

CABINET

FOREST OF BOWLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW Individual Cabinet Member Decision

Report of Head of Planning Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT					
To report on the completion of the review of the Forest of Bowland Management Plan and to seek authority to adopt the new plan on behalf of the City Council.					
Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Key Decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Referral from Cabinet Member	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Included in Forward Plan	N/A				
This report is public					

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the City Council adopts the revised Forest of Bowland AONB Management plan
- (2) That the City Council in cooperation with the partner authorities and guided by the AONB Joint Advisory Committee take the necessary steps to implement the plan.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a duty on Local Authorities to prepare and implement Management Plans for any parts of their administrative area which are designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. About two thirds of the administrative area of Lancaster District is covered by AONB designation in two distinct areas; The Forest of Bowland AONB, and the Arnsdale/Silverdale AONB.
- 1.2 In both cases there are AONB Partnerships between the various local authorities, both County and District Councils, across which the designation lies. In the case of the Forest of Bowland, Lancashire County Council acts as the lead authority which manages the AONB Unit. For Arnsdale/Silverdale it is the City Council who acts as lead authority. The AONB Unit prepares and reviews the AONB Management Plans on behalf of the local authorities in the partnership. Funding for the process comes largely from direct grant from Natural England (Formerly the Countryside Agency).

2.0 Proposal Details

- 2.1 The first AONB Management Plan for the Forest of Bowland was prepared in 1995 some years before the current statutory requirement arising from the CRoW Act 2000. The most recent plan produced to meet the requirements of the CRoW Act was adopted in 2004. An AONB Management Plan covers a variety of aspects and is intended to describe the reasons why the area is designated as an AONB, the factors which need to be addressed to keep it special and the actions that various organisations operating in the area need to address to avoid harming it. Management Plans will also pay special attention to the pressures being placed on the landscape and socio economic climate in the AONB's, in order to formulate Action Plans to react to those pressures.

- 2.2 The Management Plan Review has examined the most current issues impacting on the management of this sensitive environment, and the communities that live within it. The review has successfully considered the following impacts:-
 - a) Climate change: in particular flood risk, threat from upland fires and erosion.
 - b) Development pressures: including wind farms.
 - c) Recreation pressures: including outdoor sports.
 - d) Agricultural and landscape change: changes in land management styles
 - e) Community needs: loss of traditional skills
 - f) Atmospheric pollution: impact of nitrate levels.

- 2.3 An Action Plan has been prepared from the review and this will be implemented by the members of the partnership of organisations represented on the Joint Advisory Committee, and by the AONB Unit, which for this AONB is managed by Lancashire County Council.

- 2.4 The revised Management Plan is found to contain a sound approach to taking forward the effective management of the Forest of Bowland. It will be effective in guiding the local authorities on the special considerations they must have regard to when providing services which relate to this area. In addition the plan sits appropriately with the aspirations of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Adopted Lancaster District Local Development Framework.

3.0 Details of Consultation

- 3.1 The review of the Management Plan has been subjected to extensive consultation with the community, statutory bodies, and partnership organisations in accordance with the requirements of the CRoW Act.

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

4.1 Option 1

To adopt the Management Plan review and to then work in partnership to implement its Action Plan. This will enable it to comply with its statutory obligations. Adoption by all the Local Authorities will also mean that the partnership will secure core funding from Natural England to operate the AONB Unit and its Sustainable Development Fund.

Option 2

Not to adopt the Management Plan review. This would mean that the deadline for submitting the review to the Secretary of State would be missed and could prejudice the future operation of the AONB Unit.

5.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

5.1 The Officer preferred option is option 1 to adopt the Management Plan review.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 The review of the AONB Management Plan has been successful and will ensure continuity in the continuing management of the Forest of Bowland in accordance with national guidelines.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The appropriate management of the Districts AONB's is a requirement of Regional Spatial Strategy and the Local Development Framework. Maintaining a high quality of environment and landscape also accords with the objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Corporate Strategy.

**CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT
(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)**

Managing the rural economy through change and conservation is an effective way of ensuring that rural communities can become sustainable and that traditional skills can be retained for the benefit of those who live there, and those who visit for tourism and recreation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The receipt of core funding from Natural England (NE), and funding for giving grants under the Sustainable Development fund scheme, is dependant on the adoption and ongoing review of the Forest of Bowland Management Plan.

In 2008/9 core funding for the Forest of Bowland activities amounted to £244,400 (NE grant offer £180,934 and the remainder coming from the partner authorities) of which Lancaster City Council contributed £6,900 to the operation of this unit.

There are no further financial implications arising (over and above the Council's agreed annual contribution) as a result of the City Council adopting the reviewed Forest of Bowland Management Plan.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Forest of Bowland AONB
Management Plan Review 2009

Contact Officer: Andrew Dobson
Telephone: 01524 582303
E-mail: adobson@lancaster.gov.uk
Ref: ASD/DH/FOB