

Wellbeing Involvement and Learning

'Here is Home'





“
This landscape
has become
my home
”

Anjalika Baier, local resident

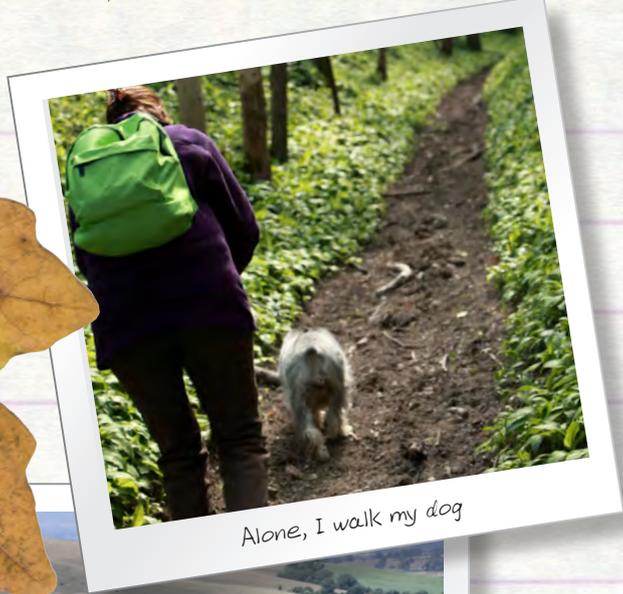


Here is Home

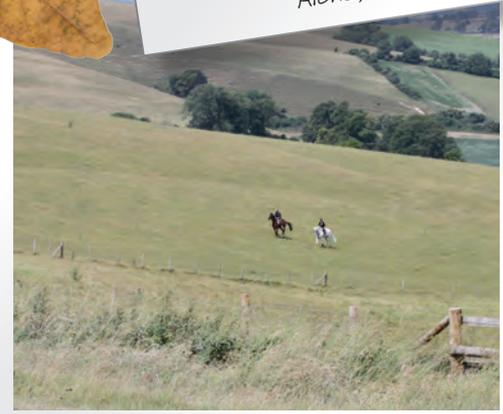
Alone, I walk my dog
Early in the morning
Everyday
People come and go
Landscape unchanged
The views remain the same
For a hundred years

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

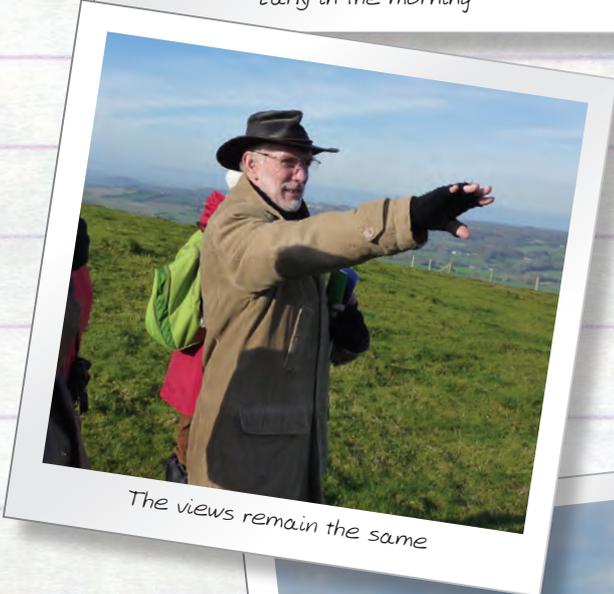
This is home
My Heimat
Where I belong
A place I call England
Special
And only here.



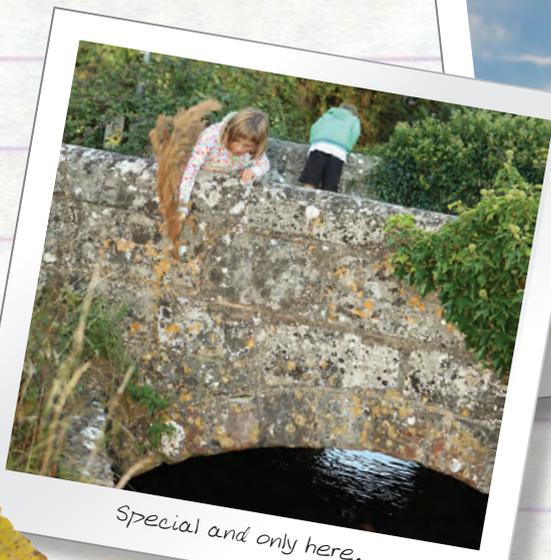
Alone, I walk my dog



Early in the morning



The views remain the same



Special and only here.



People come and go

16. Wellbeing, Involvement and Learning

Experiencing a deeply rural and tranquil area refreshes the mind, body, and soul. Volunteering is one means of becoming more personally involved in the local area whilst developing a range of practical and personal skills to help conserve and enhance it. Using the AONB as an educational resource for schools will help youngsters gain a better insight into environmental issues and experience the countryside around them. The vast network of Rights of Way offers opportunities for all to enhance their health and wellbeing in the ‘great outdoors’.

16.1. Special characteristics and qualities that make this AONB special, as a whole, with regards to wellbeing, involvement, learning:

- A peaceful, tranquil, deeply rural area, with far reaching panoramic views uncluttered by industrial intrusions, a strong sense of remoteness and expanses of dark, star filled night skies supports the wellbeing of local communities and visitors.
- The AONB is close to nearly 2/3 million people; they can each reach its borders in just 30 minutes.
- There is a high quality and diverse range of natural, historic and cultural environments; they provide the widest range of opportunities for volunteering, and learning in a natural classroom.
- 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.



New Wardour Castle - T Adams

Ambition

16.2. People's physical and mental wellbeing is improved through experiencing the high quality environment of the AONB for physical activity, relaxation and inspiration. People learn about, and understand, the natural, historic and cultural heritage of the AONB. People of all ages, abilities and backgrounds will have the opportunity to take up volunteering and countryside skills training in the AONB.



Key Achievements

- **Community consultation** has always been a high priority for this AONB, especially regarding Management Plan Reviews, offering the opportunity for communities and interest groups to help shape the future of their area.
- **University learning** – The Team hosted annual visits from Heritage Conservation undergraduates from Bournemouth and Bath Universities, and has established links with the staff and post-graduate sides of Winchester and Bournemouth Universities.
- **Chilmark Gardening Club, volunteers and schoolchildren** were all involved in growing and planting out plug plants on chalk grassland over three years whilst during 2017-18, over 650 attended stargazing evenings or visited the Mizon Travelling Planetarium with 450 children receiving 'Space Detective' workshops as part of their curriculum studies.
- **Outreach** – seminars and conferences have offered learning and involvement opportunities in recent years:
 - 12 annual landscape and planning seminars attended by officers, councillors and AONB colleagues;
 - AONB Annual Forums with up to 100 attending;
 - 2 woodland management seminars for owners and managers;
 - 2 major historic landscape conferences each attracting 100+ attendees;
 - 3 land manager seminars focussing on topical issues;
 - numerous presentations have been given to Parish Councils, natural and historic interest groups, University of the 3rd Age;
 - specific training on landscape and planning issues delivered to LA officers of relevant authorities.
- **Farmland Bird Project outreach over 4 years**

Media coverage highlighting the project and Cranborne Chase AONB	16 published articles 6 radio interviews 2 TV slots 2 You tube videos 353 followers on Twitter 16 blog posts
Presentations to farms	127 attended
Project related training sessions	195 farmers/landowners/advisers
Public Walks and Talks	14 walks and talks for the public to 365 people
Farmers and landowners attending project related events	233



- **Volunteers –**
 - 300 potential volunteers have offered and/or given time for a variety of project work or research.
 - 25 regular volunteers were crucial to the successful operation of five successful Cranborne Chase Wood Fair events.
 - Foundations of Archaeology HLF funded project engaged with an additional 200+ trained and experienced volunteers 2015-17 with specific interest in the historic environment.
- **Cranborne Chase and Chalke Valley Landscape Partnership –** First Round Heritage Lottery Fund pass. A successful second round bid will result in a £2.4m programme of work to conserve and enhance the natural, historic and cultural elements of the Landscape Partnership area, to enthuse people to engage with it, and provide a legacy of knowledge and understanding.

Key issues

1. The Government's 25 year Environment Plan⁶⁶ has an aim to connect people and the environment to improve health and wellbeing. It promotes three elements relevant to this AONB:
 - Helping people improve their health and wellbeing by using green spaces;
 - Encouraging children to be close to nature, in and out of school; and
 - Making 2019 a year of action for the environment - encourage adults and children to take positive steps to help the natural environment.
2. There is great potential in Cranborne Chase AONB to help achieve the government's goal of engaging people with the natural environment. Cranborne Chase AONB is accessible in half an hour to 2/3 million residents from the major conurbations of Poole, Bournemouth and Christchurch with a further 120,000 people on its doorstep in the surrounding market towns, offering a potentially important place for informal recreation and increased health and wellbeing for those residents. This potential is restricted for many by very scarce public transport and a continuing lack of awareness of what the area has to offer.
3. There is a significant evidence base for the range of individual and wider social health and wellbeing benefits that can be achieved through outdoor activity and contact with nature. Dorset Local Nature Partnership (LNP) has been working with other LNPs across the South West on a Health and Nature Charter. The Partnership will positively explore the potential to sign this charter to cover the whole AONB⁶⁷. Relevant health professionals may not currently be aware of the breadth of opportunities the AONB offers for improving physical and mental health and wellbeing. It can be difficult finding and engaging with the most relevant health professionals with ongoing restructuring of the National Health Service.
4. Working with schools and youth groups has always been an ongoing ambition of the AONB Partnership with successful packages focusing on food miles/local produce and, more recently, 'Space Detectives'. Further work is needed alongside teachers and relevant partners to greatly increase awareness of the natural classroom on the doorstep of the many schools and higher education establishments in and around the AONB.

⁶⁶ The Government, A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment, HMSO, 2018

⁶⁷ www.dorsetlnp.org.uk/Health_and_Nature_Charter





5. There remains a need for more round walking routes close to villages, routes suitable for the elderly, the less mobile and much better promotion of their existence. The Rights of Way across the AONB do not form a true 'network'; there are gaps where routes could be linked up. Signage and maintenance is not consistent across the area, which can lead to a variable quality of experience. Reduced County Council budgets for maintenance results in a greater reliance on local groups and volunteers to undertake practical work. The Rights of Way teams have some volunteer engagement and the AONB can help build on these initiatives. Accessing the countryside sustainably implies the need for more effective provision and use of public transport by rail and road.
6. Some partner organisations use volunteers in the conservation management of their own land or reserves in the AONB, however the majority of the AONB area is known as a 'black hole' for volunteering. There is a multitude of opportunities throughout the rest of the AONB landscape for engaging volunteers in numerous activities. There is a need for knowledgeable, experienced staff to plan, coordinate and lead this activity on the ground.
7. There is a growing interest in learning and developing traditional rural skills with communities suggesting hedge laying, scything, charcoal burning, thatching, weaving and stone carving, are of interest. There is a recognised loss of traditional countryside skills in the AONB including the skills needed to repair or restore historic buildings. Evidence shows a need, and desire, for a centre or hub for academic and life-long learning and volunteering within the AONB. As those colleges offering such learning are too distant to attend daily without personal transport.



The Issues Explained

- 16.3.** Rural public transport is scarce within and around the AONB. There are regular, if infrequent, bus routes east/west between Shaftesbury, Blandford and Salisbury that do take in some villages however north/south routes are rare. Visiting Cranborne Chase AONB from the conurbations to the south (Bournemouth/Poole) is difficult without private transport. Nevertheless, greater promotion of this AONB to those living outside it should be undertaken, suggesting particular areas or points of interest for those unfamiliar with it.
- 16.4.** For those who may visit more regularly for informal walking or cycling, promotion of day-visit and longer packages would assist by defining length of walk, difficulty, refreshment stops and ‘nuggets’ of innovative interpretation along the way.
- 16.5.** It is important that the Health and Wellbeing Boards, together with the relevant professionals, are made aware of the potential opportunities for improving lives through access to the quality environment of the AONB. Key benefits can include better physical and mental health and guarding against future illness; therapeutic and restorative qualities which enhance recovery; reduced social isolation, greater community cohesion, and opportunities to establish lifelong healthy behaviours. Outdoor activity and contact with nature can also help improve sleep patterns, reduce stress, improve mood and self-esteem, and provide meaningful social contact.⁶⁸
- 16.6.** The AONB and relevant partners should encouraged communities to take the opportunity to ‘refresh mind, body and soul’ here, through promoting the AONB as a ‘natural health centre’. The green gym concept, developed by The Conservation Volunteers, provides people with a way to enhance their fitness and health while taking action to improve the environment.
- 16.7.** ‘Green prescriptions’ are concepts becoming popular with GPs⁶⁹. These should all be developed and promoted by the AONB together with the Health and Wellbeing Boards and relevant partners. A full annual programme of guided walks, talks and activities by knowledgeable, experienced and appropriately trained staff or volunteers could also tempt more frequent visits from both within and outside the AONB. Closing gaps in the myriad of Rights of Way in the AONB should form an easily accessible resource for all and developing more circular routes in close proximity to homes, would also benefit those who may not venture out due to cultural barriers or lack of awareness or confidence.
- 16.8.** Local and national nature reserves in the AONB offer localised volunteer opportunities. The ‘Leisure Credits’ scheme⁷⁰ in the AONB engages young people in practical environmental tasks; it would like to expand. There are also some active volunteers and groups focused on access. Nevertheless, there are few substantive practical volunteer activities in the wider countryside of the AONB.
- 16.9.** There is now acknowledged support for a ‘hub’, or central base, for all types of volunteering, countryside skills training, together with an information and interpretative centre for visitors. This could be achieved through a multifunctional AONB Countryside Centre. This concept has generated interest from a wide range of people and organisations, many of whom would become partners. As partners, they would help devise training and volunteering programmes that will harness the knowledge, experience and enthusiasm of many.

68 <https://sustainablehealthcare.org.uk/>

69 <https://sustainablehealthcare.org.uk/what-we-do/green-space/green-health-routes>

70 The Leisure Credit Scheme involves young people in undertaking voluntary work and receiving Leisure Credits which are redeemed for reward trips or activities. The number of Credits a young person receives is based on how hard they worked and how well they worked as part of a team.



- 16.10.** As well as providing a focus for this nationally important landscape, a Countryside Centre could offer:
- Accredited training opportunities in countryside management skills, conservation, agriculture, forestry, livestock/animal husbandry and a variety of rural industry skills (e.g. blacksmithing).
 - A wide range of volunteering opportunities including natural history surveys, historic research and countryside management tasks.
 - Exciting recreational opportunities such as guided walks, dark night skies events and utilising all terrain mobility scooters for the less able.
 - An opportunity to take part in or attend various art based activities focussed on the special qualities of the AONB.
 - Professional, environmentally related CPD training courses for environmental professionals locally, regionally and from further afield, which could include for example, countryside, agricultural, forestry and land agency staff, those attached to all the nationally Protected Areas, the renewable energy sector and teachers/lecturers. Participants would be encouraged to stay locally.
 - A visitor centre for the area providing information on which events are on, what there is to see and do in the AONB and surrounding market towns, encouraging visitors to stay longer and spend more locally.
 - A facility for hire to external companies or organisations wanting to hold their own events or seminars.
 - Environmental play schemes during the holiday periods, encouraging exchange of town/ country experiences for young people.
- 16.11.** Countryside management tasks led by competent and experienced staff, complimented by volunteers, will help to conserve and enhance the landscape of the AONB. The construction and running of the centre will demonstrate best practice. The intent is to use a variety of sustainable construction techniques and methods. It will demonstrate the use of green energy sources such as wood chip and solar power. Where feasible, volunteers or trainees will complete some of the construction work. The skills gained through the centre will improve the job prospects of trainees.
- 16.12.** The loss of traditional skills is a significant issue for the future management of the landscape. A revival in such skills, and the ability to make a living from using them, should be encouraged.
- 16.13.** Young people in the area have to travel a long way to attend county agricultural colleges and other training centres. For many potential students of all ages, the lack and cost of public transport mean that accessing countryside skills training can be very difficult. Access to accredited training needs to be made available closer to their homes.
- 16.14.** The Cranborne Chase and Chalke Valley LPS has involvement and learning embedded as a key element of all the individual projects but it should also be the foundation of the scheme legacy. Such a Countryside Centre would enable lifelong involvement and learning for all.
- 16.15.** 2019 is the Year of Green Action for 10–20 year olds; encouraging social engagement within communities with a focus on green issues.



Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE		POLICIES	
WIL A	Improved health and well-being opportunities are developed and promoted throughout the AONB.	WIL 1	Work with Health and Wellbeing Boards, relevant health professionals, Local Nature Partnerships and relevant funding initiatives to develop and promote activity programmes in the AONB to improve health and well being.
		WIL2	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.
		WIL3	Develop an annual programme of activities, with partners, for all ages and abilities to include a Walking Festival and targeted options for enhancing health, such as 'a mile a day' initiatives.
WIL B	A wide range of opportunities exist for schools, residents and visitors to learn more about the AONB, volunteer or develop heritage and countryside skills.	WIL4	Explore with Education Departments, and schools, how engagement with the 'outdoor classroom' of the AONB may add value to curriculum studies.
		WIL5	Further develop an Involvement and Learning Strategy to increase learning, training and volunteering opportunities, improving countryside and heritage skills, within the AONB by the end of 2019/20.
		WIL6	Work with partners to engage field based staff/rangers to harness community and volunteer commitment and interest in the AONB to develop programmes of volunteer projects and activities.
		WIL7	Investigate the potential to become a partner in the Duke of Edinburgh, and John Muir, Award Schemes.
WIL C	An exemplar 'AONB Countryside Centre' is established.	WIL8	Continue work to establish an environmentally and financially sustainable 'AONB Countryside Centre' by the end of this plan period, to act as the base for the AONB Partnership, volunteers, trainees, students, residents and visitors.

(Additional Information: Involvement and Learning Appendix 36)

