



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 Management Plan guidance for both National Parks and AONBs to ensure that new 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 Partnerships 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

Following the guidance from the Secretary of State Lord Benyon on 25 July 2022, the AONB Manager produced a special report confirming the decision by the AONB Partnership on 15 July 2022 to take up the option to delay the review of the East Devon AONB Partnership Plan to 2025.

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

Our vision for the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The natural beauty of the East Devon AONB landscape, its dramatic World Heritage Site coastline, internationally important habitats and species and its cultural heritage, is conserved, managed and enhanced to support and benefit present and future generations.

Our expectation for the next Plan

It is our expectation that the next AONB Partnership Plan will require a full review that will take into account the changes and proposals arising from the government 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 to take into account the priorities of nature, climate, people and place, embedding our commitments under the Colchester Declaration.

The existing Partnership Plan will be extended to cover the period between March 2024 and the final adoption of the new AONB Partnership Plan in 2025. We will reserve the option to use the full period to 31 December 2025 for the review process but aim to complete it by March 2025.

The strategic aims, objectives and policies of the existing AONB Partnership Plan over the period March 2024 to the final adoption of the new AONB Partnership Plan in 2025 will remain valid.

PLACE - Strategic Aim 1: Place – To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB

PEOPLE AND PROSPERITY - Strategic Aim 2: People and Prosperity – Encourage and support sustainable economic development, social engagement and recreational activity that conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the AONB

COMMUNICATION AND MANAGEMENT – Strategic Aim 3: Communication and Management – To ensure the AONB is recognised and valued as a national, regional and local asset and is effectively managed in partnership with our stakeholders

Delivery

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

This Statement was approved by East Devon AONB Partnership on 30/11/2022 and signed off by East Devon District Council and Devon County Council by 31/3/2024.