



Committee and Date

Cabinet
Wednesday, 12th June 2019
11.00 am

Item

Public

**Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24
and Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Terms of Reference**

Responsible Officer Mark Barrow

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1. Summary

- 1.1 The Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 sets out the priorities for conserving and enhancing the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for the next five years. The AONB is a statutory designation to conserve and enhance natural beauty covering 23% of Shropshire and has been in place since 1958.
- 1.2 The Management Plan is a statutory requirement and is produced jointly with Telford & Wrekin Council through the AONB Partnership – a Joint Advisory Committee. The Plan has been developed in partnership with a range of stakeholders and was made available for public consultation from November 2018 to January 2019. Formal approval is by the two local authorities.
- 1.3 The Vision of the Management Plan is:

The natural beauty of the Shropshire Hills landscape is conserved, enhanced and helped to adapt - by sympathetic land management, by co-ordinated action and by sustainable communities; and is valued for its richness of geology, wildlife and heritage, and its contribution to prosperity and wellbeing.
- 1.4 At the same time, but not directly connected to the Management Plan, the Terms of Reference of the AONB Partnership (Joint Advisory Committee) have been updated and slightly revised, and these also require formal approval by the two Councils.
- 1.5 A formal request to Defra to create an independent Conservation Board for the AONB (supported by the Council Cabinet on 19th October 2016) has been shelved by Defra while a national review of designated landscapes is conducted. The Review Panel, led by Julian Glover, is due to report in the autumn of 2019, and its recommendations may affect whether the Conservation Board proposal for the Shropshire Hills is likely to progress. In the meantime, the current structure continues, of a Joint Advisory Committee (the AONB Partnership) and the AONB Partnership staff team hosted by Shropshire Council.

- 1.6 Appendix 2 details the proposed revised Terms of Reference for the AONB Partnership (Joint Advisory Committee). These have been developed by the Partnership in consultation with the two Councils' Legal teams.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approve the Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24, and the revised Terms of Reference for the AONB Partnership.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 AONB Management Plan. Preparation of the Management Plan by the large and inclusive AONB Partnership group is the established national methodology, and national guidance has been followed. The team members leading the work have been responsible for previous Management Plan reviews.
- 3.2 The statutory timescale for completion of the review of the Plan is by 31st March 2019. Defra have been sent the completed Plan as endorsed by the AONB Partnership and informed that final approval by the Councils is imminent, and have congratulated us on the new Plan.
- 3.3 Natural England have given support to the draft Plan in their 'formal observations':

"Natural England considers that the plan meets the statutory requirement that the constituent local authorities for the Shropshire Hills AONB and wider project area have, acting jointly, produced a plan that formulates their policy for their AONB and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it.

We consider that the Plan has broadly followed the guidance contained in CA23 and CA221 and the updated advice from the National Association for AONBs (prepared by Steve Preston Associates, 2017) and therefore presents a comprehensive strategy for the management of the AONB.

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 Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership and particularly the Shropshire Hills AONB staff unit. We congratulate you on this huge effort."

Emma Johnson, Area Manager West Midlands Natural England

- 3.4 In the Plan preparation, three workshops were held with the AONB Partnership, and Management Plan topics were also discussed at working groups such as the Clun Catchment Partnership, Wrekin Forest Partnership and Shropshire Hills Destination Partnership. Partnership members felt that:
- Protection of the landscape and biodiversity needs to be better in practice.

- The planning system needs to take more account of the AONB.
 - We must help people to see the AONB as an asset rather than a barrier to economic growth.
 - Sustainability should influence all areas – land management, tourism, communities.
- 3.5 A public on-line survey was carried out during April and May 2018. With over 200 responses, the survey revealed a high degree of support for the primary purpose to ‘conserve and enhance’ the AONB. The most valued characteristics of the Shropshire Hills were dramatic views and wide panoramas, opportunities to walk and explore, wildlife and relatively natural areas, peace and quiet and a chance to unwind. Top concerns were the loss/neglect of habitats and wildlife, inappropriate new built development, losing the Shropshire Hills’ distinctive character, the quality of water and condition of rivers.
- 3.6 The Sustainability Appraisal of the Management Plan conducted in parallel with the Plan review meets the legal requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment. A conclusion of the Sustainability Appraisal is that the high quality of the AONB’s environment is a huge economic asset which, if sensitively used and not damaged by inappropriate development, can deliver great long-term economic benefits. In the need however to take a long-term view and protect this asset, there is a risk of the designation being perceived as hampering economic progress. This may be overcome by demonstrating the positive economic effects of the environment and of looking after it.
- 3.7 In the public consultation relatively few responses were received, partly since all key delivery partners are involved in the Plan preparation through the AONB Partnership. A specific meeting was held with representatives of the National Farmers Union to discuss their comments.
- 3.8 As well as underpinning the area’s economy, the high-quality landscape of the AONB is vitally important to the health and wellbeing of both Shropshire residents and visitors. The AONB designation and activity linked to it brings huge benefits to the people of Shropshire.
- 3.9 There is a perception among a good number of partners that Shropshire Council does not take the AONB seriously enough or regard it as positively as an asset to the county as it should. The AONB Partnership seeks a process of awareness raising and greater engagement with various parts of the Council over the delivery period of this Management Plan to help address this. The national Glover Review is likely to recommend changes to strengthen the status of AONBs and their organisations, which should help to reinforce a higher profile locally.
- 3.10 AONB Partnership Terms of Reference. The process of updating the AONB Partnership Terms of Reference was led by the Partnership’s Chair and its sub-group the Management Board (now Strategy & Performance Committee). Several consultations were held with the Legal teams of both Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council, and drafts were seen and endorsed by the whole Partnership.

- 3.13 The Terms of Reference were last approved by the two Councils in 2010, when the Partnership also acted as the LEADER Local Action Group. Updates to the Terms of Reference endorsed by the AONB Partnership in October 2014 and November 2015 did not reach the stage of formal approval by the Councils.
- 3.14 The changes made this time are mainly minor amendments to wording. Small substantive changes include:
- The maximum number of seats on the Partnership is proposed to be reduced from 45 to 36. Reductions would be made by means of currently vacant seats and through the membership review due in the autumn of 2019. An inclusive group is valuable, but this has to be balanced with manageability, and the current size is believed to be the largest of any AONB Joint Advisory Committee in the country.
 - The Management Board has been re-named the Strategy & Performance Committee and now has separate Terms of Reference. As a sub-committee of the Partnership, its Terms of Reference are approved by the Partnership itself.
- 3.15 The Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA) initial screening and assessment follow up is shown in appendix 1.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The Management Plan is a plan for the Shropshire Hills area and not for any one organisation. It sets out aspirations for projects and delivery activities but does not make any binding financial commitments.
- 4.2 Section 85 of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act places a legal duty on all public bodies to 'have regard to the purposes of AONB designation' in carrying out their functions. The Management Plan is therefore relevant to a wide variety of Council services including planning, countryside and environment, highways, economic development, public protection, education and community. National policy is that AONBs should be distinguished from other areas and higher standards should be applied in relation to maintaining landscape quality. This may sometimes result in higher costs, but it is not possible to quantify these.
- 4.3 One of Shropshire Council's main direct commitments to implementing the Management Plan is through providing match funding for Defra core funding for the AONB Partnership team. Continuity of local authority funding is vital to the team's activities, and the gearing of Council funds with other sources is exceptional. Shropshire Council's contribution is among the lowest local authority contributions in the country for the size of the AONB.
- 4.4 The Council provides administrative support for the AONB Partnership Joint Advisory Committee meetings through the Democratic Services team, but there are no financial implications through this from the changes to the Terms of Reference.

5. Background

- 5.1 This is the fourth statutory Management Plan for the AONB since the requirement to produce a plan was enacted by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
- 5.2 The character and quality of the Shropshire Hills landscape are of high importance but under increasing pressure. The condition of some of the special qualities of the AONB is declining. Conservation activity through many schemes and projects is not enough to prevent some declines in wildlife. Not enough progress is being made with some water quality and catchment management targets. Farming, especially in the uplands, is at an important crossroads as we head towards new UK policy and funding regimes. Economic forces are increasing development pressure and reducing resources for positive management of the landscape, leading to more deterioration of valuable features by neglect.
- 5.3 The Plan sets out policies of the local authorities, and proposed actions for a wider variety of partners, under three main aims:
- Land management supporting natural beauty and landscape
 - Planning for a sustainable economy and communities
 - People enjoying and caring about the landscape
- 5.4 The Plan will help deliver many of the priorities of Defra's 25 Environment Plan - clean air and water, thriving plants and wildlife, reduced risk from flooding and drought, using natural resources more sustainably and efficiently, enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.

6. Additional Information

- 6.1 Some of the Management Plan's top priority actions include:
- Working with Defra and other partners to ensure new Environmental Land Management Systems deliver AONB priorities.
 - Establishing a large programme of planting of trees outside woodlands, partly to offset losses from Ash dieback disease.
 - Developing the 'Stepping Stones' project into a long-term delivery initiative for the Long Mynd – Stiperstones area.
 - Developing Landscape Guidance and Design Guidance for planning.
 - Developing a youth engagement project incorporating the John Muir Award, Young Rangers and traineeships.
 - Supporting activities which will contribute to a low-carbon Shropshire Hills area, compatible with the AONB's special qualities.
- 6.2 The Management Plan Actions will be monitored and reviewed by the AONB Partnership and progress reported publicly. The condition of the AONB landscape will be monitored through a set of headline indicators, and a new set of performance indicators for activity of the AONB Partnership team are currently being developed nationally.

7. Timescales

- 7.1 The Management Plan will be published in June 2019 following approval by both Councils and will run until 2024. It will be reviewed after five years.

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

Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24 (available at <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/a-special-place/management-plan/>)

Appendix 2 Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Terms of Reference

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Cllr Lezley Picton

Local Members

Cllr Lee Chapman
Cllr Andy Boddington
Cllr Jonny Keeley
Cllr Robert Tindall
Cllr Roger Evans
Cllr Richard Huffer
Cllr Nigel Hartin
Cllr Madge Shingleton
Cllr David Evans
Cllr Claire Wild
Cllr Gwilym Butler
Cllr Nick Hignett
Cllr Dan Morris
Cllr Cecilia Motley
Cllr Heather Kidd
Cllr David Turner

Appendices

Appendix 1 Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA) initial screening and assessment

Appendix 2 Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Terms of Reference

Appendix 3 Final Draft Management Plan, March 19

Appendix 1

**Shropshire Council Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA)
Part One Screening Record**

A. Summary Sheet on Accountability and Actions

Name of proposed service change

Please use this box for the full formal name of the proposed service change, whether it is a policy, a procedure, a function, a project, an update of a strategy, etc. The term "service change" is used in this form as shorthand for whatever form the changes may take.

Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24
and Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Terms of Reference

Name of lead officer carrying out the screening

Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager

Decision, review and monitoring

Decision	Yes	No
Part One ESIIA Only?	✓	
Proceed to Part Two Full Report?		✓

If completion of a Part One assessment is an appropriate and proportionate action at this stage, please use the boxes below and sign off as indicated. If a Part Two report is required, please move on to separate full report stage.

Actions to mitigate negative impact or enhance positive impact of the service change in terms of equality and social inclusion considerations

The AONB Management Plan is likely to have a positive effect on all groups in society. Evidence shows that a high-quality environment and sense of belonging is very beneficial to wellbeing. The Management Plan supports a sustainable development approach and sets out to help tackle issues of sustainability which affect people's lives.

In particular, the Management Plan includes a specific action in relation to young people, which should result in a positive impact for this grouping as well as for the grouping of social inclusion.

- Developing a youth engagement project incorporating the John Muir Award, Young Rangers and traineeships.

Positive impact is also anticipated for people with disabilities, in terms of physical access, and in terms of mental health and wellbeing. Feedback from the public indicated that the most valued characteristics of the Shropshire Hills included opportunities to walk and explore, peace and quiet and a chance to unwind. Physical access considerations could usefully be looked at alongside other Council efforts e.g. through the Great Outdoors Strategy. While there are few Council-owned sites in the AONB, rights of way and open

access land are key means of people accessing the AONB for enjoyment.

The opportunity is also there, through review of the membership, for efforts to be made to ensure that people on the Partnership are themselves as representative of the population of Shropshire as may be possible, and to encourage those who may be under represented such as young people.

Actions to review and monitor the impact of the service change in terms of equality and social inclusion considerations

Progress with Management Plan activity will be monitored through reporting at the meetings of the AONB Partnership, and the Management Plan Actions will be updated and progress reported widely on a regular basis. This is in addition to continued monitoring of indicators of landscape condition and trends.

The condition of the AONB landscape will be monitored through a set of headline indicators, and a revised set of performance indicators for activity of the AONB Partnership team are currently being developed nationally.

Such indicators will need to take due account of potential negative or positive impacts for people in Protected Characteristic groupings. Given that there is a specific action around young people, this age grouping will need to be focussed upon through specific consultation as well as efforts to ensure ongoing engagement with all groupings in pursuit of achievement of the actions set out in the Plan.

The Cabinet report notes that the maximum number of seats on the Partnership is proposed to be reduced from 45 to 36, and that reductions would be made by means of currently vacant seats and through the membership review due in the autumn of 2019. As has also been noted, an inclusive group is valuable, in terms of coverage across organisations.

The opportunity is also presented, through the membership review, for membership to be actively encouraged from people in Protected Characteristic groupings who may be under-represented at present, as well as balancing this with an overall membership size that is proportional to local need. Comparisons may usefully also be made to good practice in this regard within other AONB Joint Advisory Committees in the country.

The national Glover Review of AONBs is likely to recommend changes to strengthen the status of AONBs and their organisations, which should help to reinforce a higher profile locally and which may also contain recommendations that will assist in encouraging positive impacts in terms of equality and social inclusion considerations.

Associated ESIIAs

Reference has been made to the screening ESIIAs carried out in development of Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy, reported to Cabinet in September 2018, as well as to ESIIAs in relation to the various stages of the ongoing Local Plan Partial Review and the Council's Economic Growth Strategy.

Actions to mitigate negative impact, enhance positive impact, and review and monitor overall impacts in terms of any other considerations

The Vision of the Management Plan is:

“The natural beauty of the Shropshire Hills landscape is conserved, enhanced and helped to adapt - by sympathetic land management, by co-ordinated action and by sustainable communities; and is valued for its richness of geology, wildlife and heritage, and its contribution to prosperity and wellbeing.”

As such, the AONB Management Plan very much sets out to encourage and ensure positive impacts for the natural environment and associated positive impacts for all communities in terms of health and wellbeing.

The Sustainability Appraisal of the Management Plan, conducted in parallel with the Plan review, meets the legal requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment. A conclusion of the Sustainability Appraisal is that the high quality of the AONB’s environment is a huge economic asset which, if sensitively used and not damaged by inappropriate development, can deliver great long-term economic benefits. In the need however to take a long-term view and protect this asset, there is a risk of the designation being perceived as hampering economic progress. This may be overcome by demonstrating the positive economic effects of the environment and of looking after it.

While the activities of many Council departments support the purposes of the AONB, One of Shropshire Council’s main direct commitments to implementing the Management Plan is through providing match funding for Defra core funding for the AONB Partnership team. Continuity of local authority funding is vital to the team’s activities, and the gearing of Council funds with other sources is exceptional. Shropshire Council’s contribution is among the lowest local authority contributions in the country for the size of the AONB.

Scrutiny at Part One screening stage

People involved	Signatures	Date
Lead officer carrying out the screening Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager	Phil Holden	18 th April 2019
Any internal support*		
Any external support** Mrs Lois Dale, Rurality and Equalities Specialist	Lois Dale	10 th May 2019

**This refers to other officers within the service area*

***This refers either to support external to the service but within the Council, eg from the Rurality and Equalities Specialist, or support external to the Council, eg from a peer authority*

Sign off at Part One screening stage

Name	Signatures	Date
<i>Lead officer's name</i>	Phil Holden	13 th May 2019
<i>Accountable officer's name*</i>		

**This may either be the Head of Service or the lead officer*

B. Detailed Screening Assessment**Aims of the service change and description**

The Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 sets out the priorities for conserving and enhancing the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for the next five years. The AONB is a statutory designation to conserve and enhance natural beauty covering 23% of Shropshire and has been in place since 1958.

The Management Plan is a statutory requirement and is produced jointly with Telford & Wrekin Council through the AONB Partnership – a Joint Advisory Committee. The Plan has been developed in partnership with a range of stakeholders and was made available for public consultation from November 2018 to January 2019. Formal approval is by the two local authorities.

At the same time, but not directly connected to the Management Plan, the Terms of Reference of the AONB Partnership (Joint Advisory Committee) have been updated and slightly revised, and these also require formal approval by the two Councils.

A formal request to Defra to create an independent Conservation Board for the AONB (supported by the Council Cabinet on 19th October 2016) has been shelved by Defra while a national review of designated landscapes is conducted. The Review Panel, led by Julian Glover, is due to report in the autumn of 2019, and its recommendations may affect whether the Conservation Board proposal for the Shropshire Hills is likely to progress. In the meantime the current structure continues, of a Joint Advisory Committee (the AONB Partnership) and the AONB Partnership staff team hosted by Shropshire Council.

The Management Plan is a plan for the Shropshire Hills area and not for any one organisation. It sets out policies which have some legal weight, and aspirations for projects and delivery activities but does not make any binding commitments. It is intended to influence a wide range of stakeholders, including but not limited to the local authorities.

Intended audiences and target groups for the service change

The Shropshire Hills AONB is a nationally recognised asset, so stakeholders include the public nationally, visitors from all parts including abroad, as well obviously as Shropshire residents and especially those who live and work in the AONB.

A wide variety of organisations have an interest in the AONB, and many of these are represented on the AONB Partnership.

The Plan is relevant to a range of departments across the two local authorities – including planning, countryside and environment, highways, economic development, public protection, education and community.

Regional and national stakeholders include the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership, the Marches Nature Partnership, the Rural Services Network, other AONB Partnerships and Defra and its agencies, i.e. the Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission and Natural England.

Evidence used for screening of the service change

The review resulting in this new Management Plan has followed national guidance and been influenced by policy directions and by community consultations and experience at a local level.

A detailed progress update on actions in the previous 2014-19 Management Plan was published by the AONB Partnership on 1st November 2016.

Work on ‘State of the AONB’ has included analysing data for a set of key environmental indicators, which are set out in the Management Plan

The team members leading the work have been responsible for previous Management Plan reviews.

Defra have been sent the completed Plan as endorsed by the AONB Partnership and informed that final approval by the Councils is imminent.

Natural England have given support to the draft Plan in their ‘formal observations’:

“Natural England considers that the plan meets the statutory requirement that the constituent local authorities for the Shropshire Hills AONB and wider project area have, acting jointly, produced a plan that formulates their policy for their AONB and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it.

We consider that the Plan has broadly followed the guidance contained in CA23 and CA221 and the updated advice from the National Association for AONBs (prepared by Steve Preston Associates, 2017) and therefore presents a comprehensive strategy for the management of the AONB.

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 Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership and particularly the Shropshire Hills AONB staff unit. We congratulate you on this huge effort.”

Specific consultation and engagement with intended audiences and target groups for the service change

Three workshops have been held with the AONB Partnership:

13th June 2017: Issues and aspirations, in the context of EU Exit,

14th November 2017: Brief presentations by ten partner organisations on the issues they felt were most pressing for the new Plan,

6th March 2018 focussed on delivery priorities, i.e. what needs to be done.

Management Plan topics have also been discussed at working groups such as the Clun Catchment Partnership, Wrekin Forest Partnership and Shropshire Hills Destination Partnership.

A public on-line survey was carried out during April and May 2018. With over 200 responses, the survey revealed a high degree of support for the primary purpose to 'conserve and enhance' the AONB. Most valued characteristics of the Shropshire Hills were dramatic views and wide panoramas, opportunities to walk and explore, wildlife and relatively natural areas, peace and quiet and a chance to unwind. Top concerns were the loss/neglect of habitats and wildlife, inappropriate new built development, losing the Shropshire Hills distinctive character, water quality and condition of rivers. The age profile of respondents to the survey under-represents youth – 0.5% of respondents were under 18 and 3.5% aged 18-29. This reinforces the need and aspiration which has been identified by the Partnership to use new methods to improve youth engagement. Feedback was not sought using Protected Characteristic groupings, so the views from these perspectives are not known, and this would ideally be included in further engagement and consultation activity. 75% of respondents were from SY postcodes reflecting a predominantly local interest, although a proportion from further afield highlighting that the AONB is of national importance.

Three topic groups met in October 2018 to discuss a draft of this Plan, and the draft Plan was taken to the AONB Partnership on 23rd October. A public consultation ran between November 2018 and January 2019 and resulted in a few meetings with key stakeholders.

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

Initial assessment for each group

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have on a group, through inserting a tick in the relevant column. Please add any extra notes that you think might be helpful for readers.

Protected Characteristic groups and other groups in Shropshire	High negative impact <i>Part Two ESIIA required</i>	High positive impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>	Medium positive or negative impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>	Low positive or negative impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>
Age (please include children, young people, people of working age, older people. Some people may belong to more than one group eg child for whom there are safeguarding concerns eg older person with disability)			✓+	
Disability (please include: mental health conditions and syndromes including autism; physical disabilities or			✓+	

impairments; learning disabilities; Multiple Sclerosis; cancer; HIV)				
Gender re-assignment (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				✓+
Marriage and Civil Partnership (please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				✓+
Pregnancy & Maternity (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				✓+
Race (please include: ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, gypsy, traveller)				✓+
Religion and belief (please include: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Non conformists; Rastafarianism; Sikhism, Shinto, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and any others)				✓+
Sex (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				✓+
Sexual Orientation (please include associated aspects: safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment)				✓+
Other: Social Inclusion (please include families and friends with caring responsibilities; people with health inequalities; households in poverty; refugees and asylum seekers; rural communities; people for whom there are safeguarding concerns; people you consider to be vulnerable)			✓+	

Identification of likely impact of the service change in terms of other considerations

The character and quality of the Shropshire Hills landscape are of high importance but under increasing pressure. The condition of some of the special qualities of the AONB is declining. Conservation activity through many schemes and projects is not enough to prevent some declines in wildlife. Not enough progress is being made with some water quality and catchment management targets. Farming, especially in the uplands, is at an important crossroads as we head towards new UK policy and funding regimes. Economic forces are increasing development pressure and reducing resources for positive management of the landscape, leading to more deterioration of valuable features by neglect.

The Plan sets out policies of the local authorities, and proposed actions for a wider variety of partners, under three main aims accordingly:

- Land management supporting natural beauty and landscape
- Planning for a sustainable economy and communities
- People enjoying and caring about the landscape

From a national angle, the policy intention is that the Plan will help deliver many of the priorities of Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan and associated Clean Growth Strategy: clean air and water, thriving plants and wildlife, reduced risk from flooding and drought, using natural resources more sustainably and efficiently, enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.

Appendix 2

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership

Terms of Reference

(Amended 4th March 2019)



1. Introduction

1.1 The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership is the body responsible for coordinating the management of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

1.2 The Partnership has the formal status of a 'Joint Advisory Committee' under Section 102(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to the two local authorities of Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council ("the Councils").

1.3 The purposes of the national AONB designation are as follows:

- The primary purpose of designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

Natural beauty goes well beyond scenic and aesthetic value. The natural beauty of an AONB is to do with the relationship between people and place. It encompasses everything – 'natural and human' – that makes an area distinctive. It includes the area's geology and landform, its climate and soils, its wildlife and ecology. It includes the rich history of human settlement and land use over the centuries, its archaeology and buildings, its cultural associations, and the people who live in it, past and present.

[AONB Management Plan Specimen text, NAAONB 2018]

- In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, and other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves, conserve and enhance the environment.
- Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.

(Countryside Agency, 2001)

1.4 Local authorities have a legal obligation under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 to prepare and review a Management Plan for the AONB, and to 'act jointly' in doing this. The AONB Partnership is the body formed principally to fulfil this requirement and includes a substantially wider membership in order to engage a range of relevant interests and expertise in the management of the area.

2. Roles and Responsibilities of the AONB Partnership

- 2.1 The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership plays three main roles regarding the AONB:
- To promote the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty, character and landscape of the Shropshire Hills AONB as a local, regional and national asset.
 - To promote compatible social, environmental, economic development and the wellbeing of constituent communities.
 - In pursuit of these ends, to prepare, monitor and review the statutory Management Plan for the AONB and to coordinate its implementation.
- 2.2 In order to perform the above roles and responsibilities the Partnership will lead the review of the statutory Management Plan for the AONB every five years. This Plan will be formally approved by each individual local authority and will, as required in the CRoW Act 2000, 'formulate their policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it'.
- 2.3 In addition, the Partnership will co-ordinate and facilitate the implementation of the Management Plan, and will monitor progress in achieving its objectives, policies and actions.
- 2.4 The Partnership will champion the interests of and vision for, the Shropshire Hills AONB, as contained in the statutory Management Plan, and promote a coherent and strong identity for the area.
- 2.5 The Partnership will add value to the role of local authorities as planning authorities for the AONB, especially by contributing to the development of planning policy and guidance, and by providing comments on significant development proposals and planning applications. Detailed roles and procedures for the AONB Partnership's involvement in planning are set out in a formal Planning Protocol with the local authorities.
- 2.6 The Partnership will seek to secure resources required for effective management of the AONB, including external funds to assist in delivering management activities and projects.
- 2.7 The Partnership will ensure that public bodies fulfil their duty under S85 of the CRoW Act to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB in the exercise and performance of their functions.
- 2.8 The Partnership will monitor the condition of the AONB and progress with Management Plan implementation and will publish an annual review of progress and make recommendations to local authorities as appropriate.
- 2.9 The Partnership will periodically review its governance arrangements to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.

3. Membership

3.1 Membership of the Partnership will consist of a maximum of 36 people comprising the following:

- Four elected Members appointed by Shropshire Council (representatives should be relevant portfolio holders or local division members);
- One elected member appointed by Telford and Wrekin Council (the representative should be a local ward member);
- Up to 6 elected members of parish or town councils within or partly within the AONB;
- Up to 4 representatives of other statutory bodies;
- Up to 15 representatives appointed by non-statutory or voluntary organisations;
- Up to 6 individual members.

All of the above will have full voting rights.

APPROVAL OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

Signed

Date

Position

on behalf of SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

Signed

Date

Position

on behalf of TELFORD AND WREKIN COUNCIL

Appendix 1 to Terms of Reference - Procedures of the Partnership

1. All parties recognise that the Partnership is likely to be most effective if its recommendations can be reached by consensus rather than by confrontation but, if it is necessary to regulate any debate, then the Chair shall have the power to order that the Council Procedure Rules set out in Part 4 of the Constitution of Shropshire Council shall apply. Consensus will be taken as the majority of the members present and the Chair will have the casting vote where needed.
2. The Partnership may establish sub-committees and may delegate any of its powers and functions to sub-committees. Only Partnership members and officers of the Councils may be appointed to be members of sub-committees but officer members will not have any power to vote. Only the Partnership can appoint members of any sub-committee.
3. The Partnership may participate in other groups as it deems appropriate.

Frequency of Meetings

4. The Partnership will normally meet three times per year. A site-based meeting or tour will normally be held annually. The Chair of the Partnership may call additional meetings or cancel pre-arranged meetings if it is felt that there is either urgent business which needs to be discussed or there is insufficient business to justify a meeting being held.

Chair and Vice Chairs

5. The Partnership will elect its own Chair on a biennial basis, or as necessary. The Chair will be a non-local authority member. The Chair will not serve for more than three consecutive terms (i.e. six years maximum). Both Vice Chair posts will be elected biennially by the Partnership, or as necessary. One Vice Chair post will be an elected member of Shropshire Council and the other Vice Chair post will be open to any Partnership member. Nominations will be invited in advance of the meeting at which the elections take place.
6. In the event of the Chair or Vice Chairs not being present at a meeting of the Partnership, a chair for the meeting will be elected by the Partnership members present.
7. The expectations of Chair and Vice Chair roles are set out in Role Descriptions and Person Specifications, which will be reviewed as necessary by the Partnership.

Local Authority Officers

8. Local authority officers attending Partnership meetings do not have the right to vote on issues being decided by the Partnership.

Declaration of interests

9. Members of the Partnership and any of its sub-groups shall declare an interest in a meeting where a matter to be discussed may affect:
 - their own wellbeing or financial position, or
 - the wellbeing or financial position of a family member or close associate, or

- the financial position of an employer/business of the member, their family member or close associate, or
- the financial position of a charitable body, association or other group with which they are closely associated

and shall leave the meeting room whilst that matter is being debated and voted upon.

10. Councillor Members of the Partnership shall, when acting as a member of the Partnership, comply with the code of conduct of their local authority.
11. Non-Councillor Members of the Partnership shall, when acting as a member of the Partnership, comply with the code of conduct of Shropshire Council.

Membership, Applications & Nominations

12. The Partnership will operate an application process for the individual member seats and Parish/Town Council seats, and where necessary for non-statutory or voluntary organisations. The process will be transparent and non-discriminatory.

13. Appointment of applicants to seats will be made by the full Partnership, based on the following criteria:

Individual and Parish/Town Council members

- Resident in the AONB or a nearby town or in the surrounding countryside;
- Proven commitment to AONB purposes and relevant areas of interest;
- Ability to make a valuable contribution to the Partnership.

Non-statutory and voluntary bodies

- Support for AONB purposes and a clear synergy with the remit of the AONB;
- A significant material or operational interest within the AONB;
- Representative with ability to make a valuable contribution to the Partnership.

14. Statutory and non-statutory bodies on the Partnership will appoint a named representative to attend as their member, and may identify a named 'deputy' who will also receive papers and may attend meetings in place of the representative without prior arrangement. A representative other than the named member or deputy may attend a meeting in their place by agreement with the Chair.
15. The Partnership will undertake a biennial review of its membership.
16. In the event of conduct or alleged conduct of a member which is not consistent with the Partnership's Terms of Reference, every effort will be made to resolve the issue by informal negotiation. The Partnership may however resolve to withdraw membership, or, in the case of an organisation member, resolve to ask the organisation to provide a different representative.

Appendix 2 to Terms of Reference

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership structure (February 2019)

