

News Release

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Monday 20 November

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Renamed National Landscapes

New name underpins ambitious targets for nature

Today, [Wednesday 22 November] all designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in England and Wales are becoming National Landscapes, including Cranborne Chase, which overlaps Wiltshire, Dorset, Hampshire and Somerset. The new name reflects the national importance of Cranborne Chase; the vital contribution that it makes to protect the nation from the threats of climate change, nature depletion and the wellbeing crisis, whilst also creating greater understanding and awareness for the work that we do.

This is a significant milestone for the UK and the next step in fully realising the National Landscapes' vision to be the leading exemplars of how thriving, diverse communities can work with and for nature in the UK: restoring ecosystems, providing food, storing carbon to mitigate the effects of climate change, safeguarding against drought and flooding, whilst also nurturing people's health and wellbeing.

National Landscapes teams have been at the forefront of delivering natural solutions to the main challenges facing the nation for many years. The new name underscores their commitment to redoubling their efforts and engaging with a wider audience. In 2019, teams set themselves the most ambitious targets for nature in the sector and continue to work to meet them.

By 2030, National Landscapes aim that, within their boundaries: at least 200,000 hectares of the most valuable natural areas (Sites of Special Scientific Interest or SSSIs), which equates to 1 ¼ times the size of London, will be in favourable condition; 100,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat outside of SSSIs will be created or restored, which is roughly nine times the size

of Manchester; and 36,000 hectares of woodland, which is a little smaller than the Isle of Wight, will have been planted or allowed to regenerate. National Landscapes Partnerships will also focus on habitat restoration to ensure the protection of some of our most endangered species and increase their work to help more people to enjoy time spent in beautiful places.

Because of their size and scope, National Landscapes are ideally positioned to address the environmental issues the UK is facing. There are 46 National Landscapes in the UK, covering 14% of England, Wales and Northern Ireland including moorland, farmland, coast, forests, including UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves, a Geopark and International Dark Sky Reserves. They are the UK's nearby countryside - 66% of people in England (44 million) live within 30 minutes of a National Landscape and at least 170 million people visit them every year.

Fleur de Rhe-Philippe MBE, Chairman of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Board says:

"Since designation in 1981, Cranborne Chase National Landscape has offered tranquillity and relaxation for the many thousands of annual visitors who come to explore the 1000+ miles of Rights of Way, wonder at the numerous historic riches that nestle amongst the downs or simply take a picnic to one of many stunning viewpoints. Having gained the prestigious International Dark-Sky Reserve status in 2019, the myriad of twinkling stars in a jet-black night sky is awe-inspiring.

Since 2019, a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund has enabled over 500 volunteers to be trained in new skills and actively managing many areas for wildlife, others organising an annual Walking Festival, investigating hidden historic gems or participating in many art-based activities. Our Chase & Chalke Landscape Partnership Scheme has encouraged hundreds more to express themselves in poetry, song and artistic endeavours, all focussed on this staggeringly beautiful landscape.

Local communities, farmers and landowners are fiercely proud of where they live and work; this distinctive landscape is in their blood. They will all continue to be custodians of this spectacular area whilst the small, dedicated National Landscape team will continue to do all it can, to enable them to do just that."

Linda Nunn, Director of Cranborne Chase National Landscape says:

“The very distinctive, diverse and cherished landscapes of Cranborne Chase continue to be nurtured and enhanced by the many hundreds of farmers and landowners who are stewards of this unique National Landscape. Whilst the team has always worked closely with the farming community, the Defra funded ‘Farming in Protected Landscapes’ (FiPL) programme has enabled us to offer grants of over £1million since 2021 to farmers for 85 innovative projects, proposed by themselves, to greatly enhance their land within the themes of Nature, Climate, People and Place. The Cranborne Chase National Landscape team will continue to engage with farmers, local communities and visitors to ensure this much loved nationally designated area is conserved, enhanced and enjoyed into the future.”

John Watkins, Chief Executive of the National Landscapes Association says:

“For decades, AONB teams have convened powerful partnerships which have placed them at the forefront of the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss, but since their initial designation, our country has changed immensely, as have the needs and pressures on the environment and communities. However, we have great ambition as well as the commitment and readiness to care for and protect these important places, whilst also extending a welcome to more people. Our ambitious aims build on AONB teams’ long track record of successful delivery for nature and people and we are confident that we will achieve them. National Landscapes are the landscape designation for the 21 Century and beyond.”

Tony Juniper, Chair of Natural England says:

“For decades the AONBs have helped protect the beauty of our finest landscapes. Today though we need so much more from these wonderful places, helping us adapt to climate change, catching carbon, restoring depleted wildlife and encouraging more people outside, at the same time as producing food, sustaining local communities and enhancing historic environments.

“Modern challenges require new approaches and today marks the beginning of a new phase for our National Landscapes, as they strengthen their existing partnerships, and forge new ones that will secure in perpetuity the huge range of benefits that come from these special places.

Big change has taken place during the past 75 years and bigger changes still can be expected during the decades ahead. Uniting the National Landscapes in this way is very welcome and spells immense opportunity and great hope for the future."

Discover more about Cranborne Chase National Landscape at
cranbornechase.org.uk

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Notes to Editors:

- In the Dorset, Wiltshire, Hampshire and Somerset area, National Landscapes include Cranborne Chase, North Wessex Downs, Dorset, Mendip Hills and Cotswolds.
- The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 is the Act of the Parliament that provided the framework for the creation of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England and Wales, and also addressed public rights of way and access to open land. In the immediate wake of the second world war, the nation had the forethought to designate Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty as sisters to the NHS – one to look after the nation's health, the other its nature and wellbeing.
- The first AONB to be designated was in 1956, Gower Peninsula, and the last the most recent, designated in 1995, is the Tamar Valley AONB, which spans Devon and Cornwall. Cranborne Chase was designated as an AONB in 1981.
- An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is an area of countryside in England, Wales, or Northern Ireland, that has been designated for conservation due to its significant landscape value. Areas are designated in recognition of their national importance by the relevant public body: Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency respectively. In place of AONB, Scotland uses the similar national scenic area (NSA) designation.
- National Landscapes offer a uniquely integrated perspective in decisions about land use: convening conversations, bringing people together, and enabling a sustainable balance of priorities for nature, climate, people and place.
- The National Landscapes Association is the membership organisation representing the UK's National Landscapes.

- The work of small (average four members of staff), expert National Landscapes teams is guided by the democratically derived Management Plan, developed through consultation with partners and members of the public through an open process every five years. The Management Plan covers the entirety of the landscape, considering how to protect and regenerate its special features: geology, species, heritage, industry, culture; balancing the needs of the local community to keep pace with the latest infrastructure, through a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities of these distinct and special places.
- National Landscape Partnerships own no land, so their work is delivered by convening strong networks with landowners, farmers and partner organisations, working together to plan projects, and secure funding to deliver them.
- Since 2000 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnerships have:
 - coordinated habitat restoration projects across many thousands of hectares,
 - restored peatland twice the area of Birmingham,
 - provided free educational opportunities for many thousands of children of all ages and needs,
 - delivered many wellbeing programmes: from weekly walks for people with dementia and brain injuries and their carers to friendship cafes.