



**North Wessex
Downs
National
Landscape**

North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 Light Touch Review Statement

1. This statement sets out the Council of Partners' light-touch review of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2019-2024, extending the plan to November 2025. This is in accordance with the letter from the then DEFRA Parliamentary Under Secretary of State the Rt. Hon. Lord Benyon's letter dated 7th July 2022.

The North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership's Approach to the Management Plan Review

2. The content of the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 ("the Plan") was based on sound evidence and consultation with our partners and the public. It continues to include appropriate policy for the management of the National Landscape[] and for the execution of the NWDNL Partnership's and the NWDNL Unit's respective functions. In view of the circumstances set out in Lord Benyon's letter, the Council of Partners' position, as agreed at its meeting on 8th November 2022, is that a full review of the Plan should be deferred by one year.

3. The Council of Partners therefore proposes the following approach to the review of the Plan:

- a) November 2024: extend the application of the existing Plan to the end of November 2025, in accordance with Lord Benyon's letter of July 2022 (this statement).
- b) 2024-25: review the Plan for the period 2025-30.

4. The Council of Partners proposes that the Plan review for 2025-30 will incorporate a number of elements. These include:

- a) emphasis on the implications for relevant bodies of their strengthened duty towards the National Landscape, so that now they must *seek to further the purpose* of designation;
- b) factual updates;
- c) engagement with DEFRA and Natural England and their agents to incorporate the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework and the Protected Landscapes Management Plan guidance, as far as is feasible given the review timetable;
- d) reference to DEFRA's Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework; and
- e) reference to Natural England's protected landscapes management plan guidance.

Vision for the North Wessex Downs National Landscape

5. The vision for the North Wessex Downs National Landscape will continue to reflect the aspirations set out on pp.10 and 11 of the Plan.

Proposed Structure for the Management Plan 2025-2030

6. The plan's structure will be determined as part of the review process.

North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership Objectives 2024-2030

7. Subject to the outcomes of the Management Plan review, the NWDNL Partnership's objectives are expected to include the following:

- a) Undertake the review of the Management Plan for 2025-30.
- b) Strengthen relevant bodies' commitment to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the NWDNL, and encourage a consistent approach across all local authority partners.
- c) Renew and intensify the emphasis on nature recovery (either incorporating or referencing as an annex the NWDNL Nature Recovery Plan);
- d) Conserve the historic environment and ensure landscape management and change are informed by a full understanding of historic landscape character.
- e) Support a shift to regenerative agricultural techniques and other nature-based measures to restore nature, mitigate and adapt to climate change and support the viability of farm businesses.
- f) Take practical steps to address the challenge laid down by the Glover Review to engage with new and more diverse audiences, enabling well-managed access and supporting health and well being.
- g) Improve partnership arrangements to enhance the management and governance of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.
- h) Attain and retain IUCN Green List Protected Area accreditation.

Elements Informing the Plan Review 2025-30

8. The Plan review for 2025-20 will be informed by: the strengthened duty to further the purposes of designation; DEFRA's Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework; Natural England's management plan guidance; the Partnership's identified Goals and Strategic Objectives; the need for clear advice and leadership to guide future farming and land management; recommendations of the Glover Review; ambitions set out in the North Wessex Downs Nature Recovery Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategies; supporting guidance such as position statements, the Guide to Good External Lighting and the Guidance on Selection and Use of Colour in Development; emerging Environmental Land Management schemes; partner local authorities' climate strategies and adaptation plans; insights gained through the IUCN Green List process.