

Full Council

8 March 2019

Adoption of the Dorset and Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans 2019-2024

For Decision

Portfolio Holder

Cllr David Walsh, Planning

Senior Leadership Team Contact:

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Report Author:

H Jordan, Corporate Manager, Planning (Community & Policy Development)

Statutory Authority

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

Purpose of Report

- 1 To enable the statutory reviews of the two Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans (for the Dorset and Cranborne Chase AONBs) to be completed

Recommendations

- 2 That the Dorset AONB Management Plan, included as Appendix 1 of this report, and the Cranborne Chase AONB Management Plan, included as Appendix 2, be adopted

Reason for Decision

- 3 To ensure that the statutory responsibilities in relation to the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are met.

Background and Reason Decision Needed

- 4 North Dorset includes parts of two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Dorset AONB and Cranborne Chase AONB. The preparation and review of a Management Plan for each Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a statutory requirement for local authorities. Plans must be reviewed every five years and these are the fourth editions of the management plans for both Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Plans are the key

governance documents for the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, steering the work of the staff teams and partner organisations and helping to support bids for external funding.

- 5 The revised Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan was approved by the Partnership Board on 15 November 2018 but must be taken to all the constituent local authorities for formal adoption.
- 6 The review process, originally agreed by the Board in May 2017, has taken twelve months and has included engagement with expert stakeholders, partner organisations, community representatives and members of the public. The process began with a series of workshops with 'expert review groups', involving over 50 people, followed by the AONB Forum which was attended largely by parish and town councils and other community groups and partnerships. This was followed by a twelve-week formal consultation period which was widely advertised online and through social media channels. All county and district councillors in the area were directly informed, as were all parish clerks. Copies of the document were available in public libraries and at council offices.
- 7 During the 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 also 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.
- 8 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.
- 9 The final plans now need to be adopted by the full Councils of all the local authorities within each Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Implications

Corporate Plan

The Management Plans contribute towards the Corporate Plan objective of improving quality of life, including enhancing the quality of life of people living and working in the district, and safeguarding and providing opportunities to enjoy the natural and built environment now and in the future.

Financial

The Management Plans have been prepared by the AONB staff teams, which are overseen by Partnership Boards that include member representatives of all the councils. Over 75% of the funding for each staff unit is from Defra: the remainder comes from the local authorities. North Dorset District Council currently contributes £2,286 towards the core costs of the Dorset AONB and £4,092 towards those of the Cranborne Chase AONB. From the 2019/20 financial year, the local authority contributions from within Dorset will come entirely from the new Dorset Council.

The plans have the potential to be used as the key support documents for attracting funds for AONB management: the 2014-19 Dorset AONB Management Plan has helped to achieve over £7.5 million value of delivery coordinated by the AONB Partnership to date, and both AONBs have achieved significant funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for major landscape-scale projects.

Equalities

Equalities Impact Assessments have been undertaken during the preparation of the management plans, and amendments made as a result.

Environmental

The plans set out policies and proposals to protect and enhance the environmental quality of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, including their natural beauty, biodiversity and heritage.

Economic Development

The plans encourage appropriate rural economic development and help to promote the area, which is of benefit for tourism and other rural businesses. Local research has shown the significant economic benefit of the designation, and projects such as the Dorset Food and Drink initiative help to support and promote local businesses.

Risk Management (including Health & Safety)

Reputational risk if the management plans are not adopted in the required timescale, as preparing and reviewing the management plans is part of the council's statutory duties.

Human Resources

The plan has been prepared by the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Teams, which are funded by Defra and the local councils, as referred to above. A member and an officer attend the Partnership Board meetings to represent this Council.

Consultation and Engagement

The Plans have been subject to public and stakeholder consultation, and their preparation overseen by the Partnership Boards.

Appendices

Appendix 1 –Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2019-2024

Appendix 2 – Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2019-2024.

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>

The Cranborne Chase AONB Management Plan and supporting documentation can be viewed at <http://www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk/publications/management-plan-consultation/>

Footnote

Issues relating to financial, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

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