

**Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
Management Plan 2014 - 2019**

Report by Head of Strategy and Projects

Summary: This report advises Members of the contents of the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2014- 2019

Recommendation: That the report be noted and recommend that the Management Plan be adopted by the Broads Authority

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) came into existence through the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949) and are recognised as being equal to National Parks in terms of landscape quality although their arrangements in respect of outdoor recreation are different. There are 41 AONBs in England and Wales of which the Norfolk Coast is one and was designated in 1968. It covers 174 square miles and 451 sq kilometres and stretches from the Wash to Great Yarmouth covering the greater part of the remaining unspoilt coastal areas between them. The eastern outlier stretches from Sea Palling to Winterton where it extends into the Broads Authority Executive Area.
- 1.2 The Norfolk Coast Partnership exists to manage the area and consists of the relevant local authorities together with other public sector agencies including Natural England. Broad Authority representation on the Group has been via the Head of Strategy and Projects. Under the terms of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 local authorities are required to act jointly and to prepare and publish a plan to manage the AONB. The Norfolk Coast Partnership has produced a Management Plan that looks to the period 2014 to 2019 following extensive consultation with local communities, organisations, interest groups and individuals.

2 Management Plan 2014-19

- 2.1 This version of the Management Plan has not started from scratch as much of the 2009-14 plans remain valid, although the structure of the plan has changed to make clearer the flow between the objectives and policies to actions over a 5 year period. The Management Plan is the framework for all organisations with a role in the management of the AONB and the new plan presents a sharper focus on how the organisations that make up the Norfolk Coast Partnership will use the Plan to help conserve and enhance the areas'

special qualities of natural beauty. All partners have worked together to produce and agree the contents of the Management Plan and are committed to its delivery. Over the next few months each of the constituent partners will be asked to formally adopt and sign up to the Plan through its committee process. It is proposed that the Planning Committee consider this Plan and formally adopt it if they feel content with the document.

- 2.2 The Plan will be supplemented by an Action Plan and Annual Progress Report which will detail specific actions which aim to achieve objectives and policies contained with the Plan and will be reported to the Core Management Group representing the financially contributing bodies, the Broads Authority and the local community.
- 2.3 The Plan has an early statement on what the Partner's commitment is. This is shown in Appendix A. It identifies that when making decisions and managing activities that affect the area, account will be taken of the area's special qualities and opportunities will be taken to conserve and enhance them.
- 2.4 The Plan is structured around five integrated themes:
 - Landscape, biodiversity and geodiversity
 - Built and historic environment
 - Forestry, farming and fishing
 - Sustainable Communities
 - Access and recreation

Each theme has a series of objectives and policies that sit under them that are designed to achieve the overarching 20 year vision. The approach is similar to that applied to the production of the Broads Plan. The vision, objectives and policies is attached at Appendix B for members' ease of reference.

3. Assessment

- 3.1 There are a number of links between the AONB Management Plan and the current Broads Plan. The issues covered, and a number of the objectives all sit well together and are consistent. There is nothing within the AONB Management Plan that would appear to have conflict with the aim and objectives of the Broads Authority or with the Broads Plan or would present difficulties for the Broads Authority in the operation of its Planning functions. Indeed much of the document is complementary to that of the Broads Authority and it will be useful information in the review of the Broads Plan 2011. The Plan provides an opportunity to work closely with partners in delivering shared objectives and towards a common aim. Your officers have no reservations in recommending to the Broads Authority that it adopts the document into its policy framework.

Background papers:

- (i) Norfolk Coast AONB Management Plan 2014-2019 can be found on the web site at:
<http://www.norfolkcoastaonb.org.uk/pages/pspage.php?PageID=1000>

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Appendices: APPENDIX A Partner commitment
APPENDIX B Vision Objectives and Policies from Section 4 of the
Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan
2014-19

Partner commitment

In making decisions and managing activities that affect the area we will take account of the area's special qualities of natural beauty set out in this plan and how we can contribute towards maintaining and enhancing these.

We will...

- maintain a committed and effective partnership between organisations and interests within the Norfolk Coast Partnership, work together according to the principles set out towards agreed aims and objectives in the AONB Management Plan and participate in appropriate projects and initiatives to implement the plan.
- ensure that appropriate representatives are appointed to attend meetings, liaise within their organisations to raise awareness of the AONB and the Norfolk Coast Partnership, provide information on relevant partnership actions and participate in review of the AONB management plan and in action plan progress reporting.
- act to prevent things that would be detrimental to the area, to address problems that may affect its special character and to take advantage of opportunities for appropriate development.
- maintain good communication within and between organisations managing the area and between them and the wider public, seeking and taking into account the knowledge and views of local people in making important decisions affecting the area and its communities.

Vision, objectives and policies:

(combined from section 4 of the document – reflected in paragraph numbering)

Landscape, biodiversity and geodiversity

Vision for the Norfolk Coast in 2034:

(4.1.17) The Norfolk Coast will be richly diverse, with distinctive landscapes, wildlife, settlements, geological features, building styles and materials, communities, history and culture.

(4.1.18) Necessary development, including outside the area and in the marine environment, will have been managed so that the area will still be essentially unspoilt with a strong feeling of remoteness, peace and tranquillity, with wide skylines, seascapes and dark night skies that show the richness and detail of constellations. The marine environment will be sustainably managed in a way that takes full account of the area's important links with the sea.

(4.1.19) The coast will retain a strong feeling of wilderness and of being exposed to and shaped by the elements. In general, there will have been a managed approach to achieving a more naturally functioning coastline, which will be increasingly valuable for its habitats and the species they support, including breeding, migrating and wintering birds. Where it has been deemed necessary to maintain coastal defences, this will have been done in the most sensitive way possible in terms of sustainability and visual and wildlife impacts.

(4.1.20) Habitats will have been improved, increased and linked to enable adaptation of the area's biodiversity to climate change. The area's rivers and estuaries will be in good ecological condition, providing a passage for migratory species. All parts of the area, not just designated sites, will support a rich diversity of characteristic wildlife and habitats associated with local environmental variations and management, including species and habitats of national and international importance, although these will not necessarily be exactly the same as in 2014. Where coastal habitats have been lost through realignment they will have been replaced elsewhere, and plans for managing future loss will have been developed.

(4.1.21) The landscape will show many links with history, with features and patterns created by past cultures and land use, and with its geological past through large scale features and individual sites. The value of the landscape and the story it tells will be widely understood.

5-Year Objectives - by 2019:

Landscape:

OL1 The integrity and diversity of the area's landscapes and seascapes will have been maintained and preferably enhanced, assessed with reference to the Integrated Landscape Guidance for the AONB

Biodiversity:

OL2 Internationally and nationally designated sites for wildlife will be in favourable condition and under effective management

OL3 Locally designated sites for wildlife will be under positive management

OL4 A local expression of Biodiversity 2020 targets for the area will have been developed and a programme for their achievement nearing completion

OL5 The area's rivers and estuaries will be in good ecological condition or approaching this state

Geodiversity:

OL6 Large scale geodiversity features, including dynamic coastal features will have been conserved so that their integrity and their influence on the landscape remains apparent

OL7 Significant local geodiversity sites will be in positive management

OL8 The area's geodiversity will be better understood and appreciated by decision-makers and the public, and public access and information for a range of sites will be available

Policies - members of the Norfolk Coast Partnership, including the staff team will, cooperating where necessary:

PL1 Refer to and use the Integrated Landscape Character Guidance for the AONB to guide decision making and delivery of conservation objectives across the area

PL2 Continue to promote understanding of the area's key qualities of natural beauty, particularly those less understood and valued at present and including seascapes and the marine environment, and take account of these in decision-making

PL3 Continue to improve understanding of changes to landscape and biodiversity arising from climate change (including sea level rise and other effects) and other drivers, and plan to adapt to and mitigate these changes

PL4 Work together on a landscape scale to improve resilience to change for key habitats and species through development of ecological networks that increase, extend, link and buffer key habitat areas

PL5 Be proactive to reduce and manage adverse impacts on the key qualities of natural beauty from past development and activities, as well as resist and mitigate damaging new impacts and influence decisions by organisations outside the Partnership

PL6 Protect the area's distinctive native biodiversity from the impacts of invasive non-native species where possible by restricting pathways of introduction and carrying out targeted eradications

PL7 Plan and prepare for implementation of coastal realignment where necessary to allow maximum ability to adapt and maintain active coastal geomorphology, landscape and seascape character including ecological links between land and sea, taking into account conservation objectives for coastal sites and the interests of coastal communities (*see also policy PC7*)

PL8 Identify and implement opportunities for the relocation of key habitats that are threatened by coastal change

PL9 Take into account in plans and decision-making the services to society that habitats in the AONB provide (eco-systems services)

PL10 Work with landowners to bring Sites of Special Scientific Interest, County Wildlife Sites and other Biodiversity Action Plan habitats and non-statutory geodiversity sites into positive management where this is required

Built and historic environment

Vision for the Norfolk Coast in 2034:

(4.2.7) The quality and locally distinct character of the historic environment, including settlement form, character and patterns and in the marine environment, will be evident and valued. It will be understood, recorded, maintained and conserved as far as possible.

(4.2.8) Archaeology and historic ruins will have been well conserved and managed, or where this is not feasible will have been recorded. Traditional buildings that contribute to the character of the area will have been well maintained and conserved, including through

appropriate productive use where possible. New buildings will have been located and designed to conserve and enhance landscape and settlement character.

(4.2.9) Buildings will have been sensitively adapted where necessary to incorporate features that enhance their performance in terms of both local and global environmental sustainability. New buildings, including those using innovative design, will also have these features as well as complementing their surroundings.

(4.2.10) Within the constraints of rising sea levels and storm activity the area will retain characteristic coastal settlements and road networks. Coastal settlements will be adapting to change, with new buildings and roads located where they are sustainable in the long term in respect of coastal erosion and flood risk from rivers and the sea while retaining local distinctiveness.

5-Year Objectives - by 2019:

OB1 The area's designated heritage assets will be under positive management

OB2 Measures to improve understanding and conservation of the area's historic and archaeological heritage amongst partners and public will have been implemented

OB3 The area's key historic environment sites most at risk from climate change-related and other impacts will be known and where appropriate mitigating measures investigated and in progress

Policies - members of the Norfolk Coast Partnership, including the staff team will, cooperating where necessary:

PB1 Ensure that historic and archaeological heritage assets within their ownership or powers of regulation, particularly heritage assets at risk, are recorded, conserved and enhanced

PB2 Provide opportunities for public understanding and appropriate access to historic environment sites within their ownership and promote this elsewhere, where consistent with conservation objectives

PB3 Ensure that new development, including changes to existing buildings and infrastructure, within their ownership or powers of regulation are consistent with the special qualities of the area and relevant conservation objectives

PB4 Demonstrate good practice and provide examples of how to incorporate measures for energy, water use, resource reduction and biodiversity enhancements sensitively into new, vernacular and historic buildings and structures

PB5 Support new development and conversion that is consistent with local and national planning policy and the principles above, in order to retain and develop residential and employment opportunities that support natural beauty

Farming, forestry and fishing

Vision for the Norfolk Coast in 2034:

(4.3.6) Agriculture will still be the prime means of maintaining the natural beauty of the majority of the area's countryside. Farming and forestry will provide an economically sustainable livelihood through producing crops for a wide range of uses including food and biofuels as well as providing recreational opportunities and habitats for wildlife. Economic sustainability will be assisted where necessary through environmental grants to enable farmers and land managers to maintain and enhance specific landscape features, habitats and species and heritage assets, and use of this support will be actively encouraged.

(4.3.7) Farming, the management of woodland and food production in general, including some new crops that are being grown in response to climate change and market demand, will be in tune with the local climate and soil characteristics.

(4.3.8) Crop and animal production methods will not impact adversely on water resources and quality, soil structure and local eco-systems and at least maintain, and often enhance, landscape character, local distinctiveness, biodiversity and heritage assets through a mixture of smaller tenant and family owned farms sitting alongside larger estate-based businesses. Farm businesses in the area will be considered to demonstrate good practice and to be at the vanguard of sustainable agricultural management.

(4.3.9) Fishing will be an environmentally sustainable and economically viable activity, at least in combination with other economic activities, and will continue to contribute positively to the distinctive character of the area.

5-Year Objectives - by 2019:

OF1 High take-up of a revised agri-environment scheme, which is appropriate to the area and supports AONB objectives, delivering landscape, biodiversity and historic environment enhancements and supporting sustainable agricultural enterprises, will be in place in the area

OF2 Improved efficiency of water use and storage, and management of soil and nutrient run-off by agriculture in the area will be in development, reducing impacts on ground water, rivers and other water dependent features, respecting landscape character and contributing to Water Framework Directive and biodiversity objectives

OF3 Changes to new types of crops, such as energy crops, will have taken landscape and ecological character and the historic environment into account

OF4 There will be increased and improved management of woodland in the area with benefits for biodiversity, businesses and recreation, and development of local supply chains for woodland products

OF5 The local fishing industry will have remained viable economically and as a way of life and measures / initiatives to support adaptation, if necessary, and sustainability of the local fishing industry will have been continued

Policies - members of the Norfolk Coast Partnership, including the staff team will, cooperating where necessary:

PF1 Aim to develop and maintain understanding of the key issues affecting local farming, farmland habitats and wildlife under changing circumstances within the framework of the new Common Agricultural Policy and influence the development and implementation of the new Environmental Land Management Scheme in the area to benefit farming in the AONB and farmland landscapes, habitats and wildlife and its historic environment features

PF2 Continue to develop support for grazing infrastructure and local grazing networks as a means of maintaining specific areas of distinctive agricultural landscapes and habitats, including historic environment features, and meeting conservation objectives

PF3 Support development and diversification associated with farming, forestry, fishing and other marine industries which respects, and ideally contributes to, conserving the special qualities of the area, including their enjoyment and understanding

PF4 Promote and support the development of sustainable practice in farming, forestry and fishing, including through promotion of appropriate grant schemes and advice, and support for cooperation to develop local initiatives and marketing of sustainable local products

PF5 Promote and implement an integrated catchment-based approach to all aspects of water management throughout the area to achieve benefits for landscape, biodiversity, the historic environment and the economy

Sustainable communities

Vision for the Norfolk Coast in 2034:

(4.4.8) The Norfolk Coast will be a living, working area with individuals and communities working together where necessary for the benefit of the whole community or a wider area.

(4.4.9) The economy will be broadly based, with a range of environmentally sustainable economic activities, including opportunities to earn a living through 'traditional' activities for the area as well as activities based on new technology and communications, and others that draw on and support the area's distinctive and special features. Tourism will remain an important part of the local economy, generating money that benefits a wide section of the local community.

(4.4.10) Appropriate tenures of housing, including affordable housing will be available for people working locally. Although diverse in terms of age, income and occupation, communities will include people with family ties to the area and people will share an understanding and appreciation of the area's special qualities.

(4.4.11) The area will be widely recognised as leading in environmentally sustainable practice, including mitigating climate change. While adapting to climate and coastal change, the area will be maintaining characteristic and viable coastal settlements and infrastructure. Various forms of renewable energy will be produced and used in locations and in ways that are consistent with the key qualities that give the area its special character. Effective local food and products networks will be in operation, with local producers working together to promote their products and the links to the area. Networks and services providing alternative low-impact forms of transport to the car, reducing congestion and the need for additional car parking, will be available and widely used by both visitors and residents.

(4.4.12) Pollution from all local sources will be avoided or its impacts minimised. Water quality will be high and water will be used and managed efficiently with maximum benefits to the local environment. Generation of waste will have been minimised and waste will be used as a resource wherever possible.

5-Year Objectives - by 2019:

OC1 The area will be improving as an environment for local businesses and availability of local jobs, assessed against regional averages

OC2 Public transport and other alternatives to car travel in the area will have been maintained and improved as a service for both local residents and visitors

OC3 Pupils in all schools in the area will have been involved in learning about its special qualities

OC4 Further understanding and means of supporting coastal communities in adapting to coastal change will have been developed

Policies - members of the Norfolk Coast Partnership, including the staff team will, cooperating where necessary:

PC1 Support opportunities for economic growth that invest in the natural capital and sustainable management of the special qualities of the AONB

PC2 Promote and support services and products from the local area and use these whenever possible, especially those that are sustainable and high quality, and which contribute to maintaining natural beauty in some way, in order to support the local economy and jobs and to reduce 'supply miles'

PC3 Continue to develop understanding amongst second home owners to enable them to contribute to maintaining sustainable local communities and natural beauty

PC4 Continue to involve and develop communication and cooperation with local people and communities in the work of the Norfolk Coast Partnership

PC5 Support the development of renewable energy in the area in ways and locations that contribute to the area's local economy and jobs and maintain its natural beauty

PC6 Continue to investigate and develop ways of securing a mix of different housing tenures which will enable local people or those with local connections to live and work in the AONB, in ways that maintain the area's natural beauty

PC7 Manage traffic and transport issues, including car parking and provision and promotion of effective public transport and other non-car means of travel, to reduce traffic congestion at peak times, conserve tranquillity and manage pressures on sensitive sites in the area

PC8 Involve local communities in the development of plans and projects that may affect them, for example Shoreline Management Plans, and inform them of progress on plans and programmes

PC9 Support the provision of necessary facilities and new development to meet proven needs of local communities and businesses, in ways that maintain the area's natural beauty, including the provision of fast broadband throughout the area

PC10 Seek to maintain support for community projects in the area that contribute to AONB objectives and sustainable development, including through availability of grants

Access and recreation

Vision for the Norfolk Coast in 2034:

(4.5.8) The Norfolk Coast will be a place where people can refresh both body and soul. Tourism, recreation and enjoyment of the area will provide benefits to both its communities and landscape.

(4.5.9) Tourism businesses, visitors and residents will understand the area's special qualities of landscape, wildlife and cultural and historic heritage and their sensitivities and support their conservation through how they use, and promote use of, the area. Tourism businesses will understand the value of the natural capital that underpins their businesses and be actively contributing to initiatives that conserve and enhance natural beauty and support local communities.

(4.5.10) Recreation by both visitors and local residents, including long-standing traditional activities for the area, will be managed in a way that provides opportunities for all users to experience and enjoy the special qualities of the area without conflicting with those qualities or with other people's enjoyment of them.

(4.5.11) Public access routes and areas, both statutory and discretionary, together with non-car forms of transport, will form an integrated network which is widely used by both local residents and visitors. Information on these, and on areas suitable for a variety of recreational activities, will be easily and freely available to the public.

5-Year Objectives - by 2019:

OR1 Information on current and future site user numbers, behaviours, visit profiles and recreational activities, particularly those that may affect coastal Natura 2000 sites, will have been further improved and used to develop information for the tourism sector, visitors and recreational users, and management of pressures on sensitive sites

OR2 Cooperation will have been further developed between the tourism sector, conservation organisations and local communities to develop understanding and more sustainable enjoyment of the area by visitors and local residents, and to manage pressures on key sites, particularly for coastal Natura 2000 sites, by providing clear and consistent information and guidance

Policies - members of the Norfolk Coast Partnership, including the staff team will cooperate and share information to:

PR1 Continue to improve communication of the area's special qualities, including seascapes

PR2 Continue to improve understanding about current and future visitor numbers, behaviours, visit profiles and recreational activities, particularly for coastal Natura 2000 sites

PR3 Investigate and seek to secure funding contributions from new housing development, both within and outside the area, that are likely to provide sources of recreational pressures on Natura 2000 sites, to enable their mitigation

PR4 Develop consistent messages with the tourism sector and local communities about promotion of the area that takes into account sensitivity to visitor and recreational pressures and capacity to manage these

PR5 Work with tourism businesses to develop and promote ways for visitors to contribute to conserving and enhancing the features and qualities that bring them to the area, and to maximise benefits and minimise impacts from visitors to communities

PR6 Develop integrated and holistic management of recreation activities along the area's coast to provide opportunities that do not impact on sensitive sites, especially coastal Natura 2000 sites

PR7 Ensure that opportunities, information and incentives for visitors to enjoy the area without using the car, including new public access links, are easily available and increased where appropriate

PR8 Encourage the provision of appropriate levels and types of visitor facilities and information at key sites, including public lavatories and facilities for visitors with restricted mobility, together with information that promotes the aims of the AONB management plan in a coordinated way-and ensure that opportunities and information are easily available for all actual and potential users to enable enjoyment of the range of the area's natural beauty sensitively and encourage suitable activities away from sensitive areas