

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 10th July 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan consultation

Report summary:

East Devon District Council together with other local authorities has previously authorised the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership to undertake a review of the AONB Management Plan by March 31st 2025, as required under Section IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

The review process is well underway; key issues, new challenges and opportunities have been identified, including through stakeholder engagement, and approval is now sought for public consultation on a draft of the reviewed Plan to take place during September and October 2024. This will inform any changes to be made and once finalised the revised Management Plan will be recommended by the National Landscape Partnership for adoption by each of the local authorities by the end of March 2025.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That Cabinet agrees to the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership undertaking public consultation on the reviewed Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan for 2025-2030.

Reason for recommendation:

To enable the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership to carry out the consultation on the reviewed Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan. East Devon District Council, with other local authorities, has authorised the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership to review the Management Plan on their behalf. Consultation is a standard component of statutory Plan preparation, involving a consultation period during which consultees, including the public, can comment on the draft Plan.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination

- Communications and Democracy
- Economy
- Finance and Assets
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk;

Links to background information

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
 - A greener East Devon
 - A resilient economy
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Report in full

1.1 Under Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, East Devon District Council, together with other local authorities is required to produce a Management Plan for the Blackdown Hills AONB (now known as National Landscape) and review it at intervals of not more than five years (exceptionally, Defra authorised a 12-month extension to the review of the current Plan). Along with the other relevant local authorities, East Devon District Council has authorised the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership to perform this duty on its behalf; this work is co-ordinated by the National Landscape team.

1.2 The CROW Act (and as amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023) and guidance from Natural England provides advice on the scale, nature and content of Management Plans. A Management Plan should serve to highlight a shared long term vision for the National Landscape and contain ambitions, targets and actions that seek to further the statutory purpose, i.e. to conserve and enhance the designated AONB. The delivery of the Plan will be subject to availability of funding from Defra, the local authorities, and other parties.

1.3 The Partnership has taken the opportunity to undertake a more thorough review than in the previous cycle to ensure that the Plan remains fit for purpose and up to date. The Plan is expected to contribute to Government's Environmental Improvement Plan (including targets) and it is important to make sure it addresses the significant issues of the climate emergency and nature recovery, taking account of Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Plans and local authority climate action plans.

1.4 To help identify important matters and considerations for inclusion, discussions and workshops have been held with key partners, Partnership Management Group, and representatives of partnership organisations, in advance of a wider public consultation on a draft reviewed plan.

1.5 Public consultation on the Draft Plan for 2025-30 is proposed to take place in September to October (6 weeks). Details of specific promotion and engagement opportunities during that period are still to be determined, but an option could be to hold a session with Councillors for example if there were interest. Further to the public consultation period, the Draft Plan will be revised and a final draft version will undergo formal consultation with the statutory consultee, Natural England.

Following this, the Management Plan will be finalised and recommended by the National Landscape Partnership to the Council (and the other relevant local authorities) for adoption as the statutory Management Plan for the Blackdown Hills National Landscape.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications resulting from the report.

Legal implications:

There are no substantive legal issues to be added to this report