



SOLWAY COAST AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

Management Plan Final Consultation Report

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Consultation on the draft Solway Coast AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 and the production of the final version

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Issue: Production of the statutory AONB Management Plan

Introduction

1. Section 89 of the CRoW Act (2000) places a duty on local authorities to act jointly to produce statutory management plans for AONBs within their boundaries. This duty is discharged by the relevant AONB Partnerships. The Act states that these plans should “formulate the policy of the local authority in relation to the AONB”. A new AONB Management Plan has been prepared to cover the period from 2020 to 2025.
2. The draft plan was produced by the AONB team and consultants from *Heritage Naturally*. The approach to the plan, based around a set of outcomes and identifying actions that all could contribute to, rather than a prescriptive action plan, had been considered at Joint Advisory Committee and Steering Group meetings.

First phase of consultation

3. An initial phase of public consultation took place in spring and summer 2019. A web based community and visitor survey using Survey Monkey ran between 21 May and 2 August collecting information about their views on the AONB, threats to the landscape and priorities for action.
4. The survey was promoted via an A5 postcard which was mailed to 4800 homes and businesses. The postcard also highlighted the new Solway Coast AONB website and ways to get involved with the work of the AONB.



5. Three public consultation events were held in locations across the AONB in June and July: at the Silloth Vintage Rally, Mawbray Village Hall open day and the Solway Coast Marathon. A parish council consultation evening was held at Mawbray Village Hall with 9 out of the 14 Parish Councils in the AONB.
6. 239 individuals responded to the online survey. Approximately 200 people responded to us at the events. From the survey, 84% were local residents and 16% were visitors to the area.
7. The special qualities of the AONB that people valued most were:
 - Estuary seascape: beaches mudflats and sandbanks with huge numbers of birds
 - Views across the Solway Firth and to the Lakeland Fells and Pennines
 - Wide open landscape with a strong feeling of remoteness and tranquillity
8. The top three major threats or challenges to the Solway Coast landscape over the next five years were:
 - Loss or decline of wildlife or habitats
 - Climate change
 - Deterioration of sand dunes, peatlands and soil quality
9. The top three priorities that were identified to focus on in the AONB were:
 - Protecting and enhancing wildlife and habitats
 - Protecting natural landscape features e.g. dunes, bogs, watercourses
 - Promoting nature friendly farming
10. The top three priorities for improving understanding and enjoyment of the landscape were:
 - More wildlife focused activities
 - More engagement with local schools and community groups
 - More landscape focused activities (guided walks, workshops)



11. As well as a public consultation programme, two sessions were held with representatives from stakeholder agencies, including the three local authorities, Natural England, the Environment Agency, Solway Firth Partnership, Cumbria Wildlife Trust, the National Farmers Union, and the RSPB.

Second phase of consultation

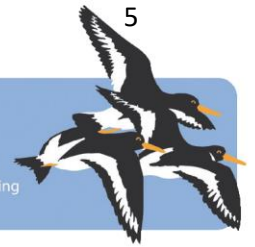
12. Once the Plan was drafted, a second phase of public consultation took place in winter 2019-20. A web based survey using Survey Monkey ran between 9 December 2019 and 31 January 2020 asking people to look at the draft plan and comment on a series of questions around each section.
13. 39 responses were received, which came from: local authorities (4), NGOs (3), statutory agencies (1), special interest groups (2), local business (1), private/personal (9), unidentified (19).
14. A summary of the key findings of the questionnaire is:
- 97% strongly (87%) or moderately (10%) supported the **vision**. Two small amendments were made to reflect the need for people to feel actively involved in the management of the AONB and to extend the historical legacy past WW2.
 - The **actions** were well supported. Support for the existing actions ranged from 93% (Coastal Mosses) to 65% (Exploring and Enjoying the Solway Coast). A variety of amendments have been made to these in line with comments.
 - 97% strongly (88%) or moderately (9%) supported the **goal** (the synopsis of the vision that forms part of the outcomes framework) which remained unchanged.
 - 90% supported the **medium-term outcomes** in the outcomes framework, which remained unchanged.
 - 81% supported the **short-term outcomes** in the outcomes framework, against which the plan will principally be measured. A small amendment was made to reflect ease of access needed for people to access the area.



15. Each comment was addressed and 32 amendments were made (at a variety of scales from typographical errors to new and more robust actions).
16. Changes were made to improve accuracy, correct errors or omissions, to provide greater clarity or to strengthen the conservation message of the plan.
17. In March 2020, the AONB Partnership Steering Group received a record of the written comments and suggested responses, and a marked-up pdf of the draft showing suggested changes. The Partnership agreed a final version, subject to the team correcting any obvious errors as the plan was finalised.
18. As a result of the changes generated by the consultation, the final plan is a clearer and stronger advocate for nature recovery, landscape conservation, heritage management and the value of engagement with all aspects of our heritage.
19. The plan was taken through the process of adoption by the area's three local authorities. The Management Plan was put on the AONB website in xxx 2020.
20. **As well as reading this report:**
 - People can read the phase one consultation report which is on the AONB website at www.solwaycoastaonb.org.uk.
 - Those who commented on the management plan can receive feedback on how their comments were addressed on request.

AONB Team Plan

21. The AONB Management Plan is a plan for the area and not a work plan for the AONB Partnership staff team and as such will be implemented by many different organisations and individuals.
22. The AONB team will produce its own Implementation Plan directly linked to Management Plan outcomes.



Monitoring

23. The AONB Partnership will monitor the implementation of the team plan (and thus the team's work in delivering the AONB Management Plan); an annual summary of activity will be available.
24. The team will seek to monitor the ways in which other organisations are delivering the management plan.
25. As identified in the management plan, a set of indicators are being developed to help measure progress.



