



Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)

**Minutes of the meeting held on
September 15th 2010
Garden Pavilion, St Mary's**

Present:

Philip Hygate (Chair)
Johann Hicks (Vice Chair)
Marian Bennett
Craig Dryden
Will Garratt
Mike Gurr
Zoe Julian
Nick Lishman
David Mawer
Richard McCarthy
Phil McMahon
Matthew Rogers
Paul St Pierre
David Senior
Trevor Kirk (AONB Officer)
Rebecca Steggles (AONB Assistant)

In Attendance:

Clare Lewis (Environmental Awareness Coordinator, AONB Unit)

1. Apologies

Received from Chris Gregory (Duchy of Cornwall represented by Will Garratt), Bryce Wilby (Five Islands School), Jules Webber (Natural England), Andrew May (land-based sector) and Eleanor Breen (Council of the Isles of Scilly).

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

David Mawer noted that page 4, paragraph 3 should read:

‘Other recent Wildlife Trust work includes bracken rolling and cutting, footpath maintenance, our local volunteer group and our Marine Project; the latter involving dive surveys, intertidal habitat monitoring and an education programme for schools’.

Minutes of the JAC meeting on June 16th 2010 were confirmed as a true and accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

Tourist Information Centre, St Mary's Quay

Page 5, paragraph 8 (JAC Minutes, June 16th 2010)

Mike Gurr questioned whether the Tourist Information Centre on St Mary's Quay plays an effective role in welcoming and orientating new arrivals to Scilly, especially those arriving by cruise ship, as verbally reported by Richard McCarthy on June 16th 2010.

JAC concluded that, while Richard McCarthy's report was accurate at the time it was delivered, there is unrealised potential for the Council of the Isles of Scilly to work with the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust to coordinate and mutually support their respective visitor facilities on St Mary's Quay.

National Association of AONBs (NAAONB)

Page 8, penultimate paragraph (JAC Minutes, June 16th 2010)

- Richard McCarthy proposed that a summary of the National Association of AONB's Annual Conference should be presented to JAC.

Action: AONB Officer to draft summary of NAAONB Annual Conference 2010 for JAC information.

- Johann Hicks congratulated Philip Hygate on his election to the NAAONB Management Board.

4. Presentation by Matthew Rogers: Tree and Shelterbelt Management in a Farming Context

While the lead theme was tree and shelter-belt management in a farming context, Matthew Roger's presentation drew out the complex relationships between the management of farmland, biodiversity, historic environment and tourism. Landscape character, including the historical development of Scilly's shelter-belts and hedged fields, was also highlighted.

The presentation outlined some of the tree management work (e.g. pollarding and thinning) that must be carried out if the health of Scilly's trees is to be maintained. For example, some of the older Monterey Pine and Elm trees are in need of careful management if they are to continue to contribute to Scilly's biodiversity and agricultural management.

The important role of the Duchy of Cornwall and Tresco Estate in woodland management, including replanting plans, was noted, with the crucial role of Woodland Management Plans also being noted.

JAC thanked Matthew Rogers for a well-presented, wide-ranging and thought-provoking presentation.

The main themes discussed during discussion of Matthew Roger's presentation were:

- Confirmation that Tree Works Consent is required for all tree works (e.g. felling, pollarding, lopping) due to the Islands' status as a Conservation Area
- Works to hedgerows are also subject to consent under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997
- Will Garratt noted that the Duchy of Cornwall Woodland Management Plan will be published at the end of October 2010
- Mike Gurr noted that trees, woodland and shelter-belts are important bat habitats. As well as providing forage and roost sites, bats use linear features such as tree-lined roads and wooded hedgerows to navigate the landscape
- Johann Hicks noted that climate change may affect the future distribution of some tree species. Some existing species may be forced from their existing niches, while other species may expand into new areas. Therefore, woodland planning needs to consider the future spatial range of tree species, as well as disease and pest resistance, economic potential (e.g. timber, fruit), and carbon sinks
- JAC noted that introduced species such as *Pittosporum* negatively impact on heathland and archaeology when they migrate (through natural colonisation) from their original hedgerow context. Debate on the definition of non-native species, such as *Pittosporum*, as semi-naturalised species may be less fruitful than consideration of the context in which those species positively contribute to Scilly's historic landscape character, and the management challenges that accrue when semi-naturalised/non-native species colonise other habitats.
- Paul St Pierre noted the spread of *Phytophthora ramorum* (Sudden Larch Disease) and its effect on mainland tree populations.

Action: AONB Officer to research the focus and scope of potential AONB project(s) on the management of trees/woodlands/shelter-belts in Scilly, including the interface with hedgerow and stonewall management. Project(s) would examine the relationships between farming, biodiversity, historic environment, landscape character, planning, tourism, recreation and access.

Action: AONB Officer to liaise with interested parties (e.g. Council of the Isles of Scilly, Duchy of Cornwall, mainland-island transport operators) to develop a protocol on the importation of timber with bark and other wood-based products, including bark-mulch.

5. Planning Consultative Panel (PCP) Recommendations: Summary Reports

PCP reports were pre-circulated for JAC members' attention.

The Chair thanked PCP for its work. Craig Dryden also acknowledged the important contribution of PCP reports to the planning process in Scilly.

Johann Hicks (PCP Chair) noted that some planning decisions are finely balanced and that PCP does not always share the Local Planning Authority's view. Craig Dryden (Chief Planning and Development Officer) agreed that balancing complex material considerations is a significant challenge. JAC also noted that some planning determinations can establish local precedent with which the LPA and PCP must subsequently grapple.

6. Members' Reports

Paul St Pierre reported on the Isles of Scilly Seabird Recovery Project. A contractor (Elizabeth Bell) has started to gather and collate information and has scheduled public consultations for October 2010.

JAC commented on the following aspects of the project:

- Are rats the only predators of seabirds in Scilly? Are crows, thought (anecdotally) to be on the increase in Scilly, also predators? (Johann Hicks)
- The close correlation between rat removal and seabird health has been demonstrated on Annet (David Mawer)
- Is the Seabird Recovery Project, projected to cost £70,000, value for money? (Johann Hicks)
- RSPB considers the project to be a high priority and has support from RSPB members nationally and internationally

JAC noted that concise, accurate and measured public communication would be a vital component of any project delivery, including the current feasibility study.

Richard McCarthy reported on the Duchy Tenants' Association (DTA) AGM. DTA has developed a very good working relationship with the (relatively new) Duchy Land Steward. DTA welcomes in principle the Duchy proposal to allow time-bound sub-letting of farm tenancies.

Phil McMahon summarised how Central Government's Comprehensive Spending Review may impact on English Heritage (EH). While EH anticipates cross-organisation funding reduction in the region of 20%, it is hoped that any projects in the pipe-line will be honoured.

Phil McMahon briefed JAC on the following EH work:

- *Caring for Places of Worship*, which focuses on the need to conserve traditional places of worship including, where appropriate, suitable alternative uses.
- *Lyonesse Project*, an EH-funded project, the preliminary results of which will be presented at a future JAC meeting.
- *EH Consultation Response on Isles of Scilly Shoreline Management Plan 2 (SMP2)*. Following adoption of the draft SMP2 by the Council of the Isles of Scilly, EH looks forward to the creation of a Coastal Management Plan that would deliver SMP2 objectives. EH notes that many of Scilly's Scheduled Monuments are at risk from coastal erosion and that any Coastal Management Plan must include appropriate mitigation, most likely in the form of conservation by record.

David Senior reported that the first draft of the Council of the Isles of Scilly Climate Change Strategic Plan will be presented to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Environment Sub-Group before the end of 2010. One of the main challenges is judging the extent to which national and regional climate change projections are accurate and relevant for Scilly.

Will Garratt reported that the Duchy of Cornwall Woodland Management Plan will be in place by October 2010 and that the Duchy looks forward to working with other stakeholders to implement the policies contained in the plan.

Craig Dryden noted that a second-round of public consultation is being held on Porthcressa Development, Phase 1 and that a planning application will be submitted in time for determination in November 2010.

Public consultation on the Council of the Isles of Scilly Sustainable Transport Strategy was also recently concluded.

Marian Bennett reported that the draft Shoreline Management Plan 2 (SMP2) is due to be presented to the Planning and Development Committee on September 16th 2010 and noted the challenges that are faced in shoreline management across Scilly.

Marian Bennett also reported that listed building consent has been granted for the alterations to Penzance Harbour that facilitates the Route Partnership initiative.

Nick Lishman noted the development of an Isles of Scilly Destination Management Plan. Consultations with JAC members and other tourism stakeholders are ongoing.

Nick Lishman also noted the opportunity for Scilly's beekeepers to collaborate with mainland colleagues to establish a breeding programme for the Islands' varroa-free bees.

Mike Gurr reported on the work of the Isles of Scilly Bat Group:

- The popularity of monthly bat walks has increased to such an extent that numbers are sometimes capped

- A Bat Group presentation to the local Youth Club attracted great interest, with Youth Members eager to form a Youth Bat Group
- The Isles of Scilly Bat Group has entered into a partnership agreement with the Bat Conservation Trust
- The Isles of Scilly Bat Group is working closely with Exeter and Bristol Universities, as well as Falmouth College, with the aim of monitoring the migration patterns of bats in Scilly
- It is proposed that, subject to funding, two local people will be trained and registered as Licensed Bat Workers

Mike Gurr also expressed the view that the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust's management of the downs effectively delivers both biodiversity and public access.

As editor of *Wild Scilly* magazine, Mike Gurr invited contributions to the magazine from JAC members.

Nick Lishman left the meeting.

Zoe Julian reported that Blue Sail consultancy has been commissioned to draft the Isles of Scilly Destination Management Plan. Consultations with JAC members and other tourism stakeholders are ongoing. Blue Sail has considerable experience of green tourism and is sensitive to the environmental qualities that underpin Scilly's tourism industry.

David Mawer reported the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust's proposed project to raise awareness of the Scilly Bee. The project would commission production of an illustrated bee guide, as well as workshops and other events for residents and visitors.

Matthew Rogers reported a good year for flower, bulb and hay production in Scilly. He also noted the essential role of farmers in maintaining key landscape features such as hedges. While the amount of polythene over fields has increased recently, its use is essential if flower growth rates are to be harmonised with the late Easter in 2011. Finally, Matthew Rogers noted that six Scilly farm tenancies are in the process of applying for entry into the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme.

Clare Lewis noted the Big Watch Beach Clean at Porth Hellick Beach is scheduled for Friday 17th September 2010.

Natural England – Due to extenuating circumstances Natural England representatives were unable to attend the meeting. However, a joint written report was submitted by Jules Webber, Sangeeta McNair and Peter Bowden.

- *Environmental Stewardship*. Six applications are in the pipeline for the new Isles of Scilly options for Environmental Stewardship. Natural England is also working to resolve the finger bar mower issues.

- *Consultation on AONB and National Park Boundaries.* A Natural England consultation document has been sent to local authorities on a guidance document for designating new AONBs, National Parks or making boundary changes to existing designations.
- *AONB budgets 2010-2011.* Nationally, AONBs have accepted an in-year (2010-2011) 5% reduction in funding.
- *AONBs relationship with DEFRA/Natural England.* Options are being explored for DEFRA to fund AONBs directly rather than through Natural England. The NAAONB has consulted AONB units nationally on the issue and will submit a summary statement to ministers.
- *Natural England budget for 2011/12* has not been finalised, though the position is likely to be known by late-2010/early-2011. However, a funding cut of up to 30% is a likely consequence of the Comprehensive Spending Review.
- *Natural England Restructuring.* Natural England is due to shed 400 posts by May 2011 and another 400 jobs in 2012. Nationally, Natural England also plans to reduce its 63 offices to around 20 offices
- *Seagrass mapping in Scilly.* This project is nearing completion. The Marine Biological Association (MBA) carried out the work for Natural England, supported by Tim Allsop. A final report will be circulated in the near future.
- *Reefs.* Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee carried out surveys of Scilly's reefs in July 2010. Weather and tide permitting, a further survey will be carried out in autumn 2010.
- *Seals.* Cornwall Seal Group and Exeter University have been contracted by Natural England to carry out pup production surveys for Grey Seals (6 yearly condition monitoring) in Scilly. The work will be completed during autumn/winter 2010/2011.
- *Marine Conservation Zones.* Feedback from the Isles of Scilly Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) Working Group continues to feed directly to the Regional Project (Finding Sanctuary).

7. AONB Officer's Report

- *Sustainable Development Fund.* Grant offers totalling £32,131 have been made to 8 projects. Assuming that all offers are accepted, £19,692 is available for allocation. The Grants Advisory Panel will meet shortly to discuss allocation of surplus SDF funds.
- *Scoping Report on Waymarking and Signposting in the AONB.* Draft scoping report will be pre-circulated in advance of the JAC meeting on December 8th 2010.
- *Field Boundaries on the Isles of Scilly. Feasibility Study to Inform Management for Conservation. Desk-Based Study.* This study will be complete by October 2010. It will inform and support a Local Action Group funding bid for a larger field boundaries project (*Pushing the Boundaries: Unlocking the Potential of Scilly's Traditional Stone Walls*)

- *Farm Environment Plan Training.* Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) has been commissioned by the AONB Unit to train one Islander to prepare the Farm Environment Plans that underpin Environmental Stewardship applications.
- *Arable Plants of Bulb-Fields and Other Arable Fields in the Isles of Scilly.* Booklet being prepared in collaboration with Rosemary Parslow (Isles of Scilly Recorder for the Botanical Society of the British Isles).
- *Grazing and Access Working Group.* The AONB Officer continues to chair the Grazing and Access Working Group.
- *Fixed Point Photography.* The AONB Unit is instigating a fixed point photography project, with the AONB Assistant taking the lead role. Due to changes in AONB Unit staffing, this important landscape monitoring project was not launched in Scilly when other partners to the South-West Protected Landscapes Forum instigated fixed point photography in 2006.
- *Seabird Recovery Project.* The AONB Unit continues to facilitate this project, mainly through the liaison role of Clare Lewis (Environmental Awareness Coordinator)
- *Local Food Initiatives.* The AONB Unit partnered Transition Scilly in a pilot *Scilly Food Festival* during September 2010. The same partnership is also planning a local food workshop before the end of 2010.
- *Business Plan 2010-2012.* An 18-month Business Plan (September 2010-March 2012) is being drafted by the AONB Unit.
- *NAAONB National Conference 2010.* The Chair, Vice-Chair and AONB Officer attended the NAAONB National Conference in Hythe, Kent (July 12th-15th 2010)

8. Date of Next Meeting

The date for the next JAC meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 8th December 2010 at 10.00 a.m.

9. AOB

There being no other business, the Chair closed the meeting at 12.15 p.m.