

ISLE OF WIGHT AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

SURVEY 2: POLICY AND POLICY OBJECTIVES

Introduction:

The first statutory Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan, was written following a two year consultation and development process. This was undertaken in line with the guidance published by the Countryside Agency, and the Plan completed with adoption by the Isle of Wight Council in February and formally published in March 2004.

The Management Plan is structured to provide a statement of significance giving details of the special qualities of the AONB; an overall vision for the future of the designated area in 2025; details on the context of its management; within themed chapters, details of the threats and challenges facing its management and associated policies and policy objectives seeking to address these; details on intended approaches to monitoring the condition of the AONB; and finally, a five year Action Plan setting out the detail of activities intended to be undertaken, to further the policies and vision in the Plan.

Legislation requires all AONB Management Plans to be reviewed within five years of their publication. The Countryside Agency and latterly Natural England, its successor national body, have published guidance on the review process, and the additional requirements of a Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment.

The AONB Partnership commenced the required review of the current Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan, at our Annual General Meeting and Open Forum in September 2007. At this event we provided an overview of the approach being taken, a summary of things that have changed since 2004 when the first Plan was published, and debate on the AONB Unit's views on what had worked well and less well with the current Plan in the last three years. As the current Plan has a vision for 2025, much of its content remains relevant just three years later at the start of the review process.

In order to identify what needs to change, a more detailed assessment of the current Plan is being undertaken through a series of workshops and meetings. In line with e-government and in recognition of the time constraints that many of our partners find themselves under, we are also consulting on the current Plan through a series of on-line surveys.

This report is based on an assessment of the second workshop held at the Quay Arts Centre on 24 January 2008, and the results of an associated on-line survey which all members of the AONB Partnership were invited to complete. The workshop data was manually entered into the on-line survey by the AONB Unit, in order to have one set of data to analyse and present.

Full survey results will be found on the Isle of Wight AONB website, by following the link on the home page. Alternatively we can provide a paper copy if you would prefer.

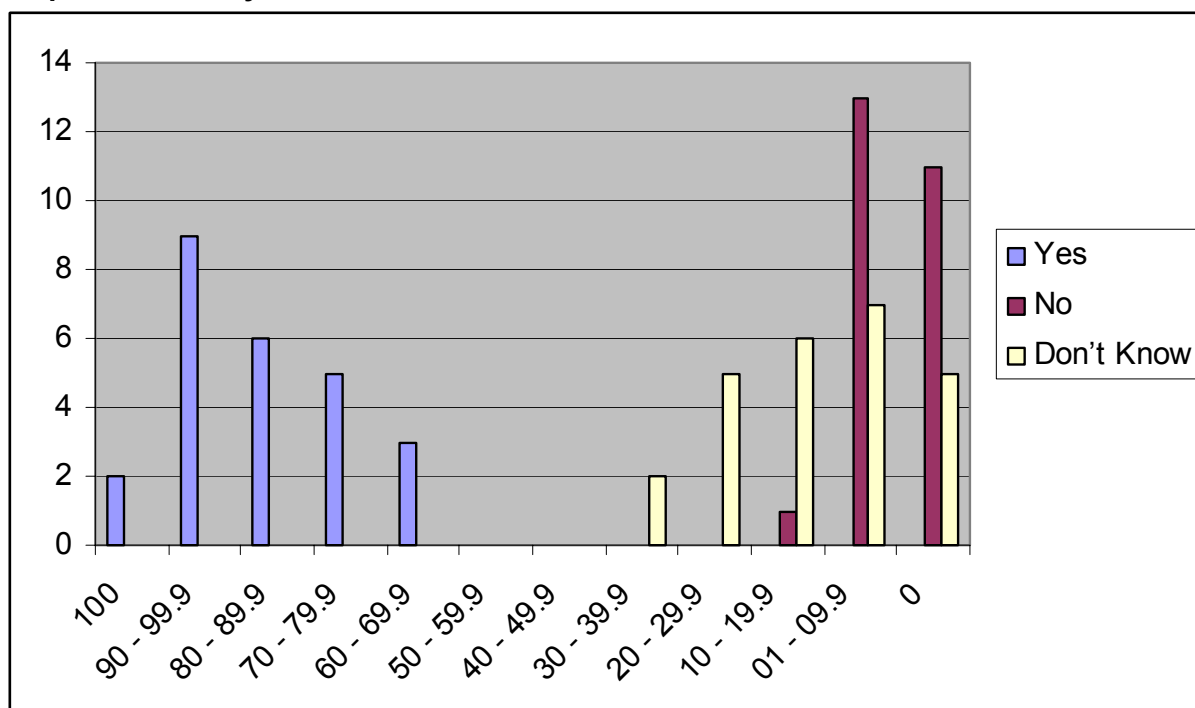
In total, we received thirty one responses to help us with analysing the validity of the 'Policy and Policy Objectives' listed in the Management Plan.

In general, respondents indicated that the Plan still remains relevant to our work in conserving and enhancing the area. The replies are summarised below:

Table 1: Summary of results -

% bands	Out of 25 questions the number within this % band answering 'Yes'	Out of 25 questions the number within this % band answering 'No'	Out of 25 questions the number within this % band answering 'Don't know'
100	2 ¹	0	0
90 - 99.9	9	0	0
80 - 89.9	6	0	0
70 - 79.9	5	0	0
60 - 69.9	3	0	0
50 - 59.9	0	0	0
40 - 49.9	0	0	0
30 - 39.9	0	0	2
20 - 29.9	0	0	5
10 - 19.9	0	1	6
01 - 09.9	0	13	7
0	0	11	5

Graph 1: Summary of the results -



The data clearly shows there is a general agreement that the policies and policy objectives of the current Management Plan, are still relevant to the objective of conserving and enhancing the AONB. However, there is more comment and an increased level of uncertainty ('Don't Knows') in relation to the AONB People part of the Plan. The following sections give an overview of the results and comment by AONB Management Plan theme.

¹ Policy reference LC3, W1

Overview of results and comment by Management Plan Theme

Landscape Character

LC1 - Awareness

There is a high level of support for this policy and its policy objectives. It was felt by some to be the core purpose of the AONB Partnership and core role of the AONB Unit.

Some comments suggested a need for greater clarity in the wording and, in particular, suggested that phrases such as 'the recognition of change', and 'an interest in change' and 'appropriate responses to change' were better terms to use than 'evolve' and 'understand'. There is clear support for the need to ensure that the meaning of landscape to communities, and individuals remains at the heart of our work.

LC2 - Recording and Monitoring

There is a high level of support and recognition of this as a key area of work for the AONB Partnership, requiring a strong commitment by all partners. The following are key comments/suggestions: there is a need to link this activity into the collation of information/data provided by others; be more specific and realistic about what can be recorded and what can be afforded, in terms of resources available for this work; increase the use of visual references for explanation; explain how collation of information then links to conservation and enhancement of landscape character - more explicit in the link between the two.

LC3 - Conserving and Enhancing

100% of respondents said yes to this question, believing it to be essential for the AONB Partnership. Comments focussed on the need to be clear with our wording; the importance of the use of volunteers and contribution by partners such as the Wildlife Trust and National Trust; not to forget the importance of 'everyday' things that contribute to the character of the AONB, alongside the unusual and the dramatic.

Earth Heritage

EH1 - Awareness

There is a high level of support and recognition of this as a key area of work for the AONB Partnership. The importance of the geology of the Isle of Wight as the bedrock of its landscape, is seen as an essential part of the story of the AONB. There is a need to be clearer on the reference to the control of fossil hunting and other such activities.

EH2 - Recording and Monitoring

Policies and policy objectives in this section are supported. There is a need to ensure any recording/monitoring is directly relevant to the AONB, its conservation and enhancement.

EH3 - Conserving and Enhancing

General agreement that this policy, and its objectives, is still valid and important for the AONB. Some comment as to whether it is feasible to achieve all the aims that are listed in relation to potential quarry sites.

Wildlife

W1 - Awareness

100% of respondents said yes to this question, believing it to be essential for the AONB Partnership. It was felt that there is great scope to link the objectives into overarching projects. Awareness and its resultant positive influence on behaviour, was felt to be essential to the conservation and enhancement of the wildlife resource of the AONB.

W2 - Recording and Monitoring

There is a high level of support for this policy and its objectives.

Key comments raised the focus on climate change, and the importance of linking and supporting the work of the Local Biodiversity Partnership and Local Records Centre. The wording needs to reflect the fact that we have moved on from the first Management Plan, and now have many of the mechanisms in place to further these objectives.

W3 - Conserving and Enhancing

Overall support is given to this policy and its objectives. Comment is based around the need to advocate this as part of the new Local Development Framework, and the potential for conservation/enhancement of biodiversity through tariffs from development.

Historic Environment

HE1 - Awareness

There is a high level of support for this policy and its objectives. We need to make specific reference to the Historic Environment Action Plan (HEAP), which is helping to meet many of the objectives outlined in the first Plan. The terminology is not consistent with the Wildlife theme, in that there is specific reference to 'authoritative' information in relation to the historic environment. It is suggested there is a need to ensure that references and relationships in the Historic Environment (HEAP and Historic Environment Record (HER)), are similarly phrased to those referring the LBAP and Local Records Centre.

HE2 - Recording and Monitoring

Overall support is given to this policy and its objectives. Comments again suggest that data collection needs to be a means to an end, and not just to record the resource with the links to active conservation and enhancement emphasised.

HE3 - Conserving and Enhancing

Overall support with the following comments: there is a need to reflect the progress made since the publication of the first Management Plan; be clear of the added value role of the AONB Partnership, rather than emphasising the statutory role of the IW Council; emphasise the economic and social value of the AONB's historic assets.

Living and Working

Rural Community and Economy

LW1 - Awareness

There is support for this policy and its objectives, with the following points being made by respondents: there is considerable overlap and linkage with the Farming and Forestry section; the importance of working with communities to allow them to define the importance of the AONB to them; importance of getting AONB messages into the education system, and also linking to the 14-19 age group.

LW2 - Conserving and Enhancing

This policy and its objectives had one of the lowest scores (Yes - 65.5%, Don't Know - 31%). Perhaps this demonstrates a need to be clearer on exactly what the role of the AONB Partnership is, in fulfilling our secondary purpose. It is felt there are clear links to the emerging Eco-Island agenda. Surprisingly no-one mentioned the importance of the Sustainable Development Fund, in demonstrating exemplar approaches to living and working in the AONB. A plea to use ordinary language and not jargon, as this will help us to communicate with 'ordinary' people.

LW3 - Conserving and Enhancing

In general this policy and its objectives are supported, but it is acknowledged it is a secondary area for the AONB Partnership's work. It is suggested that rather than use terms such as 'identify' we use 'advocate', 'support' or 'promote' to emphasise that it is others who are going to addressing the issue, and the AONB identifying how this impacts on its purposes.

Development

LW4 - Conserving and Enhancing

This policy and its objectives had one of the lowest scores (yes - 65.5%, Don't Know - 31%). From the comments it seems this is largely due to being uncertain of the AONB's mechanisms to ensure the objectives are met. Our role in the planning process is acknowledged and supported as core business, but it is felt we should be making more of examples of good, bad, indifferent and interesting approaches to development in the AONB, rather than relying on the wording of policies. It is suggested we streamline the policies in the Living and Working theme, and possibly combine them with the elements of Farming and Forestry that relate to development.

LW5 - Conserving and Enhancing

Similarly to the above this policy and its objectives had a lower score (Yes - 69%, Don't Know - 27.6%). There is a need to reflect on work that has been undertaken since the last Plan, and similar comments about simplification of policy through an overarching statement.

LW6 - Conserving and Enhancing

There is more certainty of support for this policy and its policy objectives. Comments suggest the importance of the new Local Development Framework, and the need to ensure AONB purposes are correctly reflected in it. We should be clearer on what we consider to be 'sustainable approaches'.

Farming and Forestry

FF1 - Awareness

There is a high level of support for this policy and its policy objectives. It is felt the term 'traditional' is unhelpful and open to misinterpretation. Sustainable and viable are felt to be more useful and descriptive terms for what the AONB is seeking to secure. It is also suggested the mechanisms for progressing these objectives, have been put in place more fully than when the first Plan was written.

FF2 - Conserving and Enhancing

Respondents indicate this policy and its objectives are still important. However, it is felt we need to be more specific on why the farming and forestry sector is important to the AONB, and more supportive about identifying what is allowed rather than what is not, particularly in regard to development proposals. It is suggested the aims of these policies are closely related to the Living and Working theme, and may be better included in one overall context setting and policy framework. Linking produce and products to local markets is seen as a win-win scenario.

FF3 - Conserving and Enhancing

There is general support for this policy and its objectives, although there is recognition of the impact of global market forces. Concentration on adding value at a local level and linking produce/products with local distinctiveness is mentioned.

Traffic and Transport

TT1 - Conserving and Enhancing

Respondents see this policy and its objectives remaining important for the AONB. Comments emphasise the fact that the highways network and its verges, furniture etc. is part of the public estate, and should be prioritised for our approach to looking at the impact of traffic and transport on the AONB. There is a particular emphasis on the importance and use of the public rights of way network.

TT2 - Conserving and Enhancing

Overall there is support for this policy and its policy objectives. Respondents emphasise the need to reference the Local Transport Plan and Rights of Way Improvement Plan within the

policy. There is also the need to ensure that the areas helping to achieve these objectives are properly resourced (PROW).

Visiting and Enjoying

VE1 - Conserving and Enhancing

There is a high level of support for this policy and its objectives. There is particular emphasis on sustainable tourism and its infrastructure needs, rather than conventional tourism and its higher impact on the qualities of the AONB. There is mention of the need for invisible management and marketing, as explicit approaches can be damaging to the 'natural' experience by making things too formal. 'Sustainability' and 'Responsibility' are mentioned.

VE2 - Conserving and Enhancing

There is a high level of support for this policy and its policy objectives. It is felt we need to define sustainable tourism in an AONB context, and that we should continually be seeking to 'raise the bar'. There is emphasis on the need to be positive by mentioning how people can contribute, rather than telling them not to do things that impact on the AONB.

Other comments

Finally we asked for any other thoughts, and the following were some of those mentioned that are relevant to the Policies and Policy Objectives of the current Management Plan. The following were mentioned:

- There is a need to reflect the progress made since the first Plan in the wording of the policies and objectives because as they are written, it seems that we are starting from scratch.
- The policies and policy objectives need to reference other strategies and plans and, where possible, mention how joint aims and objectives are being approached.
- A general comment about a small scale renewable energy park where people can learn about renewables was mentioned.

JB 03/03/08