



# Guidance for AONB Partnership Members

Welsh Member Training January 26/27 2015

The National Association for  
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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# AONB Designation

- AONBs are some of the most beautiful and cherished landscapes in Britain. They need to be cared for, now and in the future.
- AONBs are designated as special landscapes which provide a range of benefits for people and wildlife.
- AONBs are dynamic, living landscapes that underpin the economy and the health and wellbeing of society.
- AONBs are vibrant landscapes which offer a wealth of opportunities for everyone to enjoy them and help look after them.
- There are 46 AONBs in Britain and they cover 18% of our land area.
- The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 significantly raised the profile of AONBs by placing new responsibilities on the Local Authorities and Conservation Boards who are responsible for their management,



# Purposes of Designation

- The purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.
- In pursuing the purpose account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities.
- Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.

# Welsh Government Powers

The Minister for the Environment has the power to confirm, refuse, modify or vary any order made by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to establish an AONB.

The Minister for the Environment has the power to make establishment orders to set up Conservation Boards for individual AONBs following consultation with NRW and all affected local authorities.

# NRW statutory duties and powers

Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, NRW has the power to

- designate Areas of Outstanding Natural beauty (AONBs) that are outside National Parks and that are considered to have such natural beauty it is desirable they are conserved and enhanced
- issue a variation order to change an existing AONB boundary

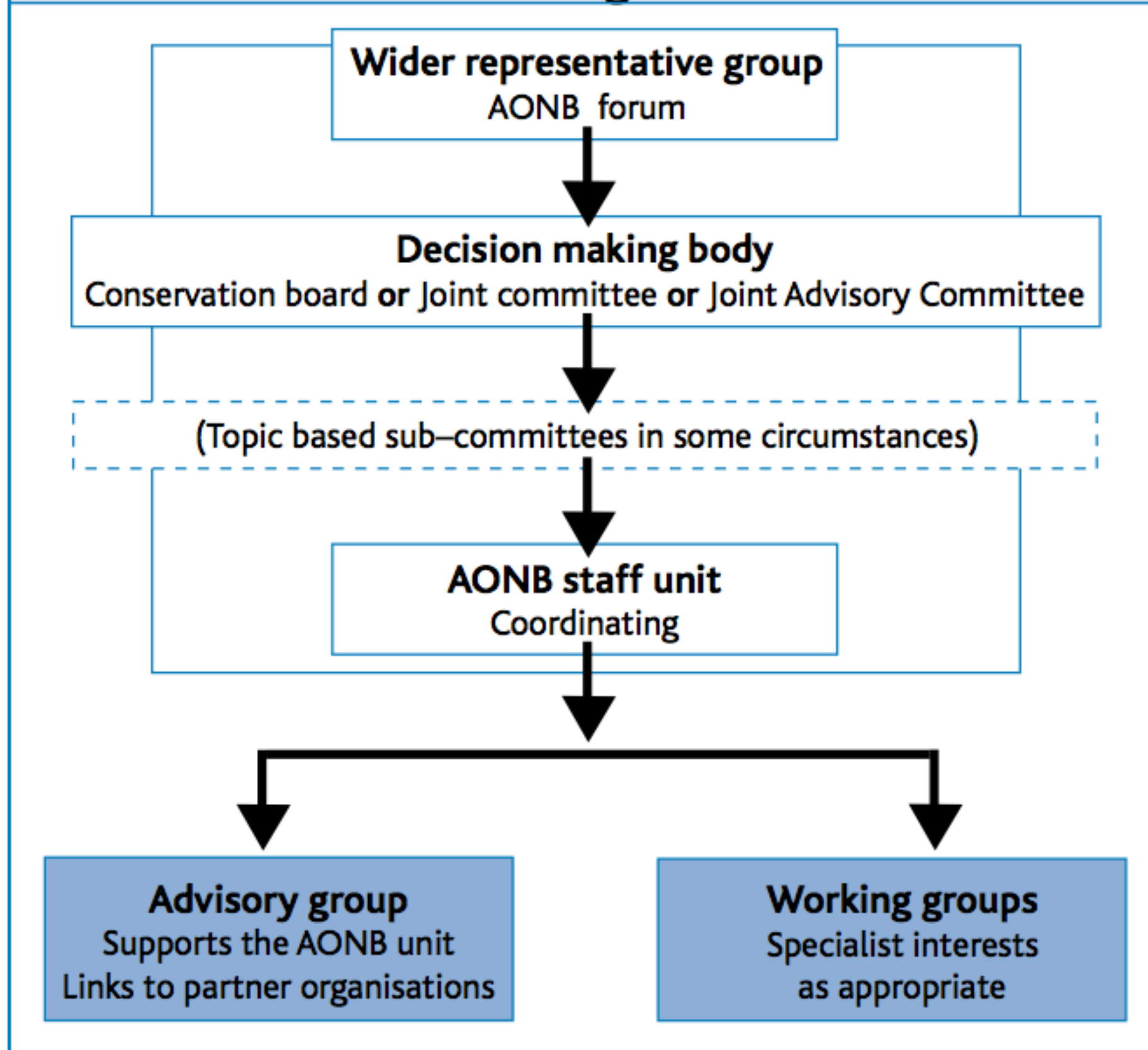
They also hold duties to

- give advice on developments taking place in an AONB
- take into account the conservation and enhancement of AONBs in its work

# Local Authorities Duties

- Prepare and publish a management plan for every AONB to set out how they will look after their AONBs
- Take into account the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of AONBs
- Consult NRW in connection with development plans, with access agreements and with access orders
- Given the diverse range of duties and responsibilities, the management of an AONB is a complex activity
- Current practice varies widely from authority to authority

## A basic AONB management structure





# Core Staff Units

## AONB core functions

- Developing a vision and strategy for AONB management.
- Preparing, with constituent local authorities, a AONB Management Plan as required by the CRoW Act.
- In the early stages of AONB development, promoting the vision and strategy to help distinguish the AONB from adjacent countryside.
- Implementing and coordinating implementation by others, the Management Plan.
- Coordinating or advising on local authority services in the AONB, to go beyond the normal level of service in countryside management.
- Monitoring and reporting on progress against Management Plan targets.
- Accessing resources for undertaking management activities, including external financing, project development and proposals, and providing matching funding for special projects.
- Tapping into advice, and liaison with AONBs at a national level.
- Providing an internal management role to coordinate AONB protection.
- Promoting the value of the AONB to the community.
- Developing an involvement by the community in the management of the AONB.
- Providing planning advice and related activities.
- Seeking additional funds to assist with the delivery of management activity.

# Partnership working

- co-ordinates the management of the AONB by the production and implementation of a Management Plan;
- provides an accountable management structure for budget and staff management;
- offers a platform, or forum, for collective decision making engage with a wide range of organisations in seeking consensus on AONB management;
- demonstrates best practice in countryside management;
- raises awareness of the true importance and purpose of AONBs for a range of partners and engage them in management.

# What Partnerships do?

- Advise Local Authorities on the preparation of a statutory AONB Management Plan or prepare it on their behalf for the constituent authorities to adopt
- Coordinate and demonstrate the protection and management of the AONB according to the purposes of designation
- Promote the purpose, importance, characteristics and significance of the AONB
- Advise partners on the level of resources needed for AONB management and act to secure funds from a number of other sources
- Establish a management structure that is relevant to the objectives of the AONB as specified in its Management Plan

# What else so Partnerships do?

- Establish and manage a staff unit and carry out internal management reviews
- Advise relevant planning authorities about appropriate strategic policies and potentially damaging development proposals
- Advise public bodies, agencies and statutory undertakers about the impact of their activities on the AONB
- Commission research, special studies and monitoring.
- Establish links with other AONBs, National Parks and protected areas, both nationally and internationally

# Partnership Members

- expertise and experience of land planning and management
- the ability to influence planning and development control issues in the AONB
- a powerful integration role of wide ranging experiences both within and outside their authorities
- powers and resources to act directly in the AONB, including to own and manage land
- influence on how other land managers manage their land, for example through advice, conservation grants and access agreements
- an elected voice for local people and views

# Effective Partners

- bring to the Partnership their own personal expertise, experience and that of their organisation
- guide the direction of the Partnership and advocate a collective view on AONB policies rather than campaign for their organisation's policies and objectives
- take information and decisions on AONB policy and issues back to their organisation to start direct action;
- promote the AONB and its management objectives to others within their organisations and change the way they develop their own policies

# AONB Management Plans

- highlights the special qualities and the enduring significance of the AONB, the importance of its landscape features, and identifies those that are vulnerable to change
- presents an integrated vision for the future of the AONB as a whole, in the light of national and local priorities
- sets out agreed policies incorporating specific objectives which will help secure that vision
- identifies what needs to be done, by whom, and when, in order to achieve these objectives, and in some cases defines resources needed and from where they will be found
- identifies the means by which objectives and actions will be reviewed

# Planning Role

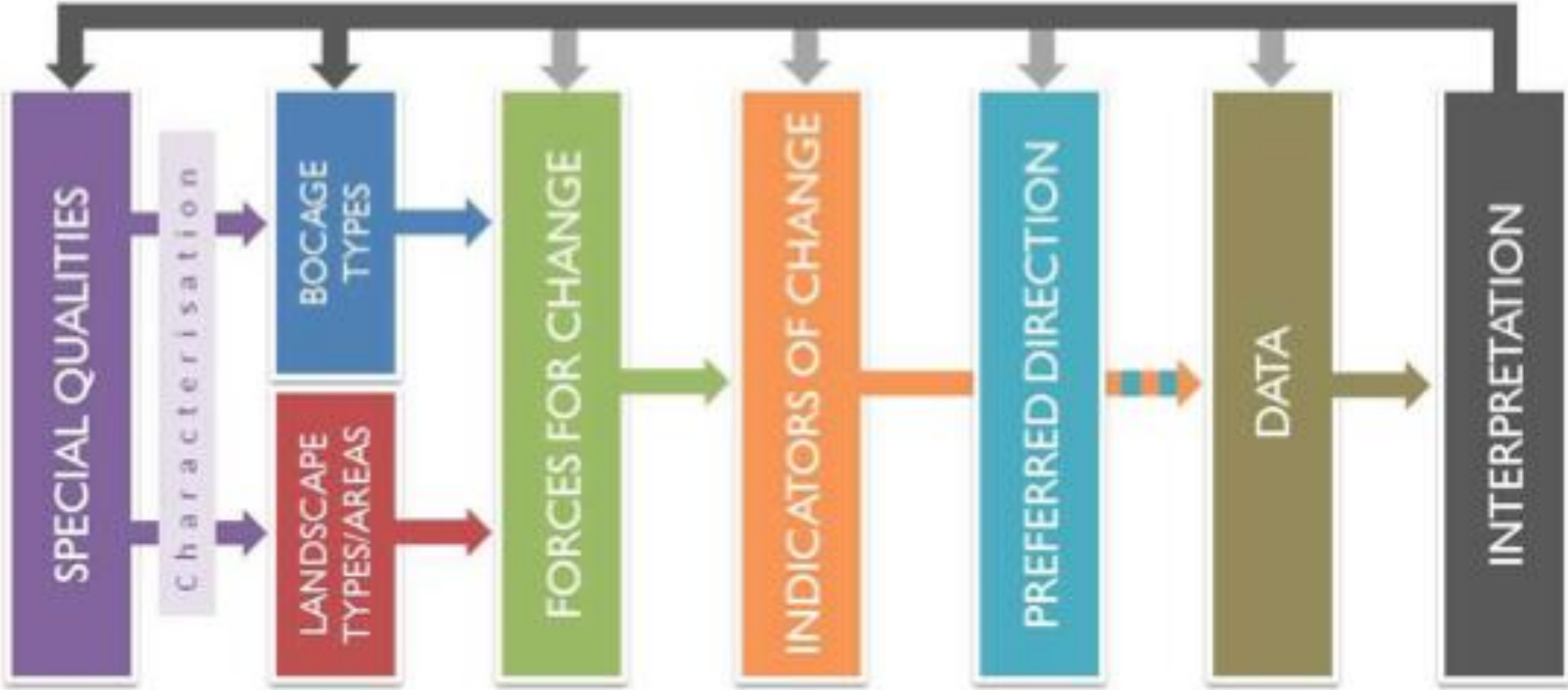
- Due to the legally protected status of AONBs (CRoW Act 2000), land within AONBs must be treated differently compared with land outside, as it has the highest status of landscape protection.
- The CRoW Act (2000) places requirements and additional responsibilities on local authorities and the planning system.
- AONBs are defined within the EIA Regulations for specific consideration as a “sensitive area”. The CRoW Act Section 85 Duty of Regard requires all public bodies, down to community council level, to consider the AONBs’ nationally protected status in any land use related decisions. This includes planning applications and the formulation of Local Development Plans.
- AONB Management Plans have been recognised to form a ‘material consideration’ in the planning decision making process.
- Land within AONBs is recognised differently under the Town and Country Planning Act as Article 1(5) land (which for example restricts certain permitted development rights).



# Monitoring Role

- Monitoring involves checking whether tasks have been carried out as specified in the plan, by a review against the targets in work programmes. Monitoring of the work carried out by partner bodies can be done by the partner bodies themselves, and reported through a joint meeting. Monitoring of the work carried out by the AONB unit itself can be integrated with the review of the AONB Management Plan and Business Plan.
- Monitoring condition is about assessing changes over time. It may be selective, concentrating on particular features of interest and using indicators selected to provide a meaningful measure of AONB quality. As well as data, the views of 'users' can also play a significant role in monitoring AONB performance, along with the professional judgment and experience of the partnership.
- The partnership should publicise the results of its monitoring, for example in an annual review, to demonstrate success and build support for the AONB.
- The key test of the AONB Partnership is that it makes a difference. AONBs are some of our most beautiful and cherished landscapes. The AONB Partnership and its staff have a responsibility to influence the way AONBs are used and developed to ensure that they are cared for, now and in the future.

**Figure 4.1: CORDIALE Common Monitoring Framework**



# Issues for Partnership Members to consider

- Understand Special Qualities
- Monitor
- Know what is happening
- Communicate
- Challenge Partners