

Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

4 December 2018

External Board/Outside Body

External Board/Outside Body	Kent Downs AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Councillor(s) represented on the Outside Body/External Board	Patrik Garten
Report Author	Patrik Garten & Nick Johansen (AONB Unit)
Date of External Board/Outside Body Meeting Attended	Kent Downs AONB Joint Advisory Committee Meeting 16 th of November

Purpose of the External Board/Outside Body:

Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)

The Kent Downs relies on many stakeholders who have a role in conserving and enhancing the landscape, supporting local business and communities and enabling quiet recreation. The Joint Advisory Committee plays a pivotal role in helping realise the strategic vision for the Kent Downs AONB and oversee the statutory AONB Management Plan which has been adopted by Maidstone Borough Council and the other Local Authorities with responsibilities for the Kent Downs.

The purpose of the JAC is to provide advice on the statutory responsibilities for the effective management, conservation and enhancement of the Kent Downs AONB. An Executive of representatives from the JAC, with some outside advisors, advises the work of the Kent Downs AONB Unit.

The Kent Downs AONB Unit is employed by Kent County Council and works on behalf of the JAC to carry out the preparation and review of the Management Plan, to advocate its policies and work in partnership to deliver a range of actions described in the Action Plan.

Funding partners & Members

Defra, Ashford Borough Council, Canterbury City Council, Dover District Council, Gravesham Borough Council, London Borough of Bromley, Medway Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Folkestone & Hythe District Council, Swale Borough Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Country Land and Business Association, Environment Agency, Kent Association of Local Councils, Action with Communities in Rural Kent, National Farmers Union, English Heritage and Visit Kent

Update:

In this period the AONB Unit continued its strategic and delivery role, the main focus of this report is a formal meeting of the Kent Downs AONB Joint Advisory Committee held a formal meeting which included

A report on progress against the AONB Action Plan

This demonstrated good progress against the action plan and in particular the very successful 50th Anniversary year activities and confirmed that the AONB Unit is very effective at securing external funding to deliver positive work on the ground.

A report on major planning matters affecting the AONB

There are several major applications affecting the Kent Downs all of which, in the Unit's view, significantly conflict with both national and local policies. This included the application at Detling on which the AONB Unit will be providing advice to Officers at Maidstone Borough Council and would be happy to provide a briefing to Members if that would be helpful.

A report on significant tourism funding bid.

The Kent Downs AONB Unit is working in partnership with Visit Kent to secure in the region of 4m Euros investment through a project called 'Experience' . The basis of the bid is to increase high value, low impact tourism across the County. This may be one of the last opportunities to secure substantial funds from Interreg. This will benefit all Local Authorities in Kent.

The review of the AONB Management Plan was discussed and it was agreed that the current plan will stay in place for the time being; a full review is underway including a review of the supporting guidance.

A report on the Government's review of Designated Areas.

The JAC drafted some key strategic aims for the review, this included recognising and reflecting in their strategic views the wish expressed by Maidstone Borough Council to either extend the Kent Downs or create a new AONB on the Greensand Ridge.

The JAC confirmed the budget for the AONB Unit for the 2019/2020 financial year.

If Members would like to know more about the Kent Downs AONB Unit or the work of the Joint Advisory Committee they are very welcome to get in touch directly with Nick Johannsen, the Director. Nick.johannsen@kentdowns.org.uk 01303 815 170
