

NAME OF COMMITTEE	Community Services
DATE	10th September 2013
REPORT TITLE	Tamar Valley AONB Management Plan Review 2014 - 2019
REPORT OF	Economic Development Officer
WARDS AFFECTED	Bere Ferrers, Tamarside

Summary of report:

This report outlines the current process and progress towards the review of the AONB Management Plan. Members are asked to agree the overall approach and timetable, including how the Consultation Draft should be formally approved. A further report will then be submitted to the next committee in November to enable members to comment on the contents of the Draft Plan.

Financial implications:

The Borough Council makes an annual contribution of £8,600 towards the maintenance of the Tamar Valley AONB Service, which includes provision for the review of the Management Plan. There are no further budget implications relating to this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that:

1. That Members note progress thus far in reviewing the Tamar Valley AONB Management Plan and agree the process for consultation and adoption as set out in the report;
2. Members agree to delegate approval of the Draft Plan for consultation purposes to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of this Committee; and,
3. That the Consultation Draft be referred to the next Community Services Committee for Member comment.

Officer contact:

Robert Plumb, Economic Development Officer on 01822 813620 or
rplumb@westdevon.gov.uk

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Acts, it is a statutory requirement for local authorities to produce Management Plans for their AONBs. It has been agreed that this will be led by the Tamar Valley AONB Partnership on behalf of the relevant local authorities. The previous plans were agreed and adopted for the AONB in 2004 and 2009 and it has now become necessary to

undertake a further five year review. The new plan will need to be sent to the Secretary of State by March 2014. The Review is necessary to make sure that the Plans remain relevant to key partners in the light of changing circumstances and resources, new knowledge, and lessons learnt from implementation of previous Plans. The task of the review is to identify amendments that are necessary to ensure the plans remain a working document that reliably, and realistically, informs the management process itself and other processes such as the preparation of local plans.

- 1.2 The Borough Council is actively represented on the Executive and Partnership Board by both members and officers. Cllr Benson is the Deputy Chairman of the Partnership.
- 1.3 The AONB Partnership has been in the process of reviewing its Management Plan documents over the past 12 months, including workshops, open meetings and exhibitions. A draft version of the Plan is due for publication in October, with a view to carrying out extensive consultations in the autumn and publishing a revised final version in the New Year. The aim being to have reviewed the plan in place by the end of next March when the current plan expires.

2. Progress and Timetable

- 2.1 Key Priorities for 2014-2019 have been identified as the following forces for change:
 - Planning
 - Renewables
 - Biodiversity
 - Food
 - Farming/woodland
 - It was recognised that the economy was a factor that should be reflected in positive policies across all action areas.
- 2.2. The changes to the planning system with the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework will necessitate close working with the respective Local Planning Authorities to agree new planning policies for the AONB. Given the different status of the three local plans (Cornwall, West Devon, South Hams) with regard to their stage of development, some flexibility will be needed in approach.
- 2.3. Of particular concern throughout the AONB is the need to reconcile the wider ambitions for the installation of renewable energy capacity with the impacts on the character of the AONB. Neighbourhood Plans will also be of significance in ensuring that community needs are met whilst protecting the landscape character from the cumulative impacts of incremental small scale development.
- 2.4. Tamar Valley AONB has been a partner in the Interreg project 'Cordiale', in which approaches to community involvement in site monitoring, and the development of tools to stimulate a wood fuel market that is consistent with the landscape protection objectives of the designation are key. It is hoped to incorporate the learning from this work into the new plan.

- 2.5. The Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal will identify other aspects of the current plan that may need revision.
- 2.6. Stakeholder engagement is an important element of plan review. However, the previous plan is in place and its supporting documents provide a basis upon which to build. The relevant engagement activities so far include:-
- (i) Partnership Forum, meeting November 2012. Workshop and subsequent Partnership Executive working group meeting.
 - (ii) Ongoing engagement by the AONB Team through the various strands of day to day work and special projects.
 - (iii) AONB Team members also regularly attend a wide range of other organisations meetings at which they listen and take on board issues and priorities.
 - (iv) A small number of expert meetings have taken place on specific issues (e.g. planning) and more of these are planned.
 - (v) Finally, the AONB Team has undertaken an extensive programme of field trials as part of the Cordiale project from which a great deal has been learned. This experience will be fed into appropriate elements of the Plan. Furthermore, this work has not been done in isolation – the AONB Team has engaged a great many people and organisations during Cordiale implementation.
 - (vi) Additional ad hoc exercises are being planned: An email survey regarding issues and options across our whole public and professional database of contacts; consulting the public on the Draft Plan via formal response, and making use of a proposed Cordiale dissemination event in September for more direct engagement.
- 2.7. The State of the Environment Assessment/Sustainability Audit scoping report was sent to Natural England, Environment Agency, English Heritage and Local Authority partners in July 2012 and since then the AONB team has been working on the preparation of these documents as well as meeting with a range of partners to monitor progress and explore issues in more detail.
- 2.8. Further engagement of partners and statutory authorities took place through 4 Technical Working Groups during August this year including:
- (i) **‘Historic environment and local distinctiveness’ plus ‘planning and development’**
 - (ii) **‘Biodiversity’ and ‘farming, forestry and land management’**
 - (iii) **‘River and estuary use and management’ (not Water Quality), plus ‘Access and Recreation and Tourism’**
 - (iv) **‘Engagement and volunteering’ and ‘education and awareness’**
- 2.9. Since then responses are of being analysed. This will be followed by:-
- Revised Management Plan Policies and Actions (August-Sept 2013)

- Developing and refining the Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal objectives and assessing the AONB Review against them. (August-Sept 2013)

- Consultation on SEA Environmental Report and AONB Management Plan (Autumn/Winter 2013)

- Analysis of responses to consultation (Winter 2014)

2.10. Following that a summary of the issues and responses will be produced and included as an appendix of an amended and Final Version of the AONB Management Plan. It will then be submitted to the local authorities for final approval.

3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Accordingly members will see that there will be adequate opportunity for individual comments to be made during the consultation and adoption process including representations through both member and officer representatives on the AONB Partnership.

3.2 Nonetheless, it is important for the Borough Council, as one of the legal entities which make up the AONB area, to formally consider and comment on the Draft Plan and eventually approve the Final Plan before publication.

3.3 The Draft Plan is not yet ready for circulation and since the next available Community Services Committee is not until the middle of November, there needs to be a timely process for agreeing the Draft Plan for consultation purposes.

3.4 Accordingly, it is suggested that approval of the Consultation Draft be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of this committee.

3.5 There will then be an opportunity at the November committee for members to consider the Draft Plan and make their formal comments.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Tamar Valley AONB Service derives its powers from the Government (through DEFRA) as a Nationally Protected Landscape as defined by the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949. It does this on behalf of the Local Authorities which make up the AONB area. As such it is not a legal entity in itself and therefore the Management Plan, which directs the actions and policies relating to the activities of the AONB Service, requires the approval of the relevant local authorities.

4.2 Under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 the Council has a general power of competence to do anything an individual can do subject to any statutory restrictions.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Borough Council makes an annual contribution of £8,600 towards the maintenance of the Tamar Valley AONB Service, which includes provision for the review of the Management Plan.

5.2 There are no further implications relating to this report.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 The risk management implications are included at Annex A.

7. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Corporate priorities engaged:	Economy and Environment
Statutory powers:	National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 Localism Act 2011
Considerations of equality and human rights:	These are fully considered by the management plan.
Biodiversity considerations:	These are key issues included in the management plan review
Sustainability considerations:	These are key issues considered in the management plan review
Crime and disorder implications:	N/A
Background papers:	Report of regeneration officer to the Environment and Community Committee 16 th June 2009 on The Tamar Valley AONB Management Strategy 2009 - 2014
Appendices attached:	Annex A : Risk Assessment