

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Summary: To seek the views of the Board on the development of the 2025 – 2030 Management Plan.

Recommendations: That the Board agrees the production schedule for the 2025 – 2030 Management Plan and comments on significant policy developments to accommodate in a first draft.

Report by: Simon Smith – Nature Recovery Lead

INTRODUCTION

1. The current Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan was adopted in February 2023. There is a legal requirement to review national landscape management plans within five years. The Board agreed that the current plan would run for two years to accommodate imminent policy developments and bring us into line with the timescale of the Environment Act. The two-year anniversary of the adoption of the current plan is in February 2025.

DEVELOPING A NEW PLAN

2. A production schedule for the 2025 – 2030 management plan has been drafted (Appendix A). It delivers a final version to the Board for adoption on the same date that the current plan expires in February 2025.
3. The core of the schedule is similar to the production of the current plan. It is based on an early consultation with key stakeholders, particularly the local authorities. A stakeholder workshop within this consultation period has already been scheduled for July 11th 2024. This is then followed by a wider consultation. With the current plan this set a positive tone with key stakeholders and has helped with securing their endorsement of the resulting plan.
4. We start this process in a good position. The still recent review that led to the production of the current plan was more thorough than originally envisaged and a great deal of additional work has taken place across the key policy areas of nature and climate.
5. In terms of both process and product it is important that the production of the new plan is a collaborative effort from both Board and team members across the organisation. A Management Plan Working Group is being convened. In addition to commenting on drafts etc. this group will undertake the work of liaising with the other working groups and feeding back key points. All working groups will need to help facilitate this through the creation of space in agendas and the sharing of meeting dates.

6. The production of this plan offers the opportunity to engage more widely beyond the usual stakeholders. This engagement is unlikely to be concerned with the detail of policies and will be more about how people respond to the place, value it and or face barriers to engaging with it. This process does not need to be tied to the formal consultation timeframe and can run throughout the summer. The Nature Recovery Lead doesn't have the capacity to undertake wider engagement but is keen to see and incorporate its outcomes. The latest draft of the new Protected Landscape Management Planning Guidance has a lot of ideas and suggestions around this area and this is being shared with the Wellbeing and Inclusion Working Group.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT SINCE FEBRUARY 2022

7. Local and national policy have developed considerably in the brief time since the current plan was adopted in February 2023. These policy developments will need to be accommodated initially within the drafting of version 1 of the new plan. This will become an iterative process with revisions being made as the outcomes of various policy developments become clearer. The Boards views on significant policy developments to consider are sought.
8. The current management plan includes a commitment to have a **pathway to net zero** in place in time for inclusion in the 2025 plan. The development of this pathway including the 6 workshops held throughout October and November form an important part of the preparation for this plan. The resulting report is considered under agenda item 8(a).
9. The **Levelling Up and Regeneration Act** will affect protected landscapes in a number of ways. These are explored in more detail in agenda item 6 and include:
 - A strengthened new duty on public bodies to seek to further the statutory purposes of designation for protected landscapes.
 - Requiring national landscape management plans to contribute to the meeting of Environment Act (2021) targets. The Nature Recovery Lead has been involved in a Defra stakeholder group helping to develop these targets and the outcomes framework that supports them. Published on 31st January 2024 they are targets for the place and all of its stakeholders rather than the protected landscape team. In combination with the strengthened duty, they have the potential to act as powerful drivers of resources towards the delivery of our management plans.
 - A strengthened role for Local Nature Recovery Strategies in plan making.
10. Defra wrote to protected landscapes in July 2023 stating that we... *"are being asked to prepare **Climate Change Adaptation Management Plans** produced, embedded in, or linked with, their Management Plans by 2028."* This is within the work programme of the Climate Action Lead although it is currently unclear as to if it will be ready for February 2025 or if we will have to include it as a commitment.

11. Natural England will be publishing the first tranche of core content for the new **Management Plan Guidance for Protected Landscapes** in England in April 2024. The CNL team have seen and commented on a draft. It is currently unclear as to whether the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment will be replaced by the new Environmental Outcome Reports within the timeframe of this review. The National Landscape Association Climate and Nature Panel is developing common principles and high-level content around; pathway to net zero, climate change adaptation & nature recovery. This is intended to aid in plan production and encourage alignment across plans. Natural England are considering the integration of this content into their management plan guidance.
12. The new strengthened **biodiversity duty** for public authorities from the Environment Act came into force on 1 January 2023. Public authorities who operate in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. The guidance states that: *"Improving nature in national parks or AONBs is an action that can enhance and conserve biodiversity. If appropriate to your public body, you could comply with your biodiversity duty by:*
 - *helping to develop and implement management plans for national parks or AONBs*
 - *making improvements to nature in these areas"*
13. The 6 **Local Nature Recovery Strategies** coincident with the Cotswolds National Landscape are all being developed to varying timescales. We should have a good idea of their content and how to refer to them in the management plan by the end of 2024, although most are unlikely to have been signed off by their responsible authority at that point.
14. The **funding** for management plan delivery continues to evolve at pace:
 - The Sustainable Farming Incentive continues to be rolled out and basic payments continue to reduce. Stewardship payments for key Cotswolds habitats have recently been dramatically increased.
 - Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain goes live on 12th February 2024.
 - The National Landscapes Association has a team looking at green finance.
 - The National Lottery Heritage Fund is targeting increased funding towards nature and landscape through both its main programme and a new Strategic Landscape Initiative.
15. Natural England have been tasked with identifying a new **National Park** in England. This will not be referred to in the next plan.

SUPPORTING PAPERS

- Appendix A - Management Plan 2025 - 2030 Production Schedule V2 291223