

<b>Report Title</b>	Forest of Bowland National Landscape Draft Management Plan 2026-2031 Consultation
<b>Meeting</b>	Executive
<b>Meeting Date</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> February 2026
<b>Report Author</b>	Neil Watson
<b>Directorate</b>	Place
<b>Lead Executive Member(s)</b>	Lola Whipp
<b>Wards Affected</b>	Barrowford & Pendleside
<b>Public. Part Exempt, or Fully Exempt</b>	Public
<b>Appendices (if any)</b>	

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, referred to now as the National Landscape, is a nationally important area for its scenic beauty and ecological value with its ornithological value meriting international status as a Special Area of Conservation.
- 1.2 Like much of the rest of the UK the ecological value of the area has seen reductions over recent years. There are challenges to stop that decline and manage the area for it to continue its important role in nature and to seek to improve it.
- 1.3 The draft Management Plan pulls together the complex array of issues facing the National Landscape. It sets out the main important features that should be retained and augmented and sets out objectives to see the area improve over the lifetime of the Management Plan. Overall the document is well structured and sets out both the challenges faced to improve the area whilst at the same time setting out realistic targeted action, within the acknowledged budgetary constraints, to cease the ecological decline and to lead to net improvements over the lifespan of the document. In overall terms it is recommended that the Council supports the Management Plan.

## 2. Recommendations

**For the reasons set out in this report, the Executive is recommended to:**

- 2.1 Agree that the draft management plan be endorsed as published.

### **3. Information: the Rationale & Evidence for the Recommendations**

- 3.1 The management plan is a statutory requirement under Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. It is intended to provide a management framework for the bodies that are part of the Forest of Bowland Landscape Partnership.
- 3.2 The Plan seeks to direct funding into enhancing the area. Under the last Plan £17.5m has been invested since 2019. This includes protecting endangered birds, improvements to footpaths, tree planting and nature recovery programmes on farmland amongst other investments.
- 3.3 The draft Plan is a replacement of the 2019-2024 Management Plan. Despite the Plan being in place biodiversity has continued to decline over that period. For example of the 22 Sites of Special Scientific Interest only 5% are in favourable condition reducing from the 6.7% in 2014 with a 1.5% decrease in those in an unfavourable condition but recovering. The Plan recognises that the continued decline needs to be arrested.
- 3.4 Agree that the Plan is not likely to have any significant impacts on the National Landscape and therefore SEA is not required.
- 3.5 The Management Plan has a number of target areas for action including Landscape Quality, Nature Recovery (including sections on different forms of targeted intervention i.e. Woodland, Peat etc), People and Access and Recreation. Each of these is assessed with targets set as desired outputs as opposed to generalised areas considered for improvement.
- 3.6 These interventions are comprehensive and cover the main elements of what needs to be monitored and improved in the National Landscape. They are set in a reasonable delivery strategy and should be supported.
- 3.7 The consultation also includes a separate but linked Climate Change Adaptation Plan. The emphasis in that is referring to climate breakdown as opposed to the commonly used climate change. The Plan emphasises that in its view there is likely to be swifter and larger climate shifts and hence impacts so the view is that the term climate change needs to be altered to a term that better reflects the increased likelihood of more severe weather patterns.
- 3.8 The main predicted impacts on the National Landscape are:
- Warmer/wetter winters
  - Hotter/drier summers
  - More extreme rainfall, storms and drought periods.
- 3.9 The Climate Plan sets out key adaptation actions which have been formulated against assessed risks.

- 3.10 A table of proposed action identifies the way the plan seeks to combat climate change. These include dealing with planning pressures for new development and responding to climate change. These are in line with the Local Plan and with the draft National Planning Policy Statement in overall terms.
- 3.11 The overall Management Plan and Climate Change Adaptation Plan are compatible with planning policy for Pendle. They are appropriate for the section of the National Landscape in Pendle and are recommended to be supported.

#### **4. Link to Council Plan Priorities: (Providing High Quality Services and Facilities, Proud and Connected Communities and Places, Good Growth and Housing and Healthy Communities)**

- 4.1 The Management Plan has two overarching aims. The first is to help with biodiversity and climate change. This will help to connect places with ecological networks and facilitate growth that is well integrated with the environment.
- 4.2 The second is to encourage better and more accessible access to the National Landscape and growing the economy in a beneficial way to the environment and climate. It will seek to foster good growth of the right form and scale.

#### **5. Implications**

##### **5.1 Financial Implications**

Pendle supports the Landscape partnership with an annual contribution. The management plan does not raise any further financial implications.

##### **5.2 Legal and Governance Implications**

None arising from this report.

##### **5.3 Climate and Biodiversity Implications**

The Plan and its implementation are targeted at significantly improving the area to benefit both biodiversity and help with climate change.

##### **5.4 Human Resources Implications**

None arising from this report.

##### **5.5 Equality and Diversity Implications**

The Management Plan would have a positive impact on equality by improving opportunities to access the countryside. There are no negative impacts identified in the screening of the report.

## 6. Consultation

6.1 This is a consultation. Pendel has not consulted on the consultation.

## 7. Alternative Options Considered

None.

## 8. Statutory Officer Sign off (please put an x in the relevant box below)

Section 151 Officer	<b>X</b>
Monitoring Officer	<b>X</b>

## 9. Background Documents

- Draft Management Plan
- Climate Change Adaptation Plan
- Habitats Assessment
- Sustainability Appraisal Screening Report
- Equality Impact Assessment

## Contact Officers

Neil Watson

Assistant Director: Planning, Building Control & Regulatory Services

01282 661706