

**Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills,
Executive Director - Environment & Economy**

Report to:	Environment & Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date:	16 January 2018
Subject:	Revised Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023

Summary:

The Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) was designated in 1973 on account of the area's outstanding landscape, cultural heritage and unique sense of place. AONB's are nationally protected – there are currently 46 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland – and in planning terms they are on a par with National Parks (as expressed through paras 115 and 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework).

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) reaffirmed the national status of AONBs and the need for all relevant local authorities to have "due regard" for the designation when performing all of their duties. The Act provided an added responsibility on all local authorities with AONBs, to produce and review a Management Plan, including 1) Statement of significant attributes, 2) State of the AONB Report, 3) Vision, Objectives and Policies for the area, 4) A resulting partnership Action Plan. Under the EU Directive an accompanying SEA report may be required, depending upon the extent of the review.

The AONB Partnership has now completed its initial revisions of the previously adopted 2013-2018 Management Plan, and has endorsed the distribution of the Public Consultation Draft. The Partnership's initial steer was to conduct a light review, and in interests of economy avoid incurring additional resources (staff and consultancy expenditure) to prepare an accompanying SEA. The Council has supported the Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service and the wider AONB Partnership – the Lincolnshire Wolds Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) and the Lincolnshire Wolds Joint Management Group (JMG – funding partnership) in helping to develop the Draft AONB Management Plan 2018-23, and prepare for its forthcoming closing review, adoption and implementation. A significant proportion of LWCS time has been undertaken in updating of baseline data and reviewing relevant trends and issues, as documented within the State of the AONB Report – 2017 and Peer Review commentary.

Actions Required:

Members of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee are invited to:

1. Endorse the Draft AONB Plan; being aware that there will be some further changes to take account of additional observations and recommendations as part of the ongoing public consultation.
2. Note that a final Plan needs to be validated by Natural England, prior to its formal adoption by all relevant local planning authorities – including Lincolnshire County Council, and also East Lindsey District Council, West Lindsey District Council and North East Lincolnshire Council.

1. Background

Under the Countryside of Rights of Way Legislation (CROW 2000) the Council has a statutory duty to produce and review a five yearly management plan for the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB. The legislation is clear in stating that all relevant local authorities must produce a single collaborative Plan in partnership following national guidance originally published by Countryside Agency, and subsequently updated by Natural England and most recently the National Association for AONBs.

Lincolnshire County Council Elected Members and Officers have been regularly consulted during the Management Plan review process, including the opportunity for dialogue at workshop and peer review stages as well as ongoing JAC and JMG updates. The Plan is now undergoing a final public consultation and all relevant LAs, Parish Councils, Government Agencies (Natural England, Environment Agency and Historic England) partner organisations, local landowners, local businesses and the wider public will have a further opportunity to influence the final Plan.

The document is seen as a Plan for everyone with an active interest in the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB, and is holistic in scope. The Strategy (policies and objectives) and resulting five year Action Plan is seeking to support and develop a wide range of collaborative projects to help secure sustainable development in the context of a nationally protected landscape. In short, protecting and enhancing the area's natural beauty whilst also delivering on social and economic aspirations – the Plan recognises that the Wolds AONB should not be preserved in aspic, but that the area is very much a living and working landscape with integral connections to its surrounding market towns and the wider area of Greater Lincolnshire.

2. Conclusion

Changes since the last Plan review:

The over-arching twenty five year Vision for the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB has remained relatively unchanged; although the accompanying Landscape Management Statement has the addition of exploring innovative approaches to land management that can help to demonstrate the area's contributions to wider goods and services, including opportunities to explore and further links with natural capital, health and well-being. This chimes with the Government's current recommendations to develop and utilise "natural capital" – recognising that our living landscapes and ecosystems provide a wide range of public goods and services.

In reviewing the previous objectives and policies some of the new expected forces for change include:

- Brexit uncertainties and its likely impact upon RDPE, agri-environment funding and general farming patterns.
- Increased focus on tourism and its contribution to the local economy e.g. linking with wider Love Lincolnshire Wolds businesses.
- An ongoing drive to secure sustainable growth, helping to positively influence future land management in planning decisions both within and immediately adjacent to the AONB.
- An increasing drive on health and wellbeing matters – including greater provision of multi-functional land.
- Emergence of new pests and diseases, including for example Chalara (ash dieback), Acute Oak Decline and Signal Crayfish.
- Possible implications and resourcing for a review of the current AONB boundary.

Since the last Plan there has been a significant improvement to the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB evidence base across a range of environmental, social and economic measures as evidenced within the State of the AONB – 2017 report. A number of indicators have been suggested to help monitor future progress. This work has been helped, in part, by an increase in availability of some national datasets specific to protected landscape boundaries (both AONBs and National Parks).

Objectives and policies have been reviewed thoroughly and there have been minor modifications to several, including in summary:

Natural heritage – Biodiversity Objective BO; updated to highlight links to the latest Lincolnshire Nature Strategy, Biodiversity 2020 and emerging UK environmental plans.

Biodiversity Policies BP3/BP4; slight rewording to reflect the local nature tourism offer.

Woodland Policy WP1; added the need for considering climate change adaptability in new planting options.

Arable Farmland Policy AFP3; rewording to aid clarification on future surveys for arable wildlife.

Built Heritage Policies BHP1 and BHP4; previous policies merged, revised BHP1 better reflects the need to work with all stakeholders to encourage sympathetic and innovative design (in keeping with local character).

Farming and Field Sports Policy FWP2; slight rewording to emphasise the importance of monitoring and influencing national agriculture policy.

Interpretation Objective IO; additional phrase included to highlight the benefits of raising the profile of the AONB to help support the local economy.

Planning and Development Management Policy PP1; amendments to highlight the requirement for making space for nature and tackling climate change when pushing for the highest quality of design in the context of the AONB. Likewise, similar additions to **Policy PP2** in respect of sensitive conversions to traditional buildings.

Planning and Development Management Policy PP4; minor change to wording of mineral and waste policy to help support implementation of the Lincolnshire Geodiversity Strategy.

Planning and Development Management Policy PP8; in terms of waste management/reduction, additional recognition made of helping the shift towards a circular economy.

The Action Plan has been updated for the period 2018-23, currently with a suite of proposed AONB partnership actions that align with the relevant overarching objectives and resulting policies. These are typically subjected to a more detailed review on an annual basis by the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC); enabling some flexibility and fleet-of-foot adjustments, taking for example changes to legislation, or the emergence of new funding streams over the life of the Plan. This approach will also enable post Brexit adjustments to take place, if for example there is significant change to the current land and resource management grant systems.

Equality Act Compliance:

The Management Plan is seeking to provide an inclusive Strategy and Action Plan for everyone – including all specialist groups living, working or visiting the area. The Plan aims to successfully balance land management interests to help support economic, social and environmental objectives for all. The AONB Partnership continues to welcome ongoing input from all members of the public as well as specialist interest groups.

Particular attention has been made to invite comments from the local communities, through for example attending a range of events, promoting an open and indiscriminate Have Your Say survey, as well as more formal contacts via parish councils and town councils, (for communities both within and adjacent to the Lincolnshire Wolds) and wider press coverage.

The Plan's aspirations include greater access and interest in the Wolds AONB from both local residents and the wider public. There is an opportunity to help provide increased green infrastructure in the future, which is especially valuable for the more dispersed and isolated settlements. Further promotion and enhancement of the public rights of way network is also sought, including improvements to the interconnect bus walks to help support these services. The recreation and tourism objectives include utilising the market towns as gateways to the Wolds, and increasing visitor numbers to help support local businesses and local services, including village shops, pubs, cafes and restaurants.

Specific objectives and policies actively supporting inclusiveness include: Interpretation Policy IP1 and IP3; Transport Objective TWO; Transport Policies TWP2 and TWP5 and Planning Policy Objective PP3.

Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS):

The plan recognises the importance of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and this is recognised as a key related strategy. Currently the JHWS statistics are available at ward level so a direct comparison with the AONB census population figures cannot be made. We have requested postcode data to help inform the Plan and in particular the State of the AONB report.

The need to link with the health and well-being agenda is included within the Partnership's Landscape Management Statement, Thriving Communities Policy TCP2 includes the aspiration to promote healthier lifestyles and Action TCA8 includes the objective of exploring and developing further links to the JHWS.

Crime and Disorder:

The Plan seeks to generate and inspire a sense of place and community cohesion for the Lincolnshire Wolds and its deeply rural communities. There is a realisation that various forms of rural crime take place, especially involving night-hawking and lamping activities. Further guidance has been sought from the local Inspector to help to develop links with the Rural Community Safety Strategy 2017-20; advice also extends to seeking to reduce the incidents of fly-tipping, especially from known hot-spots.

3. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

Yes

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2018 – 2023 DRAFT PLAN Public Consultation A hard copy of this report is available from Democratic Services and online at – http://www.lincswolds.org.uk/library/AONB_Man_Plan_51217.pdf

5. Background Papers

Document Title	Where document can be viewed
Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2013-2018	http://www.lincswolds.org.uk/looking-after/lincolnshire-wolds-aonb-management-plan

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