



## **Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Partnership - December 2017**

### **Proposed Extensions to the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB**

The next steps for the project is for a consultation on the proposed extensions to the SC&H AONB as approved by the Natural England Board at its meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> September 2017. The consultation is statutory with relevant local authorities (Suffolk CC, Suffolk Coastal DC, Waveney DC, Babergh DC, Ipswich BC, Essex CC and Tendring DC) however Natural England has decided that it should be extended to other stakeholders and the public. Other stakeholders include National bodies (eg NAAONBs); Parish Councils in the existing AONB and in and adjacent to the proposed extension; AONB Partnership members; local businesses; community organisations; recreational interests and the wider public.

The consultation (planned to start in early January) will be for a 12 week period.

**A Consultation Pack** will be made available on the online platform Citizen Space. It will also be available on request in paper form.

**Additional Information Folder:** Will be made available in print form to the SC&H AONB and to statutory consultees via Huddle (on-line) (and in paper form if requested). It will also be made available for reference in local libraries and at consultation events. It will contain:

- the detailed technical assessments and maps; and
- the designation guidance document.

### **Methodology for the Distribution of Consultation Documents:**

**Statutory consultees:** both the Consultation Pack & Additional information Folder will be available via Citizen Space and can also be provided to them in print form (on request).

**Other consultees:** All the above consultation documentation will be placed on Citizen Space and all consultees will be encouraged to respond via that means however the Consultation pack will be made available in paper form for those specifically requesting it.

**Attendees at meetings & drop-ins:** will also be encouraged to respond using Citizen Space however a number of copies of the Consultation Pack will be available for attendees to take away if specifically requested. Two copies of the Additional Information Folder will also be available for reference only at all events.

## **Meetings:**

### Prior to the start of the Consultation:

- Briefing the Technical Advisory Group was given on 8<sup>th</sup> November
- Briefing for the Essex Coast Forum was given 9<sup>th</sup> November
- Briefing for the AONB Partnership – 15<sup>th</sup> December

### During the Consultation Period:

- One meeting to be held on morning of February 12<sup>th</sup> at the Lawford Venture Centre to brief Parish and Town Councils (including both those in, and those adjacent to, the proposed extension area as well as those in the existing AONB).
- One meeting to be held on the afternoon of February 12<sup>th</sup> at the Lawford Venture Centre for statutory consultee local authority members
- One meeting on the morning of February 13<sup>th</sup> at the Lawford Venture Centre to brief special interest groups (recreation and conservation groups)
- One meeting to be held on the afternoon of February 13<sup>th</sup> at the Lawford Venture Centre to brief for local business and land owning groups

## **Drop In Events**

Two all day drop-in events meetings to be held on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of February. The first will be at the Royal Harwich Yacht Club, Woolverstone and the second at the Venture Centre in Lawford. These informal events will provide an alternative means of finding out more about the proposals and an opportunity to meet people from the Project team and ask questions.

## **What happens following the 12 week consultation**

At the end of the consultation we will analyse all the responses and review the proposals and if necessary, amend them to take account of any further relevant evidence received.

Depending on the number of responses received this is likely to take around three months. If no fundamental objections arise which cannot be overcome, and assuming no additional land needs to be included as a result of the consultation, the next stage will be to draw up a draft Order and to publish Notice of the Order in the London Gazette and other papers as required by Section 83(2) of the CRoW Act.

The Notice period allows anyone who wishes to do so to make representations to Natural England, objecting to, supportive of, or proposing amendments to the Order, and stating the grounds on which they are made.

If however as a result of the statutory and public consultation, additional land needs to be included within the proposed boundary variation, an additional statutory consultation will be required.

Following the Notice period, a further period of response analysis will be required and any further consequent changes made to the draft legal Order. It is difficult to provide a time estimate for this at this stage as this will be determined by the number of responses received.

Natural England Board approval will then be sought to allow the Order to be 'made' and submitted to the Secretary of State for confirmation. If there are any unresolved objections, these will be submitted to the Secretary of State with the Order, who has discretion to call a Public Inquiry to consider such objections further, before deciding whether or not to confirm the Order. The Secretary of State may or may not confirm the Order, with or without amendment. This decision is not made to any specific timescale.

### **The expected timescale**

Assuming that Natural England determines that a boundary variation should be made following the consultation, we expect to submit the legal Orders to the Secretary of State for a decision later in 2018. It is not possible to say how long the Secretary of State's decision will take.

### **The implications if designation goes ahead**

Any areas that become a part of the SC&H AONB will have the benefit of the national status that designation brings and the statutory protection this provides. They will be fully reflected in future AONB Management Plans and benefit from the resources and skills of the AONB Management Unit. Although the areas under review are currently managed as part of the 'Additional Project Area', they do not have this national status or statutory protection. Ownership of land remains unchanged within an AONB, and there is no restriction on how land is farmed, although some Permitted Development Rights would change; nor is there any impact on the Single Farm Payment, Cross Compliance, or the Countryside Stewardship scheme. All planning decisions continue to be made by the existing local planning authorities, albeit with specific policies which reflect the national importance of the AONB. There is no presumption against development in an AONB and nor are there any changes to access rights over and above those that already exist.