

**SUBJECT: WYE VALLEY AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN 2021-2026**

**MEETING: Individual Cabinet Member Report**

**DATE: 10 March 2021**

**DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All AONB Wards**

**1. PURPOSE:**

- 1.1 To formally adopt the revised management plan for the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as required by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act).

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 To adopt the finalised Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2021 – 2026.

**3. KEY ISSUES:**

- 3.1 Section 89 of CRoW Act 2000 places a duty on all local authorities to produce, jointly if appropriate, a management plan for any AONBs lying within their boundaries and to review them every five years.
- 3.2 The first statutory management plan for the Wye Valley AONB was produced in 2004 and covered the period 2004 to 2009. Its first review covered the period 2009 to 2014 and second review 2015 – 2020.
- 3.3 The new plan has been subject to extensive public consultation, including a 10 weeks public consultation period and two public ‘drop-in’ sessions alongside meetings with key stakeholders. Screening Reports for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) were also consulted on.
- 3.4 A copy of the finalised plan for adoption is appended and the consultation documents can be viewed at <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/management-plans/>. The Joint Advisory Committee has considered the revised plan at each stage, including considering the consultation results and proposed amendments. Strong Communities Select Committee also considered progress on the revised plan on 23 January 2020.

- 3.5 The Joint Advisory Committee endorsed the realignment of the 5 year period of the AONB Management Plan to cover 2021-2026 and approved the Post Consultation Draft version of the AONB Management Plan on 2 November 2020, recommending the Plan for adoption by the local authorities and government agencies, subject to the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) modified screening.
- 3.6 Natural Resources Wales (NRW) had previously endorsed the conclusion of the HRA Screening Report. Following a request from Natural England (NE) a revised HRA Screening Report was submitted and NE now also agrees with the conclusion that the modifications to the Plan can be screened out from further stages of assessment because significant effects are unlikely to occur, either alone or in combination.
- 3.7 This Management Plan, like its predecessors, is intended to provide guidance and strategic objectives, giving support and direction to help steer positive landscape change, particularly to those bodies that make up the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee and the wider AONB Partnership. It also provides guidance to the local communities and many landowners, residents and visitors in the area. The Management Plan is therefore for all the bodies and individuals whose actions affect the AONB and who can play an important part in helping to conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the outstanding landscape of the lower Wye Valley, for the benefit of both current and future generations.

**4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):**

- 4.1 As noted the review of the plan has been subject to formal Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) and will provide a framework within which the primary purposes of AONB designation can be maintained sustainably.
- 4.2 Positive impacts are identified through conserved and enhanced landscape and the well-being of current and future generations through access to that landscape.

**5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

| <b>Option</b>                                    | <b>Benefits</b> | <b>Risks</b>   | <b>Comments</b>  |
|--|-----------------|--|--|
| Not to approve the review of the Wye Valley AONB | None            | Reviewing the AONB management plan every five years is a statutory duty under Section 89 of CRoW Act 2000. | Whilst the AONB unit undertakes the review jointly on behalf of the partner authorities, the responsibility to adopt |

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|---|--|--|--|
| Management Plan 2021-2026   |  | Adverse impact on the Wye Valley AONB partnership and funding. | the resulting plan rests with the Council. |
| Approve the review of the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 | Meets the statutory requirements under Section 89 of CRoW Act 2000.<br><br>Will ensure the actions of the AONB unit, the AONB partners and others are guided by an appropriate and up to date management plan. | None   |  |

## 6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 6.1 Progress will be monitored against the Management Plan Objectives and the Wye Valley AONB Unit's annual work programme / funding agreements reported to, and scrutinised by, the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee.

## 7. REASONS:

- 7.1 The preparation of a management plan for the Wye Valley AONB and its periodic review is a statutory requirement as set out on the main report. The CRoW Act also requires that the County Council, as with all relevant authorities, should have regard to the purposes of the AONB in executing any of its functions which could affect the AONB.

## 8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 There are no additional resource implications. The AONB unit is funded through local authority contributions from Monmouthshire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Forest of Dean Councils and grant aid from Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Government and Defra.

## 9. CONSULTEES:

Chief Operating Officer MonLife

Cabinet

SLT

Strong Communities Select Committee – 23 January 2020:

### Chair's Conclusion:

The committee fully supports this excellent document and are happy that you progress to the next stage, which is agreement by the Joint Advisory Committee.

**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

Appendix 1: Equality and Future Generations Evaluation

Appendix 2: Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2021-26

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