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**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE  
ECONOMIC GROWTH SCRUTINY PANEL  
HELD ON 28 FEBRUARY 2019**

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**EGSP.16/19 NORTH PENNINES AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN 2019 - 2024**

The Principal Planning Officer submitted the draft North Pennines AONB Management Plan for the period 2019 -2024.

The Principal Planning Officer reported that the City Council had a statutory duty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to prepare and review the North Pennines AONB Management every five years. The duty to produce the Plan was placed on the five local planning authorities across the boundaries that the AONB lay. The Plan was drawn up on the five authorities' behalf by the North Pennines AONB Partnership.

The current Plan covered the period 2014 -19 and the Partnership had reviewed and redrafted the Plan to ensure that it was fit for purpose to guide the management of the nationally protected landscape. The purpose of the Plan was for the local authority to formulate their policy for the management of the AONB and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it. Whilst the Plan was not a development plan document it had direct and complementary actions to the adopted Local Plan as detailed in section 2 of the report.

The Principal Planning Officer detailed the consultation process and asked the Panel to scrutinise the actions in the Plan prior to it going to the Executive for approval.

In considering the Management Plan Members raised the following comments and questions:

- A Member commented that the document was comprehensive and interesting but did not feel that it was a Management Plan. He noted that the document set out the background to the Plan, but it relied on the Implementation Plan. It was important that the Management Plan recognised the Implementation Plan.

The Principal Planning Officer explained that there were no prescribed regulations for the process of preparing an AONB management plan. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has issued a guidance note, and ultimately needs to confirm that the Plan meets the statutory requirements of the legislation.

The Panel felt that the Plan did not give the Council a clear and strong steer on the AONB's stance regarding development in the area. In addition, the Panel would like to see the AONB being more proactive in interpreting the document when they were being consulted on planning applications. The AONB management plan should be stronger and clearer in the reasoning for protecting the area.

The Principal Planning Officer clarified that the AONB plan sat alongside the Planning Policies in the Local Plan and reminded the Panel that the document was not a planning policy document. She also reminded the Panel that the AONB Partnership did not have a dedicated planning officer, however she would inform the Partnership that the Council would like more robust consultation responses.

The Investment and Policy Manager clarified that it was difficult to balance what the AONB wanted to achieve without being too prescriptive. The AONB covered five local planning authority areas and each planning authority had to use the Plan as they saw fit. The Plan provided the evidence on key issues, however it could not pre-empt all eventualities. The Plan gave the Council direction, but it had to be used alongside the Council's policy framework.

- The AONB Management Plan did not have any timelines for objectives or any Key Performance Indicators for actions.

The Principal Planning Officer responded that there was a monitoring process which would oversee the objectives. She added that the Plan was not a work programme for the Partnership as the Plan was for a much wider audience. She reassured the Panel that there was a monitoring system in place for actions and objectives, and the AONB management plan would be accompanied by an implementation plan. In addition, DEFRA held up the Plan as one of the best AONB Plans in the Country.

- The AONB area had a unique landscape with a lot of farming and it was felt that the document should reflect this and should be linked into tourist policies.
- The Plan did not have any information on Open Access Cumbria or any information on access for disabled people in the Countryside.

The Principal Planning Officer responded that the document was in the process of going through each authority's governance process. The AONB Partnership also worked with other partners such as Natural England to address issues and the Principal Planning Officer agreed that disabled access could be strengthened in the document and she would report this back to the Partnership.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Panel noted the Management Plan progress to date (ED.09/19);

2) That the comments and observations of the Panel as detailed above be submitted to the Executive for inclusion in the Council's response to the consultation process on the North Pennines AONB Management Plan 2019-2024.

3) That the implementation plan be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel along with any Key Performance Indicators that may be relevant.