

Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site Management Plan – 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 World Heritage Site Management Plan Review;**
- (b) endorses the Consultation Draft; and**
- (c) notes that the final version of the new Management Plan will be adopted by the County Council through the Cabinet Member delegated decision process in Spring 2014.**

1. Summary

The report sets out the process for reviewing the Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site (WHS) Management Plan and asks Committee to endorse the Consultation Draft. Any views of the Committee will be addressed through DCC's formal consultation response.

2. Background

The Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site (popularly known as "Jurassic Coast") was inscribed by UNESCO on its World Heritage List in 2001 due to the Outstanding Universal Value of the geology and geomorphology of the undeveloped cliffs and beaches between Orcombe Point near Exmouth in East Devon and Studland Bay near Poole in Dorset. The current document is the third revision of the Plan which was first submitted to UNESCO for scrutiny in 1999 as part of the nomination for World Heritage Site listing. It is a formal requirement of both UNESCO and the UK Government to have a Plan in place for managing a WHS.

The purpose of the Management Plan is to create a strategic policy framework within which the various management interests can operate. It explains the reasons for designation and describes the Site and its key features, sets out how it is protected, outlines the key management issues and defines policies and strategic actions. It is open to public consultation in an attempt to achieve community participation in management.

The first revision was in 2003 and involved a relatively minor change following inscription. The second revision covered the period 2009 to 2014, and was a more thorough revision of the Site's management framework, accounting for significant updates to legislation and changes to partner organisations, but most importantly, learning from experience of managing the Site over the previous six years.

This version is a relatively light touch revision of the previous plan, which proved to be both robust and aspirational, if perhaps a little ambitious. This Plan will reflect new legislation and a changing operating environment in the light of reduced resources and other external changes as well as shifts in priority and aspiration. The task of the Review is to identify

amendments that are necessary to ensure it remains a working document that reliably, and realistically, informs the management process itself and other processes such as the preparation of local plans and sets out what the Partnership considers to be a realistic approach for the next five years.

3. Content of the Plan

The Management Plan review process to date has been led by the Jurassic Coast Team and Steering Group comprising funding partners including DCC, the statutory and specialist agencies, and other key stakeholders who were invited to help identify what the key priorities should be for the next five years. The first Chapter provides a brief overview about the World Heritage Site, the provenance of its designation and progress against the last Management Plan objectives. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the process for being inscribed as a World Heritage Site and a 'Statement of Outstanding Universal Value', which is a definitive statement endorsed by UNESCO that summarises the reason for the Site's inclusion on the World Heritage List. An overview of the management arrangements for the site is presented in Chapter 3, including details of legal protection and how the Site is managed. This is followed in Chapter 4 by brief discussions of each of the major new or existing issues and opportunities that may have a significant bearing on the management of the Site over the next plan period. Chapter 5 contains the long-term vision and aims for the Site, and detailed policies for the period 2014-19. Accompanying the policies are an indication of actions and approaches for delivering them; ensuring that the Plan is practical as well as strategic. Finally, how this Plan will be implemented is described in Chapter 6, which outlines the management structure, organisational roles, planning processes and monitoring and evaluation.

The overall Vision for the WHS is that:

"World Heritage Status in Dorset and East Devon will:

- Inspire people to celebrate, appreciate and enjoy the World Heritage Site, and to safeguard it for future generations in the best possible condition;
- Become a vibrant strand of the life of Dorset and East Devon, benefiting local people, visitors and the environment."

The key considerations in the Plan for this Authority relate to the:

- a) Prevention of any adverse impacts on the interests of the Site and its setting through developments such as renewable energy proposals, coastal defence works, onshore and offshore oil and gas exploration and production, or by quarrying including consented or ad-hoc pebble extraction.
- b) Using the ecosystem services approach to the future planning for conservation of the natural environment within the Site and setting and fully engaging with the Devon Local Nature Partnership.
- c) Supporting the development and delivery of visitor facilities to interpret, understand and celebrate the WHS, with particular emphasis on implementation of plans for the Seaton Jurassic Coast Discovery Centre and its wider Natural Seaton initiative.
- d) Promoting the Site's high quality environment and World Heritage Status as economic, social and cultural drivers for East Devon, and the wider sub-region in particular supporting cultural bodies in linking to the values of the WHS and using the designation to promote appropriate health and well-being initiatives
- e) Maintain and improve an effective Rights of Way network for providing access to the Site and setting and improving access to the coastal gateways by cycling, particularly through National Cycle Network routes in general and the Stop Line Way in particular.
- f) Supporting a collaborative and strategic approach to Jurassic Coast Sustainable Transport improvements including further investigation of the opportunities to provide a marine transport link along the coast, maintaining and improving existing bus services serving the coast, including associated infrastructure such as bus stops and shelters,

and information provision and encouraging the development of more effective transport interchanges and joint ticketing operations.

- g) As highway authority, supporting efforts to take account of best practice as set out in the Highway Guidance for Protected Landscapes in Devon and in particular to de-clutter coastal access routes.
- h) Developing emergency plans to implement the most effective response for visitors and communities to major incidents such as landslide or rockfall, based on the Coastal Cliff Fall and Landslide Protocol being developed in Dorset.
- i) Maintaining an effective and fit-for-purpose management structure for the WHS and ensuring sufficient resources are in place to enable effective delivery of the Management Plan.

Copies of the Consultation Draft are available for detailed consideration both electronically through the following link: www.jurassiccoast.org/plan and in hard copy at the meeting venue on the day of the Committee.

4. The Process and Timetable in Devon

The Plan is currently at the Consultation Draft stage and informal DCC officer comments have been included in this Draft. It would have been normal practice for this Committee to formally agree a draft for public consultation but due to the timetabling of meetings this was not possible. However, the WHS Steering Group, on which DCC is represented by Councillor Jim Knight, has agreed the revised policy section contained in Chapter 5. Public consultation started for a ten week period on 18 October, running until 27 December 2013. During this period the County Council will be able to submit formal comments including any views of this Committee.

Account will be taken of the feedback and comments and an amended draft Final Plan will be produced by the Jurassic Coast Team for the Steering Group in March. Local authorities will be asked to adopt these Final Plans during March and April 2014. It is proposed that these will be signed off on behalf of this Authority by the Cabinet Member for Community and Environmental Services through the delegated decision process.

5. Financial Considerations

DCC is contributing £77,375 from its Environmental Management Projects budget in 2013/14 towards the core and project costs of the Jurassic Coast Team, hosted by Dorset County Council. This contribution is set out formally in a three year Partnership Agreement for the period April 2011 to March 2014 which is due to be renewed for the next three year period when the County Councils contribution will need to be reduced. The Management Plan Review process itself is part of the agreed work programme and does not incur additional costs. However, the reduced resources that are likely to be available in the period 2014-19 have been reflected in the scope of the reviewed Management Plan.

In relation to implementation of the Management Plan there has been a £30k commitment in the capital programme until this year for Jurassic Coast interpretation projects together with a commitment of £500k from Invest in Devon and the capital programme for the construction of the Seaton Jurassic Coast Discovery Centre, due to start in 2014.

6. Sustainability, Carbon Impact, Equality and Public Health Considerations

It is a requirement that Management Plans are subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This was undertaken for the last Management Plan and will be reviewed in the light of the policy changes contained in the new Plan. This SEA Review is also subject to Consultation alongside the Management Plan. This should ensure that

sustainability and environmental issues have been fully taken into account. An Equality Impacts and Needs Assessment will be undertaken as part of the consultation phase and any outstanding equality or public health issues will be addressed in the Final Plan.

7. Legal Considerations

There are no specific legal considerations for Devon County Council in this Management Plan process. It is the UK Government which has a duty to ensure WHSs are protected and managed although in practice, in many cases, this is informally devolved to local authorities. Appropriate management frameworks and plans are a means to deliver against the obligations of the World Heritage Convention.

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 protection of the WHS; 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 not endorse the Management Plan Review process and to play no active part. However, this would have reduced its ability to influence future management of the WHS. The current Management Plan is now out of date and its review and updating accords with UNESCO Guidelines.

10. Reason for Recommendation/Conclusion

The Review procedure will allow the County Council to fulfil its obligation as a partner in managing the WHS and also to ensure that the Management Plan Review is subject to appropriate consultation.

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Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Reference
Consultation Draft of Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site Management Plan 2014 -2019	October 2013	

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