



Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)

**Minutes of the meeting held on
December 8th 2010
Old Wesleyan Chapel, St Mary's**

Present:

Philip Hygate (Chair)
Johann Hicks (Vice Chair)
Marian Bennett
Craig Dryden
Ciaran Gannon
Chris Gregory
Mike Gurr
Nick Lishman
Andrew May
David Mawer
Richard McCarthy
Sangeeta McNair
Paul St Pierre
Matthew Rogers
Jules Webber
Trevor Kirk (AONB Officer)
Rebecca Steggles (AONB Assistant)

1. Apologies

Received from Zoe Julian (Island Tourism), Phil McMahon (English Heritage) and Eleanor Breen (Council of the Isles of Scilly).

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Johann Hicks pointed out that under the *National Association of AONB's (NAAONB)* on page 2 he spoke about the important lessons learnt at the NAAONB National Conference such as the effect of climate change.

Chris Gregory noted that on page 3, the last theme discussed during Matthew Rogers' presentation on the spread of *Phytophthora ramorum* is named 'Sudden Oak Death'.

Matthew Rogers made the following amendment to his Member's Report on page 6:

'That the early warm, dry weather at the start of the summer had helped in the various processes of bulb-lifting and hay production. He also noted the essential role of farmers in maintaining key landscape features such as hedges. If members were wondering why some fields were still covered in polythene this late in the year, it was because of the late Easter and the attempt to delay flowers to catch this market. Finally, Matthew Rogers noted that six Scilly farm tenancies are in the process of applying for entry into the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme (HLS)'.

Minutes of the JAC meeting on September 15th 2010 were confirmed as a true and accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

None

4. Any other items which the Chair considers urgent

None

5. JAC Membership

Mike Gurr was attending his last JAC meeting. Dr Gurr has resigned from the JAC due to other commitments. The Chair thanked Dr Gurr for the expertise that he brought to the AONB Partnership. Dr Gurr responded by commending the AONB Partnership and Unit on its productive and collaborative working environment.

It was noted that Dr Gurr's resignation produces vacant positions also on the Grants Advisory Panel (GAP) and the Planning Consultative Panel (PCP).

JAC expressed a wish to identify new candidates for JAC membership.

Action: nominations for JAC membership to be brought to existing members.

The Chair also noted that Bryce Wilby is not able to continue as JAC representative for the Five Island School (FIS). JAC agreed that Maria Wilby, who works closely with the FIS Green Team, should be invited to join JAC as the FIS/Green team representative.

Action: Chair to invite Maria Wilby to join JAC.

6. Planning Consultative Panel (PCP) Membership

The AONB Officer noted that Nick Lishman has withdrawn from PCP due to the pressures of a busy working life. JAC thanked Nick for his work on PCP.

JAC noted the need for two new PCP members to replace Nick Lishman and Mike Gurr. As most JAC members have an involvement in the planning process, the two land-based sector representatives (Andrew May and Matthew Rogers) are the only eligible candidates.

Action: AONB Officer to discuss PCP membership with Andrew May and Matthew Rogers.

The AONB Officer noted that retaining the long-term viability of PCP is a major challenge. The work is time-consuming and exerts a strain on all PCP members. Members and Officers of the Local Planning Authority have recorded the fact that they find PCP very useful and informative. Therefore, the value of PCP reports is well-established. The challenge is to ensure that the PCP structure and processes are sustainable in the long-term.

Action: AONB Officer to research other AONB Partnerships procedures for planning consultation on the AONB designation, as well as seeking advice from the Chief Planning Officer in Scilly.

7. Planning Consultative Panel Recommendations

PCP reports dated September 2010 were noted by JAC members.

8. Isles of Scilly Seabird Recovery Project (verbal report by Paul St Pierre, RSPB)

Paul St Pierre outlined the importance of seabird conservation, especially in light of the notable decline in seabirds on the Isles of Scilly. The status of seabird populations and the issues surrounding their decline were reviewed. Predation by rats was noted as a major issue affecting seabird populations.

Research into the viability of rat removal in Scilly has been commissioned from Wildlife Management International Limited (WMIL) by Natural England, RSPB and the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust. The research, carried out by Biz Bell (WMIL) and facilitated by the AONB Unit, has involved extensive public consultation on the Islands. The research has also assessed factors that either favour or prevent successful rat removal. WMIL has concluded that rat removal is not viable on St Mary's because of issues surrounding waste management. Stand alone projects for Bryher, Tresco and St Martin's are also deemed to be unviable, not through lack of public support, but because inter-Island connectivity significantly increases the risk of re-colonisation.

Extensive work carried out on St Agnes and Gugh, including stakeholder consultations, face-to face interviews, farm visits and educational sessions, has assessed a raft of issues including risks of re-colonisation, waste management arrangements, rat density and species (brown rat only). WMIL recommends that it is feasible to remove rats from both St Agnes and Gugh.

Assuming that funds are successfully secured, the next steps for a St Agnes/Gugh rat removal project would include the implementation of new farming practises (such as storage of hay and silage and rat-proofing feed), honing waste management arrangements, identification of suitable bait stations in and around private residencies, developing a biosecurity plan by providing wooden bait stations on the quay, checking deliveries for rodent damage and training residents in rat detection and identification.

Paul St Pierre finished the presentation by identifying practical next steps which are; to circulate the report for comments to all stakeholders, provide a factsheet for each Island, identify more partners and secure funding. He noted that nothing will happen on the ground until at least 2012.

The Chair thanked Paul St Pierre for a well-presented and interesting presentation.

The main themes discussed by members were:

- Biz Bell is a very convincing advocate for this project.
- A small number of people surveyed on St Mary's are against rat removal. However, the survey results for St Mary's are significantly different to the off-Islands where support for rat removal is near universal ('dissenters' adding the caveat that they have no objection to rat removal if the majority are in favour).
- The public relations lessons from Lundy are important for Scilly.
- Within 2 years of rat eradication Lundy saw a 200% increase in Manx Shearwater.
- The Seabird Recovery Project is not just about protecting vulnerable seabird species but focuses on ecosystems in the round.
- Paul St Pierre noted the important role of volunteers in detecting re-colonisation.

Paul St Pierre invited JAC members to comment on the WMIL report when it is published.

9. Draft Scoping report on Waymarking and Signposting

December 2010 draft of Red Kite Environment's *Scoping Report on Waymarking and Signposting in the Isles of Scilly AONB* was pre-circulated.

Mike Gurr and Johann Hicks emphasised the diverse needs of different visitor groups e.g. cruise-ship passengers, *Scillonian III* day-trippers, long-term visitors, repeat visitors. JAC concluded that signage and waymarking are not yet proven to be appropriate additions to the Scillonian landscape or, indeed, fit-for-purpose in light of diverse visitor

needs. Other media such as maps, audio and download packages must be given full consideration. The AONB Officer reminded JAC that Red Kite Environment has made this point in the December 2010 draft, as well as in the *Isles of Scilly AONB Interpretation Strategy (2008)*

Craig Dryden noted progressive improvements in the various versions of the waymarking and signposting report. However, he felt that the conclusions and recommendations need developing and formalising. Craig also noted that signage is a planning issue and that signage is already proliferated in some locations (most notable at Higher Town, St Martin's).

Richard McCarthy noted that the Islands do differ one from another. Therefore, each Island might require a slightly different solution or, perhaps, a different emphasis.

Chris Gregory noted that it is difficult for members to individually feed comments directly to Red Kite Environment. Therefore, Chris suggested that a JAC sub-group might be formed to direct the scoping report to a satisfactory conclusion. Membership of the waymarking and signposting sub-group was agreed: Craig Dryden, Chris Gregory, Johann Hicks, Zoe Julian, AONB Officer and Chair of Planning and Development (Councillor Amanda Martin).

Action: AONB Officer to call a meeting of the waymarking and signposting sub-group.

10. Field Boundaries on the Isles of Scilly: a desk-based feasibility study to inform management for conservation.

This AONB commissioned study was pre-circulated for JAC members' information. The study establishes the base-line data on which a successful Isles of Scilly Local Action Group funding application was submitted by the AONB Partnership. Therefore, the legacy of this feasibility study is the LAG and AONB funded project – *Pushing the Boundaries: Unlocking the Potential of Scilly's Stone Walls* – which secured £10,800 LAG grant in October 2010.

Matthew Rogers noted and presented evidence of historic field boundaries dated 1792 (historic map entitled *A Survey of the Scilly Isles*). This evidence, as well as a manuscript dated 1695, represent the earliest documented evidence of Scillonian field boundaries, pre-dating the earliest source in the feasibility study.

JAC thanked Matthew for bringing these important historic sources to its attention.

Mike Gurr noted some of the practical issues that surround boundary management, in particular stones dislodged from walls during hedge trimming (as has recently occurred at Watermill, St Mary's). Matthew Rogers noted that boundary maintenance is a time-consuming operation and that mechanical hedge cutting is the only viable option.

Jules Webber commented on the clear synergies that exist between Environmental Stewardship (ES) and *Pushing the Boundaries* project. For example, ES options include some elements of boundary maintenance. The development of a local skills base (e.g. dry-stone walling) also exists as an identified legacy project of *Pushing the Boundaries* and is embedded in the LAG Local Development Strategy.

11. AONB Officer's Report

The AONB Officer's report briefed JAC members on the business of the Isles of Scilly AONB Unit and Partnership during the period from September to December 2010. In particular reference was made to Section 2 and the AONB Budget. The AONB Officer reminded members that all AONBs have been subject to a 5% 'in-year' reduction in their Natural England grants (2010-2011) and that the Isles of Scilly AONB Partnership is able to proportionally reduce its core and SDF expenditure, without compromising its delivery of the objectives and actions in AONB Management Plan 2010-2014.

From April 2011 AONBs will be directly funded by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). JAC was reminded of the letter from Richard Benyon MP (Minister for the Natural Environment and Fisheries) to the National Association of AONBs (NAAONB) which outlines the new arrangements, including a tri-partite relationship between AONBs, DEFRA and Natural England, as well as an assurance that multi-year funding will be in place. Details of AONB funding 2011-2012 are expected by the end of December 2010.

The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) has an under-spend of £19,000 of surplus funds. Therefore, the Grants Advisory Panel (GAP) wishes to support the following AONB-championed projects:

- *Pushing the Boundaries: Unlocking the Potential of Scilly's Stone Walls* (£7,200)
- Local Food Initiatives (£2,000)
- Bee-Keeping and Bee Breeding (£3,000)
- Promotion of the Scilly Bee (£5,000)
- Protocol on the importation of bark and other wood based products including bark mulch (£1,500).

The AONB Officer reminded JAC that the partnership is co-hosting the NAAONB Conference 2011 with Cornwall and Tamar Valley AONBs. Other AONB initiatives were noted, such as Fixed Point Photography and the publishing of the booklet *Arable Plants of Bulb-Fields and other Arable Fields in the Isles of Scilly* produced in collaboration with Rosemary Parslow.

The Chair noted the need to take action on the importation of wood that might compromise the disease-free status of the Islands.

12. Members Reports

Matthew Rogers reported on the flower industry, with the recent cold weather slowing production. Matthew also thanked Natural England for its work to develop and support Environmental Stewardship in Scilly.

Mike Gurr reported on this year's very successful bat walks. He clarify that 'capping' numbers was carried out through a booking- system at the Tourist Information Centre. Therefore, no-one is turned away on the day, but the Bat Group has the information it needs to best manage its events. Mike also reported the establishment of a Youth Bat Group.

Mike outlined a proposed collaboration between Exeter University and the Isles of Scilly Bat Group on bat movement in the Islands. The project team is seeking funds for radio tracking equipment to monitor patterns of movement within and between the Islands.

As editor of *Wild Scilly* (the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust's article in the Cornwall Wildlife Trust Magazine), Mike encouraged members of JAC to submit potential articles.

Marian Bennett presented an up-date on the Route Partnership, including the challenges that still lie ahead.

As Chair of the Isles of Scilly Bat Group, Marian reported healthy bat populations on Bryher.

Marian intends to display on Bryher the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust grazing maps, thereby informing residents and visitors of the grazing programme.

Andrew May echoed Matthew Rogers' comments on flower production. He also presented an up-date on the *Capacity for Change in Farming on the Isles of Scilly* with publication of the final report expected in early 2011.

Andrew informed JAC that Cornwall Agri-food Council is aware of a number of PhD Students at Cornwall College whose work could be of interest to the AONB.

Chris Gregory reminded JAC that the Duchy of Cornwall's Woodland Management Plan for Scilly should be available in early 2011.

Chris informed JAC that the Isles of Scilly Local Action Group (LAG) has supported a considerable number of projects through its first year of operation and that the Rural Development Agency (RDA) has indicated that future funding is relatively secure. The challenge now facing LAG is to ensure that the remaining funds are invested to good effect in the limited time before the scheme closes in 2014/2015.

On behalf of the Duchy Tenants' Association **Richard McCarthy** informed JAC that the Duchy of Cornwall will soon be in a position to sanction some sub-letting of land. Richard pointed out the potential problems associated with sub-letting but also the potential for reviving unproductive land.

Craig Dryden explained that the Economic Development team has now successfully moved to new offices on the Porthmellon Industrial Estate. Craig outlined ongoing projects such as the Porthcressa Regeneration Scheme, work spaces on St Agnes, and the provision of a new slipway on Porthloo in partnership with the Duchy of Cornwall.

Craig also echoed Chris Gregory's comments on the success of the Local Action Group. Craig also referred to the work of the Economic Development team in partnership with Cornwall Council in securing the successful approval of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership. The department was also working on various strategies which are either in consultation or about to go out for consultation, including the Sustainable Transport Strategy, Climate Change Strategy, Conservation Area Character Appraisal and the Historic Environment Research Framework.

The Tourism service is working with consultants (Blue Sail) on the Isles of Scilly Tourism Destination Management Strategy. Finally, Craig reported that changes to the planning system were expected as part of the emerging localism legislation.

Ciaran Gannon (Natural England South-West Regional Director) informed members that during this, his first visit to Scilly, he wishes to see how Natural England can work with the AONB Partnership to become more responsive to local needs. Ciaran wants to see how partnerships work in Scilly and, if seen to work well, to test if the same formula can be replicated elsewhere.

Jules Webber (Natural England Advisor for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly) gave a brief update on Environmental Stewardship across the Islands including the training and establishment of a new Farming Environment Plan (FEP) agent. Martin Goodey joins a list of Natural England approved FEP agents and is able to offer advice to potential Environmental Stewardship applicants. Jules informed JAC that there are currently six ES applicants who are soon to submit proposals for Higher Level Stewardship and a further six are to be taken forward in 2011. Jules also thanked the Islands farmers for helping Natural England to develop the Special Options for Scilly which include:

- Landscape Management
- Management of rare arable plants within a flower/bulb rotation (which the AONB publication *Arable Plants of bulbfields and other arable fields in the Isles of Scilly* supports)
- Re-introduction of grazing using traditional cattle breeds to deliver environmental benefits.

Jules also informed JAC of the implications of the Comprehensive Spending Review on Higher Level Stewardship (HLS). Start dates for agreements due to begin this financial year have been postponed until 1st April 2011. Natural England will continue work to ensure all Environmental Stewardship Schemes are effectively targeted to secure the greatest environmental outcomes and value for money whilst stream-lining procedures within the scheme to ensure more efficient delivery. DEFRA have confirmed that additional resource should be focused on safeguarding the environment by protecting wildlife and reducing water pollution and less spent on farm building restoration and access to the countryside.

Jules noted that monitoring of Scilly's 26 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is now complete (6 year cycle) and it was found that many heathland sites have issues, primarily due to insufficient grazing, with over 65% threatened by invasive non-native species. Natural England recognizes that non-native species, such as *Pittisporum* used as a hedging plant, hold an important place in Scilly. However, the important natural habitats, many designated, should be managed to ensure they are healthy and robust, thus ensuring greater resilience to the impacts of climate change including the control of non-native species with appropriate land management practices.

Natural England has secured resource to continue to provide support to AONBs and Partnerships at a local level. Jules also noted that the National Association of AONB's (NAAONB) seem to have upped their game, which bodes well for the future.

Sangeeta McNair provided an update on Natural England's work in the marine sector.

Seagrass Mapping in Scilly - Carried out by the Marine Biological Association (MBA) for Natural England and supported by Tim Allsop. The final report is currently being produced as a Natural England Commissioned Report (NECR) and a PDF will be available by late March 2011. In the meantime, anyone requiring a CD of the report in its final draft should contact Sangeeta.

Reefs – Reefs are a feature of the Isles of Scilly European Marine Site (EMS) and as such are monitored. Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee carried out work on Scilly's reefs in July 2010, in conjunction with Isles of Scilly Sea Fisheries and a further two days are planned for spring 2011. Sangeeta will be working with the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust and the Isles of Scilly Sea Fisheries Committee (and shadow Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority) to plan the monitoring.

Grey Seals - As reported in the September JAC meeting, Cornwall Seal Group and Exeter University have been contracted by Natural England to carry out pup surveys for Grey Seals in Scilly. To date they have carried out surveys from August-November and are hoping to carry out a final survey 10-12th December, weather permitting.

Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ) - the Isles of Scilly MCZ Working Group continues to lead the way with consensus building and collaborative working. The next meeting will be in January, when discussions on further intertidal areas and Reference Areas¹¹ will continue. Any proposed Reference Areas will also need to be monitoring sites ('control zones') and will be put forward only after full agreement of all members of the Isles of Scilly MCZ Working Group.

IFCA - Under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 Sea Fishery Committees (SFC) will be replaced by Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCA) with effect from 1st April 2011. The Isles of Scilly IFCA had its shadow SFC meeting on 5th October 2010 and elected Councillor Chris Thomas as the Chair of IFCA.

13. Dates of AONB JAC Meetings in 2011:

- Wednesday 16th March at 10.00a.m (Council Chamber)
- Wednesday 15th June at 10.00a.m (Off-Island venue to be confirmed)
- Wednesday 14th September at 10.00a.m (Council Chamber)
- Wednesday 14th December at 10.00a.m (Council Chamber)

14. A.O.B

There being no other business, the Chair closed the meeting at 12.30.

¹ Reference Areas are sites which may require high levels of protection, where no extraction or disturbance will be allowed.