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East Devon AONB  
Partnership Plan  
2019-24

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Environmental Report for  
the Strategic  
Environmental  
Assessment  
Final report

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Jan 2019

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## Contents

1. Context	3
2. Strategic Environmental Assessment	3
3. Purpose of this Environmental Report	4
4. The Main Objectives of the East Devon AONB Partnership Plan	4
5. Scope of the SEA	4
6. Assessment Methodology	6
7. Developing Strategic Alternatives	8
8. Assessment of policies against the SEA Objectives	9
9. Assessment of policies against the SA Objectives	26
10. Conclusions and Consultation	28
11. Monitoring	29
Appendix 1 - Limitations and assumptions of the SEA process	30
Appendix 2 - Assessment Aide	31

## I. Context

This Environmental Report has been prepared as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) undertaken on the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership Plan Consultation Draft (2018).

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, which created the statutory duty to prepare and publish a 'Management Plan' for AONBs, also requires that the Management Plan be reviewed on at least a 5yearly basis.

The current Plan was adopted in 2014 and runs to March 2019. The East Devon AONB Partnership has undertaken the statutory review of the current Plan on behalf of the relevant local authorities. The East Devon AONB Partnership Plan 2019-24 will be the result of this review.

## 2. Strategic Environmental Assessment

The requirement to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is established by the European Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (the 'SEA Directive').

The objective of the SEA Directive is to:

‘...provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.’ (Article 1, SEA Directive).

In simple terms SEA is a proactive process which provides plan-making bodies with a way to integrate environmental considerations and standards of due care, into the early stages of decision-making.

AONB Management Plans require SEA because they are plans which:

- are subject to preparation and/or adoption by an authority at local level; and;
- are required by a legislative provision (that is, CRoW Act section 89(2)).

The SEA Directive is transposed into English law through The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, (The 'SEA Regulations') but these do not add any further requirements. The term 'plan' within the SEA Directive includes revisions, so the Management Plan Review also falls under the scope of the Directive. The SEA process focuses on policy and has been undertaken on the draft 2019-24 Partnership Plan policies, which which set the framework for the plan delivery.

### 3. Purpose of this Environmental Report

This report is presented for consultation alongside the East Devon AONB Partnership Plan Consultation Draft. The SEA was carried out on policies contained within the 'East Devon AONB Partnership Plan 2019-24 Consultation Draft' based on information available at the time.

An Adoption Statement, which will be published alongside the final version of the Partnership Plan, will confirm how the SEA findings and the consultation responses have been taken into account.

### 4. The Main Objectives of the East Devon AONB Partnership Plan

The AONB Partnership Plan sets out East Devon District Council and Devon County Council policy and action in relation to the management of the East Devon AONB; as required by Section 89 of The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

The main purpose of the East Devon AONB Partnership Plan is to formulate local authority policy in relation to the AONB. In addition these policies should be used by other relevant authorities to assist them in exercising their functions with due regard to the AONB, a duty imposed by section 85(1) of The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

'85(1) In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.'

#### **The Partnership Plan has 5 key purposes:**

- To present an integrated vision for the future of the AONB
- To highlight its special qualities
- To set out key objectives and policies
- To identify priority actions for the plan period
- To state how the Plan will be monitored.

### 5. Scope of the SEA

Natural England produced Guidance to English AONB Partnerships and Boards on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of AONB Management Plans, in January 2008. This was used to inform the SEA methodology. The SEA has been carried out by the AONB Team on behalf of the AONB Partnership (acting as the 'Responsible Authority' under the CROW Act.)

The scoping stage achieved the following:

1. Identified a range of relevant strategies, policies, plans and legislation that could influence or be influenced by, the AONB Partnership Plan.
2. Identified the processes which will provide the environmental baseline.
3. Identified indicators for consideration.
4. Recorded an initial assessment of key environmental issues affecting the AONB
5. Identified and agreed sets of environmental objectives
6. Outlined the SEA methodology, including the decision that the need to review each policy would be judged from the outcome of the assessment. This effectively means that alternatives will only be developed where the assessment reveals an adverse effect.
7. Established that screening under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (HRA) would be undertaken, as a separate but complementary process, and that this would be reported on separately.

The SEA Regulations require that the 'Consultation Bodies' be given an opportunity to comment on the scope and level of detail of the Assessment and the Environmental Report.

The Consultation Bodies are:

- Natural England
- English Heritage
- Environment Agency

The Consultation Bodies were consulted on the SEA scoping in early 2018 and their comments were taken into account.

## 6. Assessment Methodology

This environmental assessment has been structured around analysis of the policies in the Partnership Plan Consultation Draft, against the agreed set of environmental objectives (the SEA Objectives). This suite of objectives was agreed at the Scoping stage, and is adapted from those recommended in the Natural England guidance on the SEA of AONB Management Plans and conforms to the SEA Directive requirements.

Assessment stages were as follows:

- 1 Initial appraisal reviewed all policies against the SEA Objectives with a view to identifying obvious and significant adverse effects.
- 2 The policies were formally reviewed against the SEA Objectives.
- 3 The Plan's environmental performance in terms of meeting the SEA Objectives was recorded using the six-point scale shown in Table I.
- 4 It is important to acknowledge that the assessment examined each of the policies in isolation. That is to say, the assessment did not take into account the wording in the supplementary text or that of the Key Objective under which the policy lies. In practice most times the policies are used, reference will be made back to the context of the Partnership Plan, but this assessment approach ensures individual policies are strong enough to 'stand alone' when used out of context and still able to conserve and enhance the AONB.
- 5 The need to revise each policy was judged from the outcome of this assessment.

**Table I – Policy Assessment criteria for SEA**

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

The East Devon AONB Partnership Plan is first and foremost a document setting the policy framework for how local authorities exercise their functions in or affecting the AONB. However, it also guides the work of other public bodies and organisations which operate within, or may affect the AONB. As such the Partnership Plan cuts across a broad range of sectors and there are many policies and objectives which impact on it.

It is envisaged that the AONB Partnership will continue to review and update the collated relevant legislation, plans, policies and strategies as part of their ongoing work.

Developing SEA objectives is not required by law, but it is a recognised method of assessment.

The objectives in Table 2 below were adapted from those provided in the Natural England guidance to AONBs. They were prioritised to more closely reflect the purpose of AONB designation and remain relevant despite changes to a number of recent policies eg NPPF.

**Table 2- SEA Objectives**

<b>E1</b>	To protect and enhance landscape
<b>E2</b>	To protect and where practical enhance biodiversity (habitats)
<b>E3</b>	To protect and enhance fauna and flora (individual species)
<b>E4</b>	To maintain cultural heritage (including architectural and archaeological heritage)
<b>E5</b>	To protect material assets including natural resources
<b>E6</b>	To protect and enhance soil quality
<b>E7</b>	To protect water, air and climate
<b>E8</b>	To safeguard human health
<b>E9</b>	To ensure no adverse effect arises on population (i.e. demographic balance)
<b>E10</b>	To avoid significant adverse effects between the above interrelationships

### **Sustainability Objectives**

In addition to environmental issues, the Plan deals with community and economic issues in the context of how these can impact on the area's natural beauty. Although not a legal requirement, it is appropriate to apply a second tier of sustainability objectives. Five headline objectives have been identified.

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

### **Environmental context**

The Partnership Plan review process identified key forces for change affecting the environment and important features of the AONB. Issues were identified from:

- East Devon AONB Management Strategy 2014-19
- The review process - professional judgement and the consultation feedback

An overview of the area's significance can be found in the Consultation Draft of the East Devon AONB Partnership Plan 2019-24. In addition, relevant context is presented under each sub-theme.

## 7. Developing Strategic Alternatives

Part 3 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, Section 12(2) states that an Environmental Report should:

‘identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of

(a) implementing the plan or programme; and

(b) reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme.’

Common SEA practice uses alternatives including ‘Do Nothing’, ‘Business As Usual’, ‘Best for Environment’ options, and others specifically developed for the plan being assessed. The appropriateness of these to the task at hand is discussed below.

### ‘No Action’ or ‘Do Nothing’ Alternative

Predicted environmental trends in the absence of management plan interventions

The environmental implications of not having an AONB Partnership Plan were considered in the Scoping Report.

Without the implementation of an AONB Partnership Plan the environment of the AONB would continue to receive protection under the wide range of statutory regimes such as the Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive, Town and Country Planning regime etc., which all serve to reduce the likelihood of significant environmental deterioration. The AONB would also continue to be considered in other significant plans, policies, strategies and decisions, because of duties imposed by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, Section 85.

Whilst in practice there are many organisations that would continue to contribute to the AONB’s protection, there is no single organisation or regulatory mechanism with a complete overview or wide-reaching influence over everything with potential to impact on the AONB. It is possible that without the implementation of the AONB Partnership Plan the cumulative effect of small-scale, or uncoordinated changes in direction in the management of the natural and built environment could threaten the area’s environmental quality and distinctiveness – factors central to its designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Without AONB Partnership Plan interventions to set a framework for the area, it is likely that there would be significant inconsistencies in the conservation and enhancement of the area’s natural beauty; its full range of distinctive and special qualities; and key features for the whole of the designated area, as well as many missed opportunities for added value. The AONB Partnership Plan therefore provides a focus for the actions of others and seeks to bring key agencies and the local community together to work to retain, conserve and enhance the existing high-quality landscape of the area, add value to existing processes and enable positive change through sustainable solutions and development.

Preparation of an AONB Partnership Plan is required by law; therefore, it is not a viable option to ‘Do nothing’. In the interests of expediency this alternative has not been examined any further than was undertaken within the Scoping Report.

### 'Business as Usual' Alternative

This assessment would consider the implications of continuing with the policies outlined in the current Partnership Plan 2014, assessing them against the SEA Objectives. The review process so far has highlighted the desire to retain policies but update new forces for change and policy/programme influences.

### 'Best for environment' Alternative

The primary purpose of the Partnership Plan as a whole is to conserve and enhance natural beauty, so it should inherently represent the 'Best for environment' option. The assessment of the policies has confirmed the improvements previously made to ensure the best environmental performance of individual policies within the Partnership Plan.

## 8. Assessment of policies against the SEA Objectives

Policies from the Partnership Plan have been individually assessed against each of the SEA Objectives. Recording effort has been directed towards documenting adverse effects and uncertainties, rather than beneficial effects.

**Table 3 - Assessment against SEA objectives**

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

Within the following Matrices, text in **aqua** under the 'Recommendations to improve environmental performance' column signifies additional text for inclusion in the policy.

Environmental Report for the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the East Devon  
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership Plan

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
LI	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.	S++	S++	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	N	N	X	<p>This policy is supportive or neutral when applied to individual SEA Objectives.</p> <p><b>Neutral:</b> There are weak potential indirect, positive, and cumulative effects on human health though improved quality of life from improvements to landscape character. <b>Interrelationships:</b> There are potential conflicting interactions between landscape, biodiversity, and heritage dependent upon how schemes are implemented. Habitat management can conflict with archaeological / heritage site management and an appropriate balance needs to be struck on an individual project/site basis. With appropriate mitigation the overall effect should be neutral or beneficial.</p>	The impact of individual schemes should be assessed with particular reference to the relative importance of selected sites for biodiversity, geo-diversity and heritage.

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
L2	Develop methods that enable effective and targeted management and monitoring of the AONB's natural, historic and cultural landscape.	S++	S++	S++	S++	S+	S+	S++	N	N	N	<b>Positive:</b> Development of monitoring tools will allow for rapid recognition of adverse change in the AONB and inform management adaptation.	
EQC I	Support and encourage environmental and renewable energy initiatives aimed at maintaining and improving the natural resources of the AONB and reducing greenhouse gas emissions and that are in keeping with the sustainable management of the landscape,	X	X	X	X	N	N	S+	N	N	X	<b>Depends on implementation:</b> This policy has some uncertain impacts on the SEA objectives for biodiversity, geo-diversity and landscape. Impact is dependent upon type of renewable and also location and individual design. Bio-energy crops can have significant adverse effects on landscape character and biodiversity, (habitats and species) especially in relation to cumulative impacts. Sustainable management in AONB terms inherently includes maintaining the local landscape character.	Schemes must be assessed on an individual basis and may require EIA.

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
	maintain landscape character and conserve and where possible enhance natural beauty .											<p><b>Positive:</b> potential indirect effects through improvements in air quality from reduced emissions. Contributions to UK commitment to reduce carbon emissions.</p>	
<b>EQC 2</b>	Support and encourage schemes that will help to reduce, re-use and recycle waste in a sustainable manner whilst respecting the landscape	N	N	N	N	S++	S+	S+	N	N	N		

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
	character of the AONB.												
<b>EQC 3</b>	Seek to understand and plan to exploit or minimise possible impacts arising from climate change in order to conserve and enhance the AONB, in particular habitats and species protected for their nature conservation value.	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S++	N	N	X	<b>Positive:</b> Increased understanding of climate change impacts will enable management and decision-making within and affecting the AONB to be informed. This includes management for landscape, biodiversity, geology, and heritage, protection of natural resources, land, air, water and climate.	
<b>BGI</b>	In partnership with others, support and encourage conservation and enhancement	S++	S++	S++	N	N	S+	N	N	N	X	<b>Interrelationships:</b> Habitat management can be in conflict with archaeological site management and an appropriate balance needs to be struck on an individual site basis.	Measures would be most appropriate at the implementation stage to ensure biodiversity projects

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
	actions for key habitat and species within the AONB that maintain and enhance landscape character and the historic environment.											With appropriate mitigation the overall effect should be neutral or beneficial.	have regard to other aspects of natural beauty, in particular heritage.
<b>BG2</b>	Encourage actions that serve to conserve, and promote geo-diversity within the AONB, in particular within the Dorset and East Devon World Heritage Site.	S++	S+	S+	N	S+	N	N	N	N	N	<b>Interrelationships:</b> Management for geology, in particular within the World Heritage Site can be in conflict with the protection of material assets. Particularly in relation to the Shoreline Management Plan.	
<b>CI</b>	Conserve and enhance the tranquil, unspoilt	S++	S++	S+	S++	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	X	<b>Interrelationships:</b> Potential conflict between the need to protect material assets from coastal flooding	

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
	and undeveloped character of the coastline and estuaries and encourage improvements to coastal sites damaged by past poor-quality development or intensive recreational pressure											and the geology and specialised biodiversity within the Dorset and East Devon World Heritage Site, which would benefit from the removal of inappropriate coastal defence structures that interfere with the natural process of erosion.  Positive: Improving coastal sites damaged by intense recreational pressure will benefit the AONB	
<b>C2</b>	Support and encourage action that maintains the highest standard of bathing water quality and litter management in the estuaries and along the coast.	S++	S+	S+	N	S+	N	S+	N	N	N	<b>Positive:</b> improved water quality and coastal environmental quality will support and potentially improve the tourism sector as well and the enhance the AONBs natural resources	

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
<b>FLM1</b>	Promote and support appropriate and positive land management, diversification and agri-environment schemes that are in keeping with the purposes of AONB designation.	S++	S++	S+	S+	S+	S++	S+	N	N	N	<b>Positive:</b> Rural diversification can help to sustain rural communities, enable small farms to remain viable and potentially increase employment opportunities	
<b>FLM2</b>	Support initiatives that enable the land management sector to adapt to change and remain viable, whilst maintaining and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	S+	S+	N	<b>Positive:</b> The policy would not support detrimental activities. Diversification can help to sustain rural communities and potentially increase employment opportunities.	

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
<b>ART1</b>	In partnership with others encourage and support the provision of high quality, sensitive, physical access for as wide a range of users as possible and the on-going sustainable development of key recreational routes where this does not conflict with the conservation of internationally protected sites and species.	X	X	X	X	X	X	N	S++	S+	X	<p><b>Depends on implementation:</b> Increased infrastructure may damage habitat and lead to disturbance however the policy clearly states this must be sensitive and must not conflict with conservation objectives.</p> <p><b>Positive:</b> Increased sustainable/ physical access can enhance health, well-being, raise awareness and offer opportunities to support the rural economy.</p>	

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
<b>ART2</b>	In partnership with others encourage and support sustainable tourism activities within the AONB through the promotion of the special qualities of the AONB, where this would not lead to conflict with the conservation of internationally protected sites and species.	S+	X	X	X	N	N	S+	N	X	X	<p><b>Depends on implementation:</b> Promotion could lead to more frequent use and damaging activity.</p> <p><b>Positive:</b> Encouraging current tourism activities to become more sustainable and respect the special qualities of the AONB will have positive effects for all aspects of the environment.</p>	Ensure that projects promote and support good practice
<b>PI</b>	Encourage the development of guidelines and design guides to support high quality sustainable development which	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	S++	N	N	N	<p><b>Positive:</b> Guidance will help to ensure development respects the character of the built environment, landscape and historic character.</p>	

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
	complements and respects the AONB landscape and historic character.												
<b>P2</b>	Provide advice and support on planning policy and development to enable the special qualities of the historic and landscape character to be protected, conserved and enhanced.	S++	S++	S++	S++	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	S+	<b>Positive:</b> Impacts are positive across the SEA objectives.	
<b>TI</b>	Promote the development of high quality, integrated and	X	S+	S+	N	N	N	N	S+	S+	N	<b>Depends on implementation:</b> infrastructure for buses and cycling can have a detrimental impact on	

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
	sustainable transport services and initiatives in and around the AONB where compatible with conserving natural beauty and the conservation objectives of European sites.											character and increase the sense of urbanisation  <b>Positive:</b> Beneficial effects from improved services and joined up transport can lead to reduced emissions, fewer vehicles on roads and public health benefits	
<b>T2</b>	Work to ensure road and transport schemes within the AONB have regard to the purpose of AONB designation.	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	X	N	N	N	The duty to have regard to the AONB purpose should ensure that schemes take account of this need.	
<b>RES I</b>	Encourage the principle of local markets and sustainable local produce where it adds value to the	X	X	X	X	X	X	N	S+	N	X	<b>Positive:</b> Opportunity for positive effects where sustainable, organic and environmentally friendly practices are adopted  <b>Interrelationships:</b> Potential conflicts with objectives for bio/geo-	Need to ensure local produce is synonymous with practices that support AONB purposes

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
	local economy and contributes to the AONB purpose of designation.											diversity and environmental quality subject to project implementation	
<b>RES 2</b>	Encourage the development of sustainable employment opportunities that are compatible with the AONB purpose and objectives, promote good design and encourage people to continue to live and work within in their communities.	N	N	N	N	N	N	S+	S+	S+	N	<b>Positive:</b> Potential positive effect on demographics and AONB if increased employment opportunities for younger age groups or landscape based professions.	
<b>RES 3</b>	In partnership with others develop monitoring and research that	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	N	S+	N	N	N	<b>Positive:</b> Potential indirect effects through increased recognition of the economic value of landscape leading	Development of ecosystem services

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
	serves to quantify and assess the economic value of the environment in the AONB.											to more resources for its management.	models would assist this process.
<b>CC1</b>	Support local community engagement in physical, cultural and natural heritage initiatives within the AONB.	S+	S+	S+	S++	S++	S+	N	N	N	N	<b>Positive:</b> indirect effects on health both physical and mental from interaction with natural environment and tranquillity	Ensure schemes are as socially inclusive as possible
<b>CC2</b>	Work with others to strengthen community capacity, resources, information, services and facilities within the	N	N	N	N	S+	N	N	N	S++	N	<b>Positive:</b> Strengthening capacity may encourage younger people to remain active in the AONB and create a wider sense of ownership /stewardship of the AONB and its features.	

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
	AONB where these contribute to the AONB purpose of designation.												
<b>CEA1</b>	Promote and support the education, understanding and appreciation of the natural and cultural landscape of the AONB.	S+	N	N	S++	<b>Positive:</b> Potential long term indirect effects through greater understanding leading to behaviour change of organisations, residents, visitors. Potential to engage a broader cross-section of AONB communities.							
<b>CEA2</b>	Promote and highlight good practice within the AONB and the role and activities of the AONB Partnership.	S+	N	S++	<b>Positive:</b> Potential indirect effects through greater understanding leading to behaviour change of organisations, residents, visitors.								
<b>MI</b>	Encourage co-ordination and partnership amongst the wide	S+	N	N	<b>Positive:</b> Opportunities for joint working in support of AONB purposes								

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
	range of national and regional agencies and organisations and other Devon based AONBs to secure funding for the care and enhancement of the AONB.												
<b>M2</b>	Ensure that the AONB Management Strategy is reviewed every 5 years and that the Delivery Plan is annually updated and made publicly available.	S+	N	N	N	<b>Positive:</b> Periodic review of delivery, management and policies will enable adaptation of delivery to address the appropriate forces for change							



## 9. Assessment of policies against the SA Objectives

Policies from the Partnership Plan have been individually assessed against each of the SA Objectives (see page 7) to address the requirement for a wider Impact Assessment covering community and economy. Recording effort has been directed towards documenting adverse effects and uncertainties, rather than beneficial effects.

### Assessment against SA objectives

	Strongly/supports the SA objective
	Is neutral in effect
	Potentially/Strongly works against the SA objective
	Effects uncertain (more information is required to ascertain effects, or impact depends on implementation)

Within the following Matrices, text in **aqua** under the 'Recommendations to improve environmental performance' column signifies additional text for inclusion in the policy.

SA Objective		Supports	Neutral	Conflicts	Uncertain
SI	To create more vibrant, cohesive, safe and mixed communities	24	2	0	0
Policy refs		LI, EQC1, EQC3, BGI, BG2, C1, C2, FLM1, FLM2, ART1, ART2, P1, P2, T1, T2, RES1, RES2, RES3, CCI, CC2, CEAI, CEA2, MI, M2	L2, EQC2		
<p><b>Summary</b> Overall the Plan is very supportive of this objective. Neutral impacts (L2/EQC2) result from landscape enhancement and waste minimisation</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b> The performance of the Plan would be improved by including community led actions under L2 and EQC2.</p>					

SA Objective		Supports	Neutral	Conflicts	Uncertain
S2	To protect the quality and character of individual settlements and communities	20	2	0	4
Policy refs		L1, L2, EQC3, BG1, C1, C2, FLM1, FLM2, ART1, P1, P2, RES1, RES2, RES3, CC1, CC2, CEAI, CEA2, MI, M2	EQC2, BG2		EQC1, ART2, TI, T2,
<p><b>Summary</b> Overall the Plan is very supportive of this objective. Uncertainty surrounds EQC1 for potential impacts on settlement character from cumulative impact of multiple schemes. But these could be balanced by the benefits.</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b> The detail of any specific 'sustainable' tourism or transport schemes should be balanced to conserve and enhance the character of AONB communities.</p>					

SA Objective		Supports	Neutral	Conflicts	Uncertain
S3	To protect the environment, people and properties from flood risk	24	2	0	0
Policy refs		L2, EQC1, EQC3, BG1, BG2, C1, P1, P2, RES3, CC2, CEAI,	L1, EQC1, EQC2, C2, FLM1, FLM2, ART1, ART2, TI, T2, RES1, RES2, CC1, CEA2		
<p><b>Summary</b> The Plan supports this objective but there are several areas where policies have a neutral effect due to the fact that only weakly influence flood risk.</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b> There is increasing awareness of Natural Flood Management and Flood Risk which policies L1, and the FLM and CEA could help encourage and address through specific actions/priorities.</p>					

SA Objective		Supports	Neutral	Conflicts	Uncertain
S4	To promote the development of an economy that support social and environmental objectives	21	5	0	0
Policy refs		L1, EQC1, EQC2, EQC3, BG1, BG2, C2, FLM1, FLM2, ART1, ART2, P2, TI, T2, RES1, RES2, RES3, CC2, CEA2, MI, M2	L2, C1, P1, CC1, CEAI,		
<p><b>Summary</b></p>					

Overall the Plan is very supportive of this objective. Neutral policies have potential for long-term cumulative and positive social benefit.					
SA Objective		Supports	Neutral	Conflicts	Uncertain
S5	To minimise the consumption of natural resources, including fossil fuels, mineral, land take and water	16	10	0	0
Policy refs		LI, EQC1, EQC2, EQC3, FLM1, FLM2, ART1, ART2, P1, T1, T2, RES1, RES2, CEA2, MI, M2	L2, BGI, BG2, C1, C2, P2, RES3, CC1, CC2, CEA1,		
<b>Summary</b> Overall the Plan supports this objective.					
<b>Recommendations</b> Actions could be delivered under most of the neutral policies which would support this objective.					

## 10. Conclusions and Consultation

**The findings of the SEA and SA are that the policies in the Partnership Plan will not give rise to any significant adverse environmental effects and are largely supportive of sustainable development.**

The assessment process was very conservative in its evaluation of environmental effects, applying the precautionary principle. This approach has highlighted some policies which have the potential for adverse effects at the delivery level; in particular, policies relating to the Access, Recreation and Tourism, and the Rural Economy and Services sub-themes, and the specific policy on renewables (EQC1). Potential impacts for all these are in relation to SEA Objectives for landscape, heritage and biodiversity. Given the environmentally protectionist nature of the AONB Partnership Plan approach, any residual potential for negative effects will be screened out during the development and implementation of actions. This, plus the controls afforded by legislative measures to protect landscape, heritage and biodiversity will result in no adverse environmental effects.

The 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 the assessment.

This SEA formed part of a consultation on alongside the Draft Partnership Plan and associated documentation between Jul-Sept 2018. Feedback from Natural England stated *"We have one comment, relating to the SEA objectives (page 7). The reviewed policies have been assessed against existing objectives so it is important to ensure that these objectives are still up to date and reflect the relevant underpinning plans, programmes and strategies. For instance some plans/strategies/ programmes may have been reviewed or replaced (e.g. the National planning Policy Framework). We suggest the approach taken is confirmed in the final document"*.

We have clarified this point on pg 7 and conclude that no further amendment is required. Final consultation with Natural England in January 2019 confirmed this assessment: *Natural England notes that our comments on the previous version of the SEA (Sep 2018) have been taken into account*

*(page 28) and clarification made. We agree with the conclusions of the report that the policies in the Partnership Plan 2019-24 will not give rise to any significant adverse environmental effects and are largely supportive of sustainable development.*

## 11. Monitoring

The SEA Directive requires that the Environmental Report includes:

‘...a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring.’ (Article 10).

Regulation 17 of the SEA Regulations requires the Responsible Authority (the AONB Partnership acting for the local authorities) to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the Plan. The purpose of monitoring is to identify unforeseen adverse environmental effects at an early stage and allow for appropriate remedial action to be taken.

Existing appropriate monitoring arrangements may be used so as to avoid duplication of monitoring. The Partnership Plan has identified indicators, and these are detailed in each sub-theme. These will assist with measuring the success of the policies in meeting the AONB objectives. Some of these will assist in indicating whether or not the AONB Partnership Plan is meeting the SEA Objectives. Monitoring for SEA requirements should seek to make use of existing datasets and existing collection mechanisms. Careful consideration should be given to the selection of indicators in terms of costs, frequency, resolution, availability and reliability.

### Duty of regard

Where data is indicated as being collected by, or is the responsibility of a relevant authority, it could be argued that it should be funding and managing the collection and analysis of this data as part of the process of demonstrating to the AONB Partnership, and ultimately Defra, that it is complying with the section 85 duty and having appropriate regard to the AONB.

### Adverse effects

Numerous organisations are collecting data relevant to the AONB which could be used as indicators of environmental change. However, difficulties arise in attributing the environmental change to specific sources, making it problematic to identify which plan or strategy is actually impacting on the environment, whether positively or negatively. Therefore, a degree of interpretation is required.

Where any significant adverse effects on the environment are recorded, the AONB Partnership should review the policies which may be responsible. It must be borne in mind that the effect may in fact be as a result of another plan or programme. However, it is in the interests of the AONB Partnership to examine and determine the possible causes. Relevant policies should be reviewed to help mitigate the environmental effect, whatever the cause.

## Appendix I - Limitations and assumptions of the SEA process

<b>Limitation</b>	<b>Approach taken</b>
<b>Timescales</b>	The SEA process takes account of the expediency required by the statutory Management Plan Review process. This guided the depth of assessment.
<b>Scope and SEA Methodology</b>	Natural England guidance recommends an expedient and fit for purpose assessment for AONB Management Plans. Consequently, the assessment focussed on the Plan policies.
<b>Management Plan Review process</b>	The SEA assessment has been undertaken on the Consultation Draft Partnership Plan.
<b>Environmental Baseline</b>	The review process has confirmed a series of indicators against which the Partnership Plan will be measured.
<b>Key Assumptions</b>	The SEA was conducted at a policy level. Actions within the Delivery Plan will need to be assessed on a case by case basis as an integral part of their development. The SEA identifies areas where assessment of actions is considered necessary.

## Appendix 2 - Assessment Aide

These questions were developed to focus the decision-making process on whether and how a policy will have a significant impact on the environment and achieving SEA objectives

	<b>SEA Objective</b>	<b>Assessment questions. Does the policy...</b>
<b>E1</b>	To protect and enhance landscape	Protect key landscape features? Protect key views? Help maintain low (financial) return landscapes that have a high ecological and/or historic environment value?
<b>E2</b>	To protect and where practical enhance biodiversity (habitats)	Promote the protection and appropriate management of statutory sites such as SACs, SPAs, NNRs, SSSIs? Promote the protection or management of BAP habitats? Protect the Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site? Prevent damage to designated sites, such as SACs, SPAs, SSSIs and RIGS?
<b>E3</b>	To protect and enhance fauna and flora (individual species)	Support the protection of legally protected species and BAP species? Maintain species that are vulnerable to changing land management? Help species that are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change?
<b>E4</b>	To maintain cultural heritage (including architectural and archaeological heritage)	Promote cultural traditions, such as farmers markets, agricultural shows, village fetes etc.? Help protect the traditional village shop or pub? Promote traditional skills, such as hedge laying, walling, building with lime mortar etc? Maintain historic environment features that are vulnerable to climate change? Maintain historic environment features that are vulnerable to changing land management?
<b>E5</b>	To protect material assets including natural resources	Reduce the consumption or degradation of natural resources? Promote recycling, and waste management? Assist Devon in recovering value from municipal waste? Protect tranquillity? Allow for adaptation to climate change impacts? Protect environmental features from flooding?
<b>E6</b>	To protect and enhance soil quality	Promote good/ sustainable soil management? Promote the restoration and maintenance of landscape features which aid soil management, e.g. by reducing run-off?
<b>E7</b>	To protect water, air and climate	Reduce diffuse pollution? Help achieve Water Quality Standards? Promote suitable renewable energy sources? Contribute to the UK target of reducing carbon emissions?
<b>E8</b>	To safeguard human health	Protect human health by raising local environmental quality? Protect human health by providing opportunities for physical exercise? Promote mental well-being for example by creating opportunities for quiet enjoyment of the countryside? Increase the quality of life of local communities?
<b>E9</b>	To ensure no adverse effect arises on population (i.e. demographic balance)	Disadvantage any particular sector of the community? Does it help vulnerable landscape management sectors adapt to economic and climate change?
<b>E10</b>	To avoid significant adverse effects between the above interrelationships	Prejudice the achievement of another SEA Objective? In combination with another policy, does it prejudice the achievement of any of the SEA Objectives?