

NAAONB Communications Strategy 2014-19 (FINAL May 2014)

This strategy is an internal document for use by the AONB Family:

- AONB partnerships¹ and staff,
- NAAONB Board and core team, and
- NAAONB member organisations

Our Vision²

The natural beauty of our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty is valued and secure, and the relationship between people and these nationally important landscapes is understood and supported at all levels.

Our Aim

To strengthen the profile of the AONB Family and the value of its work.

¹ includes any management Partnership, Conservation Board, Joint Advisory Committee or Joint Committee

² NAAONB Strategic Plan p4 vision statement

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Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

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Our Objectives

To deliver this aim we seek:

1. Commitment to collaborate and communicate as an AONB Family

Goal

Adoption of this Communications Strategy and the AONB Family brand ³

2. Understanding and support for what the AONB Family does

Goals

- i) Use of AONB Family core messages across the AONB Family through being used in AONB Management Plans / Annual Reviews / notes to editors, etc.
- ii) Key national partners, especially those that signed Accords, formally recognise AONB Family work

3. Understanding and recognition of the value of AONB partnerships leading to continued support and resourcing

Goals

- i) Use of AONB partnership core messages by AONB partnerships and their individual partners
- ii) AONB partnerships continue to receive appropriate support and resourcing from partners

4. Understanding and recognition of the value of the NAAONB leading to continued support and resourcing

Goals

- i) Use of NAAONB core messages by partners and members
- ii) NAAONB continue to receive appropriate support and resourcing

³ Landscapes for Life visual ID and behaviours

Our Core Messages

The following core messages relate directly to the AONB Family Objectives in the NAAONB Strategic Plan 2012-2015 (See Annex 1)

AONBs - Core Messages

- **People are passionate about Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and care deeply about their future.**
- **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are some of the most beautiful and cherished landscapes in Britain. They need to be cared for, now and in the future.**
- **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are dynamic, living landscapes that underpin the economy and the health and wellbeing of society.**
- **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are vibrant landscapes, which offer a wealth of opportunities for everyone to enjoy them and help look after them.**
- **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are designated⁴ as special landscapes which provide a range of benefits for people and wildlife.**

⁴ Designated under the National Parks and Access to Countryside Act 1949 with updates in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

AONB partnerships⁵ - Core Messages

The 46 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are nationally protected landscapes cared for by locally accountable partnerships that promote and support effective long term management to keep them special.

AONB partnerships, with dedicated teams

- **make things happen, translating vision and national policy into local action,**
- **work with local communities and value their skills, knowledge and energy,**
- **provide value for money by securing additional funding, resources and project partners,**
- **develop innovative approaches to achieve beneficial results through collaboration,**
- **promote a sustainable rural economy that conserves and enhances the natural environment for the benefit of society.**

⁵ partnership with a lower case p is the generic term used by the NAAONB to refer to an AONB Partnership, Conservation Board, Joint Advisory Committee or Joint Committee

NAAONB – Core Messages

The NAAONB is an influential, trusted organisation that is the unified voice for the AONB Family.

The NAAONB Board and core team

- **work to harness the collective experience, enthusiasm and goodwill of the AONB Family,**
- **use the above to further the mutual objectives shared with the sponsoring and funding bodies,**
- **bring the AONB Family together as a cohesive entity providing leadership and strategic direction,**
- **celebrate the unique identity of its individual members,**
- **work with others to achieve shared objectives.**

Audiences

The following audience sectors have been identified and Annex 3 provides an indicative list of individuals, organisations and bodies within each of these.

- Local stakeholders
- Non Governmental organisations
- Public bodies
- Local authorities

- Government Executive and departments
- Political

The AONB Family needs to agree who the priority audiences are and why in devising and delivering the actions in the annual Communication Strategy Action Plan.

Insight

Insight is about an understanding of our audiences' behaviour, experiences, attitudes, emotions or beliefs so that we know what and how they will respond to communication and devise the most effective means of communicating with them. Four key sources of gaining insight are data, research, environment/technology and relationships.

Within the AONB Family we will be able to pool some of this information from work we and others⁶ have already undertaken but we also recognise that we need to undertake further work in order to be more effective in our communications with the different audience sectors.

Resources and Tools

The delivery of the Communications Strategy will be led by an executive group of a re established Communications Group. In the first year 2014/15 the current Identity and Profile Action Learning Set (Annex 2) will assist.

The resources required for delivery of this Strategy through the Action Plan will rely on use of staff resources and continuing collaboration across the AONB Family. Finance will be sought, where required, to implement specific projects.

An existing internal resource to assist delivery of the Strategy is the NAAONB Basecamp Communications area.

⁶ See SNH Report http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned_reports/F04AB09_02.pdf and DEFRA PEG Report <http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&ProjectID=18411&FromSearch=Y&Publisher=1&SearchText=Simon>

The NAAONB also has a newly developed Knowledge Platform for sharing information linked to www.landscapesforlife.org.uk. These two websites, along with the current communication tools used - annual conference, Press Releases, e-newsletters, social media (including Twitter and Facebook), face to face meetings and events – will be used for communicating with appropriate audiences.

The NAAONB core team includes a Communications and Events Manager and the Board has a Communication portfolio position, both of whom have a role in supporting delivery of the Communication Strategy.

It is recognised that amongst the AONB Family there is a wealth of expertise and experience in communication work. It is also recognised that not all AONB partnerships have dedicated Communication officers and that many Communication posts are part time.

Collaboration is therefore essential to achieve the Strategy objectives, benefiting the whole AONB Family. Actions to share the expertise and experience we have, will be incorporated into the Action Plan and include joint projects and training.

Risks and assumptions

The development of a realistic and deliverable Action Plan requires the collaborative action and buy-in across the AONB Family. Identified risks and opportunities to development and implementation include

- reduced capacity of AONB teams,
- relationships with partner organisations,
- brand/goodwill toward AONB landscapes,
- UK General Election 2015
- Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Assembly Elections
- Scottish Referendum
- unknown reactions from stakeholders or other audiences

Action Plan

A five year Action Plan will be reviewed annually by the Communications Group Executive Group. In developing the Action Plan 2014-19, suggestions from the Strategy consultation will be considered in the development of the Action Plan – Annex 4

ANNEXES

Annex 1

AONB Family Objectives (from NAAONB Strategic Plan 2012-15)

1. Conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, ensuring they can meet the challenges of the future
2. Support the economic and social well-being of local communities in ways which contribute to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty
3. Promote public understanding and enjoyment of the nature and culture of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and encourage people to take action for their conservation.
4. Value, sustain, and promote the benefits that the UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty provide for society, including clean air and water, food, carbon storage and other services vital to the nation's health and well-being

Annex 2

Identity and Profile Action Learning Set (ALS)

Andrew Blake – Wye Valley AONB
Sarah Jackson- Mendip Hills AONB

Chris Lindley – Gower AONB
Henry Oliver – North Wessex Downs AONB
Robin Toogood – South Devon AONB
Katherine Potts – Dedham Vale AONB

Annex 3
Key Audiences

Who?	Why Communicate? What do we want the audience to do?	Geographic Scope of Influence?	Ref Code
Local Stakeholders			
Landowners and managers	Appreciate the value of the AONB to their lives and livelihoods and actively participate in their conservation.	Local	L1
Residents			L2
Neighbours (living / working around the peripheries)			L3
Businesses			L4
Visitors	Enjoy sustainable visits to AONBs and want to return and/or visit other AONBs.	Local through to International	L5
AONB Partnerships	Partnerships understand and believe in the value of the AONB Family.	Local	L6
AONB Units and Staff	Units understand and believe in the value of the AONB Family and can communicate this effectively at the local level.		L7
Non Government Organisations			
Natural, cultural and built environment partners e.g. National Trust, Woodland Trust, CPRE/CPRW	Understand and can give consistent messages on the value of the AONB Family to their own audiences. Collaborate with the AONB Family on strategic projects and initiatives.	Local through to international	NG1
Professional bodies & institutions e.g. RTPi, IUCN, Europarc Atlantic	Understand and can give consistent messages on the value of the AONB Family to their own audiences.	Local through to international	NG2

Isles			
Tourism and recreation organisations	Understand and can give consistent messages on the value of the AONB Family to their own audiences.	Local through to international	NG3
Farmers Unions, CLA	Understand and can give consistent messages on the value of the AONB Family to their own audiences.	Local through to international	NG4
Education bodies e.g. RGS	Engage in studying all aspects of AONBs in the environment, society and the economy	Local through to international	NG5
Public Bodies			
Natural England	Prioritise policy and funding that conserves and enhances the AONB Family. Collaborate with the AONB Family on strategic projects and initiatives. 'Follow through' by bodies with Joint Accords with AONB Family.	England	PB1
Environment Agency		England	PB2
Natural Resources Wales		Wales	PB3
NI Environment Agency		NI	PB4
Forestry Commission		England	PB5
English Heritage/CADW		England	PB6
VisitEngland/VisitWales		England/Wales	PB7
Local Government			
Local Authorities England and Local Government Association	Local authorities – particularly those with AONBs in their areas – make policy and funding decisions that prioritise the conservation and enhancement of AONBs.	Local and England	LG1
Local Authorities Wales and WLGA		Local and Wales	LG2
Local authorities NI		Local and NI	LG3
National / Devolved Government Executive and Departments			

Whitehall responsible Minister	Ministers value the AONB Family and make positive policy and funding decisions that keep AONBs special. Government Departments can effectively communicate the value of the AONB Family internally and prioritise the conservation and enhancement of AONBs.	England	G1
Defra		England	G2
Other Whitehall Govt Depts		UK and England	G3
Welsh Govt responsible Minister		Wales	G4
WG responsible Dept		Wales	G5
NI Executive responsible Minister		NI	G6
NI Executive responsible Dept		NI	G7
Political			
Europe – Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)	Politicians value the AONB Family and exert their positive influence in legislation affecting AONBs.	Europe/UK	P1
Westminster - House of Commons (MPs)		UK	P2
Westminster – House of Lords - Peers		UK	P3
Welsh Assembly Members (AMs)		Wales	P4
NI Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs)		NI	P5

Annex 4: Action Plan 2014-2019

This Action Plan will be a dynamic document which will be reviewed annually to ensure best outcomes.

Its initial development will take place at Landscapes for Life Conference 2014 and there will be further opportunity to feed in to its development via the Basecamp Communications area.

Communication Strategy Objective	Actions	Completion date: mm/yy	Priority	Progress – Red/Amber/Green
Objective 1: commitment to collaborate and communicate as an AONB family	1.1 Update Basecamp AONB communication lead contact list	June 2014	1	
	1.2			
	1.3			
Objective 2: understanding and support for what the AONB Family does				
Objective 3: understanding and recognition of the value of AONB partnerships leading to continued support and resourcing				
Objective 4: understanding and recognition of the value of the NAAONB leading to continued support and resourcing				