



Dorset

Area of Outstanding
Natural Beauty

Dorset AONB Partnership
Hosted by Dorset Council
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Dorset AONB Partnership Board Meeting, 10.00am, Tues. 23rd November 2021

Virtual (by Zoom)

Draft minutes

Organisation	Representative	Status	2021-11
Independent chairman	Dr Phil Sterling	Voting member	Present
Council for the Protection of Rural	Dr Guy Dickinson	Voting member	Present
Country Land and Business	Will Bond	Voting member	Present
Dorset Association of Parish & Town	Cllr Peter Bowyer	Voting member	Present
Dorset Association of Parish & Town	Cllr Chris Turner	Voting member	
Dorset Council	Cllr Ray Bryan	Voting member	Apologies
Dorset Council	Cllr Jane Somper	Voting member	Apologies
Dorset Council	Cllr Roland Tarr	Voting member	Present
Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership	Luke Rake	Voting member	Apologies
Dorset Local Nature Partnership	Will Bond	Voting member	Present
Dorset Natural History &	Jeremy Pope OBE DL	Voting member	Apologies
Environment Agency	Keith Calder	Voting member	Present
Forestry Commission	Roly Boughton	Voting member	Present
Historic England	Ross Simmonds	Voting member	Apologies
National Farmers' Union	Robert Lasseter	Voting member	
Natural England	Robert Lloyd	Voting member	Present
The National Trust	Hannah Jefferson	Voting member	Present
Dorset Race Equalities Council	Nathalie Sherring	Voting member	Apologies
Jurassic Coast Trust	Lucy Culkin	Attending member	Present
Purbeck Heritage Network	Brian Bleese	Attending member	Present
Dorset Council	Matt Reeks	Supporting Officer	Apologies
Dorset Council	Hilary Jordan	Supporting Officer	
Dorset Local Nature Partnership	Maria Clarke	Supporting Officer	Apologies
Country Land and Business	Elliot Hutt	Supporting Officer	Present
National Farmers' Union	Louise Stratton	Supporting Officer	Present
LAF	Janet Davis	Supporting Officer	Present

DAONB Team: Tom Munro (AONB Manager), Sally King (Visitor, Tourism & Access Manager), Steph Aburrow (Stepping into Nature), Jill Hearing (Reconnecting the Ridgeway Project Officer), Richard Brown (Landscape Planning Officer), Caroline Kelly (Wild Purbeck Project Coordinator), Caroline Richards (Dorset Food & Drink), Sue Dampney (Culture, Communications & Learning Officer), Ian Rees (Countryside Officer), Rachel Janes (FIPL Officer), Emma Russell (FIPL Support Officer), Kate Townsend (Project Support Officer).

Guests: Chris Clark, Nethergill Associates

Welcome, introductions and apologies

Chairman welcomed all to the meeting, with particular welcome to our guest and new board members.

1. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held in May 2021 were agreed as correct. No matters arising.

2. The Agricultural Transition: opportunity or crisis? Presentation by Chris Clark, Nethergill Associates

Link to [PowerPoint here](#) and [live presentation](#)

Chris has been appointed as a consultant to look at the business model of 4 farms in the DAONB (around the Char Valley) as part of the River Char Community Project, to report how they can farm at both maximum profitability and maximum value to nature. Chris explained how his research into around 100 farms nationally has uncovered that the conventional model of farming is failing, and how unlike the traditional business model farmers have been using, his research has found that there is a sweet spot in which farming and nature coincide to their mutual benefit. This symbiotic relationship is explained through the laws of physics (thermodynamics) – you cannot get more out than you put in, in other words the greater the level of substitutes for nature (e.g. fertiliser) the greater the likelihood of becoming a loss-making business. In all farming businesses there is a Maximum Sustainable Output (MSO), a sweet spot at which land and nature are in equilibrium, working best for both farmer and nature.

Comments:

- a. WBond: queries the correctness of the terminology ‘maximum biodiversity’ (perhaps it’s where the nature benefits are being extracted at a renewable rate?); it’s not in line with current re-wilding trend (ultimate bio-diversity objective). Aside from this the whole concept makes sense, particularly to those with some training in agricultural economics. CClark – nature is under stress unless there is an equilibrium (4 laws of thermodynamics, related to farming & nature), any equilibrium must include calculation of energy in the aim to achieve the right balance between farming and nature. We must factor the science into our calculations.
- b. PBwyer: no reference to price? The model considers variable costs as opposed to marginal /extra costs as these are key to profitability. CClark if you analyse MSO you are at the most profitable. Marginal costs only work with a non-linear relationship.
- c. KCalder: current growth model for market economy is not sustainable, regarding MSO nature has adapted to life over the last 4 billion years, nature changed due to evolution, introduce humans and that has an impact on energy flow. We can’t change energy, we can harvest it, but does it equate to maximum biodiversity at the point you are adding in a relationship by farming? I think there may be a cost. I’m not sure if MSO does maximise biodiversity– mother nature does, not necessarily farming so I need to think more about this. Very helpful primer. CClark - Nature decides, it acts in a random way, if we as a society require food it is behoven on us to produce it in a sustainable way, nature has created an equilibrium. In farming changes have been incremental, we have to change the output at any cost approach.
- d. RTarr: How do we persuade people the way forward is as you suggest? We also need to bear in mind public access to the countryside and benefits of this, the footpath network in Dorset is excellent but neglected. CClark – by using business terms and illustrating that this is the way to maximum profitability. There should be a moral obligation on farms to understand fertiliser costs cannot be re-couped at the other end.

PSterling: thanks to Chris for a stimulating presentation into what the future may look like, for inspiring debate, thought provoking and we look forward to receiving your report.

3. Partners’ 90 second updates

- a. JDavis (Local Access Forum): assisting DC with ROW improvement plan. Urge DWT/NT/RSPB etc to speak to LAF about public access to the c-side. Thanks to Cllr Tarr for comments on ROW.
- b. KCalder (Environment Agency): involved in de-commission on Winfrith at a strategic level and where it sits in the Dorset Landscape. In Wessex EA looking at future priorities of which headwaters are a major focus – a pilot catchment strategy for Dorset Stour highlights a clear area of need is

headwaters and similar issue for 4 different catchments so have adopted a Heart of Wessex programme - will be advertising a new position for a Project Manager & working on project funding. Will be working with partners such as NT etc.

- c. WBond (CLA): at a national level industry looking at alternatives to conventional agriculture, eg payments for biodiversity, investment money into biodiversity/ renewables etc as opposed to crop production. In Dorset adapting to change – FIPL, Poole Harbour Nitrate scheme. The industry is in transition. PSterling: lots of change happening within farming, may take years, a good time for entrepreneurs. WBond: even generations for change to be absorbed.
- d. EHutt (CLA): busy with member enquiries on topics such as ELMS, access, planning. Nationally - lobbying net zero, levelling up & agri-transition / ELMS. New president elected.
- e. RLloyd (NE): locally CS agreement lists for start dates 1st Jan and in HLS extension period, need to set up a Dorset Downs & Dales meeting soon – will arrange with TM. Ian Alexander moved onto work on Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Tania Kaplin taking over from him as a Team Leader. Ian will be concentrating on p-ship working. Cattle grids installed for Wild Purbeck grazing project on Hartland Moor/Stoborough Heath, tomorrow farmer cluster meeting at Gorwell farm, look around Valley of Stones etc to get NGOs and farmers together to see what can be done. TMunro: Gorwell Farm cluster supported through FIPL.
- f. HJefferson (NT): winter c-side team busy out and about, recently 4 hillforts taken off heritage at risk register, exciting new acquisition, 25ha Hayden Down nr. Eggardon, includes some SSSI & 2 scheduled ancient monuments at risk.
- g. RTarr (DC): encouraged by Keith’s comments, concerned about source of River Wey & pollution (EA project) and wants to be kept informed, concerned about DAONB Management Plan being ignored in planning applications, some counter to policy and the plan, and would like all organisations/consultees here to state they should be refused categorically if in the AONB. AONB team are doing fantastic work.
- h. LStratton (NFU): In Dorset – focus on transition plan work and resilience events for farmers looking ahead in their businesses, Supporting Poole Harbour Nutrient Management Scheme, increasing information and looking at next steps and a pilot in the new year. Fresh from COP26 a Senior Climate Change advisor is visiting, also building a group of farmers involved in SLI and coordinating a response.
- i. RBoughton (FC): new to role, focus on felling licences and ash die back, lots of site visits and meetings and very happy to be invited to meetings, in particular clusters.
- j. GDickinson (CPRE): AONB continues to be undervalued in planning terms.
- k. PBowyer (DAPTC): Amongst Town & Parish Councils there is a growing concern about the Dorset Local Plan and the no. of houses indicated for allocation in the AONB. It is felt that there is an inadequate approach by DC in its protective role of the AONB, the vast majority of Town and Parish Council want to see AONB designation adhered to and the prevention of development as opposed to mitigation measures. Concerned how bodies are promoting the use of SANGS. This morning’s presentation raised some serious economic issues and would be useful to continue discussion on another occasion. Purbeck Society have a register of non-listed heritage assets, buildings and assets outside of conservation area which could be used by DC & promoted.

4. Delivering the AONB Management Plan

TM presented on AONB team delivery report. Team members updated the board additionally: -

Sue Dampney (Engagement projects)

Recent projects have seen a greater engagement amongst children & young adults, [‘The Council of All Beings’](#) involved 200 children, [‘Beyond the Map’](#) (a Parish Mapping project) reached out to 200 residents & children, an on-line ‘Map’ will be produced in the New Year, at [‘Talking Tent,’](#) held in person at Inside Out Dorset festival at Symondsburry, 350 conversations were generated. Some of these will be published in an online ‘Talking Map’ on the DAONB website in the New Year, when In addition there will be a Social Media promotional campaign about these projects, along with the publication of a new 60 Days Out guide.

Rachel Janes (Farming in Protected Landscapes)

FIPL has received approx. 100 applications to date, 16 of which are now live.

Some examples of projects which have benefitted from the fund so far include:

- £5000 fencing project near Plush to enable sensitive grazing of chalk grassland slopes to protect and encourage a resident population of Marsh Fritillary / Duke of Burgundy butterflies
- £500 to Coppett Hill Farm towards the facilities for a Forest School, to enable Symondsburry Primary School to give all pupils
- £60,000 to a farm near Dorchester to plant 3.6km of hedging and support permissive bridleways between Martinstown and Winterborne Monkton and enabling access from southeast Dorchester to the AONB around Coneygar Hill.

Contact details for the team are on the [AONB website](#) if you would like further information.

Steph Aburrow (Stepping into Nature) – Link to [live presentation](#)

Steph explained how the team are currently working on a new off shoot project – ‘Your Seasons of Stories.’ The concept for this new project is inspired by the ‘Your Seasons...’ books. 500 books have been given out so far, they are full of stories, poems & images to help prompt conversations and stimulate memories of seasons past. In this new project, funded by Arts Council England, they are asking people to create their own Seasons of Stories based on their own reflections of what nature means to them.

They have recruited artists, storytellers, poets and a videographer to co-facilitate the first phase of project which will explore how everyone can be artists in everyday life via a series of 20 workshops, each delivered to different community groups. The culmination of the project will be a new ‘creative resource’ which will be accompanied by 5 ‘might do’ videos.

Copies of this final resource will be available in May 2022.

Comments:

RTarr: Fantastic work by the team – pleased to hear Elliott Hutt’s comments on public access. Excited by the Symondsburry example (cycling facilities etc) and how the rural economy can be developed by public access and the importance of cycling.

IRees: We’ve had 101 enquiries into FIPL, lots about access improvements, it’s an area of interest from the farming community.

RTarr: Could the Ward Councillor be notified or any access enhancement projects. IRees – Yes we will notify them.

5. AONB Business Plan budget headlines 2022-2023 (decision)

TM presented the paper. The proposed budget is based on a flatline settlement. TM explained how the National Association for AONB’s have made a strong case for an increased annual settlement from DEFRA, in light of their spending review announcement last month. PS encouraged board members to think of how increased funds could be used were this to happen.

RESOLUTIONS:

The Board approves the proposed budget and funding priorities for next financial year.

6. Glover review & Government’s response update

TM presented the paper. He explained how the national response to the Glover Review, alongside the publication of a nature Green Paper is expected in mid-December. He will be putting together a response which he will circulate to board members for comment.

RESOLUTIONS:

The board approves constituent bodies of the AONB Partnership engage in the consultation process, informed by a framework issued by the AONB Manager and delegates authority to the AONB Chairman to approve an AONB Partnership response for submission.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Dates of next meetings

	Spring (tbc)	Winter (tbc)
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AONB Steering Group	19 th April 2022	18 th Oct 2022
AONB Partnership Board	26 th May 2022	22 nd Nov 2022

If you wish to have items added to the agenda for the Board, please ensure suggestions are sent to [Tom Munro](#), [Kate Townsend](#) or the [AONB Chairman](#) at least 7 days before the date of the Steering Group meeting which precedes the Board meeting, so they may be considered for timetabling by the that group.