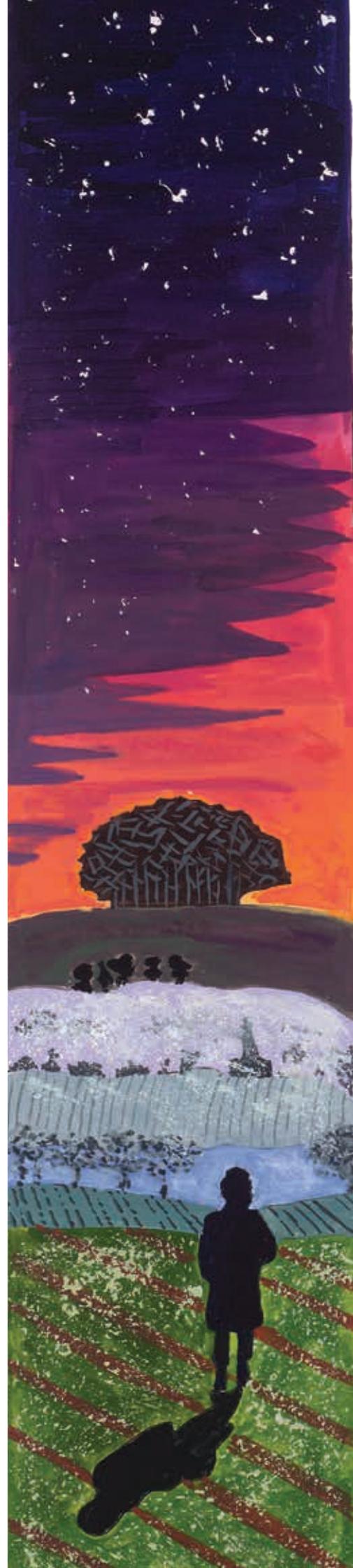
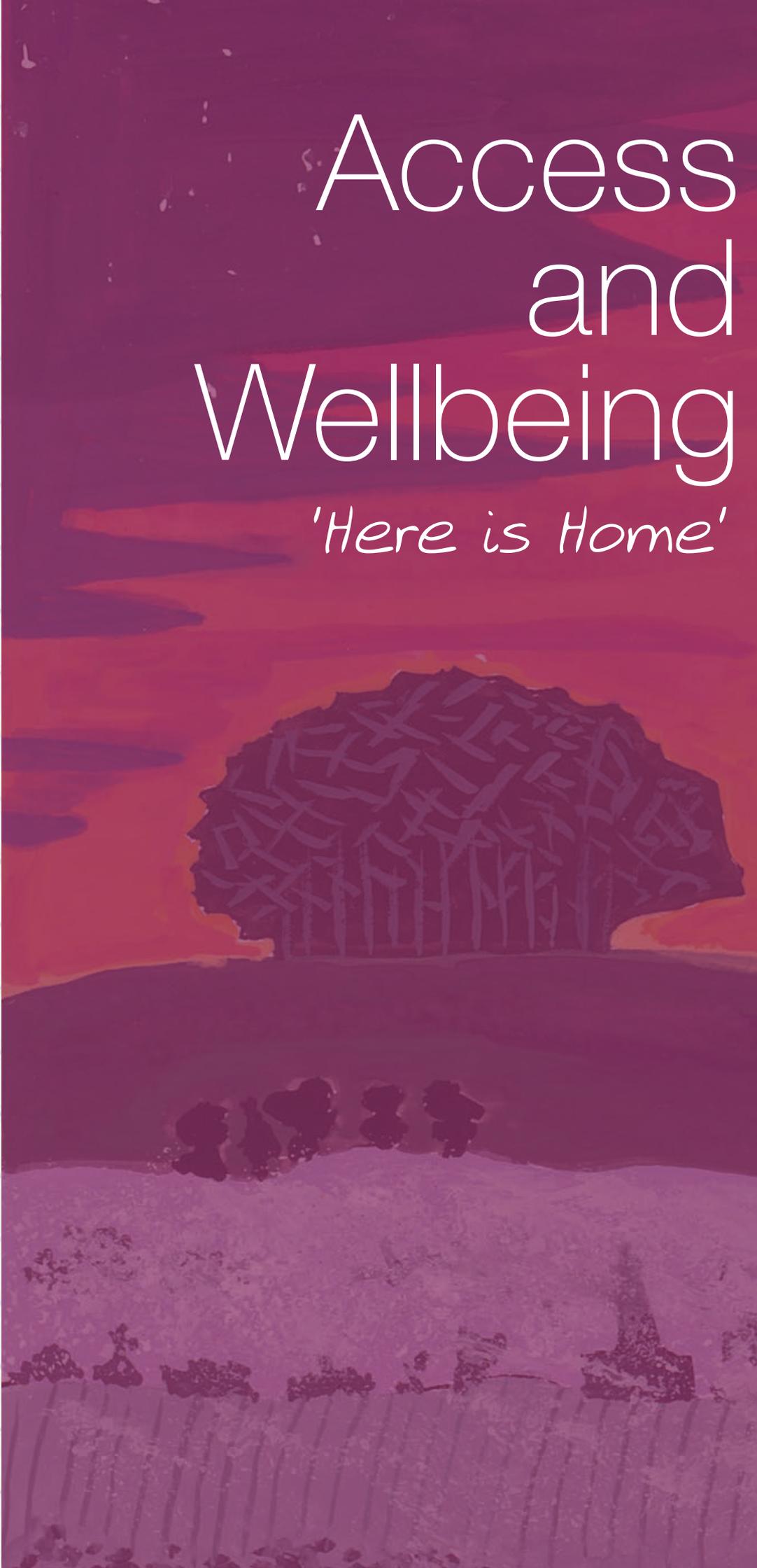


# Access and Wellbeing

*'Here is Home'*





# Here is Home

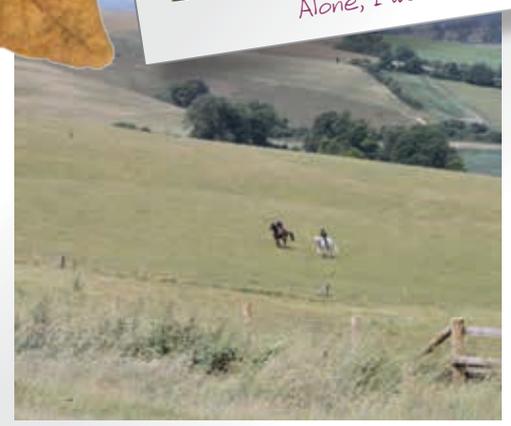
Alone, I walk my dog  
Early in the morning  
Everyday  
People come and go  
Landscape unchanged  
The views remain the same  
For a hundred years

From the top  
Gussage All Saints  
Looks small  
Covered in morning mist  
Chimneys poke through  
My feet rooted to the earth  
Memories  
Continuity

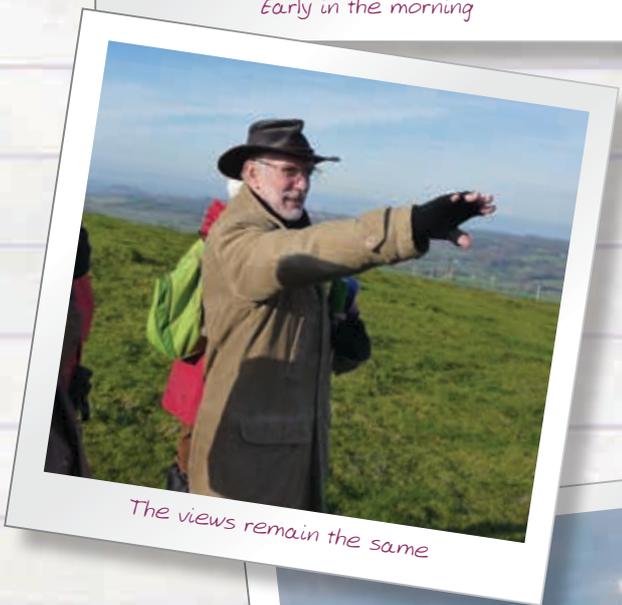
This is home  
My Heimat  
Where I belong  
A place I call England  
Special  
And only here.



Alone, I walk my dog



Early in the morning



The views remain the same



Special and only here.



People come and go



## 17. Access and Wellbeing

*The extensive web of Rights of Way, access land and promoted routes offers an unrivalled opportunity for people to link to the landscape through exploration. Discovering hidden hamlets or ancient monuments, whilst experiencing the deep rurality and tranquillity the area offers, refreshes the mind, body and soul.*

17.1. Special characteristics and qualities that make the AONB special, as a whole, with regards to access and wellbeing:

- The AONB has an extensive web of countryside access (Rights of Way, open access, permissive and named routes); the combined length of which would take you from Southampton to Edinburgh and back again.
- Enthusiastic user groups readily welcoming new members.
- There are many instances of local community volunteers undertaking regular work on Rights of Way maintenance, signage, and promotion.
- A contrast of high open downlands with ridge top routes and secluded, intimate lush valley trails.
- Ancient droves and track-ways bristling with history.
- Far reaching panoramic views uncluttered by industrial intrusions.
- A peaceful, tranquil, deeply rural area.
- Strong sense of remoteness.
- Expanses of dark night skies.

### Aim

17.2. We want everyone to explore and enjoy the AONB in ways that respect the purposes of designation. We want people to use the quality environment of the AONB to refresh the mind, body and soul.

### Achievement to date

- **PathWatch Initiative** - A scheme, successful in the South East, that allows reporting of illegal or irresponsible Rights of Way usage to police. This scheme requires ongoing work.
- **Vehicle Loggers** - Twelve vehicle loggers have been positioned around the AONB at locations determined by the relevant Rights of Way teams to record ongoing usage of the routes by different users, but in particular usage by motorised vehicles
- **New circular routes** - 26 new circular walking, cycling and horse riding routes created in the Nadder Valley.
- **Rights of Way liaison across four Counties** - Liaison and exchange of information, experience and ideas between the four County Rights of Way teams.



## Key issues

1. The AONB does not currently work in partnership with the health sector and in particular, the new public health boards. Relevant professionals may not know of the AONB and the opportunities it offers for health and wellbeing.
2. Residents and visitors, including the elderly and mobility impaired, could make more use of the AONB for health and wellbeing improvement due to the proximity of numerous routes to villages.
3. The Rights of Way across the AONB do not form a true 'network', with many gaps where routes might be linked up.
4. There is insufficient promotion of the wide variety of opportunities for outdoor recreation and exercise that exists in the AONB for all ages and abilities.
5. Signage and maintenance of Rights of Way is not consistent across the area leading to a variable quality of experience, whilst reduced budgets for maintenance means a likelihood of greater reliance on local groups and volunteers to undertake practical work.
6. Recurring conflict amongst some users of RoW endures (e.g. walkers, cyclists, horses and vehicles) and some users do cause material damage in some areas.

## The Issues Explained

- 17.3. It is important that the relatively new Health and Wellbeing Boards, together with the relevant professionals, are aware of the potential opportunities for improving health and wellbeing through access to the quality environment of the AONB. The population of around 33,000 within the AONB has the area on its doorstep; approximately ½ million people live within thirty minutes of the AONB in the surrounding market towns and the Bournemouth/Poole conurbation.
- 17.4. Continuing to close gaps in the countryside access network and providing and promoting further circular routes in close proximity to villages and the market towns would increase opportunities to access the outdoors for the elderly and less mobile. It would also benefit those who may not venture out due to cultural barriers or lack of awareness or confidence.
- 17.5. The 'green gym' concept, developed by The Conservation Volunteers, that provides people with a way to enhance their fitness and health while taking action to improve the environment, could potentially be promoted by the AONB together with the Health and Wellbeing Boards and other partners.
- 17.6. Well maintained and managed Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs) provide opportunities for people with restricted mobility to access the more remote parts of the AONB. The routes are usually well defined and, provided that surfaces are in good condition, they are generally free from stiles, gates and other obstructions, so can easily be used by older people and families with young children, cyclists, carriage drivers and those using vehicles designed for the less able. There is a need for a byway/off road vehicle management strategy that deals with both public and land management access requirements.
- 17.7. There are immense opportunities for walking, cycling, horse riding and responsible off road driving throughout the vast web of Rights of Way (1,655kms) and way marked routes, such as the Monarch's Way, Wessex Ridgeway, Jubilee Trail and others. Users are frequently rewarded with spectacular panoramas unseen from the road. These provide a great opportunity to link people with the landscape whilst providing enjoyment and improved physical and mental health. These opportunities require much improved promotion through the AONB web site, leaflets, events and through relevant partner organisations and groups.
- 17.8. The visitor economy benefits from considerable numbers of walkers and cyclists. They stay overnight and use local services. There are many active groups using the paths and tracks, such as ramblers groups, cyclists clubs, and horse riding societies, carriage drivers and the Trail Riders.



- 17.9. The four County Councils have prepared and reviewed Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs) for their networks that reflect the modern patterns of demand and land use. RoWIPs explore linkages between the off-road network, permissive routes, open access areas, minor roads and local transport routes together with local facilities and services. They also strive to ensure the network is as accessible as possible to people with disabilities or who are disadvantaged.
- 17.10. The County Councils each give support to committed and active Local Access Forums. These are independent organisations that bring all interested parties together to provide balanced advice on the improvement and promotion of responsible access.
- 17.11. Vehicle logger equipment is currently in use around the AONB. The loggers record movement and speed (with some exceptions) and experienced interpretation of the data can indicate the type of vehicle detected (tractor, cyclist, 4x4 or motorbike) which continues to help gather evidence of usage of various Rights of Way.

## Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE		POLICIES	
<b>AW A</b>	<i>Everyone has the opportunity to access the AONB for responsible enjoyment, in accord with the purposes of designation.</i>	<b>AW1</b>	Continue liaison with Rights of Way Officers, Local Access Forums, landowner and user representatives to encourage and support the development and promotion of safe walking, cycling and horse riding routes, including those that are accessible to the less able
		<b>AW2</b>	Develop, support and promote programmes of guided walks, events and activities throughout the AONB with partners
		<b>AW3</b>	Investigate revitalising the PathWatch initiative as a means to reduce illegal and/or irresponsible use of Rights of Way
<b>AW B</b>	<i>Improved health and well-being opportunities are developed and promoted throughout the AONB</i>	<b>AW4</b>	Liaise with Public Health Boards, Local Nature Partnerships and Local Enterprise Partnerships to see how best the AONB can assist with opportunities to improve health and well being
		<b>AW5</b>	Investigate funding opportunities to enhance the Rights of Way / countryside access network for all, including the provision of vehicles suitable for use by the less able and appropriate trails

(Additional Information: Access and Wellbeing Appendix 37)



“  
This landscape  
has become  
my home  
”

*Anjalika Baier, local resident*