

## **Proposed Dorset and East Devon National Park**

### **Evidence and Sources used to support the Proposal**

#### **Theme: Sustainability**

##### **Overview**

- Climate change and sustainability are possibly the biggest issues facing humanity. The Dorset and East Devon National Park would work, with partners, to ensure that these issues are addressed and that practical solutions are developed.
- A National Park has the potential to act as a catalyst and beacon for sustainability in all its forms, and for joined-up thinking and partnership working in a wide range of policy areas and functions.
- Sustainability is the key to the survival of cherished landscapes and species. More than this, sustainability is increasingly seen as fundamental to a thriving future by communities and governments, consumers and businesses, farmers and retailers, recreation and wildlife enthusiasts.
- This agenda resonates with key policy concerns and objectives of the government and key stakeholders, national and local, in all sectors of society, statutory, commercial and not-for-profit.
- As the evidence note on biodiversity indicates, the designation of a National Park would:
  - protect geology, landscapes and habitats
  - promote landscape-scale conservation and vital connectivity between designated areas across the South of England, and
  - optimise the valuable ecosystem services provided by the NP area and their contribution to national policies for sustainability.
- Through promoting sustainability, a National Park would make a significant contribution to:
  - the conservation and enhancement of the environment, biodiversity and natural resources
  - the enjoyment and appreciation of the area and its recreational value
  - social and economic well-being and public health, and
  - climate change mitigation.
- The Dorset and East Devon landscapes – which include the spectacular World Heritage “Jurassic” Coast as well as the beautiful and unspoilt heaths, chalk ridges, deep valleys, woods, wetlands and traditional farms - invoke a positive response among visitors and residents alike. They contain dramatic views, spectacular wildlife, and historic villages and buildings.
- Moreover, these areas contain assets of intangible but “priceless” value. Thus the landscapes of Dorset and East Devon are of intrinsic value, and are also of great economic value, as the source of ecosystem services, and as the foundation for a successful tourism industry. Sustaining this landscape, natural and cultural heritage,

and the recreational opportunities it provides, is therefore vital.

- To achieve this, inter-organisational co-operation and good communication are important to ensure a shared understanding in the key fields of policy, forward planning, and day-to-day operations. A National Park offers the potential, throughout the NP area, to provide a coherent strategic approach to policy across the spectrum of sustainability issues, and to promote a systematic approach to policy delivery across a wide range of stakeholders and partners.
- NE specifically envisages that designated areas should operate at a sufficient scale to enhance connectivity and facilitate coherence. The proposed Dorset and East Devon National Park would do this, operating at an appropriate scale for effectiveness and efficiency, bringing increased coherence to governance across the proposed NP area, and offering vital connectivity stretching from East Hants to East Devon, with significant potential benefits of many kinds.
- The Dorset and East Devon National Park initiative has, as a mainstream objective, to work towards sustainability in all areas, including the following: the economy; communities; green infrastructure; transport; biodiversity; tourism and recreation; the natural, cultural and built heritage; natural resources; farming; energy; planning; land use; development and the built environment; governance and administration.
- In all these areas, a National Park has the potential to assist the various stakeholders of Dorset and East Devon to do more and do better for this outstanding area.
- This is our vision and commitment for the Dorset and East Devon National Park.

### **Dorset and East Devon National Park as a catalyst and beacon for Sustainability**

Climate change and sustainability are possibly the biggest issues facing humanity. The Dorset and East Devon National Park Authority should work, in partnership with others, to ensure that these issues are addressed and that practical solutions are developed. A National Park Authority exists to secure, for the public good, the conservation, enhancement, enjoyment and understanding of the special qualities of the NP area: its landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage. The National Park's commitment to tackling climate change, through a variety of projects and initiatives, would enable it to act as an exemplar to other protected landscapes as well as to offer practical solutions and benefits to a wide range of agencies, communities and individuals in the NP area and beyond.

The National Park Authority would also have a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park and so would be mindful of the impact of various sustainability initiatives and how they can help promote and support vibrant and sustainable communities.

The key to tackling these issues and looking at solutions is effective partnership working to combat climate change and ensure a sustainable future. The National Parks family is itself a partnership network and exemplar: for example, the English National Parks Authorities

Association (ENPAA) has set out a vision for future action as well as outlining the wide range of climate change-related work that is already happening in National Parks.

A Dorset and East Devon National Park therefore has the potential to act as a catalyst and beacon for sustainability in all its forms, and for joined-up thinking and partnership working in a wide range of policy areas and functions.

The Dorset and East Devon National Park initiative has, as a mainstream objective, to work towards sustainability in all areas, including the following: the economy; communities; green infrastructure; transport; biodiversity; tourism and recreation; the natural, cultural and built heritage; natural resources; farming; food production, distribution and marketing; energy; planning; land use; development and the built environment; governance and administration.

Through its engagement in these areas, a National Park should make a significant contribution to the conservation and enhancement of the environment, biodiversity and natural resources, to the enjoyment and appreciation of the area and its recreational value, to social and economic well-being, and to climate change mitigation.

This agenda – and this central aim of the National Park proposition – resonates with key policy concerns and objectives of the government and key stakeholders, national and local, in all sectors of society, statutory, commercial and not-for-profit. This is why the proposal for a Dorset and East Devon National Park has been received with interest, engagement and support by a wide range of stakeholders.

“Green is the new black,” Vanity Fair magazine has declared. Sustainability has entered the vernacular. Sustainability is the key to the survival of cherished landscapes and species. More than this, sustainability is increasingly seen as fundamental to the future by communities and governments, consumers and businesses, farmers and retailers, recreation and wildlife enthusiasts.

Sustainability is therefore seen by the IUCN [International Union for the Conservation of Nature] and by national authorities as a necessary cornerstone of effective policies for environmental protection and conservation of Category V protected areas [which include National Parks.] Dorset and East Devon landscapes – which include the spectacular World Heritage “Jurassic” Coast as well as the beautiful and un-spoilt heaths, chalk ridges, deep valleys, woods, wetlands and traditional farms - invoke a positive response among visitors and residents alike. They contain dramatic views, spectacular wildlife and historic buildings. Moreover, these areas contain assets of intangible but “priceless” value. Thus the landscapes of Dorset and East Devon are important in them-selves, and are also of great economic value, as the foundation for a successful tourism industry. Sustaining this landscape, natural and cultural heritage, and the recreational opportunities it provides, is therefore vital.

To achieve this, inter-organisational co-operation and good communication are important, to ensure a shared understanding in the key fields of policy, forward planning, and day-to-day operations. In all these areas, a National Park has the potential to assist the various stakeholders of Dorset and East Devon to do more and do better for this outstanding area.

### **Examples of the National Park’s potential to promote sustainability**

The proposed National Park area is unquestionably “an extensive tract which, for reasons of

its natural beauty, and for the opportunities it affords for open air recreation having regards both to its character and to its position in relation to centres of population,” merits designation as a National Park “for the purpose of a) conserving and enhancing its natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage and b) promoting understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities by the public.”

Individual Evidence Notes examine the character and quality of the proposed National Park area in the different dimensions listed above which distinguish, and justify designation as, a National Park. These include:

### **Landscape and Geology**

#### **Biodiversity, landscape scale conservation and connectivity**

#### **Farming**

#### **Cultural heritage and activities**

#### **Recreational Opportunity and Tourism**

**In each of these areas, the potential is evident for increased policy coherence and for joined-up thinking and effective partnership-working to achieve sustainability. At the present time, however, the mechanisms and resources to achieve this potential are lacking. There are green shoots, but these need the overarching leadership and support of a National Park framework to grow, thrive and bear fruit. Without a National Park, the full potential of the area to contribute to national policies and priorities for addressing climate change and promoting sustainability will not be realised.**

This note does not repeat the evidence provided in other notes, but highlights selected areas below. **In all these areas it must be emphasised that there are at present no unified, coherent, effective or efficient policies or programmes to deliver the identified potential for sustainability across the suggested NP area.**

### **Open-Air Recreation**

The Dorset and East Devon NP area offers an important resource and growing opportunity for open-air recreation. For example:

- The Dorset and East Devon coast and inland countryside, including Dorset’s heaths, offer visitors the opportunity for physical and spiritual recreation in an environment which is both wild and beautiful, and which is easily accessible from major population centres across Southern England and beyond.
- The area’s nearest population centres – the large and expanding Bournemouth-Poole conurbation to the east, Exeter and Plymouth to the west – offer great potential for the National Park to promote:
  - understanding and enjoyment of the area’s special qualities by the public
  - public engagement with nature, and public understanding of ecological connectivity and climate change issues

- a wide range of public benefits associated with a healthy natural environment, and
  - to make significant contributions, formal and informal, to the health, wellbeing, and lifelong learning of generations of residents and visitors.
- An expanding range of outdoor activities and a developing active recreation business sector, across the area, offer the potential for economic, social, educational and health benefits, on a national and community level. The proposed National Park creates scope for coherent strategic promotion of this exciting recreational potential, and its management for responsible interaction with the landscape and habitats, to ensure optimised and broadly-based economic and social benefits.
  - Dorset and East Devon include a long section of the South West Coast Path national trail [also part of the E9 European route], as well as long-distance walking routes along the magnificent Dorset Wessex ridgeways, the Purbeck Way, Hardy Way and many local and community routes. National and local cycling routes cross the area and offer exceptional scope for on-road and off-road cycling experience.
  - The 2012 Olympic Games showcased the Dorset coast as an outstanding venue for sailing and water sports. Approval in principle for the designation of a National Park would give great impetus to securing the Games “legacy,” and achieving the best return on the very substantial national and local investment in the Games.

### **Sustainable Transport**

- Good public transport gives access to the area for visitors by train, coach, and bus from all parts of UK – SW, W, Midlands, NE, NW, E and SE.
- Recent approval for the reconnection of the Swanage Heritage Railway to the main-line at Wareham, linking Purbeck to London and all parts of UK, will expand direct rail access to Dorset and the Jurassic Coast.
- Initiatives to introduce a Jurassic Coast ferry service serving the whole length of the Jurassic Coast from East Dorset to East Devon, would further enhance the sustainable transport options across the proposed National Park area.

### **Energy**

National Parks should be exemplars in delivering energy conservation and efficiency, and renewable energy solutions that do not compromise landscape, heritage and biodiversity. No policies or programmes exist to examine the scope for sustainable energy initiatives and solutions across the Dorset and East Devon NP area. The theoretical potential for renewable energy initiatives is wide-ranging, and includes: biomass (wood and short rotation crops), anaerobic digestion plants, appropriately scaled and located wind turbines [on-shore and off-shore], domestic scale installations (e.g. micro combined heat and power, heat pumps, solar power,) small-scale hydro generation, and, potentially, off-shore tidal power.

A Dorset and East Devon National Park has the potential to undertake renewable energy assessments and capacity studies in partnership with neighbouring local authorities, and to participate in research into the appropriateness of forms of renewable energy in the NP context.

## **Background**

### **Climate change**

Climate change poses the most serious long-term threat to England's natural environment because of the damage it will cause to our wildlife and habitats, the landscapes we enjoy and the ecosystem services they provide, including clean water, food and recreation. The Earth's climate is changing as a result of an increase in carbon dioxide and other 'greenhouse gases' in the atmosphere, caused mainly by human activities. The rate of climate change and its impact on vulnerable landscapes, habitats and our wildlife are of critical concern.

There is an urgent need to reduce global greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere if we want to avoid potentially catastrophic impacts on the natural environment. This process of doing this, termed mitigation, mainly depends on reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, but increasing the rate of uptake by ecosystems and ensuring carbon is not released from their degradation also has a part to play.

Even if mitigation measures are successful, climate change will continue over the coming decades because of greenhouse gases that have already entered the atmosphere. So we also need to develop strategies to manage and reduce the effects of a changing climate on society and the environment – a process of adaptation.

As well as the direct effects of climate change, such as increasing temperature, changes in rainfall patterns and their physical consequences such as sea-level rise, indirect impacts will happen as society responds to climate change. We need to take action to make sure the natural environment can cope with both direct and indirect impacts.

The need to address climate change featured strongly in 'The Natural Choice', the Natural Environment White Paper (June 2011) and the Biodiversity 2020 Strategy (July 2011) as a major challenge to address. Natural England is committed to action on both mitigation and adaptation and since 2007 has been engaged in a wide range of climate change projects and research.

### **International Guidelines on the Protection and Conservation of Designated Landscapes**

Internationally, the IUCN [International Union for the Conservation of Nature] and the WCPA [World Commission on Protected Areas] have examined the defining characteristics of designated areas, and the pressures and threats which affect them, and have suggested guidelines relating to policies for the environmental protection and conservation of Category V protected areas [which include National Parks,] the protection of the environment, the conservation of scenic values, the conservation of nature and biodiversity, and guidelines for sustainable tourism.

### **Conclusion**

- Climate change and sustainability are possibly the biggest issues facing humanity. The Dorset and East Devon National Park would work, with partners, to ensure that these issues are addressed and that practical solutions are developed.

- A National Park has the potential to act as a catalyst and beacon for sustainability in all its forms, and for joined-up thinking and partnership working in a wide range of policy areas and functions.

**Sources include the following:**

"The Natural Choice," the Natural Environment White Paper (June 2011) and the Biodiversity 2020 Strategy (July 2011).

English National Park Authorities Association [ENPAA]: website and publications

National Park Authorities, including Dartmoor and Pembrokeshire Coast NPAs: websites

Campaign for National Parks: website and publications

World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA): Management Guidelines for IUCN Category V Protected Areas; Protected Landscapes/Seascapes

World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA): Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines, Series No. 9

IUCN – The World Conservation Union, 2002: Case studies in Land use planning in the UK system of national parks, Department of City and Regional Planning, Cardiff University

IUCN: Guidelines for sustainable tourism in Category V protected areas (adapted from EUROPARC Federation, 2001)

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