



<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership  14 <sup>th</sup> November 2017	<u>Item</u>  <b>7</b>
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## **AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW**

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### **Summary**

This paper outlines the process and proposed timetable for the five year AONB Management Plan review. The agenda item will also include brief verbal presentations of current key issues by member reps of a number of partner organisations, to initiate the Plan review process.

### **Recommendation**

The Partnership is recommended to endorse the proposed process and timetable, and based on the presentations of issues, to highlight key areas on which the Management Plan review should focus.

### **Background**

The AONB Management Plan is on a five year cycle, due for approval of the next Plan for 2019-2024 by the end of March 2019. The process of review of the Management Plan is an important opportunity to engage partners and look at emerging issues. With the wide implications of Brexit on land management and the environment this is very timely, though there are of course many uncertainties. The Plan review process needs to start now, though the outcome of the Conservation Board proposal will affect it. If it goes ahead, the Conservation Board itself should approve the new Plan. There are precedents nationally for the timescale to be varied, and the potential creation of a Conservation Board for the Shropshire Hills AONB may be a reason for us to do this. If the Conservation Board does not go ahead, the Plan must be approved individually by our two local authorities, as the previous Plans have been.

#### National Association for AONBs support

The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) have commissioned a useful support document providing much information on current policy and context. They are also in their current discussions with Defra promoting the idea that AONB management plans should provide a key framework for the development of a post Brexit agri-environment support scheme. The essence of this case is that:

- *AONB Management Plans are statutory documents with a democratic basis rooted in evidence based policy*

- *The integrated nature of AONB management plans ensures that agricultural policy is cross referenced to wider environmental, social, and economic outcomes, the outcome of which will result in more productive and prosperous rural areas*
- *Integrated delivery at the local level will improve opportunities for simpler, cheaper, more effective delivery*
- *The AONB management plan is a plan for sustainability.*

We do not currently have this level of detail in our Management Plan and would almost certainly need to take a more thorough approach if the next Plan is going to be used directly for this purpose.

#### Process and timescale

Appendix 1 shows the process and timetable proposed for the Management Plan review. The Partnership is invited to comment on and endorse this process.

The current AONB Management Plan, having been produced electronically as a 'text only' document is a good deal less 'visible' than the previous Plans, and arguably has achieved less influence as a result. This review should be used as a way to raise the profile of the Management Plan again, and the most effective method of publication needs considering. A series of inter-linked web pages with downloads is one option being looked at. A revised 'State of the AONB report' looking at statistics and trends is being worked on at the current time and will be released in time to inform the review.

<p><b>List of Background Papers</b> Current AONB Management Plan and supporting information can be found at <a href="http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/a-special-place/management-plan/">http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/a-special-place/management-plan/</a>.</p>
<p><b>Human Rights Act Appraisal</b> The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.</p>
<p><b>Environmental Appraisal</b> The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.</p>
<p><b>Risk Management Appraisal</b> Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.</p>
<p><b>Community / Consultations Appraisal</b> The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.</p>
<p><b>Appendices</b> Appendix 1 Timetable for review of the Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan for 2019-24 Appendix 2 Summary scoping document to support the start of the Plan review process</p>

## Appendix 1 Timetable for review of the AONB Management Plan for 2019-24

Including Sustainability Appraisal (SA), with required Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

TASK	WHO	EXPECTED TIMETABLE
<b>FORMALITIES AND NOTIFICATION</b>		
Authorisation from local authorities to undertake review on their behalf	AONB Team	Nov 17
Agree process and timetable of review	Partnership	Nov 17
Notify Natural England S90(1) and other stakeholders	AONB Team	Nov 17
Announce requirement for SEA/SA	AONB Team	Nov 17
<b>SCOPING</b>		
Gather information relating to new evidence/ issues, including partner input at Partnership meeting	AONB Team & Partnership	Nov - Dec 17
Discussion of Plan review priorities among Team, Partnership, Transition Board and key partners. Incorporate within planned events where possible	Partnership	Nov 17 – Jan 18
Identify main areas requiring update or new work	AONB Team & Partnership	Nov 17 – Jan 18
List and assess relevance of new strategies/ plans, including in Wales	AONB Team	Nov –Dec 17
Collate community views on issues from existing sources	AONB Team	Nov –Dec 17
Write scoping report for SA/SEA, setting context and objectives, establishing baseline evidence and indicators (stage A)	AONB Team	Nov –Dec 17
Consult on scoping report for SA/SEA	With statutory agencies	Jan 18
Publish update to State of the AONB report	AONB Team	Jan 18
<b>REVIEW</b>		
Undertake specific targeted consultations /participatory workshops with relevant groups	Partnership & wider	Jan – Mar 18
Redraft main issues, aims and objectives and discuss with relevant groups.	AONB Team & Partnership	Jan – Mar 18
Work on topic sections with relevant groups – issues, policies and actions.	AONB Team & Partnership	Jan – Mar 18
Assess effects of objectives, policies & actions and for SA/SEA and develop alternatives. (Stage B) An element of independent review is required.	AONB Team	Feb – Mar 18
Collate new draft plan and Environmental Report for SA/SEA (Stage C) plus non-technical summary.	AONB Team	Mar - April 18
Approve Consultation Draft	Partnership	May 18
<b>CONSULTATION &amp; APPROVAL OF FULL PLAN</b>		
Run public consultation on new draft plan and SA/SEA report (Stage D). 12 week period.	AONB Team/ Partnership	May - July 18
Run consultation events	AONB Team	May - July 18
Consider comments from consultation and amend plan	AONB Team	July - Aug 18
Report on consultation and suggested amendments	Partnership	Aug 18
Send to Natural England for formal observations	AONB Team	Sept 18
Consider comments from formal observations and amend plan	Partnership	Nov - Dec 18
Get new plan formally approved through Cabinet of local authorities	Local authorities	Jan 19 -
Send approved Plan to Secretary of State and disseminate	AONB Team	By March 19
Publish Statement on how SA/SEA was taken into account and changes made.	AONB Team	March 19
Implement and monitor Plan and its effects (SA/SEA Stage E).	Partnership	April 19 on

# Review of the Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan for 2019-2024

October 2017



## What the AONB is about

Special places matter to us. They give us a sense of belonging, calm, security and wellbeing.

The Shropshire Hills have evolved through the interaction of people and nature over a long time to produce a character and quality which we value.

The landscape contributes greatly to the economy and to our health and culture. Food production needs soils and water, while our hills and woods help to manage flood risk. Nature and beautiful landscapes are good for our mental wellbeing and quality of life, provide a sense of identity, and attract business investment.

Safeguarding the positive interaction between people and nature is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its value.

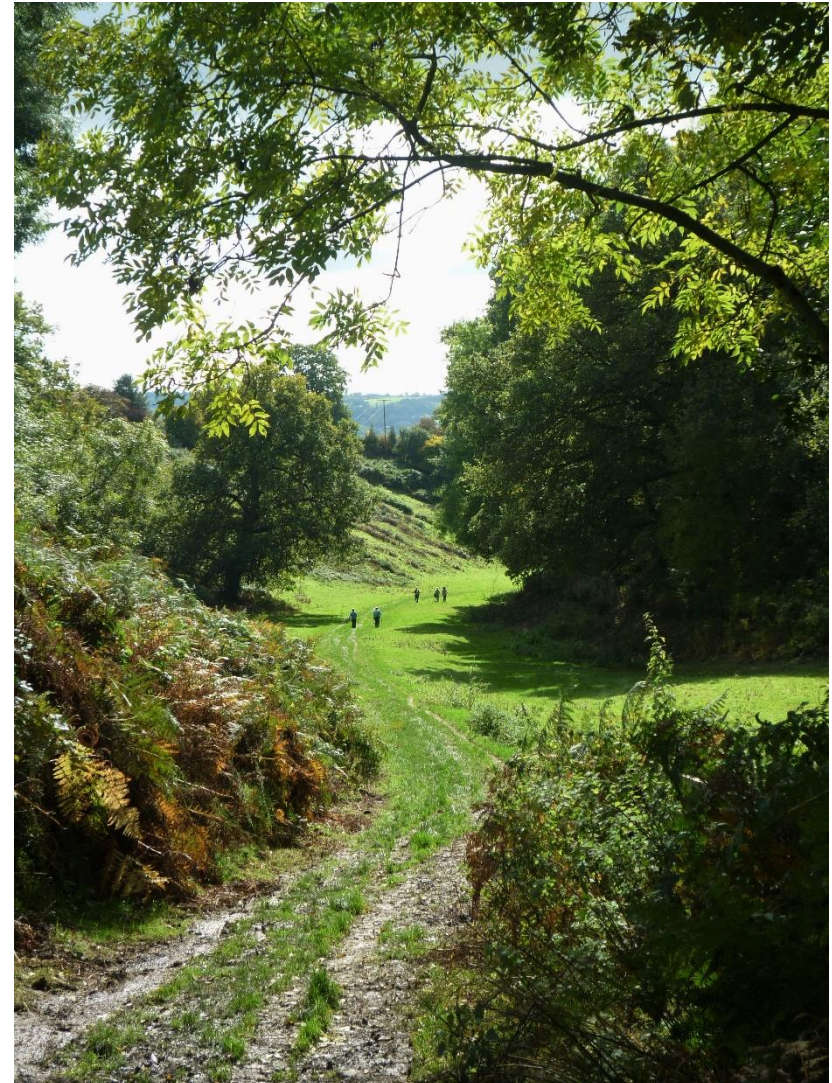
## What do you think?

What do you most value about the Shropshire Hills?

What is changing, for better or worse?

What needs to be done, and how can we work together to do it?

We need your help to understand what makes the Shropshire Hills special to you and what you can do. The new AONB Management Plan will set out priorities to build support for the landscape over the next five years. We will be putting on a range of events and activities to seek people's views. The more people we involve, the more successful the Plan will be.



## Legal requirements

The primary legal purpose of AONBs is conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 created a statutory responsibility for local authorities and Conservation Boards to produce AONB Management Plans and then to review these every five years. Our two relevant local authorities, Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council, 'act jointly' in preparation of the Plan through the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership.

## What the Plan is

It is a plan for the AONB as an area, not for any one organisation.

The 2019-24 AONB Management Plan will be the fourth statutory Plan, and will therefore build on the sound foundations of earlier Plans. Many issues affecting the AONB are ongoing, and while the Review process will lead to a new Plan, this will develop the previous ones. It will take account of new trends, but not approach the situation as a start from scratch. We will also set out and celebrate what has been achieved over the past five years.

## Who is it for?

The Plan seeks to influence those whose actions have an effect on the AONB, including policy and decision makers, land managers and local businesses, and organisations acting locally.

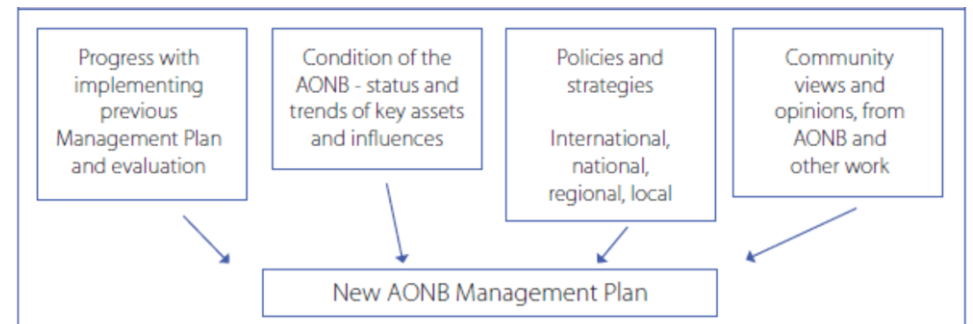
The Plan is the definitive document to support the statutory designation of the AONB, which:

- gives formal recognition to the nationally important landscape,
- requires special land use planning policies to apply, and
- encourages an integrated approach to land management.

## What is the process?

Leading the process of reviewing the Management Plan and overseeing its implementation are the main functions of the AONB Partnership. The broad membership of the Partnership includes most of the relevant stakeholders, but we want to reach further to involve others with an interest in the area.

A number of sources from grassroots to strategic level will inform review of the Management Plan, as shown below:



An updated 'State of the AONB' report will be produced, and partners and the wider public engaged. These sources will guide which sections of the Plan need most changing, and relevant people will be brought together to work on this.

An open public consultation period on a full draft new document will take place during 2018, leading to the processes of formal approval of the new Plan by the spring of 2019.

## Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership

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