

Cabinet

5 May 2020

Jurassic Coast Partnership Plan 2020 - 2025 and future funding agreement with the Jurassic Coast Trust

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr R Bryan, Highways, Travel and Environment

Local Councillor(s): **Relevant to all Dorset Council Members**

Executive Director: John Sellgren, Executive Director of Place

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Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

- 1) Cabinet adopt the Jurassic Coast Partnership Plan 2020 - 2025
- 2) Cabinet agree to continue the current funding contribution made to the Jurassic Coast Trust until to March 2023.
- 3) Cabinet delegate approval of a new funding agreement with the Jurassic Coast Trust to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment and the Section 151 Officer.

Reason for Recommendation: The Jurassic Coast Partnership Plan and Dorset Council's continued support of the Jurassic Coast Trust helps us to deliver a number of actions outlined in the Corporate Plan in an effective and cost efficient way; delivering services that protect our natural, historic and cultural environments, capitalising on Dorset's unique environmental assets to support our priorities and providing an environment that attracts business investment, tourism and a skilled workforce. The partnership plan enables us to meet UNESCO and UK Government requirements with regard to management of the World Heritage Site.

1. Executive Summary

The Jurassic Coast partnership Plan 2020 – 2025 sets out the management framework for the Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site, also known as the Jurassic Coast. The management of the site is achieved through a partnership approach.

Since 2017 the Jurassic Coast Trust has taken the lead in setting out and coordinating delivery of site management, delivering the obligations of both Dorset Council and Devon County Council in respect of site management. It uses a Partnership Advisory Committee and Board of Trustees to provide advice towards the management and policies of the site as well as collaborating with a wide range of partners, groups, visitor centres and museums. This ensures that partners' responsibilities and actions fit with the wider aims and objectives of the World Heritage Site (WHS) helping to deliver good and consistent site management, deliver key messages and provide a greater understanding of the Jurassic Coast.

The Jurassic Coast Partnership Plan is a requirement of UNESCO and the UK Government for managing the World Heritage Site. It is a public document which outlines the aims, policies and priority objectives for managing the Site for the next five years. It is the framework that looks after the Jurassic Coast helping to facilitate collaboration and provide a strategic context for investment and action.

Dorset Council together with Devon County Council have an ongoing agreement to fund the core work of the Jurassic Coast Trust as it offers an effective and sustainable financial model to both Councils to deliver management of the site which otherwise we would have a direct responsibility to do, as well as providing a significant benefit to the Dorset economy.

2. Financial Implications

There are no additional budget implications beyond the ongoing commitment to the WHS core funding necessary to deliver the Management Plan. Dorset Council's current contribution to the Jurassic Coast Trust core funding is £80,000 annually, with a contribution of an additional £40,000 per annum from Devon County Council proportionate to the length of Jurassic Coastline in Devon County.

3. Climate implications

The Plan acknowledges the potential implications of climate change on the World Heritage Site, that sea-level rise and stormier conditions may alter the expected

evolution of the site making it behave differently from that anticipated at inscription. There is acknowledgement that a considered and sustainable approach will be necessary to coastal defences and renewable energy development and future planning policy. The Partnership Plan provides an effective tool to ensure that the benefits of sustainable coastal management, adaptation and working with natural processes is facilitated and shared.

There is also an opportunity to increase understanding of climate change patterns and consequences. The site can be used to illustrate climate and environmental change and encourage people to reduce their impact on the environment.

Other Implications

National Environmental Policy direction is being framed within the Government's 25-year environment plan (2018) "A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment" set out the general trend towards landscape scale environmental conservation as an opportunity for the World Heritage Site, particularly in areas such as enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment, and adapting to climate change. There is also the potential for the WHS to contribute to nature recovery networks.

4. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with these decisions, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

5. Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

An EqIA has been carried out on the Partnership Plan (Appendix 2). The Partnership Plan recognises a more pro-active approach to equality and inclusion is required, particularly in light of the Government commissioned 2019 Landscape Review; the report suggests that the environmental and heritage sector consider audiences carefully and develop approaches that are sensitive to the needs of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups, LGBTQ people, religious groups, socially and economically disadvantaged people, people with visible or hidden disabilities or other underserved parts of our communities. It is noted that the policies, and their actions and approaches, will be guided in their implementation by the Participation and Inclusion Cross Cutting Theme within the Plan, and will be explored as part of Plan delivery. This will enable consideration of the six equality groups in what is undertaken as part of the implementation of the Plan, and also identify gaps on an ongoing basis.

6. Appendices

- A) The Jurassic Coast Partnership Plan 2020 - 2025
- B) The JCT Partnership Equality Impact Assessment.

7. Background Papers

- 1) Public Consultation Outcomes report
- 2) Jurassic Coast Partnership Plan 2020-25 Management Framework HRA Report
- 3) Strategic Environmental Assessment – Environmental Report for the 2020/25 Partnership Plan
- 4) Dorset's Environmental Economy

8. Introduction

8.1 World Heritage Sites are places of global significance. UNESCO states that: "Reflecting the natural and cultural wealth that belongs to all of humanity, World Heritage Sites and monuments constitute crucial landmarks for our world. They symbolize the consciousness of States and peoples of the significance of these places and reflect their attachment to collective ownership and to the transmission of this heritage to future generations... in regarding heritage as both cultural and natural, the [World Heritage] Convention reminds us of the ways in which people interact with nature, and of the fundamental need to preserve the balance between the two."

8.2 The Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site was designated on the 13 December 2001. The site is 155km (95miles) long from Orcombe Point, Exmouth, East Devon to Studland Bay, Swanage, Dorset. The site is owned and managed by a range of bodies including public and private landowners. The Site was granted World Heritage status under UNESCO's criteria viii – 'Earth's history and geological features' - which indicated that its geology and geomorphology were of Outstanding Universal Value.

8.3 A 'Walk through Time' describes the sites main story with the rocks exposed in the cliffs along the coast dipping gently from the west to the east, therefore a walk from Exmouth to Studland is a walk forward through 185 million years in the Earth's history. The changes through time can be seen in the exposed rocks of the cliffs and in the outstanding examples of fossils found along the length of the Site. The Jurassic Coast is the only World Heritage Site designated for its natural importance on mainland Britain

9. The Jurassic Coast Partnership Plan

9.1 The World Heritage Convention sets out the guidance for nomination and management of World Heritage Sites. UNESCO encourages State Parties to establish Management Plans and set up reporting systems on the state of conservation of their World Heritage Sites; and to encourage participation of the local population in the preservation of their cultural and natural heritage.

9.2 Being on the World Heritage List means that those responsible for managing World Heritage properties/sites have a 'common obligation' to ensure that they are protected for present and future generations, not just through legal means, but through responsible, inclusive, sustainable management practices. The Jurassic Coast World Heritage site therefore must have an agreed Management/Partnership Plan in place.

9.3 Since 2017 the Jurassic Coast Trust has taken the lead in setting out and coordinating delivery of site management, delivering the obligations of both Dorset Council and Devon County Council in respect of site management. Dorset Council has representation on the Board of Trustees. The Trust also has a Partnership Advisory Committee (PAC) comprised of representatives from key organisations, including Dorset Council, and advisors from specialist areas that provides a key advisory role to the Trust. The wider Partnership includes businesses, museums, community groups, visitor centres, development trusts and Town and Parish Councils, all of whom contribute to the plan and help deliver the management and key messages of the site.

9.4 The review of the previous World Heritage Site Management Plan 2014 – 2019 and production of this new Jurassic Coast Partnership Plan 2020 – 2025 is a formal requirement. This version of the Management Plan is different to previous revisions as it has taken more of a partnership approach in its development, but also in its future delivery. It does not, however, try to develop a completely new management framework, but builds on the successful aspects of the previous Management Plan. It also brings the policy context up to date.

9.5 Consultation has been undertaken throughout the revision process, including a coordinated Officer response from Dorset Council. Comments raised through this process have been incorporated into the final version of the Partnership Plan.

9.6 The Partnership Plan was open for an eight-week public consultation period and received 95 separate responses including 11 from organisations. The

final Plan has incorporated many of these comments. An outcomes report of the consultation is available as a background paper to this report.

9.7 As part of the Plan, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and a Habitats Regulation Screening (HRS) exercise have been undertaken, following European and UK Government guidelines (see background papers). These are designed to ensure policies contained within the Plan provide a high level of environmental protection. Reports relating to this work are published online, and the comments raised by this process have been included in this final version.

9.8 The strategic aims and policies outlined in the new Jurassic Coast Partnership Plan link strongly to those of Dorset Council's Corporate Plan.

The Partnership's strategic aims:

- Protect the Site's Outstanding Universal Value and World Heritage Status
- Conserve and enhance the Site, its attributes, presentation and setting
- Inspire and engage people with the Site and deepen their understanding of its values
- Maintain and improve access to and experience of the Site
- Enable the Site's World Heritage Status to be of benefit to people and communities

The existence and active management of the World Heritage Site provides an environment that attracts business investment and tourism. Policies aim to improve access to our coast, countryside and greenspaces and to protect our natural, historic and cultural environments. They build and celebrate community pride in our unique environment.

9.9 In 2015 Dorset County Council and the Jurassic Coast Partnership commissioned an economic report. The headline result was an estimate that the Jurassic Coast influences circa £111m of output and up to 2,000 jobs in the wider Dorset and East Devon area, on an annual basis (see background papers).

10. Future Funding of The Jurassic Coast Trust

10.1 Since inscription in 200, the World Heritage Site Team budget was wholly dependent on financial contributions from the Dorset and Devon County Councils, which mainly covered staff costs. County Councils funding remained stable over the period from inscription until public sector austerity began. Since,

there have been significant reductions in the Councils joint contribution from £283,275 in 2010-11 to £180,000 in 2016-17.

10.2 In 2017, an agreement was put in place that the World Heritage Site Team which had been hosted by Dorset County Council since site inscription would transfer to the Jurassic Coast Trust. It was determined that the Trust would be better placed to access resources, raise funds, attract volunteers and recruit sponsors to support good site management than the Councils. This enabled the economic benefit and prosperity that the status of the Site brings to the area to be sustained and enhanced. Formerly Dorset County Council and now Dorset Council have also made savings through reduced contributions but also through reorganisation of governance arrangements enabling more resources to be devoted to Management Plan delivery, and less to managing complex governance arrangements.

10.3 We are now funding at a level of £120,000 per annum with £80,000 coming from Dorset Council and £40,000 from Devon County Council. While the Councils are still the major funders, a number of other funding sources now contribute towards the Jurassic Coast Team budget. This delivery model through the Trust is a positive one for the Councils, for every £1 we provide, the Trust generates three to four times this for site management.

10.4 However, it is still early days for the Trust and continued financial support towards core site management operations of the Trust is critical while the Trust become firmly established. It is understood that the current level of funding at this time is a minimum level at which the Trust can operate. It is recommended that Dorset Council and Devon County Council continue to fund at the current level until March 2023.

10.5 The ongoing financial, practical and political support of (the former County Council and now Dorset Council and Devon County Council's is very important. English Heritage, as the statutory body charged with oversight of World Heritage Sites in England, has also acknowledged the vital importance of this support, and has described the Jurassic Coast 'one of the most effective World Heritage Sites in the UK' in large part as a result of the ongoing commitment of resources from the Councils and the fact that this has enabled employment of the core team.

11. Conclusion

11.1 The Jurassic Coast Partnership Plan 2020 - 2025 presents a renewed yet consistent approach to managing the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site and meeting our obligations as a Local Authority. By continuing the funding

agreement at its current level with the Jurassic Coast Trust this offers the best financial model to Dorset Council and delivery of many corporate aims including tangible economic benefits to Dorset.

John Sellgren
Executive Director for Place

5 May 2020