



MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW - UPDATE

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Summary

This paper provides updates and material for discussion on the Management Plan review.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to comment on the issues raised.

Background

Progress, timetable and stages

The Plan review process remains challenging for the team, in a year where additional funding has opened up new areas of work such as the capital programmes. We are now moving from the stages of gathering information and people's views into actual drafting. The target timetable to bring a full draft to a Partnership meeting and then go out to public consultation is now March. As outlined in a recent email to members, we plan to hold an extra Partnership meeting in February focusing on a draft of the Management Plan. This should help enable members to input in a more meaningful way, followed by endorsement from the Partnership in March to go out to public consultation.

'State of the Shropshire Hills' report

Taking advantage of our uplift in Defra core funding this year, we have let a contract to an experienced consultant to produce a 'State of the Shropshire Hills' report by the end of March. The report will contain text, tables, graphs, diagrams and maps, setting out a detailed profile of relevant aspects of the landscape as well as looking at change and trends across relevant environmental factors and socio-economic influences. The report will incorporate the new Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework and take account of good practice in such reports around the family of National Landscapes. Ideally this would have been produced earlier in the plan review process, but it will nevertheless be very useful.

Use of Doughnut Economics model

Phil presented at a recent Protected Landscapes Partnership national webinar on Doughnut Economics, along with representatives from Bannau Brycheiniog National Park and Tamar Valley National Landscape. A three minute video has also been made about our use of the model for the global networking event of the Doughnut Economics Action Lab from 6th – 9th November. At a time when unqualified economic growth is

being pushed as an end itself rather than in a more considered way as a means to achieve better wellbeing for people, the model is a valuable reminder of the need for a 'quality check' on economic policy. This applies equally in and outside protected landscapes.

Proposed title and headlines for the Plan

It is intended to use a short expressive title to be more engaging than 'Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan' (though this will feature too, more as a sub-title). The short title would be trying to convey the positive vision of the Plan, linking to the goal of meeting people's needs within environmental boundaries, and the balance needed of productive farming and nature and sustainability which is probably at the heart of current issues for the Shropshire Hills.

Suggestions for the title are:

Thriving in balance with nature

or

People Thriving in Harmony with Nature

For headings/headlines, we propose to add to the four established Defra headlines of Nature, Climate, People and Place, with Water and Land. These can be used as standalone words to convey the scope of the plan, as part of short straplines as suggested below, or with fuller narratives.

- Restoring our **NATURE** and regenerating natural processes
- Building **CLIMATE** resilience and decarbonising urgently
- Managing and looking after our **WATER** – which supports all life
- Nurturing our **LAND** and living healthy soil – so it can sustain us
- Healthy **PEOPLE** connected to nature – in vibrant communities and as welcome visitors
- Valuing and caring for the Shropshire Hills as a special **PLACE**

Members' comments are welcome and valued on all of this.

Climate Change adaptation

As part of the Protected Landscape Targets and Outcomes Framework, and linked to the government's Adaptation Reporting Programme (ARP), there is a requirement to have Climate Adaptation Plans embedded within our Management Plans by 2028. The current round of Management Plans also needs also to address this important topic.

Warmer wetter winters, increased severity of storms, and hotter drier summers are symptoms of a changing climate. These impacts are already being felt and will increasingly affect the special qualities and ecosystem services of our landscapes. National Landscapes can play a vital role in adapting to climate change and building resilient landscapes for future generations. Climate adaptation reporting provides an opportunity to identify relevant climate risks, incorporate them into management processes, and inform engagement with stakeholders to address climate challenges. The kinds of topics covered include Landscape; Natural Environment; Historic Environment; Farming, Forestry & Land management; Built Environment; Community & Economy; Recreation & Tourism; and Business Continuity.

The National Landscapes Association have developed some guidelines as part of a climate adaptation framework. The first step in the process is identifying risks, estimating the seriousness of the impact and what steps can be put in place to address them.

As part of collective reporting for protected landscapes this year we have recently submitted a case study based on our soil and hydrology surveying in the River Clun headwaters, which is given in Appendix 1.

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 Climate Change Adaptation case study on soil and hydrology surveying in the River Clun headwaters to inform work to re-naturalise hydrology

Appendix 1 to item 3

Shropshire Hills case study on Climate Change Adaptation, October 2024

Soil and hydrology surveying in the River Clun headwaters to inform work to re-naturalise hydrology

Detailed eco-hydrology survey work in the upper Clun catchment of 900ha of land mapped as shallow peat, including farmland, forestry and nature reserves. The survey has made recommendations for enhancing environmental benefits by re-naturalising hydrology in the headwaters.

This project has been carried out in two phases between 2022 and 2025, with partners Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team, Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Natural England working collaboratively throughout. The Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team are leading on the second phase of this work, which is part of Natural England's Clun Protected Site Strategy (PSS) pilot.

The primary theme in relation to climate adaptation is water management, especially in relation to flooding and drought. The project also has links to restoring soil condition, improving habitat networks and ecological resilience, adaptation of farming, green finance and adapting the rural economy.

The importance of high-functioning natural processes in headwater areas is key in climate change resilience. The soils, rich in organic matter and in places peaty, are important for water regulation as well as storing carbon and maintaining water quality. Hydrology in the Clun catchment is quite highly modified. Gaining detailed site-specific information about hydrology and habitats is seen as key to informing and encouraging land management centred on restoring natural hydrology.

Aims and objectives

To understand existing soils and hydrology to inform future management to re-naturalise hydrology. Specifically it includes:

- Peat soil survey (presence, depth, condition & extent) to ground-truth existing maps of shallow peat
- Vegetation surveys to understand plant communities and links between peaty soils, vegetation diversity and roughness, and the influence on hydrology.
- Eco-hydrology surveys to identify natural and human influences on water and its movement (surface water flows, ground water and streams)

Outcomes

Across the two project phases, 900 ha of land has been surveyed. Less peat was found than expected, however the areas are nevertheless important high organic matter soils with localised peat, and re-naturalising their hydrology will significantly improve delivery of ecosystem services. Partners have discussed the findings individually with landowners as well as holding meetings. Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Natural Resources Wales will be taking further practical measures on their holdings.

Impacts

The project has worked with 17 landowners across 900ha of land, and results are still being disseminated and discussed. The project has not included work on the ground but it is hoped this will follow on through a variety of mechanisms.

For further information contact Rachel Glover rachel.glover@shropshire.gov.uk 01743 255231 or see <https://www.shropshirehills-nl.org.uk/our-work/projects/clun-headwaters>.



Looking at shallow peat at Rhos Fiddle SWT nature reserve



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