

## Agenda Item

**Executive Board**

**2 December 2009**

**CP/WHS**



## World Heritage Site Management Plan – Final Plan

### Summary

The Dorset and East Devon Coast between Orcombe Point, near Exmouth and Studland Bay near Poole was inscribed on the World Heritage List by UNESCO on the 13 December 2001. The Site was granted WHS status for its Earth history and geological features. The story behind the inscription is a “walk through time” from Exmouth to Studland covering some 185 million years of the Earth history. It is England’s only Natural World Heritage Site and its boundary is from mean low water mark to the top of the cliffs and excludes the man-made frontages of the coastal towns. This document is the final Plan for consideration and adoption by East Devon DC as a key partner in the management and support of the WHS. There were some specific comments on the Draft Plan raised by Executive Board at its September 2009 meeting which have been addressed within the main report.

### Recommendation

**That Executive Board recommends the adoption of the WHS Site Management Plan 2009-14.**

#### a) Reasons for Recommendation

The partners within the WHS boundary have been requested, following the consultation of the draft WHS Management Plan, to present the final Plan back to appropriate Committee’s for adoption.

#### b) Alternative Options

None identified

#### c) Risk Considerations

Failure to adopt in the Plan would undermine opportunities for the Council to influence policy developments and future work programmes as a key partner within the Site’s management. The Management Plan is a non statutory document but can provide an important evidence base for the LDF process.

#### d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

The proposed recommendation accords with the corporate priority to “Take care of and improve our environment”. There is no specific budget for delivering WHS objectives though the work being undertaken to deliver two Gateway Visitor Centres at Seaton and Exmouth will help to significantly raise the profile of the “Jurassic Coast” within East Devon. The Council supports the work of the wider WHS Partnership with the Countryside Manager representing EDDC on its Management Steering Group.

#### e) Date for Review of Decision

N/A

## **Main Body of the Report**

### **1 Consultation process**

1.1 The Plan is a public document which outlines aims and policies for managing the Site over the next five years with a range of activities for achieve them.

1.2 The structure of Plan is as follows :

- Chapter 1 - Introduction: site description etc
- Chapter 2 - Justification for WHS status
- Chapter 3 – Site Protection and Management
- Chapter 4 – Issues and Opportunities
- Chapter 5 – Vision, Aims and Policies
- Chapter 6 - Implementation

1.3 The draft Plan received a total of 78 official responses with more than 800 individual comments making this whole process challenging for the WHS Team.

### **2 Executive Board comments on the draft Plan**

2.1 Executive Board considered the draft Plan at its September 2009 meeting and felt that the core aims of coastal defences should:

- Ensure natural processes should not be disrupted except where life or important man made or natural assets are at risk;
- A range of options should be considered and schemes should be sustainable and work with natural processes as far as is possible;
- The benefits of defending must be equal to the costs;
- The issues of conflict need to be articulated within the Plan and also how the WHS Steering Group will consider them and reach a decision on how conservation and other objectives will be reconciled.

2.2 Executive Board had two specific points they wished to be considered and addressed within the draft Plan by the WHS Team;

- 1) That the recommendations be adopted within the revised final WHS Management Plan 2009-14, including site specific information, for example the need to address the issues of unnatural erosion rates at Pennington Point as well as other sites along the East Devon coastline
- 2) That the Council's role in, and engagement with, the WHS management be pursued.

### **3 WHS response to comments**

3.1 The comments made by Executive Board outlined in 2.2 were fed to the WHS Team as part of the Consultation and their response was :

- 1) "These concerns expressed by EDDC's Committee have been addressed, although without specific reference to Pennington Point or any other specific cases (such as East Cliff Lyme Regis, Durlston Bay Swanage, Weymouth Castle Road and others). The key change we

have made here is to make it clear that it is the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) that will provide the guidance as to whether coastal defences are likely, and the WHS designation should be taken into account – as it is – in the SMPs preparation. We have also identified tests required for Coastal Defences, as identified in the last version of the Management Plan, which came out of a specific request from the Sidmouth community and Devon County Council, in addition to your comments.

2) The WHS Steering Group has not, prior to this year, sought member representation from Councillors from any of the coastal local authorities; something agreed with the respective councils at the time of inscription. However a review of governance arrangements has been undertaken resulting in a range of different actions, one of which is Member representation. The Steering Group meeting of 16<sup>th</sup> April 2009 resolved to invite elected members to be present on the Steering Group. “

3.2 Since the presentation made by the WHS Team Leader to the Overview Committee in April 2009 there has been discussion with Cllr Ash about taking on a more active role in the governance matters of the WHS Steering Group. The WHS Team are committed to taking this issue forward once the Management Plan process is completed with formal agreement with all partners to ensure the invitation of elected Councillors onto the Steering Group.

3.3 This is to be welcomed as it will follow up a concern expressed at the September 2009 Executive Board meeting that the Council needs to engage more proactively in WHS matters and seek opportunities for positive partnership working.

### **Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications set out within the report on which to comment.

### **Financial Implications**

There are no identifiable financial implications.

### **Consultation on Reports to the Executive**

N/A

### **Background Papers**

- Dorset & East Devon WHS Management Plan 2009-14 (Final) - PDF

---

Charlie Plowden  
Countryside Manager

Executive Board  
2 December 2009