

Report to: Cabinet
Date of Meeting: 3 April 2019
Public Document: Yes
Exemption: None

Review date for release None

Agenda item: 13

Subject: Adoption of the Blackdown Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24

Purpose of report: East Devon District Council, together with Devon and Somerset County Councils, Mid Devon and South Somerset District Councils and Taunton Deane Borough Council, authorised the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership to undertake a review of the Management Plan for the AONB by April 2019, as required under Section IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Public consultation on the review took place in autumn 2018; now, following endorsement by the AONB Partnership and final approval from the statutory consultee, Natural England, adoption of the AONB Management Plan by East Devon District Council and the other local authorities is required before lodging the Plan with Defra.

Recommendation: Formal Adoption of the Blackdown Hills AONB Management Plan

Reason for recommendation: Under Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 the relevant local authorities are required to review the AONB Management Plans for the Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONBs at intervals of not more than 5 years. The review for the 2014-19 Plans needs to be completed by April 2019.

East Devon District Council with other local authorities has authorised the Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONB Partnerships to review the AONB Management Plans on their behalf.

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Financial implications: Any financial implications are included within the AONB budget

Legal implications: The legal position is detailed in the report and no further comment is required.

Equalities impact: Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk

There are no risks associated with this decision

Links to background information: [Blackdown Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-2024](#)



Report in full

1.1 Under Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, East Devon District, together with other local authorities was required to produce Management Plans for the East Devon and Blackdown Hills AONBs by April 2004 and subsequently review them at intervals of not more than five years. Along with all other relevant local authorities, East Devon District has authorised the East Devon and Blackdown Hills AONB Partnerships to carry out this duty on its behalf; this work has been co-ordinated by the AONB teams.

1.2 The CROW Act 2000 and guidance from Natural England /Defra provides advice on the scale, nature and content of Management Plans: A Management Plan should serve to highlight a vision for the AONB and contain objectives, policies and targets for the delivery of the Plan. The Plan should be reviewed every five years. The delivery of the Plan is coordinated through the AONB Partnership and subject to availability of funding from Defra, the Local Authorities, and other parties.

1.3 The review of both the East Devon and Blackdown Hills AONB Management Plan followed former guidance to ensure a broadly consistent approach both nationally and locally. Both Partnerships agreed that the reviews should be conducted with as light a touch as possible given the status of the UK's relationship with the EU and potential changes over the next five-year period, particularly in environmental policy and programmes, including the current Government review of National Parks and AONBs (the Glover review). The East Devon AONB Management Plan was presented to Cabinet for adoption in February.

1.4 The review process has been a participatory one, with members of the Partnership Management Group, local authority officers and other stakeholders involved in identifying key matters and considerations, in advance of a wider six-week public consultation on the revised draft (held October – November 2018).

1.5 The Plan was also screened under Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment regulations to ensure policies in the Plan meet these assessment requirements.

1.6 Following public consultation the draft Plan has been revised, and the final version of the Management Plan is required to undergo formal consultation with the statutory consultee, Natural England before local authority adoption.

1.7 At the time of writing we are awaiting formal approval for the Management Plan from Natural England, confirming that the Management Plan meets the legislative requirements of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. No issues are anticipated, and it is expected that this will be in place prior to the Cabinet meeting. The Blackdown Hills AONB Management Plan is recommended by the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership to the Council for adoption as the statutory Management Plan for the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for the period 2019-2024. The Plan will be formally confirmed to Defra following local authority adoption.