



**Prosperous Communities  
Committee**

**17<sup>th</sup> July 2018**

**Subject: Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty  
(AONB) Management Plan 2018-2023**

Report by:

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Purpose / Summary:

To adopt the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB  
Management Plan 2018-2023.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

1. To approve the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023 as the statutory plan for West Lindsey required by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

## 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 Plan) are of particular relevance, and places a legal requirement on all relevant local authorities to prepare and publish a partnership Management Plan.

### **Financial: FIN/69/19**

There are no financial implications arising from this report. However, the following is provided for your information;

- WLDC make a financial contribution of £17.9k (18/19) towards the Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service under a shared Memorandum of Understanding between Defra, Lincolnshire County Council, North Lincolnshire Council and East Lindsey District Council.
- The funding agreement is currently in place and covers 2018/2019 and 2019/2020. Our funding contribution supports the delivery of the Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service and the production of the Lincolnshire Wolds Management Plan.
- Our funding contribution is budgeted within the MTFP.

### **Staffing:**

None

### **Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :**

Please refer to section 5 of this report.

### **Risk Assessment:**

None

### **Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:**

None

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

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**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)*

<b>Yes</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>No</b>	
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**Key Decision:**

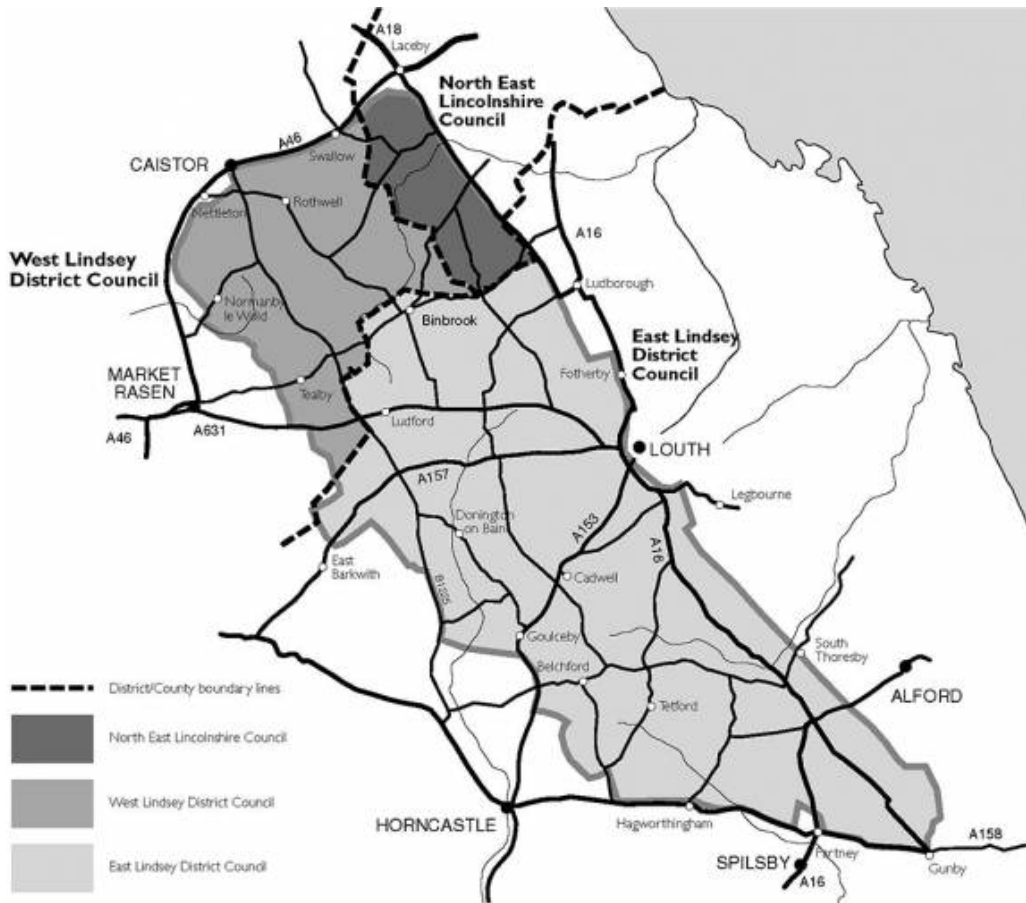
*A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications*

<b>Yes</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>No</b>	
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**1. Background**

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 Act (2000) reaffirmed the national status of AONBs and the need for all relevant local authorities to have "due regard" for the designation when performing all of their duties. The Act provided an added responsibility on all local authorities with AONBs, to produce and review a Management Plan, including 1) Statement of significant attributes, 2) State of the AONB Report, 3) Vision, Objectives and Policies for the area, 4) A resulting partnership Action Plan. Under the EU Directive an accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) report may be required, depending upon the extent of the review.
- 1.3 The AONB Partnership has now completed its final version of the 2018-2023 Management Plan following extensive engagement and public consultation. The closing plan has been endorsed by the Lincolnshire Wolds Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) at their meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2018.
- 1.4 The plan has been approved and validated by Natural England. They are the statutory consultee on all AONB and National Park matters. This now releases the plan for its formal adoption from all relevant local planning authorities.
- 1.5 At this stage of the process, the Officer recommendation is to adopt the final AONB Management Plan.

#### **APPENDIX A – Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023**

Use the following link to access APPENDIX A:

<https://www.lincswolds.org.uk/looking-after/lincolnshire-wolds-aonb-management-plan>

#### **APPENDIX B – Summary of Public Consultation**

#### **APPENDIX C – AONB MP Support (Further Guidance)**

## **2. Collaborative Plan**

- 2.1 Under the Countryside of Rights of Way Legislation (CROW 2000) the Council has a statutory duty to produce and review a five yearly management plan for the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB.
- 2.2 The legislation is clear in stating that all relevant local authorities must produce a single collaborative Plan in partnership following national guidance originally published by Countryside Agency, and subsequently updated by Natural England and most recently the National Association for AONBs.

### **3. Reasons for adopting the management plan 2018-2023**

- 3.1 West Lindsey District Council Elected Members and Officers have been regularly consulted during the Management Plan review process, including the opportunity for dialogue at workshop and peer review stages as well as ongoing JAC and JMG updates. The plan has been finalised following extensive engagement and public consultation with all relevant Local Authorities, Parish Councils, Government Agencies (Natural England, Environment Agency and Historic England) partner organisations, local landowners, local businesses and the wider public.
- 3.2 The document is seen as a Plan for everyone with an active interest in the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB, and is holistic in scope. The Strategy (policies and objectives) and resulting five year Action Plan is seeking to support and develop a wide range of collaborative projects to help secure sustainable development in the context of a nationally protected landscape. In short, protecting and enhancing the area's natural beauty whilst also delivering on social and economic aspirations – the Plan recognises that the Wolds AONB should not be preserved in aspic, but that the area is very much a living and working landscape with integral connections to its surrounding market towns and the wider area of Greater Lincolnshire.

### **4. Changes since the last Plan review:**

- 4.1 In reviewing the previous objectives and policies some of the new expected forces for change include:
- Brexit uncertainties and its likely impact upon RDPE, agri-environment funding and general farming patterns.
  - Increased focus on tourism and its contribution to the local economy e.g. linking with wider Love Lincolnshire Wolds businesses.
  - An ongoing drive to secure sustainable growth, helping to positively influence future land management in planning decisions both within and immediately adjacent to the AONB.
  - An increasing drive on health and wellbeing matters – including greater provision of multi-functional land.
  - Emergence of new pests and diseases, including for example Chalara (ash dieback), Acute Oak Decline and Signal Crayfish.
  - Possible implications and resourcing for a review of the current AONB boundary.
- 4.2 Since the last Plan there has been a significant improvement to the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB evidence base across a range of environmental, social and economic measures as evidenced within the

State of the AONB – 2017 report. A number of indicators have been suggested to help monitor future progress. This work has been helped, in part, by an increase in availability of some national datasets specific to protected landscape boundaries (both AONBs and National Parks).

4.3 Objectives and policies have been reviewed thoroughly and there have been minor modifications to several, including in summary:

- **Natural heritage – Biodiversity Objective BO**; updated to highlight links to the latest Lincolnshire Nature Strategy, Biodiversity 2020 and emerging UK environmental plans.
- **Biodiversity Policies BP3/BP4**; slight rewording to reflect the local nature tourism offer.
- **Woodland Policy WP1**; added the need for considering climate change adaptability in new planting options.
- **Arable Farmland Policy AFP3**; rewording to aid clarification on future surveys for arable wildlife.
- **Built Heritage Policies BHP1 and BHP4**; previous policies merged, revised BHP1 better reflects the need to work with all stakeholders to encourage sympathetic and innovative design (in keeping with local character).
- **Farming and Field Sports Policy FWP2**; slight rewording to emphasise the importance of monitoring and influencing national agriculture policy.
- **Interpretation Objective IO**; additional phrase included to highlight the benefits of raising the profile of the AONB to help support the local economy.
- **Planning and Development Management Policy PP1**; amendments to highlight the requirement for making space for nature and tackling climate change when pushing for the highest quality of design in the context of the AONB. Likewise, similar additions to **Policy PP2** in respect of sensitive conversions to traditional buildings.
- **Planning and Development Management Policy PP4**; minor change to wording of mineral and waste policy to help support implementation of the Lincolnshire Geodiversity Strategy.
- **Planning and Development Management Policy PP8**; in terms of waste management/reduction, additional recognition made of helping the shift towards a circular economy.

4.4 The Action Plan has been updated for the period 2018-23, currently with a suite of proposed AONB partnership actions that align with the relevant overarching objectives and resulting policies. These are

typically subjected to a more detailed review on an annual basis by the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC); enabling some flexibility and fleet-of-foot adjustments, taking for example changes to legislation, or the emergence of new funding streams over the life of the Plan. This approach will also enable post Brexit adjustments to take place, if for example there is significant change to the current land and resource management grant systems.

## **5. Equality Act Compliance**

- 5.1 The Management Plan is seeking to provide an inclusive Strategy and Action Plan for everyone – including all specialist groups living, working or visiting the area. The Plan aims to successfully balance land management interests to help support economic, social and environmental objectives for all. The AONB Partnership continues to welcome ongoing input from all members of the public as well as specialist interest groups.
- 5.2 Particular attention has been made to invite comments from the local communities, through for example attending a range of events, promoting an open and indiscriminate Have Your Say survey, as well as more formal contacts via parish councils and town councils, (for communities both within and adjacent to the Lincolnshire Wolds) and wider press coverage.
- 5.3 The Plan's aspirations include greater access and interest in the Wolds AONB from both local residents and the wider public. There is an opportunity to help provide increased green infrastructure in the future, which is especially valuable for the more dispersed and isolated settlements. Further promotion and enhancement of the public rights of way network is also sought, including improvements to the interconnect bus walks to help support these services. The recreation and tourism objectives include utilising the market towns as gateways to the Wolds, and increasing visitor numbers to help support local businesses and local services, including village shops, pubs, cafes and restaurants.
- 5.4 Specific objectives and policies actively supporting inclusiveness include: Interpretation Policy IP1 and IP3; Transport Objective TWO; Transport Policies TWP2 and TWP5 and Planning Policy Objective PP3.

## **6. Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS)**

- 6.1 The plan recognises the importance of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and this is recognised as a key related strategy. Currently the JHWS statistics are available at ward level so a direct comparison with the AONB census population figures cannot be made. We have requested postcode data to help inform the Plan and in particular the State of the AONB report.

- 6.2 The need to link with the health and well-being agenda is included within the Partnership's Landscape Management Statement, Thriving Communities Policy TCP2 includes the aspiration to promote healthier lifestyles and Action TCA8 includes the objective of exploring and developing further links to the JHWS.

## 7. **Crime and Disorder**

- 7.1 The Plan seeks to generate and inspire a sense of place and community cohesion for the Lincolnshire Wolds and its deeply rural communities. There is a realisation that various forms of rural crime take place, especially involving night-hawking and lamping activities. Further guidance has been sought from the local Inspector to help to develop links with the Rural Community Safety Strategy 2017-20; advice also extends to seeking to reduce the incidents of fly-tipping, especially from known hot-spots.

## 8. **Funding and Resources**

- 8.1 West Lindsey District Council provides a fixed annual contribution under the terms of the Local Memorandum of Agreement (Lincolnshire Wolds AONB). This contribution helps to secure 75% core cost funding from Defra. The remaining 25% contribution is met by all relevant Local Authorities (East Lindsey District Council, Lincolnshire County Council and North East Lincolnshire Council and West Lindsey District Council).
- 8.2 West Lindsey District Council has an ongoing legal commitment to have a duty of regard for the AONB, when undertaking its general duties and functions.

## 9. **Boundary Review**

- 9.1 Under **Theme 4: Developing the Wolds** in the action plan **proposed action PA15** makes specific reference to investigating options of a further Lincolnshire Wolds AONB boundary review. Both the JAC and JMG have held discussions regarding the possibilities of a boundary review seeking to extend the AONB both to the north and south of the current designated area.
- 9.2 Officers and Members will continue to support work to review the boundary and liaise with other Local Authority partners. This will include North Lincolnshire Council who are seeking an extension of the Wolds into their authority area.



## **10. Recommendations**

- 10.1 To approve the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023 as the statutory plan for West Lindsey required by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.