

CABINET

Management Plan Reviews for the Arnside & Silverdale AONB and the Forest of Bowland AONB

Individual Cabinet Member Decision

Report of the Director for Economic Growth & Regeneration

PURPOSE OF REPORT			
To approve the final versions of the Management Plan Reviews for the Arnside & Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Forest of Bowland AONB, for submission to the Department of Food & Rural Affairs (Defra).			
Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Key Decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referral from Cabinet Member
Date of notice of forthcoming key decision	N/A		
This report is public.			

RECOMMENDATION

- (1) That the final versions of the Management Plans for the Arnside & Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Forest of Bowland AONB be approved for submission to the Department of Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) for Arnside & Silverdale and the Forest of Bowland are required to produce Management Plans which “formulate policy for the management of the area of outstanding natural beauty and for carrying out functions in relation to it” as set out in Section 89 of the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000. The current plans for these areas were produced in 2014 and are now due to be reviewed. Review Working Groups, representing the Partnership organisations for the AONBs, have prepared the new plans on behalf of the AONB Executive Committees.
- 1.2 Management Plans guide the work of the AONB Partnerships, which are made up of local authorities, interest groups, national agencies, local communities and voluntary sector organisations who work together to conserve and enhance the area. The management of the AONBs is the responsibility of the AONB Executives which are made up of representatives of the relevant bodies.
- 1.3 Council officers have been involved in the review and preparation of the draft

Management Plans through attendance of the Steering Groups. Members have contributed through attendance of Executive Committee or Partnership meetings.

- 1.4 Both Management Plans are similar in their approach to setting objectives for fulfilling the requirement to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB. The Management Plans are a guide for all partners and stakeholders to refer to when planning their own work within the Respective areas. They set out a range of objectives, desired outcomes and requirements for land management and project delivery within the AONB to achieve these outcomes. Some of the actions will be led by the staff unit and included in their own team plans. Others will be led by other partner organisations and stakeholders with support from the staff unit where required.

2.0 Arnside & Silverdale AONB Management Plan

- 2.1 The Management Plan sets out a long term vision for the AONB which leads to three key outcomes: (1) outstanding landscape rich in natural and cultural heritage; (2) vibrant and sustainable communities; (3) a strong connection between people and the landscape. To achieve this a range of objectives, outcomes and requirements for land management and project delivery are detailed in the Plan. These are best expressed in the summary table that accompanies the Management Plan. The pre-adoption version of the Plan can be found at <https://www.arnsidesilverdaleaonb.org.uk/what-we-do/the-management-plan/>

- 2.2 The Management Plan focuses on:

- a) The need to protect the landscape and seascape and to ensure it is resilient to change, in association with the recently adopted Development Plan Document for the AONB;
- b) Ensuring the natural and cultural/historic heritage of the AONB is in good condition, well understood and valued; ensuring that rural livelihoods (in particular farming and tourism) are supported and viable, delivering environmental benefits without harming the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB;
- c) Promoting enjoyment and understanding of the AONB; supporting a high quality and well managed access network that is accessible to a diverse range of people.

- 2.3 Examples of some of the actions/projects referred to in the Arnside & Silverdale AONB Management Plan include: increased take-up of agri-environment schemes; co-ordinated approach to water catchment in sensitive areas; improve station facilities and information so that Arnside & Silverdale stations act as arrival hubs for visitors; promote walking, running, cycling, horse-riding and wildlife watching and other forms of quiet recreation in the AONB; develop and promote a Coastal Code.

- 2.5 Public consultation on the draft Management Plan for Arnside & Silverdale took place between 22 October and 3 December 2018. The majority of comments related to minor clarifications required to the text. Key changes made in response to the consultation responses included:

- Emphasis on the importance of farming and land management in conserving and enhancing natural beauty;
- Emphasis on the need for collaboration and co-operation to help sustain the area's landscape;
- Additional information on how objectives were derived and issues and challenges identified.

2.4 The revised Arnside & Silverdale AONB Management Plan was agreed at its Executive Committee on 20 March 2019.

3.0 Forest of Bowland AONB Management Plan

3.1 The Review Group for the Forest of Bowland AONB Management Plan identified the special qualities of the area, from which it derived a vision for the future to maintain local distinctiveness, manage the natural and cultural heritage and contribute to a sustainable and vibrant local economy. Full details of the pre-adoption version of the Plan can be found at:

<https://www.forestofbowland.com/review-forest-bowland-aonb-management-plan>

3.2 The plan is written to achieve three main outcomes:

- **An outstanding landscape rich in natural and cultural heritage**, which promotes sustainable land management practices, considers the impact of new development, and raises awareness of the value of ecosystem services;
- **Resilient and sustainable communities**, which focuses on matters including the nurturing and protection of local jobs and services, the promotion of sustainable tourism and the provision of affordable housing;
- **A strong connection between people and the landscape**, dealing with access and visitor management issues, information and engagement with local and visitor interest groups.

3.3 Some of the actions/projects contained in the Forest of Bowland AONB Management Plan include: landscape-scale projects to restore large areas of upland peat habitats; visual amenity projects to remove or screen overhead power lines; involvement in testing of the Government's proposed Environmental Land Management System; continued operation and support of lengthsman and volunteering activities to assist in managing the local environment; management of visitor events and interpretation including the AONB Discovery Guide; promoting non-car access to the area.

3.3 Public consultation on the draft Forest of Bowland Management Plan was held between from 26 November 2018 and 18 January 2019. Following this consultation, amendments were made which included:

- Amendment to the Plan vision to reflect the breadth of the Plan Objectives;
- An additional section on the Partnership's 'core principles';
- An additional section on monitoring of the Plan.

3.4 The revised Forest of Bowland AONB Management Plan was agreed at its Joint Advisory Committee on 1 March 2019.

4.0 Commentary

- 4.1 The Management Plans expand on the objectives, summarise the key challenges and opportunities for each of them, and then set out delivery plans covering the period 2019 – 2024. The delivery plans establish lead partners, contributing partners, proposed timescales and priorities, but are not required to include budgets or financial forecasts. The Management Plans have been subject to local public consultation through preliminary drafts, including a series of consultation events.
- 4.2 The Plans present a detailed picture of the measures proposed to retain and enhance the special qualities of the areas. They focus on landscape and other environmental significances, but are aware of the essential need to link with economic and social objectives, and with the continued need to work in partnership with other organisations to achieve common purposes. Finally, they are clearly written and presented, and will show to Defra that the AONB Partnerships have prepared well researched plans of work for the next five years.
- 4.3 The delivery plans set out ambitious programmes of objectives and actions for the plan period, building on the excellent working relations with several partner organisations to maximise benefits and share the responsibilities and costs of implementation. In both cases the plans show how they would adapt to funding uncertainties.

5.0 Options and Options Analysis [including risk assessment]

	Option 1: Approve both management plans	Option 2: Approve one of the management plans	Option 3: Approve neither management plan
Advantages	This option would be appropriate if the new management plans incorporated Council policies and involved the Council in their preparation.	This option would be appropriate if one of the new management plans failed to accommodate a key concern of the Council, or proposed a policy which was contrary to that already adopted by the Council.	This option would be appropriate if both of the new management plans failed to accommodate a key concern of the Council, or proposed a policy which was contrary to that already adopted by the Council.
Disadvantages	None anticipated.	The Management Plans would not be submitted to Defra by the AONB Executive Committee and would need to be amended.	The Management Plans would not be submitted to Defra by the AONB Executive Committees and would need to be amended.
Risks	None. Requirements for adoption of the plans are complied with	A decision not to adopt either of the Management Plans would mean that the Council would fail in its statutory duty to jointly prepare and review	A decision not to adopt the Management Plans would mean that the Council would fail in its statutory duty to jointly prepare and review Management Plans

	under this option.	Management Plans for the AONBs within its administrative boundaries. The receipt of core funding from Defra is dependent on the adoption and ongoing review of the Plans.	for the AONBs within its administrative boundaries. The receipt of core funding from Defra is dependent on the adoption and ongoing review of the Plans.
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6.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

- 6.1 Given the extent of joint working on the Management Plans, the involvement of Council officers in the process, and the quality of the final plans produced, officers recommend that both plans be approved by the Council for submission to Defra (Option 1).

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The final versions of the Management Plan Reviews for the Arnside & Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Forest of Bowland AONB are appended to this report. They have been prepared with the full involvement of officers of the City Council. The Council is (along with other local authorities covering the AONBs) required by the CRoW Act, 2000 to formally approve the plans. Once approved, the AONBs will have up to date policy, appropriate for the next five years, which is recognised by the relevant local authorities and Defra.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The AONB Management Plans relate well to the Council's ambitions for 2018-22 for clean, green and safe neighbourhoods and healthy and happy communities.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Human Resources, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

The report and its recommendation to approve the AONB Management Plans has positive implications for sustainability and rural issues, because of the way in which these topics are given prominence in the plans. There are no equality issues arising from this report. The AONB Management Plans include actions that seek to address equality issues, increasing access opportunities for disabled people and those with additional needs. The support of activities for outdoor recreation and education/community participation all of which promote good health.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Legal Services have been consulted, and advise that Local Authorities are required by the provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 to adopt a Management Plan for AONBs within their areas and to have regard to the purpose of the designation in making decisions relating to matters affecting those areas.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Lancaster City Council acts as the host authority for the Arnside and Silverdale AONB, including financial accountability for all funding streams on behalf of Lancashire County Council, Cumbria County Council and South Lakes District Council.

Defra core funding for the Arnside & Silverdale AONB was £140.2K for 2018/19, increasing to £142.6K for 2019/20. Lancaster provides an annual contribution £16.4K with partnership

contributions from other local authorities being £28.6K per annum. Voluntary / Parish Council contributions amount to £10K per annum. In addition, Lancaster is currently acting as Accountable body for the Natural England funded 'Morecambe Bay Nature Improvement' project totalling, which contributes income of £16.1K in 2019/20.

Lancaster City Council also provides an annual funding contribution to the Forest of Bowland AONB £6.8K per annum.

There are no additional financial implications arising over and above existing budgetary provision for the AONBs as a result of adopting the reviewed AONB Management Plans.

It should be noted however, that failure to adopt the Management Plans and submit to the Secretary of State could prejudice the future operation of the AONB Units as the receipt of core funding from Defra is dependent on the adoption and ongoing review of the Plans.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS, such as Human Resources, Information Services, Property, Open Spaces:

None

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The s151 Officer has been consulted and has further no comments.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has nothing to add.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Arnsdale & Silverdale Management Plan 2019-2024
2. Forest of Bowland Management Plan 2019-2014

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