Hill who will be starting in April.

Fiona Allan, Landscape Trust – The Trust continues as usual, with a Jacobs Join and lecture evening upcoming. The Trust are still trying to get the business plan agreed. The Trust have been offered some money informally to have a little observatory on Coldwell Bank. They recently had events at night at Coldwell Bank and it's a spectacular dark sky. The Trust are looking to use the reserves more for the benefit of members and the general public.

Elliott Lorimer, Lancashire County Council – Lancashire County Council has submitted an expression of interest for an investment zone, but we do not have details as to how these might affect the AONBs.

Lucy Barron confirmed that both Cumbria and Lancashire County Councils have put in an expression of interest for the new Investment Zones. The Cumbria proposals do not impact Arnside & Silverdale AONB as yet, but we have yet to have confirmation of the Lancashire Zones. The guidance around investment zones released by the government doesn't exclude AONBs from being included in investment zone areas, which could have a significant impact on planning. The NAAONB are having discussions with the government around these issues. The AONB Partnership are aware that this is a potential issue but need to know more to come to a position on it.

Councillor June Greenwell, Lancaster City Council – June Greenwell asked for a letter of support for an investment through the Rural Prosperity Fund which would support the AONB Management Plan. Lucy Barron responded that more information is needed to confirm there are no conflicts of interest. There is also a Shared Prosperity Fund which might offer other opportunities.

Glen Swainson, Natural England – Dormouse box checks over the last few days have found 92 dormice – a substantial increase on the 15 released.

12. Any Other Business

12.1 An e-mail from Keep the Ban was read to the committee (as requested by them) and discussed.

It was agreed that when the Management Plan Review occurs in 2024 issues can be raised by the public or other stakeholders and there would be opportunities for this to be raised for review at this point. The other requests made are not within the remit of the AONB Partnership, and should be referred to relevant national bodies.

Table of Actions

Action	Assigned	Deadline
Forward business representative advert to HC to share via SLDC	CH	ASAP
Liaise with RW and Cllr PM regarding CCC contribution	CH	ASAP
Invite Jack Ellerby from FLD to deliver a <i>Talking the Landscape</i> event	CH	Next Meeting
Arrange meeting with RSPB Events Co-ordinator	CH	End 2022
Contact new Rural 'watch' scheme.	LB	Next Meeting

Dates of Next Meeting:

17th May 2023, 2pm

18th October 2023, 2pm