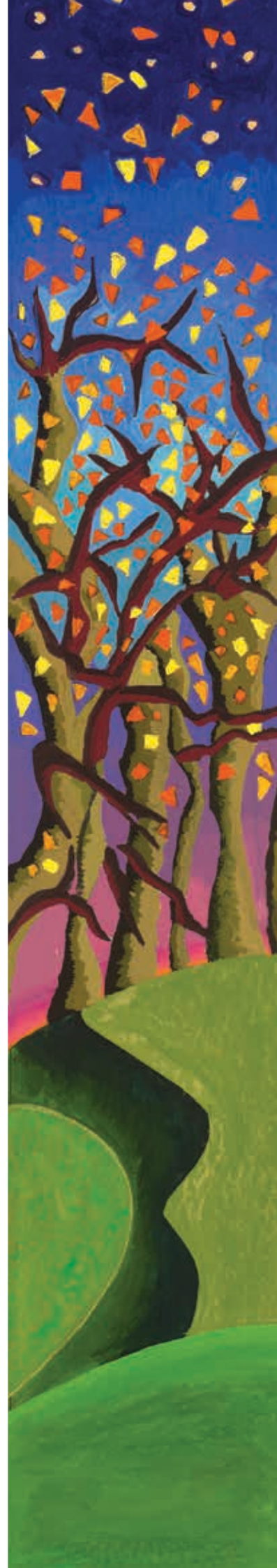


Outstanding Landscapes

'Living Landscape'





Where those have gone before



Light caressing curves



The sanctuary of Win Green

Living Landscape

Light caressing curves

Pink sky

Sunrise circles

The sculpted dome.

Treading lightly

Where those have gone before

The sanctuary of Win Green.

Precious secrets held

In gnarled and knotted trunks,

Out and onto the soft turf covered chalk

Views stretch out as far as the glistening sea

Ancient woodland

Dappled ceiling of orange and yellow

Bright backdrop of blue.

Low winter sun

Elongated shadows

Darkness falls

Momentary blackness

Until the first star rises

Announcing

The night's sparkling constellation.



Dappled ceiling of orange and yellow



...out and onto the soft turf covered chalk



...precious secrets held in gnarled and knotted trunks

8. Landscape

The topography, geology and vegetation, and the ways they have evolved with the climate and human usage, come together to form the landscapes we experience around us today. All landscapes have character; however, that character is more substantial, obvious, and extensive in the especially important Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We use characteristics and qualities to describe and assess those cherished landscapes.

8.1. Special characteristics and qualities that make this AONB special, as a whole, with regards to landscape:

- A peaceful, tranquil, deeply rural area; largely ‘unspoilt’ and maintained as a living agricultural landscape.
- The scale of the landscape is often grand and dramatic with the ‘intensity’ of landscape character almost palpable.
- The open downland offers wide expansive skies, dominant skylines, dramatic escarpments and panoramic views.
- Unity of the underlying chalk expressed in the distinctive and sometimes dramatically sculpted landforms, open vistas, escarpments and coombes.
- A rich land use history with many ancient hilltop forts and barrows.
- Overlain by a woodland mosaic - including the eye-catching hill-top copses, veteran parkland trees and avenues, extensive areas of wooded downland and ancient forest together with more recent game coverts.
- Three major river valleys with their individual distinctiveness.
- Distinctive settlement pattern along the valleys and vales, and small Medieval villages along the scarp spring line.
- Local vernacular building styles include the patterns of knapped flint, brick, cob, clunch, clay tiles and straw thatch.
- Strong sense of place and local distinctiveness represented by the use of local building materials and small-scale vernacular features such as the sunken lanes and distinctive black and white signposts.
- Strong sense of remoteness.
- Expanse of dark night skies.

Aim

8.2. 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 to be consistent with the character of the landscape and the setting of the AONB. We will take opportunities to restore landscape features that require it.

Achievements to date

- **Publications** - The AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Sensitivity Study, and Tranquillity Study are being effectively used by planning policy and development management officers within the nine local planning authorities. The AONB team clearly identifies landscape character in all planning application responses.



- **Landscape Protection** - Potentially negative impacts on the landscape have been avoided through advice, guidance and input to specific development applications and appeals.
- **Landscape Enhancement Advice** - Detailed discussions with Wessex Water led to a four-year funding package to enhance the landscapes surrounding a major pipeline development.
- **AONB Tranquillity Study** - The methodology behind the Tranquillity Study is now valued as good practice. This is now being used by the New Forest National Park and other Protected Areas in the southwest to determine their own levels of tranquillity.
- **Undergrounding of Power Lines** - Power lines have been laid underground to enhance the landscape from the viewing area in front of the Fovant Badges (eight military badges cut into the chalk) and around the site of the 13th Century chapel at Fifield Bavant and in the conservation area of Horningsham.

Key Issues

1. **Understanding and Sustaining Landscape Character** - It is crucial that all landscape managers and planners understand, appreciate, and use the Landscape Character Assessment.
2. **Monitoring Landscape Change Over Time** - Long-term, objective monitoring of landscape change takes time and resources. Fixed-point photography locations will be used to track changes although it will be a while before it helps to determine long-term trends. Such trends may be a result of global issues such as climate change, food prices and/or demand affecting rural land management.
3. **Enhancing Tranquillity and Dark Night Skies** - National data shows the general loss of dark night skies and the risk of light pollution encroaching on the dark skies of the AONB¹⁵.

The Issues Explained

8.3. The AONB is a large area with both consistent character, for example the downlands of West Wiltshire, and considerable diversity and contrast. There are the ancient forests and woodland of Cranborne Chase that contrast with the deeply incised chalk coombes close by. In addition, there are the more intimate and secluded chalk river valleys with their distinctive pattern of settlement.

8.4. Its special qualities include its diversity, distinctiveness, sense of history and remoteness, dark night skies, tranquillity. It is deeply rural and free from development. Landscapes are sensitive to many factors to a greater or lesser degree. Some crops create a change that lasts a few months while the planting or felling of woodland can cause change that persists for decades. Built development can introduce changes that are rather more permanent. There is a decline in the quality of some characteristic features. This is brought about by machine trimming of hedgerows; the planting of hedges contrary to landscape character; or planting that cuts out views. A greater understanding of the character of the landscapes will inform decisions that help to conserve and enhance the AONB.

8.5. Meaningful analysis of landscape change over time can use considerable resources, depending on the aim of any such study. A tried and tested methodology using fixed-point photography in Devon produces a series of repeatable images through time. This is now being applied in this AONB. There is a strict timetable in place for the taking of a series of photographs at twelve locations.

8.6. Tranquillity is important for our mental and physical well-being. It improves our quality of life. Power lines, masts, cars, roads, light pollution and building developments can erode the

¹⁵ National Framework Data sheet PLNB9 2013: based on National Tranquillity Mapping Data 2006 developed for the Campaign to Protect Rural England and Natural England by the University of Northumbria. OS Licence number 100018881.



tranquillity that means so much to all of us. We want to ensure the dark starry skies of much of the AONB continue to exist and are appreciated. Security lights, floodlights and some street lighting can break into the darkness, lighting up the surrounding area. Some of this light is necessary in order to keep people safe. However, inappropriate lighting can waste energy and reduce landscape quality¹⁶.

Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE	POLICIES
<p>LAN A <i>The landscape character, tranquillity and special qualities of the AONB are fully understood by policy makers and land managers.</i></p>	<p>LAN1 Review the 2003 Integrated Landscape Character Assessment to include relevant elements of the Historic Landscape Characterisation, Sensitivity, Tranquillity and other studies.</p> <p>LAN2 Develop guidance from the reviewed Integrated Landscape Character Assessment to inform and assimilate with land use planning and landscape management.</p>
<p>LAN B <i>The landscape character, tranquillity and special qualities of the AONB and its settings are conserved and enhanced.</i></p>	<p>LAN3 Encourage, support and analyse research on landscape issues affecting the AONB and its surroundings to inform policy formulation and the consequent action required.</p> <p>LAN4 Determine the factors that contribute to, or detract from, tranquillity in order to more effectively conserve and enhance levels of tranquillity through additional policy formulation and action.</p> <p>LAN5 Pursue opportunities to underground and remove power and telecommunications lines and poles.</p>
<p>LAN C <i>Understand the rate and degree of landscape change within the AONB.</i></p>	<p>LAN6 Undertake fixed point photography biannually and prepare a 'Landscape Change' report every five years) to identify areas and/or features where landscape character, condition or quality has been or is being lost to inform potential restoration and enhancement measures.</p> <p>LAN7 Maintain an appropriate and effective record of the presence and condition of the AONB's visual, natural, historical and cultural resource primarily through collation of external sources of data or surveying.</p>
<p>LAN D <i>Dark Night Sky status is secured for the AONB.</i></p>	<p>LAN8 Actively promote the benefits that Dark Night Sky status would bring to the AONB and surrounds to partners and communities, to encourage action and support for an application to the International Dark-Sky Association by end of 2016</p>

(Additional Information: Landscape Appendix 28)

¹⁶ e.g. Dorset County Council Local Transport Plan (LTP3) 2011 to 2026 Policy LTP C-4 - The street lighting network will be managed and improved to increase energy efficiency, to minimise environmental impact and to enhance conservation areas and areas identified for public realm improvements. Alterations to street lighting should not compromise road safety or personal security.



“
Where my
father walked,
my grandfather walked,
and I walked, as
a young woman
”

Clare Thomas, Artist