

NAME OF COMMITTEE	Community Services
DATE	12th November 2013
REPORT TITLE	Tamar Valley AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019; Consultation Draft
REPORT OF	Economic Development Officer
WARDS AFFECTED	Bere Ferrers, Tamarside

Summary of report:

This report presents the Consultation Draft of the AONB Management Plan and outlines the current process and progress towards reviewing the Plan. Members are asked to comment on the contents of the Draft Plan and agree the process for approving the final version.

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. Members consider the Consultation Draft Plan and put forward any comments they may have; and,
2. Members agree to delegate approval of the Final version of the plan to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of this committee.

Officer contact:

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

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 and as expressed in the original 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, it is a statutory requirement for local authorities to produce Management Plans for their AONBs. As reported at the last Community Services Committee (Minute 10/09/13) it has been agreed that the review of the current Management Plan will be led by the Tamar Valley AONB Partnership on behalf of the relevant local authorities. 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 Consultation Draft version of the Plan is now presented to members for their detailed comments within the current consultation process.
- 1.4 The aim being to have the reviewed 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 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.
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5. 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.

- 2.6. Stakeholder engagement is an important element of plan review and the report to the previous committee outlined the various engagement activities leading up to the preparation of the Draft Plan. The current consultation process runs from 19th October until its closing date of 15th December. It includes a series of events which have been publicised through parish and town councils and through the local media. A questionnaire is also available to complete on line at www.tamarvalley.org/consultation or if people simply want to comment they can do so by sending their comments to consultation@tamarvalley.or.uk
- 2.7. After the end of the consultation period a summary of comments and issues, together with responses will be produced and included as an appendix of an amended and Final Version of the Plan. It will then be submitted to the Executive and local authorities for final approval.

3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 Members are now asked to go through the document and put forward any comments or raise any issues of concern they may have.
- 3.2 Copies of the Consultation Draft are available on the Borough Council's website and in the member's room. It is also available on the AONB website (see website address above)
- 3.3 In considering this version of the plan members are asked to comment on any factual errors or gaps they find, they are asked to review the policies as set out in each section – many of which are not significantly altered from the current plan. Members are in particular asked to examine the Priorities for Action, which appear at the end of each section of the plan. These will be the main focus of AONB's work programme over the next 5 years, if agreed.

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 and as amended in the CRoW Act (2000). 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 Countryside & Rights of Way Act (2000) 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