

Cabinet

Dorset County Council



Date of Meeting	6 th March 2019
<p><u>Cabinet Member(s)</u> Daryl Turner - Cabinet Member for Natural and Built Environment</p> <p><u>Local Member(s)</u> All County Council Members whose wards are within the Dorset and Cranborne Chase Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.</p> <p><u>Lead Director(s)</u> Mike Harries – Chief Executive & Director for Environment and Economy Matthew Piles – Service Director for Environment, Infrastructure and Economy</p>	
Subject of Report	Adoption of the Management Plans for the Cranborne Chase & Dorset Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)
Executive Summary	<p>Dorset County Council has responsibility for two AONBs: the Cranborne Chase AONB and the Dorset AONB. AONBs are designated so that their natural beauty is conserved and enhanced for future generations.</p> <p>The Council has a statutory duty to cooperate with other local authorities to review, produce and adopt a 5-year AONB Management Plan for each AONB in their area.</p> <p>The Partnership Boards for each AONB have been reviewing the current Management Plans (2014-2019) and overseeing the compilation of new plans for the next 5 years. This process has included targeted pre-drafting consultation involving Council officers and Members, and extensive public consultation on a published draft.</p> <p>The plans are required to express a vision for each AONB and a framework through which their natural beauty can be conserved and enhanced. AONB Management Plans are a material consideration that can be taken into account in coming to planning decisions.</p> <p>Both AONB Management Plans have been approved by their relevant Partnership Boards (including Council Member representation) and will be taken to the relevant committee/s of the new Dorset Council in the summer of 2019.</p>
Impact Assessment :	<p>Equalities Impact Assessment: An EqlA has been completed for the Dorset AONB Management Plan. Through the process of this evaluation, a new AONB policy was devised and included which promotes the monitoring and understanding of the people affected by the policies</p>

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	<p>and subsequent actions of the plan, to enable and ensure inclusive delivery of the plan's aims. The Cranborne Chase AONB Management plan has not changed substantially in this review, and preceding plan reviews have included EqIAs. Following guidance from the National Association of AONBs an EqIA for the latest edition of the plan has not been deemed necessary.</p>
	<p>Use of Evidence: The development of both Management Plans was supported by good evidence. Both plans were screened for Strategic Environmental Assessment and a wealth of environmental data was assessed in the plans' preparation.</p> <p>Both plans were subject to wide consultation including Council Members and Officers.</p>
	<p>Budget: Cost implications of the production of the AONB Management Plans are modest and borne by the Partnerships. These each receive the majority of their core funds from Defra, matched by a Council contribution (£25,380 for the Dorset AONB, £9,270 for Cranborne Chase AONB). The Management Plans have been very useful in attracting grants for project activity; the Dorset AONB Management Plan 2014-2019 helped lever over £7.5 Million which was invested through the Partnership for conservation, access, understanding and celebration activities.</p>
	<p>Risk Assessment: Having considered the risks associated with this decision using the County Council's approved risk management methodology, the level of risk has been identified as: Current Risk: MEDIUM (if the plans were not adopted, there would be some reputational risk as the plans are a statutory requirement) Residual Risk LOW</p>
	<p>Outcomes: While environmentally-based, the plans are broad and support work which contributes to all four Corporate Plan outcomes.</p>
	<p>Other Implications: The recommendations within this report enable the Council to meet its statutory responsibilities for the AONBs and provides a framework for sustainable development and activity within these landscapes.</p>
Recommendation	That the Dorset AONB Management Plan and the Cranborne Chase AONB Management Plan be adopted
Reason for Recommendation	To ensure that the statutory responsibilities in relation to the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are met.
Appendices	None
Background Papers	The final Dorset AONB Management Plan and consultation responses are available to download at https://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/the-dorset-aonb/management-plan

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	<p>The Cranborne Chase AONB Management Plan and supporting documentation can be viewed at:</p> <p>http://www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk/uploads/docs/Management_Plan/CranborneChaseAONBManagementPlan2019_24.pdf</p>
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1. Background

- 1.1. Dorset includes parts of two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Dorset AONB (parts of West Dorset, Purbeck, North Dorset and Weymouth & Portland Borough) and Cranborne Chase AONB (parts of North & East Dorset; extending significantly into neighbouring counties).
- 1.2. These areas are landscapes of national importance, designated to conserve and enhance their natural beauty for future generations to enjoy through the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) confirmed their significance; section 89 places a statutory duty on local planning authorities to act jointly to produce a Management Plan for each AONB in their areas.
- 1.3. AONB Management Plans must be reviewed every five years; these are the fourth editions for both AONB. The Plans are the key governance documents for the AONB, steering the work of the staff teams and partner organisations and helping to support bids for external funding.
- 1.4. The plans also provide a supportive framework for delivery in the AONBs which contributes to the Council's Corporate Plan priorities.
 - a) SAFE: the plans can facilitate interventions such as natural flood management and sensitive road design. For example, the current Dorset AONB Management Plan is enabling investment in a natural flood management pilot on the River Asker.
 - b) HEALTHY: the plans enable the promotion of many outdoor activities to a large audience for a wide range of health and well-being benefits. The current Dorset AONB Management Plan has facilitated the development of the Stepping into Nature programme increasing access to nature -based activities for older people, particularly those living with dementia and their carers. The Cranborne Chase AONB Management Plan policies promote improved access to the countryside for all, and the provision of suitable vehicles for use by the less able. Improved health and well-being are fundamental components of both AONB management plans for 2019-2024.
 - c) INDEPENDENT: the plans include a range of policies to encourage training, outdoor learning and increased nature-connection for all people. The current Dorset AONB Management Plan enabled the South Dorset Ridgeway Schools programme in which 51 schools engaged in Ridgeway-related learning. The

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Cranborne Chase AONB management plan recognises the opportunities to engage people of all ages and abilities in education about the AONB and in developing heritage and countryside skills, and presents a number of policies around this.

- d) PROSPEROUS: the plans facilitate the conservation of Dorset's superb natural environment and in so doing contribute considerably to the county's economy. The current Dorset AONB Management plan facilitated the establishment of Dorset Food & Drink CIC which supports the local sector with access to markets, training and business to business networks. It has also enabled 8 apprentice rangers to be recruited and trained. Policies in the Cranborne Chase AONB Management Plan support collaborative working with farmers, land owners and allied businesses to improve profitability, and the promotion of superfast broadband and a sustainable visitor economy.

2. The Dorset AONB Management Plan

- 2.1. The Dorset AONB Partnership Board approved the review process in May 2017, maintaining oversight but delegating responsibilities to a Review Group comprising Officers and stakeholders from the community and local enterprise sectors. The process has taken twelve months and has included pre-drafting and post-drafting engagement with expert stakeholders, partner organisations, community representatives and members of the public. All county and district councillors in the area were directly informed of the 9-week public consultation period, as were all parish clerks. Copies of the document were available in public libraries and at council offices.
- 2.2. During this formal consultation period there were 174 responses to the online questionnaire and 31 detailed responses making around 350 separate points of support, comment or proposed amendment. The responses demonstrated a large degree of support for the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and included a range of suggested changes many of which have been made to the final draft document. These changes included strengthening the definition of 'natural beauty'; giving greater emphasis in the Chairman's foreword to the scale of the challenge of conserving and enhancing this landscape; including a list of key partners in each policy section; and setting out the Partnership's priorities for action over the lifetime of this management plan.
- 2.3. The revised Dorset AONB Management Plan was approved by the Partnership Board on 15th November 2018.

3. The Cranborne Chase AONB Management Plan

- 3.1. The revised Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan has been through a similar consultation process, with a three-month public consultation period between 1 September and 30 November 2018, and 2,000 individuals or organisations directly notified. Progress was reported to the Partnership Board meeting of 10 December and a final amended version has been circulated to Board members in January for any final amendments.

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4. Management Plan adoption

- 4.1. Both plans should be adopted by all the local authorities that are engaged in the Partnerships of the respective AONB.

- 4.2. Both plans will be taken through to Dorset Council for adoption in the summer of 2019.

Matthew Piles
Director for Environment Infrastructure and Economy
March 2019