

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
4th March 2019

FILMING & BROADCASTING JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Purpose

To consider the opportunity to film and broadcast/webcast the meetings of the Joint Advisory Committee in the Forest of Dean District Council Chamber.

Recommendations

That the JAC does not pursue the opportunity the film and broadcast its meetings at this time.

Key Issues

- The Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) traditionally holds its meetings in the Forest of Dean District Council Chamber
- The Forest of Dean District Council has the facility to film, record and webcast meetings held in the Council Chamber.
- The constituent local authorities of the Wye Valley AONB all have the facility to record and broadcast meetings from their respective Council Chambers.
- Some National Park Authorities also film, record and broadcast their meetings
- However, no other AONB Partnership or JAC is known to film, record or broadcast their meetings.
- The low response to the Public Question time and low public attendance at JAC meetings would indicate that there is currently not much demand for viewing the JAC meetings.

Reasons

With advances in digital camera and recording equipment, many local authorities have invested in the installation of hardware and software to enable the recording &/or filming and broadcasting or live-streaming of meetings. This includes some National Park Authorities. The Forest of Dean District Council has the facility to film and webcast meetings held in the Council Chamber, where the JAC is usually held. The Forest of Dean District Council currently only webcast Full Council and Planning Committee meetings. Monmouthshire County Council broadcast a wide selection of meetings from County Hall at Usk. Herefordshire Council voice-record a range of their Council meetings with the recordings available on their website.

If the Forest of Dean District Council Chamber is not available the JAC has previously met in the Monmouth Town Council Chamber in the Shire Hall, Monmouth. The JAC has also once been held in the Town Hall in Hereford. Neither of these venues currently have filming and broadcasting facilities.

Implications

A brief survey of AONBs was conducted to determine whether any other AONB Partnerships or Joint Advisory Committees record or broadcast their meetings. Of the lead officers that responded on behalf of 12 AONB Partnerships, none of them currently film or broadcast their meetings, for a variety of reasons. Below are a selection of the comments received and reasons given.

“For many years we have rotated JAC meetings around community venues (village halls/institutes etc.) in each district/borough. These venues have very variable (if any) ICT capabilities. We would probably need to move to local authority council chambers, committee rooms etc. to be able to do it. These are often located some distance from the AONB in urban centres, so any move in that direction would take the JAC away from the heart of the matter.”

“We wouldn’t do this – who would watch it? We move meetings around to some places where the IT is not great.”

“Whilst our JAC meetings are occasionally held in other locations most of them take place in the same council chamber so I’m sure we could do this. In the interests of transparency I doubt any one would object. But no one in our JAC has ever asked that we do this”

“Whilst we don't have any plans to film or live stream our Partnership meetings we have with the Partnership's consent for the last 12 months recorded audio of meetings onto mp3. This has been used to aid accurate minute taking and has not been undertaken with the intention of making the recordings publicly available. Our data retention policy means these are deleted after 6 months. ICT at various venues is variable and would prevent live streaming. Emphasis instead has been placed on welcoming groups and members of the public as observers of meetings in our Parishes.”

“We move the JAC meetings around the AONB, the location of the meeting is chosen to showcase an issue or project through a morning walk/ site visit followed by a formal meeting in the afternoon – this means that the venues do not have broadcast facilities.”

“Not felt the need - no one has asked - we used to post minutes on websites but download data demonstrated little demand”

“We have had the opportunity to record and broadcast in the past but did not progress, for two principle reasons;

1. The venue of meetings does change and the facility is not always available
2. Currently we have very open, robust and frank discussions at our board meetings. I am not sure that the quality of these discussions would be maintained if meetings were broadcast.”

“we don't do this, if we did I suspect rather than live transmission we would put it on the website as a video clip and promote through social media links. This would give the opportunity to those who can’t attend to see what was discussed. I wouldn't anticipate a very large audience at all but we send the papers (which are sometimes large files) to over 100 organisations and people and they are not asking to come off the mailing list so I guess the papers are read by some!”

“We do not have the facilities at our regular venues, like others we commonly use village hall locations for our JAC gatherings and tend to move locations. At the moment we

have a very limited number of requests to view our minutes or previous discussions from wider parties, so initially I couldn't see much interest in people wanting to view them.”

The consensus seems to be that there is little demand for such a service, even if it were technically feasible. While the Wye Valley AONB could set a precedent, this is not seen currently as a priority. There are other issues of communication that were identified as priorities in the Good Governance Review last year. Resources should be directed to pursuing those in the first instance. Therefore, it is recommended that the JAC does not pursue the opportunity to film and broadcast its meetings at this time. However, the situation can be kept under review.

Background

The questions asked of AONB lead officers were:

- a) which AONBs already record/film & broadcast their JAC / Joint Committee / Conservation Board meetings?
- b) if not - but where the technology is available - why not?
- c) if not and the technology is not available, would you if you could?
- d) if you don't and you can't...it would still be useful to hear, as a baseline.

Responses were received from the following 12 AONBs; Dedham Vale, East Devon, Forest of Bowland, Isles of Scilly, Kent Downs, Lincolnshire Wolds, Malvern Hills, North Pennines, Quantocks, Shropshire Hills, South Devon and Suffolk Coast & Heaths.