



Report Number
Committee: Prosperous Communities
Date: 4 June 2013

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Subject: Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2012-2017

Report by Director of Development and Neighbourhoods

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Purpose / Summary: The Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Management Plan 2012 – 2017 has been prepared by the Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service on behalf of West Lindsey District Council to meet the duty set down in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000 Section 89 (9) and (10)

RECOMMENDATION(S): To approve The Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Management Plan 2012 – 2017 as the statutory plan for West Lindsey required by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: This plan is a statutory requirement under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 Section 89 (9) and (10)

Financial : Costs for the Wolds Management Plan are born by the Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service which is a partnership funded by both DEFRA and those local authorities having the AONB within their boundary. WL costs are covered by a SLA and are within existing budget provision; they are set out in the body of the report.

Staffing : There are no additional staffing implications; existing staff structures take account of this role.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

There are actions within the Management Plan that seek to promote access for all groups into the countryside of the Lincolnshire Wolds. Disability groups have been included in the public consultation stages of the Plan preparation.

Risk Assessment : By jointly funding the Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside service to bring forward this plan on their behalf, all constituent public authorities with the AONB within their jurisdiction achieve considerable cost savings due to economies of scale. In this way the duty is discharged achieving best value for money and with the widest community considerations.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities : The management plan contains objectives to further sustainable farming practices and to increase bio diversity across the AONB thus promoting carbon reduction, water table improvements, and landscape enhancement.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

The Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Management Plan 2012 – 2017 (197pages) and associated documentation may be found at the following external website. Please note that these are very substantial documents.

<http://www.lincswolds.org.uk/managementplan.htm>.

Call in and Urgency: Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

1 Introduction

1.1 The Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was designated in 1973 for its landscape quality. It is the only AONB in the East Midlands and one of only two protected landscapes in region; the other being the Peak District National Park. The Lincolnshire Wolds AONB includes parts of the administrative areas of East Lindsey District Council, West Lindsey District Council, North East Lincolnshire Council and Lincolnshire County Council

2 Background

2.2 The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 brought in new measures to help protect AONBs. The role of Local Authorities was clarified and this includes the requirement to prepare a Management Plan setting out how they will care for their AONBs. It also introduced the requirement for all public bodies to have a duty to regard the purposes of AONBs when undertaking their work.

2.3 In order to fulfil their responsibilities towards the AONB, the responsible local authorities have come together, along with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) (this was until recently the role of Natural England) to form a partnership to carry out these responsibilities. The Lincolnshire Wolds AONB has an established Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) which is a partnership of public, private and voluntary organisations and representatives who have a specialist interest in the area. The JAC guides activity on a wide range of issues across the Wolds and will be instrumental in taking the Management Plan forward. The Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service (LWCS) provides the dedicated staff for the AONB and is hosted by Lincolnshire County Council on behalf of the JAC. The LWCS receives its core funding from DEFRA and the local authorities in whose area the AONB resides. Currently the funding looks like this:

2.4 Core Funding for 2012/2013

DEFRA:	£175k
WLDC:	£17k
ELDC:	£17k
LCC:	£30k
NELC:	£4k

2.5 A Joint Management Group (JMG) made up of elected member representatives and officers from the funding partners ensures that statutory duties placed on local authorities are delivered and oversees the accounts. From the above it can be seen that the production of the Wolds AONB Management Plan as well as all the other programmed work on landscape wide improvements are achieved for a WL contribution of £17k. This represents exceptional value for money.

- 2.4 The LWCS prepared the first Management Plan in 2004, on behalf of the partner local authorities; fulfilling the requirement under CROW Act. That Plan has now been reviewed by the partner local authorities, Natural England, members of the JAC and other interested parties, to create new priorities and actions for the future. It has been subject to public consultation (at the end of 2011) and Strategic Environmental Assessment as required by the Regulations.

3 The Wolds AONB Management Plan

- 3.1 The Management Plan starts with a vision for the Wolds and is divided into five themes:

Theme 1 – Protecting the Wolds - covering Landscape Conservation and Enhancement; Natural Heritage – Biodiversity; Earth Heritage – Geodiversity; and Cultural Heritage.

Theme 2 – Living and Working in the Wolds - covering Farming in the Wolds and Thriving Communities

Theme 3 – Discovering the Wolds - addressing Interpretation; Access; Recreation; and Tourism

Theme 4 – Developing the Wolds - Looking at Planning and Development Management; Transport in the Wolds; and Climate Change and Energy

Theme 5 – Partnerships in the Wolds

- 3.2 For each component of the theme, there is an overview of the current situation, the threats and pressures faced and a series of objectives and policies, along with an action plan.
- 3.3 The action plan includes many activities that support the corporate aims of West Lindsey. There are grant schemes that promote landscape enhancements such as hedge and tree planting, there is a Sustainable Development Fund for local communities and local enterprises to use as seedcorn funding for their projects and programmes. There are guided walking programmes for health promotion, accessibility and tourism (Wolds Walking Festival), and the national award winning Chalk Streams Project that is bringing fresh wildlife to the chalk streams in the Wolds and protecting the quality of our scarce water resources. 5 kilometres of river were improved by the project directly over this last year; and this doesn't include those lengths improved by land owners with the help of the Environment Agency.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 The work of the Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service has long proven exemplary value for money. The team have been the first AONB nationally to trial schemes of funding and bid for and manage innovative partnership landscape improvement schemes with the farming community. They are an award winning team.
- 4.2 The Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Management Plan pulls the work programme together and allows for additional funding bids to be pursued furthering on the ground improvements in West Lindsey and beyond. The adoption of this Plan will allow for this work to continue and protect the DEFRA grant core funding which is needed to support the various Councils in pursuing their corporate aims.