



## Ministerial Foreword

*Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are some of our finest landscapes. They are cherished by residents and visitors alike and allow millions of people from all walks of life to understand and connect with nature.*

I am pleased to see that this management plan demonstrates how AONB Partnerships can continue to protect these precious environments despite the significant challenges they face. With a changing climate, the increasing demands of a growing population and in difficult economic times, I believe AONBs represent just the sort of community driven, collaborative approach needed to ensure our natural environment is maintained for generations to come.

AONB Partnerships have been the architects of a landscape-scale approach to land management. This approach is a key feature of the Government's Natural Environment White Paper and emphasises the need to manage ecosystems in an integrated fashion, linking goals on wildlife, water, soil and landscape, and working at a scale that respects natural systems.

This management plan also makes the important connection between people and nature. I am pleased to hear that local communities have been central to the development of the plan, and will be at the heart of its delivery. From volunteers on nature conservation projects, to businesses working to promote sustainable tourism, it's great to hear of the enthusiasm and commitment of the local people who hold their AONBs so dear.

AONBs are, and will continue to be, landscapes of change. Management plans such as this are vital in ensuring these changes are for the better. I would like to thank all those who were involved in bringing this plan together and I wish you every success in bringing it to fruition.

**Lord de Mauley**, Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries.

## Chairman's Foreword

*Lord de Mauley, as Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, in his Ministerial foreword to this Plan has made clear the contribution the Government believes that Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty can make to the protection of our environment and to the need to manage our ecosystems in an integrated fashion. He also refers to the important connection between people and nature. We share his views and welcome his support.*



It is our immense good fortune that we live in, and in many cases draw employment from, such an amazing area of beauty as the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs. Limited population, stunning scenery, a number of wonderfully preserved rural estates, few major roads and a number of charming rivers and streams all contribute to the splendour of our environment. The AONB Partnership is committed to taking the steps that we can, and must take, to conserve and enhance such an environment.

This Management Plan for the next 5 years clearly shows the diversity and scope of the challenges which lie ahead for the small professional team employed by the Cranborne Chase AONB. In turn, the team is fortunate in that it can look for advice and guidance from a multiplicity of other organisations whether members of the AONB Partnership or part of one of the special interest groups who play a valuable part in guiding the work of the AONB team. Together I believe we can face those challenges with considerable confidence.

At this point I would pay particular tribute to both Wiltshire Council as our host and largest Local Authority funder and to the officers and members from the other eight Local Authorities and nine further key organisations on the Partnership Panel, who contribute so valuably to our discussions and decisions. Life has been very tough for organisations like ours over recent years, thanks in very large part to the funding pressures faced. The fact that so much has been achieved in the 2009 to 2014 Management Plan is due in great measure to all the help we have received from so many sources.

Too many individuals have played their part in putting this Plan together to enable me to thank them individually but I would particularly commend Linda Nunn and her small team for the contribution they have made to bringing it all together. It will, I believe, provide an excellent blueprint for the way ahead and will enable us to meet the challenge of conserving and enhancing these glorious landscapes which form our inheritance. I warmly commend this Management Plan to you.

**James Stanford** - Chairman, Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership

# 1. What makes this area special?

**The following (1.1-1.14) is often referred to as the Statement of Significance:**

- 1.1. Forming part of the extensive belt of chalkland that stretches across southern central England, the Cranborne Chase AONB<sup>1</sup> is a landscape of national significance. Its special qualities include its diversity, distinctiveness, sense of history and remoteness, dark night skies, tranquillity and undeveloped rural character. With mists slowly forming over expansive downlands, it can be a moody, evocative landscape, with sights and sounds of bygone times never far away. It is an unspoilt and aesthetically pleasing landscape.
- 1.2. Natural beauty is not just the visual appearance of the countryside, but includes flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features, manmade, historic and cultural associations and our sensory perceptions of them. These factors in combination give each locality its own sense of place, contributing immensely to the quality of life.
- 1.3. The AONB designation embraces a collection of fine landscapes, each with its different landforms, soils and wildlife habitats. Whilst the chalk downland is a dominant feature, the escarpments, valleys, greensand terraces and clay vales reflect the geomorphology and impact of the underlying geology. Sometimes the changes between these landscapes are slow and gentle; in other cases such as above and below escarpments, they are quite swift and obvious. Views across and along these landscapes can be wide and expansive whilst in the valleys they are more focussed and channelled. Unspoilt and panoramic views are characteristic of this AONB.
- 1.4. Hilltop earthworks, monuments, and tree clumps are features of the chalk downlands, serving as landmarks to help orientate ourselves in these extensive landscapes. In historic terms, the landscapes of the AONB today are extraordinarily rich. Evidence of successive eras of human activity and settlements can often be lost but not in this AONB; the landscapes offer up evidence of the imprint of man, carved out over the centuries; a continuous timeline throughout British history. Prehistoric monuments of national importance, historic borderlands, ancient field systems, droves and routeways all have stories to tell. The pioneering excavations and findings of General Pitt-Rivers, of the present day Rushmore Estate in Cranborne Chase, led to him being known as the ‘father of modern archaeology’.
- 1.5. Eight thousand years ago, Neolithic peoples first started to change and manage this land. They built burial mounds and mysterious constructions, with many still seen today. The Bronze and Iron Ages saw the creation of large areas of pasture and arable farmland. The pastures on the downs date from this period. During the Anglo Saxon period, large landholdings began to change rural society. This was already a royal hunting area when the Normans invaded. They imposed forest law on the area then known as Cranborne Chase. Agricultural expansion continued outside the Chase and by the fifteenth century, hedges and walls divided the land into large blocks. This trend continued as sheep production became very profitable and the wealthy built large houses with extensive parks. Forest law persisted in the Chase until 1829.
- 1.6. Since then, agriculture has changed rapidly but the settlement patterns are very similar to those that existed in the eighteenth century. There are more than 550 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, over 2,000 Listed Buildings and 16 Registered Parks and Gardens within the AONB.
- 1.7. The AONB is of great ecological importance. It has 5 internationally, and 60 nationally, protected sites. These range from ancient downland, chalk rivers and meadows to scattered semi-natural ancient woodland, which include remnants of the medieval Cranborne Chase royal hunting area and the former Royal Forests of Selwood and Gillingham. There are also around 520 sites of local importance for wildlife comprising just over 9% of the AONB.
- 1.8. Large, rectangular fields emphasise the open character of the chalk downs. The chalkland valleys of the Rivers Wylde, Nadder and Ebble are mainly in permanent pasture, with many

<sup>1</sup> **Cranborne Chase AONB** - shorter name. At the AONB Partnership Panel meeting of 9th January 2014, it was agreed that the shorter name ‘Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)’ would be used on a day to day basis from that date. The decision was taken after very considerable and thorough discussion and consultation over a period of a year. The legal title ‘Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)’ remains in place and unaffected.





copses and hedgerows, whilst the ridges are predominantly arable. In the northwest, the sandstone fringe of wooded ridges and valleys includes rich parklands such as Longleat and Stourhead. Agriculture and its associated businesses are still a significant employer together with commercial forestry and limited mineral extraction.

- 1.9. The lush, wooded clay Vale of Wardour spreads out throughout the centre of the AONB, separating two large and distinct areas of largely arable chalk downland. To the south is the unusually wooded downland of Cranborne Chase itself with its steeply cut coombes and dry valleys so typical of chalk landscapes; to the north, the West Wiltshire Downs are generally more elevated, rising up to Grovely Wood on the eastern ridge and from where, on a clear day, the huge chalkland plateau that is Salisbury Plain can be seen stretching northwards in the distance.
- 1.10. The Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) (2003) draws together the features and attributes that contribute to the distinctive and outstanding character of the AONB. It explores the physical, ecological, visual, historic and cultural forces that shape the present day dynamic, working landscape, encompassing its social, economic and recreational characteristics. It identifies eight Landscape Types, each with distinct and relatively homogenous character with similar physical and cultural attributes, including geology, landform, land cover, and historical evolution. Four cover the chalk landscapes, two the greensand areas, and one each the clay vale and the hills between the chalk and the heathland outside the AONB. The individual characteristics of the fifteen Landscape Character Areas are set out in the LCA.
- 1.11. The Historic Landscape Characterisation (2008) describes and maps the historic and archaeological dimensions of the present day AONB landscape. Together, these two documents are a huge educational and management resource, charting the ever changing, living landscapes and the lives of those who made, and make, this their home; in essence a 'living library'.
- 1.12. The immense historic and ecological riches are held in high esteem by both local communities and visitors, as are the many diverse cultural associations with inspirational artists, writers, sculptors, poets, photographers and musicians. To name but a few, Heywood Sumner, Thomas Hardy, Desmond Hawkins, Cecil Beaton, Lucien Freud and Elisabeth Frink all took inspiration from Cranborne Chase and its hinterland. Cultural associations offer a greater awareness, understanding and appreciation of these evocative landscapes.
- 1.13. As sustainable rural tourism begins to evolve, panoramic views, dark skies awash with stars, the wealth of wildlife, plethora of historic sites, ancient droves and routeways all offer opportunities for exploration, relaxation, walking and cycling, which, in turn, offers growing potential to support this fundamentally rural economy.
- 1.14. This AONB is a deeply rural area with widely scattered hamlets, villages and narrow roads. This mainly agricultural landscape has no large settlements within its boundaries. Nearby market towns such as Salisbury, Shaftesbury, Blandford, Fordingbridge, Wimborne and Warminster are growth areas.
- 1.15. **The setting of the AONB**
- 1.16. The setting of an AONB is the surroundings in which the area is experienced. If the quality of the setting declines, then the appreciation and enjoyment of the AONB diminishes. The construction of high or expansive structures; or a change generating movement, noise, odour, vibration or dust over a wide area will affect the setting. As our appreciation of the relationships between neighbouring landscapes grows, so our understanding of what constitutes the setting continues to evolve.
- 1.17. Views are one element of setting, being associated with the visual experience. Views are particularly important to the AONB because of the juxtaposition of high and low ground and the fact that recreational users value them. Without management, views within, across, from and to the AONB may be lost or degraded.

## 2. What is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

2.1. An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is one of the nation's finest landscapes; an area of high scenic quality that has statutory protection in order to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of its landscape. Designation is under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The intent is to secure their permanent protection against any development that would damage their special qualities. The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 brought in new measures to help protect AONBs further and confirmed that the landscape qualities of National Parks and AONBs are equivalent. The protection given to both types of area by the land use planning system should therefore be equivalent.<sup>2</sup> There are currently 46 AONBs in Britain. In all, AONB designation covers approximately 18 per cent of the land area of the country.

2.2. Designation of the Cranborne Chase AONB was in 1981 and it extends over 981 square kilometres (*Map 1*). The AONB is the sixth largest and is one of thirteen AONBs in the South West (*Map 2*). The majority of the AONB lies within the South West though 6.8% of the AONB (the Hampshire section) falls within the South East. In the South West, together with the two National Parks (Exmoor and Dartmoor), the family of protected areas cover some 38% of the countryside.



### Primary purpose of designation

2.3. The primary purpose of AONB designation is 'conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area'<sup>3</sup>.

2.4. 'In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of economic and social development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.

2.5. Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.'<sup>4</sup>

### What is natural beauty?

2.6. The primary purpose of AONB designation is rooted in *natural beauty*. The term was enshrined in the 1949 Act when a romantic idea of scenic value still prevailed. Over the years qualification and amendment to the legislation has made it clear that natural beauty includes considerations such as wildlife, geological features and cultural heritage<sup>5</sup>. Government guidance relating to AONBs provides a useful non-technical definition: "Natural Beauty" is not just the look of the landscape, but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries<sup>6</sup>. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 clarified that land is not prevented from being treated as of natural beauty by the fact that it is used for agriculture, or woodlands, or as a park or that its physiographical features are partly the product of human intervention in the landscape<sup>7</sup>.

2.7. The AONB is a cultural, living landscape by virtue of both the species and habitats within it but also due to its special qualities, that human activity maintains. The natural beauty of the AONB is a blend of both the rich natural, historic and cultural heritage. The AONB

<sup>2</sup> National Planning Framework: Paragraph 115, Department for Communities and Local Government, ISBN: 978-1-4098-3413-7 (March 2012)

<sup>3</sup> Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000: Section 82

<sup>4</sup> Countryside Commission Policy Statement on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty 1991

<sup>5</sup> A draft statement on natural beauty, The University of Sheffield, January 2006

<sup>6</sup> Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A guide for AONB Partnership members, Countryside Commission, CA24, November 2001, p.6.

<sup>7</sup> Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006: Section 99



Partnership believes that the presence of the expansive, open downlands; the many historic and literary associations; and the high levels of tranquillity, comprise important elements of the natural beauty of the AONB. Those who manage the land are central to the future of this landscape. It is inevitable that this cultural landscape will continue to develop but this needs to be in ways that conserve and enhance its special qualities.

## International context

### IUCN Protected Landscape

- 2.8. The AONB landscape is of international importance, recognised as a Category V Protected Landscape by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (*Appendix 1*). In 2013, the IUCN UK Committee reaffirmed the Category V status of all AONBs, confirming the significant impact they have on conserving the UK's biodiversity.

### European Landscape Convention

- 2.9. The European Landscape Convention (ELC) is a Treaty devoted exclusively to the protection, management and planning of all landscapes in Europe (*Appendix 2*). The Convention also encourages the integration of landscape into all relevant areas of policy, including cultural, economic and social policies.
- 2.10. The ELC defines landscape as *"An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors."* (Council of Europe 2000)
- 2.11. There is a particular emphasis on the need for co-operation in undertaking programmes of landscape work that cross administrative and national boundaries. This AONB is in a prime position to showcase the UK's commitment to the Convention.



Win Green



## 3. A vision for the AONB

### What is the Vision?

- 3.1. In 2030, the Cranborne Chase AONB will be an inspirational example of sustainable management in action.
- 3.2. A place where:
- its distinctive local landscapes, historic heritage and wildlife are conserved and enhanced by those who work and manage the land, nurturing a valued and treasured countryside for future generations;
  - its characteristic vibrant villages, profoundly rural character and local sense of pride are tangible to all who live and visit here or just pass through;
  - the breadth and depth of historic land use still offers up its story in the landscape today;
  - its cultural heritage is understood, enhanced and valued; and
  - the quality of life remains high and the aspirations of those who live and work here are supported.

***The AONB Partnership wants to achieve the following:***

## Conserving and enhancing Outstanding Landscapes

### Our aims

- We want the unique character, tranquillity and special qualities of the landscapes in the AONB to be conserved and enhanced. We want a widespread understanding of the area's special qualities. We want these qualities strengthened by informed decision-making. When change happens, it is consistent with the character of the landscape and the setting of the AONB. We will take opportunities to restore landscape features that require it.
- We want the sustainable management of all natural resources in the AONB. The AONB will be a place where wildlife thrives and is able to move freely across the area. The natural environment will be resilient to the effects of climate change.
- We want to conserve and enhance the historic and cultural environment of the AONB. We want everyone to understand, value and enjoy its cultural and heritage assets. The story of the area's evolution over time should be clear to everyone.



## Conserving and enhancing Living and Working Landscapes

### Our aims

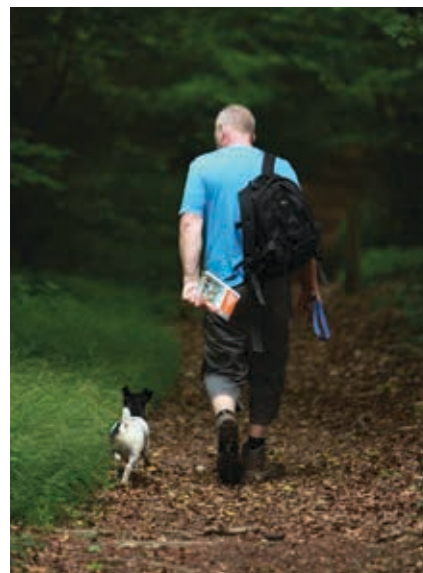
- We want the sustainable management of our rural land. This will meet the demand for food, fuel and other produce in ways that conserve and enhance the landscape character of the AONB and deliver increased public benefits.
- We want a thriving rural economy that will sustain the landscape and ensure economic and social wellbeing.
- We want planning and transportation strategies, policies and decisions that affect this nationally important AONB to conserve and enhance its special qualities. Where development is necessary, we want it located and designed to integrate fully with the landscape character and natural beauty.
- We want all management of, and improvements to, roads to enhance the distinctive character of the area. We want a range of more sustainable options for transport that reduce the effects of transport on tranquillity and the natural environment of the AONB.
- We want communities that appreciate and care for the AONB; and their residents enjoy a high quality of life.



## Conserving and enhancing Special Landscapes to Enjoy

### Our aims

- We want the area's special qualities and landscape character, its traditions, and its historic and natural assets understood and valued by all. We want everyone to understand what the AONB designation means and why the area was designated. We want everyone to promote and support the AONB.
- We want people to learn about the natural, historic and cultural heritage of the AONB. We want people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to have the opportunity to take up countryside skills training and volunteering in the AONB.
- 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.



### Who is going to make it happen?

- 3.3. The AONB Partnership developed and agreed the Vision after listening to the many people who care about this very special place. The AONB Partnership is an alliance of eighteen national and local organisations and it steers the implementation of the Management Plan (*Appendix 3 and Section 18*). The AONB team works on behalf of the Partnership.
- 3.4. The Vision is a call for action. Landowners, farmers, local people, visitors, and the many organisations working in the AONB, or who have a contribution to make to it, must unite to achieve this Vision.



## 4. What is an AONB management plan?

- 4.1. Local authorities with an AONB in their area must prepare and publish a management plan and review that plan every five years<sup>8</sup>. All public bodies have a statutory duty to 'have regard' to the 'purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area'<sup>9</sup> (*Appendix 4*).
- 4.2. This document is the second review of the Cranborne Chase AONB Management Plan first published in 2004. This plan runs from 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2019. It is a statutory document and forms an important role in the delivery of services by the local authorities. It is a plan for all those that have a responsibility to look after this precious and treasured landscape. The plan sets out realistic objectives and policies for AONB partners to achieve in the next five years. Working together, these targets can be realised to the benefit of the landscapes and communities of this nationally designated area. *The review process is set out in Appendix 5.*

### How does the management plan fit with the policies and plans of others?

- 4.3. National and local policies already provide a considerable level of protection for the natural beauty of the AONB. In addition, many partner organisations prepare strategies and plans that deal with a range of other issues that affect the area (such as the management of development, transport, tourism, recreation, energy, water resources, and biodiversity).
- 4.4. These policies, plans and strategies will inform the AONB Management Plan. Implementation of this Management Plan will complement them and influence the preparation and delivery of other key policies, plans and processes affecting the area. This covers, for example, Local Development Frameworks and other planning documents; and Sustainable Community Strategies. *An explanation of the policy context is set out in Appendix 6.*

### Who approves the plan?

- 4.5. Many people and organisations commented on this Management Plan during its preparation. The plan was subject to assessments under European directives and to public consultation between February and November 2013. The AONB Partnership (*see section 18*) endorses the plan and relevant local authorities have formally adopted it. It is published with the assistance of the partners responsible for much of the plan's delivery. The Partnership Panel will review the Partnership Delivery Plan, which sets out the programme for achieving the Management Plan's aims and objectives, annually.

**This Management Plan, the Strategic Environmental Assessment, the Habitat Regulations Assessment and the Equality Impact Assessment, the Partnership Delivery Plan and supporting documents are all available on the Cranborne Chase AONB website:**

**[www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk](http://www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk)**

**You can make enquiries about these documents to the Cranborne Chase AONB team through the website or via [info@cranbornechase.org.uk](mailto:info@cranbornechase.org.uk).**

<sup>8</sup> Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000: Section 89

<sup>9</sup> Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000: Section 85



## 5. Context for this plan

### The statutory planning process

- 5.1. At the time of writing this plan most of the Local Planning Authorities of the AONB are moving towards adopting their Core Strategies and this has already been done for the New Forest. The previously adopted South Wiltshire Core Strategy is in the process of being subsumed into the Wiltshire-wide Core Strategy. The Core Strategies will be the primary planning documents for the coming 15 years and it is therefore important that AONB topics are clearly and appropriately identified and handled.
- 5.2. Virtually all of the extensive governmental planning policy guidance documents were replaced at the end of March 2012 by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)(Appendix 7), which is very much shorter. Whilst there is clear support for the protection of AONBs, the brevity of the Framework means there is considerable scope for interpretation. The Framework makes clear there is a general presumption in favour of sustainable development but within AONBs more restrictive policies apply. Furthermore planning permission should be refused for major developments except in exceptional circumstances and only when they are in the public interest. There is however, obvious emphasis on social, economic, and environmental improvements being sought together through the planning process with the clear implication that one aspect, for example the economic benefits, does not override the others.
- 5.3. There has also been considerable concern due to a statement that development proposals could be approved if appropriate planning policies were not in place by March 2013 and the requirement to have at least a five year supply of housing land identified. In reality developers and the Planning Inspectorate have had to recognise that it is appropriate to give considerable weight to Core Strategy / Local Plan Policies that are a long way down the path to being adopted.
- 5.4. Most people encounter the planning process through what used to be called 'development control' and is now referred to as 'development management'. By providing extensions to permitted development rights, charging for planning applications and pre-application advice, and making provision for community infrastructure levy, there are however more, not less, matters for an applicant to address.
- 5.5. The Localism Act 2011 and the NPPF make provision for Neighbourhood Plans (*Appendix 8*) and Neighbourhood Development Orders at a parish or group of parishes level. These plans can increase the amount of development and speed up the implementation of that development as long as they are compliant with the relevant Core Strategy. Such plans must involve a local referendum. Village Plans and Village Design Statements are separate matters which can, if appropriately prepared, still be adopted by the planning authority as Supplementary Planning Documents.

### External factors

- 5.6. Three main factors are external to the AONB but will have ongoing effects on it:
  - climate change
  - fluctuation world demand and prices
  - severe economic conditions
- 5.7. Whilst the Partnership cannot pro-actively influence these three factors, it will make every effort to respond to the impacts they have. They are all facts of everyday life that we need to be aware of, keep up to date with, and act accordingly. They are accepted as strands that run throughout this document.

## Climate change

- 5.8. A changing global climate, principally caused by the activities of man, is now regarded as an indisputable fact by the UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP)<sup>10</sup>, the Government and local authorities. There is a broad consensus on the likely changes to the climate of southern England, and therefore the Cranborne Chase AONB, over the next few decades (*Appendix 9*).
- 5.9. In summary, the likely changes are that:
- summers will become warmer and drier
  - winters will become milder and wetter
  - extreme weather conditions will become more frequent
- 5.10. These changes have the potential to affect the landscapes, wildlife and communities of the AONB. The range of crops grown by farmers will change and water flows in rivers and streams could become more erratic. Habitats may expand, contract or migrate. New species may enter the area, some bringing disease or pests that 'native' species are not immune to. Tourism pressures could increase as more people decide to holiday in the UK. All of these factors would affect which flora and fauna can flourish in the area<sup>11</sup>.
- 5.11. Climate change mitigation describes measures or actions aimed at reducing the long-term risk and hazards of climate change. Climate change adaptation describes measures or actions that help individuals, groups and natural systems to prepare for and respond to changes in the climate. Alongside other organisations and individuals, the AONB will support and promote mitigation and adaptation measures wherever practicable.

## Fluctuating world demand and prices

- 5.12. The landscapes of the AONB are dominated by farmland and woodland, and changes in these land uses will always have a major influence on the natural beauty of the area.
- 5.13. Fluctuations in the price received for cereals and associated products together with variable costs of growing those products, are making future arable profitability hard to predict. Livestock farming, which is crucial to the management of special habitats like chalk grassland, has been in decline for some time.
- 5.14. The fluctuating market for UK timber has had a pronounced effect on the area's woodlands. Many woodlands no longer produce significant volumes of timber and are often more valuable for recreation, conservation, and game management than timber products.
- 5.15. Within Europe, reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy and new agri-environment schemes in the UK, directly affect farming practices and the extent to which farmers undertake conservation work as part of their operations.
- 5.16. At a global scale, the fluctuating demands for food and timber worldwide have direct impacts on market conditions. Farmers and foresters have to deal with a huge amount of uncertainty, regarding the potential demand for their produce and the price it will fetch when sold. Planning and developing their businesses is made difficult amidst these ever-changing conditions.

## Severe economic conditions

- 5.17. For a number of years now, the UK economy has been in recession with periods of slow, or minimal, growth. Government and Local Authority budgets have been cut whilst the demand for services remains. Many charity and volunteer organisations have also been badly affected by the economic downturn, whilst there is an expectation that the 'Big Society' (*Appendix 10*) will take on providing many of the services that were once publically funded. The competition

<sup>10</sup> The UKCIP web site as the authoritative source for scientifically sound research and government policy. [www.ukcip.org.uk](http://www.ukcip.org.uk)

<sup>11</sup> 'Natural Solutions to a changing climate on the Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase', 2010





for grant funding through various programmes is now more intense than ever, mainly from a noticeable increase in applications.

- 5.18. The severe economic conditions being felt across the country are referred to specifically in the Rural Economy section of the Plan. It is clear, however, that whether it is agriculture, a village shop, number of visitors, public transport or the type of planning applications received, that the current austere economic conditions affect every facet of life.

## What does the natural environment mean to us?

- 5.19. The natural world touches our lives every day. Whether we live in a rural village or in the wider countryside, we rely on the natural systems that support us. Our natural environment underpins our health, wealth and happiness and gives us a sense of place, pride and identity.
- 5.20. A healthy natural environment helps local authorities in their responsibilities to:
- support economic and social regeneration,
  - improve public health,
  - improve educational outcomes,
  - reduce crime and antisocial behaviour,
  - help communities adapt to climate change; and
  - improve the quality of life across an entire area.
- 5.21. Natural goods and services (or 'natural capital') provided by the environment are important for business. Businesses can gain value from managing their impact on natural capital. They are aware of the risks to their brand image, security of resources, and their financial bottom line if they do not.
- 5.22. Land managers have shaped our landscapes and wildlife heritage over thousands of years. Some 95% of the AONB's land is under agricultural or woodland management. The decisions that farmers and land managers take determine, largely, whether society can achieve its ambitions for water, wildlife, healthy soil and food production.
- 5.23. Like other AONB Partnerships, we utilise an ecosystems approach that values, sustains and promotes the benefits that the natural environment of the AONB provides for society, including clean air and water, food, carbon storage and other services vital to the nation's health and well-being<sup>12</sup>. An appreciation and valuation of our 'Natural Capital' (*Appendix 11*) makes explicit the link between the health of natural systems and the natural goods and services that support human well-being. It seeks to maintain the integrity and functioning of natural systems as a whole to avoid rapid, undesirable ecological change. It also recognises that the impacts of human activities are a matter of social choice, and are as integral to natural system interactions as natural systems are to human activities. The national network of Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) has been set up to champion the idea of valuing nature and the AONB Partnership will work with LNPs within the area to this end
- 5.24. Local Authorities in the AONB either have developed or are developing Green Infrastructure (GI) (*Appendix 12*) policies for their areas. GI is the physical environment within and between the towns and villages. It is a network of open spaces, including formal parks, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, waterways, street trees and open countryside that aims to deliver multiple benefits to people and wildlife. These include ecosystem services, the improvement and linking of habitats for wildlife and increased opportunities for open air recreation, improved health and well being.

<sup>12</sup> Defra and Natural England advice note to AONB Partnerships 2012

## Benefits from the natural environment

- 5.25. To maintain natural systems within environmental limits, the value of environmental goods and services needs consideration, as well as the future costs arising from any increase in environmental risks resulting from actions that affect the AONB. This Management Plan aims to sustain the area's environmental capital. *Table 1 lists the component environmental goods and services.*

Table 1: Component environmental services<sup>13</sup>

Provisioning services	Cultural services	Regulating services
Biomass energy	Biodiversity	Pest regulation
Food provision	Genetic diversity	Pollination
Timber provision	Geodiversity	Regulating climate change
Water availability	Recreation	Regulating soil erosion
	Sense of history	Regulating soil quality
	Sense of place/inspiration	Regulating water flow
	Sense of tranquillity	Regulating water quality

## Five Principles on which this Plan is founded

- 5.26. There are five principles that underpin this Management Plan and provide a framework for managing change within the AONB. These are:
- Partnership Working** - The AONB Partnership does not have the resources to undertake all the work determined in this Plan. It is understood that current and new partners will work together to achieve its objectives.
  - Landscape Scale Approach** - Sites and projects within the AONB will not be seen in isolation, instead the landscape scale approach involves enlarging, improving and joining up areas of land to create a connected ecological network across the AONB, for the benefit of both wildlife and people.
  - Landscape Functions** - or what the landscape provides for us. The landscapes of the AONB provide us with many 'goods and services'. These range from measurable things such as fresh food, water, energy and clean air, along with less easily defined benefits such as inspiration, awareness, health and well-being. These landscape functions embrace 'ecosystem services'. The objectives in this Plan all aim to conserve and enhance these landscape functions.
  - Ecosystem Approach** - Conserving and enhancing how the landscape functions and provides us with the benefits above, is called the 'ecosystem approach' (*Appendix 13*). This approach has three strands:
    - The natural systems that operate within the AONB are complex and dynamic, and their healthy functioning should not be taken for granted.
    - Those that live, work and visit the AONB all benefit from services provided by the natural environment.
    - Those that benefit from the services provided within the AONB, and those who are involved in the management of them, should play a central role in making decisions.
  - Sustainable Development** - this has been defined as 'development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'<sup>14</sup>. This Plan is underpinned throughout by the principle of sustainable development (*Appendix 15*).

<sup>13</sup> Adopted from Natural England's National Character Area Profiles 132,133 & 134 - <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/587130>

<sup>14</sup> Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission), *Our Common Future*, published by Oxford University Press (1987)



## 6. Plan structure

6.1. **Building on the purposes of designation, the issues affecting the AONB are presented under three themes:**

- *Conserving and enhancing* - **Outstanding Landscapes**
- *Conserving and enhancing* - **Living and Working Landscapes**
- *Conserving and enhancing* - **Special Landscapes to Enjoy**

These themes are prefaced by an overview of the landscape character types, their special qualities, and associated spatial issues.

6.2. The three themes are then separated into **ten topics**, which are followed by four aspects of 'getting things done':

### Outstanding Landscapes

<b>1</b>	<b>Landscape</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Natural Environment</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Historic and Cultural Environment</b>	

### Living and Working Landscapes

<b>4</b>	<b>Rural Land Management</b>	
<b>5</b>	<b>Rural Economy</b>	
<b>6</b>	<b>Planning and Transport</b>	
<b>7</b>	<b>Viable Rural Communities</b>	

### Special Landscapes to Enjoy

<b>8</b>	<b>Awareness and Understanding</b>	
<b>9</b>	<b>Involvement and Learning</b>	
<b>10</b>	<b>Access and Wellbeing</b>	

### Getting Things Done

<b>i</b>	<b>The AONB Partnership</b>	
<b>ii</b>	<b>Funding</b>	
<b>iii</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	
<b>iv</b>	<b>Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	

**For each of the ten topics, the plan includes:**

**Special Characteristics** - These are particular features, for each element, that are unique to this AONB

**The Aim** (the eleven aims make up the overall 'Vision' for the AONB) - The difference we want to make for the AONB.

**Achievements to Date** - Work the AONB and partners have already undertaken

**The Key Issues** - Many issues affect the AONB. The key issues identified are those the Partnership feels it can address during the life of this plan.

**The Issues Explained** - This is information that explains the key issues in more detail.

*Working with you to keep this living landscape special*





*Rushmore Estate*

**Objectives** - Specific things (not in any order of priority) that we want to achieve in order to make progress towards the aim. Wherever possible, we have tried to make these measurable, with a realistic timescale for completion.

**Policies** - How we will achieve the objectives.

- 6.3. The ten sections are not a checklist of all the activities that affect the AONB. Rather, they provide a framework for setting out the range of topics relevant to the statutory purpose for designating the area as an AONB.
- 6.4. None of the sections of this plan operates in isolation. There are many connections between them. Many of the objectives and policies relate to more than just the topic in which they appear. Tackling the issues identified depends upon integrated action. Action taken to achieve one set of objectives should complement and reinforce the achievement of objectives elsewhere in the Plan (*Appendix 14*).
- 6.5. Work undertaken to implement this Management Plan will be set out annually in the AONB Partnership Delivery Plan. Rather than set out work for a five year period, the Partnership feels that an annual Delivery Plan can best reflect current circumstances, opportunities and resources.
- 6.6. Maps referred to in the plan can be found in a separate booklet at the back of this document.



## 7. Landscape character, qualities and spatial issues

### Introduction

- 7.1. The characteristics and qualities of the landscapes of this AONB are the fundamental basis for the area being designated of national importance.
- 7.2. These are described by broad landscape **character type** and specific landscape **character area** in the *Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2003)*. The key characteristics of the landscape types are set out here to provide an understanding of the scope, range, and scale of these landscape qualities.
- 7.3. Further details of the character of the landscape areas are in both the *Integrated Landscape Character Assessment* and *Sustaining Landscape Character (2006)*. The inherent sensitivities of the landscapes of the AONB are detailed in the Landscape Sensitivity Study (2007). The *Integrated Landscape Character Assessment* - carried out in accordance with the 2002 good practice guidance - has been supplemented by the detailed *Historic Landscape Characterisation (2008)*. Important woodland, habitat, and landscape matters are addressed in *A Landscape view of trees and woodlands (2009)*. Topic by topic and area by area attention is given to sustaining our cultural heritage in the *Historic Environment Action Plans (2012)*.

### Issues and Challenges

- 7.4. Clearly this wealth of information and analysis contributes to our understanding of the character of the AONB, and although it is too substantial to repeat here all the documents should be referred to for a fuller understanding of the character and qualities of this AONB.
- 7.5. There are issues and challenges faced by the landscapes and communities of Cranborne Chase AONB that apply to many or most landscape character types. Whilst the viability of family farms and development pressures arising from demographic changes are two examples, the challenges of renewable energy are probably the most widespread. The growing of crops, such as oil seeds and biomass, on agricultural land as alternative fuels stimulates a debate on whether farms are primarily food or fuel producers. Proposals to install fields of photovoltaic (PV) panels provide an additional strand to that debate as well as instigating long term, almost permanent, changes to the appearance of the countryside.
- 7.6. Visually intrusive energy developments impact not just on the aesthetics of the AONB landscapes and associated views but also the integrity of these finest of the nation's landscapes.
- 7.7. The appearance, and appreciation, of the AONB from areas outside relates to all landscape types, as do the qualities of the views to and from the AONB. Nevertheless, this is particularly relevant to the escarpment, hill, and downland landscapes where elevated positions facilitate long and wide ranging views. The areas within those views contribute to the setting of the AONB, an aspect that is increasing valued for heritage assets.
- 7.8. Furthermore the funding of incentives and actions to conserve and enhance at a landscape scale is a challenge for the whole AONB.
- 7.9. This appraisal outlines the landscape characteristics and qualities of the eight landscape types of this AONB. It then focuses on the additional issues and challenges that are particularly pertinent to each of them.



# Landscape type 1:

## Chalk Escarpments



This Landscape Type comprises the following Landscape Areas:

*Character Area 1A - Melbury to Blandford Chalk Escarpment*

*Character Area 1B - West Wiltshire Downs Chalk Escarpment*

*Character Area 1C - Fovant and Chalke Chalk Escarpment*

- Dramatic chalk escarpments eroded into spurs and deep coombes
- Underlying geology of Lower, Middle and Upper Chalk giving rise to predominantly calcareous soils
- Areas of unimproved chalk downland of international importance
- Steepness of slope leads to an absence of farmsteads and settlements
- Field systems on lower slopes, including strip lynchets close to Medieval villages sited along the spring line
- Improved pasture and arable fields occupy the shallower, more accessible slopes where straight-sided fields represent late 18th / early 19th century enclosure
- Cross dykes and Bronze Age features on the escarpment edge
- Hanging woodland and sunken lanes are features of the steep, enclosing chalk coombes
- Panoramic views over adjacent landscapes

### Issues and challenges

- Decreases in livestock grazing leading to loss of grassland habitat
- Visibility of changes within the landscape and areas round it
- A350 corridor, intensification of use and highway paraphernalia, and potential visibility of any development
- Maintenance of heritage assets





## Landscape type 2: **Open Chalk Downland**

This Landscape Type comprises the following Landscape Areas:



*Character Area 2A West Wiltshire Downs*

*Character Area 2B Southern Downland Belt*

- Large-scale landform of broad rolling hills interspersed by dry river valleys
- Dominated by Upper Chalk geology with drift clay with flint capping, and associated woodland and tree clumps, on higher ground
- A predominantly arable landscape divided into large, rectangular units with straight-sided fields representing late 18th / early 19th century enclosure
- Remnant chalk grassland, ancient broad-leaved woodland and yew woodland are important habitats
- Main roads cut across the undulating landscape linking major settlements on either side of the AONB
- Large open skies and distant panoramic views
- Low density scattered settlement of farmsteads and the occasional downland village
- Numerous Neolithic burial and ritual monuments and Bronze Age barrows
- Later pre-historic and Romano-British ditches and defensive earthworks

### **Issues and challenges**

- Arable crop changes influenced by globalisation, commodity prices, farm inputs and costs
- Exposed transport corridors - A303 / A350 / A354 - intensification of use and highway paraphernalia, and potential visibility of any development
- Erosion and truncation of Ancient Monuments
- Hedge planting blocking views and modifying character



# Landscape type 3:

## Wooded Chalk Downland



This Landscape Type comprises the following Landscape Area:

### *Character Area 3A Cranborne Chase*

- An elevated downland landscape with dramatic intersecting coombe valleys and rounded upstanding ridges
- Dominated by an Upper Chalk geology with drift clay with flints capping higher ground
- A well wooded landscape with large woods, shelter belts, copses and clumps creating a series of enclosed spaces or 'rooms' surrounded by trees
- Mosaic of unenclosed downland, improved grassland and arable fields, dating from 19th century enclosure, between the woodland
- Chalk grassland and ancient woodland provide important nature conservation habitats
- Typically low density, scattered settlement of individual farmsteads with the occasional downland village or Medieval hunting lodge
- Visible archaeological features including Neolithic long barrows, Bronze Age round barrows, prehistoric to Romano-British earthworks and field systems
- Panoramic views from upstanding chalk ridges to adjacent ridges and into valleys / coombes

### Issues and challenges

- Conservation of heritage / archaeological interests
- Impacts of climate change on mixed farming and forestry / ancient woodlands
- Connectivity between woodlands and maintenance of enclosures
- Hedge planting and reduced management blocking views and modifying character



## Landscape type 4: **Downland Hills**



This Landscape Type comprises the following Landscape Area:

### *Character Area 4A Martin - Whitsbury Downland Hills*

- A series of prominent hills and knolls
- Dominated by Upper Chalk geology giving rise to argyllic brown earths
- Land cover is predominantly arable, with improved pasture on lower ground towards the river valleys
- Dominated by a pattern of medium to large Parliamentary enclosure type fields
- Deciduous and coniferous woodland silhouetted against the skyline, clothing the crests of the slopes
- Low density, dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads
- The absence of major roads contributes to the feeling of remoteness
- A number of ancient woodlands including Burwood, Ashwood Copse and Bouldsbury Wood (SSSI)
- Neolithic and Bronze Age burial monuments, prehistoric and Romano-British enclosures, settlements, field systems and hill forts contribute to the plethora of visible, historic features of the landscape
- Panoramic views from hill tops

### **Issues and challenges**

- Conservation of archaeology and ancient woodlands
- Development pressures on the villages
- 'Horsiculture' and changes in sense of place
- Decrease in agricultural stock grazing





# Landscape type 5:

## Chalk River Valleys

This Landscape Type comprises the following Landscape Areas:



*Character Area 5A Wylde Chalk River Valley*

*Character Area 5B Ebble Chalk River Valley*

*Character Area 5C Stour and Avon Tributary Valleys*

- Strongly enclosing valley sides, frequently eroded to form dry valleys
- The steepest valley slopes have retained their semi-natural chalk grassland or are clothed in 'hanging' woodland while the shallow valley sides have been exploited for cultivation
- The clear, fast-flowing chalk rivers are a key habitat
- The floodplains support water meadows, cress beds and damp pasture
- The valleys typically provide convenient transport corridors, containing major roads and railways
- Straight-sided fields represent late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary enclosure, with large scale fields resulting from 20th century boundary loss
- Field boundaries and footpaths often reflect the tracks, droves and hollow ways that took livestock from and to the downs in the Medieval period
- A series of linear spring line villages typically lie at the foot of the valley slopes
- Isolated Neolithic long barrows, Bronze Age round barrows and water meadow channels on the valley floor contribute to visible archaeology
- The rural landscapes are sometimes interrupted by the large volumes of traffic that use the valleys as transport corridors

### Issues and challenges

- Waterflows and water resource management
- 'Horsiculture' and loss of sense of place
- Development pressures (expensive properties and high demand)
- Highway 'improvements'
- Infrastructure clutter (eg telephone and electricity poles, signs)





## Landscape type 6: **Greensand Terrace**

This Landscape Type comprises the following Landscape Areas:



*Character Area 6A Fovant Greensand Terrace*

*Character Area 6B Kilminster Greensand Terrace*

- Flat aprons of land from which the dramatic chalk escarpments and hills rise
- Dominated by arable fields of Parliamentary enclosure
- Large, geometric fields and open skies contrast with the smaller scale, enclosed landscape of the adjacent Greensand Hills
- Upper Greensand geology giving rise to rich brown earth soils that have a high agricultural value
- Land use is predominantly agricultural, including cereal cropping, grass rotations, dairy farming and stock rearing
- Mixed woodland runs in discontinuous belts along the base of the chalk escarpment
- Coniferous belts shelter dispersed and isolated farmsteads
- Settlements tend to be at the interface with, or within, the Greensand Hills
- General absence of prehistoric earthworks

### **Issues and challenges**

- A30 corridor
- Highway paraphernalia, traffic volumes, and loss of tranquillity
- Field sizes, hedge management, and pressures on farming
- Development pressures



# Landscape type 7:

## Greensand Hills

This Landscape Type comprises the following Landscape Areas:



*Character Area 7A Donhead - Fovant Hills*

*Character Area 7B Penselwood - Longleat Hills*

- Upper Greensand is exposed as a band between the older clays and younger chalk
- The Greensand typically forms upstanding hills that have been eroded by tributaries of the major rivers into a series of rounded knolls and deep valleys
- Hills support a large proportion of woodland, both deciduous and coniferous
- Country houses and estates, set within landscaped parkland contribute to the scenic beauty of the area
- Distinctive patterns of settlement include villages hidden in the shelter of the deep valleys
- Fortifications are strategically located on the hilltops
- Ancient sunken lanes wind their way through the hills
- Small and irregular fields characterise areas of agricultural land use
- Meadows and wet woodland are typical of the valley floors

### Issues and challenges

- Heritage conservation especially parklands
- Infrastructure clutter (eg telephone & electricity poles, signs)
- Viability of commercial forestry
- Livestock grazing



## Landscape type 8: **Rolling Clay Vales**

This Landscape Type comprises the following Landscape Areas:



### *Character Area 8A The Vale of Wardour*

- Predominantly clay vale occupying a series of eroded anticlinal axes between the chalk downlands
- Varied underlying geology with many different geological exposures
- A mixed agricultural landscape with small scale fields of lush improved pasture and arable with water meadows on the valley floor
- Wooded character, with broadleaf and mixed woodland and copses (some of ancient origin) scattered across the vale, reinforced by lush hedgerows
- Layout of fields, farms and villages illustrate the pattern of Medieval settlement, clearance and farming
- Rivers and their tributaries meander through the vale
- A sense of enclosure is provided by the surrounding upland landscapes
- Villages dispersed over the floor of the vale

### **Issues and challenges**

- Viability of family farms and dairying
- Water regimes (Nadder and Sem rivers)
- Transportation and vehicle accessibility
- Infrastructure clutter (eg telephone & electricity poles, signs)
- Development pressures, particularly around Tisbury, and potential loss of character

