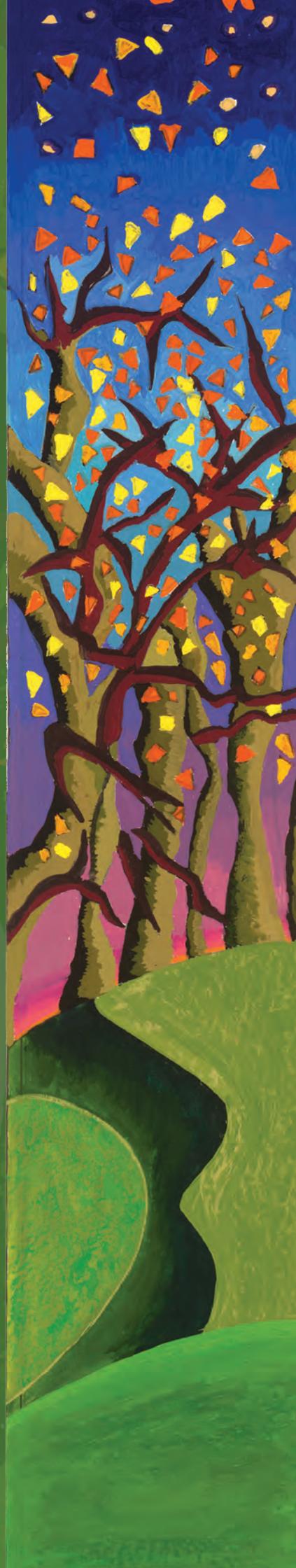


Outstanding Landscapes

'Living Landscape'





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

Clare Thomas, Artist



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 nationally 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.
 - A bountiful mosaic of habitats playing host to a myriad of wildlife.
 - 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 chalk 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 and ability to see the Milky Way.



Ambition

- 8.2. The unique character, tranquillity and special qualities of the landscapes in the AONB are conserved and enhanced for future generations. There will be a widespread understanding of the area's special qualities, and informed decision-making will strengthen these qualities. When change happens, it is to be consistent with the character of the landscape and the setting of the AONB. Everyone will take opportunities to restore landscape features that require it.

Key Achievements

- **Publications** – The effective use of the AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Sensitivity Study, and Tranquillity Study 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** – Avoided potentially negative impacts on the landscape through advice, research and authoritative reports; 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 farmland landscapes surrounding a strategic pipeline installation and associated pumping and storage facilities.
- **A Landscape View of Trees and Woodlands** – offers woodland owners, farmers and advisors a fuller understanding of the landscape character context in which they are working.
- **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.
- **Cranborne Chase and Chalke Valley Landscape Character Assessment** – This study provides a more refined understanding of the landscape character of this Landscape Partnership Scheme area. It will support a 5 year programme of activities to enhance the understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of the landscape by all ages, resident or visitors from outside area, through a range of natural, historic and cultural projects across the area. Its ambition is to provide a significant landscape legacy.





Wood engraving of Malacombe Bottom © Howard Phipps

Key Issues

1. **Understanding and sustaining landscape character** – It is crucial that all landscape managers and planners understand, appreciate, and use the Landscape Character Assessments.
2. **Monitoring landscape change over time** – Long-term, objective monitoring of landscape change takes time and resources. Fixed-point photography locations have been installed 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 AONB²¹. However, 90% of the AONB falls in the top 2 categories of darkness, as evidenced by CPRE research in 2016. This makes this AONB the last dark area in southern, central England²². (See also Chapter 11 Dark Night Skies).

21 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.

22 CPRE (June 2016) Night Blight: Mapping England's light pollution and dark skies.



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 largely free from development outside settlements. 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 are declines in the quality of some characteristic features. Some are brought about by machine trimming of hedgerows; the planting of hedges contrary to landscape character; or planting that cuts out views.
- 8.5. A greater understanding of the character of the landscapes is crucial to helping everyone make informed decisions that contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB.
- 8.6. 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 in use in this AONB but there is a need to take photographs at regular times in consistent light and weather conditions. There are now twelve fixed-point locations with landowner permissions.
- 8.7. 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 tranquillity that means so much to all of us. We want to ensure the dark starry skies of much of the AONB remain that way and continue to be seen and appreciated. However, inappropriate lighting can waste energy and reduce landscape quality²³. This is explained in detail in chapter 11 – Dark Night Skies.

²³ 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.



Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE		POLICIES	
LAN A	The landscape character, tranquillity and special qualities of the AONB are fully understood by policy makers and land managers.	LAN1	Provide appropriate training on a range of landscape matters to relevant partners.
		LAN2	Review the 2003 Integrated Landscape Character Assessment to develop guidance for the Landscape Character Types/Areas to inform land use planning and landscape management.
		LAN3	Develop guidance for a Landscape Character Type or Area to inform land use planning and landscape management activities.
LAN B	The landscape character, tranquillity and special qualities of the AONB and its settings are conserved and enhanced.	LAN4	Ensure the conservation and enhancement of the landscape character, tranquillity and special qualities of the AONB and its setting, particularly those that are sensitive to change.
		LAN5	Encourage, support and analyse research on landscape issues affecting the AONB and its surroundings to inform policy formulation and the consequent action required.
		LAN6	Determine the factors that contribute to, or detract from, tranquillity to ensure that policies will more effectively conserve and enhance levels of tranquillity.
		LAN7	Pursue opportunities to underground and remove power and telecommunications lines and poles, and other incongruous features where they detract from the Special Qualities.
LAN C	Understand the rate and degree of landscape change within the AONB.	LAN8	Undertake fixed point photography biennially to identify areas where landscape character, condition, or quality has been or is being lost. This will inform potential restoration and enhancement measures.

(Additional Information: Landscape Appendix 28)

