



FOREST OF BOWLAND

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

AONB Unit
Draft April 2015

AONB Unit Business Plan 2015-2018

Introduction

The Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is one of England's finest landscapes and is internationally important for its heather moorland, blanket bog and rare birds. The special qualities of the area which contribute to its distinctive 'sense of place' can be summarised as:

- Wild open spaces
- A special place for wildlife
- A landscape rich in heritage
- A living landscape
- Delicious local food and drink
- A place to enjoy and keep special

The AONB designation means that the natural beauty of the landscape should not only be conserved and enhanced, but also that recreation and sustainable development should be promoted to help to sustain the landscape and its communities.

The AONB Partnership and Unit

The AONB is managed by a partnership of local councils, utility company, landowners, farmers, voluntary organisations, wildlife groups, recreation groups, and government agencies, who work to protect, conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of this special area.

The Partnership is funded by eight local authorities (Craven District Council, Lancashire County Council, Lancaster City Council, North Yorkshire County Council, Pendle Borough Council, Preston City Council, Ribble Valley Borough Council, Wyre Council), United Utilities and the Department for Environment Farming and Rural Affairs (Defra).

The AONB Unit is the staff team, who are employed on behalf of the AONB Partnership, to prepare and implement the statutory AONB Management Plan. The team comprises five people (4 full-time equivalents), with additional support from the 'Networks of Nectar' Project Officer (funded up to March 2016), two LCC Senior Environmental Project Officers and LCC Ranger Service.

A Plan for the Future

This business plan sets out how the AONB Unit will contribute to the work of the Partnership in achieving the long-term vision for the AONB:

"The Forest of Bowland AONB retains its sense of local distinctiveness, notably the large-scale open moorland character of the Bowland Fells, traditional buildings and settlement patterns of villages, hamlets and farmsteads. Natural and cultural heritage is sympathetically managed and contributes to a sustainable and vibrant local economy. The management of the AONB has improved the quality of the landscape for all."

The AONB Unit is working towards four key outcomes, in accordance with the AONB Management Plan 2014 - 2019:

1. An outstanding landscape of natural and cultural heritage
2. Resilient and sustainable communities
3. A strong connection between people and the landscape
4. A dynamic and effective AONB partnership

The Business Plan

This plan will guide the work of the AONB Unit from 2015 - 2018. The actions within it link directly to the implementation of the statutory AONB Management Plan and links are shown against each action. It is designed to be a rolling 3-year plan, which is reviewed and updated annually.

The AONB Unit aims to work with the following values at the core of its operation:

- We are knowledgeable and passionate about the AONB - its landscape, biodiversity and culture
- We care about the environment and sustainability
- We work together with others to achieve success
- We value people and are approachable and responsive
- We communicate clearly and effectively

It should also be recognised that this plan relies on the work of other partner organisations, communities and individuals to achieve the successful delivery of the AONB Management Plan and the long-term vision for the area.

Strategic Priorities 2014 - 2017

| An outstanding landscape of natural and cultural heritage | Resilient and sustainable rural communities | A strong connection between people and the landscape | A dynamic and effective AONB Partnership |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p>OLI Provide and seek advice, training and support to promote sustainable land management practices; helping to safeguard the natural and cultural landscape of the AONB.</p> <p>OL2 Continue a strategic programme of restoration and re-establishment of traditional boundaries (e.g. hedgerows, dry stone walls, railing fences); allied to provision of training opportunities to promote skills associated with these traditional boundaries.</p> <p>OL3 Co-ordinate partner activity in conserving and enhancing biodiversity and in developing better understanding and management of ecosystems services with the AONB.</p> <p>OL4 Work with others, in particular local authorities, to establish development management and other policies/strategies, which result in positive outcomes for the landscape quality of the AONB.</p> | <p>SCI Continue to support and develop local parish lengthsmen schemes within the AONB to assist in the management and maintenance of key community assets.</p> <p>SC2 Support and promote local businesses and products to maintain their viability.</p> <p>SC3 Continue to promote and manage the Sustainable Development Fund; whilst also responding to local community requests for advice on funding, project management and volunteering.</p> <p>SC4 Continue to develop, support and promote local tourism businesses; building on the AONB's reputation as an internationally-recognised destination for sustainable tourism.</p> | <p>PL1 Develop, improve, and promote access and recreational opportunities for a diverse range of people.</p> <p>PL2 Provide high quality information, communications and events to enable people to enjoy and understand the landscape of the AONB and the work of the AONB Partnership.</p> <p>PL3 Support local communities and visitors to conserve, restore, enjoy and learn about the heritage of the AONB, and develop programmes of activity which provide opportunities to engage people with the landscape.</p> | <p>API Work with others to maximise the successful delivery of the AONB Management Plan and effectively monitor progress.</p> <p>AP2 Achieve excellence in the governance and management of the AONB Partnership and Unit, its people and resources; and helping to identify sustainable future funding to support these.</p> |

AONB Unit

CH – Cathy Hopley, Development and Funding Officer

EL – Elliott Lorimer, Principal AONB Officer

HB – Hetty Byrne, Sustainable Tourism & Web Development Officer

LCC SM – LCC Service Manager (tbc by 31st March 2015)

SS – Sandra Silk, Projects and Events Officer

Networks for Nectar Project

SR – Sarah Robinson, Project Officer

Lancashire County Council Environmental Projects and Countryside

DP – Dave Padley, Environmental Projects Officer (covering Craven, Pendle and Ribble Valley)

TW – Tarja Wilson, Environmental Projects Officer (covering Lancaster, Preston and Wyre)

AG – Andrew Greenwood, Head Ranger

An outstanding landscape of natural and cultural heritage (OL)

| OLI Provide and seek advice, training and support to promote sustainable land management practices; helping to safeguard the natural and cultural landscape of the AONB | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| We will: | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | AONB MP 2014 – 2019 Objectives | Staff lead(s) |
| OLI.1 Provide advice, guidance and encouragement to land managers on sustainable land management of the AONB landscape | <p>On-going</p> <p>Regular meetings with local NE Land Management Team</p> <p>Ensure AONB Partnership involvement in delivery of new Countryside Stewardship</p> | <p>On-going</p> <p>Regular meetings with local NE Land Management Team</p> | <p>On-going</p> <p>Regular meetings with local NE Land Management Team</p> | 1.1, 1.2, 2.1 | <p>DP/TW</p> <p>CH/SR/TW/DP/EL</p> |
| OLI.2 Liaise with woodland planting and management initiatives to encourage and support appropriate woodland extension, creation and management within the AONB landscape | <p>On-going</p> <p>Respond to FC consultations regarding felling licences, woodland management plans and woodland grant applications</p> <p>Develop plan for managing landscape change due to loss of woodland or veteran trees due to tree health issues (see C. Fencing)</p> | <p>On-going</p> <p>Respond to FC consultations regarding felling licences, woodland management plans and woodland grant applications</p> | <p>On-going</p> <p>Respond to FC consultations regarding felling licences, woodland management plans and woodland grant applications</p> | 1.1 | EL |

Resilient and sustainable rural communities (SC)

SCI Continue to support and develop local parish lengthsman schemes within the AONB to assist in the management and maintenance of key community assets

| We will: | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | AONB MP 2014 – 2019 Objectives | Staff lead(s) |
|---|--|--|--|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| SCI.1 Support Parish Councils to continue to fund and manage existing lengthsman schemes | AONB grant offer made to Parish Councils/Meetings Review funding with Parish Councils to manage potential reduction in AONB contributions | AONB grant offer made to Parish Councils/Meetings | AONB grant offer made to Parish Councils/Meetings | 2.3, 4.2 | TW/DP |
| SCI.2 Work with Parish Councils to develop best practice (e.g. record-keeping) to help demonstrate best value | Scheme monitoring information received from Parish Councils/Meetings | Scheme monitoring information received from Parish Councils/Meetings | Scheme monitoring information received from Parish Councils/Meetings | 2.3 | TW/DP |

| SC2 Support and promote local businesses and products to maintain their viability | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| We will: | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | AONB MP 2014 – 2019 Objectives | Staff lead(s) |
| SC2.1 Support local businesses, via provision of advice, signposting, funding opportunities (e.g. RDPE/LEADER), training, networking opportunities and events | One-to-one business advice provided 2 training events provided and evaluated | One-to-one business advice provided 2 training events provided and evaluated | One-to-one business advice provided 2 training events provided and evaluated | 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 | HB |
| SC2.2 Continue to provide support for Bowland Experience Ltd. (BEx) | BEx board meetings held (min. 2/year) Secretariat provided for BEx Regular tourism business bulletin produced and distributed 2 BEx training events held | BEx board meetings held (min. 2/year) Secretariat provided for BEx Regular tourism business bulletin produced and distributed 2 BEx training events held | BEx board meetings held (min. 2/year) Secretariat provided for BEx Regular tourism business bulletin produced and distributed 2 BEx training events held | 2.2, 2.4 | HB/EL |
| SC2.3 Continue to support the development, management and promotion of the Champion Bowland | Secretariat for Champion Bowland provided Champion Bowland trustees meetings held (min. 2/year) | Secretariat for Champion Bowland provided Champion Bowland trustees meetings held (min. 2/year) | Secretariat for Champion Bowland provided Champion Bowland trustees meetings held (min. 2/year) | 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 | CH |

A strong connection between people and the landscape (PL)

| PL1 Develop, improve and promote access and recreational opportunities for a diverse range of people | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| We will: | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | AONB MP 2014 – 2019 Objectives | Staff lead(s) |
| PL1.1 Work in partnership with key stakeholders to maintain and improve access in the wider countryside of the AONB; including support for implementation of PRoW Improvement Plans | Regular meetings of local advisory groups (e.g. Pendle Hill, Upper Hodder) to consider access and recreation issues | Regular meetings of local advisory groups (e.g. Pendle Hill, Upper Hodder) to consider access and recreation issues | Regular meetings of local advisory groups (e.g. Pendle Hill, Upper Hodder) to consider access and recreation issues | 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 | EL/DP |
| PL1.2 Carry out a review of existing AONB promoted routes | <p>Continue to support volunteer monitoring system for existing AONB promoted routes</p> <p>Prioritise promoted routes and rotate twice a year (remove and re-instate where appropriate based on download stats)</p> <p>Annual review of routes completed and acted upon</p> | <p>Continue to support volunteer monitoring system for existing AONB promoted routes</p> <p>Prioritise promoted routes and rotate twice a year (remove and re-instate where appropriate based on download stats)</p> <p>Annual review of routes completed and acted upon</p> | <p>Continue to support volunteer monitoring system for existing AONB promoted routes</p> <p>Prioritise promoted routes and rotate twice a year (remove and re-instate where appropriate based on download stats)</p> <p>Annual review of routes completed and acted upon</p> | 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 | HB/TW/DP |
| PL1.3 Review, rationalise and develop downloadable promoted routes as required | <p>Review and rationalise downloadable promoted route cards</p> <p>3 new routes cards</p> | <p>Review and rationalise downloadable promoted route cards</p> <p>3 new routes cards</p> | <p>Review and rationalise downloadable promoted route cards</p> <p>3 new routes cards</p> | 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 | TW/DP/HB |

| PL2 Provide high quality information, communications and events to enable people to enjoy and understand the landscape of the AONB and the work of the AONB partnership | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|----------------------|
| We will: | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | AONB MP 2014 – 2019 Objectives | Staff lead(s) |
| PL2.1 Co-ordinate and review Festival Bowland (FB) | <p>Co-ordinate FB Steering Group</p> <p>Evaluation of customer feedback completed (via incentivised postcard scheme)</p> <p>At least 10 FB events organised by AONB Unit/LCC</p> <p>Annual review and evaluation of aims and content of FB completed and acted upon</p> | <p>Co-ordinate FB Steering Group</p> <p>Evaluation of customer feedback completed (via incentivised postcard scheme)</p> <p>At least 10 FB events organised by AONB Unit/LCC</p> <p>Annual review and evaluation of aims and content of FB completed and acted upon</p> | <p>Co-ordinate FB Steering Group</p> <p>Evaluation of customer feedback completed (via incentivised postcard scheme)</p> <p>At least 10 FB events organised by AONB Unit/LCC</p> <p>Annual review and evaluation of aims and content of FB completed and acted upon</p> | 3.4, 3.5 | SS/TW/SR |
| PL2.2 Publicise Festival Bowland programme | <p>FB brochure produced</p> <p>Monthly FB events posters produced and distributed</p> <p>10 press releases/year produced to promote FB events</p> | <p>FB brochure produced</p> <p>Monthly FB events posters produced and distributed</p> <p>10 press releases/year produced to promote FB events</p> | <p>FB brochure produced</p> <p>Monthly FB events posters produced and distributed</p> <p>10 press releases/year produced to promote FB events</p> | 3.4, 3.6 | SS |

A dynamic and effective AONB partnership (AP)

| API Work with others to maximise the successful delivery of the AONB Management Plan and effectively monitor progress | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| We will: | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | AONB MP 2014 – 2019 Objectives | Staff lead(s) |
| API.1 Participate in a range of fora and networks to represent AONB interests (e.g. Local Nature Partnerships, Local Enterprise Partnerships, RDPE/LEADER LAGs) | On-going | On-going | On-going | 4.1, 4.4 | All |
| API.2 Review the AONB Management Plan, in accordance with national guidance | Develop Partnership Advocacy Plan (to site alongside the Communications Strategy) Continue to liaise with local authorities, utility company and other government agencies to raise awareness of AONB Management Plan and its delivery | Continue to liaise with local authorities, utility company and other government agencies to raise awareness of AONB Management Plan and its delivery | Continue to liaise with local authorities, utility company and other government agencies to raise awareness of AONB Management Plan and its delivery | 4.1, 4.4C | EL |
| API.3 Ensure effective and inclusive consultation is carried out on all major AONB strategies and activity | On-going | On-going | On-going | 2.3, 4.4 | EL |
| API.4 Manage and promote the interactive management plan (IMP) to ensure regular monitoring of partnership delivery of actions | IMP regularly updated by Unit and partners | IMP regularly updated by Unit and partners | IMP regularly updated by Unit and partners | 4.1, 4.4 | HB/EL/CH |
| API.5 Produce a clear and concise AONB Annual Report | Annual Report produced | Annual Report produced | Annual Report produced | 2.2, 3.4, 4.4 | SS |
| API.6 Produce quarterly progress reports on business plan | Quarterly reports | Quarterly reports | Quarterly reports | 4.4 | EL |

