

MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

7 DECEMBER 2018

AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

Recommendation

1. **The Committee is recommended to:**
 - a) **Note progress made with conducting the review (Appendix 1);**
 - b) **Note and comment on the consultation undertaken and its reach (see also Appendix 2);**
 - c) **Discuss the summary of key comments made in relation to the consultation draft text and the AONB Unit's response to them. (Appendix 3)**
 - d) **Discuss and then endorse (subject to agreed changes) the text for the next AONB management plan (Appendix 4). NB The committee should recognise that further changes may still need to be made to the document following formal observations from Natural England and, possible, final comments from Local Authorities.**
 - e) **Note and comment on work undertaken as part of preparing and consulting on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).**
 - f) **Note and comment on work undertaken as part of the State of the AONB report preparation.**

Background

2. Members of the JAC considered a paper on the AONB Management Plan review (Agenda Item 6) when the committee last met on 20 April 2018. Members raised a number of comments at that time (see <http://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=6421>) These included the need for the plan to be responsive and a suggestion that the plan be reviewed once there was less uncertainty about the future.

Summary

3. **Review timetable** – Appendix 1 provides an update on progress with meeting the review timetable. We are currently at Task 24 with all previous tasks having been completed.

4. **Consultation** - Two key phases of consultation were undertaken as part of the review process. The first, between March and June 2018, was designed to identify people's views on challenges and priorities for the AONB over the next five years, as well as providing key interests with an opportunity to discuss and update the current management plan. This phase included an online survey and three workshops, attended by colleagues from a range of partner bodies. The second key phase of consultation took place over a 5-6 week period in October and November when comments were invited, via online survey, on draft text for a new management plan for the period 2019-2024 and on a related draft Environmental Report.

5. Appendix 2 provides a summary of consultation tasks carried out in relation to the review process and some details on numbers of invitees and participants. In brief:

- More than 250 people were contacted directly regarding the various stages of consultation
- A further reach of 561 on Facebook and 1731 impressions on Twitter were made with social media posts
- 64 responses were collected from the initial online survey
- 44 individuals attended the workshops across three dates
- We received 25 responses to our call for comments on the consultation draft plan
- We received 4 responses to our call for comments on the SEA

6. **Consultation responses** – Appendix 3 shows a selection of comments/points raised in relation to the consultation draft plan 2019-2024 and the AONB Unit's responses to them. A full list of comments has not been made available here since many points are minor and easily dealt with. A full list of comments and responses will be made available on the website in due course.

7. **The new management plan** – Appendix 4 contains the proposed text for the AONB Management Plan for 2019-2024. The text has been changed in response to many comments raised during the second phase of consultation.

8. **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** – SEA is a statutory requirement to ensure that land-use plans and programmes that are likely to have significant effects on the environment are the subject of a strategic assessment of options and alternative courses of action during plan preparation, in order to avoid or mitigate any adverse effects. A SEA has been carried out on the AONB Management Plan. This began with the preparation of a Scoping Report which the statutory consultation bodies (Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency) were consulted on, as required by law. Comments received were then taken into account in preparing a full Environmental Report which was made available for consultation alongside the consultation draft of the Management Plan. A copy of the Environmental Report is available on request.

9. **The State of the AONB report** – JAC members are aware that the State of the AONB report is the companion document to the AONB management plan. It aims to paint a picture of the condition of the AONB at the time that a new management plan is launched, comparing this with the position five years previously. In this way the report provides an indication, however imperfect, of the success of the AONB Partnership over the last five years, whilst also attempting to provide a summary analysis of trends and issues.

10. With the kind permission of property owners, data has been collected on a range of AONB attributes in recent months. This includes data on the condition of Listed Buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Local Geological Sites and Rights of Way. Additional data for the report has been made available by national bodies.

11. Work to compile the State of AONB report for 2019 is ongoing with significant input from Dr Nick Evans at the University of Worcester. A draft report is expected by the end of December 2018.

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report

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Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 - Indicative Review Programme and Timetable
- Appendix 2 – Summary of consultation tasks
- Appendix 3 – Selection of comments received
- Appendix 4 – Draft Revised Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan (2019-2024)