Outcomes of the public consultation on the draft Jurassic Coast Partnership Plan

January 2020
Compiled by the Jurassic Coast Trust

Introduction

The public consultation on the draft Jurassic Coast Partnership plan ran between August and October 2019. Responses were invited through an online questionnaire, by email, post or via a series of fourteen public drop-in sessions that took place within a number of communities along the length of the World Heritage Site. Our thanks go to all those who submitted comments and to the venues who kindly hosted the drop-in sessions.

We received a total of 95 separate responses to the questionnaire and by email or post, and had many useful discussions with people during the drop-in sessions. The comments and questions that arose were wide ranging, but when taken together a number of subjects emerged as prominent.

This document sets out those subjects or ‘themes’, describing both the nature of the concerns or questions raised and how these will be addressed in the next draft of the plan. In summary, the themes are:

1. The Climate Emergency
2. Visiting and exploring the Jurassic Coast
3. Fossil Collections (including the proposed ‘World Class’ fossil museum)
4. Links with wider heritage and culture
5. Implications of the Landscapes Review (including the proposed Dorset and East Devon National Park)
6. Education and schools
7. Jurassic Coast organisational structures and functions

A note on spelling, grammar and factual corrections – A number of respondents helpfully pointed out errors in the text relating to spelling, grammar and references. Corrections to these will be incorporated into the next draft, which itself will be proof read and checked before being finalised.

A note on the length of the plan and the volume of its content – a few respondents recommended that the final plan should be as concise as possible and made suggestions as to which areas could be trimmed or moved to appendices. It is certainly the intention of the partnership that this plan be as concise as possible, but there are some substantial pieces of content, particularly in relation to the description of the Site and its protections, that will be difficult to edit any further. The next draft will be further amended to make it as accessible, readable and concise as possible whilst retaining the level of completeness that is required to make it a useful, functioning document.

Other forthcoming changes - An equalities impact assessment, Habitats Regulations Assesment and a Strategic Environmental Assesment of the draft Plan are underway. Further amendments to the
draft plan may be required based in their findings. These will be detailed and publicised separately as they become available.

**Changes to the draft plan**

**Summary of actions:**

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Jurassic Coast organisational structures and functions

15 Simplify the partnership section within the Plan and, for the sake of transparency, move details about the Partnership Advisory Committee and wider partnership to a dedicated page on the Jurassic Coast Website.

16 Provide a better definition for the String of Pearls concept and improve the way it appears in policies and objectives.

17 Add further clarity around the relationship between the Jurassic Coast Trust and the Partnership Plan.

18 Reframe stated ‘aspirations / actions’ as priority objectives.

19 Provide further clarity around the nature of a future delivery plan.

20 Strengthen the policies and objectives relating to community involvement and the role of Parish Councils.

Discussion:

The Climate Emergency

The current climate emergency and possible mass extinction were of considerable concern for a number of respondents. A general feeling was expressed that the full reality of the crisis was not adequately reflected in the draft plan and that the tremendous potential of the World Heritage Site in contributing positively to societies’ response to the crisis was missing. In addition, there was a request for more clarity over the role of erosion in sustaining the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site and the conflict that can arise when erosion threatens coastal communities.

In response, the Partnership Advisory Committee have agreed the following actions:

ACTION 1: Amend the plan so that it better reflects the approach to climate change taken by UNESCO and key local organisations.
UNESCO administer the global World Heritage programme, and their expectation is that all World Heritage Sites contribute to the UN sustainable development goals. We will draw on their approach to incorporate into the Jurassic Coast Partnership Plan both the wording and ambition on climate action set out by UNESCO and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In the interests of united local action, and in ways that are compatible with the World Heritage Site, we will also seek to align the Partnership Plan with the approach to the climate crisis being taken by local organisations, particularly Devon County Council, Dorset Council, East Devon and Dorset AONBs and the Devon and Dorset Local Nature Partnerships.

ACTION 2: Strengthen how the plan articulates the potentially very valuable role of the World Heritage Site in helping people understand and respond to the current climate crisis and mass extinction event.

The World Heritage Site nomination document and inscription emphasise the value of the Dorset and East Devon Coast as a teaching site. This is perhaps the most important contribution it can make towards climate action. The geodiversity of the Jurassic Coast provides evidence of both the mechanisms and consequences of climate change and mass extinction events. The geomorphology of the Site demonstrates the impact of the last ten thousand years of sea level rise, since the end of the last Ice Age. These are natural heritage stories that UNESCO consider to be of Outstanding Universal Value, and they can be a powerful tool in helping people think differently about natural change, the vulnerability of our environment and the importance of adaptation and sustainability. In amending the plan, special attention will be paid to expanding the Jurassic Coast educational ambition to address the climate crisis.

ACTION 3: Strengthen and clarify how the partnership will address the impacts on the World Heritage Site from sea level rise and climate change.

Although not directly picked up within the consultation, the potential impacts of climate change were illustrated by the coast itself with the further break up during 2019 of the iconic ammonite pavement near Lyme Regis. This, along with the recognised need for the plan to be strengthened on the subject of climate action, indicated a requirement to understand what impact predicted sea level rise in particular will have on the Site and the ways people engage with it. For example, research is needed to determine which features may be diminished by natural change and to identify areas where access to the foreshore may become more difficult. It will also be important to highlight places where coastal communities are most at risk so that we understand where new or expanded coastal defences may be needed. The plan will be amended to emphasise these potential impacts on the World Heritage Site.

ACTION 4: Amend the plan so that it better reflects the threat that erosion and flooding pose to coastal communities and the ways in which their needs can be balanced with the ongoing protection of the World Heritage status of the coast.

We accept that the plan does not fairly recognise the threat that erosion and flooding pose to coastal communities. The natural processes of change along the coast are fundamental to its World Heritage Status, but this can be in conflict with the needs or desires of communities to prevent or slow erosion or protect themselves from flooding. Since designation, a pragmatic approach has
always been taken in order to balance the needs of the World Heritage Site and the needs of the communities that live along it, but the implications of climate change and sea level rise mean that this issue of conflict may well intensify over time. Close collaboration will be required between communities and various local organisations in order to respond to coastal change, and the Jurassic Coast Partnership Plan should reflect that need. The plan will identify and highlight opportunities for such collaboration, for example the development of Coastal Change Management Areas and the refresh of the Shoreline Management Plan.

Visiting and exploring the Jurassic Coast

We received more comments and concerns about tourism than any other subject connected to the World Heritage Site. In particular, there seems to be a growing concern surrounding how busy certain parts of the coast get. Whilst this is complicated by the fact that tourism is a huge benefit to the local economy, and issues that arise from visitor pressure are not consistent the length of the coast, there is no question that the Jurassic Coast brand has a major influence on tourism in Dorset and East Devon and so tourism must be addressed carefully within the plan. Additional points were raised about public transport along the World Heritage Site, and although it was explained that Partnership has limited influence over the provision of public transport, it was noted that plan is an important place to advocate for sustainable transport options, especially in support of climate action. Finally, concerns relating to visitor access and safety were also expressed by several contributors and a request for increased clarity around how the Partnership approaches both these issues.

In response, the Partnership Advisory Committee have agreed the following actions:

**ACTION 5:** Amend the plan to increase its emphasis on sustainable visitor management and strengthen the connections between the coast and inland areas through updated policies and objectives.

The ambition to work towards sustainable visitor management reaches far beyond the coastline of Dorset and East Devon and will require the co-ordinated effort of many people and organisations. The Jurassic Coast Partnership is a useful forum that can help foster this kind of collaboration, but the World Heritage Site is only one piece of a wider picture. However, it is recognised that the Jurassic Coast is of significant importance within the visitor economy and could have a valuable influence on sustainable tourism. Three key opportunities in particular have been identified by the Partnership Advisory Committee. Firstly, that the Jurassic Coast Trust act as a facilitator in order to help stakeholders in the public and private sectors work together to find opportunities for managing visitor behaviour. Secondly, in order to relieve visitor pressure in certain parts of the coast, it will be important to encourage more people to explore inland, dispersing them to less pressured areas. This will require a targeted approach, and one developed in collaboration with stakeholders and delivered by coordinated effort amongst the partnership. Finally, it has been noted that data sharing amongst stakeholders could help develop an understanding of visitor behaviour along the World Heritage Site. There may be data protection barriers to this however, and capacity constraints around managing and analysing such a rich data set.
**ACTION 6:** Make sure that support for sustainable transport is suitably expressed within the plan and linked to the need to respond to climate change.

Sustainable transport can play an important role in support of visitor management and climate action. Whilst the Partnership Advisory Committee have no direct control on the provision of transport, it can provide a strong voice of influence and advocacy and the starting place for this must be the Partnership Plan. Therefore, it has been agreed to review and amend the plan to make sure that the role of sustainable transport in respect to the World Heritage Site is picked up more explicitly in terms of how sustainable visitor management and climate action is developed, supported and promoted.

**ACTION 7:** Make sure the Dorset Landslide and Rockfall protocol is highlighted and that the design and emplacement of safety signage is specifically covered.

The safety of visitors who are using the beach or cliff-top path along the World Heritage Site has long been a concern across every group represented with the Jurassic Coast partnership. The nature of the naturally eroding parts of the coast mean that geohazards such as rockfalls, landslides and mudflows are a common occurrence. This has led to the development of a Landslide and Rockfall protocol in Dorset to help direct the response to these kinds of events. In general practice, there is ongoing work carried out by many stakeholders to raise awareness of the risks that are present along the World Heritage Site. Particular consideration has been given to the design, placement and positioning of warning signs, which is often done in collaboration between landowners and the local authorities. It is recognised that the partnership plan is not currently clear enough on these points and the structures that are in place to help address the issues relating to safety. Changes will be made accordingly.

**Fossil Collections** *(including the proposed 'World Class' fossil museum)*

There were a number of objections raised to the wording of the Fossil Collecting, acquisition and display sub-section that starts on pg.22 of the draft plan. The term ‘world class facility’ was specifically identified to be problematic for some respondents as it was ambiguous and lacked any clear definition of what constituted ‘world class’. It was also emphasised by some respondents that a new museum should only be pursued if a clear need for one has been demonstrated and a business case explored. Other comments indicated that there was not enough of a clear connection between the description of the issues and opportunities relating to fossil collecting and the related policies and actions in the policy framework.

In response, the Partnership Advisory Committee have agreed the following actions:

**ACTION 8:** Address the concerns raised in relation to the term ‘world class’ fossil museum.

*and*

**ACTION 9:** Incorporate the recognition that the need must be demonstrated for a new museum facility before one is pursued.

The Partnership Advisory Committee discussed and agreed revised wording for the issues and opportunities section of the draft plan that incorporates both of these considerations. The phrase
‘world class’ has been replaced with less ambiguous terms. The requirement to demonstrate the need that could justify any new museum has been included in the revised paragraphs.

**ACTION 10:** Provide clearer objectives within the policy framework that relate to fossils from the World Heritage Site.

It is accepted that the policies, aspirations and actions in the policy framework do not connect well enough with the first draft of the issues and opportunities section on fossil collecting. With new wording agreed for that section, the policies and actions will be revisited to make sure there is more clarity around how they address the issues and opportunities that have been identified. For example, the Partnership Advisory Committee noted the value of facilitating better working between existing local museums and the collecting community and highlighted the opportunity of reaching a wider audience by providing access to fossils digitally.

**Links with wider heritage and culture**

Several comments were received pointing out that the arts sector and links with social and cultural heritage in Dorset and East Devon was underrepresented in the draft plan. The Partnership Advisory Committee accept this as an obvious oversight, especially in light of the Creative Coast programme that successfully delivered many positive arts and engagement outputs for the World Heritage Site.

In response, the Partnership Advisory Committee have agreed the following actions:

**ACTION 11:** Strengthen the links drawn between the World Heritage Site and cultural and social heritage.

It is common practice for the Jurassic Coast Trust and partners to routinely promote the links between the geodiversity of the World Heritage Site and the cultural and social heritage of the area. There are a great many examples of this being done in practice to a high standard along the length of the World Heritage Site. The failure to highlight this within the partnership plan is obvious. The interpretation framework for the World Heritage Site, the Jurassic Coast Story Book, includes a key theme that emphasises these connections and will form the basis for incorporating relevant amendments within the partnership plan. Additional material will be drawn from the comments on this subject submitted during the consultation and from the ongoing work of Jurassic Coast stakeholders.

**ACTION 12:** Increase the recognition that the arts sector has made and will continue to make a valuable contribution to the management of the Jurassic Coast.

There is a well-established recognition that the arts sector has a valuable contribution to make to the management of the World Heritage Site. The Partnership Advisory Committee have accepted that not giving this enough emphasis in the plan was an oversight. Two key documents will be used to inform relevant amendments to the plan; the evaluation of the Creative Coast programme and a recently published report by the Heritage Alliance on the connections between heritage and the creative industries.
Implications of the Landscapes Review (including the proposed Dorset and East Devon National Park)

The proposal of a National Park for Dorset and East Devon came up several times with respondents expressing views for and against. The National Park can be considered in the wider context of the Landscapes Review, led by Julian Glover and published in late September 2019. Whilst that report didn’t directly comment on the Jurassic Coast, there is a lot in it that is relevant to the collective work that takes place to manage and conserve what is a landscape-scale World Heritage Site. Government have yet to formally respond to the Landscapes Review at time of writing, so there is no steer yet as to how they may expect organisations to act on the recommendations within the report.

In response, the Partnership Advisory Committee have agreed the following actions:

**ACTION 13:** Amend the plan in response to the key aspirations outlined by the Landscapes Review.

Whilst there has been no formal response from government to the Landscapes Review (at the time of writing) there is an appetite amongst local bodies to begin to act on the recommendations the review sets out. The overall ambition can be expressed as a desire to make sure important landscapes are effectively protected, do more for wildlife and do more for people. In the context of the Jurassic Coast Partnership Plan, we can make amendments to the policies in anticipation that future action and delivery will aspire to meet this ambition. Delivery objectives will also be reviewed to make sure they are coherent with this intention.

The notion of a National Park for Dorset and East Devon is a complex proposal that will continue to unfold in the coming years. The Jurassic Coast Trust has a key role in monitoring progress to ensure that the position the Jurassic Coast as a natural World Heritage Site is properly considered and not disadvantaged whichever way the proposals of the National Park and the outcomes from the Landscapes Review go. This objective will be included in the plan.

**Education and schools**

There were a number of respondents who felt there was not enough in the plan to truly reflect the opportunities relating to engagement with schools. In particular, this was seen as a crucial oversight in relation to climate change. Whilst the Plan recognises informal education and engagement there is very little concerning formal education.

In response, the Partnership Advisory Committee have agreed the following actions:

**ACTION 14:** Strengthen recognition of formal education opportunities, particularly those relating to climate change.

We accept that the plan lacks any specific ambition around the opportunities to engage with formal education sector, particularly schools. As already noted, the Jurassic Coast holds great educational value. Indeed, education is one of the key purposes of any World Heritage Site. This is perhaps most
relevant today in how the Jurassic Coast can contribute to people learning about and understand climate change. Additions and amendments will be made to the plan to strengthen its ambition in relation to formal education, schools, tertiary education, Further Education and Higher Education.

Jurassic Coast organisational structures and functions

A number of distinct questions were raised relating to the organisational structures that exist in support of the Partnership Plan or in relation to the Jurassic Coast. There were several requests for more transparency around the purpose and the membership of the Partnership Advisory Committee. The relationship between the Partnership Plan and the Jurassic Coast Trust was also questioned as was the definition of the ‘String of Pearls’, which is currently a loose concept used to consider the visitors’ centres and museums along the Dorset and East Devon coast in the context of the World Heritage Site. Several respondents asked for more clarity about how the Plan will be delivered, pointing to some gaps between the policy framework and the stated actions/aspirations, terms which were themselves criticised as lacking focus. Several Parish councils were able to provide helpful responses to the consultation but also expressed concerns over the level of engagement with them to date in the creation of the Plan.

In response, the Partnership Advisory Committee have agreed the following actions:

**ACTION 15:** Simplify the partnership section within the Plan and, for the sake of transparency, move details about the Partnership Advisory Committee and wider partnership to a dedicated page on the Jurassic Coast Website.

The current draft of the Plan attempts to give an overview of the Partnership Advisory Committee in the core document whilst providing details of membership and roles in an appendix. This appendix was not available during the public consultation, which may be why concerns about transparency were raised. In considering what changes could be made, it was decided that the partnership section in the core document could be further simplified to reduce the overall length of the Plan, but only if the operational details are made more accessible elsewhere. The logical place for these details is online, as part of the Jurassic Coast website, www.jurassiccoast.org. This web page will include a full description of the Partnership Advisory Committee and list current members and their roles in respect to the World Heritage Site and the Partnership Plan. It will replace what is referred to as appendix 5 in the current draft of the Partnership Plan. The creation of the new webpage will be done in time for the adoption of the final draft of the Partnership Plan.

**ACTION 16:** Provide a better definition for the String of Pearls concept and improve the way it appears in policies and objectives.

The ‘String of Pearls’ concept has, for many years, been used to describe the collection of visitors centres and museums that help people to explore and learn about the Jurassic Coast. It is not a formal group, nor are there any specific organisational or management structures that relate to the concept. It is, however, recognised as a valuable idea that museums, visitors’ centres and communities have used to understand the nature of the World Heritage Site, the opportunities it
provides for them and the potential for collaboration and mutual support. In essence, the concept of
the String of Pearls is intended to capture both the unique character of different parts of the Site
and the diversity of experiences and facilities that the coast has to offer. The Partnership Advisory
Committee recognise that a better explanation for the String of Pearls is needed in the next draft of
the Plan, as is an improvement to the way it appears in the policy framework.

**ACTION 17:** Add further clarity around the relationship between the Jurassic Coast Trust and the
Partnership Plan.

The comments and questions raised indicate that there is some remaining confusion over the
relationship between the Partnership Plan and the Jurassic Coast Trust. In brief, the distinction lies in
the need to have a management framework that can exist independently from a central body that
provides co-ordination for Site management activity (The Jurassic Coast Trust), a body that may
change or be vulnerable over time. The internal business and activity plans of that organisation will
be created in response to the agreed Site management framework (the Partnership Plan). This will
be further clarified within the Plan and as part of the new web pages described in action 15.

**ACTION 18:** Reframe stated ‘aspirations / actions’ as priority objectives.

This is a relatively straightforward change to simplify the terms used in the policy framework to
indicate priorities for delivery. Policies will also be reviewed to make sure distinctive wording is used
for policies vs objectives. The overall structure of the policy framework will stay the same and
specific actions against stated objectives will be detailed in the delivery plan rather than in the
Partnership Plan itself (see action 19).

**ACTION 19:** Provide further clarity around the nature of a future delivery plan.

The revised Partnership Plan will set out the priority objectives for the next five years. A subsequent
and separate delivery plan will be agreed by the Partnership Advisory Committee that sets out
specific actions, responsibilities and timescales that demonstrate how stakeholders are working
towards those priority objectives. Where appropriate, it is hoped that each partner will identify their
own delivery actions in support of the Plan. The intention is to host the delivery plan on the Jurassic
Coast website as a live document that could, in principle, be updated at any time. As a baseline, the
Jurassic Coast Trust will take responsibility for reviewing delivery across the partnership on an
annual basis in order to update the delivery plan from year to year. The review process will be
carried out in collaboration with stakeholders. This approach will be set out in the new draft of the
Partnership Plan, to be adopted as part of it.

**ACTION 20:** Strengthen the policies and objectives relating to community involvement and the
role of Parish Councils.

It was accepted by the Partnership Advisory Committee that there has not been enough pro-active
engagement with relevant Parish Councils as part of the process of creating the new Partnership
Plan. The World Heritage Convention emphasises the involvement of people in World Heritage and
the importance of encouraging them to value and want to protect Sites. In order to improve our
approach in the future, policies and objectives will be reviewed to make sure there is a clear mandate for community and Parish Council involvement. This will be most significant when the time comes to prepare the delivery plan and in any future review of the way the Partnership Advisory Committee operates.