

## **AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW**

### ***Purpose***

To outline the programme for the preparation and publication of the AONB Management Plan 2026-2031.

### ***Recommendations***

That the JAC

- A. Requests that the four local authorities delegate the preparation and production of the next Wye Valley AONB Management Plan to the Wye Valley National Landscape Team.
- B. Endorses the programme for the review and publication of the AONB Management Plan 2026-2031.

### ***Key Issues***

- The existing Wye Valley AONB Management Plan (2021-2026) needs to be reviewed, under the Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW) Act Section 89, by the end of 2026.
- The current Wye Valley AONB Memorandum of Understanding 2021-2024/25, signed by the four local authorities, delegates the Management Plan review to the AONB Partnership.
- The proposed Management Plan review programme is appended.
- Following the previous Management Plan review it was recognised that a comprehensive review was required, rather than a 'light touch' approach.
- Natural England and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) are due to finalise production of guidance for AONB Management Plan reviews.

### ***Reasons***

Sections 89-90 of the Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 require local authorities to review adopted and published AONB Management Plans at intervals of not more than five years. The CROW Act also requires local authorities to 'act jointly' in the preparation and review of AONB Management Plans.

The current Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Herefordshire Council, Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council and Monmouthshire County Council formally delegated the publishing, reviewing and monitoring of the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan to the AONB Partnership. The MoU was extended by 12 months from 2021-2024, to March 2025. It is anticipated that the delegation will continue because it mitigates the shared risk of not delivering on statutory duties.

### ***Implications***

The review of the current Wye Valley AONB Management Plan (2021-2026) must be complete by the end of 2026. In the current Plan it was recognised that a ‘full review’ will be applicable for the preparation of the next Plan (2026-2031).

Attached below is the proposed programme for that Management Plan review. The Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) and Technical Officers Working Party (TOWP) will oversee the review conducted by the National Landscape Team. The review will involve a wide range of stakeholders and public consultation. Key local authority members and officers will be closely involved in the process and each local authority will ultimately approve and adopt the final Plan individually. AONB Management Plans also fall under the requirements of Habitats Regulation Assessments and Strategic Environmental Assessments. Formal guidance is awaited from NRW on behalf of Welsh Government and Natural England on behalf of DEFRA.

Work will commence shortly at an officer level on the Management Plan review. It is intended that the National Landscape Partnership Winter Seminar is used to focus on the review.

### ***Background***

The previous four statutory AONB Management Plans have been produced by the AONB Unit on behalf of the local authorities, acting jointly.

The CRoW Act 2000 (Sections 89 and 90) require local authorities to publish AONB Management Plans, at not more than five years intervals, which formulate their policy for the management of their AONB and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it. The current Management Plan 2021-2026 is available on the National Landscape website <https://www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/management-plans/>

## Wye Valley National Landscape

### AONB Management Plan (2026-31) Review Programme - DRAFT

Task No.	Task	Who	Suggested timetable
<b>Formalities and Notification</b>			
1.	Endorse outline Management Plan Review programme	JAC	Nov 2024
2.	Authorisation from local authorities to undertake review on their behalf	NL Team	Dec 2024
3.	S90 (1) Notify Natural England & Natural Resources Wales	NL Team	Dec 2024
4.	Announce requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	NL Team	Jan 2025
5.	Finalise process and timetable of review	NL TOWP	Feb 2025
<b>Scoping</b>			
6.	Consider strengths and weaknesses of current Plan and new strategic priorities	NL Team with core partners	Feb 2025
7.	Endorse consultation programme	JAC	Mar 2025
8.	Online survey to gather initial comments and views	NL Team	Mar-Apr 2025
9.	Publish State of AONB Report	NL Team	Mar 2025
10.	JAC/ Partnership 'workshop' on current Plan, policies, evidence, positions and new strategic priorities	NL Team	Mar 2025
11.	Review and assess other new evidence, law, policies, strategies, plans and issues which are of relevance (including the Outcomes Framework, requirement for climate change adaptation plans etc).	NL Team	Mar-Apr 2025
12.	Identify main areas requiring update or new work	NL Team	May 2025
13.	Collate responses & views on issues from existing sources	NL Team	May-Jun 2025
14.	Start SEA Scoping Study, collation of data and evidence of other plans and programmes, seek input from the Environmental bodies.	NL Team	Jun 2025
<b>Consultation</b>			
15.	Undertake targeted consultations/participatory workshops with relevant groups on current Plan, policies, evidence, positions and new strategic priorities	External support to prepare content. NL team to arrange invites, hall bookings, host events etc	Jun 2025

16.	Identify key issues, aims and objectives	NL Team/Partnership	July 2025
17.	Draft new wording for consultation draft of revised Plan	NL Team	Aug 2025
18.	Write SEA report, setting context and objectives, establishing baseline evidence and indicators (Stage A). Assess effects of objectives, policies and actions and for SEA and/or SA (stage B). Collate Environmental Report for SEA/SA (stage C) plus non-technical summary	NL Team	Sept 2025
19.	Consultation Draft reviewed	TOWP	Oct 2025
20.	Run public consultation on new draft plan and SEA/SA report (Stage D). 12 weeks. Consult on scoping report for SEA	NL Team	Oct 2025 – Jan 2026
21.	Undertake specific targeted consultations/participatory workshops with relevant groups as required	External support to prepare content. NL team to arrange invites, hall bookings etc NL Team	Autumn 2025
22.	Consider comments from consultation and amend plan	NL Team	Feb-Mar 2026
23.	Initial report on consultation and suggested amendments	NL Team & JAC	Mar 2026
<b>Adoption</b>			
24.	Draft plan to JAC for approval	NL Team TOWP JAC	May June July
25.	Send to Natural England for formal observations	NL Team	July 2026
26.	Consider comments from formal observations and amend Plan	NL Team	Aug 2026
27.	Get new plan formally approved by Local Authorities and JAC Chair	Local Authorities	Sept 2026
28.	Design, printing and distribution	NL Team	Oct 2026
29.	Send approved plan to Secretary of State	NL Team	Oct 2026
30.	Publish statement of how SEA taken into account and changes	NL Team	Oct 2026