

Western Area Committee

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REPORT

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Cllr Brown : Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport

DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN - CRANBORNE CHASE AND WEST WILTSHIRE DOWNS AREA OF NATURAL BEAUTY, AONB.

Report Summary:

The purpose of this report is for members to make comments and recommendations to the Steering Group on the draft management plan for the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs.

A full copy of the management plan is available in the Members Room or can be downloaded from their website:

www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk

This report summaries the visions, objectives and aspirations, section by section, as they are outlined in the management plan making particular reference to Transportation and Planning which are the major issues that the council's needs to consider at this stage.

1. Development of the Management Plan:

This management plan which aims to provide a "vision", representing the shared aspirations of the community for the next 25 years, has been developed through an extensive programme of public consultation. The key groups that have led this development are:

- The four County Councils – Wiltshire, Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset
- The seven District Councils – Salisbury, West Wiltshire, East Dorset, North Dorset, New Forest, Mendip, South Somerset
- Government agencies and department
- Statutory undertakers, private utilities
- Land Managers – farmers, foresters, landowners; recreation, tourism, countryside and access managers
- Business, industry, economic, and/or rural regeneration partnerships
- Parish Council
- Community, voluntary and interest groups
- Community Councils
- People who live and work in the AONB
- People who visit and enjoy the area.

In addition to the public 'Issues Conferences', freepost questionnaires were delivered to every residential household in the area and 10%, 1,500 were returned.

The closing date for comments has been extended until 10th November in order that the Cabinet and Western Area Committee can discuss and consider the plan.

2. Themes:

The management plan focuses on three themes:

- Environment
- Rural Economy
- Community

A working group has been established to support each theme with officers and members from SDC serving on these working parties as relevant to their areas of expertise.

3. Environment Theme: Natural; Historic; Built; and Roads, Traffic and Rights of Way.

The vision for the environment in 25 years time is:

‘The vision is for a highly valued, diverse landscape with the simple elemental character of the largely uninhabited, remote, open downland contrasting with the settled vales and valleys. Features of the natural and cultural environment are recorded, understood, managed and celebrated’.

Natural Environment Aim:

- Conserve and enhance the landscape character, habitats, species and tranquillity of the.

Objective NE1: Design and develop a landscape scale restoration programme.

Aspiration - A distinctive, diverse, living landscape enhanced by a programme of restoration enhancing features of natural and outstanding beauty.

Objective NE2: Support the completion and co-ordinated implementation of Biodiversity Action Plans relevant to the AONB.

Aspiration - Biodiversity Action Plans have been completed across the AONB and funds have been secured for long term implementation and monitoring.

Objective NE3: Support existing and create new initiatives to enhance, expand, link and manage key BAP habitats and species relevant to the AONB.

Aspiration: - A rich natural landscape with special habitats and species protected and complemented by a programme of restoration and enhancement to create an inter-linked network of managed chalk grassland, wet meadows, woodlands, chalk streams and other habitats.

Objective NE4: Support initiatives that promote a viable land based economy that contributes to the enhancement of AONB characteristics.

Aspiration: - A sustainable countryside where agriculture and woodland management maintain and enhance the valued characteristics, features and habitats of the AONB.

Objective NE5: Encourage a co-ordinated and consistent approach to planning policy and its implementation.

Aspiration: - ‘Unpopulated’ open downland contrasts with the characteristic settlement pattern and distinctive built character of the vales and valleys.

Objective NE6: Support the protection of rural tranquillity, remoteness and dark night skies.

Aspiration: - A remote and tranquil area with a reservoir of dark night skies.

Objective NE7: Support the protection and conservation of natural resources and enhancement of environmental quality.

Aspiration: - A living, working landscape where the principles and importance of sustainability are understood and valued.

Historic Environment and Archaeology Aim:

- Conserve and enhance historic, archaeological and cultural features within their distinctive landscape settings.

Objective HE1: Identify and support the protection and appropriate management of the historic landscapes and archaeological sites as key feature of the AONB's cultural and physical character.

Aspiration: - Historic, archaeological and cultural feature (both visible and buried) are conserved and enhanced as part of the wider landscape setting.

Objective HE2: Encourage understanding of important cultural features.

Aspiration: - Residents and visitors appreciate, value and help sustain the historic and cultural fabric of the AONB.

Built Environment Aim:

- Conserve and enhance the distinctive character of the built environment within its historic, cultural and landscape setting.

Objective BE1: Encourage the use of appropriate locations, local materials and vernacular design.

Aspiration: - Building design and materials enhance and respect local character.

Objective BE2: Encourage the conservation of important buildings and structures of historic and/or architectural importance.

Aspiration: - Distinctive features of the built environment are recorded and valued for their contribution to landscape character.

Road, Traffic and Rights of Way Aim:

- Promote the management of the impact of roads and traffic on the AONB.

Objective RT1: Support the development of a co-ordinated hierarchy of roads and Rights of Way relevant the AONB.

Aspiration: - A strategic approach to transport planning takes account of landscape character whilst an enhanced, linked network of Rights of Way and permissive routes offers enjoyable access to the countryside, respecting the interests of conservation, farming and forestry.

Objective RT2L: Support initiatives to minimise the impact of roads and traffic.

Aspiration: - Local and visitor reliance on the car is reduced with improved awareness of the impact of car travel within the AONB and the availability of more sustainable forms of transport.

Objective RT3: When new development is proposed, seek to minimise the impact of associated traffic on local settlements and the wider countryside.

Aspiration: - A balance is sought between maximising social and economic interests whilst minimising the impact of traffic throughout the AONB.

Appendix One shows the actions relating to this theme for year one.

4. Rural Economy Theme: Local Economy and Employment and Recreation, Tourism and Access.

The vision for the rural economy in 25 years time is,

'The vision is for a diverse and sustainable rural economy with an appropriately skilled local workforce employed in businesses that support the character of the AONB and contribute to quality of life for the local economy. In particular, agriculture, woodland management and tourism are thriving,

independent sectors of the economy, building on and sustaining the special character and quality of the landscape'.

Local Economy and Employment and Recreation, Tourism and Access Aim:

- Support the rural economy in ways that are sustainable.

Objective RE1: Gain a full understanding of economic activities and trends within the AONB and surrounds.

Objective RE2: Support the coherent and consistent delivery of rural regeneration opportunities across the AONB.

Aspiration: - Local communities benefit from sustainable rural regeneration/development schemes and any review of those funding mechanisms recognise the special nature and needs of the AONB.

Objective RE3: Support initiatives and mechanisms that encourage a mixed land based economy with long term management objectives.

Aspiration: - A viable land-based sector of agriculture and woodland management employs an appropriately skilled rural labour force and provides the basis for businesses adding value to primary products and a local route to market.

Objective RE4: Support the development and promotion of a 'local market' approach to the economy.

Aspiration: - Working in partnership, the AONB focuses support on businesses that use local products and services, encouraging others to invest in the local area and communities.

Objective RE5: Support recreation and tourism opportunities that focus on the special qualities of the AONB.

Aspiration: - Sustainable recreation and tourism initiatives contribute to strong local economies and build on the unique resources of Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs, particularly historic sites and the extensive network of Rights of Way and open access.

Objective RE6: Support the development of local economic infrastructure.

Aspiration: - Businesses are aware of their contribution towards AONB objectives and advice and assistance is available to help and support them.

Objective RE7: Support initiatives that offer locally based training opportunities.

Aspiration: - Training courses close to home optimise opportunities for self-development.

Appendix Two shows the actions relating to this theme for year one.

5. Community: Sustainable Rural Communities:

The vision for the community in 25 years time is,

'The vision is for vibrant communities in sustainable rural settlements, enjoying a good quality of life including access to local services, facilities, employment opportunities and to a high quality local environment. The community has a strong sense of pride in their local area, valuing the qualities and character that make it such an attractive place to live'.

Sustainable Rural Communities Aims:

- Support and influence innovative ways of maintaining and providing access to community facilities and services.
- Increase levels of awareness and understanding of the AONB.

Objective SRC1: Encourage local people to be involved in identifying the future needs and aspirations of their communities.

Aspiration: - Local communities are strongly engaged in the processes that determine local service provision.

Objective SRC2: Support the provision of an infrastructure that enables and encourages more home and locally based work opportunities.

Aspiration: - Thriving small businesses help maintain lower levels of commuter traffic on AONB roads and support associated local services.

Objective SRC3: Support the extension, integration and promotion of public and community transport initiatives that meet the needs of local communities and visitors.

Aspiration: – Realistic alternatives to the car increasingly fulfil the transport needs of residents and visitors.

Objective SRC4: Support initiatives to improve or enhance delivery of local services and multi-use facilities that meet the needs of both resident and visitor communities.

Aspiration: - All villages have access to the full range of services and facilities that meet the needs of both resident and visitor communities.

Awareness and Understanding:

Objective AU1: Develop and implement, with partners, an AONB Information and Interpretation Strategy.

Aspiration: - The distinctive and diverse natural, historic and cultural qualities of the AONB are understood, valued and strongly supported by locals and visitors.

Objective AU2: Encourage a 'sense of pride' by directly involving local communities in caring for and making decisions about the AONB.

Aspiration: - Management of the AONB strongly reflects the views and decisions made by local people.

Objective AU3: Help to identify, sustain and encourage local traditions, customs and artistic expression that add to local identity.

Aspiration: - The life and times of the past are celebrated, nurtured and enjoyed which help to develop and broaden a modern day 'sense of pride'.

Appendix Three shows the actions relating to this theme for year one.

6. Analysis of Transportation and Planning Issues:

6.1 Planning:

The planning elements of the Management Plan represent measures, which can contribute to retaining and enhancing the distinctive character of the AONB. It is also important that the social and economic needs of the AONB's communities are addressed and again planning has a key role to play in shaping these aspirations.

Officers of the Forward Planning Team have been able to play an active role in assisting the AONB Team (through its Planning and Development Working Group) to formulate suitable practical activities which result from the concerns and issues identified in the extensive consultation phase. These measures aim to assist the AONB Forum in articulating its own expectations which, it should be noted, are not in any way conflicting from the expectations of the District Council in its policies and programmes.

The following headings set out areas of activity relevant to planning which the forum is proposing to address in the 5 year management plan period to 2009.

6.2 IMPROVING KNOWLEDGE

- Undertake a number of AONB wide research projects (e.g. Historic Landscape Character assessment, Socio-economic profiling, etc.) to more widely map the characteristics, features and resources, which make up the AONB. Much of this work will collate existing resources and in time will allow the context of the AONB to be better understood as a whole.
- Undertake an investigation of traditional building patterns and styles in the AONB and to identify important structures and the collation of buildings at risk data.

6.3 INFLUENCING FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

- A planning topic group will be formed to assist and articulate the AONB's aspirations in respect of Planning Policy. This is important as the AONB Forum has no statutory planning powers and therefore relies on the Cupertino of the 11 County and District Councils. It is intended that this group will contribute initially through,
 - a) The examination of policies and proposals currently applied amongst the authorities with a view to harmonising their application across the AONB.
 - b) Providing inputs into the formulation of collective SPG appropriate to the AONB on matters including design, noise and light pollution, highways, conversion/reuse of rural buildings, etc.
 - c) Providing technical inputs into submissions in respect of the imminent changes to the National and Regional Planning process and how these will relate to the AONB.
- The monitoring of development being undertaken in the AONB, and
- Participation in the planning process through submission of consultation responses to major proposals.

6.4 RAISING AWARENESS

- Organise an annual planning seminar for officers, elected members, developers, Parish Councils, etc. which is designed to increase understanding of AONB issues and promote best practice.
- Develop a design award scheme to encourage high quality development in the AONB, which can then be held up as good examples for the future.
- Collate and develop a directory of information and suppliers who can provide expertise in local building styles, materials and craftsmanship prevalent in and/or characteristic of the AONB.
- Study and collate a compendium of rural regeneration case studies within and applicable to the AONB to provide guidance and influence best practice.
- Investigate and promote appropriate sustainable approaches in respect of Local Infrastructure, Transportation and Service Delivery, etc.

6.5 Implementation and Resources

All of the measures and initiatives set out in the management plan will complement the existing work undertaken by Salisbury District Council and are likely to better inform the planning process. In terms of putting the measures into action, the AONB Team have expressed the desire to employ a Planning Advisor to monitor and comment on major planning applications and co-ordinate other planning functions, particularly the joint formulation of Supplementary Planning Guidance in association with the 11 planning authorities. Officers from the District Council will continue to be required in contributing to the proposed planning topic group which can only strengthen the consistency of approach being advocated for the AONB as an entity.

The AONB Forum has no planning status and it is therefore important that members recognise that for it to exist as a distinctive entity it must operate a consistent approach to development issues. The actions proposed in the management plan do not represent any form of shift in the powers currently in the hands of members, but do provide an opportunity for a wider tract of the region's countryside to be coherently stewarded. The actions proposed under the headings above seek to understand, contribute and raise awareness of planning issues in the sensitive AONB context and this can only aid in member's deliberation over development proposals put before them.

6.6 Transportation:

The Draft Management Plan, through extensive public consultation has been able to summarise accurately the traffic and transportation issues that face the area, namely: impact of traffic on rural communities, particularly large vehicles; increased car dependency; poor access to public transport services; ability to maintain the condition of roads and verges; safety for all road users but particularly pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders and local residents and; conflict between vehicular traffic and users of the rights of way network where it intersects the road network.

The consultation thus has the potential to form the springboard for taking forward the District Council's long held ambition to extend a transport strategy to cover areas of the district outside of Salisbury. However, the Plan in itself does not form a transport strategy.

The Plan proposes the formation of a transport and traffic topic group to provide information on current and future trends. It also proposes an area wide approach to establish a commonality of highway design and maintenance across administrative boundaries, thus reinforcing the distinctive character of the AONB.

In summary the traffic and transportation elements of the draft plan are welcomed as an overarching framework within which the District Council can work positively, either on its own or in partnership with Wiltshire County Council or the transport topic group, towards achieving the vision for the AONB. The success of the Plan will be measured not only in terms of the degree of partnership working towards the vision but also in attracting appropriate levels of funding to implement the individual transport elements required.

7. Staffing:

There are currently four members of staff working under fixed contracts covering the development stage of this work.

- Management Plan Officer
- Administration Support Officer
- GIS Officer
- Communications Officer

Discussions are taking place to put together a staffing structure for the implementation stage and this will form the basis of a funding application to all partner organisations and the Countryside Agency.

8. Funding:

Total core funding for 2003/2004 is £150, 047. 75% of this funding is from the Countryside Agency and SDC contributes £8,818 as part of this matched funding agreement. (25% from local authorities on a pro rata basis)

9. Recommendations:

- 9.1 Members are invited to endorse the visions, aims and aspirations set out in the draft management plan.
- 9.2 Members are further invited to comment on the content and objectives as set out in the Management Plan. (Comments will then be collated and agreed with the Portfolio Holder and his Deputy Portfolio Holder and presented formally to the Steering Committee.)
- 9.3 Members are invited to comment on the actions proposed for year one.
- 9.4 Members may wish to encourage ward residents to respond individually or collectively to the Management Plan as part of the public consultation.
- 9.5 That the proposal set out in 6.5 for the AONB team to seek funding in order to employ a specialised Planner to work across the AONB area is not supported as this could have the potential to delay the process and duplicate the professional opinion of our current consultees, English Nature and the Countryside Agency.

10. Background Papers:

A full copy of the management is available in the Members Room or can be downloaded from their website, www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk

Issues Conference - 15th January 2003.

Partnership Forum – 20th March 2003.

11. Implications:

- **Financial:** An application through the portfolio plan to allow £6k of non recurring revenue in 2004/05 would attract a contribution of £18k from the Countryside Agency.

- **Legal:** Developing a Management Plan is a statutory duty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
- **Human Rights:** There are none identified in the management plan.
- **Personnel:** There are none identified in the management plan for SDC.
- **Community Safety:** Section 17 of the Community and Disorder Act 1998 will apply and specific decisions taken by the AONB management will need to consider this as it relates to specific pieces of work, e.g. walking routes.
- **Environmental:** Addressed in the report.
- **Council's Core Values:** Being Environmentally Conscientious, Promoting a thriving economy, Being fair and equitable, Communicating with the public, Supporting the disadvantaged and Wanting to be an open, learning Council and a willing partner.
- **Wards Affected:** All wards within the boundary of the Western Area Committee

Environment Theme: Natural; Historic; Built; and Roads, Traffic and Rights of Way.

Actions for Year One:

- AC1: Set up Land Managers Advisory Forum (LMAF) to develop integrated land management aims, objectives and action plans for each Character Area based on analysis of LCA, (Landscape Character Assessment) biodiversity and historic data.
- AC3: Undertake -wide Historic Landscape Characterisation
- AC8: Establish an Access Topic Group to develop an wide co-ordinated approach to RoW and open access management, usage and promotion.
- AC9: Ensure cross-border issues are dealt with effectively, particularly through RoW Improvement Plans and exchange of best practice.
- AC13: Review the roles played by agriculture and forestry within the wider **economy**.
- AC15: Set up a Planning Topic Group that;
 - a) Examines planning policies, particularly during the Structure and Local Plan Review processes with the aim of harmonisation
 - b) Determines how to influence and input to the preparation of new Regional Spatial Strategies and any Sub-Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks and changes in national planning legislation.
 - c) Determines how to input to a collective influence on PPGs. (Planning Policy Guidance)
- AC20: Produces summary of LCA (Landscape Character Assessment)
- AC23: Promotes BAP implementation work and its environmental/social and economic benefits.
- AC26: Disseminate best practice in land management techniques and relevant information
- AC31: Promote locations/dates of farm/local produce sales in and around
- AC35: Raise awareness of the responsibilities and duties imparted by the CroW Act 2000 (Part IV) on public bodies.
- AC36: Good practice/case study 'away days' for officers/Members
- AC40: Attend appropriate DEFRA/FC meetings particularly at times of policy/target review.
- AC41: Liaise with all relevant BAP co-ordinators. (Biodiversity Action Plan)
- AC52: Attend ERDP meetings as appropriate. (England Rural Development)
- AC53: Collate, analyse, and report on Development Control work throughout the annually.
- AC54: Monitor the effectiveness of EIA's annually. (Environment Impact Assessment)
- AC55: Determine a 'major proposals checklist (size, location, design, precedent etc).

**Rural Economy Theme: Local Economy and Employment and Recreation, Tourism and Access.
Actions for Year One:**

- AC66: Undertake audit of all relevant economic data, activities and trends within and around the.
- AC68: Produce summary LCA (Landscape Character Assessment)
- AC69: Promote best practice examples of:
 - a) Rural regeneration/development schemes
 - b) Farm/woodland diversification projects
 - c) Thriving local produce sales/services
 - d) Improvements to local infrastructure
- AC72: Attend ERDP meetings as appropriate. (England Rural Development)
- AC76: Liaise closely with the four Local Access Forums

**Community: Sustainable Rural Communities:
Actions for Year One:**

- AC78: Audit Community Plan processes and timetables.
- AC81: Affirm close working relationship with Community Planning Officers and Rural Community Councils and collate relevant information for communities.
- AC88: Prepare LCA summary. (Landscape Character Assessment)
- AC90: Support, attend, promote local events, customs, traditions related to the.
- AC92: Promote best practice Community Plans.
- AC93: Promote best practice in improving local infrastructure.
- AC94: Promote best practice in public/community transport initiatives.
- AC95: Promote best practice in enhanced delivery of facilities and services.
- AC97: Agree /Local Strategic Partnerships future partnership working arrangements
- AC102: Promote, encourage and assist with community led plans when/where appropriate.
- AC103: Publish results of all public participation results and use to influence Community Strategies.
- AC106: Continue development of 'Parish Partners' project establishing local contact in each parish.
- AC107: Continue establishing database of potential volunteers, inclusive of all ages and abilities.