

Cabinet Report



Listening Learning Leading

Report of Head of Planning

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North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019 - 2024

Recommendation

That the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan (2019-2024) be adopted

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to consider the adoption of the for the North Wessex Downs Area of outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan (2019 -2024).

Corporate Objectives

2. The Management Plan accords with our strategic objective to for 'Homes and Jobs for Everyone' by ensuring our environmental assets are protected for future generations.

Background

3. The preparation of a Management Plan for AONB's is a statutory requirement under s.89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000. It is intended to guide the activities of all who live and work in the AONB to help conserve and enhance the area's natural beauty. The plan for the North Wessex Downs is prepared on behalf of this council and the other constituent local authorities by the North Wessex Downs Council of Partners. We have a representative on the Council of Partners and currently provide funding for their activities along with the other constituent local authorities and Natural England.

4. The management plan sets out a vision for the North Wessex Downs and is split into eight key themes designed to better focus the delivery of objectives. The themes are Landscape, Rural Land Management, Biodiversity, Historic Environment, Natural Resources, Development, Communities and Tourism, Leisure and Access.
5. Each of the key themes is evaluated and described in detail and the key issues affecting them are drawn out. The key issues are used to form objectives which are supported by a number of policies.
6. The plan policies are designed to be delivered by a wide range of stakeholders and partners in the AONB. The core AONB unit co-ordinates the monitoring and delivery of the plan policies and are directly responsible for the delivery of certain work areas.
7. The council was consulted on the draft plan and a written response was submitted on 10/12/18. The final Adoption Draft (January 2019) has been amended to take on board all the comments submitted by the Council.

Options

8. Do not adopt the Management Plan – this option has financial and legal implications for the Council as the Councils would have to prepare its own Management Plan for the AONB, undertake public consultation and submit the plan to the DEFRA Secretary of State.
9. Adopt the Management Plan prepared by the Council of Partners.

Financial Implications

10. We are represented on the North Wessex Downs AONB Council of Partners and provide funding for their activities along with the other constituent local authorities and Natural England. DEFRA provides core funding with the constituent local authorities sharing responsibility for the remainder.
11. The proportion of funding from each local authority corresponds to the amount of AONB land within that authority. We fall within the lowest band contributing 1 per cent of the core costs. For the period 2018 to 2020 the annual contribution was £3,939 per year.
12. The adoption of the Management Plan has no implications for providing any funding additional to the annual contribution.

Legal Implications

13. The preparation of a Management Plan for AONBs is a statutory requirement of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000. We delegate the preparation of the plan to the Council of Partners, but each constituent council is required to formally adopt the plan.

Risks

14. None identified.

Other implications

15. None identified.

Conclusion

16. An up to date Management Plan is an important tool in furthering the objectives of AONB designation. While the primary focus is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB there is also a duty to increase public understanding and enjoyment and to seek to foster the social and economic well-being of the area. The Plan brings together public and private interests in the area to deliver the purposes of AONBs in a sustainable way. Cabinet is therefore asked to approve the adoption of the Management Plan.

Appendices

1. The North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019 – 2024
2. Consultation response from the Council.