

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**Decision Report**

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Environment
Date:	4 March 2014
Title:	Adoption of Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB 2014-2019 Management Plans
Reference:	5665
Report From:	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

Contact name: Garry King

Tel: 01962 667946

Email: garry.king@hants.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek the adoption by the County Council of the 2014-2019 Management Plans for the Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB (provided as appendices to this report).
- 1.2. Adoption of these AONB Management Plans will enable the County Council to meet its statutory responsibility to produce and adopt strategic land management plans for AONBs within its geographic area and help in delivering the County Council's corporate aims.
- 1.3. Each AONB Management Plan sets out a vision and policy framework for the delivery of actions to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape as well as take account of local communities, with particular regard to the promotion of sustainable forms of economic and social development.
- 1.4. The policies of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Management Plan reflect the deeply rural nature of the area, its rural economy, communities and land use management. The Chichester Harbour AONB Management Plan policies additionally reflect the special nature of the harbour seascape and its associated marine-based economy and recreational uses. The plan also reflects the Chichester Harbour Conservancy's statutory functions relating to water-based and land-based activities.
- 1.5. The review, production and publication of these strategic Management Plans, together with the coordination of their delivery, has been delegated to

AONB Partnerships on the County Council's behalf, through Memoranda of Agreement (MoA), signed in 2013.

- 1.6. Local Authority contributions to the AONBs enable their Partnerships to draw-down significant additional match funding. For instance for every pound paid to the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB in 2013/14, eleven pounds were secured to enable the delivery of Management Plan objectives.
- 1.7. This report sets out the contextual information on Hampshire's AONBs and how these strategic Management Plans deliver Hampshire County Council priorities.

2. Contextual information

- 2.1. 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. The Government provides up to 75% funding for AONB partnerships, with local authority partners (constituent local authorities) sharing responsibility for at least 25%. Defra has secured its funding for AONBs for at least the next two years.
- 2.2. Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 places a statutory duty on constituent local authorities to publish Management Plans for AONBs within their administrative areas and to review and publish them at five yearly intervals. AONB Management Plans were first published in 2004 (2004-2009) and following a review and update, published again in 2009 (2009-2014). The current plans have undergone 'light touch' reviews to update them for 2014-2019.
- 2.3. Partnerships, underpinned by small AONB delivery teams, were established to coordinate the preparation, publication and implementation of the statutory AONB Management Plans.
- 2.4. Copies of both the Chichester Harbour AONB and Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Management Plans, adopted by the constituent local authorities, are required to be sent, by the respective AONB Partnerships, to the Secretary of State by 1 April 2014.
- 2.5. It should be noted that Hampshire's other AONB, the North Wessex Downs AONB, is working to a slightly different timetable and it is intended that this plan will be published by September 2014. This plan will come to the 1 April 2014 Executive Member meeting for adoption.
- 2.6. Since the adoption of the Management Plans in March 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 both of the AONBs is reviewed and evaluated annually through Management Plan reviews.

2.7. Hampshire County Council has been engaged with the Chichester Harbour AONB and Management Plan via:

- (i) Member input through the Chichester Harbour Conservancy Board;
- (ii) Officer response to the first draft of the revised Management Plan;
- (iii) Officer involvement on the Management Plan Steering Group;
- (iv) Officer technical response to the formal consultation on the final draft of Management Plan; and
- (v) Formal adoption (this part of the process).

2.8. Hampshire County Council has been actively engaged with the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB and Management Plan via:

- (i) Member and Officer steering of the Partnership Panel;
- (ii) Officer guidance and advice via the Steering and Advice Group;
- (iii) Steering of policy formulation at the AONB Planning Seminar;
- (iv) Officer input via Management Plan workshops;
- (v) Officer response to the first draft of the revised Management Plan;
- (vi) Officer technical response to formal consultation on final draft of Management Plan;
- (vii) Preparation of Equalities Impact Assessment of the Management Plan on behalf of the AONB Partnership; and
- (viii) Formal adoption (this part of the process).

3. Funding situation

3.1. Chichester Harbour AONB: the activities of the AONB are paid for from the Chichester Harbour precept, payable by Hampshire County Council and West Sussex County Council under the terms of the Chichester Harbour Act 1971. Defra also makes an annual contribution to the AONB. For 2013/14 each County Council's contribution from the precept to the AONB was £52,950, which will rise to £57,750 in 2014/15. Defra's contribution to the AONB in 2013/14 was £150,389 and will fall by approximately 6% in 2014/15.

3.2. The implementation of the Chichester Harbour AONB Management Plan does not provide justification for increase in Chichester Harbour precept contributions. Discussions regarding the County Council's precept to the Chichester Harbour Conservancy are independent of the AONB and the Management Plan review and adoption process.

- 3.3. Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB: Hampshire County Council contributes 3.42% of total local authority funding to the AONB based on an agreed formula, which amounted to £2,198.03 for 2013/14. Defra's contribution to the AONB in 2013/14 was £222,618. The County Council's contribution will fall by approximately 6% in 2014/15 to correspond with the intended fall in Defra funding in 2014/15 by approximately 6%. A breakdown of the Partnership contributions to the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB is provided in Appendix 1.
- 3.4. Funding arrangements are set out in a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) for each AONB, signed by constituent local authorities and Defra, which run until 31 March 2015. Defra match funding is confirmed on a three year cycle and is secured for the next two financial years after which Defra will review the next three year funding cycle.
- 3.5. The Management Plans do not commit the County Council to any further expenditure beyond the contributions outlined above.

4. Performance

- 4.1. 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. Both AONB Management Plans contain policies to support sustainable local businesses and sustainable development.
- 4.2. In addition, the CRoW Act makes clear that recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the needs of the rural economy, including agriculture and forestry and the conservation of natural beauty.
- 4.3. Hampshire's contribution to the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB of £2198.03 for 2013/2014 has enabled the AONB to draw-down eleven times that figure in other funding for core and project activities (including the final year of the Sowing SEEDS Leader programme).
- 4.4. Some examples of recent Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB projects include:
 - (i) The funding of over 35 community, business and tourism projects across the AONB since 2009 through the European funded 'Sowing SEEDS' Rural Development Fund;
 - (ii) Supporting the development of community shops within the AONB through the Defra funded Sustainable Development Fund;
 - (iii) The provision of integrated land management advice for game managers;

- (iv) The creation of a coordinated wood-fuel initiative for woodland owners.
- 4.5. The funding that the County Council provides to the Chichester Harbour AONB enables the AONB to draw down almost one and a half times as much funding from Defra for core and project activities.
- 4.6. 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 of policy delivery.
- 4.7. The delivery of the AONB Management Plans is monitored by the respective Partnerships through an annual review of the delivery of their respective action plans (which are to be developed after adoption of the Management Plans). For the Chichester Harbour AONB, achievements are reported through their [Management Plan Annual Review](#). For the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB, achievements to date are outlined in the relevant sections of the 2014-2019 Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Management Plan.

5. Other key issues

- 5.1. Although there is a statutory duty on constituent local authorities to review AONB Management Plans on a five yearly basis, the advice from Natural England is to undertake a 'light touch' review only, in order to avoid diverting resources away from delivery.
- 5.2. Initial reviews of both current AONB Management Plans (adopted by Hampshire County Council in 2009) reflected the national guidance that substantial re-drafting is not required. The overall visions for the AONBs, together with objectives and policies remain relevant, but the plans required updating to take account of changing local, regional and national policy, new legislation, and to ensure that the actions for the next five years are fit for purpose.
- 5.3. The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Partnership considered that the current adopted plan would benefit from being more concise and easily accessible and the redrafting has also reflected this.

6. Other options considered

- 6.1. Option 1: Do not adopt the Management Plans. Rejected as this would leave the County Council in breach of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000, and create a high risk of damaging its reputation and leadership in this field.
- 6.2. Option 2: Further substantive amendment of the Management Plans. Rejected as substantive amendments are not required by Natural England and with those modifications recommended by officers that have been incorporated, the Management Plans are considered fit for purpose.

7. Future direction

- 7.1. Once adopted, the AONB Management Plans will operate for a five year period until 31 March 2019. The process of reviewing the adopted plans will begin in late 2017 or early 2018 and include the County Council's involvement. Reviewed and updated Management Plans will then be published by 1 April 2019.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1. That the 2014-2019 Management Plan for the Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty be adopted.
- 8.2. That the 2014-2019 Management Plan for the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty be adopted.

Rpt/5665/GK

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Chichester Harbour and Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – Management Plan Review	592	24 March 2009
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>
Chichester Harbour AONB Management Plan 2014-2019	Strategic Environmental Delivery Group
Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Management Plan 2014-2019	Strategic Environmental Delivery Group

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA):

- 1.1 An EqIA Scoping Report has been prepared for the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Management Plan by Hampshire County Council, on behalf of its respective Partnership. Similarly, an EqIA for the Chichester Harbour AONB Management Plan has been undertaken by the AONB Unit.
- 1.2 Both assessments have concluded that the objectives and policies of the AONB Management Plans would have no negative impacts on those groups of people identified in law as being at risk of discrimination or on poverty or rurality.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

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

3. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA):

- 3.1. In order to comply with the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, SEAs were undertaken for both the Chichester Harbour and Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Management Plans. The SEA process is an iterative process that runs in parallel with the formulation of Management Plan policies, which provides the opportunity to modify policies to minimise conflict with SEA objectives.
- 3.2. For both Management Plans the respective SEAs have concluded that the policies are neutral, supportive or strongly supportive of the SEA objectives.

4. Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA):

- 4.1. In order to comply with The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended), an HRA must be undertaken where a plan may potentially have an impact on the integrity of a Natura 2000 Site (European protected site for nature conservation and Ramsar sites). HRA was undertaken for both AONB Management Plans by their respective Partnerships in compliance with AONB specific guidance provided by Natural England.
- 4.2. For both Management Plans the respective HRAs have concluded that the Management Plans are unlikely to have any significant adverse impacts on Natura 2000 sites.

5. Climate Change:

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

Climate change has been identified in both the Chichester Harbour and Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Management Plans 2014-2019 as one of the key forces for change that will affect both AONBs into the future and that there is a need to affect positive change through more sustainable lifestyles. Policies contained in the Management Plans help to promote sustainability and would not lead to an increase in carbon footprint or energy consumption.

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

Adaption to climate change and increased resilience in terms of its affects on the natural environment and communities is a key thread that runs through both Management Plans.

Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) - Partnership and Defra funding 2013/14

Organisation	2013/14
Hampshire County Council	£2,199.25
Wiltshire Council	£39,478.88
Dorset County Council	£9,480.62
Somerset County Council	£739.10
East Dorset District Council	£5,222.69
North Dorset District Council	£4,257.90
New Forest District Council	£2,199.25
Mendip District Council	£437.36
South Somerset District Council	£302.30
<i>Total Local Authority Funding</i>	<i>£64,317.35</i>
Defra Funding	£222,618
Total Partnership and Defra Funding	£286,935.35