

## **Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Draft Management Strategy – Consultation Draft 2009-2014**

Report of the Director for Environment, Economy and Culture

***Please note that the following recommendations are subject to confirmation by the Committee before taking effect.***

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that the Committee notes the process and timetable for undertaking the AONB Management Plan Reviews and:

- (a) notes that the submitted Consultation Draft of the Management Strategy 2009-2014 for the Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is currently in an advanced draft form and requires completion and refinement;**
- (b) approves, in principle, the Consultation Draft of the Management Strategy 2009-2014 for the Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty provided that areas of specific concern are addressed;**
- (c) delegates to officers the final agreement of any outstanding detailed issues for the Consultation Draft;**
- (d) notes that the final version of the new Management Strategy will be approved through the Executive Member decision process in Spring 2009, with similar approval required from other Local Authority partners.**

### **1. Summary**

This report outlines the process of the Review of the Management Strategy for the Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, provides guidance on the extent to which the Draft has complied with the requirements of the County Council, and seeks the Committee's approval of the Draft Strategy for further public consultation.

### **2. Background**

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. The current Plans were agreed and adopted for all five AONBs in 2004 and it has become necessary to undertake a five year review of these Plans which need to be sent to the Secretary of State by March 2009. The Review is necessary to make sure that the Plans remain relevant to key partners in the light of changing circumstances, new knowledge and feedback from their implementation. 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 development frameworks.

### **3. Content of the Plan**

Natural England has issued Guidelines as to how the Review should be undertaken and on the content of the Plan. A critical new area of work has been the production of a Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) which is also forming part of the consultation process. The Review process has involved a comprehensive assessment of the relevance, accuracy and achievements of the Management Plan and the drafting of new information that will steer the management of the AONB over the following five year period.

The County Council and other relevant local authorities have delegated the task of undertaking the Management Plan Review to the respective AONB Partnerships. In doing this, the County Council has set out in writing its expectations and requirements for the reviewed Plans. This guidance contains a number of general criteria relevant to all AONBs and further criteria which are explicit to each individual AONB. The specific criteria relevant to the Tamar Valley AONB are attached at Appendix I. The content of the Draft Plan has been judged against these criteria.

### **4. The Process and Timetable in Devon**

The County Council has encouraged the five AONB Partnerships in Devon to develop a consistent approach to the development of their plans and to work to a similar timetable. To this end the Partnerships have agreed a common format and structure to their Plans and adopted the same timetable.

The Plans are currently at a draft stage and the local authorities are being requested to endorse the structure and outline content of the Draft Plan so that it may go out for public consultation. Consultation on the Draft Plans and the SEAs will take place during the period July to September and at this point the County Council will be able to submit formal comments. 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 November. Local authorities will be asked to adopt these Final Plans during January and February 2009. It is proposed that these will be signed off on behalf of Devon County Council by the Executive Member for the Environment decision process.

### **5. Draft Consultation Version of the Management Strategy for the Tamar Valley AONB 2009-2014**

The Consultation Draft of the Tamar Valley AONB Management Strategy has only partly adopted the common format and structure agreed for all the reviewed Devon AONB Management Plans. However, much of the content is broadly compatible and acceptable. Certain key omissions, such as treatment of geological conservation, will need to be addressed through the current consultation process and by the final submission.

Although the Strategy itself covers the period 2009 to 2014, it sets out a proposed vision, to be seen as an ideal in 20 years time, for the Tamar Valley to remain as one of England's finest landscapes, offering sustainable, prosperous and healthy lifestyles to those who live and work within the AONB.

To achieve this Vision, a number of themes within the AONB and issues relating to these have been identified and objectives and policies drafted that will guide the delivery of the Strategy towards the Vision. The discussion under each sub-theme provides the background and evidence; related issues, trends and forces for change; objectives and policies; measures for progress; and examples of potential actions. The final section summarises the implementation and review process for the Strategy. Some of the detailed information is

contained within the Appendices and Supporting Documents which will be available as background during the Consultation on the AONB's website.

## **6. Devon County Council's Response**

The Consultation Draft Plan has partly met the criteria set down by the County Council. Key omissions, incomplete sections and matters of detail will need to be included or amended prior to public Consultation. The Plan sets out the framework for how the AONB will be managed over the five year period and the detail of how the policies will be implemented will be contained within an Action Plan which will be subject to regular evaluation and review.

The Draft Plan contains much to be commended in terms of its treatment of landscape, natural and historic environment conservation and interpretation. However, a significant omission is the lack of sufficient reference to geological conservation. This is a particularly significant omission given the mineralogical component of the World Heritage Site designation and the amount of background work that has recently been undertaken in this field.

A key issue of importance for this Plan is the relationship with adjacent AONBs (Cornwall and South Devon), the Dartmoor National Park Authority and with other partnerships that have a role in the Tamar Valley such as The Cornwall & West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site and the Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum. Although reference is made to each of these, further explanation would be helpful on working arrangements and the dovetailing of respective roles and management strategies. Similarly, further explanation might be expected on the relationship between the AONB and these and other partners in the delivery of projects such as the Tamar Valley Mining Heritage Project, the East Cornwall Regeneration Project and the future of Morwellham Quay. Additional comment might also be presented on joint opportunities arising from external funding sources, such as the Territorial Co-operation Programme.

In relation to the factual omissions, and further points of detail (including precise wording of some parts of the document) that might be raised by this Committee in its consideration of this Draft Plan, it is requested that delegated approval of the final wording be given to officers prior to the public Consultation version being finalised. It is anticipated that additional County Council officer comments on points of detail will be submitted in response to the Consultation and will be considered by the AONB Partnerships for inclusion in the Final Adopted Management Plan.

It should be noted that The Tamar Valley AONB Service has already carried out one round of public consultation (Winter 2007/08) to inform the Draft Plan. The AONB Partnership also involves 7 Local Authorities, with different consultation requirements for the Draft Plan.

## **7. Financial Considerations**

The Management Plan Review is being undertaken as part of the AONB services' core function, for which Natural England is the main funder. Costs of undertaking the review is being met from existing budgets.

## **8. Sustainability Considerations**

It is now a requirement that AONB Management Plans are subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment. This is being drafted and will be subject to Consultation alongside the Management Plan. This should ensure that sustainability issues have been fully taken into account.

## 9. Equality Considerations

As the AONB unit is hosted by Caradon District Council, equality considerations will be handled in accordance with their corporate procedures.

## 10. 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.

## 12. 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 AONB Partnership.

## 13. 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 Review is subject to appropriate consultation.

Edward Chorlton

**Electoral Divisions: Bickleigh & Wembury; Okehampton Rural; Tavistock; Yelverton Rural.**

Local Government Act 1972

List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Ref
Tamar Valley Draft Management Strategy 2009-2014 – Consultation Draft	June 2008	

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sn/tamar valley  
3 hq 030708

**REVIEW OF MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL  
BEAUTY**

**REQUIREMENTS OF DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL  
FOR  
TAMAR VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY**

In undertaking the Review of the Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan, Devon County Council requests that, in addition to the General Criteria set out in the attached paper, the Review considers a number of further specific points relevant to this AONB.

1. The Review should assess the benefits of [extending existing] joint working with the South Hams AONB and the Cornwall AONB and, in the latter case, whether there is potential concerns with any difference in approach between the two counties.
2. The Review should explore the relationship of the AONB with and assess the benefits of joint working with the Dartmoor National Park Authority.
3. The Review should explore the relationship of the AONB with the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site and the joint work that is undertaken with the WHS Team. The cross-representation on these Partnerships should be encouraged.
4. There should be a definition of the role of the AONB and relationships with partners in the Tamar Valley Mining Heritage Project, the East Cornwall Regeneration Project and the Morwellham and Tamar Valley Trust.
5. The Review should consider the appropriate relationship with the Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum.
6. The Review should highlight opportunities arising from external funding programmes, in particular the potential joint Devon AONB bid for Territorial Co-operation Programme, the bid for Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) funds to take forward the LEADER Plus approach across west Devon and the Devon Renaissance funding bid for a county-wide cultural trails project.