



Business Plan for 2017-18

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1.0 Introduction and Review of 2016/17

During 2016 the North Devon Coast AONB (NDAONB) Partnership has continued its work to deliver the 2014 – 2019 Management Plan objectives. Key changes during the year included the office relocation into new open plan facilities adjacent to the previous office in Barnstaple requiring considerable de-cluttering, training in new ICT equipment, systems and software and new working practices. Staff changes included recruitment of a full-time officer (Cat Oliver) to deliver the HLF funded Coastal Creatures project and the bringing in-house of all PR and communications work. Contraction of information about the AONB from its 2 websites to 1 new website was completed in 2016. A new vice-chairman of the Partnership was appointed in 2016 – Steve Mulberry.

Review of the AONB Management Plan Delivery (2014-19)

The year has seen progress in delivering a range of the Plan's policies and objectives both through the efforts of the team, the use of the SDF grants and the work of Partnership members. These are summarised in the following table:

Management Plan Theme	Policy	Activity in 2016/17	Key Partners
1. Landscape	A3 A1 A6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seascape Character Assessment - training Fixed post photography Character of our Coast – talks/exhibitions Defra Landscape Pioneer – development phase 	Team Team Beaford Arts /Team BR Partnership / Team
2. Biodiversity & Geodiversity	B6 B8 B7 B7 B7/8 B7/8 B8 B8 C3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project – Braunton priority area SDF – Love the Verge – Biosphere – community management of verges SDF – Photomicrography – digital camera and microscope SDF – Explore & Learn – digital microscope in Combe Martin Museum Coastal Creatures HLF 2 year project – Citizen science on coastal species, bioblitzes, beach cleans, surveys, training and interpretation Croyde and Combe Martin 8 hour Bioblitzes SDF – Wild Shorts Film competition SDF – GH Bats Viewing Platform Local Geodiversity Action Plan 	DWT & 18 others / Team Tarka Country Trust / BR / DCC Coastwise ND Combe Martin Museum Team / NT / Coastwise ND / NBCP / CM Sea School CC/ Coastwise / Combe Martin Primary School NDMI Braunton PC Team
3. Historic environment	E2 E2 E1 E2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Silver, Smoke and Strawberries Walk Booklet - Combe Martin Industrial Heritage SDF – The Story of North Devon's Churches (2 year HLF project) SDF - Clovelly Dykes Southern Extension GeoPhysical survey Devon Historic Environment Record – 	Team / CM Museum Seize the Moment / team NDAS DCC HER team

		updates of AONB sites	
4. Coast	D6 D4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coastal Creatures – beach cleans with Tesco Bags of Help Consultations on SW Marine Plan and Defra Marine Pioneer 	Team /NT /NBCP /Coastwise ND / CM Primary School /
5. Farming and land management	F6 F1/2 F1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catchment Partnership projects Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund for GHB area – Braunton and Caen Valley 'Future of Farming in the AONB' meetings 	DWT, WRT, BR, EA, NE DWT/BR Team
6. Planning and development	I2/3 I4 I4 I4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40 planning applications considered, 2 appeals, 6 pre-application advice New Local Plan consultations Planning Protocol signed with 3 LPAs Major developments in the AONB setting 	Contractor/team Chair/NE TDC, NDC, DCC Planning Panel
7. Transport and highways	I8 I8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Down End, Croyde – 20 telegraph poles and 700 metres of overhead lines removed Woolacombe Line removal bid and plans 	WPD / BT, team Parish Council, landowners Team / WPD
8. Access, recreation and health	H5/6 H1 H3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Devon AONB Marathon 28 Beach Cleans SDF – Northam Burrows Welcome Signs 	Team & Hospice Team & Partners NBCP/TDC
9. Rural economy and tourism	G3/4 G3/4 G5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SDF – Hartland Abbey film and farming interpretation SDF – Coast to Coast Family Cycling Guide Coastal Communities Teams – 'Surfing Beaches' and 'Combe Martin' 	Hartland Abbey / team EOS Cycling NDC/Team
10. Community	J1 J1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Events – 6 Stands at local festivals, 10 walks/activities, 6 exhibitions, 9 talks SDF – Bat Audio Trail - Braunton Countryside Centre 	Team NDET

Priority Annual Themes

These were agreed as a way to ensure delivery of key management plan themes and to focus the limited resources of the AONB as shown below:

1. Farming and Land Management 2014/15
2. The Coast 2015/16
3. Biodiversity and Geodiversity 2016/17
4. Historic Environment and Health and Wellbeing 2017/18

The annual themes for 2016/17 were addressed through partnership working, externally funded projects and the contribution of the SDF grants. The main pieces of work delivered over the year included:-

1. Coastal Creatures project – two year citizen science, training, beach cleans and interpretation project focussing on coastal biodiversity – led by Cat Oliver and working with key local partners (Coastwise North Devon, National Trust, Northam Burrows Country Park, Combe Martin Primary School) focussing on 4 beaches across the AONB
2. Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project – Dave Edgcombe supported the DWT team's activities within North Devon, primarily focussed around the Braunton area, related to community engagement, surveying, monitoring and awareness raising

3. Coastal Change – Dave Edgcombe has provided talks across the area to a wide range of audiences using historic and contemporary photographs to illustrate change due to human, climate and environmental impacts on the AONB landscape (in partnership with Beaford Arts)
4. Combe Martin HEAP – Silver, Smoke and Strawberries Walks booklet – developed by Chrissie Ingle to incorporate the industrial heritage and geology of Combe Martin
5. Local Geodiversity Action Plan – Chrissie Ingle has led work to develop a plan for the AONB to prioritise work and support external funding bids for interpretation and engagement work

Thanks are extended to key partners, communities and funders for their support in these achievements.

2.0 Staffing

The budget proposed for 2017-2018 maintains the core staff of full time manager and projects officer, with a part time administrator (totalling 2.4 FTE's). Additional contract work in relation to planning advice and specific projects or tasks will be continued. Partnership working locally and regionally will be used to complement our activities and support delivery of Management Plan priorities.

External funding will be sought to support specialist and project staffing, either contracted through our host authority, Devon County Council or seconded through our arrangements with partner organisations

3.0 Funding for 2017/18

Following Defra's commitment of funding for the four years of this parliament, the budget for the financial year 2017/18 is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Funding contributions

Funder	Indicative Amounts
DEFRA (75%)	138,415
Devon County Council	13,132
North Devon District Council	16,770
Torridge District Council	17,000
Total	£185,317

The financial appendices of the Memorandum of Agreement between the local funding partners will be updated annually.

4.0 Delivering the 2014 – 2019 Management Plan

a) Monitoring and reporting on progress against ND AONB Management Plan targets

The monitoring framework will be reported on every other year to reflect budget constraints and availability of new reporting data from external agencies and organisations. This will be conducted in 2016 working with Devon Biodiversity Records Centre and other partners. An AONB annual forum will be re-introduced in 2017 which will provide a public report, as well as a review included in each annual business plan.

b) Monitoring AONB landscape condition

We will maintain local monitoring of key sites through fixed point photographic surveys. The Seascape Character Assessment has provided detailed visual imagery of the coastal areas of the AONB, which can be used for ongoing monitoring.

c) Promoting the NDAONB vision, Management Plan and its delivery.

An annual communications plan will be developed working with the Communications Working Group based on a review of annual priorities and effectiveness of the previous year's activities. The new single website is fully operational for 2017. Different community engagement activities are being used to reflect the range of projects live each year to reach appropriate audiences.

d) Advising upon, facilitating and co-ordinating implementation by others of the Management Plan.

The Management Plan has a Delivery Plan that is broken down into priority areas and core themes. It highlights key partners for delivery and identifies whether the AONB team acts as a lead, partner or advocate on each objective.

The manager's review of the Partnership membership and operation in 2015 through meeting with most members, has led to a few changes in the membership (particularly the increase in Community members) and operation of the Partnership. The Partnership will continue to meet three times a year and contribute to the regular monitoring of the Plan's implementation and impact.

e) Accessing resources for delivering Plan objectives

We will seek funds for new projects of benefit to the AONB through a range of sources and with key local partners. Some of these are highlighted in Section 5.

f) Working with and contributing to the NAAONB activities, sharing advice and best practice at a regional and national level

The manager and chair will attend NAAONB events and participate in networking and communications, supported by the NDAONB Partnership member who is a trustee of the National Association. We will work with other AONB's and protected landscapes to develop joint funding bids, contribute to policy and participate in the South West Protected Landscapes Forum.

g) Developing an involvement by the community in the management of the AONB

The Partnership has been strengthened by new and additional 'community' members to reach new groups and areas. The SDF and outreach activities encourage community participation and engagement with the AONB, as will new projects proposed for 2017. We will support a diverse and active events schedule across the AONB, by the whole team.

h) Providing landscape related planning advice to the Local Planning Authorities

The AONB continues to work closely with the three local planning authorities, and has signed a new Planning Protocol with them. The Projects Officer and contracted Landscape Architect working with the Planning Panel will review planning applications within the AONB and its setting. Pre-planning application advice will be offered to the LPAs to meet NPPF recommendations.

5.0 Annual Priorities – ‘Historic Environment’ and ‘Health and Wellbeing’

The focus for 2017-2018 will be historic environment and health and wellbeing. Key objectives to be addressed this year from the Management Plan are detailed below:

Historic Environment	AONB role
Protect historic features and landmarks – e.g. strip field systems	Lead
To develop further Historic Environment Action Plans for the AONB	Lead
Protect and appropriately manage the landscapes’ archaeological heritage including prehistoric hill forts and burial sites	Partner
Promote protection and awareness of key WW2 heritage sites	Partner
Develop an innovative programme of interpretation projects for heritage features	Partner
Involve and engage local communities in celebrating the historic environment	Partner
Health and Wellbeing	
H6 To maximise health-linked recreation in the North Devon AONB	Partner
H7 Develop links with healthy lifestyle initiatives	Partner

6.0 Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)

A sum of £25,000 will be allocated for 2017-18 and publicity will highlight the annual themes as well as the full management plan priorities. To ensure delivery of the health and wellbeing priorities, a proportion of the SDF budget will be used to commission activity as this is a new area of work for the Partnership. Decisions on projects to be funded will continue to be made by the SDF Panel in conjunction with the AONB Manager.

7.0 Projects and Activities

Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project (GHB)

This Heritage Lottery Fund supported project started in October 2015 with 19 partners led by Devon Wildlife Trust. With a total value of £2m over 5 years, one of the 12 target areas is the GHB population around Braunton and the Caen Valley. ND AONB is the lead partner in North Devon, working closely with key partners to support delivery of the biodiversity, land management and community elements. 2017 will see the establishment of a mobile bat beacon for Braunton, a viewing platform and a range of events throughout the year. The team will be focusing some additional activity on the Combe Martin area.

North Devon Biosphere Reserve, Catchment Partnership and Defra Pioneers

The NDAONB is a member of the Biosphere Partnership and active in the North Devon Catchment Partnership, looking to deliver the wider benefits of the catchment based approach to communities and land managers. The AONB is also part of the working groups for the two Defra Landscape and Marine Pioneers covering the North Devon Biosphere

Reserve area, testing innovation in delivery and funding through priorities in the Defra 25 Year Environment Strategy.

Biodiversity – The **Coastal Creatures** project funded for 2 years by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the AONB, Tesco Bags of Help and local partners is focussed on the beaches and rocky foreshores of the AONB. It provides an education and interpretation officer, species and habitats training and monitoring, citizen science, schools training, volunteer engagement, interpretation and wildlife trails. In addition to increased biodiversity monitoring, the aim is to increase access to and understanding of the AONB for a wide range of people and visitors through wildlife. Key partners are the National Trust, Coastwise North Devon, Combe Martin Primary School, Northam Burrows Country Park and North Devon+.

Geodiversity - interpretation

Following production of a Local Geodiversity Action Plan for the AONB, a project and funding bids are in development to start delivering the actions in the Plan. These will include a range of methods to engage schools, local people and visitors with the geodiversity of the AONB. There will be a focus on interpretation (hard copy and digital) and materials for activities in local schools and museums. Key partners: Devon RIGS, North Devon museums, tourism businesses and schools.

Farming and Land Management

Engagement with farmers and landowners in the AONB is planned to better understand the issues facing the different agricultural sectors across the AONB and the potential implications of leaving the European Union for farming, the environment and the AONB's landscape.

Historic Environment theme in 2017

Funding bids are in progress to provide a two year volunteers coordinator to deliver surveying and recording of historic features in the AONB, development of a volunteer practical conservation group and development of a HEAP for Clovelly or Hartland.

Health and Wellbeing theme in 2017

Activity will be commissioned through the SDF programme to deliver activity in both North Devon and Torridge to engage new people and organisations with the AONB, to increase access and enjoyment for the benefit of health and wellbeing. The target will be AONB residents and populations in neighbouring urban areas.

Management Plan Review

The Management Plan for the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty is produced every five years by the Partnership, at the request of the three Local Authorities as part of their statutory duty under Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. The review process for the next Plan will start in July 2017 to meet consultation and decision making requirements before its publication in 2019.

The review process provides an opportunity to measure progress against the purpose of designation "*to conserve and enhance the natural beauty*", the achievement of objectives and actions over the five year period and to take into account the changing circumstances and new challenges facing the area and the Partnership members in delivering the AONB Vision and Policies. A new delivery plan will accompany the main Plan document and policies.

Expenditure Summary and Key Milestones for the year

Table 2: Expenditure – core costs and project activity

Expenditure item	Amount (£)
Staff incl. training & project development	118,426
Accommodation and support	9,767
PR, website and interpretation	3,950
Partnership, NAAONB & Plan monitoring	7,250
Planning contractors	11,000
SDF grants	25,000
Projects match funding	9,924
Total	£185,317

Table 3: Key Milestones 2017/18

Activity	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR
Partnership Meetings												
Funding bids for geodiversity project												
Funding bids for historic environment												
Annual Forum												
SDF Launch & Panels												
Coastal Creatures project delivery												
GHB project delivery												
Management Plan Review Process												
Publicity & events												