



**Strategic Environmental Assessment of the
Arnside & Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Management Plan 2014-2019**

Post adoption statement

Prepared by the Arnside & Silverdale AONB Partnership, May 2014

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This document is the Post Adoption SEA Statement for the Arnside & Silverdale AONB Management Plan. It has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of Regulation 16 (4) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

The Arnside and Silverdale area was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1972 under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949, in recognition of the outstanding qualities of its landscape. The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 (Section 89) subsequently strengthened the earlier legislation and placed a statutory duty on local authorities to act jointly to produce Management Plans for AONBs within their boundaries and review them every five years.

The Arnside & Silverdale AONB Management Plan was produced by the Arnside & Silverdale AONB Executive Committee on behalf of the four principal local authorities in the area, Cumbria and Lancashire County Councils, Lancaster City Council and South Lakeland District Council, and adopted in 2009. It has been reviewed in accordance with the requirements of Section 89 (5) of the CROW Act 2000.

The new plan, the AONB Management Plan 2014 -19, has now been adopted by the four principal local authorities and endorsed by the AONB Partnership.

The Management Plan is a statutory plan which sets out a framework that gives guidance and direction towards achieving the long term 'Vision' for the Arnside & Silverdale AONB. The Plan sets out management for positive action in the AONB over the 5-year period 2014-2019.

1.2 The Arnside & Silverdale AONB

Arnside & Silverdale AONB is a unique landscape of national importance that covers an area of approximately 75km² in south Cumbria and north Lancashire, including around 30km² of intertidal sand and mudflats. The Arnside & Silverdale AONB is one of 46 AONBs throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland and is especially celebrated for its wealth of plants, birds and butterflies. The Area boasts an extraordinary range of diverse habitats, and the mosaic of stunning limestone pavements, low limestone hills, ancient woodlands, mosses, orchards and meadows, along with an impressive coastal setting affording magnificent views over Morecambe Bay, make this a truly special place.

1.3 Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Arnside & Silverdale AONB Management Plan

The European Union Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment (2001/42/EC) came into force in England on 21 July 2004 through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. The objective of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive is to 'provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view of contributing to sustainable development'. The approach for carrying out the SEA of the Management Plan 2014-19 is based on current best practice and the *Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive*, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, (September 2005).

The assessment has been undertaken by the AONB Partnership in order to fully integrate the SEA with the production of the Management Plan.

The post adoption statement is the final output of the SEA process. Its main purpose is to demonstrate how the comments and recommendations made by the Environmental Report have been taken into consideration. The post adoption statement also needs to explain how consultation comments have been integrated into the SEA process. Additionally monitoring measures proposed in the Environmental Report need to be confirmed or modified in light of the consultation process.

1.4 Habitats Regulations Assessment and SEA

The Habitats Directive¹ requires plans or projects to be assessed before they can be adopted to ensure that they have no significant environmental effect on sites of European interest. The Amendment² to the Habitats Regulations transposes into English law the requirement to carry out appropriate assessment on land use plans. This ensures that protection of the integrity of European sites is a part of the planning process at a regional and local level.

Habitats Regulations Assessment of the draft Management Plan has been carried out alongside SEA. The assessment concluded that none of the management proposals in the Plan are considered likely to adversely affect the integrity of the international sites provided certain listed conditions are met.

2 Integration of Environmental Considerations

The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area³. The whole Plan is therefore, centred round environmental protection and improvement.

The aims of the Management Plan, which reflect the purposes of AONB designation are to:

- conserve and enhance the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB
- promote the sustainable needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries
- promote the social and economic well-being of people living within the AONB
- increase public understanding and enjoyment of the AONB
- meet the recreational needs of local residents and visitors alike - where these are compatible with the purpose of AONB designation.

Achieving environmental and social sustainability has been a central element in the development of the Management Plan. Extensive consultation has been undertaken throughout the Management Plan review process which helped highlight environmental issues and guided the development of sustainable Management Plan objectives.

The SEA process has shown that the AONB Management Plan is highly supportive of both environmental and sustainability objectives and delivery will lead to significant cumulative positive benefits to the environment and also communities and local economy of the AONB. The process has also demonstrated the highly positive impact the Plan will have on the environment, delivering multiple benefits across a wide range of ecosystem services. The high level of partnership working involved in delivery of the AONB Management Plan will also strongly support managing for climate change across the landscape, biodiversity, communities and economy of the AONB.

¹ Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.

² The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) (Amendment) Regulations 2007 (SI 2007/1843)

³ National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949; confirmed by Section 82 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

Throughout the development of the Plan, the SEA process has enabled a number of specific improvements to the Plan (see section 5.3 and 10 of the Environmental Report) as well as improving the overall robustness of the plan through focusing attention early on key environmental and sustainability issues during the scoping and baseline phases.

In summary, the Management Plan scores very highly in terms of environmental and social sustainability.

3 Integration of Consultation Responses

Consultation is a key element of the SEA process and extensive consultation has been undertaken throughout the Management Plan review. This section details the consultation activities undertaken for the SEA process, and describes how consultation comments on both the Scoping Report and Environmental Report informed the Management Plan.

A six week consultation was undertaken at the SEA scoping stage with the statutory consultees (Environment Agency, Natural England & English Heritage) and other key stakeholders. Scoping responses were received from:

- Natural England
- English Heritage
- Environment Agency
- South Lakeland District Council
- Cumbria County Council

The consultation responses to the Scoping Report can be found in section 2 of the Environmental Report.

The Management Plan has been developed in close consultation with key stakeholders. Outline Plan proposals were initially published and subject to a 7 week consultation period (20th June – 7th August 2013). The proposals were sent to a wide range of stakeholders and also the public via the AONB website. Responses confirmed the direction the Management Plan should take. The Outline Plan Proposals and the responses received formed the basis for development of the Management Plan Objectives and the AONB Management Plan 2014-19 (Consultation Draft). A formal public consultation was then undertaken on the Consultation Draft between 4th October and 18th November 2013. Responses to this consultation were considered in development of the AONB Management Plan 2014-19 (Final Draft). Strategic environmental assessment was undertaken during development of the Final Draft, and findings incorporated into the Final Draft document.

Consultation was undertaken on the AONB Management Plan 2014-19 (Final Draft) between 19th December 2013 and 23rd January 2014 and also on the Environmental Report between 19th December 2013 and 12th February 2014. No comments were received from the Consultation Bodies on the Environmental Report within the consultation period; a response was received from Natural England after the closing date. Responses were received within the consultation period from:

- North Western Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
- United Utilities
- Cumbria County Council

As a result, a small number of minor amendments were made to the final Environmental Report. Details of the consultation responses and changes made can be found in section 9 of the report.

4 Reasons for choosing the Management Plan as adopted

The SEA process has informed the development of the AONB Management Plan from the initial scoping stage to publication of the Final Draft, as described in section 2. Extensive consultation has been carried out throughout the SEA process and Management Plan review, as described in section 3. In response to the assessments and consultation feedback the draft Management Plan has been revised in a number of ways, strengthening the Plan in its aim to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB.

The SEA process has shown that there will be significant positive effects from implementation of the Plan. The process also highlighted two potential areas of conflict: delivering appropriate actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts (as the range of required actions remains uncertain) and developing the AONB and Morecambe Bay area as a sustainable tourism destination which could potentially affect tranquillity. The need for careful management in future delivery of actions under these objectives is recognised and has been acknowledged in the final Plan.

The AONB Partnership considers that the SEA process has been of significant help in developing and strengthening the Plan and that the final Arnside & Silverdale AONB Management Plan 2014-19, as adopted, will lead to significant positive benefits to the environment, communities and local economy of the AONB.

5 Monitoring

The purpose of monitoring is to measure the environmental effects of a plan, as well as to measure success against the plan's objectives. It is therefore beneficial if the monitoring strategy builds on monitoring systems which are already in place. It is also recognised that monitoring can be resource intensive. Therefore, wherever possible, existing data sets and indicators have been suggested where monitoring is routinely carried out and data available cut to the AONB boundary. The SEA and Management Plan review processes have also highlighted data gaps where data is not currently collected or where data is not currently available/collected for the AONB in a consistent way. Consideration will need to be given to how these could be addressed in the longer term.

Two types of monitoring will be undertaken:

- Monitoring performance: reviewing progress on actions in the Delivery Plan to establish how well the Partnership is progressing in delivering the Plan's objectives; this will be reported annually
- Monitoring condition: collecting data against the identified indicators set out in Appendix 2 of the Environmental Report, providing some measure of the state of the AONB's environment, economy and communities. This will be reported less frequently due to the nature of the data but a first report will be published after two years of plan delivery. Any notable adverse changes in the indicators may prompt a change in priorities for action.