

AONB Management Plan Review Update

Issue for consideration

The following report summarises progress towards completion of the Forest of Bowland AONB Management Plan review, adoption by partner local authorities and formal submission to Defra.

Background

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 established the requirement for all AONBs in England and Wales to have an up-to-date Management Plan in place, and provided a timetable for the review and updating of plans. The Act also required that the local authorities are responsible for the production of the Plan and are required to establish a long-term vision for the AONB.

In February 2014, the Forest of Bowland AONB Joint Advisory Committee approved the final draft of the Forest of Bowland AONB Management Plan (2014 – 2019) to proceed for adoption by partner funding authorities and approval by statutory agencies.

Progress update

The final stages completed since the last AONB JAC meeting in February 2014 are set out below:

1. The AONB Unit received notification of Natural England's approval of the final draft of the Plan on 21st March 2014. The Defra agency has responsibility for managing the review of the AONB Management Plans in England.
2. The consultation on the Environmental Report (including a Sustainability Appraisal) for the Plan was completed in March 2014. During the consultation, the AONB Unit received one response (from Natural England) approving the content and conclusion of the report. Thus the statutory requirements for the review relating to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) have now been met.
3. The Screening Report for Habitat Regulations Assessment was approved by Natural England on 18th March 2014, following the provision of the additional information to support the report's conclusions. The statutory requirements for the review relating to Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) have now been met.
4. The final designed version of the Plan (including images, maps and illustrations) is now complete and has been uploaded to the AONB website: http://www.forestofbowland.com/cons_managementplan
5. At the time of writing this report, three partner local authorities (Lancaster City Council, North Yorkshire County Council and Preston City Council) have formally adopted the Plan.

Final submission to Defra

The AONB Unit understand that the remaining local authorities are planning to consider the Plan for adoption during April/early May 2014. Once notification is received from these partners of this adoption, the Plan will then be formally submitted to the Under-secretary of State for Defra with responsibility for AONBs, Lord de Mauley.

Decision to be taken

The Committee is asked to:

- i. note the report and offer comments