

Howardian Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Annual Report 2007/08

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

I have great pleasure in welcoming you to the 2007/08 Review of the work of the AONB Joint Advisory Committee.

It has been another good year of endeavour, with the Partnership working hard to implement the Objectives of the AONB Management Plan. We again completed a substantial amount of work on our primary aim – conserving and enhancing the AONB landscape, despite the now perennial problem of accessing funds for practical project work from Natural England. The Sustainable Development Fund also continued to attract high quality applications, with nearly £62,000 being allocated to projects.

In the Foreword to our 2006/07 Review, my predecessor William Worsley highlighted the on-going budget issues at Defra and the potential impact on land management within the AONB. It is heartening to see that approximately 60% of the land in the AONB is now covered by Entry Level Stewardship agreements, although Higher Level Stewardship agreements are still sparse. A year ago there was hope that returns from agriculture and forestry were slowly improving, on the back of increased demand for biofuels and woodfuel. But we certainly didn't foresee the rapid rise in wheat prices (albeit dented by similar increases in the price of fuel and fertiliser), nor the almost overnight 'demonisation' of biofuels. The debate over whether arable crops should be used for food or biofuel will no doubt continue to rage, but the demand for woodland products to fuel electricity and heat generation is already leading to increased levels of woodland management. With such an apparent upswing in the land management industry, it is opportune that the AONB Management Plan will undergo its first 5-year review during 2008. As always, the AONB Committee will continue to work with our farmers, landowners and local communities, to ensure that these new factors help build a sustainable AONB for future generations.



Cllr Robert Wainwright
Chairman, Joint Advisory Committee

ADMINISTRATION

Local Authorities are responsible for the management arrangements within the AONB, which falls within the County of North Yorkshire and the Districts of Ryedale and Hambleton. AONB policy and programmes of work are overseen by a Joint Advisory Committee (JAC), supported by Officer groups. The Core Funders Group consists of representatives of the 4 main funding bodies (see Financial Statement). The AONB Partnership Group takes in a wider range of organisations and interests and helps with developing ideas/projects.

The Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)

During 2007/08, the members of the JAC were as follows:

North Yorkshire County Council –

Cllrs Caroline Patmore & Clare Wood

Ryedale District Council –

Cllrs Robert Wainwright & Jim Bailey

Hambleton District Council –

Cllrs Percy Featherstone & Christine Cookman

Natural England – Sara Schultz & Justine Clark

Parish Councils (Ryedale) – Ian Reid

Parish Councils (Hambleton) – Dr Tony Cowan

Country Land and Business Association – William Worsley

National Farmers Union – Stephen Prest & Ken Harrison

Ramblers Association – Dr Geoff Eastwood

Forestry Commission – Mick Hoban

The JAC met twice in 2007/08:

2nd November 2007: Oswaldkirk Village Hall. Robert Wainwright was elected as the new JAC Chairman, with Clare Wood as the new Vice-Chairman. Members also discussed the proposed 2008/09 JAC budget and the programme for the forthcoming review of the AONB Management Plan. The procedure for commenting on planning applications was also rigorously examined and updated.

3rd April 2008: Hovingham Village Hall. Members discussed the work achieved in 2007/08 and approved the Business Plan and Action Programme for 2008/09. They also discussed the progress made on the Management Plan review and a forthcoming series of community events encouraging the preparation of Parish Plans.

The JAC carried out its tour of works completed in 2006/07 on 13th July 2007, visiting projects in the Ryedale area of the AONB.

Officer Steering Groups

The Core Funders Group convened on its regular quarterly cycle, whilst the AONB Partnership Group met in early April 2008 to review progress made with implementing the Objectives of the AONB Management Plan over the last year. This meeting was held in the evening and Parish Council representatives were also invited.

The AONB Unit

In 2007/08 the Unit comprised:

AONB Officer Paul Jackson
 Assistant AONB Officer. Liz Bassindale
 AONB Administrative Assistant (18.5 hrs/wk). . . Sue Wright

AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Management Plan is the key document setting out specific objectives for the sustainable management of the Howardian Hills AONB. Engaging in the strategic plans and actions of other organisations is an important role for the AONB Unit.

In 2007/08 AONB staff engaged with the strategies of many organisations, including:

- Hambleton District Council Local Development Framework
- North Yorkshire County Council Minerals and Waste Local Development Framework
- Environmental Stewardship Scheme HLS targeting
- English Heritage Regional Heritage Strategy
- Yorkshire and Humber Regional Biodiversity Strategy
- Post Office Ltd Network Change proposals
- North Yorkshire County Council Local Transport Plan

We also started work on the first 5-year review of the AONB Management Plan.

NATIONAL ACTIVITY

The Howardian Hills AONB is part of the national ‘family’ of 49 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) is an important umbrella body that co-ordinates lobbying on behalf of all AONBs, responds to national consultations and organises training events. Support and participation in NAAONB activities brings many benefits for the Howardian Hills and is important for staff development.

In 2007/08:

- Paul Jackson continued on the Management Board of the NAAONB (being elected Vice-Chairman in January 2008) and attended 5 Board meetings
- As a member of the Management Board, Paul Jackson participated in the Board’s visit to some of the Northern Ireland AONBs in May 2007
- The Chairman and AONB Officer attended a Regional Chairmen’s meeting held in York
- AONB Unit staff attended 2 Northern AONB Group meetings, at the Arnside Silverdale and North Pennines AONBs
- AONB Unit staff attended 5 NAAONB seminars training events, including the NAAONB Conference, and 1 national Communications meeting
- 2 articles were contributed to the NAAONB magazine ‘Outstanding’
- The Northern Group of AONBs produced a 2008 calendar to showcase our landscapes, wildlife, local produce and recreational opportunities

FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2007/08

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Natural England	163,686	Staffing	87,586
North Yorkshire CC	39,750	Office costs	14,665
Ryedale DC	5,383	Partnership running costs	1,459
Hambleton DC	5,800	Publicity	9,491
Heritage Lottery Fund (balance in-hand)	11,878	Management Plan	1,300
Forestry Commission	2,161	Countryside Management	32,145
CAN DO Partnership	2,000	Sustainable Development Fund	68,150
Environment Agency	500	Enjoying the AONB	985
		Discovery Project (HLF)	4,426
<i>Brought forward</i>	<i>16,093</i>	<i>Carried forward</i>	<i>19,592</i>
		<i>Carried forward (HLF)</i>	<i>7,452</i>
	£247,251		£247,251
		(Resources from grant recipients)	149,055
		Total Value of AONB Unit Activity	£396,306

CONSERVING AND ENHANCING NATURAL BEAUTY

This is the primary objective of AONB designation and much time and effort is spent on working towards this aim. The JAC attaches great importance to carrying out work on the ground in the AONB, working in partnership with local farmers, landowners and communities.

Work funded or facilitated by the JAC in 2007/08 included:

- 3.4km of new hedge planting and gapping-up
- Repairs/maintenance to 617m of roadside walls
- Replanting 1.5ha (3.7 acres) of native woodland/plantation at Gilling, to convert to native broadleaves
- 170m of open beck restored at Brandsby
- 43 new individual field/hedgerow trees planted
- 10 black poplar cuttings taken (Winter 2006 cuttings still being grown-on)
- Detailed surveys of 2 SINC's
- Conservation grazing of 6 SINC's or other important sites by Exmoor ponies
- Scrub clearance, fencing and installation of water supply on SINC at Terrington, to allow grazing by Exmoor ponies
- Management of scrub/vegetation on 3 SINC's
- Management works on 43 Special Interest Road Verges
- 15 barn owl boxes installed
- Construction of 20 hedgehog boxes by volunteers, for community areas and local schools
- Scrub clearance from 340m of historic Park Wall
- Restoration of the locations of 2 Estate boundary stones
- Maintenance of the City of Troy turf maze
- Production of 3 information leaflets on the value of hedges, their maintenance and new planting
- Community conservation management of Chestnut Bank, Oswaldkirk

In addition to initiating and grant aiding work itself, the AONB Unit also gives advice to applicants and/or comments on applications submitted to the two main national grant schemes:

- 1 farmer/landowner advised about Entry Level or Higher Level Stewardship
- 1 Farm Environment Plan completed
- 13 English Woodland Grant Scheme application consultations appraised for impact on the AONB; major comments submitted on 2 schemes, minor comments submitted on 7 schemes



Scrub clearance and new fencing prior to grazing by Exmoor ponies, Littledale SINC, Terrington

Planning Issues

The Joint Advisory Committee is consulted by the Local Planning Authorities on major developments in the AONB, in line with an agreed protocol. The AONB Officer also monitors the Weekly List of planning applications and calls-up details of any smaller schemes which might potentially have an impact on the AONB. Consultation responses are dealt with by the AONB Officer, in consultation with the JAC and Chairman for more contentious proposals.

Larger applications examined in 2007/08 included the erection of a goat rearing shed at Scackleton; new agricultural buildings at Scackleton, Coulton and Yearsley; the creation of a new farm access track at Crayke and the erection of buildings associated with a new alpaca rearing enterprise at Hushwaite. More applications were scrutinised than in the previous financial year, with a number of the above cases requiring a significant input of time.

During 2007/08:

- 148 applications were determined by the Local Planning Authorities. 84% of these were approved
- 41 of the applications were scrutinised in detail by the AONB Officer
- Comments were submitted on 15 schemes, where a conflict with AONB Objectives was identified, improvements could be made or support was given
- Objections or Strong Reservations were lodged in 8 of those responses; the District or County Council followed the JAC's recommendation of refusal, or the applicants submitted more acceptable proposals, in all of the 6 cases where a decision was required (1 application withdrawn, 1 decision still pending)
- 7 consultations on other development (primarily within roads or verges) were also scrutinised, although we know that a change in procedures resulted in 5 schemes being missed (no impacts identified retrospectively)

SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION

2007/08 was the fourth year of our AONB Discovery Project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is a 5-year programme of educational work with local primary schools. Each year 6 schools spend a day learning about the AONB, both in the classroom and out on-site. A Junior Ranger Club in the school holidays shows children features of the natural world and local culture that can be found all around them. 10 Ranger Club sessions were held, half of them in the May school half-term and the other half during the October half-term.

In 2007/08 the programme consisted of:

Discovery Days

- Terrington Hall – 25 pupils
- Slingsby – 21 pupils
- Husthwaite – 23 pupils
- Ampleforth St Benedict's – 30 pupils
- Foston – 18 pupils
- Welburn – 18 pupils

Junior Ranger Club (Spring)

- Behind the Scenes (Nunnington Hall) – 23 children
- Rock Solid – 21 children
- High Flying (weather) – 16 children
- Brilliant Bugs – 24 children
- The Dragon's Tale (Nunnington) – 16 children

Junior Ranger Club (Autumn)

- Take it or Leaf it – 20 children
- Wigloo and Willowcraft – 30 children
- Smelly feet (biodiversity) – 14 children
- Howardian Halloween – 26 children
- Howardian Harvest – 20 children

PUBLICITY

Stories achieving coverage in print in 2007/08 included major planning applications in the AONB, the launch of the Local Information and Walks leaflet based on Welburn village, SDF projects and the Junior Ranger Club.



Junior Ranger Club day at Nunnington Hall, re-creating the legend of the Nunnington Worm

In 2007/08 we:

- Maintained the 14 AONB Gateway Signs
- Obtained at least 24 known press mentions for projects/AONB, equivalent to at least £10,800 of advertising space
- Used the AONB display boards at 3 consultations/ events
- Maintained stocks of the AONB general information leaflet at Tourist Information Centres and other outlets
- Published and distributed our annual Newsletter (AONB News) in January/February 2008 (delayed from October 2007 by the postal strikes)
- Published and distributed our 2006/07 Annual Report in July 2007
- Developed the new AONB website, which received nearly 72,000 visits during 2007/08 (44,000 more than the old site in 06/07)
- Would have attended the Ryedale Show, but it was cancelled due to waterlogged ground

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Sustainable Development Fund was again available in 2007/08. £61,850 was distributed to projects in the Howardian Hills, assisting a variety of schemes addressing environmental, social and economic objectives. This is an important grant fund, which allows us to support a wide range of projects that benefit the AONB and its communities, complementing the work we carry out on improvements to the natural beauty of the AONB landscape.

In 2007/08 the Sustainable Development Fund assisted:

- A biomass development service. (Joint project with North York Moors National Park & Ryedale District Council)
- A dry-stone walling course
- A cardboard and paper re-cycling service for businesses in the AONB, together with furniture and white goods re-cycling for residents. Run by Basics Plus - a centre for students of all ages with learning disabilities. (Joint project with North York Moors National Park)
- A fish passage study on the new Archimedes Screw turbines at Howsham Mill
- The launching of the Global to Local Connection Scheme in 1 Secondary school and 10 Primary schools in or close to the AONB
- The surveying and production of management plans for all 29 churchyards in the AONB
- The creation of a composting educational facility at the Castle Howard Arboretum
- The production of a Local Produce Guide. (Joint project with North York Moors National Park)

- The provision of mowers and equipment to Basics Plus, to enable expansion of their vegetation management service. (Joint project with North York Moors National Park)
- A hedge-laying course
- Interpretation panels for the new Archimedes Screw turbines at Howsham Mill
- A transport van/mobile display unit for the Yorkshire Exmoor Pony Trust, to assist with their conservation grazing scheme
- The restoration of 5 traditional direction signs
- The production of a Flora of the North York Moors and Howardian Hills. (Joint project with North York Moors National Park)
- The production of 3 Whole Farm Energy & Carbon audits

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The AONB Management Plan is delivered via the policies and actions of many partner organisations, but we also make use of a number of sources of specialist help and assistance.

In 2007/08:

- We continued to contract the North York Moors National Park to help deliver our Sustainable Development Fund
- The Native Woodland Development Officer continued to work across the National Park and AONB areas
- We continued our active involvement in the CAN DO partnership, including the bid for major HLF funding
- Volunteers helped us with 6 projects or tasks, equating to over 70 person/days of assistance

ENJOYING THE AONB

The Public Rights of Way network continues to be managed to a high standard, although minor improvement works have continued over the whole network. More complex path routing issues continue to be resolved at a gradual rate, depending on their complexity, whilst volunteers are now making a significant contribution to path condition surveying.

In 2007/08:

- New fingerpost signs, gates and bridges were installed at various locations throughout the AONB, continuing the improvement programme
- A Local Information and Walks leaflet was published for Welburn
- 4 guided walks were organised
- Condition surveying of 131 routes (110km) of Rights of Way was carried out by volunteers
- Litter was removed from at least 12 sites in the AONB, on a regular basis throughout the summer



Bat walk, Castle Howard

HOWARDIAN HILLS AONB FACT FILE

- The Howardian Hills covers 204 sq. km (79 sq. miles)
- The area was confirmed as an AONB in 1987
- About 6,500 people live in the area
- Over 15% of the area is wooded



AONB CONTACTS

AONB Manager

Paul Jackson
paul.jackson@northyorks.gov.uk

AONB Officer

Liz Bassindale
liz.bassindale@northyorks.gov.uk

AONB Assistant

(currently vacant)

The Mews, Wath Court
Hovingham, York
YO62 4NN

Telephone 0845 034 9495
info@howardianhills.org.uk
www.howardianhills.org.uk

Photos: AONB Unit

