

North Devon Coast AONB Management Plan

Statement on the Delay of Review 2024/25



Background

On 7 July 2022 the Right Honourable Lord Benyon, Parliamentary Secretary of State for Environment wrote to all AONBs and National Parks regarding the option for delaying the review of their Management Plans. This was primarily due to the proposals arising from the Landscapes Review and the work to implement non-legislative change during 2022/23. Changes include proposed new Management Plan guidance for both National Parks and AONBs to ensure that ambitious outcomes are agreed for the role of Protected Landscapes in delivering on the government's goals, aligned with the revised 25 Year Environment Plan and interim environmental targets under the Environment Act 2021 and the Net Zero Strategy.

Lord Benyon confirmed that:

*“Defra considers that that any Partnership wishing to delay their next Plan would still need to respect their five-year review cycles as stipulated by the Environment Act 1995 (for National Park Management Plans) and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (for AONB Management Plans). In order to comply with the law without compromising the integrity of future Management Plans, Defra judges that Partnerships could simply produce a **light-touch review** in which they commit to produce a new Management Plan after the new guidance is published.”*

Defra has considered what a light-touch review might look like and advises the following:

*“**Partnerships would agree and publish one page of text setting out their intentions for the next Management Plan.** This could include a brief vision statement, a summary of how the Management Plan will be structured, and a summary of the Partnerships' objectives over the next five-year review period (carrying forward actions and/or adding new ones for the year affected by the delay).*

*Producing a light-touch review of this nature would allow Partnerships to carry over their existing Plan by demonstrating they have considered the next Plan, in compliance with the law. **Partnerships would not need to consult extensively to produce this light-touch review, as we expect it would be pitched as a continuation/extension of the current Plan.***

We remain committed, however, to ensuring substantive Management Plan reviews are conducted. We therefore ask all Protected Landscapes electing to delay their next Management Plan to complete a review of that Plan no later than 31 December 2025.”

Current Position

The AONB Manager reported the proposal to defer the Review of the current Management Plan to the North Devon Coast AONB Partnership on 20 May 2022 and there was a unanimous decision to take up the option to delay to 2025. This was subsequently supported by officers from all three local authority partners who have statutory responsibility for the Review, pending formal agreement by their respective committees. This was reported to the Partnership meeting on 30 September 2022.

The following page sets out the intentions of the North Devon Coast AONB Partnership for the next Management Plan for North Devon Coast AONB in line with the Secretary of State's guidance.

Our Vision for the North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The North Devon Coast AONB will remain as one of England's finest landscapes and seascapes, protected, inspiring and valued by all. Its natural and cultural heritage will sustain those who live in, work in or visit the area. It will be valued by residents and visitors alike who will have increased understanding of what makes the area unique and will be addressing the challenges of keeping it special to secure its long-term future.

Our Expectation for the next Management Plan

It is our expectation that the next AONB Management Plan will require a full review that will consider the changes and proposals arising from the government's Landscape Review and any new duties, purposes and targets arising from that process. It will seek to align with the Defra 25yr Environment Plan and associated programmes and will be structured around the priorities of nature, climate, people and place, embedding our commitments under the Colchester Declaration.

The existing Management Plan will be extended to cover the period between March 2024 and the final adoption of the new AONB Management Plan in 2025. We will reserve the option to use the full period to 31 December 2025 for the review process. The objectives below and policies of the existing AONB Partnership Plan over the period March 2024 to the final adoption of the new AONB Plan in 2025 will remain valid: -

Plan Objectives

- **Landscape and Seascape** To conserve and enhance the natural beauty and special landscapes of the AONB
- **Biodiversity and Geodiversity** To conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geodiversity of the AONB, in terrestrial, aquatic and marine habitats
- **Historic Environment and Culture** To conserve, enhance and understand the historic and cultural features of the AONB
- **Environmental Quality and Climate Change** To promote the sustainable management of natural resources and of climate change impacts
- **Planning, Development and Infrastructure** To ensure the planning process and infrastructure development protects and enhances the designated AONB and its special qualities
- **Farming and Land Management** To promote farming, food production and land management practices that conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB
- **Sustainable Rural and Visitor Economy** To promote sustainable development within the AONB that is consistent with the designation
- **Access, Health and Wellbeing** To ensure sustainable access to the AONB for the benefit of the health and wellbeing of local people and visitors, consistent with the designation
- **Community Action, Learning and Understanding** To support more people to learn about, understand and take action to conserve the AONB

Delivery

The AONB Partnership will continue to update the AONB Delivery Plan and produce a work programme in the annual Business Plan in support of its Defra grant application that articulates delivery priorities.

This Statement was approved by the North Devon Coast AONB Partnership on 20 May 2022 and signed off by North Devon Council, Torridge District Council and Devon County Council by 17 May 2023.