

**ISLE OF WIGHT
AONB PARTNERSHIP**



Isle of Wight
area of outstanding
natural beauty

**COMMUNICATION AND
CONSULTATION
STRATEGY**

December 2007

1. **Introduction**

- 1.1 The first Communication Strategy for the Isle of Wight AONB Partnership was produced in 2003 by J2 Communications. The document was written to cover the period 2003-2007, and as the AONB Partnership's first strategy of this type was weighted towards guidance on PR and Marketing aspects of AONB Communication. There is a need to update and revise this Strategy.
- 1.2 As a Partnership organisation, stakeholder engagement is of prime importance. Part of our role is to carry out formal consultation with stakeholders and the general public and this updated Communication and Consultation Strategy will also set out how we do this.

2. **Objectives**

- 2.1 The primary purpose of the AONB designation is the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty.
- 2.2 To achieve this aim, our core functions are:
- Produce and review an AONB Management Plan
 - Raise awareness and appreciation of the AONB
 - Encourage people to take account of the AONB when carrying out any actions that might impact upon it
 - Monitor and report on the management of the AONB
 - Promote sustainable forms of social and economic development that also conserve and enhance the AONB. This includes commenting on development control and planning policy issues.
- 2.3 The key objective of this Strategy is to assist in our delivery of these core functions through identifying the audiences, key messages and methods of communication.

3. **Target Audiences**

- 3.1 The work of the AONB Partnership covers a broad range of activities and deals with a variety of audiences both internal and external. It is important that for all communication activities consideration is given to the intended audience, and the appropriate method of communication and language is used.

- 3.2 We have three distinct audiences:

3.2a ***External audience - General Public.***

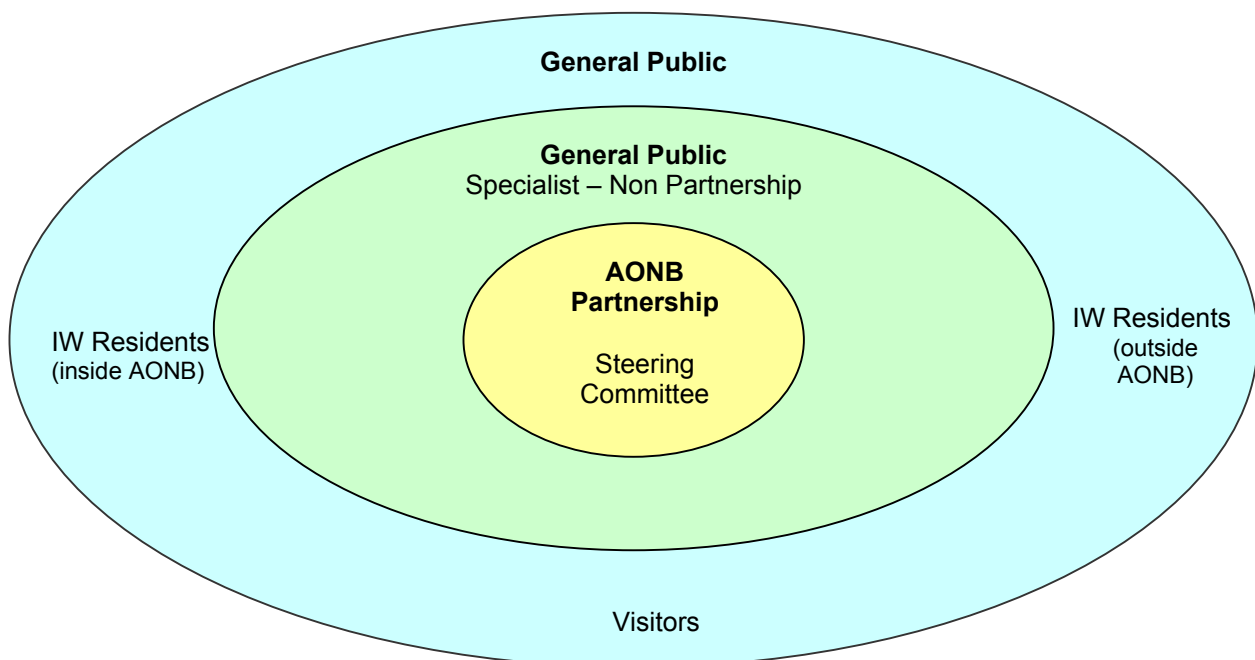
This audience can be split into Island Residents and Visitors. Island Residents can be further sub-divided into people who live within the AONB and those living outside the designated area. Within this category there is likely to be a broad range of levels of awareness and understanding. Our approach to the design of communication with this audience should either target certain sectors or have something to 'appeal to all'. We will, ensure that 'Plain English' is used.

3.2b **External Audience – Specialist Non Partnership**

This audience is made up of people who have an active role in or impact on the conservation and enhancement of the AONB but are not AONB Partnership members. This includes those statutory organisations that may have a ‘duty of regard’ and others who are key stakeholder, for example; Councillors, Town and Parish Councils, Residents Groups, Landowners, Local Businesses and Media. Communication with this audience is likely to consist of both technical and more generic information. It is likely that we would encourage people from this audience to be more actively involved by becoming a member of the AONB Partnership.

3.2c **Internal Audience – AONB Partnership**

This audience is made up of people with a direct management role, responsibility or interest in the AONB designation and its conservation and enhancement. The AONB Partnership consists of the AONB Steering Committee, Advisory Group and Open Forum Group and is administered by the AONB Unit. This audience has a high level of awareness of the designation and communication is likely to be of a more detailed technical nature. However, internal communication may be selective as within the Partnership there will be different levels of expertise and some technical information may only be relevant to some members.



4. **Core Funder Acknowledgement**

We will include reference to the support given by Natural England and the Isle of Wight Council in all our communication activities. As a minimum this will be in the form of the following written statement: “The Isle of Wight AONB Partnership is jointly supported by Natural England and the Isle of Wight Council”. On published documents and promotional materials, where scale allows, we will also include the logos of these core funder organisations, alongside our own. This will be done in line with the established protocols.

5. **Key Messages**

- 5.1 The previous Strategy identified five key messages to form the basis of our communication toolkit. As the nature of our work and core functions are the same, for consistency these messages should remain the same.

They are:

The Island's Finest Landscapes

The Isle of Wight AONB is part of a national family of protected landscapes. AONBs have the same level of protection as National Parks

Conserving and Enhancing Natural Beauty

The natural beauty of the Isle of Wight AONB landscape encompasses everything that makes the area distinctive. The AONB's quality is due to the combination of its wildlife; landform; land use; geology and soils; archaeology; historic landscape and buildings; people, past and present; events and traditions; and other cultural associations. We use Landscape Character Assessment as a process to describe this 'natural beauty' and manage its conservation and enhancement.

Managing Change

The relationship between people and place is critical to the future health of the AONB designation. Living landscapes need sustainable vibrant communities, where there is a balance between the social and economic needs of communities and the protection of the environment.

Working Together

The management of the Isle of Wight AONB is overseen by the Isle of Wight AONB Partnership, an independent organisation made up of key stakeholders with a direct management role or interest in the AONB.

This Partnership is jointly funded by Natural England and the Isle of Wight Council.

Our Role

A significant role of the AONB Partnership is to promote awareness of the sense of place afforded by landscape character; and encourage stakeholder and community responsibility for the future of the AONB. This can be achieved by working in partnership to produce and review an AONB Management Plan, and through ongoing monitoring and reporting on the condition and management of the AONB.

- 5.2 It is accepted that it will not always be possible to include all key messages in every communication activity, however, consideration needs to be given as to which are most appropriate for the particular activity and at least one message should be incorporated.

6. **Methods of Communication**

- 6.1 The following table gives an indication of our current communication activities. All documents, etc are available to anyone on request, however, the table identifies those audiences that they are particularly written and/or designed for.

Target Audience(s)	Communication Activity	Comments
All - External and Internal	Finest Landscapes Newsletter	This is our public newsletter published three times a year and distributed primarily through the Isle of Wight County Press but also to those on our mailing list.
All - External and Internal	AONB Website www.wightaonb.org.uk	This is currently being revised and a new website is due to be launched by November 2007.
All – External and Internal	AONB Interpretation Guide	This guide is for anyone contemplating a project that requires interpretative material.
All – External and Internal	Contribution to National and Regional Publications	'Explore your Natural Beauty', People's Landscapes, Outstanding, Regional AONB Calendar are some of the National and Regional publications that we contribute towards.
All - External and Internal	News/Press Releases	We are not currently as pro-active as we should be in working with the media. Improvement in this area will be highlighted in the action plan.
External -General Public	AONB Leaflet	First produced in April 2007 this provides an introduction to the designation.
External - General Public	Heritage Coast Leaflet	Encouraging quiet enjoyment of the Tennyson and Hamstead Heritage Coasts.
External - General Public	AONB Pocket Map	Produced in conjunction with Isle of Wight Tourism introducing some of the wealth of natural and historic features of the Isle of Wight AONB.
External – General Public	Sponsorship of events	As a partner of the Walking Festival and from this year the Cycling Festival, AONB information is incorporated into all literature. Monitoring information is also gained through the feedback cards produced by the AONB for these events.
External – General Public	Attendance at shows and events	We currently sponsor marquees and attend 3 public events annually – Chale Show, Wolverton Show and Fort Vic Foray.
External – General Public	Walks	Walks within the AONB are led by the AONB Unit as part of: Wight Summer/Winter programme, Walking Festival and Heritage Open Days.
External – Specialist and General Public	Talks and Presentations	Individually tailored talks are given by the AONB Unit team to varied groups e.g., Austin 10 Club, Welcome Walkers & Cyclists programme.
Internal and External – Specialist	AONB Management Plan	This is our statutory plan, which provides the vision, policies, objectives and action plan for the future management of the AONB.
Internal and External - Specialist	State of the AONB report	A snapshot of the condition and extent of: social, economic and environmental issues and assets within the AONB. It is aimed to publish this midway through the life of the AONB Management Plan.
Internal and External – Specialist	Annual Reviews	Yearly reviews of the work of the AONB Unit including financial statements and monitoring information.
Internal	Partnership Update	This is our regular report to Partnership members updating them on current AONB Unit work programmes.
Internal	Minutes of meetings	Minutes of all Steering Committee Meetings are copied to all Advisory Group members. Records of any Partnership meetings are available on request.
Internal	Workshops & events	Each year the AONB holds its Annual General Meeting and Annual Open Forum. The Open Forum, which is also opened up to the public, is usually themed relating to current issues or topics. Other Partnership workshops are held as required as part of consultative processes.

7. Evaluation

7.1 All communication activities will be subject to monitoring and evaluation, to assess the effectiveness of the AONB Partnership in increasing awareness and understanding of the AONB designation and its purpose.

7.2 As a matter of course we will undertake the following:

7.2a	Media	Monitoring the Isle of Wight County Press and other local publications recording articles and features that include the AONB area, the work of the AONB Partnership and others.
7.2b	Website	Responding to and monitoring feedback and enquiries received through the AONB website along with recording levels of usage, pages visited, etc.
7.2c	Direct Feedback	Responding to and recording letters received directly to the Unit. Recording comments from events and shows. Liaison with partners and other organisations on uptake and feedback from publications.
7.2d	Questionnaires	Receiving and recording feedback from the Walking Festival and Cycling Festival Feedback cards. Specific awareness surveys and questionnaires for Partnership members.
7.2e	Other Sources	Collation of information from activities undertaken by others e.g. mention of AONB in Parish Plan and Village Design Statement Resident Surveys.

8. **Resources & Action Plan**

- 8.1 This strategy provides a general overview and direction for all our communication and consultation activity. There will be a need annually, to combine this with a specific action plan highlighting particular activities for that financial year. This will be produced as part of our Core Bid to Natural England, to ensure that all communication and consultation activities are in accord with the planned actions for the year and that adequate resources are in place.

9. **Consultation Processes**

- 9.1 To achieve our vision needs the support of both our partners and the general public, we have outlined above how we will communicate with these audiences but due to the nature of our work, there will be occasions when we will need to formally consult.
- 9.2 When looking for views on policy or guidance draft documents we will, where possible, base these upon evidence through our analysis of data. We recognise that many organisations carry out formal consultation and rather than repeating this work, we will endeavour to use these results to influence our approach.
- 9.3 We will approach our consultation activities in the following way:

9.3a ***Notification of consultation***

Internal Consultations	Partnership members will be notified via e-mail and/or letter and through Partnership Update.
Public Consultations	Public Advertisements in local press and Finest Landscapes.

It is our aim that all consultations will be undertaken using electronic media as much as practicable, with paper copies being available on request.

9.3b ***Work Groups/Workshops***

If required workshops or work groups will be organised to discuss issues, receive feedback and develop recommendations for all audiences.

Normally workgroups are set up in line with the Constitution and Terms of Reference of the Partnership. The AONB Unit are happy to take requests from any member of the Partnership to the Steering Committee for specific issues or projects to be discussed by workgroups/workshops. Alternatively, Partnership members can approach the relevant portfolio holder directly to ask them to raise this on their behalf.

9.3c ***Circulation of first draft document (Full process)***

All consultations All drafts will be circulated to Partnership members and, where applicable to others within the external specialist category. Where possible this will be done electronically with paper copies available on request. All comments received will be recorded and acknowledged.

Depending upon the document being produced for consultation, particularly if primarily for internal management, this stage may be missed.

9.3d ***Circulation of final draft document for formal consultation***

All consultations Copies of the document will be circulated to all Partnership members and, where applicable, to others within the external specialist category. Where possible this will be done electronically with paper copies available on request.

Public consultations Electronic copies will be available on our website with hard copies available on request. Copies will be available for viewing at all libraries and at Planning Service Offices, Seaclose, Newport. Public consultation periods will last for a minimum of six weeks whereas internal consultation periods will vary. All comments received will be treated as public information and we will publish a summary on our website, with hard copies available on request.

In all consultations we will report back on consultation responses, detailing how comments have been taken into account. Unresolved disputes on content will be referred to the AONB Steering Committee who will have the final say.

9.3d ***Production of final document***

All consultations Partnership members and, where relevant, others within the external specialist category will be notified that the final document has been produced. Where possible copies will be forwarded electronically.

Public consultations Consultation respondents will be forwarded a copy of the final document, ideally in electronic format, though hard copies will be available. Notices will be placed with the local press

- 9.4 Undertaking a review of the AONB Management Plan is a statutory function and as such has certain additional requirements. These include formal comment by Natural England and formal adoption by the Isle of Wight Council, prior to its final publication and submission to the Secretary of State.

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The Isle of Wight AONB Partnership is jointly supported by Natural England and the Isle of Wight Council

