

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Summary: To present for adoption the final draft of the Management Plan for 2023 - 25.

Recommendations:

That subject to satisfactory Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment the 2023 – 2025 Management Plan be adopted.

Report by: Simon Smith – Nature Recovery Lead

PROGRESS TO DATE

1. Following approval of the consultation draft by the Board in October 2022 stakeholders were consulted from late October through to early December. Stakeholders consulted included; the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL), team, Board Members and volunteers, national agencies, local authorities including parish councils, MP's, Local Enterprise Partnerships and non-governmental organisations.
2. 49 responses were received from 38 individuals. The number of individuals contributing comments was greater than this, as several local authorities submitted comments collated from across their teams.
3. Comments with the potential to lead to a change in the plan were collated along with any recommended changes. The resulting document was 61 pages long. This document along with a revised post consultation draft of the plan was circulated to the relevant CNL team leads for final checking throughout January and early February. The Executive committee also considered the post consultation draft at its meeting on 24th January 2023.

SOME KEY ISSUES FROM THE CONSULTATION

4. Several stakeholders questioned the viability and validity of the open character of the high wolds as a special quality within the context of the climate emergency and ecological crisis. This is beyond the scope of the current review but will require exploring thoroughly with stakeholders for the 2025 plan.
5. There were some challenging comments from planning departments concerning the relationship between the Management Plan and local plans and this point was raised as a potential difficulty for endorsement. New text in the introduction addresses this issue.
6. The plan's emphasis on consistency across the National Landscape was questioned. The plan now has a greater emphasis on coordination, and the supporting text for policy CC6: *Developing a Consistent, Coordinated and Landscape-led Approach* recognises variation in decisions and actions due to local circumstances.
7. Many local authorities struggled with the policy to have 20% biodiversity net gain from development within the National Landscape. They were unconvinced that the

evidence base presented was strong enough to justify the policy. The new wording in the introduction allows this as an aspirational policy without conflicting with Local Plans. We need to continue looking for new information to strengthen the evidence

8. The original text concerning the duty of regard also caused difficulties, mainly with respect to the requirement to record compliance being seen as overly onerous. Policy CC7 and Appendix 4: *The Duty of Regard* have been amended accordingly.
9. The extent to which the plan addresses issues of diversity and inclusion was challenged. The supporting text for policy UE2: *Access and Recreation* strengthens the term “everyone” by stating that it is intended to address equality, diversity and inclusion. More work in this area will be required for the 2025 plan.

SEA, HRA AND EIA

10. In early November 2022 Natural England advised that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) are required and a consultant was engaged accordingly. The process is in hand and the SEA scoping report has been completed and agreed by the relevant statutory agencies. Natural England also advised that they will not be able to engage with this process within the statutory timescale. Consequently, adoption of the Management Plan by the Board will have to be subject to these assessments proving to be satisfactory. In practice no further changes are expected.
11. The consultant undertaking the SEA/HRA additionally undertook to prepare a report on the development of an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) at no cost. The EIA considers impacts on nine groups set out in the Equality Act 2010. These groups do not directly include economic factors but we may choose to include them to better address equality, diversity and inclusion. The report has been shared with the Wellbeing and Inclusion Working Group who concluded that such an assessment would be helpful in informing the production of the 2025 plan.

NEXT STEPS

12. Following adoption both a full technical version and a concise, accessible, public facing summary will be designed and published.

SUPPORTING PAPERS

- Appendix A – 2023 – 2025 Management Plan

February 2023