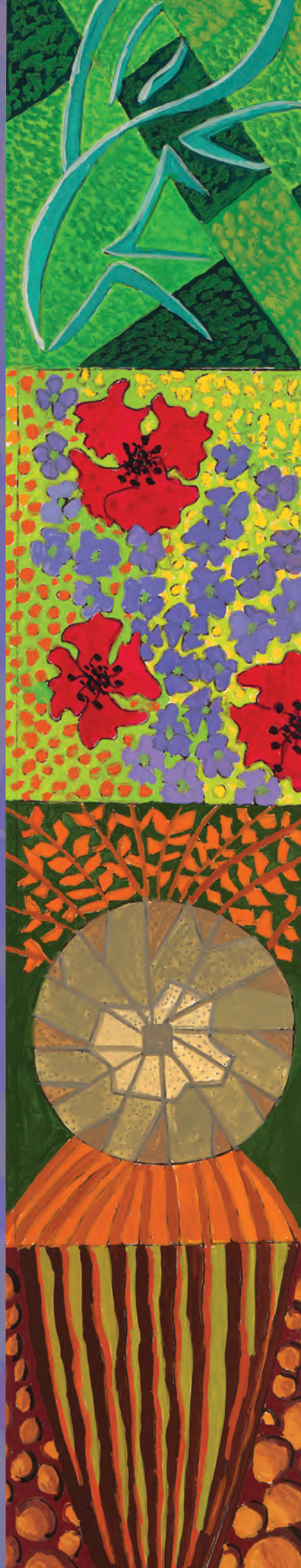


Rural Land Management

'Sow, Breed, Reap'





“
The sound
of the combine harvesters
working late
into the long summer evenings

Shirley Vickers, AONB local resident

”



Corduroy textured



And crunchy green watercress

Sow, Breed, Reap

Sparkling clean, fast flowing
Temperate Chalk Rivers
Home to insect hungry jumping trout
Rare butterflies
And crunchy green watercress

In spring
Corduroy textured
Freshly ploughed
Rich brown earth
Transforming into vast patchworks
Yellow, blue, red and green

In summer
Reaping crops
Harvesting grain
Metal braced millstones
Grinding flour
Bread rising

In autumn
3000 years of coppicing
Cutting, expanding, creating space
Materials for making by hand
Hurdles and thatching spars
Heat of the log fire
In winter



Transforming into vast patchworks



Yellow, blue, red and green



3000 years of coppicing

12. Rural Land Management

Rural land management encompasses farming, forestry, fisheries and game management. In this deeply rural AONB, landowners and managers have been the custodians and sculptors of the landscape for centuries. Today and tomorrow, their activities will continue to shape and mould the landscapes we see around us. They will deliver the food we need; they will help with the supply of clean air and water; they will offer recreational opportunities.

12.1. Special characteristics and qualities that make this AONB special, as a whole, with regards to rural land management:

- The agricultural character of the AONB is typified by arable cropping, especially the south-eastern sector and on the West Wiltshire Downs.
- There are several large estates within the AONB resulting in consistent agricultural regimes over large areas over time.
- The Vale of Wardour and the north-western edge of the area are mostly grasslands.
- A typical AONB farm is slightly larger than the regional average and consists of predominantly arable land with some permanent pasture and woodland. It is the mixed nature of the holdings that contributes significantly to the special qualities of the landscape and its biodiversity.
- The mosaic of broad-leaved, mixed and coniferous woodland, shelterbelts, copses, hedgerows and veteran trees is a distinctive element in the AONB landscape.
- The AONB is one of the most intensively managed game landscapes in the country. This reflects the heritage of the area as a Chase and the character of the downlands. Historically there were early cereal crops making way for early season partridge shooting. Much of the focus is now on pheasant shooting which contributes to the social and economic development of rural businesses and communities.
- The legacy of previous land management adds to the historic dimension of the landscape.



Combining wheat field, Fifiield Bavant - T Adams

Ambition

12.2. The management of the rural land of this AONB will be sustainable. 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.





Key Achievements

- **‘Raising Our Game’** – Production of the first integrated landscape management advice for game managers in a protected landscape. Research conducted with game managers by the AONB with analysis by The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust.
- **‘A Landscape View of Trees and Woodland’** – Guidelines for tree planting for each landscape character type within the AONB.
- **Co-ordinated Wood Fuel Initiative (2007-2009)** – This was undertaken jointly with Protected Areas in South West England. It included distribution of a wood fuel information and questionnaire leaflet, two demonstration projects and two practical seminar events attended by 50 interested parties. A Wood Fuel Fayre attracted 150 attendees.
- **Biennial Cranborne Chase Woodfair (2007-2015)** – This major event attracted around 7,000 visitors over a weekend. It very successfully acted as a showcase for the AONB and its woodland management, woodland owners, crafts people and allied industries.
- A woodland owners and managers seminar, **‘Make Woodland Work’** was held jointly with the North Wessex Downs AONB in April 2017, attracting over 30 participants. Workshops focussed on the economic and practical problems of the management of small-scale and/or undermanaged woodland, potential markets and how to optimise timber sales.
- A joint consultation response was prepared with Dorset AONB on the Forestry Commissions **Draft Forest Plan** for woodlands of Cranborne Chase and North Dorset 2016-2026.
- **South Wiltshire Farmland Bird Project (2009-2015)** – Cranborne Chase AONB hosted the project officer who gave one to one advice to 147 farmers on creating and managing essential year-round habitat for the six most threatened farmland bird species (see Natural Environment Chapter). An outcome was the creation of over 1000ha of new habitat, mainly through the Natural England’s Environmental Stewardship Scheme. In 2015, the project won the Bowland Award, awarded annually for the best project, best practice, or outstanding contribution to the wellbeing of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty by the National Association of AONBs.
- **Farm Conservation Project** – 2015 onwards. The main component of the Farm Conservation Project (developed from the farmland bird project) involves bringing together groups of neighbouring farmers in groups or ‘clusters’. Within the Farm Conservation Project Area, there are currently three established farmer clusters. They surround Martin Down National Nature Reserve to form a ‘supercluster’ and represent over 30,000ha of land in total. Thirteen farms in the Wylde Valley make up a new cluster, covering an area of 8000ha of farmland from Sutton Veny to Steeple Langford. The Farm Conservation Adviser also works with farmers submitting applications to Natural England’s Countryside Stewardship Scheme.
- **Land managers seminars** – The AONB held land managers’ seminars that focused on topics of current interest such as species protection in the farmed landscape and game management in a protected landscape.



Key issues

1. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union has steered agriculture for decades. The decision to leave the EU means CAP will no longer govern the agricultural industry. The Government's 25 year Environment Plan and ministerial commitment that public money (to agriculture) must produce public goods (environmental gains) create huge environmental opportunities. In the transition to a new agri-environment regime, there are opportunities to test options that restore soil health, produce healthy food, conserve wildlife, sustain clear air and clean water, and enhance landscapes within sustainable farming.
2. To ensure the sustainable management of the AONB's rural land, it is essential that farmers are encouraged to adopt good environmental and agricultural practices. Then the nation can achieve the aims of improved soils, more wildlife, and sustainable food production. 
Map 12
3. The area once had a thriving dairy industry but the number of dairies has declined. Cattle and sheep numbers however have remained steady over the past decade whilst pig figures show a drastic reduction from 48,000 to 13,000. The shelters associated with extensive pig rearing can have a detrimental visual impact in our open landscape areas.
4. Many woodlands are either under-managed or do not have a coherent management plan. The wood-fuel market continues to offer an opportunity to bring more small woodlands into positive management.
5. The AONB is one of the most intensively managed game landscapes in the country and the effects of this are not fully appreciated and valued. This sector can create significant social, environmental and economic benefits but, if poorly managed, can have negative impacts.
6. The impact of pests (and particularly pest and wildlife management) is a major issue for forest managers, landowners and nature conservationists. There is an increase in the number of alien species, pests and pathogens entering the natural environment, with many being recorded almost monthly. In May 2018, the Forestry Commission noted 30 new pests and diseases affecting livestock, and 15 affecting trees in the UK.⁴⁵ These can have a devastating effect on the natural environment and livelihoods.
7. The rivers of the AONB, particularly in the catchment of the Hampshire Avon, are some of the finest trout streams in the world, valued highly by fishermen. However, climate change and other factors threaten this heritage and the benefits that flow from it. Water flows in rivers and streams could become more erratic; or too much water can be abstracted. In addition, diffuse pollution occurs through poor land management practices, reducing water quality. 
Map 9

⁴⁵ <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/geography/our-research/ecss/webber11.pdf>



The Issues Explained

- 12.3. Farmland covers over 86% of the AONB; together with woodland cover this rises to 96%⁴⁶. The landscapes we cherish are the result of the interactions of nature and human activities over centuries. The stewardship of land managers over past generations, and the commitment of many today, is critical to sustaining, and enhancing, these landscapes in to the future.
- 12.4. European farming grant schemes have been the largest single public investment in the AONB to date. However, past stewardship payments did not reflect the profitability of arable farming, resulting in some farmers terminating their agreements prematurely or not partaking at all.
- 12.5. The current uptake of environmental stewardship schemes within the AONB is nonetheless above the national average with 44% of the 'utilisable agricultural area' under Environmental Stewardship Schemes. The 152 agreements in place in the AONB cover over 34,000 hectares.
- 12.6. The UK will formally leave the European Union (EU) in March 2019. The government anticipates that we will agree, with the EU, an implementation period for the whole country lasting for another 21 months. There will be an additional 'agricultural transition' period in England. This will give farmers time to prepare for new trading relationships and environmental land management systems.



Sheep on the Chase - Simon Barnes

- 12.7. From 2022 onwards, a new environmental land management system will be the cornerstone of the UK agricultural policy, achieving improved biodiversity, water, air quality, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and cultural benefits that improve our mental and physical well-being and the safeguarding of the historic landscapes.

⁴⁶ Natural England (2014), Monitoring Environmental Outcomes in Protected Landscapes, NE 31 March 2014





Beetle bank and conservation headland - D Blake

- 12.8.** The new environmental land management scheme(s) (NELMS) will be underpinned by payment of ‘public money for the provision of public goods’. In 2015, UK farmers received £2.4b in direct payments (Basic Payment Scheme (BPS)) and the total to be directed to NELMS remains unclear. While environmental enhancement and protection are of key importance, better animal and plant health, animal welfare, improved public access, rural resilience and productivity are also areas where farmers and land managers may need support in the future.
- 12.9.** The AONB designation provides a platform for integrating the support provided to the sector with wider environmental, social and economic opportunities. In doing so, AONBs could be vital test beds in helping develop a more sustainable approach to agriculture in England.
- 12.10.** The Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan focuses on using and managing land sustainably, recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes and connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing. It also commits to undertaking a review of National Parks and AONBs. The review, led by Julian Glover, will report on the options for improving access to AONBs, and on the support needed by those who live and work in them. It will also explore the role these designations have in growing the rural economy.
- 12.11.** There are many practices that can be adopted by farmers that will bring environmental and commercial benefits, such as:
- sustainable utilisation of soil, minimising erosion;
 - effective water catchment management;
 - avoidance of direct pollution and measures to reduce diffuse pollution;
 - farm waste minimisation and recycling.

National and local policies must support and encourage farmers in making decisions that bring these “win-win” solutions to the challenges of the future.





Map 8

- 12.12.** As part of the Landscape Partnership Scheme, there are plans for bringing woodland owners together to work collectively, as with the farm clusters, managing their holdings more effectively and finding new markets for the timber. Creating local wood-fuel supply chains was one of the top five recommendations in a review of the business opportunities that arise from valuing nature correctly⁴⁷. Businesses using the wood fuel may enjoy reduced costs with local and secure fuel supplies. They may also benefit from the Renewable Heat Incentive. There may be marketing benefits for some companies from using green energy. The report identifies the main barrier to be a lack of confidence in the long-term consistency of the supply chain preventing demand. This lack of demand then holds back the confidence to increase the supply. There is a need for technical support and training to ensure managing woodland for fuel is undertaken sustainably. The need is to develop local cooperatives surrounded by groups of users. This will help link local supply chains.
- 12.13.** Indications are that the market is improving for timber sales (Forestry Commission 2018). There may be opportunities for woodland extensions or creation, appropriate to the relevant landscape character. With the increasing incidence of pests and diseases, landowners may need to be flexible in considering the species chosen for planting schemes.
- 12.14.** The research for 'Raising Our Game' document (2011) highlighted the importance of game shooting as a reason for acquiring, retaining and managing land. It has a significant effect on the local economy. In 2011 game management provided significant employment and housing, 30.5 full-time equivalents in our sample of 42 shoots. The game sector of the AONB is at least as robust as in 2011, if not stronger. It attracts large numbers of day and weekend visitors to the AONB and supports a significant hospitality service outside of the main tourist season.
- 12.15.** There are approximately 120 shoots in the AONB. Many are of modest size whilst a few shoots are larger concerns with the turnover of a medium-sized company.
- 12.16.** A significant proportion of the River Avon System is within the AONB. It holds two Natura 2000 sites; the Hampshire Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Avon Valley Special Protection Area (SPA). The Hampshire Avon is one of four demonstration test catchments in England, a Government-funded project designed to study how to control diffuse pollution from agriculture to improve and maintain water quality in rural river catchments areas.
- 12.17.** There has already been much good work undertaken such as the river restoration work of the Wessex Chalk Streams Project. Additionally, the Wessex Chalk Stream and Rivers Trust continues to be very active in its river restoration work delivering innumerable benefits to water quality and conservation. Much more remains to be achieved however, if our world-class fisheries are to be sustainable in the face of climate change and other challenges.

⁴⁷ 'Realising nature's value: The Final Report of the Ecosystem Markets Task Force', March 2013
www.defra.gov.uk/ecosystem-markets/files/Ecosystem-Markets-Task-Force-Final-Report-.pdf



Objectives and Policies

| OBJECTIVE | | POLICIES | |
|--------------|--|--------------|---|
| RLM A | Land managers are aware of how their activities can impact on the landscape and environment of the AONB. | RLM 1 | Offer AONB focused landscape and land management training, as appropriate. |
| RLM B | Farmers, foresters, game and fishery managers actively assist in conserving and enhancing the landscape and environment of the AONB through their business operations. | RLM2 | Work closely with all relevant stakeholders, particularly farmers and Defra, to design New Environmental Land Management Scheme opportunities that will conserve and enhance the landscapes of the AONB. |
| | | RLM3 | Offer Cranborne Chase AONB focused land management advice to support and encourage the formation of further farm clusters throughout the AONB. |
| | | RLM4 | Support and encourage appropriate woodland management, encouraging skills training, reconnecting supply chains and increasing biodiversity, including PAWS restoration. |
| | | RLM5 | Work with partners, such as the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, to disseminate appropriate information and advice on how game management practices can positively contribute to AONB purposes and collaborate in further research to this end. |
| | | RLM6 | Identify good agricultural practices that are appropriate to the challenges facing the farmers of the AONB and disseminate through networks, partnerships and training. |
| | | RLM7 | Work with, and support partners such as the Environment Agency, private land owners, fishery managers, Trusts and Natural England, to deliver programmes and projects that bring environmental benefits to catchments while securing a viable future for fisheries. |

(Additional Information: Rural Land Management Appendix 31)

