

**Blackdown Hills and East Devon Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Management Plan Reviews: Consultation Drafts**

Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Committee:

- (a) Approves the process and timetable for undertaking the AONB Management Plan reviews and consultation;**
- (b) endorses, in principle, the approach within the Consultation Drafts of the Management Plan 2019-2024 for the Blackdown Hills and East Devon Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;**
- (c) delegates to officers the final agreement of any outstanding detailed issues for the Consultation Drafts;**
- (d) notes that the final version of the new Management Plans will be adopted through the Cabinet Member decision process in early 2019.**

1. Background/Introduction

This report outlines the process of the Review of the Management Plans for the Blackdown Hills and East Devon Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and seeks the Committee's approval of the approach within the Draft Plans for public consultation. Any views of the Committee will be addressed before finalising the Plans.

2. Main Text/Proposal

Devon has five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) within its boundaries. Three, East Devon, North Devon and South Devon, are wholly within the county, while two, Blackdown Hills and Tamar Valley, straddle the county boundary with Somerset and Cornwall respectively.

Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, it is a statutory requirement for local authorities to produce Management Plans for their AONBs and undertake review every five years. The County Council and other relevant local authorities have delegated the task of undertaking the Management Plan Review to the respective AONB Partnerships and have set out its requirements for this process.

3. Content of the Plans

The County Council is promoting a 'light touch' approach, building on the existing common format and structure of the current plans. However, the Reviews need to reflect changes in the statutory and legislative background, new ways of partnership working and current/developing policy and issues e.g. The Government's new 25yr Environment Plan and public health/well-being agendas.

4. The Process and Timetable in Devon

The County Council has encouraged the five AONBs Partnerships in Devon to develop a consistent approach to the development of their plans where possible and to work to a similar timetable. The Consultation Drafts of the Plans are currently being prepared and the local authorities are being requested to endorse the structure and outline content of the Draft Plan for consultation. The Consultation Drafts will be approved by the AONB Partnerships on which DCC members are represented prior to consultation during summer/autumn.

Account will be taken of the feedback and comments and an amended draft Final Plan will be produced for each of the AONB Partnerships by December. Local authorities will be asked to adopt these Final Plans during January and February 2019. It is proposed that these will be signed off on behalf of the County Council by the Cabinet Member for the Environment and Community through the delegated decision process.

It should be noted that the Consultation Draft of the Blackdown Hills Management Plan will also be reported to the Mid Devon Locality Committee on 29 October (noting the meeting scheduled for 17 June was cancelled). Any views raised will be taken account of in the final Draft.

5. Financial Considerations

The costs for Management Plan Reviews are being met as part of the AONB services' core functions, for which Defra contribute 75% of the funding; the remaining 25% is provided between all the local authorities on the Partnership and these contributions are set out formally in a Memorandum of Agreement from 2016/17 – 2019/20.

6. Environmental Impact, Equality and Public Health Considerations

It is a requirement that AONB Management Plans are subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment, Habitat Regulations Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment. These are being drafted and will be subject to Consultation alongside the Management Plans. This should ensure that sustainability, environmental, equality and public health issues have been fully taken into account.

7. Legal Considerations

Under the CROW Act, the County Council and the relevant District Council(s) have a statutory duty for ensuring that AONB Management Plans are periodically reviewed. The current Review process meets that responsibility.

8. Risk Management Considerations

Risks associated with the Management Plan can be categorised as reputational, relating to not undertaking full public consultation; legal, relating to not having statutory plans in place to ensure effective management of the AONB; and financial, related to lack of strategic context for making funding bids to deliver activity.

9. Options/Alternatives

The County Council could have resolved to undertake the Management Plan Reviews itself or in conjunction with the relevant District Council(s). This would have ignored the existing governance structure and expertise of the AONB Partnerships.

10. Reasons for Recommendation/Conclusion

The Review procedure will allow the County Council to fulfil its statutory obligation and also to ensure that the Management Plan Reviews are subject to appropriate consultation.

Dave Black
Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

Electoral Divisions: Axminster, Cullompton & Bradninch, Exmouth, Exmouth & Budleigh Salterton Coastal, Feniton & Honiton, Otter Valley, Seaton & Colyton, Sidmouth, Whimble & Blackdown, Willand & Uffculme

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Ref.
1. Blackdown Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24 Briefing Paper	June 2018	
2. East Devon AONB Partnership Plan Consultation Draft 2019-24	June 2018	

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sc/cr/Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONB Management Plan Reviews Consultation Drafts
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Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan Review Briefing Paper June 2018

The review process (Sept 2017 – June 2018)

- Identification of new issues/what's changed since preparing the current Plan
- Online questionnaire to the Partnership and wider stakeholders
- Management Plan consultation workshop for Stakeholders
- Management Plan discussions held at other Blackdown Hills AONB workshops and groups, for example Community Heritage Forum, Biodiversity working group
- Discussions with the other Devon and Somerset AONBs
- 'State of the Blackdown Hills' produced reporting on 'measuring progress indicators' in current Plan and drafting new indicators
- Liaison with DCC Environment and Sustainability Policy Officer on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of plan
- Commissioned support for planning guidance content in response to stakeholder views on using the management plan in the planning system

Key messages from consultation and feedback

- Reduce length of document
- Make it simple to pick out key points
- More of a focus on delivery
- Secure commitment from partnership

Proposed Structure and Content

2014 - 2019	2019 - 2024	Remarks
Local context maps	Vision statement	<i>Opening section to be common format with Devon AONBs</i>
Contents	Contents	
Ministerial and AONB foreword	Local context maps	
Introduction/purpose of plan	Ministerial and AONB foreword	
Special qualities	Introduction/purpose of plan	
Context: the broader picture	AONB Key facts/special qualities	
Vision statement		
Management Framework	Management Framework	
Theme 1: Landscape	Theme 1: Place	<i>Topics to remain the same. Content reduced by addressing repetition and moving material to annexe/background evidence</i>
Theme 2: Sustainable development	Theme 2: People	
Theme 3: Communication and management	Theme 3: Working together	
Implementation and review	Delivery	<i>Extended section to include indicators and Strategic delivery tables</i>
Appendices	Appendices (reduced number)	<i>Material moved to annexe/background evidence</i>
Separate Delivery Plan		

East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan Review Briefing Paper June 2018

The review process (Sept 2017 – June 2018)

- Identification of new issues/what's changed since current Plan
- AONB Partnership input into review and content
- Discussions with other Devon AONBs over format and assessments
- Updating indicators alongside work on KPIs with the National Association for AONBs
- Commissioned AONB perception/awareness report

Key messages from consultation and feedback thus far

- Light touch review requested by Partnership
- Reduce length of document – make it more business like
- Annual delivery plan

Proposed Structure and Content

2014 – 2019 (63pgs)	2019 – 2024 (50pgs)	Remarks
Management Strategy	Partnership Plan	
Ministerial Foreword	Map/contents	
Map/contents	Ministerial Foreword	<i>Opening section to be similar format with Devon AONBs</i>
Vision	Vision, strategic aims, objs	
Partnership commendation	Partnership commendation	<i>reduced where possible</i>
Context, purpose, intro to AONB	Context, purpose, intro to AONB	
Landscape character /special qualities	Landscape character /special qualities	
Management Framework	Management Framework	
Theme 1: Landscape	Theme 1: Place	<i>Maintain largely as before – summarised format of key issues – update key priorities and indicators</i>
Theme 2: Sustainable development	Theme 2: People and prosperity	
Theme 3: Communication and management	Theme 3: Communication and management	
Implementation & review; details of supporting documents	Delivery & monitoring; details of supporting documents	<i>Outline of processes for delivery and proposed monitoring</i>
Separate 5yr Delivery Plan	Separate Annual Delivery Plan	<i>Delivery plan to follow approved Plan</i>