

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Environment and Transport
Date:	23 April 2019
Title:	Cranborne Chase, North Wessex Downs and Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans 2019-24.
Report From:	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

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1. Recommendation

- 1.1. That approval is given for the adoption of the 2019-24 Management Plans for the Cranborne Chase, North Wessex Downs, and Chichester Harbour Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and the documents are published in accordance with the requirements of Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The purpose of this paper is to seek approval for the adoption of the 2019-2024 Management Plans for the Cranborne Chase, North Wessex Downs, and Chichester Harbour Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Adoption entails formal approval of amendments arising from the review of the AONB management plans, as required by Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000.
- 2.2. The three draft plans are appended to this report. Some final updates are required, but the principal content is included here for consideration and approval. As and when approval has been confirmed from all the relevant authorities, the revised documents will officially replace the previous versions.
- 2.3. Approval of these AONB Management Plans will enable the County Council to meet its statutory responsibility to review, produce and publish strategic land management plans for AONBs within its geographic area and help in delivering its Strategic Plan aims that 'People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment' and 'People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities'. The statutory responsibility applies equally to all other relevant local authorities for each of the three AONBs.
- 2.4. The coordination of the review, production and publication of these strategic Management Plans, together with the coordination of their delivery, has been delegated to the respective AONB Partnerships (Chichester Harbour Conservancy acts as the governance body for the Chichester Harbour AONB), working on the County Council's behalf.

- 2.5. The AONB Management Plans submitted with this paper have been approved/endorsed by the Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership Board, North Wessex Downs AONB Council of Partners and the Chichester Harbour Conservancy, respectively. Following approval by the relevant local authorities, the Management Plans will be subject to further design work and formatting for publication, as appropriate.
- 2.6. Local Authority contributions to its AONBs enable their Partnerships to draw-down significant additional match funding. For instance, for every pound paid to the North Wessex Downs AONB, a further £5.39 was secured to enable the delivery of Management Plan objectives in 2017/18 in Hampshire and across the AONB.
- 2.7. This paper sets out the contextual information on Hampshire's AONBs and how these strategic Management Plans deliver Hampshire County Council priorities.

3. Contextual information

- 3.1. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are designated by Government, under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, for the primary purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the landscape. Protection of AONBs is enhanced by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000.
- 3.2. Section 89 of the CRoW Act places a statutory duty on relevant local authorities to review, prepare and publish Management Plans for AONBs within their geographic areas, collectively with other relevant local authorities, at five yearly intervals. Management Plans for Hampshire's AONBs were first published in 2004 and following 'light-touch' reviews, published again in 2009 and 2014. The current plans have again undergone light-touch reviews, following advice from Natural England, to update them for the plan period 2019-2024.
- 3.3. The 2019-2024 Management Plans are neither development plans nor completely new Management Plans. They have been updated to reflect changes in legislation, regulation and policy, projects delivered and opportunities for delivery. Changes to the Plans include: refreshed vision and objectives/policies; appropriate reference made to the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and reviewed National Policy Framework (NPPF); greater focus on climate change, natural capital, and ecosystem services; detail of projects delivered over the last five years; and the identification of opportunities for delivery and funding over the next five years.
- 3.4. The vision, objectives and policies have been made more concise and objectives and policies made more realistic to enable Management Plan delivery. Objectives and policies have also been amended where new projects and priorities will be pursued over the next five years.
- 3.5. The 25 Year Environment Plan is now referenced in the Ministerial Foreword of each Management Plan and additional references to relevant sections have been inserted. Reference has also been made to the recently initiated national review of protected landscapes (the 'Glover Review'), a key ambition in the Environment Plan. The Environment Plan recognises the importance of AONBs in delivering the Government's environmental ambitions.

- 3.6. Although the emphasis placed on the protection of AONBs in the reviewed NPPF remains broadly the same, the structure of the national policy document has been significantly amended and, as a result, referencing to the document has been amended throughout the Management Plans, as appropriate.
- 3.7. Climate change has become a more pressing international issue since the current Management Plans were reviewed, as has been the recognition of the benefits of a natural capital and ecosystem services approach to land management and the health and well-being benefits of AONBs to communities. The cross-cutting nature of these issues/topics has been emphasised in the Management Plans, suitable projects and initiatives included, and updated targets and methodologies referenced.
- 3.8. The Management Plans refer to projects delivered during the last five years and identify opportunities for project delivery over the period of the plans and beyond. Opportunities listed include the potential for the AONBs to be a delivery vehicle for agri-environment and rural development schemes, which could see increased resources to the AONBs and opportunities for better communication with the farming and landowning communities.
- 3.9. The approach to generic issues and topics varies between the respective Management Plans and reflects the different views and priorities of each AONB Partnership and the different site-specific characteristics and requirements of each of the AONB landscapes.
- 3.10. All other AONB relevant Local Authorities, in addition to Hampshire County Council, are also required to approve each respective AONB Management Plan and have already approved or are in the process of approving the Plans. A list of relevant local authorities for each of the three AONBs, including both local authority and Defra financial contributions, is provided in Appendix 1.
- 3.11. Additionally, under Section 85 of the CRoW Act relevant local authorities have a duty to 'have regard' to the primary purpose of AONBs in all the decisions they make. The primary purpose of AONBs is 'conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area' and this purpose is the cornerstone of AONB Management Plans.
- 3.12. Partnerships, underpinned by small AONB delivery teams, were established by relevant local authorities, including Hampshire County Council, to coordinate the preparation, publication and implementation of the statutory AONB Management Plans on their behalf. The Chichester Harbour Conservancy is the governing body for the Chichester Harbour AONB.
- 3.13. Notice was given to Natural England by each AONB partnership of the proposal to review the Management Plans at the outset of the process and copies of redrafted plans sent to it on completion, in compliance with Section 90 of the CRoW Act. Observations made by Natural England at all stages of the process have been taken into consideration. In addition, full twelve-week public consultation was undertaken for each reviewed Management Plan. Copies of the reviewed AONB Management Plans, approved by the relevant local authorities, are required to be sent by the respective AONB Partnerships to the Secretary of State for approval.
- 3.14. Since the finalisation of the first AONB Management Plans in 2004, the AONB teams and wider partnerships have been undertaking activities to deliver

actions set out in the plans. The delivery of policies and actions for the AONBs is reviewed and evaluated annually.

- 3.15. The Chichester Harbour AONB Management Plan is an Integrated Plan to ensure that the planning of the operation of the harbour and the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the AONB are integrated.
- 3.16. Hampshire County Council has been actively engaged with the Cranborne Chase AONB and North Wessex Downs AONB Partnerships in the review of the respective Management Plans via:
 - County Council Member and Officer steering of the respective Partnership Boards;
 - Officer guidance and advice via the respective Partnership Steering Groups;
 - Officer input to the respective Management Plan Review Groups;
 - Officer input via Management Plan workshops;
 - Officer response to the first drafts of the revised Management Plans;
 - Officer technical response to the formal consultations on the final drafts of the Management Plans; and
 - Approval and publication (this part of the process).
- 3.17. Hampshire County Council has been engaged with the Chichester Harbour AONB and review of the Management Plan via:
 - Member input to the Chichester Harbour Conservancy Board;
 - Officer response to the first draft of the revised Management Plan;
 - Officer involvement on the Management Plan Steering Group;
 - Officer technical response to the formal consultation on the final draft of the Management Plan; and
 - Approval and publication (this part of the process).

4. Finance

- 4.1. The Government, through Defra, provides up to 75% match-funding for AONB partnerships, with relevant local authority partners collectively responsible for the remaining 25%. Defra funding is dependent on the local authority funding being in place. Local authority funding is shared across relevant local authorities following agreed funding formulae.
- 4.2. For the Cranborne Chase and North Wessex Downs AONBs, annual contributions from each relevant local authority are set out in respective Partnership Agreements. Defra 3:1 match funding is confirmed on a three-year cycle. For the financial year 2019/20 Hampshire County Council's agreed contribution to the Cranborne Chase AONB is £2,187.48 and to the North Wessex Downs AONB is £8,854.69.
- 4.3. For Chichester Harbour AONB, relevant local authority funding is paid through the Chichester Harbour Conservancy from the Chichester Harbour precepts, paid by Hampshire County Council and West Sussex County Council under the terms of the Chichester Harbour Act 1971. This funding receives significant match funding from Defra.
- 4.4. The Management Plans do not commit the County Council to any further expenditure beyond the annual contributions outlined above.

5. Performance

- 5.1. Although the primary purpose of the AONB designation is to 'conserve and enhance natural beauty', the CRoW Act makes clear that in pursuing this primary purpose account should be taken of the needs of local communities and that particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development. All three AONB Management Plans contain policies to support sustainable local businesses and sustainable development.
- 5.2. In addition, the CRoW Act makes clear that recreation should be met in so far as this is consistent with the needs of the rural economy, including agriculture and forestry and the conservation of natural beauty.
- 5.3. The County Council's financial contributions to Hampshire's AONB partnerships has enabled those partnerships to draw-down many times these figures in external funding for core and project activities (e.g. £5.39 for every £1.00 of funding to the North Wessex Downs AONB partnership).
- 5.4. Some examples of recent projects/funding include:
 - Current bid by the Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership for approximately £1.7million of grant funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscapes Partnership Scheme (total project value £2.4million), which would include significant funding and project work for that part of Hampshire within the AONB;
 - Supporting the development of community projects within the AONBs through their Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) small project grant schemes; and
 - Development of a bid by the Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership for the AONB to become an International Dark Sky Reserve.
- 5.5. The Chichester Harbour AONB Management Plan is an integrated plan for the AONB, the Conservancy and for management of water-based activity in the Harbour, ensuring integration in policy implementation.
- 5.6. The delivery of the AONB Management Plans, which are monitored by their respective partnerships through an annual review of the implementation of their respective action plans, will make a significant positive contribution to the delivery of the County Council's Strategic Plan.

6. Consultation and Equalities

- 6.1. Formal public consultations were undertaken for all three draft AONB Management Plans (2019-24) and the draft plans amended as a result of comments received. Public consultation followed internal consultations with AONB Partnership Members, officers and other stakeholders.
- 6.2. Equalities Impact Assessments (EqIA) were undertaken for each AONB Management Plan by the respective AONB Partnerships. These concluded that, due to the inclusive nature of the Management Plans and their purpose in conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONBs, their objectives and policies would have no negative impacts on those groups of people identified in law as being at risk of discrimination, or on poverty or rurality.

7. Other Key Issues

- 7.1. Although there is a statutory duty on relevant local authorities to review AONB Management Plans on a five-yearly basis, the advice from Natural England is that this should constitute a 'light touch' review only, in order to avoid diverting resources away from delivery.
- 7.2. Initial reviews of current AONB Management Plans (approved by Hampshire County Council in 2014) reflected the national guidance approach that substantial re-drafting is not required. The overall visions, objectives and policies remain broadly relevant, but the plans required updating to take account of changing national and local policy, new legislation, opportunities around Brexit and the publication of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, to ensure that the policies and actions for the next five years will be fit for purpose.
- 7.3. All three AONB partnerships considered that their current plans would benefit from being more concise and easily accessible, and review and redrafting has reflected this.

8. Future direction

- 8.1. Once approved, the AONB Management Plans will operate for a five year period until 31 March 2024 (30 September 2024 for the North Wessex Downs AONB). The process of reviewing the plans will begin in late 2022 or early 2023 and include the County Council's involvement. Reviewed and updated Management Plans will then be published in 2024.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Strategic Plan**

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	No
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	No
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	yes

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Chichester Harbour and Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – Management Plan Review	24 March 2009
North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan	28 July 2009
Adoption of Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB 2014-2019 Management Plans	4 March 2014
Adoption of North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) 2014-2019 Management Plan	1 April 2014
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act	1949
Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act	2000

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
Cranborne Chase AONB Management Plan 2019-2024	Strategic Planning Group
North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-2024	Strategic Planning Group
Chichester Harbour AONB Management Plan 2019-2024	Strategic Planning Group
None	

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1 The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.2 Equalities Impact Assessment:

Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) Screening was undertaken for each AONB Management Plan on behalf of their respective Partnerships. These assessments concluded that, due to the inclusive nature of the Management Plans and their purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONBs, their objectives and policies would have no negative impacts on those groups of people identified in law as being at risk of discrimination or on poverty or rurality.

The plans make provision for improvement of physical access to the protected landscapes for individuals with mobility problems.

2. Impact on crime and disorder

2.1. It is considered that approval of the AONB Management Plans will have no impact on crime and disorder.

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

The focus of the AONB Management Plans is on the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the landscape. Specific policies/objectives are contained within the AONB Management Plans that seek to reduce our carbon footprint/energy consumption.

- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

The effects of climate change on the natural beauty of the landscape of the AONBs is a key issue in the AONB Management Plan and policies/objectives that seek to address climate change adaptation are contained within the plans.

Appendix 1**AONB Relevant Local Authorities and AONB funding**

Cranborne Chase AONB	2019/20 (£)
Hampshire County Council	2,187.48
Wiltshire Council	39,259.00
Dorset County Council	9,428.00
East Dorset District Council	5,193.65
North Dorset District Council	4,234.24
New Forest District Council	2,187.48
Somerset County Council	735.55
Mendip District Council	434.94
South Somerset District Council	300.62
Total Local Authority contribution	63,960.96
Defra contribution	220,363.00

North Wessex Downs AONB	2019/20 (£)
Hampshire County Council	8,855.00
Wiltshire Council	16,322.00
West Berkshire District Council	13,211.00
Oxfordshire County Council	7,299.00
Swindon Borough Council	5,121.00
Test Valley Borough Council	3,939.00
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council	3,939.00
South Oxfordshire District Council	3,939.00
Vale of White Horse District Council	3,939.00
Total Local Authority contribution	66,564.00
Defra contribution	248,684.00

Chichester Harbour AONB	2019/20
Hampshire County Council	*
West Sussex County Council	*
Havant District Council	*
Chichester District Council	*
Defra contribution	148,900.00

* Local authority contributions to the AONB are provided by the Chichester Harbour Conservancy from the Precepts paid by Hampshire County Council and West Sussex County Council.