

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Summary: To provide a revised forward plan for developing a 2023 – 2025 Management Plan.

Recommendation: That the Committee approves the 2023 – 2025 Management Plan's production schedule.

Report by: Simon Smith – Nature Recovery Lead

INTRODUCTION

1. The current Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan was adopted in September 2018. There is a legal requirement to review it and have an updated plan in place within five years so we need to have a revised plan in place by September 2023. This revised plan would then normally run until 2028.
2. The national situation concerning National Landscape/AONB management planning has changed rapidly and extensively since a production schedule and issues paper for a Cotswolds plan were presented to the Board in February 2022.

A CHANGING SITUATION

3. Not all National Landscapes/AONBs currently review their Management Plans at the same time. Most are scheduled to produce a plan to run from 2024 to 2029, a year later than our production cycle.
4. Conversations with the National Association of AONB's indicate that most AONBs would also wish to delay by a year to produce plans that run from 2025 to 2030, two years later than our current schedule. Defra and Natural England support this delay and are currently working on new advice on delaying Management Plans.
5. There are many reasons why this delay is widely supported by AONB Boards/Partnerships and Government bodies:
 - Management Plans running from 2025 to 2030 would be aligned with the timeframe of the government's 25 Year Environment Plan.
 - Natural England are working on new guidance on Management Plan production and structure. This delay would allow for a new cohort of plans to be drawn up following its publication.
 - Defra are working on new targets and policies for Protected Landscapes in response to the Landscape's Review and Natural England are working on a new Strategy for Protected Landscapes. It makes sense for the next cohort of plans to be produced in the light of these.

- The government response to the Landscapes Review is likely to entail significant changes to the purposes of designation for Protected Landscapes which will have consequences for Management Plans.
6. We are also in the midst of wider significant policy developments both nationally and locally, the outcomes of which may significantly influence a Cotswolds Management Plan.
- The role of protected areas in delivering the UK government’s policy to protect 30% of all four nations’ land and seas for nature by 2030 (‘30x30’).
 - Our current work on better understanding the local requirements for climate change mitigation and their impacts.
 - The development and publication of Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
 - Further development and roll-out of new funding mechanisms for environmental management and nature recovery including: Environmental Land Management, Biodiversity Net Gain and Payment for Ecosystem services.

NEXT STEPS

7. In order to accommodate all of the above and also to provide for continuity in having a functional Management Plan it is proposed to undertake a limited interim review to produce a plan for publication in 2023, but to only run that plan for two years. This will allow for a further thorough review that can fully consider all of the above leading to the publication of a fully revised plan in 2025. This new plan will then be aligned with most other plans and the 25 Year Environment Plan.
8. This proposal is permissible within the legislation as the Countryside and Rights of Way Act states that Management Plan reviews need to be at “intervals of not more than five years”.
9. Discussions with partners and within the team have indicated that there are limited changes that should helpfully be made now. The interim review will be limited to:
- Inclusion of our new vision.
 - Removal of the ambitions.
 - A technical review of the wording of the policies. This will be limited to updating and better expressing the Board’s current position. Any changes representing a significant shift in the Board’s position will be held over for the coming full review.
10. A revised production schedule, Appendix ‘A’ has been produced. It is similar to the schedule presented to the Board in February 2022 and still includes two full six-week consultation periods for partners.

11. The production of this plan is subject to a number of legal requirements including issuing formal notification to Natural England and local authorities.
12. Subject to the extent of revision between plans it may also be necessary to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening assessment. Advice will be sought as to their need for this interim review.

SUPPORTING PAPERS

- Appendix A – Management Plan Timeline

May 2022