



Prosperous Communities

Tuesday, 7 June 2022

Subject: Lincolnshire Wolds Funding 2022-2025

Report by:

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Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To present new MoU for the Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service including funding commitment matching DEFRA and other Local Authority contributions.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1. Committee approve 3-year funding commitment for the Lincolnshire Wolds Memorandum of Agreement 2022-2025.**

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (NPAC Act) established the powers to designate AONBs; with the primary objective of conserving and enhancing their natural beauty, whilst taking account of the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) reaffirmed the duty and obligations for the protection and management of AONBs. Part IV of the Act; Sections 82, 84, 85, 86 and 89 (as detailed within the Management Plan) are of particular relevance, and places a legal requirement on all relevant local authorities to prepare and publish a partnership Management Plan.

(N.B.) Where there are legal implications the report MUST be seen by the MO

Financial : FIN/33/23/PC/SL

The report requests approval for a commitment of £17,830 pa for the 3 financial years' 2022/2023 to 2024/2025. There is ongoing budget provision of £17,900 pa allocated within the MTFP for this purpose.

(N.B.) All committee reports MUST have a Fin Ref

Staffing :

Not applicable.

(N.B.) Where there are staffing implications the report MUST have a HR Ref

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

Not applicable.

Data Protection Implications :

Not applicable.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

The Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service plays an important role in championing and supporting activity associated with reducing carbon and environmental impact. Work and actions associated with climate and environment including bio-diversity are listed within the Lincolnshire Wolds Management Plan 2018-2023.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

Not applicable

Health Implications:

The Lincolnshire Wolds as an AONB provides important open space that can support the health and wellbeing of its residents, visitors and communities. Whilst much of the delivery activity of the Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service does focus on environment and landscape, the associated activities, support and events that take place in the AONB further support health and wellbeing outcomes.

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

17th July 2018 - Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2018-2023 – Report to Prosperous Communities Committee.

Risk Assessment :

Not applicable.

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

x

Key Decision:

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

Yes

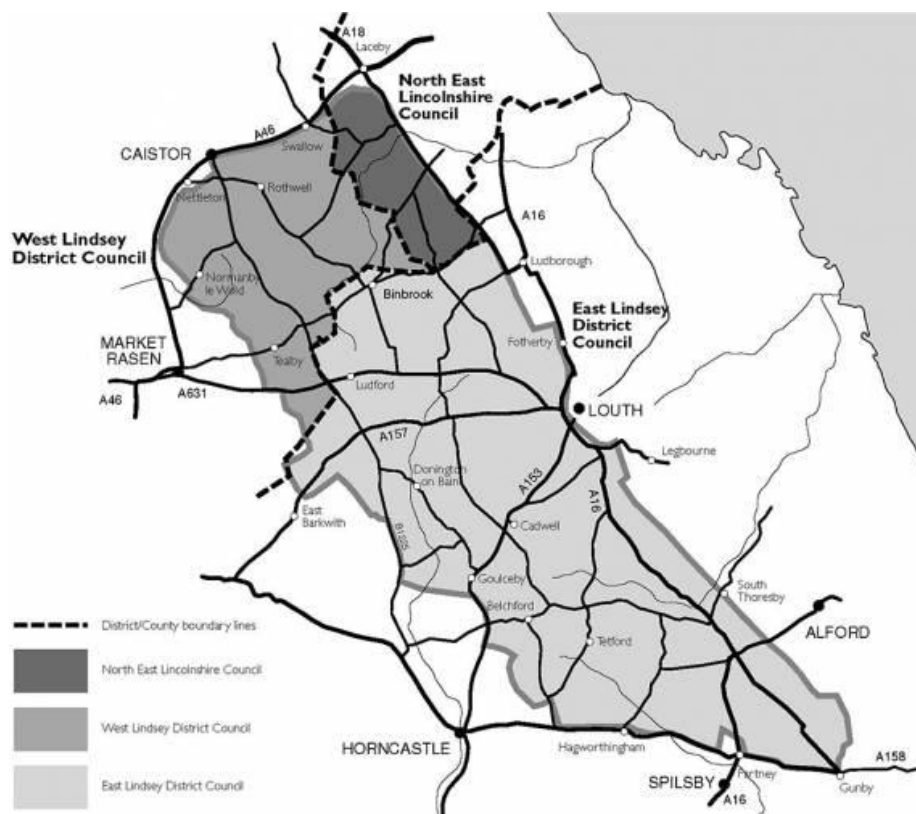
No

x

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was designated in 1973 on account of the area's outstanding landscape, cultural heritage and unique sense of place. AONB's are nationally protected – there are currently 46 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland – and in planning terms they are on a par with National Parks (as expressed through paragraphs 115 and 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework).

Lincolnshire Wolds AONB area map:



- 1.2 The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 introduced new measures to help protect AONBs. The role of Local Authorities was clarified, including the duty for all public bodies to have regard to the purposes of AONBs (to conserve and enhance their natural beauty) when undertaking their work and a requirement to prepare a Management Plan setting out how they will care for their AONBs.
- 1.3 In order to fulfil their responsibilities towards the AONB, the relevant local authorities came together along with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) (now a role covered by Natural England) to form a partnership approach to carry out these responsibilities.
- 1.4 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 Joint Advisory Committee guides activity on a wide range of issues across the Wolds.

- 1.5 The Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service (LWCS) provides the dedicated staff for the AONB and is hosted by Lincolnshire County Council on behalf of the Joint Advisory Committee. The Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service receives 75% of its core funding from Defra with the relevant local authorities combining to cover the additional 25%. The payments reflect a combination of geographic proportion and financial/value return of the AONB in each Council's area.
- 1.6 A Joint Management Group (JMG) also operates, made up of elected member and officer representatives from the funding partners, to ensure that statutory duties placed on local authorities are delivered and to oversee the effective use of resources. West Lindsey District Council is entitled to two Elected Member representatives, as are Lincolnshire County Council and East Lindsey District Council; North East Lincolnshire has one elected Member representative due to the small amount of the AONB in its area.
- 1.7 The Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) meets twice a year and the Joint Management Group (JMG) meets four times a year.
- 1.8 The current Management Plan covers from 2018 to 2023 and was adopted by the Council at the Prosperous Communities Committee on 17th July 2018. Work to review the management plan will begin during 2022.

The Lincolnshire Wolds Management Plan 2018-2023 can be accessed online: <https://www.lincswolds.org.uk/our-work/management-plan>

2. Memorandum of Agreement

- 2.1 The Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) sets out the roles, responsibilities and structure of the partnership, including the funding commitment level of the partners and is reviewed every three years.
- 2.2 The Countryside Service carries out many projects on the ground, which are highly valued by the local population and visitors. Some examples include:
 - The production of walking and cycling leaflets and activities throughout the year
 - Promoting the Wolds at events such as the Lincolnshire Show
 - Hosting a promotional website
 - Administering two grant schemes (funded by Defra); the Sustainable Development Fund for larger projects and the Small Grants Fund for projects up to £1,000; these support the projects of local communities and businesses.
 - Carrying out advisory visits to farmers and land owners to provide advice and support for land management to enhance the AONB and supporting access to grants and stewardship schemes

- Responding on behalf of the JAC to consultations on planning applications in, and affecting the setting of the Wolds, and strategic policy documents of various organisations
- 2.3 An updated version of the Memorandum of Agreement has been produced following confirmation of Defra funding until 2025. In recent years an MoA has been prepared on an annual basis, although West Lindsey District Council have committed to its funding allocation within the MTFP.
- 2.4 The new MoA now covers a 3-year period to match the funding commitment secured from Defra. The Defra funding commitment is subject to obtaining the required match funding from Local Authority partners through this MoA.
- 2.5 The MoA will be signed by an appropriate officer following the council's delegated procedures.

APPENDIX 1 – Lincolnshire Wolds MoA 2022-2025

3. Funding Commitment

- 3.1 On 1st April 2022, Defra have confirmed the core grant settlement for Lincolnshire Wolds AONB is £190,056.40 annually. Defra will now prepare a 3-year grant agreement. There remains a grant condition that the grant recipient (Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service) has secured at least 25% of its core expenditure from other sources. This is covered by the contributions from Local Authority partners plus any additional funding that can be secured per year from other grant funding or investment opportunities.
- 3.2 It is proposed that all Local Authorities commit to the current levels of funding for the duration of the Lincolnshire Wolds MoA 2022-2025. For West Lindsey District Council this would be a commitment of £17,830 annually until 2024/25 financial year. This amount has already been budgeted as part of the Council's MTFP.
- 3.3 The Lincolnshire Wolds MoA 2022-2025 would commit Local Authorities to the following contributions:

Organisation	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Lincolnshire County Council	£30,920	£30,920	£30,920
East Lindsey District Council	£17,750	£17,750	£17,750
West Lindsey District Council	£17,830	£17,830	£17,830
North East Lincolnshire Council	£3,850	£3,850	£3,850

- 3.4 In addition to core funding East Lindsey District Council also invest £30,000 annually as part of wider activity and tourism promotion across the Wolds area. This includes the core delivery of the Love Lincs Wolds website and associated marketing. East Lindsey District Council also provide the operational base for the Countryside Service (Navigation Warehouse, Louth) at a substantially

lowered rate. These additional commitments to the wider Wolds area reflect the amount of core funding provided in comparison to other local authorities.

4. Corporate Plan Priorities

4.1 The Council's support for the Partnership helps to deliver a number of aspects of the Corporate Plan in particular:

- **Our Council**

- Finances – helps to secure match funding into the district area
- Partnerships – strong partnership working with local communities, local authorities and government departments

- **Our People**

- Health & Wellbeing – helping to promote access and correct management of the Wolds area
- Leisure – provides a wide range of leisure opportunities and activities in the Wolds area
- Skills – skills development through a wide range of activities and projects led by the Countryside Service
- Vulnerable Groups & Communities – Countryside Service works with very rural and isolated communities

- **Our Place**

- Economic Growth – supports rural economy including farming, land management and other rural businesses
- External Investment – helps to secure external funding including match funding
- Enhanced Environment – provides a strong and robust partnership and management approach to maintaining and enhancing the Wolds area

5. Other Options

5.1 The other option to continuing with the Memorandum of Agreement is for the Council to withdraw from the partnership. As a result, the Council would be required to undertake the work required by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 independently.

5.2 It is considered that to do so would damage the wider partnership arrangements and would have a detrimental impact on the work in the AONB. This would include a reduction of core funding provided by Defra. It is also anticipated that there would be significantly increased costs for the Council in meeting its obligations in isolation from the partnership arrangements in place.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 Committee approve 3-year funding commitment for the Lincolnshire Wolds Memorandum of Agreement 2022-2025.