

**Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> March 2019

**Report:** Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan (2020 – 2025)

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## **1. Purpose of Report**

To consider the result of the consultation and the programme for the adoption of the new AONB Management Plan (2025 – 2025)

## **2. Background**

Sections 89 and 90 of the CRow Act (2000) require local authorities and Conservation Boards to produce AONB Management Plans and to review adopted and published plans at intervals of not more than five years. A new Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan will need to be adopted by local authorities in 2019. The current Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan (2014 – 2019) is fit for purpose and has been adopted by the local authorities and submitted to the Secretary of State. Consequently, and because many changes to the Management Plan policies are unlikely, a 'light touch' review seems the most appropriate approach. It will however be an opportunity to review progress on implementing the Management Plan and to consider aligning the Board's governance, funding and Business Plan in the Management Plan review process.

A key 25 Year Environment Plan initiative is that the Government will be setting up a commission in 2019 to review whether National Parks and AONBs are fit for purpose. As this is not likely to report until after the AONB Management Plan is adopted, this is further justification as to why there should not be fundamental changes to the existing structure at this stage. Depending upon the outcome of this review it may be necessary to review the 2019 – 2024 earlier than would otherwise have been the case.

## **3. Engagement and Consultation**

On 12th September, the AONB Board approved the Consultation Draft for publication, subject to minor amendments delegated to the Officers Working Group and AONB Director. The Consultation Plan was launched at the Surrey Hills Symos

The Surrey Hills Officers Working Group provided comments and reviewed the survey and consultation responses in January. The AONB Director, with particular support from the Chair of the Officers Working Group and the AONB Planning Adviser, then had several sessions to go through the document, with a focus on updating the policies.

As there were too many changes to present to the AONB Board, these have been incorporated in to the Post Consultation Draft, as attached. The main changes are:

### **Section 1. The Introduction**

A new section on the 25 Year Environment Plan, ecosystem services and natural capital has been added.

### **Section 2. The Policy Framework**

## **Vision.**

Anew health and wellbeing wording added.

## **Agriculture**

New policy (F4) to recognise the importance of farming and retaining farmland

## **Woodland, hedgerows and veteran trees**

This has been extended to with new policies relating to hedgerows and veteran trees

## **Biodiversity and Water Resources**

New text and policies relating to the water framework directive and biodiversity net-gain legislation

## **Cultural Heritage**

Change in wording to incorporate historic landscape.

## **Recreation, health and well-being**

Extending policies to include health and well-being. Tourism policies moved to Economy section.

## **Planning**

Updating NPPF, highlighting concerns about incremental development and the importance of dark skies.

## **Transport and traffic**

Various changes to policies

## **The Economy, Tourism and Community Development**

Highlighting the benefit of the Surrey Hills to the wider regional economy and policies related to encouraging sustainable tourism.

## **Section 3. The Delivery Strategy**

This publication will include case study examples of projects implemented in the previous Plan period. The strategic targets have been listed under Pillar themes. There will be a supplementary document identifying lead body, partner organisations and timescales that will form the basis of the monitoring plan.

## **4. My Surrey Hills Marketing and Promotion**

The promotion of the Management Plan will be developed under the theme of My Surrey Hills. As part of the programme, a locally based videographer has been commissioned to create a series of 12 videos, each will be focused on an individual who will sum up what the Surrey Hills landscape means to them, ie the beneficiaries. The aim of the videos is to encourage a greater understanding and awareness of the Surrey Hills and make the AONB Management Plan policy framework more relevant to the wider public.

The first My Surrey Hills video was launched at the end of January, then being released monthly culminating in the launch of the AONB Management Plan at the Surrey Hills Symposium in November.

## 5. AONB Management Plan Review Programme

Date	Activity	Action
Sept 25	Officers Working Group to consider Pre-Consultation Draft for consultation and consultation programme	Officers Working Group
Nov 28	Launch survey (with post-cards and social media) at the Surrey Hills Symposium at Surrey University on 28 <sup>th</sup> November.	AONB Unit
Jan 22 <sup>nd</sup>	OWG considered Survey and Symposium feedback and to advise on any changes to the Consultation Draft Management Plan.	Officers Working Group
Feb - March	Prepare report of consultation and recommend changes to the Draft	AONB Director, Chair of OWG and Planning Adviser
March 21 <sup>st</sup>	Submit Report of Consultation and recommendations for amendments to Management Plan to Board	AONB Director
March 27 <sup>th</sup>	AONB Board recommends amendments (ie pre-publication draft) for local authority adoption	AONB Board
April	Undertake again Habitat Regulation Screening Report	Peer Review
April	Natural England Formal Comments on Management Plan	Natural England
May 14 <sup>th</sup>	Officers Working Group consider Screening Report and any further amendments to Plan	OWG
June – July	Prepare reports for Constituent Bodies on Management Plan adoption, constitutional changes and business plan 2020 - 2025	Officers Working Group
September 4 <sup>th</sup>	Adopt new AONB Management Plan. To agree arrangements for publication and launch; adopt constitution and governance; and agree business plan	AONB Board AGM
November	Publish and launch Management Plan, including Executive Summary and web version at My Surrey Hills Symposium	AONB Unit
December	Distribution and potential training programme targeted at parish councils and local authorities	AONB Board

## 6. Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Advise on any changes required to the draft post consultation AONB Management Plan.
- Advise on the programme for the adoption and launch of the AONB Management Plan
- Agree the delegate to the AONB Director and Officers Working Group the making of any minor amendments to the pre-publication draft

## **Appendix 1. Report of Consultation**

Surrey University hosted the inaugural Surrey Hills Symposium on 28th November. This was the last major event that celebrated the 60th Anniversary of the AONB Designation. The theme was to celebrate, inspire and debate a vision for the Surrey Hills over the next 60 years. Although it was sold out with 400 guests, unfortunately there were a lot of no shows due to traffic congestion on the A3 and the inclement weather. An artist's visualisation of the Debate will be included in the published document. It illustrates the issues that were presented and discussed by the Panel. Of particular note to the AONB Management Plan was:

- The importance of the London City region context, particularly in relation to development and recreation pressures on the Surrey Hills
- Issues about Green Belt protection and affordability
- The need for recreation infrastructure to improve and catering for all users, including those with limited mobility.
- Climate change being a major threat to the existing land management regimes and habitat, but opening up new opportunities, eg new technology and plants
- Viticulture was discussed as a major land use and economic development opportunity but raised questions about the scale of the investment and vineyards, and the input, labour supply and infrastructure requirements, eg visitor centres
- The branding and profile of the Surrey Hills including National Park status
- Creating wild places for people to explore, wild camp etc, but also the need to protect areas for nature's sake

Over 300 individuals and organisations responded to the consultation, the majority of which was through the completion of the on-survey that was launched after the Surrey Hills Symposium on 28th November and was live until 14th January. The results of the survey were:

Q1. What 5 features did people most value about the Surrey Hills were identified in the following order of importance:

Views  
Tranquillity  
Heathland  
Commons  
Country Lanes  
Chalk grassland  
Historic buildings  
Dark skies  
Farmland  
Parkland

[woodland was missed off the list of choices, but was listed second in the previous AONB Management Plan survey]

Q2 The activities associated with the Surrey Hills were identified in the following order:

Walking  
Dog walking  
Visit pub, tea shop, etc  
Mountain biking  
Photography  
Horse riding  
Road cycling

Running  
Visiting attractions  
Leisure drive  
Shopping

Q3 The following threats and pressures were identified in the following order:

Housing development  
Traffic  
Energy (oil, gas fracking)  
Loss of local services  
Off-raod vehicles  
Excavation of minerals  
Aircraft noise  
Climate change  
Recreation pressure  
Changes in agriculture

Q4 The following areas of work that were important to the Surrey Hills over the next 5 years, in order of importance were

Landscape conservation  
Enjoyment and understanding  
Developing the rural economy

Q5 There were 60 Project suggestions. These ranged from planning protection; to nature conservation; to recreation and access; to arts, health and well-being; to banning and controlling cycling; to marketing and promotion etc. Further analysis is required.

Q6. The following brand names suggested for the Surrey Hills AONB were;

National Park	39%
AONB	35%
National Landscape	18%
Other	8%

The Other category mainly related to points of clarification between AONBs and National Parks, but there were additional suggestions including Natural Heritage Area, Protection Area of National Importance, National Park Conservation, National Heritage site

Q8. Statement of Significance.

67%	Strongly agreed
28%	Agreed
2.5%	Neither agreed nor disagreed
2%	Disagreed
0.5%	Strongly disagreed

Q9. The vision

44%	Strongly agreed
38%	Agreed
10%	Neither agreed nor disagreed
5%	Disagreed
2%	Strongly disagreed

Q10 Agriculture

There was strong support for these policies

Q11 Woodland

There was strong support for these policies

Q12. Biodiversity

There was strong support for these policies

Q13 Historic and Cultural Heritage

There was strong support for these policies

Q14 Recreation and Tourism

There was strong support for these policies

Q15. Land Use Planning

There was strong support for these policies

Q16. Transport and Traffic

There was strong support for these policies

Q17 Community Development and the Local Economy

There was strong support for these policies