

Non Technical Summary

Environmental Report for the
East Devon AONB Management Strategy
Consultation Draft 2008

Strategic Environmental Assessment and
Sustainability Appraisal

Prepared by



For the East Devon AONB Partnership
July 2008

Introduction

This document presents a summary of the Environmental Report (ER) which has been produced as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the East Devon AONB Management Strategy Consultation Draft 2008'. It also summarises the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA).

Purpose of the Environmental Report

A key purpose of the Environmental Report (and this Non-Technical Summary) is to supply consultees with the environmental information they need, to respond to the consultation on the East Devon AONB Management Strategy in an informed way. This Non-Technical Summary is presented as a consultation document.

If information is brought to the attention of the AONB Partnership which changes the findings of the SEA or SA this will also be taken into account, and may require the Environmental Report to be updated.

How to comment on this Summary or the full Environmental Report


The AONB Partnership welcomes your views and comments on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the East Devon AONB Management Strategy Consultation Draft 2008.

To help structure responses, you are invited to consider the following questions. However, if you would prefer to comment more generally on the content of the Environmental Report, please do so.

More Information

The full Environmental Report, and the East Devon AONB Management Strategy Consultation Draft 2008 can be viewed and downloaded from:

www.eastdevonaonb.org.uk



Section 1.3 of the Environmental Report

Resources available

1. Non-Technical Summary of the Environmental Report (This document)
2. Environmental Report for the East Devon AONB Management Strategy Consultation Draft 2008
3. East Devon AONB Management Strategy Consultation Draft 2008 (The Management Strategy)

Questions to think about

Do you agree with our understanding of the baseline environment of the AONB?

Are there any other plans, policies (in addition to those listed in the Management Strategy) or wider environmental objectives that should be taken into account?

In your opinion have we identified the most important 'Forces for Change' acting on the AONB?

Do you disagree with any of the assessment findings? If so, please identify which ones and tell us why. (Please back this up with additional information and explain your reasoning)

Do you have concerns about significant or cumulative environmental effects on particular areas within the AONB, or on particular environmental features?

Are there more positive aims and aspirations for the environment that the Management Strategy could deliver in the long term?

What will happen to the responses?

All comments on the Environmental Report, received by the end of the consultation period, will be reviewed and taken into account during the preparation of the final East Devon AONB Management Strategy.

Adoption of the final East Devon AONB Management Plan (Part 1 Strategy and Part 2 Delivery Plan) is expected to be in March 2009. At that time an 'Adoption Statement', published alongside the final version, will set out how the SEA and SA findings, and the consultation responses have been taken into account in the final East Devon AONB Management Plan. The statement will also set out commitments to future monitoring of environmental effects.

More Information

Send responses to

East Devon AONB Partnership

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Heath Park

Honiton

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Email: aonb@eastdevon.gov.uk

Your comments should reach the AONB Partnership by **30 September 2008**

What is the East Devon AONB?

The East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is one of Britain's finest landscapes. Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty known as AONB for short, is a statutory (legal) designation, made using the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The East Devon AONB was designated in 1963, and is one of 50 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The East Devon AONB is an attractive and diverse working landscape rich in wildlife, heritage and internationally important geology.

What is an AONB Management Plan?

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW) requires local authorities to prepare a Management Plan for AONBs in their area.


The AONB Management Plan is first and foremost a plan which sets out East Devon District Council and Devon County Council policy (The Management Strategy) and actions (The Delivery Plan) in relation to AONB management. However, the Plan is also intended to guide all the organisations and communities within the AONB on how they can help to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area - what is known as the 'statutory purpose of designation'.

The East Devon AONB Partnership published the current AONB Management Plan in 2004. This statutory plan requires review on a 5 yearly basis.

Purpose of Management Plan Review

The CRoW Act also requires the AONB Management Plan to be reviewed on at least a 5 yearly basis. The East Devon AONB Partnership published the current Management Plan in 2004 and it is time for a formal review.

More Information



Section 1.1 to 1.3 of the Management Strategy Consultation Draft 2008



Section 2.2 of the Management Strategy Consultation Draft 2008



East Devon AONB Management Plan

Part 1
Management Strategy

Part 2
Delivery Plan



Section 2.2 of the Management Strategy Consultation Draft 2008

The Management Plan Review ensures that new challenges to the conservation of the AONB can be taken into account and dealt with through new or revised policies and actions.

What is Strategic Environmental Assessment?

Strategic Environmental Assessment, known as 'SEA' for short, is a formal assessment process for plans, programmes, policies and strategies which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

The aim of SEA is to:

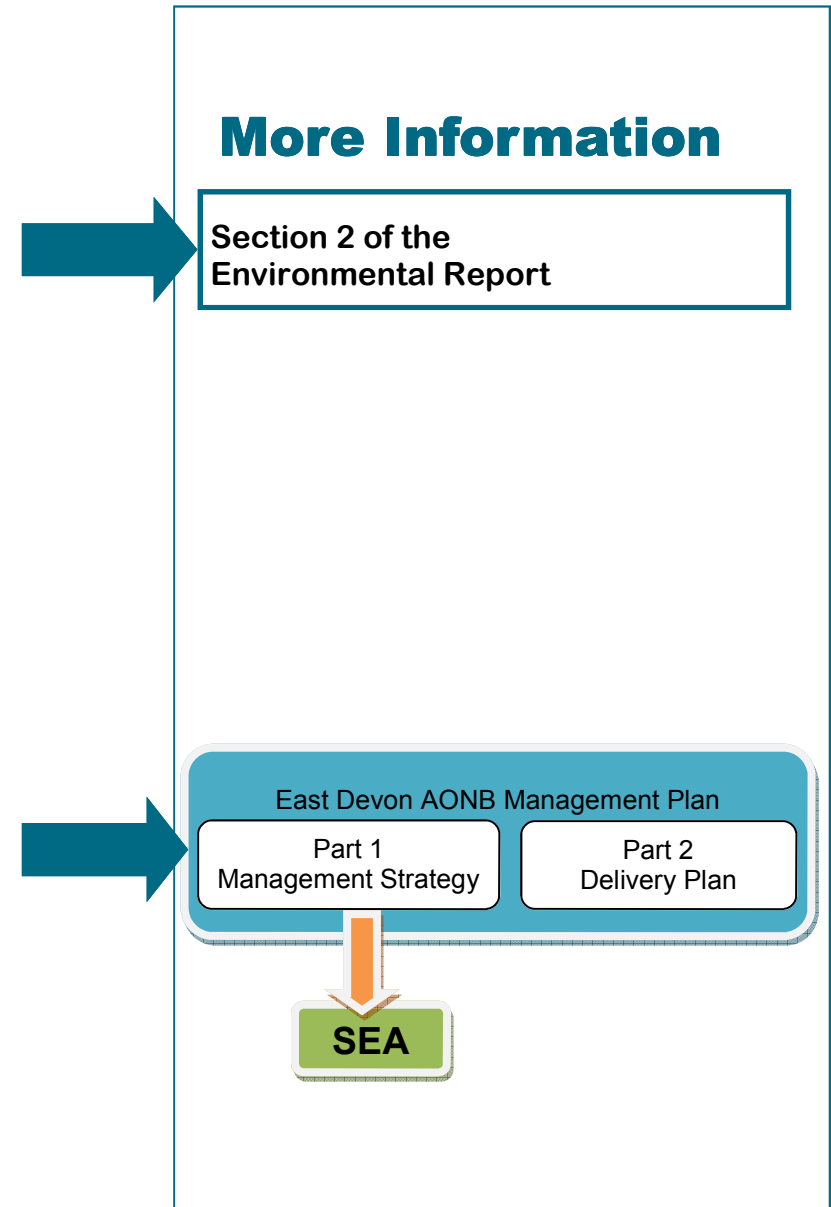
- Provide high level protection of the environment
- Help integrate environmental considerations into plans and programmes

SEA is required by European legislation known as the 'SEA Directive', which is made into English law through the 'SEA Regulations'.

The AONB Management Plan falls within the scope of these Regulations and therefore requires a formal Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Because the SEA process focuses on **policy** it has been undertaken on the 'Part 1 Management Strategy' which contains the policies which set the framework for the management of the East Devon AONB.

The Environmental Report also presents the findings from an optional Sustainability Appraisal also carried out on the Management Strategy policies.




Outline assessment method

Each policy was reviewed to identify potential impacts, both positive and negative, and to recommend possible means of enhancement. Policies were assessed against a set of 10 environmental objectives, (the SEA Objectives), assuming that worst case scenarios were realised. The Management Strategy deals with community and economic issues as well, so it was appropriate to apply a set of 5 sustainability objectives (the SA Objectives).

Table 1 Environmental / SEA Objectives

E1	To protect and enhance landscape
E2	To protect and where practical enhance biodiversity (habitats)
E3	To protect and enhance fauna and flora (individual species)
E4	To maintain cultural heritage (including architectural and archaeological heritage)
E5	To protect material assets including natural resources
E6	To protect and enhance soil quality
E7	To protect water, air and climate
E8	To safeguard human health

More Information



Section 2.3 of the Environmental Report

Developing SEA and SA Objectives is not required by law, but it is a recognised way of assessing the environmental impact of policies.

Table 2 Sustainability / SA Objectives

S1	To create more vibrant, cohesive, safe and mixed communities
S2	To protect the quality and character of individual settlements and communities
S3	To protect the environment, people and properties from flood risk
S4	To promote the development of an economy that supports social and environmental objectives
S5	To minimise the consumption of natural resources including fossil fuels, minerals, land take and water

Method of assessment

The performance of the policies in the Management Strategy were assessed against the SEA and SA Objectives using the following six-point scale.

Strongly supports the objective	S++
Supports the objective	S+
Is neutral in effect	N
Potentially works against the objective	C- (C = conflicts)
Strongly works against the objective	C--
Effects uncertain (more information is required to ascertain effects, or impact depends on implementation)	X



More Information

These colours are used to display the results of the SEA in the full Environmental Report, with a matrix for each Management Strategy Policy assessed against each SEA Objective

Relevant Plans, Programmes and Environmental Objectives

An appraisal of related law, plans, policies and programmes was carried out during initial stages of Management Plan Review and a summary is provided the Management Strategy Consultation Draft 2008 under each Management Sub-theme. These set the context within which the AONB Management Strategy policies must operate, and the environmental objectives and obligations to which the AONB Management Plan can contribute.


Main Objectives of the Management Strategy

The Management Strategy has 5 key purposes:

- To highlight the special qualities and issues of the area and the importance of its different features.
- To present an integrated vision for the future of the AONB as a whole in the light of local, regional and national priorities.
- To set out agreed policies and objectives with specific targets, which will help secure that vision.
- To identify what needs to be done, by whom and when, in order to achieve these outcomes in The Delivery Plan.
- To state how the condition of the AONB and the effectiveness of its management will be monitored.

To achieve this, the Management Strategy sets out a series of **Key Objectives** under 3 Management themes: Landscape, Sustainable Development, and Management.


More Information



Section 2.4 of the Environmental Report




Section 2.4 of the Management Strategy Consultation Draft 2008



Section 1.4 of the Environmental Report



Section 2.2 of the Management Strategy Consultation Draft 2008



Section 4.0 to 4.3 of the Management Strategy Consultation Draft 2008

Environmental Baseline

Environmental baseline data relating to the East Devon AONB has been collated by the AONB Partnership as part of the Management Plan Review process and in the interests of expediency is not repeated here. An overview of the area's significance can be found in the East Devon AONB Management Strategy Consultation Draft 2008. In addition, relevant summary data is presented under each Management sub-theme.

Key Environmental Issues

The Management Plan Review process identified Forces for Change affecting the environment and important features of the AONB. These were used to develop a set of questions to inform the assessments. The most relevant and influential are presented under the Trends and Forces for Change heading within each Management sub-theme within the Management Strategy Consultation Draft 2008.

Developing strategic alternatives

3 alternative options were briefly considered. These were:


1. **Do Nothing (No AONB Management Plan)**
2. **Business As Usual**
3. **Best for Environment**

Option 1 is not a viable option because there is a legal requirement to prepare an AONB Management Plan. This option was dismissed. Option 2 considered continuing with the policies in the current Management Plan. This is not an option because the Management Plan Review has highlighted new impacts on the AONB which must be addressed. Regarding option 3, the purpose of the

More Information




Section 1.1 'Statement of Significance'
4.1 to 4.3 of the Management Strategy Consultation Draft 2008



Section 4.1 to 4.3 of the Management Strategy Consultation Draft 2008



Section 3.1 and Appendix 1 of the Environmental Report



Section 3.2 of the Environmental Report

AONB Management Plan as a whole is to conserve and enhance natural beauty, so it should inherently represent the 'Best for environment' option.

In the interests of expediency the development of alternatives focussed on developing alternative policy wordings where policies were identified as having an adverse environmental effect.

Key Findings from the assessments

The assessment recognised the positive ambitions and vision of the AONB Management Strategy and its role in bringing together a wide range of stakeholders to address a variety of issues which impact on the area's natural beauty.

The findings acknowledged that further assessments are required at the Delivery Plan level, in particular when considering actions relating to:


- renewable energy,
- legally protected sites, species or features.

The performance of policies against SEA Objectives


Based on the information available at the time, the findings of the SEA are that the policies in the Management Strategy are not likely to give rise to any significant adverse environmental effects.

The collective impacts on each of the SEA Objectives is considered below. It is important to acknowledge that recording effort during the assessment focuses on the potential for negative effects and how these can be addressed, rather than the numerous positive impacts on the environment which could result from the Management Strategy.

More Information



Section 4 of the Environmental Report



Section 4.1 of the Environmental Report

E1 To protect and enhance landscape

With the primary purpose of AONBs including the conservation and enhancement of landscape, it is unsurprising that the Strategy is very supportive of this objective. There are opportunities to strengthen the policy on renewable energy (EQC1) by ensuring the policy wording only supports projects which 'maintain landscape character and conserve, and where possible enhance, natural beauty.' The combined application of policy L1 to projects under this policy should mean that only renewable projects which complement the landscape character are supported and delivered. Similarly, ART1 on increasing physical access to the AONB needs to ensure any projects which involve increased infrastructure or increased use are 'sensitive' to the location in terms of landscape character. This approach also applies to T1 on transport infrastructure. RES1 to encourage local produce may have negative impacts unless the policy reflects that local produce should be 'sustainable'.

E2 To protect and where practical enhance biodiversity (habitats)

Habitats form a major component of landscape and the majority of policies support the protection and enhancement of habitats. Uncertain impacts may result from EQC1 (as worded) with regards renewable energy depending upon type of renewable, location and individual design. Increased infrastructure from access projects under ART1 could damage habitat, lead to more frequent use and further damage. However, individual schemes must still have regard to conserving biodiversity. If mitigation is in place (through assessment of individual schemes) then neutral effects are the more likely outcome. Encouraging local markets and produce in RES1 could have potential indirect effects if inappropriate land (wildlife rich) is brought into agricultural use as a result of increased local demand for land based produce. But positive effects will result if sustainable, organic, environmentally friendly land management practices are encouraged.

More Information

EQC1 Support and encourage environmental and renewable energy schemes, actions, programmes and policy aimed at maintaining and improving the natural resources of the AONB and that are in keeping with the sustainable management of the landscape.

L1 Support the development and delivery of environmental schemes and projects aimed at maintaining and improving the landscape character, historic environment and local distinctiveness of the AONB.

ART1 Encourage and support the provision of high quality physical access for as wide a range of users as possible and the on-going development of key recreational routes.

T1 Promote the development of high quality, integrated and sustainable transport services and initiatives in the around the AONB.

RES1 Encourage the principle of local markets and local produce where it adds value to the local economy.

E3 To protect and enhance fauna and flora (individual species)

Whilst the majority of policies are either supportive or have a neutral effect, similar impacts on species can occur as does for habitats. EQC1 with regards renewable energy could have uncertain impacts on species, either indirectly through reduced habitats from land take for bioenergy crops, or directly from wind turbines affecting bird or bat flight paths and migration behaviour. This may be important in relation to the adjacent Exe Estuary SPA (for birds), or the Beer Quarry and Caves (for bats). Species will be particularly vulnerable to cumulative impacts from successive developments. The nature and extent of impacts depend upon type of renewable, location and individual design. Increasing the accessibility of the countryside under ART1 could lead to more frequent use and disturbance unless schemes are sensitively designed and routed. Impacts on species from policy RES1 would be as an indirect result of impacts on habitats.

E4 To maintain cultural heritage (including architectural and archaeological heritage)

The majority of policies support this objective. However, EQC1 with regards renewable energy has some uncertain impacts (as worded) on heritage depending upon type of renewable, location and individual design. For example some bioenergy crops such as Miscanthus (Elephant Grass) can damage archaeological features, with its strong and deep root systems. Increased infrastructure, signage in particular, from access projects under ART1 could alter the character of historic settlements unless they are sensitive to their location and respect local distinctiveness. If mitigation is in place (through assessment of individual schemes) then neutral effects are the more likely outcome. Inappropriate land take for agriculture, resulting from an increased local demand for land based produce encourage by policy RES1, could have potential indirect effects for archaeological features.

More Information

EQC1 Support and encourage environmental and renewable energy schemes, actions, programmes and policy aimed at maintaining and improving the natural resources of the AONB and that are in keeping with the sustainable management of the landscape.

ART1 Encourage and support the provision of high quality physical access for as wide a range of users as possible and the on-going development of key recreational routes.

RES1 Encourage the principle of local markets and local produce where it adds value to the local economy.

E5 To protect material assets including natural resources

There are potential negative impacts on feelings of tranquillity for individuals resulting from an increase in man-made infrastructure in the countryside where access provision under policy ART1 is implemented. To prevent this, all infrastructure, signage etc, needs to be unobtrusive and minimal.

E6 To protect and enhance soil quality

Most policies are either supportive or have a neutral effect on soil quality. However, increased access under ART1 could cause localised degradation in soil quality with increased path use. RES1 increasing demand for local produce could cause a decline in soil quality.

E7 To protect water, air and climate

The majority of policies are supportive of this objective. T2 on transport has an uncertain effect, depending on how road transport schemes are delivered; the environmental performance of which can be enhanced through sustainable design. Water impacts can be reduced if road drainage is regulated (attenuation). The policy can be strengthened by rewording to 'Ensure...' rather than 'Work to ensure..'.
[Ensure...](#)

E8 To safeguard human health

Most of the policies have a neutral impact on human health. This is not surprising given the emphasis on the environmental protection and enhancement within the plan. Positive effects are felt indirectly through these environmental enhancements, both in terms of physical and mental wellbeing.

E9 To ensure no adverse effect arises on population (i.e. demographic balance)

The majority of policies have a neutral impact on population. Several policies may result in positive effect on demographics, and community vitality if more job opportunities are created for local young people, as this would help to

More Information

ART1 Encourage and support the provision of high quality physical access for as wide a range of users as possible and the on-going development of key recreational routes.

RES1 Encourage the principle of local markets and local produce where it adds value to the local economy.

T2 Work to ensure road and transport schemes within the AONB have regard to the purposes of AONB designation.

rebalance the ageing population and help reduce the outward migration of the working age population.

E10 To avoid significant adverse effects between the above interrelationships

In general the policies avoid conflicts between the SEA Objectives. That said, there may be conflicts between SEA Objectives for biodiversity (E2 and E3) for some policies, owing to the conflicts between habitat management and archaeological / heritage site management, and an appropriate balance needs to be struck on an individual scheme or site basis. With appropriate mitigation the overall effect should be neutral or beneficial. There may be potential conflict between the need to protect material assets (SEA Objective E5) from coastal flooding and the geology and specialised biodiversity (SEA Objective E3) within the Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site, which would benefit from the removal of inappropriate coastal defence structures which interfere with natural coastal processes, erosion in particular.

The performance of policies against SA Objectives

In terms of sustainability the Management Strategy is largely supportive of the sustainability objectives. Where impacts are neutral these tend to occur where there is no direct link between the policy and the Sustainability Objective. No policies were assessed as likely to have an adverse effect.

S1 To create more vibrant, cohesive, safe and mixed communities

The Strategy is very supportive of this objective, with all but 2 policies being supportive. These 2 neutral policies, L2 (landscape) and EQC2 (recycling and reducing waste) can be improved at the delivery Plan stage by including community-led actions.


More Information

E2 To protect and where practical enhance biodiversity (habitats)

E3 To protect and enhance fauna and flora (individual species)

E4 To maintain cultural heritage (including architectural and archaeological heritage)

E5 To protect material assets including natural resources



Section 5.1 of the Environmental Report

L2 Develop and encourage assessment models and tools that enable effective and targeted management and monitoring of the AONB's natural, historic and cultural landscape

EQC2 Support and encourage schemes that will help to reduce, recycle and re-use waste in a sustainable manner whilst respecting the landscape character of the AONB

S2 To protect the quality and character of individual settlements and communities

Potential impacts from ART 1 which encourages increased access can be mitigated by altering the policy wording to encompass 'sensitive' access so that the character of individual settlements is maintained.

S3 To protect the environment, people and properties from flood risk

Policies only weakly and indirectly support this objective, mainly owing to its specific nature regarding flood risk management. Performance could be improved under L1 by delivering habitat enhancements which increase the water-holding capacity of land to reduce 'flash' flooding.

S4 To promote the development of an economy that supports social and environmental objectives

This objective receives strong support from the Management Strategy policies. It is unsurprising that the Strategy supports the development of an economy which supports environmental objectives, since conservation and enhancement of natural beauty is the purpose of AONB designation. The social impacts which result from sustainable land management and encouraging local communities should have benefits for the well being of communities.

S5 To minimise the consumption of natural resources including fossil fuels, mineral, land take and water

The Strategy supports this objective. Neutral impacts result from L2 which targets landscape enhancements, BG1 and 2 which focus on biodiversity and geodiversity enhancements, C1 and 2 which focus on the coastal area.

More Information

ART1 Encourage and support the provision of high quality physical access for as wide a range of users as possible and the on-going development of key recreational routes.

L1 Support the development and delivery of environmental schemes and projects aimed at maintaining and improving the landscape character, historic environment and local distinctiveness of the AONB

BG1 In partnership with others, support and encourage conservation and enhancement actions for key habitats and species within the AONB

BG2 Encourage actions that serve to conserve, enhance and promote geodiversity within the AONB

C1 Conserve and enhance the tranquil, unspoiled and undeveloped character of the coastline and estuaries and encourage improvements to coastal sites damaged by past poor quality development or intensive recreational pressure

C2 Support and encourage action that maintains the highest standard of bathing water quality and litter management in the estuaries and along the coast

Actions could be delivered under most of the neutral policies which would support this objective. For example the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) could support a project to encourage energy and water efficiency.

Conclusions from assessment

Given the environmentally protectionist nature of the East Devon AONB Management Plan approach, it is expected that any residual potential for negative effects will be screened out during the development and implementation of specific actions. This, plus the controls afforded by legislative measures to protect landscape, heritage and biodiversity should reduce the likelihood of the Management Plan giving to any significant adverse environmental effects.

The 20 Year Vision for the AONB is founded on the principle of sustainable development, to secure protection for the area's natural beauty and deliver an enhanced landscape which can be enjoyed by and benefit present and future generations. This assertion is supported by the outcome of both the assessments.

Whilst the policies are not likely to give rise to significant adverse environmental effects, they could be enhanced. Ensuring the recommendations here are taken into account in the Management Strategy revisions, following the consultation period, will improve the Strategy's performance and ability to conserve and enhance the AONB.

Monitoring

The Environmental Report sets out a proposed framework for monitoring the environmental effects of policies in the Management Strategy. This will help to ensure that adverse environmental effects are identified promptly and appropriate action taken to correct the situation.

More Information



Section 6 of the
Environmental Report



Section 7 of the
Environmental Report

Where to send responses to

East Devon AONB Partnership

East Devon Business Centre

Heath Park

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EX14 1SF

Email: aonb@eastdevon.gov.uk

Your comments should reach the AONB Partnership by:
30 September 2008.