



**Cranborne  
Chase  
National  
Landscape**

An Area of Outstanding  
Natural Beauty

## **FACT SHEETS & GOOD PRACTICE NOTES**

### **Number 1**

#### **Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000:**

#### **Section 85(A1) Duty to further the purposes of the AONB**

National Landscapes, known statutorily as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, are nationally designated areas of especially fine landscape. The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB has been established under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act to conserve and enhance the outstanding natural beauty of this area which straddles four counties and one district council.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 reiterates the purpose and designation procedures for AONBs as well as making provision for national funding of the local management of these national resources. It also empowers a Local Planning Authority to take all such action as appears to them expedient for the accomplishment of the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.

Natural beauty includes wildlife, scientific, and cultural heritage, and it is also recognised that in relation to their landscape characteristics and quality, National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – National Landscapes – are equally important aspects of the nation’s heritage and environmental capital. In addition, the importance of the setting of an AONB has been incorporated in the National Planning Policy Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance.

**Section 85** of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 was revised by s.245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 and **Section 85(A1)** now places a **general and overarching duty** on public bodies and persons holding public office to:

**“In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty in England, a relevant authority other than a devolved Welsh authority must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.”**

A **relevant authority** for the purposes of this section includes

- (a) any Minister of the Crown;
- (b) any public body
- (c) any statutory undertaker
- (d) any person holding public office.

“Any public body” includes “a county council, county borough council, district council, parish or community council.”

This means that national, regional, and local organisations and people are statutorily obliged to take into account the objectives and purposes of AONBs in their day to day work. That work can include policy formulation, decisions, and practical tasks.

In order to help them meet their obligations under section 85(A1) the Partnership for this AONB feels it is essential that all “relevant authorities” are vigilant in upholding their duty by

- a) Familiarising themselves with National Landscape / AONB publications, especially the statutorily required Management Plan and the Landscape Character Assessment, which are readily accessible on our web site, [www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk](http://www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk)**
- b) Involving the National Landscape / AONB team in discussions on policy and project formulation and including the team in partnerships, steering groups, and similar working arrangements**
- c) Taking into account the views and professional opinions and judgements of the National Landscape / AONB team in decision making**
- d) Contacting the National Landscape / AONB staff regarding work that may affect the National Landscape / AONB or its settings.**

Version 1 / 2

RFB 17 6 08 / 2 7 08 / 6 3 24