

**Report for: Cabinet**

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Date of Meeting:	15 <sup>th</sup> October 2024
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan</b>
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Steven Keable, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration
Responsible Officer:	Richard Marsh, Director of Place and Economy
Exempt:	None
Wards Affected:	Upper Culm, Cullompton Outer (part)
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 – Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan Review: Briefing Paper August 2024  Appendix 2 – Draft Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan Review

**Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)**

Under Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, Mid Devon District Council, together with other local authorities is required to produce a Management Plan for the Blackdown Hills AONB (now known as National Landscape) and review it at intervals of not more than five years. The Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership has performed this duty on behalf of Mid Devon and other relevant local authorities. There is a need for a draft management plan to be published and consulted on before it is finalised and approved by each of the partnership Councils.

**Recommendation(s):**

**To Cabinet to agree that:**

**The Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership undertakes a public consultation on the reviewed Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan for 2025 – 2030 (Appendix 2 to this report)**

## Section 2 – Report

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Part of Mid Devon district is situated within the area covered by the Blackdown Hills National Landscape (formerly known as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).
- 1.2 Under Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, Mid Devon District Council, together with other relevant local authorities, is required to produce a management plan for the Blackdown Hills AONB (now known as National Landscape) and review it at intervals of not more than five years (exceptionally, Defra authorised a 12-month extension to the review of the current management plan). The Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership has performed this duty on behalf of Mid Devon District Council and other relevant local authorities; this work is co-ordinated by the National Landscape team.
- 1.3 The CROW Act (and as amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023) and guidance from Natural England provides advice on the scale, nature and content of management plans. A management plan should serve to highlight a shared long-term vision for the National Landscape and contain ambitions, targets and actions that seek to further the statutory purpose, i.e. to conserve and enhance the designated National Landscape. The delivery of the Plan will be subject to availability of funding from Defra, the local authorities, and other parties.
- 1.3 The Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership has taken the opportunity to undertake a more thorough review than in the previous cycle to ensure that the management plan remains fit for purpose and up to date. The management plan is expected to contribute to Government’s Environmental Improvement Plan (including targets) and it is important to make sure that it addresses the significant issues of the climate emergency and nature recovery, taking account of Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Plans and local authority climate action plans.
- 1.4 To help identify important matters and considerations for inclusion, discussions and workshops have been held with key partners, Partnership Management Group, and representatives of partnership organisations, in advance of a wider public consultation on a draft management plan.
- 1.5 The Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership has prepared a draft management plan, which is included in **Appendix 2** to this report). A briefing paper is included in **Appendix 1** to this report which explains more about the review process and a proposed structure and content for the management plan. Public consultation on the draft management plan for 2025-30 is proposed to

take place in the late summer / autumn 2024 for a six-week period. Details of specific promotion and engagement opportunities during that period are still to be determined, but an option could be to hold a session with Councillors for example if there were interest. Following the public consultation period, the draft management plan will be revised and a final draft version will undergo formal consultation with the statutory consultee, Natural England. Following this, the management plan will be finalised and recommended by the National Landscape Partnership to the Council (and the other relevant local authorities) for adoption as the statutory management plan for the Blackdown Hills National Landscape.

## **2.0 Groups consulted**

2.1 The Planning Policy Advisory Group (PPAG) considered a briefing paper on the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan at its meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2024 and has given its approval for a public consultation on the draft management plan to take place.

## **3.0 Next Steps**

3.1 The draft Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan will be published on the Blackdown Hills National Landscape website together with details about the consultation. It is expected the consultation will commence in early November and run for 8 weeks. The Blackdown Hills National Landscape website will include details for how and when public comments can be made and where they should be sent to.

3.2 The draft management plan will be updated as necessary by the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership following the public consultation and brought to a further meeting of the Cabinet for its adoption, anticipated in March 2025.

## **Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications from the public consultation and the adoption of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan. The Council makes a grant funding contribution each year to the host authority, Devon County Council, to support the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership.

## **Legal Implications**

The production of a management plan for the Blackdown Hills National Landscape, and keeping it under review is required under Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000.

## **Risk Assessment**

No operational or strategic risks associated with the matters covered in this report have been identified.

## **Impact on Climate Change**

The review of the management plan is underpinned by a strong commitment to act in response to the climate emergency, with one of the four key themes being Climate, and one of the fundamental aims of the plan being to help facilitate and deliver meaningful actions for climate change mitigation and adaptation. The Government's climate National Adaptation Programme (NAP3) requires all protected landscapes (National Parks and National Landscapes) to have Climate Change Adaptation Management Plans produced, embedded in or linked with their Management Plans by 2028, and in all future plans. The management plan is also expected to address national targets to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions to net zero and restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat (carbon storage) in Protected Landscapes.

## **Equalities Impact Assessment**

The Landscapes (Glover) Review published in 2019 included proposals to increase the inclusivity and diversity of all the work of AONBs (and National Parks), from governance through to engagement and delivery. The review of the management plan embraces this proposal and is based on some guiding principles including that the valued Blackdown Hills landscape and environment provides an asset to benefit people's wellbeing and therefore everyone should feel welcome and be able to access and enjoy the National Landscape. Further guiding principles recognise that local communities play an integral role in the evolution of the Blackdown Hills landscape, and the need to respond to the needs of people living and working within the area and in nearby towns. An equalities impact assessment will be conducted once the management plan is further advanced.

## **Relationship to Corporate Plan**

The Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan can help the following aims of the Council's Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028:

- **Planning, Environment & Sustainability:** The management plan includes a vision that sets a strategic direction for nature recovery, species, habitat and wildlife management, and also to reduce greenhouse gases, for carbon storage and a pathway to net zero and adaptation. The management plan includes a Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (TOF) to achieve a number of targets, including: Goal 1 Thriving plants and wildlife; Goal 7 Mitigating and adapting to climate change and Goal 10 Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.
- **Economy & Assets:** The management plan's vision sets a strategic direction for economy and transport.

- Community, people and equalities: The management plan's vision sets a strategic direction for community, access, and inclusion.

### **Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks**

**Statutory Officer:** Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

**Date:** 1 October 2024

**Statutory Officer:** Maria de Leiburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

**Date:** 1 October 2024

**Chief Officer:** Stephen Walford

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director

**Date:** 1 October 2024

**Performance and risk:** Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

**Date:** 26 September 2024

**Cabinet member notified:** (yes/no)

**Report: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information.** (Yes/No)

**Appendix: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information.** (Yes/No)

### **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

#### **Contact:**

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**Background papers:**

Blackdown Hills National Landscape website: [Blackdown Hills National Landscape  
\(blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk\)](http://blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk)