



PART A:	MATTERS DEALT WITH UNDER DELEGATED POWERS
REPORT TO:	PLANNING COMMITTEE
DATE:	23 OCTOBER 2018
REPORT OF THE:	SPECIALIST SERVICES LEAD GARY HOUSDEN
TITLE OF REPORT:	HOWARDIAN HILLS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY: DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN 2019-2024
WARDS AFFECTED:	AMOTHERBY, AMPLEFORTH, DERWENT, HELMSLEY, HOVINGHAM, RYEDALE SOUTH WEST, SHERIFF HUTTON AND SINNINGTON

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) has prepared a draft Management Plan for consultation to cover the period 2019-2024.
- 1.2 This report is for Members to agree the Council's response to the formal consultation document (Appendix 1).

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Members:

(i) agree the District Council's response to the consultation on the draft Howardian Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 at Appendix 1 of the report.

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 There is a statutory duty on Local Authorities to prepare and have in place an up-to-date Management Plan for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in their area. It is appropriate that this Council provides a response to the current consultation prior to considering the final Management Plan for adoption.

4.0 SIGNIFICANT RISKS

- 4.1 There are no significant risks associated with this report. An agreed response at this formal consultation stage will help to ensure that finalisation and adoption of the Management Plan progresses in accordance with the established timetable to meet

the funding conditions imposed by DEFRA. Failure to meet the agreed timetable by the end of March 2019 could potentially result in a loss of funding for the AONB.

5.0 POLICY CONTEXT AND CONSULTATION

Background

- 5.1 In 1992 the Howardian Hills Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) was established to guide and co-ordinate the management of the Howardian Hills AONB. The constituent Local Authorities agreed that the JAC should co-ordinate the production and implementation of the Management Plan for the Howardian Hills on their behalf. A Management Plan for the AONB provides an agreed approach to the conservation and enhancement of the AONB based on partnership and co-operation, and provides an important framework to co-ordinate the plans and strategies of a range of partners.
- 5.2 Members will be aware that Ryedale District Council together with Hambleton District Council, North Yorkshire County Council, Local Parish Councils and other key stakeholders such as the National Farmers Union, the Forestry Commission and Natural England are members of the JAC. Day-to-day work is undertaken by the small team of staff in the AONB Unit.
- 5.3 The current AONB Management Plan was adopted by the constituent Local Authorities in 2014. There is a statutory duty to review and adopt the AONB Management Plan every five years. The current consultation represents a further review of the AONB Management Plan which aims to refresh and roll the document forward to 2024.

Consultation

- 5.4 The draft Management Plan has been produced following informal consultation with stakeholder representatives during 2018. The draft Management Plan is predominantly an update of the previous adopted Management Plan, with relatively minor changes to its Vision, Key Vision Aims, layout and presentation. The draft Management Plan is also supported by a State of the AONB Report (containing statistics and indicators), a Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report and a Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report.
- 5.5 Public consultation on the draft Management Plan runs from 28th September 2018 to 11 November 2018. The JAC will consider comments received on the draft Management Plan during December 2018 and make any changes necessary. The revised Management Plan will then be circulated to constituent Local Authorities in late January 2019 with a formal request from the JAC to adopt the revised Management Plan. The final document will need to be formally adopted by Ryedale District Council to meet the statutory requirements for production. It is anticipated that this will be achieved via a report to Council in February 2019.

REPORT

6.0 REPORT DETAILS

- 6.1 A copy of the draft Management Plan 2019-2024 and supporting documents is available at the Howardian Hills AONB website [here](#). Appendix 2 of this report summarises the Vision and Aims of the Plan.

6.2 The draft Management Plan generally follows a very similar format to the current adopted plan. This format was considered to afford a much easier and more focussed document than earlier versions. The draft Management Plan is again divided into three main parts:

Part One: Introduction

6.3 This includes the insertion of a new introductory section “Policy and Legal Framework for AONBs” which provides a welcome summary of the history and context within which AONBs operate.

Part Two: “Achieving a Vision”

6.4 Following articulation of the “Vision for a Living landscape”, this section sets out issues, aims and objectives and is focussed around the following topics:

- Natural Capital & Ecosystem Services
- Natural environment
- Historic environment
- Local Communities
- Agriculture
- Forestry & Woodland
- Development and the rural economy
- Roads, Transport and Traffic Management
- Recreation, access and tourism
- Awareness and promotion

6.5 There has been some minor re-articulation of the Vision and Aims of the current Management Plan, although these are relatively minor, providing clarification and updates to make the aims more succinct and/or relevant rather than to substantially alter them (e.g. referencing the spread of tree diseases and uncertainties regarding the policy context given the UK’s withdrawal from the EU).

6.6 One of the key principles of DEFRA’s major policy document ‘A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment’ (2018) is to adopt a Natural Capital approach in decision making. Natural Capital is defined as

“the sum of our ecosystems, species, freshwater, land, soils, minerals, our air and our seas. These are all elements of nature that either directly or indirectly bring value to people and the country at large. They do this in many ways but chiefly by providing us with food, clean air and water, wildlife, energy, wood, recreation and protection from hazards.”

6.7 The Natural Capital approach requires understanding of the:

- range of economic and social benefits provided by natural assets and their associated ecosystem services;
- way in which these benefits depend upon the various assets and services;
- state/condition and location of natural assets in relation to the benefits derived from them.

6.8 Whilst further information and guidance on the Natural Capital approach is expected to emerge in the coming years, the draft Management Plan sets out that this approach will be used to refine its approach to management in the future and identifies objectives relating to improving knowledge of the AONB’s Natural Capital. This new concept of the Natural Capital approach and preparing for its use recurs throughout the Draft Management Plan.

Part Three: "Implementation"

- 6.9 In general, most of the objectives of the current Management Plan have been rolled forward. Some have been re-articulated to reflect the some of the changes set out above or where this improves the clarity / succinctness of the plan. The majority of changes relate to updates to actions which is appropriate given that the plan is a roll forward of an existing document.
- 6.10 The Partnership Indicators that have been used for many years to monitor performance of the AONB Partnership have now been superseded by Key Performance Indicators drawn up by the National Association for AONBs as a mechanism for reporting AONB family achievements to DEFRA. These include indicators on area of land enhanced for biodiversity and historic environment features, number of partnerships influenced, number of planning applications scrutinised and income secured. These indicators will be used from April 2019 onwards as the measure of AONB Partnership action.
- 6.11 The proposed Ryedale District Council response to the draft Management Plan is included in Appendix 1 to this report. Given that the draft Management Plan is largely an update of the current plan, that there are no significant changes to format or objectives, and that informal consultation has already taken place with stakeholders the number of comments is relatively low. The most significant comment proposes a change of wording to provide a more positive and supportive stance towards potential enhancements to the A64 (Objective RTT5), whilst still having regard to the special qualities of the AONB and minimising environmental impact, as follows:

~~"Ensure that any *Support* proposals for improvement of the A64 Trunk Road through the AONB *subject to these being* are fully justified and sensitive to local characteristics. Proposals should aim to minimise environmental impact, make maximum use of the existing road alignment and utilise new techniques such as 'green bridges' where possible"~~

- 6.12 On the basis of the above, it is considered appropriate that the District Council express general support for the revised Draft Management Plan subject to the points outlined in Appendix 1.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The following implications have been identified:

a) Financial

There are no new financial implications associated with this report. It should be noted that the proposed revisions to the Management Plan and in particular the revised actions do not commit the Council to providing additional financial support to the AONB unit which is over and above the core funding that the Council currently contributes.

b) Legal

The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that a Management Plan for the AONB is in place – in effect this means that the Council needs to adopt the Final Management Plan prior to the end of March 2019, when the previous plan expires. Failure to do so may:

- i) put at risk funding for the AONB from DEFRA; and
- ii) mean that decisions made by the Council (as in its role as Local Planning

Authority) in relation to the AONB may not be safe from challenge during the period until the Management Plan was adopted.

- c) Other (Equalities, Staffing, Planning, Health & Safety, Environmental, Crime & Disorder)
There are no other implications associated with this report.

8.0 NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 The final Howardian Hills AONB Management Plan for 2019-2024 will be prepared in January 2019 whereupon Ryedale District Council will be invited to consider the document for formal adoption prior to the end of March 2019. It is proposed that this will be via a report to Council in February 2019.

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Background Papers:

- Howardian Hills AONB draft Management Plan 2019-2024 (2018)
 - Howardian Hills AONB Management Plan 2014-2019 (2013)
- [The above documents are available from the Howardian Hills AONB website at:
<http://www.howardianhills.org.uk/about-us/management-plan-and-work-programme/>]
- [“A Green Future: Our 25 Year plan to Improve the Environment”, \(2018\) DEFRA](#)