

Mendip Hills AONB Partnership Committee		
Committee meeting date:	19 th March 2020	Paper: A
Title:	Applications for Chair and/or Vice-Chair	
Presented by:	Jim Hardcastle, Mendip Hills AONB Manager	
To be voted on.		

1.0 Applications and process

According to the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership Terms of Reference 2018-2021, 'The Partnership Committee elects a Chair and Vice Chair, one of whom will be from one of the local authorities, to each serve a term of 2 years.' As Cllr Nigel Taylor, the current Chair of the AONB Partnership, is the only applicant that represents a local authority by default he will have to fill one of the roles.

It is recommended that as we have three applicants who would only like to be considered for the role of Vice-Chair, all other applicants have applied for both roles, the Partnership votes on the Vice-Chair role first. If Cllr Nigel Taylor is not voted in for this role, he by default remains the Chair.

Each applicant has submitted a written statement and has been asked to deliver a five-minute talk stating why they want this role. If they cannot attend, they have been asked to submit a short video or dial in via telephone. All applicants will be asked to leave the room and invited back individually to present and answer questions. Voting will be by a show of hands. In the event of a joint first place the Partnership will be asked to vote again only considering those applicants that have received the most votes.

Applicant Name	Vice-Chair	Chair
Prof. Danielle Schreve	Yes	No
Dr Susan McMillan	Yes	No
Owen Tebbutt	Yes	No
Cllr Nigel Taylor	Yes	Yes
Andrew Wear	Yes	Yes

Individual applications attached.

Prof. Danielle Schreve

I would like to be nominated for the role of Vice-Chair because, (*max 400 words, continue on a separate sheet*)

In my professional role, I am an internationally-recognised environmental scientist and professor in the Department of Geography at Royal Holloway University of London, where I teach and carry out research on climate change, biogeography and past environments. Since my first visit to the Mendip Hills over 25 years ago, I have been deeply engaged with the study of the changing landscape, fauna and early human occupants of this most special area. Ongoing activities include annual research excavations in Ebbor Gorge, collaboration with Wells and Mendip Museum to create new public engagement materials regarding Mendip's heritage, and my regular support for Mendip Rocks! events.

My work brings me into contact with diverse stakeholders, including non-departmental government bodies, wildlife trusts, museums, artists, special interest societies, archaeological and environmental consultancies, landowners and aggregates companies, existing links that I would build on for the benefit of the Mendip Hills AONB. I have advised Natural England and Historic England on policy regarding national strategic research and geoconservation themes, I currently guide the Geological Conservation Review concerning the adoption of "Ice Age" Sites of Special Scientific Interest and I have acted as a specialist internal reviewer for UNESCO World Heritage status applications. More widely, I have been an advocate for geology and Quaternary science, having previously served on the board of two national charitable, learned societies, as President of the Geologists' Association (2008-10, Vice President 2007-8 and 2010-11) and Vice-President of the Quaternary Research Association (2013-16). I am comfortable with all aspects of these roles, including chairing meetings, accountability and representing associations at key public events.

Outreach and public engagement are strong elements of my profile. My work has received widespread media coverage in local, national and international arenas and I have given my time extensively to local/regional special interest societies and events. I have published widely, for both specialist and non-specialist audiences. I particularly value the role of volunteers in widening community engagement and it has been a great pleasure to work alongside the Mendip Hills AONB Volunteer Rangers and Natural England's Young Wardens in the field.

Having discussed the requirements of the role with the current AONB Chair and Manager, I believe that my expertise in heritage and geoconservation, as well as wider environmental and climate change issues, would bring a new and complementary element to the existing AONB partnership at a time of exciting opportunities afforded by the recent Landscapes Review.

Dr Susan McMillan

I would like to apply for the role of Vice Chair of the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership and can bring a wide range of experience and skills to this role. I have a significant track record as a senior manager and leader in Higher Education (HE) in the South West and, prior to that, a 20+ year career working in the media, primarily for the BBC Natural History Unit in Bristol.

I have a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Science in Nature Conservation, which gave me a grounding in conservation management and environmental practice. I am a keen naturalist, bird watcher and Rambler, spending most weekends on the footpaths of Mendip. I also have a PhD which means I can interpret complex research, understand regulation and write reports relevant to contemporary science issues. I also have an extensive natural history and conservation network, regionally and nationally.

Working for over 20 years for the BBC Natural History Unit means that I have a strong understanding of how to communicate stories on science, nature and the environment. I also worked with many of the UK's wildlife and environmental organisations in this role. I pride myself on my ability to communicate effectively with people from all backgrounds – be they scientists, landowners, farmers, politicians, the general public or school children.

Working at a senior level in both the media and in higher education for the last 30 years means that I have strong organisational, planning and people skills. I have worked on many external partnerships and developed new relationships between HE and employers, charities, creative and cultural organisations, as well as working on projects with the city and regional councils (WECA, BANES). As a Senior Manager, I have experience of bringing together a wide range of organisations and providing strategic direction.

In my current role, as Head of School at Bath Spa University, I am an ambassador for the University and work externally with a diverse range of organisations and employers in the region. I chair many meetings, both internally and externally, and work with a range of stakeholders. I have to be non-partisan, politically aware and diplomatic, whether dealing with young people or working with community leaders, the council, VIPs or academics.

I am also on the Board of Governors at Bath Spa University and this means I have valuable experience of governance and business at the highest level. As a governor, I ensure sound financial, business and strategic planning for the University - be it declaring a climate emergency or ensuring the University signs up to the UN sustainability goals.

A major part of my work is to ensure widening participation and inclusivity in Higher Education and in the Creative Industries in Bristol and Bath. I have been part of a team developing initiatives working with the BBC and working with marginalized

communities and the Stephen Lawrence Trust. I am also involved with the government's Industrial Strategy plans for the region, through research projects, and am part of a working group of educators and science organisations setting up a UN Sustainability Goals Centre in Bristol.

The requirements for this role suggest that the relevant areas of Interest are landscape, heritage, health and wellbeing. However, the Glover Report talks about 'landscapes for everyone' and so diversifying and attracting a wider range of visitors to AONBs and National Parks in the future will be important. My experience of widening participation within higher education, my science communication experience from the media, may, therefore, be beneficial to the AONB partnership.

I have a passion for the environment and for the Mendip Hills. I lived on an old farm above West Harptree for 12 years and now live in one of the valleys leading from the Mendips to North Wootton. My neighbours are farmers, landowners and Mendip people and so, on a daily basis, I deal with all aspects of rural living, which enables me to understand issues from multiple perspectives. I feel strongly about ensuring the protection of the Mendip Hills for future generations and would be interested in assisting the AONB partnership to develop further opportunities to secure its long-term legacy.

Owen Tebbutt

I'd like to be nominated for the role of Vice-Chair because:

Having lived on the edge of the AONB in Wrington for 15 years, Mendip has become an important part of my, and my family's lives. We're all passionate users of the Hills, and are lucky to have access to it as our privileged playground.

As keen walkers, cyclists, cavers and climbers we spend many happy hours exploring the area, and have all become deeply attached to the landscape, its communities and its wildlife. It has become part of the fabric of our family, and has played an important part in the upbringing and education of our children.

With our passion for the area has come an appreciation for the history and heritage of the area, as well as a growing understanding of the pressures and challenges the AONB faces, both from human activities, threats to biodiversity, and invasive species & diseases.

My role as a National Trust Volunteer Ranger on Crook Peak has served to increase my practical awareness of the challenges the area faces, the opportunities available to make improvements, and the numerous stakeholders involved in making decisions and driving forward positive action.

A good example of this is the work I've done over the past 12 months to help survey and protect the adder population on Crook Peak and Wavering Down, where I've worked with a number of organisations to make practical improvements and improve joined up thinking.

Through my background as a marketing and strategy leader in a large IT company, I've been involved in a number of public/private partnerships and have worked closely with District Councils and other public sector stakeholders to deliver social, economic and environmental development programmes.

I have a good understanding of the inner workings of local government, and associated agencies, and appreciate the pressures they are under to balance support for areas like the AONB, alongside social progress, with diminishing resources.

My professional background has given me an ability to think and act strategically, to create clear and actionable plans, and to put the right resources in place to deliver the right outcomes and results, working as part of a closely-knit team. I pride myself on my pragmatic, positive 'can-do' attitude, and am by nature somebody who likes to get his hands dirty and make things happen.

Having worked in a number of volunteering roles, I have a lot of empathy for people who give up their free time to support good causes, and realise the importance of ensuring volunteers are well supported and well recognised for their contributions.

I see this as an ideal opportunity to use my skills and experiences to continue give positive things back to the area, so it can continue to thrive, and give family's like mine huge physical and mental benefits – but above all, to provide wildlife and fragile habitats the support they need to flourish.

Thank you.

Cllr Nigel Taylor

I have held the post of Chairman of the AONB for the last 1 year and 10 months, and have taken an active interest in the role and the work of the team under the direction of the Manager Jim Hardcastle.

I have attended almost all AONB Partnership meetings for over ten years, and don't think I have missed any, and have attended both National Association Seminars during my period as Chairman.

Jim has led the team with strength and vigour, and I should like to continue in this role, taking the AONB Partnership forward to greater cohesion and profile. I am keen to see the Somerset AONB's host the National meeting here soon, and would like to play an active part in helping the team to bring that to fruition. As the Somerset County Council Rep to the Partnership, and as the ongoing Chair of Somerset County Council, I believe that I can unlock doors and help in negotiations from a position gifted by that post. I have an absolute love affair with all things Mendip, and dream of the day that it expands further across the Mendip range.

I ask that you consider this as my heartfelt wish to retain the post for a little longer, yet assist in the development of others to take on the role at a later stage, when they will apply their own distinctive style to these roles, for the safe guardianship of the Mendip Hills A.O.N.B.

Cllr Nigel Taylor

Andrew Wear

Thank you for this opportunity as 50+ years within the social fabric through schooling, Young Farmers Club (YFC), Pony and Rugby Clubs, contract shepherding, NFU, and 23 years rehabilitating Fernhill Farm has forged my lasting relationship with the Mendip Hills. Annually grazing 4000 sheep over 5000 acres, I work with 30 land holders, some private and others managed by conservation bodies i.e. National Trust, Butterfly Trust, Avon and Somerset Wildlife Trust, all provide an intermit knowledge of this landscape and its inhabitants.

Having carried out this leadership role for the NFU (North Somerset Branch), YFC Wrington, and Shearing Committee at the Royal Bath and West Show, I welcome media coverage, whilst sharing skills with every age and ability. Representing England for decades, it was a true honour to receive the BISCA award for dedication to the British Isles sheep shearing community in 2019.

The Mendip Hills AONB Partnership promotes and coordinates the conservation and enhancement of the Mendip Hills AONB. Actively involved in projects such as Send A Cow, Grow it Global, Growing Schools, Food for Life, and Let Nature Feed Your Senses we provide first hand knowledge exchange to all our visitors through our Fernhill Farm Experience.

Previous beneficiaries of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) for our Eco-installations, we appreciate the support and offer our assistance to the Mendips Hills and other national and global objectives.

We feel a farmers voice is vital at this challenging time for agriculture and with the UK leaving the EU. The symptoms of intensive chemical agriculture are obvious, farmers need to ensure their livelihoods, and soil, plants, animals and Humans need improved health. As previous winners of the Otter Trophy from the Farm and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), I take a leading role on managing grazing livestock to build biodiversity naturally from the soil upwards.

A recent botanist study revealed 120 plant species /1km² at Fernhill farm, which is three times the national average for a crop or vegetable growing farm and clearly highlights the beneficial effects of grazing livestock. We welcomed a British Crayfish Conservation Ark site in our WET system and explore ideas of wilding parts of the UK.

Retrained in Holistic Management we are amongst the first UK Regenerative farmers, producing meat and fibre from multipurpose Mendip style sheep. A visit to Allan Savory's ranch in Zimbabwe and Patagonia OVIS21 confirmed high impact grazing with large mobs of herbivores, allowing grazed plants time to replenish is the ultimate soil ecosystem that supports all species. Soil gives what it has received and a grassland sword photosynthesising offers the fastest carbon sequestration.

Over 20 years adopting government agricultural improvement schemes, Conservation Grazing and now Ecological Verification, I bring an environmental, social and political awareness to Agriculture within the AONB regions.

A Wear.