

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

From: Strategic Director (Place)	Report Number: N37
To: Strategy	Date of meeting: 11 July 2013

SUFFOLK COAST AND HEATHS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB) MANAGEMENT PLAN 2013-2018

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report considers the Management Plan prepared for the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB for the period 2013 – 2018 and its potential implications for Babergh.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Management Plan 2013-2018 – Appendix A refers – be endorsed.

The Committee is able to resolve this matter.

3. Key Information

- 3.1 The statutory purpose of an AONB designation is to conserve cherished landscapes. In pursuing this purpose account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and the economic and social needs of local communities. Recreation is not an objective of designation but the demand for recreation should be met and managed in so far as this is consistent with the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty.
- 3.2 In order to ensure the efficient and co-ordinated management of the AONB the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Partnership was formed in 1993. The partnership is made up of organisations with a particular interest in the area who work together to deliver the Management Plan. It encompasses local authorities, statutory bodies as well as private, community and voluntary organisations.
- 3.3 The Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB is recognised at a local, national and international level as being a special place because of its wildlife, landscape and heritage qualities. As well as being an important environmental and cultural asset, the AONB is valuable in economic terms. In 2012 it was calculated that approximately £234 million per annum was spent on tourism in the AONB.
- 3.4 In view of this significant contribution to the local economy it is crucial that the environment is protected and enhanced. Development needs to be sustainable and of a high quality to reflect the characteristics of the area. The AONB partners therefore rely on a clear Management Plan to ensure the area is managed sympathetically.

3.5 The Management Plan sets out four themes for the effective stewardship of the AONB. These themes are:

- Coasts and Estuaries,
- Land-Use and Wildlife,
- Enjoying the area, and,
- Working together.

3.6 The Plan outlines 155 actions which seek to deliver a 20 year vision for the area. The vision can be summarised as:

- Protecting the area's high quality landscape and wildlife,
- Enabling local communities to become actively engaged in their environment,
- Helping the economy to thrive so new and established businesses can flourish,
- Ensuring high quality facilities enable everyone to enjoy the AONB, and
- Maintaining the area's tranquillity and rural character.

3.7 The Management Plan is a partnership document and as such no one organisation is responsible for its implementation. The priorities are therefore jointly 'owned'. While the Management Plan is intended to assist local authorities with the preparation of their Local Plans, it does not constitute Supplementary Planning Guidance.

3.8 It should be noted that the Management Plan has been the subject of an Appropriate Assessment under *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, 2010* by Suffolk County Council and is acceptable. This assessment will be formally submitted to Natural England by Suffolk County Council.

4. Financial and Resource Implications The core budget for the management of the AONB is around £354,000 of which 50% comes from DEFRA. Suffolk County Council currently contributes around 18% (some £66,000) with the remainder coming from local authorities and partners. While future funding may be reduced during the next Comprehensive Spending Review, the funding partners are seeking to ensure that the Management Plan can still be delivered within budget.

5. Risk Management

5.1 The Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Partnership enables the District Council to deliver its legal responsibilities under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000. The adoption of the Management Plan would fulfil this duty and help protect and enhance the area for the next five years.

6. Consultations and Communication

6.1 The Management Plan has been subject to 18 months of consultation with local communities, professional interests and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership.

7. **Equality Analysis** There are no equality and diversity implications arising directly from the content of this report.

8. **Shared Service / Partnership Implications**

8.1 This report relates to a matter affecting Babergh only.

9. **Appendices**

Title	Location
(a) Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan, 2013 – 2018	http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/assets/AONB-Management-Plan-20132018.pdf

10. **Background Documents**

None.

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