

AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

Purpose

To outline the programme for the preparation and publication of the AONB Management Plan 2020-2025.

Recommendations

That the JAC

- A. Welcomes the delegation by the four local authorities to the AONB Partnership for the preparation and production of the AONB Management Plan by the AONB Unit.
- B. Endorses the programme for the review of the AONB Management Plan.

Key Issues

- The current Wye Valley AONB Management Plan (2015-2020) needs to be reviewed, under the CRoW Act Section 89, by the end of 2020.
- The Wye Valley AONB Memorandum of Understanding 2018-2021, signed by the four local authorities, delegates the Management Plan review to the AONB Partnership.
- The proposed Management Plan review programme is appended.
- In due course, the Local Authorities and the JAC will need to decide the extent of Management Plan review required, whether an appropriately 'light touch' approach should be taken or a comprehensive review is needed and justified.
- Defra, Natural England and the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) have produced outline guidance on the next round of AONB Management Plan reviews. The Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) are currently reviewing their own guidance.

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.

Herefordshire Council, Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council and Monmouthshire County Council have formally delegated the publishing, reviewing and monitoring of the AONB Management Plan to the AONB Partnership. This was included in the Wye Valley AONB Memorandum of Understanding 2018-2021, signed by the four local

authorities earlier this year. The previous three statutory AONB Management Plans have been produced by the AONB Unit on behalf of the local authorities.

The joint Defra, Natural England and the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) guidance produced in 2011 stated that

Individual AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards should decide the extent of a review required. An appropriately “light touch” approach may be taken by some, whilst others may decide a comprehensive review is needed and justified. AONB Partnership and Conservation Boards will know those areas of their Plans or themes which are constants and do not need re-visiting. They will also have a good idea of the deficiencies and issues to be addressed under the review.

Implications

The review of the current Wye Valley AONB Management Plan (2015-2020) must be complete by the end of 2020. Attached is the proposed programme for the Management Plan review. The Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) and Technical Officers Working Party (TOWP) will oversee the review conducted by the AONB Unit. 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 European Directives on Habitats Regulation Assessments and Strategic Environmental Assessments. Consideration will also be given to undertaking a broader Sustainability Appraisal for the Management Plan given the importance of the social and environmental context in this area. Formal guidance is awaited from Welsh Government on whether a Health Impact Assessment may also be required, but potentially that could also be wrapped into the same overall appraisal.

Work will commence shortly at an officer level on the Management Plan review. It is yet to be determined whether a ‘light touch’ approach should be taken rather than a comprehensive review. The revised Management Plan will need to be updated and address, and be relevant to, changed context and priorities but could also retain tried and tested policies which do not need changing.

Background

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 2015-2020 is available on the AONB website <http://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/index.php/about-us/management-and-guidance/management-plan-2015-2020/> .