

Item 8. Management Plan Review

1. Summary

This paper informs members of the Board of the results of the evaluation questionnaire survey carried out on the Management Plan.

2. Background

- 2.1. A total of 29 questionnaires were received, representing a range of interests and involvement and a broad range of opinions. The full results of the evaluation are shown in Appendix 1. Overall it appears that those who were involved in preparing the plan are generally positive about it. Many of those who have read the plan having not been involved have found it more difficult to understand. The value of a summary document for this audience is clear. There was a lack of continuity between the preparation of the Plan and its implementation due to staff changes in the AONB Team, and this is shown through in the results. A considerable 'loyalty' to the plan preparation process is apparent among many who were involved.
- 2.2. There is evidence of improvement – the scores for each year's Action Plan show a small rise each time. The overall score for implementing and monitoring the plan is however lower than for the plan preparation. Discussion with some of those who scored lower for implementation and monitoring reveals that this is influenced by views on implementation by some partners. This fits with the middling scores on influence of the Plan within other organisations and the quite widely varying views on how to improve engagement of partners. The importance of continuing to build the Plan as a partnership document and not just as a plan for the AONB Team is clear. The processes of the AONB Partnership and its sub-groups are the main mechanism for this, but a more structured approach to bilateral liaison between the AONB Team and partners is also needed.
- 2.3. Feedback on core staff roles. This is very encouraging, with all average scores between 7.5 and 8.5 out of 10, and 90% of respondents feeling that effectiveness is improving.

3. RECOMMENDATION:

The Management Board is requested to note the results and consider their implications for review of the Management Plan.

This paper has been prepared by Phil Holden, AONB Manager. For further details contact 01588 674088 or phil.holden@shropshire-cc.gov.uk.

Appendix 1 Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan & Core Roles Evaluation, Nov 06 – Feb 07

The average scores are shown against each question, along with the number of responses to that particular question. Answers to open questions are shown but not accredited to individuals.

The Management Plan

1. How would you rate the effectiveness of the AONB Management Plan overall?

(Low) 1 - 10 (High) **Average score 6.7** (23 responses)

2. How effective was the process of preparing the Plan?

(Not effective) 1 - 10 (Effective) **Average score 7.3** (20 responses)

3. How effective has the implementation and monitoring of the Plan been?

(Not effective) 1 - 10 (Effective) **Average score 6.6** (18 responses)

4. How much of the Plan have you read? (None) 1 - 10 (All) **Average score 7.8 (28 responses)**

5. Which sections of the Management Plan have been most useful to you?

Background information (Not useful) 1 - 10 (Useful) **Average score 8.0** (22 responses)

Analysis of key issues (Not useful) 1 - 10 (Useful) **Average score 8.2** (21 responses)

Vision and Aims **Average score 8.1** (23 responses)

Original Action Plan **Average score 7.2** (23 responses)

Revised Action Plan & progress update **Average score 7.4** (23 responses)

Second progress update Oct 2006 **Average score 7.9** (21 responses)

Management Plan Summary document **Average score 8.5** (21 responses)

The Management Plan and your organisation (if appropriate)

6. How would you rate your organisation's sense of shared ownership of the AONB Management Plan? (Low) 1 - 10 (High) **Average score 5.8 (23 responses)**

7. To what extent has the Management Plan influenced your work or that of your organisation? (Not at all) 1 - 10 (A lot) **Average score 5.4 (23 responses)**

8. Have actions from the Management Plan fed into or influenced your own organisation's Business Plan? Yes – 11 (52%) No – 10 (21 responses)

9. In what ways has your organisation been influenced by the CRoW Act Section 85 duty to 'have regard to the purposes of AONB designation in carrying out all of its functions'? (applies to all public bodies).

- Aware of need for sensitivity within AONB (Forestry Commission).
- Assume that our work dovetails; statutory role for AONBs (Natural England).
- Not sure (local authority).

Do you need more information or guidance on this duty? 5 respondents said Yes, including a local authority, Parish Councils and voluntary organisations.

10. Do you have any other comments about the Management Plan?

- Well presented throughout and easy to read.
- Closer relationship to information and outcomes from Landscape Character work.
- This is the one organisation I attend which is friendly, efficient and communicates well with a variety of organisations.
- Very good plan but needs to be distributed on a wider scale.
- Plan is rather introspective and not very clear how it can link to business plans and decisions of other bodies.
- Sorry to say but it's not a document that I see as being of great relevance to my work.

- 78 pages before meeting anything resembling a SMART objective was too many. Having read it twice I am still not sure what the AONB is about. There is more to the AONB than farmers and tourism – help small businesses and experimental developments. Focus is on conserving not enhancing and seems too timid to offend land managers.
- Wider consultation next time especially with Market Town Partnerships and South Shropshire Partnership.
- Process of preparation as important as the final document. Need firm commitments from partners to deliver actions in their own areas.
- Increasingly important to consider the social and economic aspects and make this clearer.
- Community representatives on the Partnership could be offered space to present a report of the Management Plan progress, picking on aspects that are relevant.
- Would be useful to include position statements as being developed, which other organisations can incorporate into their activities. Comments from real people in visions bring it alive. Needs to be made more explicit where it links to other strategies.
- Tourism matters seemed low on the agenda despite representation in Plan working groups. AONB is now addressing the issue but needs to discuss with tourism providers in revision.
- An extraordinarily complex document - not easy reading, but interesting, informative and well produced. Too much detail in places, especially the Action Plan. Sorry, but very few memorable ideas or plans come through, nor does an overall practical vision.
- The process of preparing the Plan was perhaps the most beneficial because it brought together such a wide range of different interests who worked collectively to prepare a shared vision for the AONB.
- I am fairly sure that some good has been done but it does take time to assess the real benefits.
- Very detailed, informative and useful – excellent reference material.
- Difficult to know what influence the Plan has had on local authority decisions – perhaps this could be developed.
- The Plan was drawn up to a tight legally driven timescale. This influenced content which in effect meant practical substance was largely missing and the focus was inevitably on process and early communication needs. The need now is to move on and deliver, but in a manner that frees up the skills, energy and resources of partners. This will mean practical action in geographically specific areas, lively community led debate and, inevitably, some activity that all AONB partners are not going to readily sign up to. It would also be worth considering a number of ‘flagship’ projects that the AONB really drives. The economic/ diversification theme is an obvious area where gaps exist and no other organisation is providing real leadership.
- There is so much change in farming and the local population that it’s almost impossible to set anything in context. The wealth and lifestyle of so many incomers is so much at odds with what we are trying to achieve that I despair! We should concentrate on trying to influence town populations in favour of ‘local living’. Tourism needs to be very carefully managed – I am really concerned with some of their worst habits on the very fragile habitats and crops.
- Policy is well thought through. Partners are very committed already in general.
- Much of our work is supportive of AONB aims and does deliver against Management Plan objectives. However, individual actions are not cross-referenced with the Plan. The organisation has a high level of awareness of the AONB and of our obligations to it.

Review of the Management Plan

11. What improvements would you like to see in a revised Management Plan?

Updated information (not important) 1 - 10 (important)	Average score 8.4 (23 responses)
Better description of significance of the AONB	Average score 6.8 (20 responses)
Better/updated analysis of issues	Average score 8.4 (24 responses)
Revised aims/objectives	Average score 7.3 (21 responses)
Definition of clearer policies	Average score 8.1 (21 responses)
Closer link with planning policy documents	Average score 8.1 (24 responses)
More commitment from partner organisations	Average score 8.4 (24 responses)
Updated actions	Average score 8.1 (23 responses)

Better monitoring of progress

Average score 8.4 (25 responses)

Other (please specify)

- Analysis of information in map form, e.g. important features, action/ target areas.
- Simple user friendly format with clear objectives and prioritised actions. Allow easy review.
- See little need to update the Plan – it is very valuable in its current form.

12. How do you feel about the time and resources the Management Plan takes up?

(Not enough) 1 - 10 (Too much) **Average score 5.9** (22 responses)

13. How can partners be encouraged to engage more with the Management Plan?

Through activity of the Partnership and Working Groups **Ave score 7.7** (24 resp)

One to one meetings with AONB Team members **Ave score 7.5** (20 resp)

Formal signing or endorsement of Management Plan **Ave score 5.9** (22 resp)

Partners submitting regular progress updates **Ave score 7.5** (23 resp)

Other (please specify)

- All report back on their aims and actions for and in the AONB.
- Good engagement with production of plan.
- Shared ownership at the outset, reporting requirements.
- Partners have very little opportunity to influence their members as most organisations have so few active members.

Questions on core staff roles

14. Please rate the effectiveness of any functions of which you have experience:

Specific advice (Not effective) 1 - 10 (Effective) **Average score 7.8** (15 responses)

Strategic guidance & policy **Average score 8.3** (15 responses)

Co-ordination with others **Average score 8.1** (18 responses)

Response to consultations **Average score 8.5** (18 responses)

Clear communication **Average score 8.0** (21 responses)

Developing new practical initiatives **Average score 7.5** (19 responses)

Engaging people proactively **Average score 7.9** (17 responses)

Keeping the Management Plan at the centre of the AONB Partnership's work
Average score 7.9 (12 responses)

15. Is the effectiveness of the core staff

improving - **18** (90%), staying the same - **2**, deteriorating - **0** (20 responses)

16. What has been your involvement with the AONB Management Plan?

AONB Partnership member - 13

Consultation Group member - 3

Partner organisation - 5

Other organisation - 3

AONB Team member - 5

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