

MINUTES BHPN STEERING GROUP MTG MONDAY March 30th at 10.30am

AONB Meeting Room

Attending

Heather Stallard	Chair
Catherine Bass	Co-ordinator & Communications Group
Lisa Turner	AONB
Bruce Payne	Wellington w/o, AONB Management, Natural Futures
Ken Pearson	Churchstanton & Traffic, Transport & Highways Group leader
Graeme Long	Upottery

1 Minutes of last mtg Nov 30th were discussed and approved, matters arising taken in the agenda

3. Steering Group membership:

Graeme Long was welcomed to the Steering group. LT queried whether more members are required. All agreed that the responsibility of the Stg Gp is to maintain momentum in furthering the actions arising from the Community Plan. No further nominees or volunteers have emerged since the last meeting. Agreed that we do need a Dunkeswell rep again since resignation of Geoffrey Sworder.

HS recapped the reason for developing the group originally - parishes were not happy to be considered as appendages to the peripheral towns which have their own agenda and are not acquainted with rural area issues. BHPN must speak up for the communities and parishes of the AONB.

How is the BHPN perceived? Originally conceived a tri-partite stance with AONB and BH Business Association. The latter group has not been demonstrably active in its inclusion of BHPN in information sharing, understandable considering the different focus of the groups.

- KP noted that the key issue is to uphold the principles laid out in the AONB management plan, focussed on maintaining the uniquely tranquil environment and resisting inappropriate developments in transport and planning which may lead to overall and irretrievable erosion of the landscape. The BHBA association is not a priority as local businesses do not consider local residents in their forward planning.

Agreed that we do need to continue to encourage more active (financial) participation of parishes –following the recent Planning meeting in Yarcombe, 2 or 3 parishes to follow up (Neroche group - CB TDBC, Tatworth and Forton –SSC and Otterford -TDBC). CB to follow up.

4. Action Group activity

Points arising from a general discussion of the three key areas of interest for the BHPN (Communications, Traffic/Transport and Planning)

- Some parts of the infrastructure are in danger of becoming so eroded that there will be no return – these must somehow become self-sustaining before vanishing altogether. Other key infrastructures run the risk of never being put in place or arriving so late that they will benefit fewer people.
- KP described the Somerset Community Foundation, a charity supported by sponsors who allocate funds to themes. Transport is one of these; with a key bus route (Sidmouth to Taunton, route 387, due to be axed from 5 to 1 day a week) there is a need to revive interest

in workable alternate transport schemes. In many cases residents have accepted successive reductions in public transport provision, although many are still cut off with no personal transport, relying on Blackdowns Support Group, etc. In spite of this the CBO bus, for example, is under-used, hard to fill 10-15 seats necessary to make viable journeys. Cotleigh lost a daily bus service 3 years ago, yet all residents now have alternative transport access.

- Are these considerations being mapped in neighbourhood plans?
- The rural vs urban debate appears to be being led by govt. economics / planners, removal of services/facilities in rural areas is increasingly accepted/absorbed by its residents – the underlying message is put up with it or move!
- Communications issues are wide in terms of the key 'highways' which need improvement – information (esp. broadband), transport, and road infrastructure. GL updated the Stg Gp on the latest from CDS which indicates that while there may be a few more Blackdown Hills (BH) areas served with superfast BB as BT attempts to connect up to 95% of the population by 2020, this will be no comfort for the remainder in BH areas that are hardest to reach. EDDC & SSDC considering withdrawing from CDS agreement.
- Planning workshop feedback (LT): this was deemed to be a good meeting on March 19th, with several new parishes becoming involved. There was interest in a regular updating meeting.
- Stg Gp to support development of parish hubs in each LA area, starting with Taunton Deane . KP

5. BHPN AGM agenda to concentrate on connectivity and communications, using case studies such as Mendip transport scheme (KP), Business strategy adopted by Combe St Nicholas firm (GL), GAP funding to provide superfast broadband as in Halse (CB) – important to support BH residents. KP/GL/CB

- CB to follow up on offer from David Whitton in Devon Highways to discuss how parish clusters might help themselves collectively to develop effective road wardening schemes. CB
- KP to find a complementary Somerset contribution. KP
- BP to map what we have and what has been lost since the 2010 General Election. BP
- Agreed that the AGM be delayed until June to accommodate new Parish Councils etc following the General Election on May 7. Preferred dates are Monday evening June 22 or Thursday evening June 25.
- Suggested venues preferably with Internet access - Greg Page-Turner venue outside Honiton, Candlelight Inn function room, Monkton Court Hotel, Lakeview Manor CB
- CB to circulate draft agenda to Stg Gp in advance of general circulation. CB

5 Finance

Account balance at 29.3.15 : £ 2,636.43

No payments since last mtg

- Receipts since last meeting £1,305.00

- Payments due:

£225 re catering (The Strand Stores) for Planning workshop - agreed

£284.40 for Coordinator activity/expenses since November 2014 - agreed

6 AOB

- BP requested stats on website use
- GL informed the Stg Gp that he is standing as an independent for EDDC on May 7.
- **Next stg gp meeting on May 11 10.30 am at AONB offices**