



**Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty  
Management Plan 2014-19**

**Strategic Environmental Assessment**

**Screening Report: November 2013**

**Report by Mendip Hills AONB Unit**

# Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding natural Beauty Management Plan 2014-19 Strategic Environmental Assessment - Screening Report November 2013

## Introduction

- 1.1 In January 2013 a Scoping Report for the Mendip Hills AONB Management Plan 2014-19 Strategic Environmental Assessment was subject to consultation with the three statutory bodies Natural England, Environment Agency and English Heritage, the AONB Partnership and key stakeholders.
- 1.2 No significant comments were received and over recent months, across the country through the National Association for AONBs and in various local authorities there has been discussion on whether a SEA is necessary for AONB Management Plans and a number of AONB screening reports have been produced concluding that a SEA is not required.
- 1.3 This screening report has been produced to determine whether it is necessary to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan for 2014 to 2019. This is to ensure compliance with European Directive 2001/42/EC on 'the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment' ('The SEA Directive') and 'The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations, 2004 (Statutory Instrument 2004 No. 1633), which implements the Directive in England and for relevant non devolved plans and programmes in the UK as a whole.

## 2. AONB Management Plans and Guidance on SEA

- 2.1 Part IV, Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 sets out the requirement for Conservation Boards or relevant Local Authorities to publish and review a management plan for their AONB that: "*formulates their policy for the management of the area of outstanding natural beauty and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it*". These management plans must be reviewed '*at intervals of not more than 5 years*'.
- 2.2 The previous AONB Management Plan (2009 to 2014) had been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment. However, as the plan has been subject to review rather than a more fundamental rewrite, there is some uncertainty over whether SEA would be required for this plan.
- 2.3 In 2012, Natural England, the National Association for AONBs and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) published an 'Advice Note to AONB Partnerships, the Conservation Boards and Relevant Authorities on Management Plan Reviews', which gave some early guidance on considering the need for SEA:

*"The requirements of the SEA and Habitats Directives, and the need for compliance with them, apply to new management plans, and to revisions or re-issues of existing management plans.*

*AONBs and National Park Authorities (protected landscape managing bodies) should screen their revised or amended Management Plan to evaluate whether the individual or cumulative effect of the changes which they are proposing is likely to have a significant effect, as defined under the Strategic Environmental Assessment or Habitats Regulations. They may wish to seek informal guidance from Natural England (and Environment Agency, English Heritage for SEA) at this screening stage”.*

That same guidance goes on to state that:

*“Given that all the extant AONB Management Plans have been assessed under the regulations, the AONB Partnership / Conservation Board (protected landscape managing body) may decide that the proposed changes to the extant plan are not likely to have a significant effect, and may conclude that there is no requirement to carry out further assessment. The AONB Partnership / Conservation Board should record the screening decision and supporting reasons for it”.*

- 2.4 This Screening Report has been written to enable a judgement to be made on whether an SEA should be undertaken. In line with the ‘tripartate’ guidance outlined above, it discusses whether the Mendip Hills AONB Management Plan 2014 to 2019 is likely to exhibit significant environmental effects, and documents supporting reasons for the report’s conclusions. A further screening report, to establish whether appropriate assessment under the Habitats Regulations is necessary, is also published alongside this report.

### 3. **The Mendip Hills AONB Management Plan 2014 - 2019**

The draft Mendip Hills AONB Management Plan sets out a draft vision for a living landscape as well as a series of objectives that relate to topics of relevance to the AONB. The draft vision states:

**In 15yrs time there will be:**

#### **Landscape Quality**

Wide understanding and appreciation of the Mendip Hills as a protected area of distinct character created overtime by the interaction of people and nature. Its ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value conserved and enhanced.

#### **Biodiversity and Geodiversity**

Resilient and coherent ecological networks in place providing bigger, better and joined up habitats with no loss of characteristic species. The areas diverse geology is understood and managed for its importance both to the biodiversity and ecosystem services that benefit business, people and wildlife.

#### **Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage**

Enhanced understanding of the AONBs historic environment and cultural heritage with appropriate management in place to ensure all sites, structures and landscapes are conserved and enhanced and local communities and visitors enjoy a rich experience of sense of place.

### **Recreation, Access and Tourism**

Provision for enjoyment by a diverse population, from both within and beyond the AONB boundary, through a wide range of active and quiet pursuits that the area can sustain. The area will be accessible, regardless of individual mobility, wealth or background.

### **Natural Resources**

Integrated land use management that has restored and continues to enhance the areas natural resources including soils, food, and water supply.

### **Land Management**

As the main land use agriculture continues to contribute to enhancing landscape character including ecological networks and the provision of benefits such as clean water. The area of woodland managed for fuel as well as wildlife and recreation has increased.

### **Development and Transport**

Sustainable development in or near to the Mendip Hills AONB is sustainable and enhances and respects the special qualities of the area, including tranquility, and is contributing to the social and economic needs of the area.

### **Participation**

Significant numbers of the local community accessing training and learning to benefit, their involvement in the conservation and enhancement of the Mendip Hills AONB, either through direct employment in the rural economy, or as custodians of the landscape influencing decision makers or volunteering.

The Management Plan outlines objectives that relate to the vision's sub headings

The vision is essentially the same vision as was presented in the 2009 management plan, with clearer links to the associated themes.

Similarly most themes can be seen as continuations of themes in the 2009 management plan. However the climate change theme has become part of context for the whole plan, while the Farming and Land uses theme has been split into Natural resources and Land Management to take account of increased relevance of ecosystems services.

Appendix 1 shows how the objectives that underlie themes have changed between the current draft of the AONB Management Plan and the 2009 Management Plan. Generally the divergence between old and new objectives is considered to be low.

The Management Plan also defines a series of 'special qualities' for the AONB. These are summarised as:

- Distinctive limestone ridge;
- Views towards and from the Mendip Hills;
- A sparsely populated plateau, retaining darks skies and tranquillity;

- Diverse and visible geology;
- Caves;
- Limestone aquifer;
- Dry stone walls;
- Steep south-facing slopes of flower rich limestone grasslands;
- Ancient woodland;
- Evidence of historic human settlement;
- A landscape enjoyed by people;

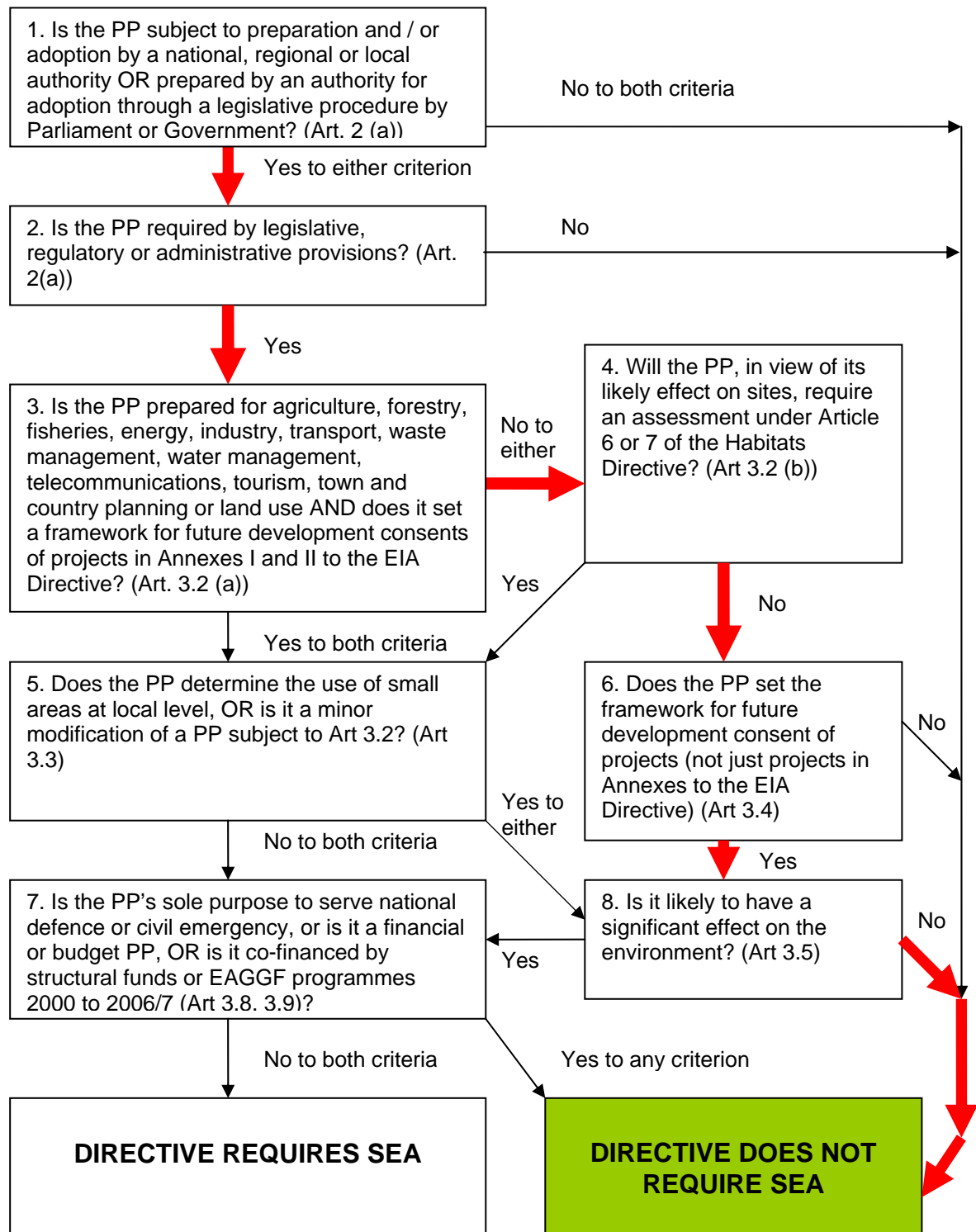
#### 4. **Screening**

- 4.1 The SEA Directive and accompanying national regulations describe the types of plans for which the undertaking of SEA is mandatory. There are also a number of other plans where a decision must be taken on whether SEA should be undertaken.
- 4.2 The Government has set out in a series of steps a means to determine which plans and programmes require SEA<sup>1</sup>, as required by the SEA Directive. Figure 1 describes the steps that should be taken to determine the need for SEA. The path taken by the AONB Management Plan is indicated by a series of red arrows.

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<sup>1</sup> ODPM, 2006. A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, ODPM, London

**Figure 1: Deciding whether the SEA Directive is applicable to the AONB Management Plan**



Anticipated status of the AONB Management Plan 2014 - 2019  
(Adapted from ODPM, 2006)

4.3 Figure 1 shows a considered view of the status of the AONB Management Plan 2014 - 2019 in relation to the requirements of the SEA Directive. Further explanation of the reasons for selecting the Management Plan's pathway through the flow chart is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Establishing the need for SEA

Stage	Answer	Reason
1. Is the PP subject to preparation and / or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2 (a))	Yes	The AONB Management Plan will be prepared and adopted by Somerset County Council, north Somerset Council, Bath and North East Somerset Council, Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Yes	The AONB Management Plan is being prepared under section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000
3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use AND does it set a framework for future development consents of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art. 3.2 (a))	No	Although the AONB Management Plan covers several of these topics, it is unlikely that any work proposed, framed or required by the management plan would fall into Annexes I and II of the EIA Directive.
4. Will the PP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art 3.2 (b))	?No	A Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report has been completed. This report concluded that there are unlikely to be significant negative effects on the network of European Sites in and around the AONB. <sup>2</sup>
5. Does the PP determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of	Not applicable	This question need only be answered if questions 3 or 4 are answered in the affirmative.

<sup>2</sup> The Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening report is being consulted on in parallel with this SEA screening report. Should the consultation result in changes to the conclusions presented, this SEA screening report will be updated in line with those changes.

a PP subject to Art 3.2? (Art 3.3)		
6. Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive) (Art 3.4) <sup>3</sup>	?	<p>A narrower interpretation of ‘framework for development consents’ would exclude the AONB Management Plan as it does not direct projects that would generally fall within the planning system.</p> <p>However, public bodies have a duty to consider the natural beauty of AONBs in their decisions, including in planning decisions<sup>4</sup>. Taking a broader interpretation of ‘framework’ (see footnote 3), the Management Plan may affect the outcome of future development consents, though only in as much as they affect the special qualities of the AONB.</p>
7. Is the PP’s sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency, or is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7 (Art 3.8, 3.9)?	Not applicable	This question need only be answered if the answer to question 6 is ‘no’. Or the answer to question 8 is ‘yes’.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art 3.5) (See appendix for criteria and	No	The relatively small scale improvements to the AONB resulting from the strategic direction given by the AONB

<sup>3</sup> The Directive is not clear on what constitutes a framework for development consents, but a broad interpretation has been taken in this assessment, informed partly by wider experience of SEA as described in the Resource Manual to Support Application of the UNECE Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (United Nations draft document, 2006). This describes such frameworks as documents that place limits on types of activity from an area, contain conditions to be met by applicants if permission is to be granted, or that are designed to preserve certain characteristics of an area. (See: [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/eia/sea\\_manual/documents/SEA%20Manual%20-%20Chapter%20A3%20-%20slides.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/eia/sea_manual/documents/SEA%20Manual%20-%20Chapter%20A3%20-%20slides.pdf) )

<sup>4</sup> Part IV, Section 85 (1) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 establishes a general duty on public bodies: “In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty”. Public bodies are listed as relevant authorities.



<p>characteristics determining significance)</p>		<p>management plan are unlikely to have significant negative effects on the environment. In addition, the objectives and actions in general seek to maintain and enhance the special qualities of the AONB, which will have a moderating impact on development and other actions that may seek to modify the environmental character of the AONB.</p> <p>Criteria for significance are presented in Annex II of the SEA Directive, in which a range of characteristics of plans are listed as influencing judgements on significance, as well as a range of characteristics of the area likely to be effected by the plan. Appendix 2 at the end of this report shows the SEA Directive's significance criteria alongside the likely effects of the plan.</p>
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## 5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The conclusion of this screening report is that a Strategic Environmental Assessment will not be required for the Mendip Hills AONB Management Plan. This is because the plan is unlikely to display significant environmental effects.
- 5.2 Further work has been undertaken via a Habitats Regulations Assessment screening report to clarify uncertainty over whether the AONB Management Plan would require assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive. This HRA Screening Report on the draft Management Plan has concluded that there will be no significant effects on European Sites and has been subject to consultation<sup>5</sup> by Natural England whose response concludes that an appropriate

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<sup>5</sup> Section 61(3 and 4) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, 2010 state that “(3) *The competent authority must for the purposes of the assessment consult the appropriate nature conservation body and have regard to any representations made by that body within such reasonable time as the authority specify*”, and “(4) *They must also, if they consider it appropriate, take the opinion of the general public, and if they do so, they must take such steps for that purpose as they consider appropriate*”

assessment<sup>6</sup> under the Habitats Regulations is not therefore considered necessary. If the screening had shown otherwise the Management Plan would be required to be subject to SEA.

## **6. Consultation**

5.1 The three statutory bodies for the purposes of SEA screening are Natural England, the Environment Agency and English Heritage. These bodies will be consulted for their views on the conclusions of this screening assessment.

5.2 Following this consultation an SEA screening statement will be published to show the conclusions of the screening exercise.

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<sup>6</sup> Appropriate assessment is the detailed stage of Habitats Regulations Assessment that is required when significant effects on Natura 2000 sites are likely.

## Appendix 1: Comparison of AONB Management Plan Objectives

2015 Management Plan Draft Objective	Is there a similar 2009 Management Plan objective	Divergence	Notes on likely significance of divergence to the environment
<b>Landscape Quality</b>			
L1 Promote appropriate management to ensure that the distinctive Mendip Hills AONB landscape is maintained and enhanced	L2 Promote appropriate management to ensure that the distinctive Mendip Hills AONB landscape is maintained and enhanced	None	N/A
L2 provide opportunities to acquire and develop skills required to care for and promote the landscape and its special qualities	L3 provide and encourage training provision on land management to care for and promote the landscape and its special qualities	Low slight rewording	<u>Not significant</u>
L3 Increase awareness and appreciation of the purposes of designation and the special qualities of the AONB	L4 Increase awareness and appreciation of the purposes of designation and the special qualities of the AONB to residents and visitors	Low slight rewording	<u>Not significant</u>
L4 Increase awareness of the benefits of supporting local products and services that help conserve and enhance the landscape	N/A	Low  although not previously covered, this objective could have been progressed under previous plan's existing objectives	<u>Not significant</u>
<b>Biodiversity and Geodiversity</b>			
BG1 Ensure that there is no net loss of characteristic habitats and species	B1 UK Biodiversity Action plan (BAP) priority habitats and species in the Mendip Hills AONB are maintained and enhanced.	Low  recognises Biodiversity2020 targets	<u>Not significant</u>
BG2 Promote a landscape scale approach to the conservation and	N/A	Low	<u>Not significant</u> - as new objective can be seen as

expansion of coherent and resilient ecological networks within and adjoining the AONB.		recognises Biodiversity2020 targets	strengthening protection to AONB natural environment.
BG3 Increase awareness and monitoring of the biodiversity resource of the Mendip Hills AONB so that it is sufficiently understood to continue to guide the successful conservation of the characteristic habitats and species.	N/A	Low  although not previously covered, this objective could have been progressed under previous plan's existing objectives,	<u>Not significant</u>
BG4 promote a holistic approach to implementing the AONB Management Plan objectives, National Character Area Statements of Opportunity and a locally determined Nature Improvement Area's objectives.	N/A	High divergence as not previously covered	<u>Not significant</u> - as new objective can be seen as strengthening protection to AONB environment.
BG5 Recognise and celebrate geological sites and features of the Mendip Hills AONB to ensure the successful conservation both of the geology and wildlife habitat they provide.	B3 Recognise, conserve and enhance significant geological sites and features	Low	<u>Not significant.</u>
BG6 Increase awareness of the Mendip Hills geology, particularly cave systems in relation to the importance they play in water management and water supply.	N/A	Low  although not previously covered, this objective could have been progressed under previous plan's existing objectives,	<u>Not significant</u>
<b>Historic and environment and cultural heritage</b>			
H1 Improve the recording, interpretation and understanding of all aspects of the AONBs historic environment to ensure local communities and visitors enjoy a rich experience of the sense of place.	H1 Identify record, protect and conserve the historic environment	Low  although slight difference in wording	<u>Not significant</u>

H2 Increase awareness and communicate the significance of the high quality historic environment of the Mendip Hills AONB.	H2 The historic resources in the Mendip Hills are better understood	Low  although slight difference in wording	<u>Not significant</u>
H3 Promote appropriate management of sites, structures and landscapes designated for their international, national, regional or local importance in the historic environment to ensure no further loss of heritage assets.	H1 Identify record, protect and conserve the historic environment	Low  although slight difference in wording	<u>Not significant</u>
<b>Recreation, Access and Tourism</b>			
R1 Maintain, improve and promote public access and quiet recreational activities with measures to ensure access for all in accordance with the purposes of AONB designation.	A2 Maintain, improve and promote public access and quiet recreational activities with measures to ensure access for all in accordance with the purposes of AONB designation.	None	N/A
R2 Support the development of tourism and day visits that benefits the local economy, conserves and enhances the landscape and improves understanding of the Mendip Hills.	A4 Support the development of tourism and day visits that benefits the local economy, conserves and enhances the landscape and improves understanding of the Mendip Hills.	None	<u>N/A</u>
R3 Develop and promote more sustainable methods of travel to and around the AONB for enjoyment and recreation.	N/A	Low - moderate  although not previously covered, this objective could have been progressed under previous plan's existing objectives,	<u>Not significant</u>
R4 Support healthy lifestyles by encouraging more people to use the Mendip Hills for sustainable outdoor activities	A2 Maintain, improve and promote public access and quiet recreational activities with measures to ensure access for all in accordance with the purposes of AONB designation.	None	<u>N/A</u>

<b>Natural Resources</b>			
N1 Recognise and promote the benefits and relevance of the AONB as a valuable source of ecosystem services, economic and health benefits.	F1 Recognise the importance of farming and support land management that conserves and enhances biodiversity and other natural resources, that contributes to landscape character and aids public awareness and enjoyment of the Mendip hills AONB	Low - moderate	<u>Not significant</u> – greater emphasis on ecosystem services can be seen as strengthening protection to AONBs environment making it more resilient to significant environmental effects.
N2 Promote conservation of water resources and enhance water quality, taking measures to reduce low flows and flooding by appropriate management and use.	F4 The use of natural resources is managed to minimise harm to the distinctive characteristics of the AONB.	Low – moderate  Objective similar but emphasis significance of water management	<u>Not significant</u>
N3 Promote sustainable management of soils in accordance with best practice to minimise erosion and water pollution and maximise resilience to drought.	F4 The use of natural resources is managed to minimise harm to the distinctive characteristics of the AONB.	Low – moderate – objective similar but emphasis on significance of soil management	<u>Not significant</u>
<b>Land management</b>			
LM1 Support sustainable farming to ensure it remains as the principle land and contributes to maintaining the special qualities of the AONB	F1 Recognise the importance of farming and support land management that conserves and enhances biodiversity and other natural resources, that contributes to landscape character and aids public awareness and enjoyment of the Mendip Hills AONB	Low	<u>Not significant</u>
LM2 Support and promote rural land management that conserves and enhances natural resources, including	F1 Recognise the importance of farming and support land management that conserves and enhances biodiversity and	Low	<u>Not significant</u>

biodiversity, landscape character the historic environment and aids public awareness and enjoyment of the Mendip Hills AONB.	other natural resources, that contributes to landscape character and aids public awareness and enjoyment of the Mendip Hills AONB		
LM3 Promote a sustainable woodland economy that enhances the Mendip Hills AONB woodlands and wider landscape with targeted woodland management and creation in appropriate locations supporting wood fuel and local community opportunities.	F2 Promote a sustainable woodland economy that enhances the Mendip Hills AONB woodlands and wider landscape provides wood fuel and local community opportunities.	Low slight rewording	<u>Not significant</u>
LM4 Influence the use, restoration and after use of all quarries to minimise the impact on the landscape and to be compatible with the purposes of the AONB designation.	F3 The use, restoration and after use of all quarries is planned and carried out to minimise the impact on the landscape and to be compatible with the purposes of the AONB designation.	Low slight rewording	<u>Not significant</u>
<b>Development and transport</b>			
D1 Working with local planning authorities, ensure that development in the AONB and its setting, is of a nature, scale, location and design that meets community need without compromising the special qualities of the Mendip Hills AONB.	D1 All Local Development Framework (LDF) documents and planning decision making processes will use the following criteria to determine the acceptability of a proposed development in the Mendip Hills AONB.	Low	<u>Not significant</u>
D2 Working with local highways authorities ensure that the special qualities of the AONB are fully respected in the design, provision and management of all types of transport and associated infrastructure.	D3 As part of transport planning, ensure that the special qualities of the AONB are fully respected in the design, provision and management of all types of transport.	Low – slight rewording	<u>Not significant</u>
D3 Encourage reduction in Carbon emissions within the AONB through reducing energy consumption, applying energy conservation measures,	CC3 Measures are taken to mitigate the causes of climate change	Low – moderate divergence previously addressed under climate change objectives	<u>Not significant</u>

encouraging more sustainable patterns of development, and utilising renewable energy generation technologies that are of an appropriate type and scale for their siting.			
D4 Ensure issues of importance for the management of the AONB landscape are fully reflected in strategies and plans produced by other agencies and local communities.	D2 All other regional and local strategies take account of the Mendip Hills AONB Management Plan and recognise the importance and fragility of the Mendip Hills AONB.	Low- slight rewording	<u>Not significant</u>
<b>Participation</b>			
P1 Increase the opportunities for volunteering and the range of people participating, to benefit the environment, peoples well being and the local communities in and around the AONB	P1 Increase the opportunities for volunteering and the range of people participating, to benefit the environment, peoples well being and the local communities in and around the AONB	None	N/A
P2 Encourage the involvement of local people and the wider community in the Management of the AONB.	P2 Link local people with their immediate area through community projects that have mutual environment and community benefit	Low – slight rewording	<u>Not significant</u>
P3 Promote the Mendip Hills as an educational resource for all ages and encourage sharing of research and learning tools	P3 Promote the Mendip Hills as an educational resource for all ages	Low- slight rewording	<u>Not significant</u>



## Appendix 2: Judging Significance in Relation to the SEA Directive

Annex II of the SEA Directive lists criteria for determining the significance of environmental effects of a plan or programme. Taken together these criteria should inform judgements about whether environmental effects can be considered to be significant.

Table 2: Table showing criteria of significance listed in Annex II of the SEA Directive alongside an assessment of their applicability to the AONN Management Plan 2014 to 2019

Characteristic of significance	Is it significant?	Likely effect of plan
<b>1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:</b>		
The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	Yes	The AONB Management Plan will set a framework for a number of smaller scale projects.
The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	Yes	The AONB Management Plan does not influence a hierarchy of subsidiary plans; however, actions include the contributing to other plans and programmes of varying significance.
The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations with a view to promoting sustainable development	Yes	The management plan sets sustainable development at the heart of its vision, and objectives and actions contribute to the maintenance of special qualities in the AONB. This ensures that environmental considerations are

		<p>fully integrated.</p> <p>The plan is considered highly beneficial to the achievement of sustainable development.</p>
Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	No	<p>The management plan is unlikely to cause environmental problems. It is not substantively different from the previous 2009 to 2014 management plan (see appendix 1) which had been subject to SEA and shown not to exhibit significant environmental effects. It is highly likely to lessen problems such as atmospheric, soil and water pollution, loss of biodiversity, loss of landscape character, and deterioration of cultural heritage.</p>
The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).	No	<p>The management plan is carried out as a result of national legislation (the Countryside and Rights of Way Act) which is not transposed from higher Community legislation.</p>
<p><b>2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</b></p>		
The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,	No	<p>The AONB Management Plan is unlikely to exhibit significant long term / frequent / irreversible</p>

		<p>effects as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Objectives and actions generally link to and support national or local initiatives that are designed to enhance the quality of the rural environment;</li> <li>-Objectives are linked to preserving special qualities so actions which are contrary to this are not promoted as part of the plan.</li> <li>-The condition of the AONB will be monitored as part of the management plan</li> </ul>
The cumulative nature of the effects	No	The generally positive environmental improvements are likely to negate / offset cumulative environmental effects arising from outside sources.
The transboundary nature of the effects	No	There is no likelihood of transboundary effects occurring.
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),	No	Objectives / actions which aim to manage traffic levels will reduce the risk of accidents occurring.
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),	No	While the management plan applies to the entirety of the AONB, negative environmental effects are not likely to be significant.

<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: special natural characteristics or cultural heritage</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The AONB is a highly valued area that contains areas of high biodiversity and cultural heritage value, making the area sensitive to environmental impacts. However, no such impacts are predicted and, due to the protections given to 'special qualities' emphasised in the management plan, would in any case be unlikely to be significant.</p>
<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The AONB management is highly unlikely to provoke the exceedence of any environmental thresholds and is likely to increase environmental capacity in many instances (e.g. by restoring biodiversity).</p>
<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to intensive land-use</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The AONB management plan is unlikely to promote intensive land use, rather it helps promotes less intensive farming.</p>
<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The AONB is a highly valued nationally protected landscape designation. However, the management plan is integral to the maintenance of that status and aims to achieve this through positive interventions that are likely to enhance landscape</p>

		<p>value. Such interventions are shown to be similar to those in the previous 2009 -14 management plan for which a previous SEA did not identify significant environmental effects.</p>
<p><b>Overall level of significance: Unlikely to exhibit significant effects on the environment.</b></p>		