



Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)

Minutes of the meeting held on

June 15th 2011

Adam's Fish and Chips, St Martin's

Present:

Philip Hygate (Chair)
Johann Hicks (Vice Chair)
Zoe Julian
David Mawer
Andrew May
Richard McCarthy
Phil McMahan
Sangeeta McNair
Paul St Pierre
David Senior
Steve Watt
Jules Webber
Maria Wilby
Trevor Kirk (AONB Officer)
Rebecca Steggles (AONB Assistant)

Invitees:

Paul Buckley (RSPB, Conservation Manager SW England)
Caroline Cotterell (Principal Advisor, Marine Function, Natural England)
James Marsden (Marine Director, Natural England)
Tony Richardson (RSPB, SW Regional Director)
Jim Smyllie (Executive Director, Delivering with Communities, Natural England)

1. Apologies

Apologies received from Marian Bennett, Eleanor Breen, Craig Dryden, Chris Gregory, Nick Lishman and Matthew Rogers.

2. Welcome to visiting Natural England and RSPB representatives

The Chairman welcomed visitors from both Natural England and the RSPB.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Trevor Kirk noted on page 5, paragraph 3 under *Paul St Pierre's Member's Report* that the date July 15th, should be changed to read June 15th.

The minutes of the JAC meeting on March 16th 2011 were confirmed as a true and accurate record.

4. Matters Arising

AONB Business Plan (2011-2012) – the plan has been amended in light of JAC recommendations and comments. The revised plan will be presented for approval by Council Members at Planning and Development Committee meeting on July 19th 2011.

5. Any other items which the Chair considers urgent

None

6. Natural England

The Chair passed the meeting over to Natural England representatives.

Jim Smyllie summarised key national issues from the perspective of Natural England.

Challenges arising from the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) include:

- loss of 500-600 staff in Natural England, most of who will be entering into voluntary redundancy by 2012;
- Decrease in programme spending throughout the CSR cycle.

However, Natural England's statutory purposes are unchanged. Natural England will continue act as the country's lead organisation in protecting nature, landscapes and seas for all the benefits that they provide.

The UK National Ecosystem Assessment (UK NEA) is the first analysis of the UK's natural environment in terms of the benefits it provides to society and its continuing economic prosperity.

The Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP) sets out the Government's vision for the future of the natural environment, and highlights in particular the economic and intrinsic value of nature and landscapes. The Local Nature Partnerships and Nature Improvement Areas advocated in NEWP provide a new way of looking at the environment. However, the challenges of establishing connectivity are greater on the Mainland than in Scilly, mainly due to the dispersal of relatively small high-quality habitats over large areas.

Jim Smyllie concluded by noting that new forms of partnership working will be needed to deliver biodiversity enhancement targets.

James Marsden briefed JAC on the main marine management issues for Natural England.

- Looking towards 2020, Natural England is aiming to achieve a 'healthy status' for the UK's seas;
- By December 2012, Government Ministers hope to see the designation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) substantially complete around the UK. However, a great deal of supporting evidence is required to secure the designation of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs). Therefore, it is unlikely that all 130 candidate MCZs will be designated by 2012;
- The strong partnership work in the Isles of Scilly in identifying candidate (MCZs) was noted and applauded.

The Chair thanked Natural England Representatives for their presentations to JAC and noted the significant contribution that Natural England representatives make to the AONB Partnership in Scilly.

7. RSPB

Tony Richardson informed JAC of the current situation nationally in the RSPB, with specific focus on the importance of 'working with other organisations in delivering conservation gains. Locally, the Scilly AONB Partnership is a crucial mechanism for delivering conservation benefits across the Islands.

Paul Buckley briefed JAC on the work of the RSPB both nationally and in Europe:

- The RSPB has a large number of members, which are central to conservation efforts around the UK and in Europe. In relation to the broader scope of the RSPB's work, it was noted that work to conserve birds invariably seeks also to conserve other species and habitats on the basis of good scientific evidence.
- 200 Nature Reserves across the UK provide a small part of the picture, but are extremely important in protecting nature locally and for the public to enjoy.
- Education is a huge priority for the RSPB and is seen as a vital part of its work.
- The RSPB consults on and implements Energy, Forestry and Climate Change policies.
- Working closely and advising land managers and owners, such as the Ministry of Defence and the Forestry Commission to provide conservation gains.
- Project work of the RSPB in Europe and the wider World in collaboration with the partner organisation Birdlife International, in securing conservation for birds, their habitats, global biodiversity, and by working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources.

- RSPB's community focused work by in the UK and abroad is central to fulfilling Species Recovery Projects, such as rat control programmes, as soon to be seen on St Agnes.

It was noted that the Isles of Scilly is high on the RSPB's priority list for protection and enhancement and that the JAC provides excellent partnership working in delivering environmental projects across Scilly.

Philip Hygate noted the value of the RSPB to the work of the JAC, and the importance and value that birds bring to the Islands.

8. NAAONB Conference 2011

On July 6th 2011, 24 NAAONB Conference delegates will be visiting Scilly. The AONB Unit is on track to deliver two field trips (St Mary's and St Agnes) and noted the significant opportunity to promote Scilly, its AONB designation and its special qualities.

9. Planning Consultative Panel Recommendations

Johann Hicks invited comments from JAC members on the PCP reports.

JAC was reminded that bespoke training is to be offered to PCP members in the future. Natural England has supplied contact details of a consultant who may be able to deliver such training to both PCP and, potentially, also some staff in the Local Planning Authority.

Richard McCarthy noted that a representative from Tresco is still to be invited to sit on PCP. Richard also suggested that it would be helpful to have the determination of planning applications included in future PCP reports to JAC.

Phil McMahon highlighted the *Isles of Scilly Design Guide* as a good piece of work and that guidance laid out in the document should also be included in training delivered to PCP and Planning staff.

10. AONB Officer's Report

- **Defra Funding for 2011-2012.** Defra has confirmed 'one pot' grant allocation of £138,876. It is anticipated that the grant will be allocated as follows: AONB Core budget of £89,854, and AONB Sustainable Development of £49,025.
- **Sustainable Development Fund.** Despite three rounds of applications, SDF was under-spent by £24,938 in 2010-2011. However, expressions of interest are encouraging in 2011-2012. The AONB Unit will also identify possible AONB-championed projects to absorb any under-spend in 2011-2012.
- **Pushing the Boundaries Project.** The habitat survey has been completed by the Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (ERCCIS),

and the historic environment survey by Cornwall Council is due for completion this week.

- **Local Food.** Following publication of the *Capacity for Change in Farming in Scilly*, the AONB Unit will work with AONB Partners and local community to progress work to mature the market-place for local food in Scilly.
- **Bee Keeping and Bee Breeding Project.** The AONB Unit continues to support the local bee keeping community and in particular, scoping the commercial opportunities available for Queen Bee rearing and bespoke training.

11. Members Reports

Zoe Julian updated JAC on the Blue Sail report '*Future of Tourism on Scilly*'. The report has been well received by the local community and positive recommendations have been put forward by the Blue Sail Consultants. The challenge is now to implement the delivery plans through the relevant task groups.

Andrew May commented on local food issues in Scilly and highlighted the significance of the Abattoir Report emerging from the *Capacity for Change in Farming in Scilly* project. The commercial argument for local food in Scilly is still under-developed, though the environment and animal welfare case has been well made. There is considerable support for an abattoir in Scilly, including from organisations such as the Duchy of Cornwall and Tresco Estate. However, 'adding value' to the end product remains the key to economic viability.

David Mawer updated JAC on the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust's rat eradication programme. Vickie Heaney's work surveying colonies of Kittiwakes, Lesser Black Backed Gulls and Manx Shearwater continues to produce invaluable results.

David briefed JAC on the success of the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust's Heathland Meeting, which included members from Save Our Scilly (members of the local community in opposition to the Wildlife Trust's Heathland Restoration Programme). The meeting broke down a lot of existing barriers between the two groups and proved to be very useful.

The 'Big Scilly Bee Search', a project part-funded by the AONB Partnership, has been launched. Bee walks led by expert entomologists have been well-attended, but as yet no Scilly Bees have been found.

Paul St Pierre updated JAC on the FAME project, which is an extensive research programme on the foraging ranges of seabirds. To date Fulmar, Shag and Kittiwakes have been tracked using data loggers. Other species of seabird are now being considered for study. Paul highlighted the work of IFCA and Natural England, which has significantly increased our understanding of the marine life that inhabits the waters around Scilly.

Paul also updated JAC on the Isles of Scilly Seabird Recovery Project, highlighting the significance of partnership working, and in particular thanked AONB staff for their work in facilitating the project. RSPB is developing a funding bid through LIFE (the EU's financial instrument, supporting environmental and nature conservation projects throughout the EU) and in the future may seek funding through the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF).

Action: Trevor Kirk and Paul St Pierre to discuss pipeline projects and their potential for funding through SDF.

David Senior informed JAC that the Council of the Isles of Scilly's Climate Change Strategy has now been approved. Copies of the report will be available by the end of June.

David updated JAC on the developments of the LSP Environment Group, which now sees its main role and function as a forum to discuss and implement actions that fallout from various strategies e.g. the Climate Change Strategy.

David also noted that his new role within the Council's Technical Services Department will focus heavily on Coastal Defence, and encouraged feedback from JAC on where coastal defence management is most necessary on the Islands.

Sangeeta McNair updated JAC on Natural England's Marine Sector work.

- **Monitoring the condition of the Isles of Scilly European Marine Site (EMS)** - Natural England is required to monitor the features of the EMS, in order to report on the Favourable Conservation Status (FCS).
- **Seagrass Mapping in Scilly** – This project was carried out by the Marine Biological Association (MBA) for Natural England and by Tim Allsop locally during 2010. The final report is currently being produced as a Natural England Commissioned Report (NECR) and although the production of this has been slightly delayed, the PDF will hopefully be available shortly.
- **Annual Seagrass Survey** – the survey is due to take place in August 2011.
- **Scilly Reefs** – Reefs are one of the features of the Isles of Scilly European Marine Site (EMS). Reef biotope includes - Kelp forest, sub-tidal faunal turf communities, sub-tidal rock and boulder communities, vertical rocks. 3 different surveys are being carried out this year:
 1. **Cornwall IFCA (Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority) & Cefas – Sidescan Sonar.** CSFC (Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee) carried out work on Scilly's reefs in July 2010, in conjunction with Isles of Scilly Sea

Fisheries Committee. Further surveys took place 24-25th May 2011 with Cefas on board *St Piran*, using sidescan sonar. The Cefas field report has been forwarded previously to JAC. Further acoustic work using Cefas vessel *Endeavour* is planned for September 2011.

2. **Cornwall IFCA – Drop Down Video (DDV)** – Using the information gained from sidescan work, plus information from Tim Allsop, Cornwall IFCA will be carrying out DDV work over the summer at the locations detailed in the Cefas report. Currently awaiting suitable weather window.
 3. **Sub-tidal Diving Surveys** – Took place 4th-14th June 2011. Natural England, working with the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust and employing St Martin's Diving Services to ensure best sites are chosen (historic and new), including Planning Marine Conservation Zone (pMCZ) sites. Working with Isles of Scilly IFCA to monitor sites, for example the use of new IFCA RIB (*Matt Lethbridge*), to carry out surveys.
 4. **Intertidal survey** planned for 26th September – 1st October 2011. Natural England is working with the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust to ensure the best choice of sites. Intertidal reef sites below Mean Low Water (MLW) and low shore boulder communities.
- **Scilly Grey Seals** - Cornwall Seal Group and Exeter University were contracted by Natural England to carry out pup surveys for Grey Seals in Scilly 2010-2011. A final report is now available and will be published as part of the Natural England Commissioned Report series.

Jules Webber briefed JAC on Environmental Stewardship in Scilly. Six Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreements are in place, all delivering around £35,000 to environmental projects in Scilly, for example Heathland Restoration and Management. There has been a push on Upland Entry Level Stewardship (UELS) for farm tenancies in Scilly that cover over 4 hectares. These schemes have the option to upgrade to HLS at a later date.

Scilly is a priority for Natural England in the South West, especially regarding the status of SSSIs. Natural England is working with Tresco Estate and the Natural History Museum to develop a monitoring project on invasive species in SSSIs. Over 65% of SSSIs in Scilly have issues with invasive species, such as *Pittisporum* and New Zealand Flax, which are threatening the wildlife value of the sites.

Steve Watt briefed JAC on the history and development of the Isles of Scilly IFCA. In particular noted the support of local fisherman in agreeing to a closed season, no trawling or any mobile equipment, pot limitations to keep fisheries sustainable, and the

banning of scallop dredging. It was noted that whilst MCZs are being proposed in the waters around Scilly, IFCA has not agreed to Reference Zones. Steve finished by thanking the MCZ working group for its support.

Richard McCarthy briefed JAC on the work of the Duchy Tenants Association. It was noted that the next AGM is scheduled for July 2011. Richard noted the Duchy of Cornwall's move away from the tendering process on Duchy properties, which can often leave people stretched financially, to a set 'guide price'.

Maria Wilby briefed JAC on the work of the Five Islands School 'Green Team', including recent Beach Cleaning work with Clare Lewis (AONB Environmental Awareness Coordinator). Maria noted that the children were amazed at the amount of litter, but were pleased that they are able to make a difference to their local environment.

The plastic recycling scheme set up by the Green Team has become a victim of its own success as the team cannot keep pace with the volume of plastic bottles being brought to the school. A Local Action Group funding bid for bigger machines, developed in partnership with St Mary's Hall Hotel, did not come to fruition. The Chair noted that the AONB SDF is a possible funding stream.

Action: Maria to work with the AONB Unit to discuss potential projects eligible for SDF.

James Marsden (Natural England) informed JAC of a plastic recycling project on Lundy and urged JAC to look at similar projects for guidance.

Phil McMahon updated JAC on the national situation in English Heritage (EH). EH will be subject to a significant cut in funding (35%) over the next five years. EH makes a large, national contribution to planning and gives designation advice on historical monuments. This important statutory role gives some security to some of the work carried out by EH though other areas, such as research, may be vulnerable.

EH's National Heritage Protection Plan (NHPP) Core Priorities bring together EH and partner organisations to protect and enhance the historic environment.

The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Shoreline Management Plan has been well received within EH.

Rebecca Steggles informed JAC that due to the success of *Spring into Scilly*, a 3 day environmental project lead by the AONB Unit in collaboration with the Council of the Isles of Scilly's Children's Services and the RSPB, the AONB Unit and staff from Children's Services are taking a group of 11-12 year olds to Goblin Combe

Environmental Centre in North Somerset. Here the children will have the opportunity to get involved in activities such as Caving, Stone Walling and Owl Prowls, which they would not be able to do in Scilly. The trip focuses heavily on meeting with the Mendip AONB Young Rangers, in the hope that future work programmes will become established between the two.

Rebecca also summarized the recent work of the Isles of Scilly Bat Group, on behalf of Marian Bennett. A radio-tracking project, supported by SDF funding, has been a huge success. The Bat Group have not only found out where colonies move to and where they forage, but have also discovered two new species, not thought to exist on the Islands. Bat Group intends to apply for more funding through SDF in 2011-2012 to carry on this work.

Philip Hygate noted that work on the new school should be complete in time for the new school year and that the next JAC meeting might be held in the new building.

The JAC Chair also noted that HRH The Prince of Wales has agreed to record a message to NAAONB Conference 2011.

Trevor Kirk spoke on behalf of Chris Gregory on the opportunities and challenges of an abattoir on the Islands; the Duchy Land Steward's views resonating with those expressed earlier by Andrew May.

12. Any other business

None

The meeting was closed at 12.25 p.m.

The afternoon session included a visit to Churchtown Farm to discuss flower growing and livestock management in the context of Environmental Stewardship. Soem delegates also had the opportunity to view parts of the Isles of Scilly Marine SAC from the new IFCA vessel (*Matt Lethbridge*)