

Arnside & Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership

Executive Committee meeting

**2pm, 1st November 2023
Storth Village Hall**



In Attendance

Cllr Brian Meakin (Chair), Beetham Parish Council
Cllr Helen Chaffey (Vice-Chair), Westmorland & Furness Council
Cllr Angela Metcalfe, Yealand Conyers Parish Council
Cllr Steve Porter, Arnside Parish Council
Cllr Kevin Briggs, Warton Parish Council
Cllr Sue Tyldesley, Lancaster City Council
Cllr Keith Reed, Silverdale Parish Council
Sam Stalker, National Trust
Mike Warren, Landscape Trust
Jarrod Sneyd, RSPB Leighton Moss
Laura Partington, Friends of the Lake District
Simon Waller, CLA
Brian Jones, Ramblers – User Group Rep
Bridget Pickthall, Bridleways Association – User Group Rep
Ann Kitchen, BCCIC – Business Rep
Julian Oston, Dallam Tower Estate – Landowner Rep

Rachel Whaley, Westmorland & Furness Council – Officer Rep

Lucy Barron, AONB Manager, AONB Partnership Team
Caroline Howard, Funding & Communications Officer (mins), AONB Partnership Team
Dougie Watson, Countryside Officer, AONB Partnership Team

Apologies

Jim Turner, Natural England
Dan Taylor, National Trust
Fiona Allan, Landscape Trust
Liz Cheslett-Davey, Environment Agency
Ailsa Gibson, Bridleways Association – User Group Rep
Gemma Wren, Nature's Gems – Business Rep
Adam Briggs – NFU Rep (alternate) / Farming in Protected Landscapes Local Assessment Panel Chair

Richard Camp, Lancaster City Council – Officer Rep
Elliott Lorimer, Lancashire County Council – Officer Rep

Sue Hunter, AONB Officer, AONB Partnership Team
Helen Rawlinson, Countryside Officer, AONB Partnership Team
Richard Park, Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer, AONB Partnership Team
Tonia Armer, Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer, AONB Partnership Team
Belinda Barclay, Local Nature Reserves Warden, AONB Partnership Team

Not in Attendance

Cllr Philippa Williamson, Lancashire County Council
Cllr Mike Macklin, Yealand Redmayne Parish Council
Sarah Wilson, Natural England
David Harpley, Cumbria Wildlife Trust
NFU Rep – Joan Jackson

Minutes

1. Welcome, apologies and introductions

Cllr Brian Meakin opened the meeting, and attendees introduced themselves.

2. Annual re-endorsement of User Groups, Business and Farming representatives and election of Chair and Vice Chairs

Cllr Brian Meakin asked the committee to endorse/re-endorse the following user group, business and farming representatives:

- User Group Rep – Brian Jones, Ramblers
- User Group Rep – Bridget Pickthall, Bridleways Association
- Business Rep – Ann Kitchen, BCCIC
- Business Rep – Gemma Wren, Nature's Gems
- Farming Rep – Julian Oston, Dallam Tower Estate

All user group, business and farming representatives were unanimously endorsed.

Brian Meakin handed over to Lucy Barron, who asked the committee to elect a Chair and Vice Chair.

Cllr Brian Meakin was re-elected as Chairperson.

Cllr Helen Chaffey was re-elected as Vice-Chairperson.

Proposed by Ann Kitchen

Seconded Julian Oston

3. Minutes of meeting held on 7th June 2023

No comments on the minutes. Minutes were accepted as a true record.

Brian Jones asked if there were any update on the planning application for a development of flats at Sandside. At present it appears to still be under consideration by the planning department at Westmorland & Furness Council.

4. Matters arising

There was one outstanding action from the minutes of the last meeting – Lucy Barron was actioned to organise a meeting to discuss coordination of biological recording in the area. This hasn't happened yet, but it is planned, and will link with the Nature Recovery Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategy work.

ACTION: Lucy Barron will progress organisation of the meeting before March 2024.

5. AONB Partnership team work programme - presentation and update (report circulated)

Lucy Barron gave a short presentation summarising work which has been undertaken by the AONB team over the last 6 months.

Ann Kitchen highlighted the work of the AONB team with schoolchildren; particularly the new Woodland Oasis development at Trowbarrow.

The Removing Barriers backpacks were discussed – Sam Stalker and Laura Partington were interested in the concept and Caroline Howard suggested that some training on supporting people with diverse access needs could be provided for organisations based in the AONB, potentially linked to the AONB rebrand.

6. AONB Budget 2022/23 Final Outturn and 2023/24 Mid-Year Report (report circulated)

Caroline Howard gave a summary of the report.

Julian Oston asked about the staffing of the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme following the uplift in funding, which is being partially used to cover a new part time staff member currently being recruited. Lucy Barron clarified that the new staff member will be carrying out admin/service support activities.

7. Planning work programme update (report circulated)

Cllr Keith Reed asked about the Planning Protocol, which sets out how the AONB Partnership deals with planning matters. Lucy Barron will circulate a copy of the latest version of the Planning Protocol. Brian Jones stated that Silverdale Parish Council and the Ramblers have responded to a consultation by Lancashire County Council to the proposed closure of a footpath and pedestrian rail crossing at Waterslack. Lucy Barron confirmed that the AONB team had also responded.

ACTION: Lucy Barron will circulate a copy of the Planning Protocol.

8. Brief updates from partners

Friends of the Lake District – Laura Partington

The Good Lighting Technical Advice Note, which will cover the whole of the AONB, is being launched. This will provide guidance for new developments on suitable lighting schemes to minimise light pollution and protect Dark Skies. A platinum award was achieved at the Build Back Better Awards. Friends of the Lake District have been contributing to the Destination Management Plan from Cumbria Tourism. Has the AONB been involved? Lucy Barron confirmed that the AONB team haven't been to the steering group but did undertake an in-depth interview with the organisation doing the consultation.

ACTION: Lucy Barron will follow up on progress on the DMP.

RSPB Leighton Moss – Jarrod Sneyd

The RSPB have seen a considerable improvement in financial success at Leighton Moss post-covid, largely due to the café. This year there were 9 booming male bitterns across reserve, and 30-40 avocet chicks fledged. The RSPB will be replacing Lower Hide in 2024. The Evolving Leighton Moss project is looking at a sensitive redevelopment of the visitor centre and is making steady progress.

National Trust – Sam Stalker

A Tramper accessible route has been implemented at Eaves Wood and new welcome signs will be installed shortly. There have been some significant developments around Barrow in Furness which have taken a lot of time. Sizergh have a new 1 ½ km accessible trail. There are new tenants at Sizergh, and the team have been working on new Countryside Stewardship scheme and have started carbon auditing for some new tenants. Sizergh has had strong visitor numbers this year, bucking the national trend. The National Trust team have been working with partners on events.

Bittern Countryside Community Interest Company – Ann Kitchen

The Bittern Sustainable Schools Programme has been a focus, and the BCCIC are hoping to continue it and build on this year's success. The project has worked with all the schools in the AONB to carry out a variety of activities related to climate and nature, including moth workshops, installation of solar panels and LED lighting.

The botanical recording project has now identified 58 rare or threatened plants with 12 volunteers recording – this year there have been recorded sightings of 52 of the target species. Some species are doing better than anticipated, other species seemed badly affected by the droughts. The project now has a good baseline, and the next phase will involve rationalising historic data from the area, considering records from 1968 onwards.

Dallam Tower Estate – Julian Oston

Water quality assessments have been recently undertaken on the estate, and more farmers are looking into Countryside Stewardship and regenerative agriculture.

Warton Parish Council – Cllr Kevin Briggs

The parish council have been looking at flooding issues especially those relating to Warton Mires. Some effort has also been spent on Warton's small quarry – climbers have not been seeking permission and there have been some impacts by local businesses. Plug plants from the AONB are being planted out on some roadside verges as part of the Bee on the Verge project.

Jarrold Sneyd updated on RSPB involvement in the flood mitigation elements of the original Warton Mires proposal. The proposal was to install a large bund for flood mitigation however this saw escalating costs and the cost/benefit became uneven, therefore RSPB have withdrawn from this part of the project. The information and research are available to other organisations, and RSPB efforts will now focus on Countryside Stewardship and habitat improvements for Lapwing.

Landscape Trust – Mike Warren

The Landscape Trust reserves are doing well, and the Landscape Trust is in good heart. Bob Pickup has stood down this year as a trustee; the reserves management group has now taken over the work of managing the reserves. There are some succession planning issues for the trustee officers and there may be some new vacancies soon. The collaboration with the AONB team on events has been working well. The Landscape Trust Calendar 2024 is now available to buy via the website or at the AONB Office.

Silverdale Parish Council – Cllr Keith Reed

Rural Prosperity Fund grant gained for the redevelopment of the village toilets by the Parish Council. The transport and access working group is seeking to come forward with proposals to better manage

parking provision and traffic in the village. There is also a working group looking at net zero / carbon. Looking to deliver a zero carbon fair in 2024.

Ramblers – Brian Jones

The Ramblers have been checking additional footpaths around the AONB – this typically focuses outside the AONB as the footpaths in the AONB are generally well maintained. The England Coastal Path is progressing with the route now confirmed between Silverdale and Cleveleys. The Ramblers have been disappointed that many of their suggestions on this have not been taken up.

Arnside Parish Council – Cllr Steve Porter

It's now 2 years since the start of the verges project. Cumbria Wildlife Trust have assisted, including with the Planting for Pollinators project. Some apple trees have been planted at Beachwood to replace trees lost during Storm Arwen. Thanks to the AONB for providing some deer proof tree guards! The Parish Council have also been carrying out a survey on affordable housing in Arnside. There is a resident-initiated zero carbon group, which has invited the Parish Council to become involved. The Parish Council is holding an event to encourage Gardening for Wildlife in the village; there is some AONB participation in this. The first event will be 17th January – there will be drinks and nibbles.

Beetham Parish Council – Cllr Brian Meakin

The wildflower verge in Beetham parish has been developing well. It has seen some resistance from locals, who have needed reassurance it will be worthwhile once biodiversity recovers! Ash dieback has been an issue in the parish – Silverdale Woodbank have done an excellent job of tidying the debris from felling. Responding to the planning application for a large development at Sandside has taken a substantial amount of time.

9. AONB Management Plan review 2024 (report circulated) Decision required

The responsible Local Authorities are required to develop a joint management plan for the AONB. It is not a plan for the AONB Partnership team, rather a joint plan for the area and how it can be conserved and enhanced and must be developed in consultation with the local community. It is a requirement to review the AONB management plan every 5 years. The AONB team carry out this process on behalf the responsible local authorities and other partners. The current review has been delayed by a year as we were asked to do so by Defra, but the review needs to be carried out in 2024. The new Management Plan will cover the period from 2025 – 2030.

A draft of the project plan has been included in the report. The AONB Partnership team recommend that a working group be formed to support the review.

Natural England are in the process of preparing updated guidance on the review of management plans. The review process will need to start before the final version of the guidance is available, however a draft copy of the guidance has been circulated (not yet publicly available). It is proposed that the review is started using the draft guidance, amending the approach as necessary once the final document is available.

Defra's outcomes and monitoring framework for protected landscapes is also expected shortly – this will give a strong steer for the information which needs to be included. It is hoped that much of those data will be provided centrally. The timing of the release of this might impact the project plan timeline.

Conducting a management plan review takes time - the input and support of partners is essential to making it a success. The AONB Partnership Team appreciate the co-operation of all partners during the process:

Phase 1: Scoping and preparing for the review

Phase 2: undertaking the review

Phase 3: publishing and adopting the AONB Management Plan 2025-30

Cllr Helen Chaffey asked what will the public involvement be in this?

Lucy Barron responded that there will be one principal opportunity for a formal public consultation on the new plan for a 6 week period. There will also be some informal consultations earlier in the process. Documents like the special qualities report are also available for feedback.

Ann Kitchen asked if there are stages to look back at what's happened up to now, and then looking forward to 2025-30? The consultation will be once the new plan document is drafted? Lucy Barron responded that that was broadly correct. This process will consider factors which have changed over the past 5 years, such as key policy changes.

Sam Stalker asked will there be any changes in the remit of a National Landscape rather than an AONB? Lucy Barron responded that there may be, but we don't know what those will be as yet. At present the purpose of the designation has not changed but there are conversations at a national level to review this. Defra are gradually making a number of changes that were originally recommended through the National Landscapes Review, however this has been gradual.

Rachel Whaley asked about the status of the year delay – Lucy Barron confirmed that the process has already been delayed by a year at Defra's suggestion.

Keith Reed stated that the stages are similar to a local plan review, but the timescales are significantly shorter, and asked if the timescale is achievable? Lucy Barron stated that the timescales are ambitious, however have been achieved in the past. Subject to the publication of the aforementioned documents the AONB Partnership Team are confident the Management Plan can be delivered in the timeframe. Publication had a slippage of 2 months last time.

Keith Reed asked, given the rolling back of legislation from the EU, are we sure all requirements still apply? Lucy Barron responded that it is not confirmed at present, but that the team will start the process and will follow the national guidance once it is published.

Lucy Barron asked for volunteers for the review working group – meetings will be scheduled every ~3 months.

The following individuals volunteered:

Cllr Brian Meakin
Cllr Helen Chaffey
Cllr Sue Tyldesley
Cllr Keith Reed
Laura Partington
Brian Jones

Brian Jones asked when the AONB Development Plan Document (DPD) will be reviewed (emphasising the importance of the document)?

Lucy Barron stated that there are no plans to imminently review the AONB DPD but at some point, this will need to be done. The Local Authorities will make that decision.

It was recommended that:

1. The AONB Partnership team conduct the review on behalf of the local authorities.
2. The Executive Committee approve the draft project plan.
3. A Review Working Group is established to support the process.

All recommendations were unanimously approved.

10. National Landscape rebrand (presentation circulated)

The new Arnside & Silverdale National Landscape logo was shared and the national rebrand was discussed. The Rebrand will launch on the 22nd November 2023. A Destination Management Organisations (DMO) and Partners pack is being produced by the NAAONB; this will be circulated once available.

11. National update – activities of National Association for AONBs, forthcoming legislative changes (amendment to Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill) and Protected Landscapes Partnership.

Following the National Landscapes Review in 2019 there has been discussion on the role and management of AONBs and National Parks. A briefing note has been circulated regarding amendments to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, which will strengthen the role of AONB Management Plans. The wording around the responsibilities of relevant bodies to 'have regard to' the AONB designation in their decision making will become to 'further the purpose' of AONB designation.

A discussion around determining a new funding formula for National Landscapes is being progressed by Defra. Factors such as area size, population, numbers of Local Authorities etc. were originally used for the funding formula but this was approximately 30 years ago. However, this will be subject to the spending review next year. The NAAONB are being very positive about that process and are hoping that it will be a positive outcome for AONB teams.

Another key change at a national level is the establishment of a Protected Landscapes partnership – this was based on the recommendation in the National Landscapes Review to have a National Landscapes Service. The Protected Landscapes partnership is Natural England, Defra, National Trails, National Parks England, and the NAAONB. The NAAONB are hoping outcomes will include more funding opportunities, central staff support and national coherence in terms of schemes of work and opportunities.

Laura Partington asked will there be a role for the Protected Landscape partnership on management plans? Lucy Barron responded not in terms of local priorities, but potentially with regard to common national issues/guidance.

Julian Oston asked how the original funding formula was developed – was it based on the number of council tax payers? In the new formula will visitor density be considered? Lucy Barron did not have exact details about the original funding formula; it was some considerable time ago and the situation has changed considerably since then. With any new formula other factors, such as visitor numbers, may be considered but this is still to be determined by Defra.

Brian Jones asked if there is a policy that National Landscapes are less for access and engagement than National Park / National Trails? Lucy Barron responded that the purpose of National Landscapes is not currently being changed but that these are issues being discussed nationally. However, at a local level here we see access and engagement as an essential part of how we help manage the AONB, within current resourcing levels.

12. Bittern Award 2023

Nominations are requested for the 2023 Bittern Award. The Bittern Award is presented each year to an individual or organisation who have made an outstanding contribution to the AONB. The opportunity to put forward nominations will open shortly. The deadline will be in December. Caroline Howard suggested a youth award.

13. Any Other Business

Ann Kitchen highlighted that the BOOM programme is closing but the project has done a considerable amount of positive work in the area including the hazel dormouse reintroduction, green-winged orchid and spiked speedwell population reinforcement.

Ann Kitchen raised that Bank Well at Silverdale needs some work. Dougie Watson confirmed that the AONB Partnership Team and Silverdale Parish Council are aware of this.

14. Dates for your diary and dates of future meetings

AONB Executive Committee Meetings 2024:

22nd May 2024

31st October 2024

Upcoming Events:

9th November – Talking the Landscape: The Geological Story of the AONB

18th November – Hedgelaying training (joint with Lancashire & Westmorland Hedge Laying Association)

Table of Actions

Action	Allocated to	Deadline
Organise meeting re: coordination of biological recording	Lucy Barron	Mar 24
Circulate copy of the Planning Protocol	Lucy Barron	Nov 23
Follow up on progress on the Destination Management Plan.	Lucy Barron	Next Meeting