

**Suffolk Coast & Heaths (SCH) Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Boundary Review  
Project: Natural England update briefing for the combined Suffolk Coast & Heaths &  
Dedham Vale AONB Joint Advisory Committee March 2017**

This note is to brief the Joint Advisory Committee on the forthcoming statutory and public consultation for the project and in particular the issues with regard to the timing of the start of the consultation. This updates the briefing note provided to the SC&H AONB Partnership meeting of December 2016 (see below) in which we undertook to provide a more specific indication of the timescale when in a position to do so.

It is our intention to undertake a 12 week formal statutory consultation which meets best practice in line with the Cabinet Office Consultation Principles (January 2016). In doing so we will consult both statutory local authority consultees and other stakeholders, including 'communities of interest and place' in order to ensure that we are providing an opportunity to engage for all who live, work, visit or otherwise have an interest in or near the areas proposed for designation. We intend to promote the consultation widely and to provide opportunities for responses to be submitted either online or on paper and we will support the consultation with meetings with local stakeholders. We will provide maps and a questionnaire seeking opinions about the proposed revised boundaries and providing an opportunity for respondents to submit evidence to support their views. We will also make available all the required technical assessments. Before the start of the consultation we will provide a full briefing to the Technical Advisory Committee (comprising relevant local authority officers) in order that the local authorities are aware and prepared in advance.

We are now at the stage of finalising our assessments prior to seeking approval from the Natural England Board for the proposals on which we will consult. From previous experience we are acutely aware of the need to ensure that we support any proposed landscape designations with robust defensible evidence and avoid providing undue opportunities for challenge. We have also taken the decision that the consultation should start after the pre-election period for the County Council elections on 4<sup>th</sup> May. Approval of the proposed boundary for statutory formal consultation will now be put to the Natural England Board at its meeting of 14 June and the consultation will start as soon as possible after this date. In the meantime relevant staff are actively preparing for the start of the consultation.

David Vose  
Project Manager

## **Project to Consider Variations to the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Boundary: Natural England's Briefing Note for SC&H AONB Partnership meeting December 2016**

### **Introduction**

This note is to update the Partnership about the project.

### **Informal Consultation**

The informal consultation took place between July and September 2016. We supported the consultation with two meetings, one for Parish Councils and one for Partnership members. We also provided Partnership members with the opportunity to visit some of the areas being proposed for designation as extensions to the SC&H AONB. Following these meetings we also attended a separate meeting organised by the CLA for their members with land in the areas under review. Following the informal consultation, we received written responses from five Parish Councils and four members of the Partnership.

### **Technical Assessment**

The responses that we have received are proving to be very helpful in our assessment of natural beauty, the desirability of designation and in reviewing the boundaries on which we consulted. We want to ensure that we have considered all the evidence prior to starting the next stage of the project.

### **Statutory Consultation**

It remains our intention to undertake the statutory and public consultation in the early part of 2017 and we will provide our written assessments and justification for the revised boundaries along with advice about how to respond as part of this process. As soon as we are able to do so, we will provide the Partnership with a more specific indication of the timescale for this however we wish to ensure that we have fully assessed the areas concerned before doing so. Our priority is to ensure that we have been as rigorous as possible in undertaking these assessments prior to seeking formal responses from statutory and other consultees.

Jonathan Dix

Natural England