

## **AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW**

### ***Purpose***

To determine the extent of the review required for the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 and receive an update on the programme for the preparation and publication of Management Plan.

### ***Recommendation***

That the JAC endorses a balanced and proportionate review of the AONB Management Plan which modifies, updates and simplifies the current Plan, but builds on the sound foundation of the existing Plan.

### ***Key Issues***

- The current Wye Valley AONB Management Plan (2015-2020) needs to be reviewed, under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 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 Management Plan review programme is appended.
- In mid-July Biodiversity, Landscape and Planning officers from the Local Authorities met to discuss the format of the Review.
- The conclusion was that a balanced review is needed which modifies, updates and simplifies the existing Plan, being proportionate but slightly more than a 'light touch' review, while building on the sound foundation of the existing Plan.

### ***Reasons***

Biodiversity, Landscape and Planning officers from Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Monmouthshire local planning authorities met at the AONB Office on 17<sup>th</sup> July to discuss the format of the AONB Management Plan Review. Conclusions, in the form of a SWOT analysis, were:

#### **Strengths**

- The Plan 'adds value' to funding bids and grant applications.
- The Management Plan has many tried and tested policies which do not need changing.
- The Management Plan 'adds value' to local planning authority decisions and is useful for problematic applications &/or evidence in Public Inquiries.
- Linkages between Special Qualities, Landscape Management Zones and constraints (Activities & Pressures) are useful.

### Weaknesses

- The Plan relies on county Landscape Character Assessments (LCAs) some of which are now 20 years old.
- Needs to look forward in context of climate change and future land use.
- Document is lengthy, can appear overly complex with lengthy tables, and repetitive in places.
- No obligation on the local authorities to deliver the Plan (although that allows it to be aspirational).

### Opportunities

- Make next Plan fully digital, therefore rationalised (and simplified) for on-line viewing.
- the ‘Strategic Objectives’ could be referred to as ‘Policies’ (under section 89 of the CRoW Act).
- Framing needed in context of Climate Change and Well-being.
- Clear ‘strategy’ on “What is not acceptable”.
- More pictures, especially of Special Qualities, and value judgement of ‘good practice’.
- Strengthened proposals/context for AONB Management Plans may be outcome from Review of Designated Landscapes in England & Wales.

### Threats

- Being out of step with other legislation and strategic documents such as Well-being Plans, Area Statements and post Brexit agri-environment schemes.
- Getting bogged down in full-blown Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
- Divergent proposals and outcomes from Review of Designated Landscapes in England & Wales.

### ***Implications***

The above SWOT analysis identifies that the existing Management Plan remains a sound foundation on which to base the next Plan. The core of the Plan is still robust and the timetable difference with other strategies & legislation would seem to make a ‘full review’ more applicable to the preparation of the subsequent Plan (2025-2030). The review of the current Wye Valley AONB Management Plan (2015-2020) must be complete by the end of 2020. The proposal is for a proportionate and balanced review which modifies, updates and simplifies the existing Plan, but retains tried and tested policies and content as appropriate. Consequently it may be expedient to call this a ‘light touch *Plus*’ review.

The review programme for the Management Plan is attached and will be modified as required and reported to the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) and Technical Officers Working Party (TOWP) who 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. Each local authority will ultimately approve and adopt the final Plan individually under Section 89 of the CRoW Act 2000.

AONB Management Plans fall under the requirements of European Directives on Habitats Regulation Assessments (HRA) and Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA). A Sustainability Appraisal and Health Impact Assessment (HIA) will also be undertaken. The Management Plan review programme (attached) will be updated and address, as appropriate, any changed context and priorities as the review progresses.

### **Background**

The CRoW Act 2000 (Sections 89 and 90) require local authorities to publish AONB Management Plans, at not more than five year 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/>.

### APPENDIX 1:

## **Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 Review Programme**

### **Stages and outline timetable for review process.**

Update October 2018

<b>TASK</b>	<b>WHO</b>	<b>EXPECTED TIMETABLE</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<b>FORMALITIES AND NOTIFICATION</b>			
Authorisation from local authorities to undertake review on their behalf [CRoW s89(9)]	AONB Unit	June 18	✓
Propose process and timetable of review	JAC	July 18	✓
Notify Natural England & NRW [CRoW s90(1a)]. Other stakeholders – identify any beyond Partnership.	AONB Unit	Oct 18	✓
Announce requirement for SEA, HRA & SA	Partnership	Oct 18	✓
<b>SCOPING</b>			
Evaluation workshop on current Plan.	Partnership	July 18	✓
Discussion of Plan review priorities among AONB Team, TOWP, JAC, Partnership and with key partners.	Partnership	June-Sept 18	✓
Analyse key stakeholders in Management Plan review process	AONB Team	June-Aug 18	✓
Report on impact and strengths/weaknesses of Plan.	AONB Team [TOWP/JAC]	June-Oct 18 [Oct/Nov ?]	✓
Gather information relating to new evidence/ issues	AONB Team	June-Oct 18	□
List and assess relevance of new strategies/ plans in England & Wales	AONB Team	June-Aug 18	□
Collate community views on issues from existing sources	AONB Team	June-Oct 18	
Write scoping report for SEA & HRA, setting context and objectives, establishing baseline evidence and indicators (stage A)	AONB Team	July-Oct 18	

Consult on scoping report for SEA & HRA	With statutory agencies	Nov 18	
Publish update to State of the AONB report	AONB Team	Nov 18	
<b>REVIEW</b>			
Assess individual sections of plan and agree main areas for revisions and structure [CRoW s89(10a)].	AONB Team/ Partnership	June-July 18	<input type="checkbox"/>
Undertake specific targeted consultations /participatory workshops with relevant groups	Partnership & wider	July-Oct 18	
Reassess main issues, aims and objectives. Redraft, and discuss with relevant groups.	Partnership	Autumn 18	
Work on topic sections with relevant groups (Working Groups, Area groups, etc) – detailed issues, policies and updated actions.	Partnership	Autumn 18	
Assess effects of objectives, policies & actions and for SEA and develop alternatives. (Stage B) Element of independent review required, inc LA Scrutiny	AONB Team	Winter 18/19	
Collate new draft plan. Prepare Environmental Report for SEA & HRA (Stage C) and non-technical summary.	AONB Team	Winter 18/19	
Approve Draft for Consultation	JAC	March 19	
<b>CONSULTATION &amp; APPROVAL OF FULL PLAN</b>			
Run public consultation on new draft plan and SEA report (Stage D) for 12 week period.	AONB Team/ Partnership	March-May 19	
Consider comments from consultation and amend plan	AONB Team	June-August 19	
Report on consultation and suggested amendments [CRoW s89(10)]	Partnership	August 19	
Send to Natural England & NRW/WG [CRoW s90(1b)] for formal observations	AONB Team	August 9	
Consider comments from formal observations and amend plan [CRoW s90(1c)]	AONB Team	Sept 19	
JAC Endorsement of Adoption Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-2025	TOWP/JAC	Oct/Nov 19	
Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 formally approved by local authorities	Local authorities	Nov-Dec 19	
Design & publication of Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-2025	AONB Team	Early 20	
Send approved Plan to Secretary of State	AONB Team	By March 20	
Publish Statement on how SEA & HRA taken into account and changes.	AONB Team	March 20	
Implement and monitor Plan and its effects (SEA Stage E).	Partnership	March 20+	