

## **North Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan Review: Consultation Draft**

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) notes the process and timetable for undertaking the AONB Management Plan review and consultation;**
- (b) endorses, in principle, the approach to the preparation of and consultation on the Consultation Draft of the Management Plan 2019-2024 for the North Devon AONB;**
- (c) delegates to officers the final agreement of the detailed content and any outstanding issues for the Consultation Draft;**
- (d) notes that the final version of the new Management Plans will be adopted through the Cabinet Member decision process in early 2019.**

### **1. Summary**

This report outlines the process of the Review of the Management Plans for the North Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) 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. Background to Management Plan Review**

Devon has five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) within its boundaries. Three, North Devon, East 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 (CRoW) 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 Plan**

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 25 Year Environment Plan and public health/well-being agendas.

An outline of the structure and contents of the consultation draft of the revised management plan is set out in Appendix 1.

#### **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, due to the cancellation of their meeting on 28 June, it has not been possible to share a similar report with the North Devon Locality Committee. However, a written briefing will, instead, be circulated to the Members represented on that Committee.

#### **5. Financial Considerations**

The costs for Management Plan Reviews are being met as part of the AONB service's core functions, for which Defra contribute 75% of the funding; the remaining 25% is provided between the three 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 Councils 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, which may arise through the 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. All of these are being addressed by the AONB Team and Partnership through the review process.

## 9. Options/Alternatives

The County Council could have resolved to undertake the Management Plan Review itself or in conjunction with the relevant District Councils. This would have ignored the existing governance structure and expertise of the North Devon AONB Partnership.

## 10. Reasons for Recommendation/Conclusion

The review procedure will allow the County Council to fulfil its statutory obligation and to ensure that the Management Plan Reviews are subject to appropriate consultation. This Committee is asked to consider any issues which it believes will need to be addressed through the review and the production of the revised Management Plan.

Dave Black  
Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

**Electoral Divisions: Combe Martin Rural, Ilfracombe, Braunton Rural, Northam, Bideford West and Hartland**

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Contact for enquiries: Jenny Carey-Wood, North Devon AONB Manager

Room No: First Floor, Taw View, Barnstaple EX31 1EE

Tel No: 01271 388758

Background Paper	Date	File Ref.
North Devon AONB Management Plan 2014-2019	March 2014	<a href="http://www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk/sites/default/files/users/common/Management%20Plan%202014-19.pdf">http://www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk/sites/default/files/users/common/Management%20Plan%202014-19.pdf</a>

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**Outline of Structure and Contents of the Consultation Draft of the North Devon AONB Management Plan**

- A 20 Year Vision and Outcomes
- Ministerial Foreword
- AONB Partnership Chairman Foreword
- Statement of Significance and Special Qualities

**Context**

- Purpose of AONB designation
- Managing the North Devon AONB
- Monitoring the state of the AONB
- Strategic and Policy Context
- The UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve
- Setting and boundary

**Management Plan Themes**

- Landscape and Seascape
- Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Historic environment and culture
- Development management and infrastructure
- Sustainable rural and visitor economy
- Farming and land management
- Access, health and wellbeing
- Community action, enjoyment and understanding

**Appendices**

- Plan delivery, monitoring and reporting
- Glossary
- References