

Date: 12th September 2018

Report: Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan (2019 – 2024)

Written by: Rob Fairbanks, Surrey Hills AONB Director

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the pre-consultation draft AONB Management Plan (2019 – 2024) and the programme for its review and adoption

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 Plan 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.

Opportunities will be taken to link the AONB Management Plan review, particularly engaging a wider audience in the consultation, with the celebrations of the 60th Anniversary of the designation in 2018 and the 70th anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act in 2019. This will include the Surrey University Symposium on 28th November.

3. Resource and Financial Considerations

The AONB Director is project managing the Management Plan review with the support of the AONB Unit. This will include the Planning Adviser advising on policy; the Office and Finance Manager; the administration of the Expert Panels; the Working Group Coordinator supporting the consultation (including Survey Monkey); and the Communications Officer leading on the PR including developing a new micro site for the Surrey Hills AONB Board.

A financial allocation has been identified out of the Defra single-pot for the consultation, publishing (print and on-line) and promotion associated with the Management Plan.

4. Screening Exercise

On 13th June, the AONB Board undertook a Screening exercise to ensure that all policies conserve and enhance the AONB and do not have a significant detrimental impact on its environment. This included reviewing the Statement of Significance, the Vision and undertaking a SWOT appraisal.

<p>SRENGTHS – identifying the AONB assets</p> <p>Beautiful landscapes Accessible – lots of visitors, proximity to London Diverse landscapes (woods, heaths, commons, downs) Affluent, vibrant rural economy Historic and cultural heritage Important biodiversity, nature areas</p>	<p>WEANESSES – the current (detrimental) issues</p> <p>Public transport links Traffic, congestion, parking, particularly honey pots Lack of awareness of Surrey Hills, AONB, special qualities Incremental development Unviable (vulnerable) land management AONB restricts development and investment Fragmentation (land management and infrastructure) Surrey image as ‘patio of London’ Lack of Views Lack of funding and investment in land management and recreation infrastructure</p>
<p>OPPORTUNITIES - to conserve and enhance landscapes and lives</p> <p>Education, health and well being Visitor experience to connect places Infrastructure and information Cycle Surrey Hills network New Environmental Land Management Schemes Community engagement, education and volunteering User cooperation, behaviours, citizenship Develop key gateways, eg Box Hill and Newlands Corner Biodiversity reserve for environmental net gain Developer contributions Business and institutional promotion</p>	<p>THREATS – the potential detrimental impacts on the AONB</p> <p>Lack of investment in infrastructure (capital and revenue) Housing development (major and incremental) Viability of agriculture and land management sector London growth (3m in next 25 years) Greater visitor pressure Transport growth, congestion Climate change Community resistance to change, eg providing for visitors Disease, eg Ash dieback and OPM Lack of strategic and integrated planning Lack of public funding Waste management, fly tipping Fragmentation of land</p>

The AONB Board agreed that the consultation should highlight the issues identified through the SWOT appraisal but it did not see a requirement for Expert Panels. The instruction was for the AONB Director to update the current AONB Management Plan but the consultation should be based on the existing Management Plan policies and programmes as they were agreed as being largely fit for purpose.

5. The Pre-Consultation Draft

A copy of the pre-consultation draft AONB Management Plan (2019 -2024) is attached for Members consideration. It is based on the same format as the previous Plan. The Forewords are still to be drafted. Section 1 The Introduction has been updated based on national guidance to ensure a common approach with other AONB Management Plans. Section 2 The Policies has been updated but there has only been minor alternations to the policy statements. Section 3 The Delivery Strategy has been updated setting out new proposed Strategic Objectives that will inform the business planning process.

6. AONB Management Plan Review Programme

Date	Activity	Action
Sept 18.	Agree Consultation Draft and consultation arrangements	AONB Board
Sept 25	Officers Working Group to consider Pre-Consultation Draft for consultation and	OWG

	detailed consultation programme	
October	Launch Consultation Draft, including Survey Monkey and promotional events	AONB Chairman
Nov 28	Profile at the Surrey Hills Symposium at Surrey University on 28 th November.	AONB Unit
Nov - Jan	Prepare reports for Constituent Authorities on Management Plan consultation, constitutional changes and business plan	Officers Working Group
March 19	Submit Report of Consultations and recommendations for amendments to Management Plan, business plan and governance arrangements to Board	AONB Director
April 19	Natural England Formal Comments on Management Plan	Natural England
April – July	Prepare reports for Constituent Bodies on Management Plan adoption, constitutional changes and business plan 2019 - 2024	Officers Working Group
September 19	Adopt new AONB Management Plan. To agree arrangements for publication and launch; adopt constitution and governance; and agree business plan	AONB Board AGM
October 19	Publish and launch Management Plan, including Executive Summary and web version	AONB Unit

7. Recommendation

Members approve the Consultation Draft for publication, subject to any minor amendments delegated to the Officers Working Group and AONB Director

Members agree the outline programme for the review and adoption of the new AONB Management Plan (2019 – 2024)