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| <u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 23 rd October 2018 | <u>Item</u> 3 |
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AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW – DRAFT PLAN FOR COMMENTS BEFORE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

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Summary

This paper introduces the current full draft of the new AONB Management Plan for 2019-24, for comments before its publication for public consultation.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to comment on the draft Plan provided. All comments are welcome, but members may wish to concentrate on those parts of the draft Plan relating most closely to their areas of interest.

Background

Three workshops have been held on the Management Plan review with the AONB Partnership:

- 13th June 2017 – issues and aspirations, in the context of EU Exit
- 14th November 2017 - brief presentations by ten organisations on the issues they felt were most pressing for the new Plan
- 6th March 2018 focussed on delivery priorities.

Management Plan topics have also been discussed at sub-groups e.g. Clun Catchment Partnership, Wrekin Forest Partnership, Destination Partnership and Commons Area Group, and among the AONB team.

Three topic groups of reps from key delivery bodies met in early October 2018 to comment on a first draft.

The draft document

The last Management Plan review five years ago resulted in amendments and updates to the earlier Plan. This time a new Plan document has been started. Some things have been brought in from the last Plan and updated, but most of the text is new. This Plan aims to be shorter but at the same time give more practical guidance.

Policies within the Management Plan are one of its more formal aspects, and these have been developed over the last two Plans. Changes to these are therefore shown in the current draft

as 'tracked changes' in the document so that members can easily see them. They will however be shown as just the plain new text in the public consultation document.

Some graphics have been added at this stage where these are easily available. More will be added to the consultation draft, and then further in the final designed document.

Comments are welcome from members in any form, but detailed comments on wording will be more easily dealt with in written form (before or after the meeting). Discussion at the meeting will aim to focus on larger issues.

Key topics for discussion

The following are suggested, but members may wish to put forward others (with a reminder that the Plan focuses on issues for the Shropshire Hills area, more than for the AONB organisation):

- **Farm business choices, especially re large scale farm developments**

Agriculture policy and new schemes are not within control of the Plan, so the focus is on the Plan's role in setting out a vision of future viable farming which is compatible with the AONB, how this discussion is continued with farmers, and how the landscape and natural environment are valued in decision-making (by businesses and the planning system).

- **Sustainability and climate change**

The challenges of shifting to low carbon have slipped down the political agenda partly due to austerity and to some extent by 'mainstreamed', but have not gone away. Further big changes will be needed for national CO2 emission targets to be met, as well as adapting to changes now happening and inevitable. Previous Plans focused on encouraging behavioural changes and small-scale renewables, but some large renewable energy schemes have been in conflict with AONB aims. The process of Sustainability Appraisal on the Plan needs to look at these conflicts to inform how they can best be resolved.

- **Increasing urgency for significant planting of new trees and woodlands**

This is needed due to tree diseases, especially Ash dieback, plus flood management, climate change, etc. The current rates of planting are however low. Availability of land is a major factor, often determined by farmers' decision-making in the context of business planning.

- **Poor condition of the water environment and inadequate progress to tackle this**

Current good work needs to be built on, but is not achieving enough, and there is the possibility of greater regulation.

- **What are the main actions the Plan should try to bring about?**

– for the AONB Partnership, and for others

Public consultation and approval process

During the consultation period it is planned to hold meetings of the various area groups supported by the AONB Partnership, and to encourage wider engagement with farmers through a follow-up to the Uplands Forum, as well as other public consultation events.

Changes arising from the public consultation will be considered by the AONB Partnership. The Plan will then be submitted for 'formal observations' by Natural England, before formal approval by the two Councils in the spring of 2019.

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| List of Background Papers None |
| 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 Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24 Draft at 15 October 2018 |