

Item 9. Sustainable Tourism Strategy Action Plan and European Charter

1. Summary

This paper presents a draft of the Action Plan linked to the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

2. Background

Strategy Action Plan

The Sustainable Tourism Strategy document is being led by the Destination Partnership (which sits under the wing of Shropshire Hills Tourism), and the AONB Partnership has a supporting role. The draft has been developed through a sub-group of the DP, and informed by a consultation including detailed and productive feedback from several partners, and a consultation event attended by around 25 people.

The comments of the Transition Board on the Action Plan are welcomed, but it must be remembered that there are also other stakeholders and views to take into consideration. The Action Plan is not for any one organisation to deliver – it is partly a guiding document for the Destination Partnership, and partly an influencing document aimed at a variety of partners. It aims to balance being realistic and deliverable with also remaining aspirational. The draft Action Plan pulls action proposals out of the main Strategy document and adds detail to them. The costings, priorities etc have mostly not yet been discussed with particular partners, and this is an important part of the ongoing process.

An up to date draft of the main Strategy document itself developed further since the version provided to the AONB Partnership meeting on 14th November) is available to members of the Board on request.

Charter

The Transition Board minutes of 5th September also state that options and recommendations for using the European Charter to best effect over the next period would be discussed at the December meeting. Current proposals for this are as follows:

- The Charter process gathers together concerns and issues within the sector and provides a clear approach that is mirrored as good practice throughout Europe. This will help ensure the Destination Partnership remains relevant and strong.
- Shropshire Hills Tourism, as the body responsible for the Marketing Plan which will arise out of the Strategy, will be encouraged to make reference to the Charter where appropriate. The Europarc Federation has very recently adopted a new logo for the Charter, which is more modern and should help with relevance to the public. In most circumstances the Charter may be more appropriate to promote with tourism businesses than with visitors themselves.



Old logo



New logo

- With the recent winding up of the Shropshire Hills Sustainable Business Network (principally due to falling demand and risk of competing with Shropshire Hills Tourism), there is scope to develop a new local Business Network for Sustainable Tourism. This would need to be different, and should be developed closely with Shropshire Hills Tourism. The Charter has an optional Part II, where individual businesses become signatories (Part I is the protected area body being accredited). Part II is much less well developed, especially in the UK, and there is the option to tailor it to local circumstances. We intend to explore using Part II of the Charter as the basis for a new local scheme.
- The other main scheme run by the Europarc Federation is the Young Rangers scheme. This year for the first time some of our Young Rangers attended the international summer camp in Switzerland. It may be possible in future to connect relationships forged through Young Rangers with the Sustainable Tourism Charter. One benefit would be to develop a lasting relationship with one or more areas in other countries which share similar characteristics as ours e.g. a non-prime tourist destination with an inland, farmed landscape and walking and outdoor activities of a moderate nature (e.g. not major mountains).
- Renewing the Charter would put us in the forefront of AONBs in relation to sustainable tourism, and will give us the opportunity nationally also to develop our networking with Charter National Parks. Good profile for the AONB Partnership locally and nationally – something that we can promote to our partners
- There has historically been an issue with recognition of the Shropshire Hills within county level tourism promotion. We will seek to use the accolade of the Charter to raise the profile of the Shropshire Hills in the promotion of Shropshire.
- Planned improvements to the AONB website can feature the Charter more prominently, and this can also be reflected in our social media and other communications.

The Europarc Federation have agreed to an extension to our reapplication deadline from Dec 2017 to the end of February 2018, but they will not agree to a reduction in the fee. They said *"The Charter is conceived and implemented as a voluntary scheme and it works at its best when Parks and Partners are committed, self-motivated and with a proactive attitude. When this is the case the Charter can generate really big and impressive action plans the re-evaluation fee appears very small compared to the overall figures that can be generated by an effective Charter process in place. Also, quite often the Forum and the structure of the Charter provide the right tool/operative framework for an effective cooperation between the Park and its various stakeholders. The Cairngorms National Park recently undertook their second re-evaluation of their Charter award and found the process incredibly useful both for the park authority and for their business partners."*

3. RECOMMENDATION:

The Transition Board is recommended to comment on the draft Action Plan and proposals to make best use of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.

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Shropshire Hills Sustainable Tourism Strategy Action Plan 2018-23 Draft at 30 Nov 17

	Who	When	Priority	Dir cost (Est)	Lead partner
Objective 1: To orientate and spread visitors across the area and through the season					
Review and improve destination signage					
Work with partners to ensure our signage is fit for purpose	DP, DT, DL, ST, SHT, AONB, NT +	2018	Medium	£ 5,000.00	AONB
Work with the business community, attractions and visitor information centres to help orientate visitors	SHT, AONB, DL, TCS, DT, ST	Annually	High	£ -	SHT
Promote greener ways to travel					
Promote the Shropshire Hills Shuttles to our businesses and visitors	SHT, AONB, NE, NT, SWT, ST	Annually	High	£ 1,000.00	AONB
Work with transport partners and providers to encourage greater use of public transport	AONB, SC, NT, TCS	Annually	High	£ -	AONB
Promote Co Wheels and other car sharing schemes	SHT, TCS, LCG, DL, DT, ST	Annually	Medium	£ -	SHT
Promote cycling and walking holidays	SHT	Annually	High	£ -	SHT
Promote the bus and train network as an alternative to using cars for exploring the area wherever possible.	SHT, AONB, SCOP, SCT, DL	Annually	High	£ -	SHT
Promote the use of hybrid and electric vehicles and greener fuel options	AONB, SCT, TCS, LCGs	As developed	Medium	£ -	SCT
Support the installation of EV charging points	AONB, TCS, SCT	As required	Medium	£ -	AONB
Develop relationships with green businesses, green technology advisers and local interest groups such as Stretton Climate Care and Green Shropshire Xchange	AONB, SHT	2018 -	Medium	£ 300.00	AONB
Promote year round activities and events					
Develop and promote a year round calendar of events and activities through print, digital and social media	DP, DT, ST, SHT, DL	Annually	High	£ -	SHT
Spread visitor use across the area and through the seasons					
Work to put the promotional spotlight on less known locations and iconic, characterful places, celebrating the diversity of the landscape and its characterful historic market towns, whilst helping to protect the better-known locations	AONB, SHT, SCOP, DL, DT, ST, TCS	Annually	High	£ -	AONB
Maintain web and print media designed to help visitors navigate, orientate and be inspired by our harder to reach places	SHT, AONB, NT, NE, SCOP	Annually	High	£ 12,000.00	SHT
Promote activities and events of communities across the destination	SHT, AONB, SCOP, TCS	Annually	High	£ -	SHT
				£ 18,300.00	
	Who	When	Priority	Dir Cost (Est)	Lead Partner
Objective 2: To support the visitor economy through promoting year round events and activities, local businesses, food, drink and crafts					
Promote green businesses and services for a better environment	SHT, DL, DT, AONB, SCOP	2018	High	£ -	AONB
Launch a new membership scheme promoting green business products and services	AONB, SHT, DL, DT	2018	Medium	£ 1,000.00	AONB
Work with others to promote information and opportunities that help businesses prosper by being greener	AONB, SHT, MGH, SCED	2018-19	Medium	£ -	AONB
Promote our area's best qualities to our business community through open days, workshops, events and networking opportunities.	SHT, AONB, MGH	Annually	High	£ 1,000.00	SHT
				£ 2,000.00	

Shropshire Hills Sustainable Tourism Strategy Action Plan 2018-23 Draft at 30 Nov 17

	Who	When	Priority	Dir Cost (Est)	Lead Partner
Objective 3: To work closely with businesses, attractions, communities and other tourism bodies					
Demonstrate how we make a difference					
Grow the contacts, influence and reputation of the Destination Partnership as the central focus for tourism in the Shropshire Hills	DP, DT, DL, ST, DS	2018-2020	Medium	£ -	DP
Promote the work of the Destination Partnership and its members to local tourism businesses	DP, SHT, DL, DT, ST	2018-	Medium	£ -	DP
Promote the Destination Partnership to the Local Enterprise Partnership and other strategic local partnerships and organisations	DP, SCED, ST, DT, DL, DS, AONB	2018-	High	£ -	DP
Work proactively with other destinations, AONBs and Visit Britain, promoting the Shropshire Hills, sharing best practice and developing ideas collaboratively	SHT,AONB, SCED, DT, DL, ST	2019-	Medium	£ -	SHT
				£ -	
	Who	When	Priority	Direct Cost (Est)	Lead Partner
Objective 4: To increase enjoyment and understanding of our outstanding landscape's nature and heritage					
Managing the impact of visitors on the environment					
Encourage a partnership approach to address visitor pressure issues	DP, NT, NE, FC	2018-2023	High	£ -	AONB
Work to ensure that the need for managing visitors is understood and widely supported	AONB, SC, NT, EH, EN, SWT	Annually	High	£ -	AONB
Work with the Shropshire Hills AONB Trust to create opportunities for the public and business community to support restorative work through charitable giving	AONB, SHT, DL, DT	2018, 2019	Medium	£ -	AONB
Develop conservation holidays and opportunities to involve visitors in practical conservation	DP, NT, NE, FC, SCOP, SWT	2019-2021	Medium	£ 1,500.00	
Managing the impact of visitors on people's lives					
Work to address visitor pressure issues on communities	AONB, SHT, SC, NT, EN, TCs	Ongoing	High	£ -	DP
Work with transport partners and providers to encourage greater use of public transport	DP, SCT, AONB, NT, EN, TCs	2019	Medium	£ -	AONB
Promote cycling routes and self-guided trails from our market towns and public transport routes.	SC, SHT, NT, AONB	Ongoing	Medium	£ 6,000.00	
Support initiatives that seek to generate income from visitors to help manage key sites	AONB, SHAONBT, NT			£ 2,000.00	
				£ 9,500.00	
	Who	When	Priority	Dir Cost (Est)	Lead Partners
Objective 5: To promote the area's outstanding qualities for enjoyment, health and wellbeing whilst safeguarding them for the future					
Creating an 'outstanding' destination					
We will produce a new marketing plan that engages, inspires, coordinates and differentiates our unique destination	DP	2018	High	£ 1,000.00	SHT
Co-ordinate our offer and messages					
Develop the Shropshire Hills brand	DP	2018-19	High	£ 500.00	SHT
Improve digital marketing of the area	DP	Ongoing	High	£ 1,000.00	SHT
Help others to help ourselves					
We will work together, improving our access to funding and markets and maximising our resources	DP, ST, Other DPs, MGH, SCED	Ongoing	High	£ -	AONB

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Show off the beauty and uniqueness of the Shropshire Hills						
Develop brand application guide for businesses and partners	DP, ST, DL, DS, AONB, SHT	2019-20	Medium	£	500.00	SHT
Making more of what we've got and recognising its value						
Communicate the value of our rights of way, open spaces, wildlife and heritage to the LEP and other economic planning partners	DP, DS, EN, EH, AONB, SCOP	2018	High	£	-	DS
Promote and support the care of our natural and cultural sites and attractions	AONB, SC, SCOP	Ongoing	High	£	-	SC
Promote our cultural and natural sites to inbound tourists	DP, DS, DL, DT	2018-	Low			DS
Promote sense of place through food, drink, arts, crafts and celebration	SHT, AONB, SHDC, BC, DL, DT	Ongoing	High	£	1,000.00	SHT
A valued Charter						
Use the Charter to inspire greener businesses and visitors	AONB, SHT, ST	2018-23	High	£	5,000.00	AONB
Be a bigger part of the whole						
Present a consistent and coordinated offer, working in partnership at a county level and beyond	SHT, DP, ST, DL, VE, NAAONB	2018-23	High	£	-	SHT
Developing a reputation						
Support our business community to produce effective promotion both digitally and in print	SHT, MGH	Ongoing	High			MGH
				£	9,000.00	
Key to abbreviations						
				AONB		AONB Partnership
				BC		Bog Centre
Estimated costs				Bus Parts		Business partners
				DL		Discover Ludlow
Objective 1	£18,300			DP		Destination Partnership
Objective 2	£2,000			DS		Discover Shropshire
Objective 3	£0			DT		Discover Telford
Objective 4	£9,500			FC		Forestry Commission
Objective 5	£9,000			LCGs		Local Community & Interest Groups
Total	£38,800			MGH		Marches Growth Hub
				NAAONB		National Association for AONBs
				NE		Natural England
				NT		National Trust
				SC		Shropshire Council 'Culture & Heritage'
				SCED		Shropshire Council 'Culture & Heritage' services
				SCOP		Shropshire Council Outdoor Partnerships
				SCT		Shropshire Council Transport
				SHAONBT		Shropshire Hills AONB Trust
				SHDC		Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre
				SHT		Shropshire Hills Tourism
				ST		Shropshire Tourism
				SWT		Shropshire Wildlife Trust
				TCS		Town Councils
				VE		Visit England/Britain (as appropriate)