

# June 2011

## Monthly update



1. The highlight of the month was undoubtedly hosting a visit from **Richard Benyon MP, Defra Minister for the Natural Environment**. During the visit discussion with our partners included tourism management, ecological networks and the future of farming in the AONB. The Minister was very impressed with what he saw and heard. The East Anglian article can be read at the following link: [http://www.eadt.co.uk/news/suffolk\\_environment\\_minister\\_richard\\_benyon\\_praises\\_aonb\\_work\\_1\\_917737](http://www.eadt.co.uk/news/suffolk_environment_minister_richard_benyon_praises_aonb_work_1_917737)
2. At the beginning of the month we also hosted a visit from Central Suffolk MP **Dr Dan Poulter**. Dan Poulter's constituency does not include any of the AONB, but many of the issues that his constituents raise are key AONB issues, including the future of the forests, developments at Sizewell and coastal change. The visit gave him the opportunity to learn more about our work.
3. **UK Power Networks has now started the £342,000 project** to underground low-voltage power lines between Chillesford and Butley. The scheme will make significant visual improvements to the area and is funded through an Ofgem allowance for undergrounding low-voltage power lines in AONBs and National Parks. For today's East Anglian report on this: [http://www.eadt.co.uk/news/major\\_effort\\_to\\_remove\\_overhead\\_power\\_cables\\_1\\_947064](http://www.eadt.co.uk/news/major_effort_to_remove_overhead_power_cables_1_947064)
4. Both the **Sustainable Development Fund and the Connect Conservation Fund** grant processes have now concluded and we have awarded a total of 20 grants to organisations and projects throughout the AONB. The 12 SDF projects total £39,920 and the full list can be seen at <http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/downloads.asp?PagelD=76>. The 8 Connect projects total £3,505 and can be seen at <http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/text.asp?PagelD=180>
5. This month Defra launched its eagerly awaited **Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP)**, which sets out the Government's vision for the natural environment over the next 50 years, backed up with practical action to deliver that ambition. Initiatives of particular interest to the AONB include: the development of 12 Nature Improvement Areas nationally (a meeting of AONB Partners is planned to discuss whether we should apply), the development of Local Nature Partnerships, proposals for piloting biodiversity offsetting and VisitEngland gathering and showcasing best practice visitor payback schemes (we will submit our Connect scheme as a case study). Suffolk and the AONB are cited as local area trail-blazers in the NEWP. <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/>
6. A significant evidence base for the NEWP came from the **UK National Ecosystem Assessment** (also launched this month). The UK NEA is the first analysis of the UK's natural environment in terms of the benefits it provides to society and our continuing economic prosperity. The report strengthens the arguments for protecting and enhancing the environment and will be used by the Government to direct policy in future. Plenty of examples such as: pollinators are worth £430million per year to British agriculture; the amenity benefits of living close to rivers, coasts and other wetlands is worth up to £1.3billion per year to the UK; and the health benefits of living with a view of a green space is worth up to £300 per person per year. This YouTube link features Defra's Chief Scientist explaining the work: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KzgeShn5seg&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KzgeShn5seg&feature=player_embedded)
7. Our **Beachwatch 2010** report has just been published, funded by The Crown Estate. 788 volunteers took part, picking up over 2,388kg of litter on 35 beaches. <http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/uploads/Suffolk%20Beachwatch%20Newsletter%202010.pdf>
8. We have just produced a new leaflet "**An introduction the AONB**", coinciding with June's Suffolk Show. It answers our two most common questions - What is an AONB? What does the AONB Unit do? <http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/uploads/SCH%20Overview%20leaflet.pdf>
9. Following this month's announcement by Transport Minister Mike Penning MP, the decision has been made that **ship-to-ship oil transfer** off the Suffolk Coast will go ahead, as the only off-shore location in the UK.
10. **On our estuaries** the Orford river bank strengthening and footpath trial gained overwhelming community support at an event organised by our Estuaries Officer. The Stour and Orwell Forum took place at UCS with over 80 people attending and the Deben Estuary Partnership has now put a project team in place to develop the Deben Estuary Plan.
11. **New faces at the AONB Unit** include Francine Cordery, a student studying for an MSc in Environmental Management, who has started a volunteer placement to help research the proposed improvements to the Sailor's Path between Snape and Aldeburgh as part of our BALANCE Project. Sue Waters has also joined the team as a temporary Business Support Officer.

Nick Collinson

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