



<u>Portfolio Holder Decision</u> <u>Making Session and date/time</u>
Planning, Housing and Commissioning (Central)
4 March 2014 10am

<u>Item</u>
1
<u>Public</u>

## **SHROPSHIRE HILLS AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN 2014-19**

**Responsible Officer** Andy Evans, Head of Economic Growth & Prosperity  
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### **1. Summary**

This report presents for formal approval the new statutory Management Plan for the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for 2014-19.

The Plan has been prepared by the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership with wide involvement of stakeholders, and the necessary stages of public consultation and formal observations by Natural England have been completed.

The final draft of the Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2014-19, can be found at <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/looking-after/management-plan/>

### **2. Recommendations**

- A. To approve the Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2014-19.

Reasons for decision:

Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council, as the two local authorities falling within the Shropshire Hills AONB, are required to put in place a new Management Plan for the AONB by 31 March 2014.

## **REPORT**

### **3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**

#### Risk Management Appraisal

There is no provision for derogation from the statutory timescale for approval of the Plan, but there is no financial or other penalty in the event of late approval. The Management Plan should help to secure the future of the AONB. Its production and the examination of links with economic and social issues, including through the Sustainability Appraisal, has helped to develop partnership and common understanding, and should help to reduce potential conflicts. Production of the Management Plan is a condition of Defra core funding for the AONB Partnership, and funding will be increasingly tied to its implementation.

## Human Rights & Equalities Appraisal

The Management Plan seeks to encourage equality of access and opportunity.

## Environmental Appraisal

The main purpose of the Management Plan is to conserve and enhance the environment of the Shropshire Hills.

## Community / Consultations Appraisal

Formal public consultation on the draft Plan ran from July to September 2013. Development of the Management Plan by the broad inclusive AONB Partnership with 40 members.

## 4. Financial Implications

Shropshire Council administers the expenditure and income on behalf of the AONB Partnership. Details of the total expenditure and income in operating the AONB Partnership are shown in the table below. In the first financial year, Shropshire Council contributes £40,830 towards the AONB Partnership with the remaining £896,532 being funded through external contributions to the Partnership.

	Expenditure		Income	
	Revenue	Capital	Revenue	Capital
<b>First financial year budget</b>	£937,362	-	£937,362	-
<b>Funded By:</b>				
Shropshire Council	-	-	£40,830	-
External Contributions	-	-	£896,532	-
<b>On-going annual budget</b>	£900,000	-	£900,000	-
<b>Funded By:</b>				
Shropshire Council	-	-	£40,830	-
External Contributions	-	-	£859,170	-

## 5. Background

The Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a national designation covering 23% of Shropshire, with the principal purpose to 'conserve and enhance natural beauty'. The AONB Management Plan is a statutory plan for the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, required under the Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. S89(2) of the Act states "*the relevant local authority in respect of an area of outstanding natural beauty shall... prepare and publish a plan which formulates their policy for the management of the area of outstanding natural beauty and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it.*" Timetables set out in the Act required approval of a Management Plan by April 2004 and its review every five years, i.e. this time by the end of March 2014. The CROW Act requires local authorities to 'act jointly' in the preparation of the Management Plan, and the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership is the body established to do this. The Partnership, with 40 members, is formally a 'Joint Advisory Committee' to the two local authorities into whose area the AONB falls, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.

## Process of Plan Review

The local authorities formally agreed to the AONB Partnership leading preparation of the Management Plan on their behalf. However, final approval of the Plan is required by each individual authority. The draft Management Plan has been prepared by the AONB Partnership over 2012 and 2013 with wide involvement. Relevant Council officers and members have been closely involved with the preparation of the Plan through the AONB Partnership itself, and its Management Board and Working Groups.

A period of public consultation on the draft Management Plan was held from July to September 2013. 20 written responses were received, and minor amendments were made to the Plan. The AONB Partnership endorsed the revised draft Plan on 19 November 2013, with a small number of minor changes. Formal observations were received from Natural England (as statutory consultee) on 9 January 2014. Their letter explains that '*Natural England considers that the Plan meets the statutory requirement*', and continues '*This is an excellent document that brings together a wide range of issues and concerns... In conclusion, Natural England recognises that the production of this final draft represents the culmination of many months of intensive work on the part of the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership and particularly the AONB team. We congratulate you on this huge effort, and for the significant contribution the review makes to the ensuring that 15 per cent of the land area of England is under the protection of a statutory AONB management plan.*'

## **Plan Content and Form**

The Management Plan sets out a range of Policies, as required by the CROW Act. Some of these relate to planning matters, and their relationship with planning policies has been closely discussed with planning officers and is made clear. Approval of the Management Plan will mark the formal adoption of these Policies by the local authorities. A process of Sustainability Appraisal has been applied to the draft Policies and Positions to examine their implications against a range of economic, social and environmental considerations and to look at alternatives where potential conflicts are identified. This resulted in some refinements, mostly at earlier draft stages.

The Plan includes a programme of Actions, including current and proposed activities led by a wide variety of organisations. The AONB Partnership has core funding from Defra and the local authorities, but many aspects of the Management Plan are not supported by specific budgets of any organisation, and some of the Actions included are aspirational projects. The Actions are reviewed periodically with a progress update.

## **6. Conclusions**

This report presents for formal approval the new statutory Management Plan for the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for 2014-19 required under the Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. The Plan has been prepared by the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership with wide involvement of stakeholders, and the necessary stages of public consultation and formal observations by Natural England have been completed.

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information):**

Final draft Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2014-19, at <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/looking-after/management-plan/>

**Key Decision: Yes**

**Included within Forward Plan: Yes**

**If a Key Decision and not included in the Forward Plan have the General Exception or Special Urgency Procedures been complied with: N/A**

**Name and Portfolio of Executive Member responsible for this area of responsibility:**

Cllr Mal Price, Planning, Housing and Commissioning (Central)

**Local Members:**

Cllr Charlotte Barnes Bishop's Castle  
Cllr Robert Tindall Brown Clee  
Cllr Heather Kidd Chirbury  
Cllr David Evans Church Stretton & Craven Arms  
Cllr Richard Huffer Clee  
Cllr Gwilym Butler Cleobury Mortimer  
Cllr Madge Shineton Cleobury Mortimer  
Cllr Nigel Hartin Clun  
Cllr Cecilia Motley Corvedale  
Cllr Roger A Evans Longden  
Cllr Tracey Huffer Ludlow East  
vacant Ludlow North  
Cllr Vivienne Parry Ludlow South  
Cllr David Turner Much Wenlock  
Cllr Tudor Bebb Rea Valley  
Cllr Tim Barker Severn & Burnell  
Cllr Claire M Wild Severn Valley

**Appendices:**

**Declaration of Interest**

- I have no interest to declare in respect of this report

Signed ..... Date .....

NAME: .....

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR: .....

- I have to declare an interest in respect of this report

Signed ..... Date .....

NAME: .....

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR: .....

(Note: If you have an interest you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter.)

For the reasons set out in the report, I agree the recommendation(s) in the report entitled .....

Signed .....

Portfolio Holder for .....

Date .....

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and pro-forma is returned to Democratic Services for processing.

Additional comment : .....

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Note: If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Chief Executive and the Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance (S151 Officer) and, if there are staffing implications the Head of Human Resources (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law.

Note to Portfolio Holder: Your decision will now be published and communicated to all Members of Council. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed from publication.