



Committee and Date Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership	Item
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19 June 2012	5
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AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

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Summary

This paper provides members with a summary of the process proposed for the AONB Management Plan, and material for discussion in a workshop session.

Background

1. The process of review of the Management Plan is now under way. Appendix 1 gives a detailed breakdown of the stages and timetable, including the necessary stages to fulfil statutory requirements of both the Plan review process itself and Strategic Environmental Assessment.
2. Following the workshop session evaluating the last Management Plan held at the Partnership meeting in October 2011, the main purpose of the session at this meeting will be to review the Strategic Priorities, and the Policies and Positions.
3. Strategic Priorities
The following priorities were agreed for the 2009-14 Management Plan:

Valuing, conserving and enhancing what we have

Keeping the Shropshire Hills countryside thriving

Shifting to low carbon

Adapting for the future, working alongside nature

Helping people to connect with the AONB

It is proposed to amend these slightly to bring them into line with the four objectives now adopted nationally by the AONB family:

- Conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, ensuring they can meet the challenges of the future.
- Support the economic and social well-being of local communities in ways which contribute to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty.
- Promote public understanding and enjoyment of the nature and culture of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and encourage people to take action for their conservation.
- Value, sustain, and promote the benefits that the UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty provide for society, including clean air and water, food, carbon storage and other services vital to the nation's health and well-being.

The proposed theme headings for the new Management Plan are:

Conserving and enhancing

Prosperity and wellbeing (including low carbon aspects)

Enjoyment and participation

Benefits to society (including ecosystem services)

4. Policies and Positions

It is proposed that most of the Policies and Positions agreed in the last Management Plan can remain. However it will be important to identify at this stage any which may need amending or removing, or any new areas where Policies or Positions should be developed. In particular it may be desirable to include a new overarching policy for conserving and managing the AONB, picking up on the points made in the SAMDev paper. Policies 38 and 39 on climate change adaptation perhaps need developing in the light of developments in thinking through the Lawton review. Policies 42 and 43 on the Wrekin Forest area need updating or removing, or perhaps matching with equivalent ones for other sub-areas. The full list of the Policies and Positions from the last Plan is given at Appendix 2 as a basis for discussion.

5. Other Plans and Policies

As part of the Scoping exercise for Sustainability Appraisal, and to inform the strategic sections of the new Plan, it is necessary to identify relevant international and national commitments, laws and policies, and government and local government strategies. The list prepared last time has been extensively revised and is included in Appendix 3 for comment by members, in particular with regard to any omissions.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note the information provided and offer comments.

List of Background Papers Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2009-14 http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/looking-after/management-plan/
Human Rights Act Appraisal The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.
Environmental Appraisal The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.
Risk Management Appraisal Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.
Community / Consultations Appraisal The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.
Appendices Appendix 1 Stages and outline timetable for Management Plan review process Appendix 2 Management Plan 2009-14 Policies & Positions Appendix 3 Review of relevant Plans and Policies

Appendix 1 Stages and outline timetable for Management Plan review process

TASK	WHO	EXPECTED TIMETABLE
FORMALITIES AND NOTIFICATION		
Authorisation from local authorities to undertake review on their behalf	AONB Team	June 12
Agree process and timetable of review	Partnership	June 12
Notify Natural England S90(1). Other stakeholders – identify any beyond Partnership.	Partnership	June 12
Announce requirement for SEA	Partnership	June 12
SCOPING		
Evaluation workshop on current Plan.	Partnership	Oct 11
Discussion of Plan review priorities among Team, Partnership, Management Board, Working Groups and with key partners.	Partnership	June-Aug 12
Analyse key stakeholders in Management Plan review process	AONB Team	June-Aug 12
Report on impact and strengths/weaknesses of Plan.	AONB Team	June-Aug 12
Gather information relating to new evidence/ issues	AONB Team	June-Aug 12
List and assess relevance of new strategies/ plans, including in Wales	AONB Team	June-Aug 12
Collate community views on issues from existing sources	AONB Team	June-Aug 12
Write scoping report for SEA, setting context and objectives, establishing baseline evidence and indicators (stage A)	AONB Team	June-Aug 12
Consult on scoping report for SEA	With statutory agencies	Sept 12
Publish update to State of the AONB report	AONB Team	Nov 12?
REVIEW		
Assess individual sections of plan and agree main areas for revisions and structure (S89(10a)).	AONB Team/ Partnership	June 12
Undertake specific targeted consultations /participatory workshops with relevant groups	Partnership & wider	Summer 12
Reassess main issues, aims and objectives. Redraft, and discuss with relevant groups.	Partnership	Summer 12
Work on topic sections with relevant groups (Working Groups, Area groups, etc) – detailed issues, policies and updated actions.	Partnership	Autumn 12
Assess effects of objectives, policies & actions and for SEA and develop alternatives. (Stage B) Element of independent review required.	AONB Team	Winter 12/13
Collate new draft plan and get designed. Prepare Environmental Report for SEA (Stage C) and non-technical summary.	AONB Team	Winter 12/13
Approve Consultation Draft	Partnership	March 13
CONSULTATION & APPROVAL OF FULL PLAN		
Run public consultation on new draft plan and SEA report (Stage D). 12 week period.	AONB Team/ Partnership	March/Apr 13
Consider comments from consultation and amend plan	AONB Team	May 13
Report on consultation and suggested amendments	Partnership	June 12
Send to Natural England for formal observations	AONB Team	July 13
Consider comments from formal observations and amend plan	AONB Team	Sept 13
Get new plan formally approved through Cabinet of local authorities	Local authorities	Oct 13 -
Printing and distribution	AONB Team	Early 14
Send approved Plan to Secretary of State	AONB Team	By March 14
Publish Statement on how SEA taken into account and changes.	AONB Team	March 14
Implement and monitor Plan and its effects (SEA Stage E).	Partnership	March 14 on

Appendix 2 Management Plan 2009-14 Policies & Positions

POLICIES

POLICY 1. Organisations which regulate designated sites and features, environmental quality and amenity should make full use of available measures to ensure the highest standards appropriate to a nationally protected landscape are achieved in the AONB. A supportive and awareness-raising approach should be used with landowners where possible, but mechanisms for legal enforcement should also be used where necessary in more serious cases. Known 'blackspots' and problems should be addressed and tackled, but consideration given to the secondary purposes of AONBs to have regard for the needs of rural industries and local communities, and to promote sustainable development.

POLICY 2. Consideration of the purposes of designation in all decisions affecting the AONB should reflect sustainability and the full range of special qualities defined in the Management Plan as well as landscape character and visual amenity.

POLICY 3. Even with small structures not requiring planning permission, care should be taken to avoid loss of wildness. On many hills and in more secluded valleys, especially where there are few man-made objects, this will mean a preference for no structures at all. In cases where structures are essential, their location and design may need to be modified to reduce the impact on wildness.

POLICY 4. Farm diversification enterprises need to be in harmony with the environment and not degrade this resource, which also provides an important economic asset for the future. The impact of business-related traffic to and from the property will be an important consideration, including cumulative effects.

POLICY 5. Small scale quarrying to supply local materials for restoring traditional buildings and structures is supported, subject to careful consideration of environmental factors, including the conservation value of former quarries where these may be reopened.

POLICY 6. Opportunities created by technological advance should be sought to remove or reduce the prominence of hilltop telecommunications structures.

POLICY 7. New overhead cables should be avoided where possible, with emphasis given to undergrounding or off-grid options.

POLICY 8. Design of new agricultural buildings including location, structure and materials should be of a high standard appropriate to the AONB. Efforts should be made to improve existing buildings where these are of a poor standard.

POLICY 9. Exceptionally where a significant adverse impact associated with development cannot be avoided, appropriate mitigation measures including habitat creation or community benefits, should be sought.

POLICY 10. The siting, design and specification of new developments for tourism and recreation should be to high standards of environmental sensitivity and sustainability. The following guidelines are recommended:

- Single developments of more than around ten accommodation units are less likely to be supported in small settlements and open countryside.
- Large parks of static caravans, cabins or chalets are likely to be intrusive. Smaller sites with good landscaping are preferable, and facilities for touring caravans and camping generally have a low impact as there are fewer permanent structures.
- Built facilities for recreation should only be allowed where their location and the activities they support are compatible with the special qualities of the AONB.

POLICY 11. Road improvement schemes within and outside the AONB should not increase noise pollution or emissions from traffic. Approaches such as speed management schemes

may, for example, be more appropriate than road widening. Potential impacts within the AONB of proposed road improvement schemes beyond the boundary should be considered.

POLICY 12. Road management and improvement schemes in the AONB should minimise landscape impact and avoid urbanisation of rural roads, e.g. through sensitive and appropriate design and use of materials, and avoiding unnecessary signage clutter.

POLICY 13. The provision of any new public car parking should be in scale with the setting and capacity of roads used to reach the location. Larger car parks should generally be situated nearer to settlements or larger roads. Where informal roadside parking is improved to alleviate traffic problems on smaller roads, care should be taken to avoid adding to traffic levels. Design should be appropriate to a rural setting, e.g. stone surfacing, use of timber for edging and signs.

POLICY 14. The Shropshire Hills should remain a priority area for agri-environment funding, and farmers should be actively encouraged to utilise the options that best contribute to the AONB Management Plan's aims.

POLICY 15. Broadleaved woodland comprising native species should be expanded, and especially restored on Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) and Plantation on Wood Pasture (PWP).

POLICY 16. Where woodland and forestry felling is taking place, opportunities should be sought to improve design and landscape sensitivity of plantations. Reversion to open habitat should be targeted to locations where landscape benefits and potential for high value habitat (e.g. heathland) are greatest.

POLICY 17. Any new or replacement coniferous planting should follow the highest standards of design guidelines in relation to landscape and amenity, nature and heritage conservation and resource protection.

POLICY 18. Tranquillity should be taken fully into account in both strategic and specific decisions. Proposals having a significant impact on tranquillity in the AONB should be prevented where possible.

POLICY 19. Expansion of airports or alterations to flight path corridors which increase the volume or impacts of air traffic over the AONB should not be allowed.

POLICY 20. A principle of 'quiet enjoyment' should apply, and activities which are in keeping with this encouraged. Recreation activities which are inherently noisy or intrusive should be discouraged, and where possible prevented, e.g. facilities for such activities not allowed through the planning system.

POLICY 21. Recreational off-road use of motor vehicles should not be encouraged or promoted within the AONB. Voluntary measures and pro-active work with users are recommended to minimise the impact of legal off-road use of motor vehicles on the landscape and on people's quiet enjoyment of the countryside. Where the impact on the AONB is significant however, measures including traffic regulation orders restricting legal use should be used. Illegal motorised activities should as far as possible be prevented, and pro-active support given to the Police.

POLICY 22. Events in the AONB such as concerts, festivals, and challenge walks should be planned (e.g. in location, timing and scale) to minimise environmental impact, and regular events should not be allowed or encouraged to grow to a scale where problems arise. Event organisers should seek advice at the planning stages to enable this.

POLICY 23. Infrastructure associated with countryside access should be sensitively designed, and appropriate materials should be used, e.g. stone for surfacing of a type appropriate to the

location, preference for wooden signposts and gates on rights of way, rural character in the specification and signage of cycle routes.

POLICY 24. Farmers and land managers should be supported as the main stewards of natural beauty, and for their vital role in maintaining the Shropshire Hills landscape. Policies and public funding relating to farming and forestry should recognise this and help to support ways of farming which generate these public environmental benefits.

POLICY 25. Environmental Stewardship priorities should support a shift back towards more mixed systems of farming especially in the uplands (e.g. by allowing a proportion of arable cropping and hay meadows). Advisory services should make better links with business approaches such as selling direct into local markets, which are also of benefit to the AONB.

POLICY 26. Countryside attractions and walks should be linked where possible to settlements where services and public transport facilities exist and can be promoted, helping to maximise economic benefits, especially from day visitors.

POLICY 27. Tourism activities which draw on the special qualities of the area without harming them should be especially encouraged. This may include development of access infrastructure (e.g. off road cycle routes, rights of way), use of public transport, historic and natural sites, interpretation to help aid understanding, enterprises based specifically on the special qualities of the AONB (e.g. wildlife watching, landscape painting, walking festivals) and cultural events.

POLICY 28. Lowering carbon emissions from the area is an over-riding priority, and should influence all areas of decision making. Energy conservation should be given the highest priority, and should always accompany renewable energy generation. Low carbon community initiatives are supported. In addition to carbon from energy use, the ability of land management to reduce carbon emissions should be optimised.

POLICY 29. Integration of energy efficiency and renewable energy will be encouraged in all development – new or refurbishment, and of any scale.

POLICY 30. Renewable energy developments in the AONB should generally be of a small scale appropriate to local use. Larger scale energy developments will be more suitable outside the AONB, e.g. linked to market towns where transport links are better, closer to larger scale demand, etc.

POLICY 31. Small scale domestic renewable installations (e.g. solar panels) are encouraged and AONB designation should not be used as a reason against these. The design and installation of these should take account of visual amenity. Greater sensitivity may be required in Conservation Areas and on Listed Buildings, but even in these circumstances, effort should be made to enable energy benefits to be achieved.

POLICY 32. Biomass energy based on existing resources in the area, such as woodfuel and agricultural by-products, is particularly compatible with the AONB and is strongly supported.

POLICY 33. Establishment of energy crops should avoid harm to biodiversity, water quality and availability, and where larger and longer-lived than normal agricultural crops, should take account of visual amenity (e.g. following forestry design guidelines regarding scale and shape of compartments including in relation to landform, structural diversity and edge treatments).

POLICY 34. There should be no development of wind turbines (other than in accordance with permitted development rights) within the 'High Open Moorland' and High Volcanic Hills and Slopes' Landscape Types in the AONB.

POLICY 35. Proposals for wind turbines and associated infrastructure within the AONB should take account of factors including landscape character, visual amenity, biodiversity, heritage and recreation, and the following guidelines:

- Within 100m of buildings (excluding Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas), one or two wind turbines of up to 12m to blade tip are likely to be acceptable within the AONB.
- Turbines of over 25m to blade tip, or groups of more than two turbines, are not likely to be acceptable within the AONB.
- Wind turbine proposals should be linked to local energy needs and energy conservation measures. Community benefits should relate to energy in preference to amenity or other measures.

POLICY 36. Decisions on proposals for wind turbines and associated infrastructure outside the AONB should take account of the potential impacts within the AONB, especially the extent of visibility and significance of viewpoints affected, and potential cumulative effects with existing structures.

POLICY 37. Promotion of the area for tourism should aim to minimise car travel. Towns and locations best served by public transport should receive the main promotion as 'gateways' to the Shropshire Hills, in preference to locations where access is only possible by car.

POLICY 38. Pro-active adaptation to climate change, focusing on wildlife and natural processes, is essential to retaining the natural beauty of the AONB and must be given a high priority.

POLICY 39. Existing areas of high quality habitat must be retained, and networks developed of higher quality habitat through targeted improvements on privately owned land.

POLICY 40. Opportunities should be should be taken to strengthen the integrity and identity of the Shropshire Hills as an area of exceptional landscape value. Consistent use of the 'Shropshire Hills' identity should be given greater prominence in tourism and other forms of promotion, along with the special qualities of the AONB and opportunities for visitors to adopt a sustainable approach.

POLICY 41. Opportunities and promotion aimed at both visitors and the local community should encourage people to experience the AONB's countryside more fully in ways which are not damaging (e.g. through walks and activities away from cars and roads, through appreciating wildlife and heritage).

POLICY 42. The management of the wider Wrekin Forest area is crucial to the integrity of the Wrekin itself within the AONB. The landscape quality of the wider Wrekin Forest area should be protected as far as possible, and the management of the Wrekin integrated with this surrounding area. The Wrekin Forest Landscape Conservation Management Plan is a locally relevant and detailed framework for the area and is formally endorsed by the AONB Management Plan.

POLICY 43. The Wrekin Forest Partnership provides a vital local forum for this important area, and should be supported and its links to the AONB Partnership maintained. The Wrekin Forest Partnership needs to develop as a long-term structure linked to permanent funding for a dedicated staff resource to take and co-ordinate action on the ground.

AONB PARTNERSHIP POSITIONS

Note that these are Positions approved by the AONB Partnership itself, which the local authorities did wish to adopt as formal Management Plan Policies.

AONB PARTNERSHIP POSITION 1 The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership does not believe that the benefits of formally amending the boundary are justified against the considerable costs and resources this would entail. The Partnership will work, and encourage its partners and others also to work, in ways which will strengthen the integrity and identity of the Shropshire Hills as an area of exceptional landscape value. The Partnership will focus its work strongly on the designated AONB area, but will work in a flexible and pragmatic way in relation to the

AONB boundary, to secure the maximum benefit for the Shropshire Hills. (see www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk for full statement approved Feb 2008).

AONB PARTNERSHIP POSITION 2 An approach of smaller, low-key tourism developments designed in sympathy with local character will blend better into the area and spread economic benefits more widely than larger facilities. Tourism businesses will be supported to take a sustainable approach and encourage their visitors to do likewise.

AONB PARTNERSHIP POSITION 3 In recognition of its unique character, prominence to visitors and the juxtaposition of residential properties with the highest quality landscape, the AONB Partnership advocates the designation of Cardingmill Valley as a Conservation Area.

AONB PARTNERSHIP POSITION 4 Because the vitality of the local agricultural economy is so integrally linked with the natural beauty of the Shropshire Hills, the AONB Partnership will actively support appropriate and sustainable forms of farming and diversification enterprises where these are compatible with the AONB designation.

AONB PARTNERSHIP POSITION 5 The model for the economy of the Shropshire Hills should be of environment-led regeneration, in which a pattern of relatively small-scale dispersed enterprise will be key to maintaining the right balance.

AONB PARTNERSHIP POSITION 6 Where market priced housing is used to generate finance for affordable housing within the AONB, it is preferable that the market priced housing is outside the AONB.

AONB PARTNERSHIP POSITION 7 Where affordable housing is allowed when other forms of development would not be, in order to meet social need, the standards of sensitivity to the AONB should not be compromised, and are expected to be higher than outside the AONB.

AONB PARTNERSHIP POSITION 8 The Partnership supports community low carbon initiatives and will take a view of wind turbine proposals based on a range of sustainability criteria as well as visual aspects.

AONB PARTNERHIP POSITION 9 Land within 5km of the AONB boundary is unsuitable for large scale windfarm development, and should be excluded from any Search Areas. (The definition of 'large' used in this Position is that used by TAN 8, i.e. developments of 25MW and over).

AONB PARTNERSHIP POSITION 10 The Partnership supports permitted development rights for appropriate microgeneration, but believes the current moves to extend permitted development rights could allow some wind turbine developments which would have an unacceptable impact on the landscape of the AONB. The Partnership does not support permitted development rights in the AONB for multiple micro wind turbines and for those sited away from existing development (e.g. further than 100m from buildings), and if these are introduced, will work with the planning authorities to explore the case for an Article 4 Direction.

AONB PARTNERSHIP POSITION 11 Strategies for transport affecting the AONB should not be solely informed by a 'predict and provide' model of increasing capacity to deal with increased traffic flow. The need for road upgrades and improvements which could have detrimental effects on the AONB may be avoided by use of other measures.

Appendix 3 Review of relevant Plans and Policies

INTERNATIONAL

Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979)
Bonn Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species (1979)
The Rio Convention on Biological Diversity (Adopted June 1992, into force December 1993)
Kyoto Protocol to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Dec 1997)
Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International importance (1971)
Rio Declaration of Environment and Development (1992)
The World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg (2002), Commitments arising from the Johannesburg Summit
Copenhagen Accord United Nations Climate Change Conference (2009)

EUROPEAN

Aarhus Convention, UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (1998), ratified 2005)
The Birds Directive (Directive on Conservation of Wild Birds) (79/409/EEC) Adopted 1979
The Environmental Noise Directive (2002/49/EC) (2002)
Our Life Insurance, Our Natural Capital: an EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, European Commission 2011
The Habitats Directive (Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora) (Directive 92/43/EC)
The Landscape Convention (entered into force 1st March 2004, ratified by UK Nov 2006)
Draft EU Soil Framework Directive (2006/0086) (COD)
Renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy (June 2006)
The Waste Framework Directive (75/442/EEC) (October 2000)
The Landfill Directive (99/31/EC)
The Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)

NATIONAL

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000
Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act (2006)
'The Natural Choice', the Natural Environment White Paper (Defra, 2012)
Water for Life, the Water White Paper (Defra, 2011)
National Planning Policy Framework (CLG 2012)
Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services (Defra 2011)
Safeguarding our Soils – A Strategy for England (Defra 2011)
The Carbon Plan (DECC, 2011)
UK Bioenergy Strategy (DECC, 2012)
Business Plan 2012-2015 (Defra 2012)
Business Plan 2012-2015 (Department for Transport, 2012)
Sustainable Energy Act (2003) Department for Trade and Industry
Secure and Sustainable Buildings Act (2004)
Code for Sustainable Homes (CLG, 2009)
Annual Energy Statement (DECC, 2011)

Securing the Future – UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy (DEFRA, 2005)
Mainstreaming sustainable development – The Government’s vision and what this means
in practice (Defra, 2011)
Government Review of Waste Policy in England 2011 (Defra 2011)
Rights of Way Circular (1/09) Guidance for Local Authorities (Defra 2009)
Business Plan 2012-15 (DCMS, 2012)
Healthy lives, healthy people: Improving outcomes and supporting transparency (DH,
2012)
Creating a sporting habit for life, A new youth sport strategy (DCMS, 2012)

WALES

People, Places, Futures - The Wales Spatial Plan 2008 Update
TAN 8 Renewable Energy
Powys Unitary Development Plan 2001-2016 (Adopted 1st March 2010)
A Living Wales - Natural Environment Framework (NEF)
Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition (Welsh Government March 2012)
Sustainable Tourism - A Framework for Wales 2007

SHROPSHIRE

Shropshire’s Community Strategy 2010-2020 A Flourishing Shropshire (2010)
Shropshire Local Development Framework : Adopted Core Strategy 2006-2026 (2011)
Schedule of remaining and replaced local and structure plan policies (Shropshire Council)
Supplementary Planning Document: Sustainable Design Part 1 (Shropshire Council 2011)
Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Preferred Options 2012
Shropshire Place Plans - Bishop's Castle, Bridgnorth, Church Stretton, Cleobury Mortimer,
Craven Arms, Ludlow, Minsterley and Pontesbury, Much Wenlock
Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan Delivery Plan 2009
Evolution, Revolution and Innovation - the Cultural Strategy for Shropshire and Telford and
Wrekin
New Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire 2012-2026 (in preparation)
Shropshire Geodiversity Action Plan (August 2007)
Shropshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2011-2026 (near completion)
Shropshire Hills and Ludlow Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2011-16

TELFORD & WREKIN

Telford & Wrekin Core Strategy 2006 - 2016