

## Agenda Item

Executive Board

25 June 2008

CP



## Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONBs – Draft Management Plans

### Summary

East Devon District Council along with all the other funding authorities have authorised the Blackdown Hills AONB Management Group and the East Devon AONB Partnership to produce revised and updated Management Plans for their respective AONBs. Therefore approval of the draft Management Plans is sought to enable wider consultation to be carried out as required by Natural England. Both Plans are intended to go out for public consultation for a minimum period of six weeks consultation from July, this maybe extended into late September to ensure enough time is allocated for as many comments as possible.

### Recommendation

That SMT approves :

1. the Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONBs draft Management Plans be approved for consultation
2. that where there maybe gaps in detail in the draft Plans that changes made will be made prior to public consultation commencing and that agreement of these changes will be delegated to Officers and/or Chairmen of the AONB Partnerships on behalf of the District Council.

#### a) Reasons for Recommendation

Approval is required to enable the wider consultation of the draft Management Plans with key stakeholders engaged in the management and care of the two AONBs and for a final draft to presented back to SMT and Executive Board in January 2009.

#### b) Alternative Options

None identified

#### c) Risk Considerations

That if both SMT and Executive Board refuse to approve a consultation process for the draft Plans then East Devon District Council will not be fulfilling its statutory duty to produce a Management Plan for those AONBs within its administrative area.

#### d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

The recommendation accords with Council Policy to take care of and improve its environment. The consultation and publication costs associated with both Plans has been identified and agreed within both AONB budget cycles for the 2008/09 financial year.

**e) Date for Review of Decision**

The AONB Management Plans will be brought back to SMT and Executive Board for final adoption early 2009.

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**1 Main Body of the Report**

1. Background

1.1 Both AONB Partnerships are jointly funded by a wide range of local authorities and Natural England with core costs of the AONB teams funded up to 75% from Natural England.

1.2 East Devon District Council acts as the host authority for the East Devon AONB team and is managed by the Planning & Countryside Service. The Blackdown Hills AONB is hosted by Devon County Council on behalf of a number of Devon and Somerset local authorities and managed by Devon County Council.

2. Review process for the Management Plans

2.1 Under Section IV of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000 a Management Plan is required to be produced by local authorities for whom the AONB falls within their administrative control. The District Council along with other local authorities authorised the respective AONB Partnerships to produce the Plans on their behalf in 2003. These Plans are now due for review.

2.2 The Management Plans that are being reviewed have now been in operation for five years and it is a requirement to now review and update the Plans to ensure they are still relevant. There had been a considerable amount of consultation of the existing Plans in 2003 and it is therefore proposed to follow a similar format for the 2008 review.

2.3 The CROW Act and guidance that was produced in 2003 by the then Countryside Agency is still relevant and will again provide a framework for the review of both documents.

2.4 The Plans that are attached to the report have been modified in structure, the main changes being :

- Adoption of a common format with the five Devon AONBs which has revised the structure around three main themes – Landscape, Sustainable Development & Management.
- There has been creation of sub theme Visions for the East Devon AONB Management Plan for each theme which supplements the overarching Vision
- Within both Plans there is information referencing the recently completed landscape character assessment for East Devon.

2.5 There are some gaps in the draft Plans and this is unavoidable due to the timeframe but along with Devon County Council and other local authorities it is recommended that Committees are advised that any changes should be made prior to the public consultation commencing and that agreement of these changes will be delegated to Officers from the funding bodies and/or the Chairmen of the AONB Partnerships

- 2.6 The timetable for the review of the Management Plans is a generic one for most AONBs in the south west and Devon and is attached as an Appendix to this report. The main addition to this process from five years ago is the requirement to carry out a Strategic Environment Assessment for the Plans.

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### **Legal Implications**

The statutory implications are as set out in the report

### **Financial Implications**

The costs can be contained within existing budgets

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

N/A

### **Background Papers**

- Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONBs draft Management Plans
- Timetable for review process

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Executive Board  
25 June 2008