

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 public consultation;**
- (b) endorses, in principle, the approach to the consultation on the Consultation Draft 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 Plan 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 Plan 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. Main Text/Proposal

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 a 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 I.

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. It should be noted that, due to the cancellation of the North Devon Locality meeting on 28 June, a report on the Draft outline content was not presented although it was considered and supported by the Torridge Locality Committee. The Community Consultation approach, revised Objectives & Policies and outline contents of the Draft was approved by the AONB Partnership on which DCC members are represented, prior to the launch of the public consultation in October 2018. The local authorities are being requested to endorse the Statement of Community Consultation outlining the timetable and ongoing process.

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 Community, Public Health, Transportation and Environmental Services through the delegated decision process.

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 and Habitat Regulations Assessment. These have been produced and are available alongside the Consultation Draft Management Plan. This should ensure that environmental and habitat issues have been fully taken into account. For this five-year period, new objectives and policies have been included in AONB Management Plans to address equality and health and wellbeing considerations.

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.

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Electoral Divisions: Combe Martin Rural, Ilfracombe, and Braunton Rural

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Ref
Consultation Draft of North Devon AONB Management Plan 2019-24	18 October 2018	http://www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk/about/management-plan-2019-2024
Statement of Community Consultation and Involvement	18 October 2018	http://www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk/about/management-plan-2019-2024
North Devon AONB Management Plan 2014-19	March 2014	http://www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk/about

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Outline of Structure and Contents of the Consultation Draft of the North Devon AONB Management Plan 2019-24

- A 20 Year Vision
- Ministerial Foreword
- AONB Partnership Chairman Foreword
- Map of the AONB
- Summary of Objectives and Policies
- Statement of Significance and Special Qualities

1. Context

- 1.1 Purpose of the AONB Designation
- 1.2 State of the AONB
- 1.3 Strategic and Policy Context
- 1.4 The North Devon UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve
- 1.5 Setting and Boundary Review

2. Place

- 2.1 Landscape and Seascape
- 2.2 Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- 2.3 Historic Environment and Culture
- 2.4 Environmental Quality and Climate Change

3. People and Prosperity

- 3.1. Planning, Development and Infrastructure
- 3.2. Farming and Land Management
- 3.3. Sustainable Rural and Visitor Economy
- 3.4. Access, Health and Wellbeing

4. Communications and Management

- 4.1. Community Action, Learning and Understanding
- 4.2. Management and Monitoring

5. Appendices

- 5.1. Glossary and Abbreviations
- 5.2. References