

# Management Plan 2019-2024





## OUR SHARED LANDSCAPE

# Our vision

The Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership is working towards a future in which the management of the landscape and designation is the best example of how protected landscapes can stimulate truly sustainable development and land management.

### For the environment of the AONB:

- the AONB is stunningly beautiful, tranquil and healthy
- there are large tracts of well linked, high quality habitats within a landscape capable of supporting resilient populations of a wide range of species
- the AONB is regarded as a store of natural capital which is conserved and managed to maximise the benefits available from it (clean water, clean air, productive soils, geological resources, etc)

### For the community of the AONB:

- sustainable rural communities are thriving and housed affordably, enjoying a range of health and wellbeing benefits afforded by a wonderful environment
- there is a range of active travel options and wide access to the countryside
- the landscape's natural and cultural heritage is the basis for a wide range of education, learning and volunteering opportunities for all ages; it inspires ongoing research and artistic endeavour

### The economy of that community offers great employment for all ages in:

- well-rewarded sensitive farming, forestry and fishing businesses and the conservation sector alongside which they work
- the production of superb local products and a tourism industry that rewards host communities and contributes to landscape management
- the local building industry which is a leader in low energy construction employing local timber
- a world-class creative industry and the wider green economy inspired by the landscape



**Lord Gardiner  
of Kimble**

Parliamentary Under  
Secretary of State for Rural  
Affairs and Biosecurity

I am fortunate that England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are part of my Ministerial responsibilities. Whether it be rolling hills, sweeping coastline or a tranquil village, spending time in an AONB can stir the heart and lift the spirit.

This is a pivotal moment for all AONBs. The Government has set its ambition in the 25 Year Environment Plan which states clearly the importance of natural beauty as part of our green future, while AONBs retain the highest status of protection for landscape through national planning policy. Leaving the EU brings with it an opportunity to develop a better system for supporting our farmers and land managers, who play such a vital role as stewards of the landscape. And the Review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty led by Julian Glover - the first of its kind for generations - will make recommendations to make sure our designated landscapes can flourish in the years ahead.

In my visits to AONBs around the country, I have been struck by the passion of many people - farmers, volunteers, and hard-working staff - for the beautiful places they live and work. In this spirit I am delighted to welcome publication of this Statutory Management Plan for Dorset AONB. It is significant that this plan will be delivered in partnership by those who value Dorset AONB. I would like to thank all those involved in preparation of this document, and wish you the best of success in bringing it to fruition.



# Contents

Our vision	3
Minister's foreword	4
Chairman's foreword	7
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2. AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3. THIS MANAGEMENT PLAN</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>4. KEY ISSUES &amp; OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>5. KEY CONCEPTS WITHIN THIS PLAN</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>6. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>7. LANDSCAPE &amp; SEASCAPE CHARACTER</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>8. NATURAL CAPITAL</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>9. POLICY FRAMEWORK</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>9.1</b> The working landscape	74
<b>9.2</b> Exploring, understanding, and engaging	80
<b>9.3</b> Planning for landscape quality	86
<b>9.4</b> Ways of working	94
<b>10. DELIVERY</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>11. ORGANISATIONS ENDORSING THIS PLAN</b>	<b>102</b>



## **Jim White MBE** Chairman of the Dorset AONB Partnership

It is my pleasure to present this fourth edition of the management plan for the landscape of the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It's an area I love deeply; a landscape of international and national significance for its natural beauty and all that this includes: wildlife, geology, archaeology, built heritage and cultural links. Recognition for this area is not new; this plan comes into effect in the 60th anniversary year of the Dorset AONB designation.

Previous AONB Management Plans have achieved lots of positive action, enabled better conservation management of large areas of land and numbers of monuments, and inspired and enabled projects which have engaged great numbers of people. It has also helped shape development and other change within the landscape for the better. Significant pressures and threats remain: globally we are witnessing widescale biodiversity decline and extinction and climate breakdown. Locally, there is huge pressure on land for large numbers of dwellings both within and around the AONB. The natural environment

is stretched; natural systems are dealing with past decades of insensitive or unenlightened practice in built development and agriculture, and in general our lifestyles have a damaging environmental footprint.

The time this plan takes effect is one of great flux: Brexit on a national scale and Dorset's nine Local Authorities becoming two Unitary Authorities. Now, however, the policy background for the natural environment is stronger than it has been for years as outlined in the Minister's Foreword. We look forward to the outcomes of the Glover Review of England's designated landscapes, which will make recommendations on funding, governance, priorities and designation coverage.

The AONB Partnership has limited resources for delivery; it always amazes me how so much is achieved with so little. We have a core team of 6 (4.5 FTE) which works to coordinate the making of this plan and overseeing its implementation. The Partnership will continue to make the case for increased resources and influence to support the conservation and enhancement of this area's natural beauty, particularly through the Glover Review. Indeed, the aims of this plan would be delivered more deeply and widely across the AONB with a significant uplift in funds and influence for the Partnership and its team.

Notwithstanding the resources at the disposal of the AONB Partnership, achieving the vision and meeting the objectives of this plan requires more than an adherence to the statutory duty by local authorities, agencies and utility companies. It requires buy-in and effort from the very widest of partnerships: all people, agencies, land managers and other businesses with an interest or a stake in this very special place.



**\* ALL maps to be updated for PB meeting on 15th November**



# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Dorset AONB is a landscape of national and international significance for its natural and cultural heritage assets. It is a landscape rich in natural beauty which has been shaped by millennia of human occupation. Natural beauty and landscape quality goes beyond the look of the landscape: it includes the elements which comprise the view (topography, geology, hydrology, wildlife, archaeology and other built heritage and the cultural heritage made in response to it). This management plan sets out the legal basis and background of this landscape and articulates a policy framework for the conservation and enhancement of its natural beauty.

Now in its fourth edition, this management plan builds on previous iterations; it is for the landscape of the Dorset AONB, not for one organisation or partnership. It fulfils a legal requirement and is derived through local consensus. It sets out an approach to conserving and enhancing the AONB's natural beauty (which itself is further defined). It is for all people and organisations engaged in activities which have implications for the area's natural beauty, such as strategic planning, development management, land management, conservation, celebration and education.

It is one of a group of documents which describe the policies, landscape condition and implementation strategy. The others in this set are:

- Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) which describes the various landscape types and character areas of the AONB, their characteristic features and the landscape condition.
- Strategic Environmental Assessment which was delivered alongside this Management Plan to test the policies in this plan; it also includes a baseline assessment of various socioeconomic subjects for the AONB.

- Delivery Plan which will be constructed following the public consultation period on this plan and annually thereafter. This describes how these policies will be implemented and translated into practice; it will describe one year's activity in detail with a view towards the timespan of this plan.

This plan has been developed and reviewed with the input and involvement of a wide range of stakeholders. Through this process, local people and organisations have provided extensive input in identifying the local actions and priorities that will conserve and enhance this nationally important landscape.

## 2. AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are nationally important protected landscapes. Dorset is one of 46 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Together with the 13 National Parks, these make up our finest countryside and are protected in the national interest for future generations.

AONBs are also recognised internationally by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature as part of the global family of protected areas.

### Protected landscapes in the UK



#### Key

##### England and Wales

- National Park
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

##### Scotland

- National Park
- National Scenic Area
- Regional Park

##### Northern Ireland

- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

## 2.1

### Purposes and Duties: the legal basis

AONBs are designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside (NPAC) Act 1949. The purposes of the AONB designation were updated and confirmed by the Countryside Commission in 1991 as follows:

- The primary purpose of the designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.
- In pursuing the primary purpose, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.
- Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 confirmed the significance of AONBs and created improved arrangements for their management. There are three key sections of the Act for AONBs:

- Section 85 places a statutory duty on all 'relevant authorities' to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty when discharging any function affecting land in AONBs.
- Section 89 places a statutory duty on local planning authorities to act jointly to produce a Management Plan for each AONB in their administrative area.
- Section 90 describes the notification required during the AONB Management Plan-making process.

AONBs are defined as areas not in a National Park but considered to be of such outstanding natural beauty that it is desirable to protect them. Government has confirmed that the landscape qualities of National Parks and AONBs are equivalent and current guidance makes it clear that the practical application of the natural beauty criterion is identical for both National Parks and AONBs, as is their equivalent importance and protection.



## 2.2

### Natural beauty

Natural beauty remains largely undefined in legislation, despite being central to the NPAC Act 1949. Since then, qualifications and amendments to the legislation make it clear that natural beauty includes wildlife, geological features and cultural heritage while not being restricted to them.

Government guidance relating to AONBs provides a useful non-technical definition: 'Natural beauty is not just the look of the landscape, but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries'. More recently the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 clarified that land used for agriculture, woodlands, parkland or with physiographical features partly the product of human intervention in the landscape, is not prevented from being treated as an area of 'natural beauty'.

Landscape beauty is not limited to the visual character but includes all aspects which underpin and contribute to that character. Therefore, the conservation and enhancement of wildlife, built heritage and cultural heritage is integral to the conservation of landscape and its natural beauty.

## 2.3

### The Dorset AONB

The Dorset AONB was designated in 1959 and is the fifth largest AONB. It covers 1,129 square kilometres, approximately 42% of the county. The AONB stretches from Lyme Regis in the west, along the coast to Poole Harbour in the east, and north to Hambledon Hill near Blandford Forum. It covers over half of Poole Harbour, including Brownsea and the smaller islands. Outside of Poole Harbour and the Fleet, the designated area ends at mean low water, but with a significant extent of coastline the seaward setting and adjacent marine environment is important to the AONB's condition. The Dorset AONB also includes small areas in Somerset and Devon.

The Dorset AONB has approximately 74,600 people living within it and 2.15 million people living within 40 miles of the boundary. A number of market and coastal towns lie within the AONB, including Lyme Regis, Bridport, Beaminster and Swanage.

## 2.4

### Context of the Dorset AONB

The Dorset AONB is connected to land, ecosystems, people and business beyond its boundaries. The Dorset AONB lies within an area known for its outstanding environmental quality. To the east are the internationally important urban heaths around Poole and Bournemouth and the New Forest National Park. To the northeast, the Dorset AONB shares a boundary with the Cranborne Chase AONB near Blandford. To the west lie the Blackdown Hills AONB and the East Devon AONB which meets the Dorset AONB at Lyme Regis and includes the western section of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

Much of the surrounding countryside in Dorset, while not being covered by landscape designations, is still of extremely high quality. To the north lies the Blackmore Vale, to the south the Isle of Portland and separating the AONB's northern downs from the Isle of Purbeck are the lower Frome and Piddle valleys. Significant and growing urban populations adjacent to the AONB at Dorchester, Weymouth, Yeovil, Taunton and the Poole-Bournemouth conurbation look to the AONB as an area for leisure and recreation.

As a coastal protected landscape, management of the Dorset AONB must also take into account its links to the marine environment. Harbour and saline lagoons lie within the boundary in Poole Harbour and the Fleet. Outside these areas the AONB boundary is at Mean Low Water. Activities within the marine elements of the AONB as well as out at sea can have significant implications for the character and qualities of the AONB, and a high quality marine environment is just as crucial to the AONB's integrity as a high quality terrestrial environment.

## 2.5

### Managing the Dorset AONB

Most of the Dorset AONB is in private ownership and actively farmed (over 70%). The Dorset AONB Partnership has influence over the landscape through the planning process, by shaping grants and other incentives, and through guidance and advice. There are many decisions affecting the landscape over which the Partnership has no direct influence, however it seeks to improve understanding of the designation to enable better decisions to be taken.

Delivery of the Dorset AONB Management Plan is coordinated by the Dorset AONB Partnership, which brings together local authorities,



statutory agencies, local community and landowner representatives (key partners are listed in chapter 9). The Partnership has a dedicated staff team which delivers a wide range of projects and advises on activities and initiatives in the AONB. Core activity is funded by Defra and the local authorities which have responsibility for parts of the AONB; significant additional funds are raised for Partnership projects.

The Partnership also works closely with a wide range of organisations, communities and landowners across the area, notably Dorset Coast Forum, Jurassic Coast Trust, Dorset Wildlife Trust, National Trust, RSPB, Natural England, Dorset Countryside, Arts Development Company, Dorset Food & Drink, plus many others. The success of the Partnership is dependent on its close working relations with these organisations and those who farm, live and work here.

The AONB Partnership also works with the Dorset Health & Wellbeing Board, Dorset Local Enterprise and Dorset Local Nature Partnerships, Catchment Partnerships and the Local Access Forum, raising issues and promoting opportunities afforded by the AONB landscape.

## 2.6

### Working beyond the Dorset AONB boundary

The Dorset AONB Partnership is a member of the National Association for AONBs, the South West Protected Landscapes Forum and Europarc, which bring together the family of protected landscapes at regional, national and European levels. Through membership of these bodies, the Dorset AONBs.

Partnership develops joint initiatives, shares experience, influences policy and lobbies for greater recognition and protection for AONBs. Many of the principles of this Management Plan can be applied to landscapes outside the AONB boundary. Where appropriate, the Dorset AONB Partnership works with partners to deliver projects across the county of Dorset rather than just within the AONB, ensuring that the context of the AONB is recognised. Many projects also operate collaboratively to make best use of available resources.

## 3. THIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

This chapter sets out this plan's purposes, intended audiences and how it relates to other strategies. It also gives some examples of how previous plans have been used for positive action.



INSPIRE  
ACTION

### 3.1

## What is the Plan for?

This plan is for guiding and inspiring action that will bring us closer to achieving the vision. It meets the statutory requirement on local authorities to produce a Management Plan but goes beyond that requirement by:

- Bringing together partners to target or vision for this protected landscape.
- Promoting collaboration in action for best results.
- Helping to prioritise public investment, for example agri-environment or rural development grant.
- Providing a policy framework within which the AONB Partnership can bring partners together to design, resource and implement programmes of action.

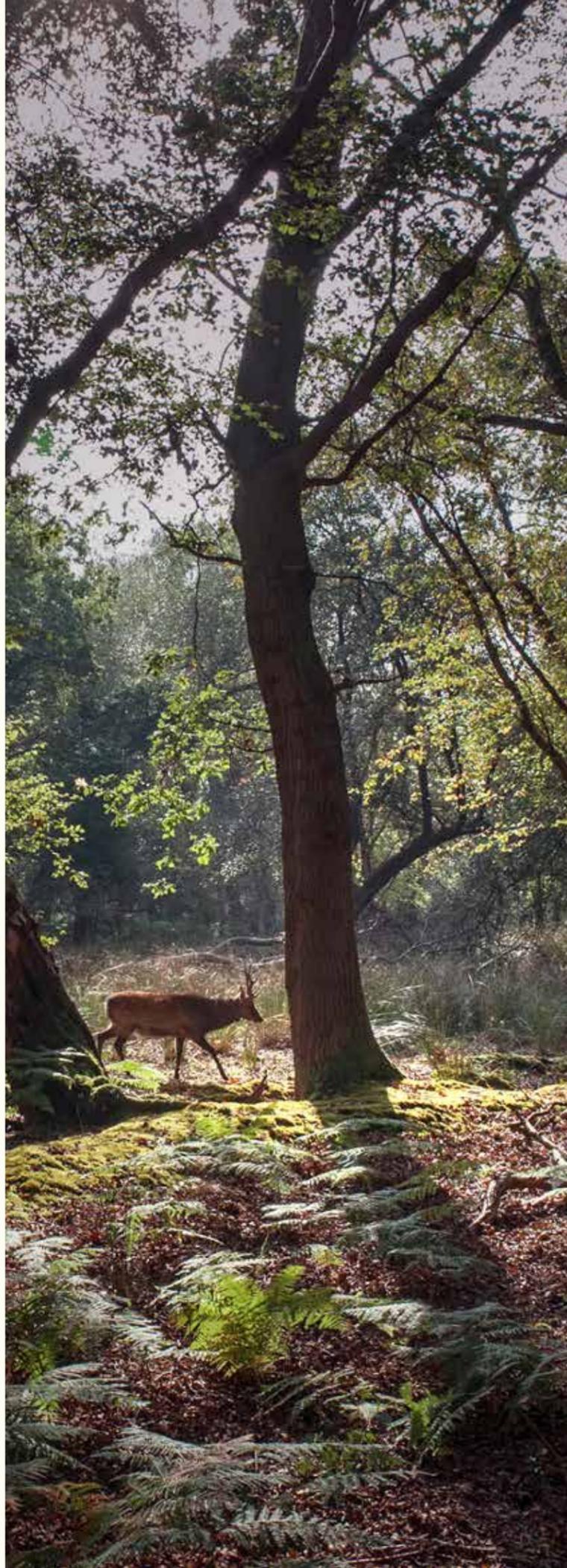
The plan places a focus on how the primary purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty will be delivered; social and economic issues are covered in terms of their relationship to that primary purpose.

### 3.2

## Who is the Plan for?

The AONB Management Plan is just that – a plan for the AONB area. It provides a framework that can help guide all activities that might affect the AONB. Its audiences include:

- AONB Partnership organisations – these organisations will have a key role in delivering and championing the Management Plan.
- Relevant authorities – all public bodies and statutory undertakers have a duty to have regard to the primary purpose of the AONB; this Management Plan will guide them in fulfilling their statutory duties.
- The Dorset Local Nature Partnership and Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership.
- Landowners and managers – those who own and manage land in the AONB have a vital role to play; the plan aims to guide, support and attract resources for sensitive management of the AONB.
- Local communities – all of us that live and work in the AONB can play an active role in caring for the Dorset AONB; the plan identifies some of the priorities for action and ways to get involved.



### 3.3

## How does it relate to other plans, strategies and processes?

This plan should be used to guide and inform all other plans and activities developed by public bodies and statutory undertakers that may affect the AONB, in line with their duty of regard for the primary purpose of the AONB. It should also be used for other people and organisations in and around the AONB so that they may contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the AONB.

- This plan will help promote and support local delivery of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan including development of a Local Natural Capital Plan
- Public investment strategies: it can guide the targeting and prioritising of land management grants and other rural industry grants or loans via the Local Enterprise Partnership and community-led local investment strategies (e.g. Local Action Groups); it can provide evidence for the Local Industrial Strategy
- Local & spatial plans: it provides part of the evidence base for local plans including those for transport, waste and minerals.
- Marine plans: provides part of the evidence base for the Marine Plan (South).
- Development management: local planning authorities and the Marine Management Organisation have a statutory duty of regard for the AONB when making planning decisions. In making these decisions the relevant authority should seek the advice of Natural England, the statutory agency responsible for AONBs. In addition, this Management Plan is a material consideration in the planning process. Planning authorities seek advice from the AONB Team under the Dorset AONB planning protocol.
- Health and wellbeing plans: it can guide the implementation of the 'Prevention at Scale' priority of the Dorset Sustainability and Transformation Plan.
- Catchment plans: it provides part of the evidence base for the partnership catchment management plans within the AONB (currently the Poole Harbour and Stour Catchments Plans).
- Community planning: it can help inform neighbourhood and parish plans and community strategies.
- The Dorset & East Devon World Heritage Site Management Plan: this plan outlines the statutory landscape protections for the site and its setting in the collective interests of all humanity.
- Cultural strategies: it can add context and local distinctiveness to enhance implementation.

## 3.4

### What have previous plans helped to achieve?

Earlier editions of the plan have underpinned the work of the Dorset AONB Partnership and a wide range of contributors. The last 5-year management plan helped attract over £7.5M investment over the last 5 years through the AONB Partnership alone for conservation, access, understanding and celebration activities. It also influenced considerably more investment through agri-environment schemes. The following four examples highlight the ways in which the AONB Partnership operate:

- Development management and planning gain: the policies and detail within the plan has helped limit harmful development within the AONB and enabled a framework for mitigation and compensation where residual significant impacts remain at the approval of certain proposals. The two key examples of compensation for landscape impacts are the Weymouth Relief Road Environment Fund (£200,000 which enabled greater investment – see below) and the Wytch Farm Landscape and Access Enhancement Fund (£1.7M currently being disbursed to positive projects).
- The South Dorset Ridgeway Landscape Partnership was a wide-ranging 5-year programme of work substantially funded by Heritage Lottery Fund, matched by compensation funds from the Weymouth Relief Road construction. This landscape area is nationally important for its concentration of prehistoric monuments, and the programme enabled the survey of 410 monuments (and subsequent restoration of 25) alongside further built heritage restoration, natural heritage conservation, celebration, interpretation, education and skills development. In all over 28,000 hours of volunteer time were committed, 10,600 schoolchildren were engaged in Ridgeway-related learning, 500 metres of stone walls were rebuilt and tens of hectares of priority habitat were improved.
- Wild Purbeck Nature Improvement Area: one of the initial 12 NIAs following the Lawton Review, a suite of conservation, awareness and engagement projects received funding support from Natural England which led to a step-change in delivery. In an area in which there is a long history of effective partnership working, this landscape-scale approach helped ‘fast forward’

through a desired conservation programme which included land acquisition (124 ha purchased by conservation organisations), land management change (including 467 ha heathland restored), community and education effort (reaching over 13% of the area’s population) and inspiring over 20,000 hours of volunteer time.

- Stepping into Nature: with significant funding from Big Lottery, this project has developed and resourced numerous nature and arts-based activities targeted at older people, particularly those living with dementia, and their carers. It has also trained many staff in the conservation sector so they are better able to deliver activities for that key audience, and funded dementia-friendly improvements to accessible greenspaces. The project is working with Public Health Dorset to improve both the evidence and narrative for using our natural environment to improve the health and wellbeing of residents and mitigate the impact of growing numbers of people living with dementia on the Dorset health and care system, as part of Dorset’s “prevention at Scale” portfolio.
- Sustainable Development Fund: nearly £100k from the AONB Partnership’s small grants fund went to 59 projects with a total value of nearly £500,000. Each project was conceived in the community or among wider partners. The fund remains popular.



## 4. KEY ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

The policies at Chapter 9 provide a framework in which the following threats may be mitigated and the opportunities developed. An action plan, to be developed annually, will give detail of method and location.

A photograph of a landscape featuring a large, leafy tree on a hillside covered in dense, low-lying vegetation with small pink and purple flowers. A dirt path winds through the vegetation. The sky is blue with some light clouds. A green circle is overlaid on the lower right portion of the image, containing the word 'CONTEXT' in white, uppercase letters. A thin green line extends from the right side of the circle towards the right edge of the page.

CONTEXT

## 4.1

# Political



### Brexit

This plan was prepared as negotiations continued to remove the UK from the European Union (EU) and establish a new trading relationship with it. This has significant implications for the UK's rural areas and their management, particularly regarding:

- Investment in agriculture, fisheries the environment and rural communities to replace those arising from Common Agricultural and Fisheries Policies. These are partially addressed in an Agriculture Bill at the time of writing.
- National legislation for environmental protection to replace those agreed at EU level, to come in an Environment Bill.
- Agreements for international trade with the EU and beyond, and the potential for future cross-Channel co-operation.

At the time of writing, it is impossible to predict where the threats and opportunities lie with any precision. The situation will clarify over the coming months and during any transition period to EU withdrawal.

### Austerity

While National Parks and AONBs have been cushioned to some extent, at the time of writing there have been 8 years of consistent funding reductions to large parts of the public sector, with knock-on effects in terms of:

- Increased competition for available funds for AONB management
- Capacity to engage in AONB management by local authority, statutory agency staff, schools, youth groups, arts organisations etc.
- Reductions in public service provision (e.g. loss of rural bus routes, fewer tourist information staff/offices).
- Increased wealth and health inequality (see 4.2)

### National environmental policy

National environmental policy direction is being framed within the Government's 25-year environment plan "A green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment". This plan has been warmly welcomed by the AONB Partnership and provides high-level support for environmental conservation and enhancement. The plan underlines the importance for much of the AONB Partnership's work.

Actions under the following headlines are particularly relevant:

- Using and managing land sustainably
- Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes
- Connecting people to the environment to improve health and wellbeing
- Increasing resource efficiency and reducing pollution and waste
- Securing clean, healthy, productive and biologically-diverse seas and oceans

Through this plan, a review of protected landscapes has been instigated which will make recommendations to government in 2019 on the purposes, funding, governance and coverage of England's National Parks and AONBs. A pre-existing campaign to create a National Park in Dorset and East Devon sees this as an opportunity for change.

Policy direction also supports natural capital and the potential for innovative funding solutions, such as Wessex Water's Entrade which facilitates efficient spending on catchment-related issues for water quality improvements.

Related statutes are being developed within the Agriculture Bill (currently before Parliament) and an Environment Bill (yet to be drafted). The above, alongside the Government's Clean Growth Strategy, recognises our interdependence on the natural environment

### National housing policy

At the time of writing, government policy supports a huge uplift in house-building. To facilitate this, government policy includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This presents challenges to the AONB's landscape in terms of:

- Land-take for building with associated potential impacts on the landscape (its visual character as well as its component elements and overall function).
- Increased nutrients being introduced to sensitive river catchments. There is a need for all new developments in the Poole Harbour catchment to be nutrient-neutral, which may necessitate off-setting measures affecting agricultural land use and operations.
- Increased recreational pressure from a growing population. While many areas of the AONB are robust and afford ample opportunities for outdoor recreation, some are particularly sensitive to such disturbance.

### Local government reorganisation

At the time of writing Dorset's 9 local authorities are merging to form two unitary authorities, to conclude in 2019. The Dorset AONB will be entirely within the Dorset Council area (excepting those small areas in Devon and Somerset). This change is efficiency-driven: the new Dorset Council will be smaller than the sum of its original parts.

This may present challenge to AONB management through reduced capacity and expertise across planning and community support services; increased consistency in policy application and clearer lines of communication may present opportunities.



### Deprivation and inequality

Inequalities have deepened over the past 8 years among the country's population. There are pockets of deprivation in the Dorset AONB and areas of low skills provision and attainment. Social mobility is low. This has implications for the local economy's potential as well as for the community's health and wellbeing. Levels of obesity and other lifestyle-related conditions are higher among those living in deprivation.

### Housing affordability

According to the National Housing Federation, the average house price in Dorset increased to £311,426 in 2018, which is 13 times the average salary of £24,288. Many young people and those on wages associated with land management are being effectively priced out of the countryside. Alongside this, there is a shortage of truly affordable and social housing. This national trend is exacerbated by Dorset's desirability as a retirement, second home and holiday destination.

### Ageing population

Over the next ten years, the percentage of Dorset residents aged 65+ is expected to grow by 1% per annum. That's an increase of 20,500 people, with a fifth of these (3,700) aged 85+. While this reflects national trends, in Dorset 28% of the population is aged 65+, compared with 18% in England & Wales.

This growing number of older people will increase demand for health and social care services, leading to more family members finding themselves acting as informal carers. In 2011 the Census identified 49,300 unpaid carers in Dorset, an increase of 17% since 2001, with 11,400 people aged 65+ living with dementia by 2025 in Dorset, it is likely that an additional 3,000 carers will be needed to cope with this increase.

Health and wellbeing influences - and can be influenced by - most aspects of our lives including how and where we live, our behaviours, our work and our leisure activities. Health behaviours impact on both physical and mental health - and many people may be affected by more than one health behaviour.

## 4.2 Socio-economical (continued)

Healthy populations live longer, are more productive and save more thus contributing to economic progress as well as maintaining personal wellbeing.

The AONB's landscape and its management presents opportunities for this sector of the population, for example by enabling, maintaining or increasing social outdoor activity. There are also opportunities for the conservation sector to harness a retired population's expertise and willingness for volunteering.

## Environmental awareness

There has been a surge in environmental awareness, known recently as the Blue Planet effect. This relates particularly to the volume of single-use plastic now found in the seas and oceans but is a gateway to wider engagement about the way our lifestyles and consumption choices affect the local and global environment. Alongside this, there is a continued interest in food provenance and the impact of food production methods.

## Water quality issues

The AONB's water resources are subject to significant nutrient loading from agriculture and sewage, both current and historical (especially the Poole Harbour catchment). A significant challenge facing the rivers, streams and tidal water within the AONB and its marine setting relates to the impact of nutrients and eutrophication.

The AONB management plan can support the move towards nitrogen (and other nutrient) neutrality in development and efforts to reduce inputs of nutrients from the agricultural sector and other diffuse sources of sediment and phosphate.

## Mass extinction and biodiversity declines

Across the planet there is a sixth mass extinction of plants and animals – the sixth wave of extinctions in the past 500 million years. Currently there is the most rapid rate of species die-offs since the loss of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. Although there is a natural “background” rate of extinction (about one to five species per year), scientists estimate current species loss to be 1,000 to 10,000 times the background rate. The vast majority is related to human impact, including climate change, habitat destruction and pest and disease introduction.

Recent research is assigning much of the cause of globally declining invertebrate populations to changes in climate. As invertebrates are the bottom of the food chain, the impacts, especially on mammals and birds, will continue to amplify more local pressures. It is likely that soil biology is also adversely affected with potential impacts on soil function for sustained productivity and ecological services (such as water purification). Additionally, introduced or advancing pests and diseases could have significant landscape effects (e.g. Ash Dieback, *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) both in terms of appearance and landscape function.

## 4.3 Environmental



## Climate breakdown

Since 1990, global surface temperatures have warmed at a rate of about 0.15°C per decade and are projected to increase to around 0.2°C for the next few decades. This is linked to atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases and aerosols, a significant proportion of which originates from human industrial and agricultural activity. Fundamental changes in human activity are required to limit global temperature increases to

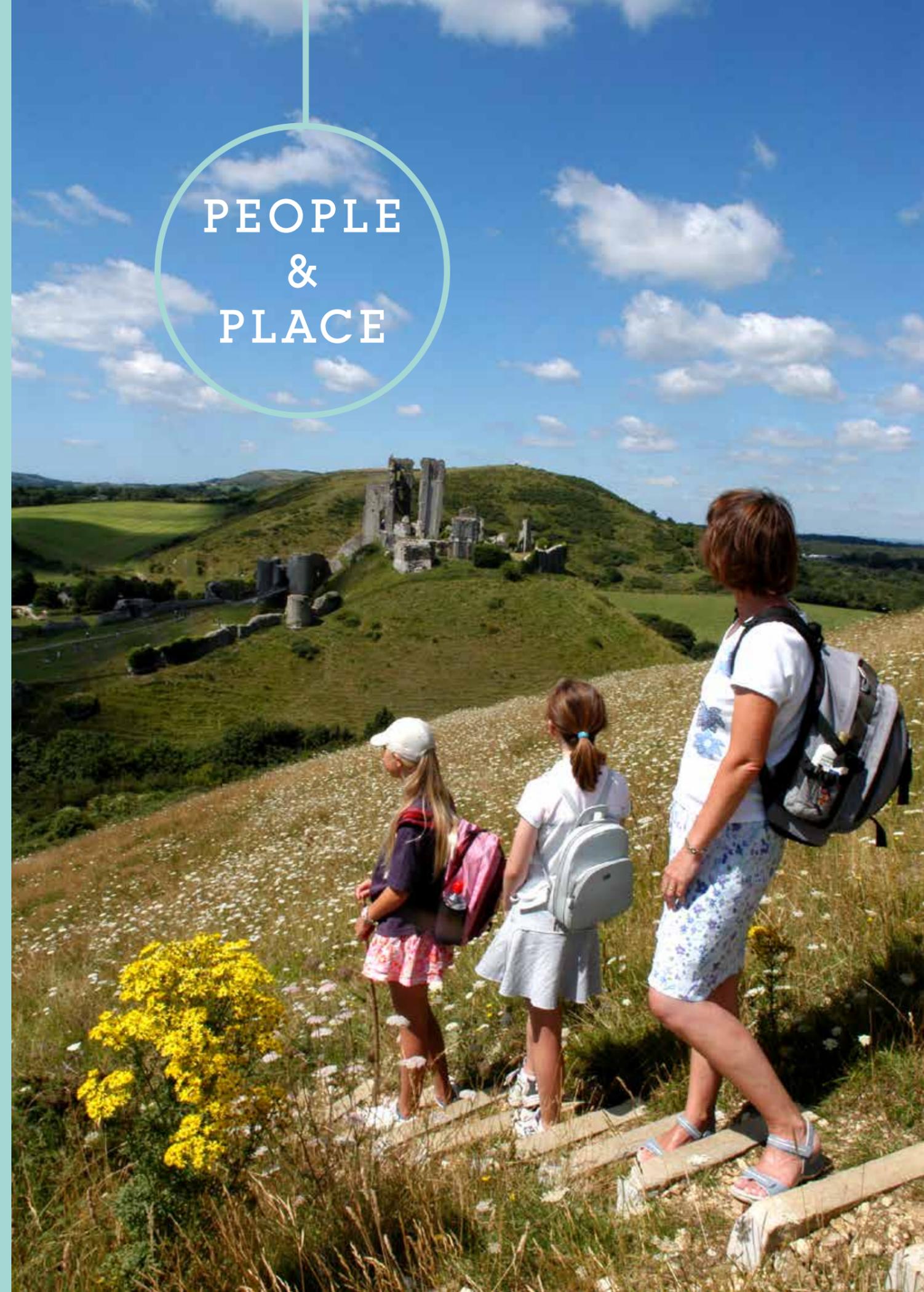
1.5°C to 2°C. Around the world, habitats are changing at an unprecedented rate, sea levels are rising and extreme weather events are more frequent.

While there are some potential local positives around staycationing and new agricultural crops, most local effects are overwhelmingly negative including increased storminess with associated erosion and damage and increased drought/wildfire likelihood.

PEOPLE  
&  
PLACE

## 5. KEY CONCEPTS WITHIN THIS PLAN

The key concepts that underpin our approach to managing the AONB are sustainable development, the ecosystem approach and the landscape approach.



## 5.1 Sustainable development

This Management Plan is underpinned by, and contributes towards delivery of, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:

- No poverty
- Zero hunger
- Good health and wellbeing
- Quality education
- Gender equality
- Clean water and sanitation
- Affordable and clean energy
- Decent work and economic growth
- Resilient infrastructure; sustainable and inclusive industrialisation; innovation
- Reduced inequalities
- Sustainable cities and communities
- Responsible consumption and production
- Climate action
- Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources
- Life on land
- Peace justice and strong institutions
- Partnerships for the goals

## 5.2 Natural Capital & the ecosystem approach

By bringing together three core principles of the ecosystem approach, we can ensure that the threats to the Dorset AONB are adapted to or mitigated against and that the benefits we derive from the natural environment (ecosystem services) are safeguarded and enhanced. The principles are:

- The natural systems that operate within the AONB are complex and dynamic, and their healthy functioning should not be taken for granted.
- Those that live, work and visit the AONB benefit from services provided by the natural environment. These services underpin social and economic wellbeing and have a value – both monetary and non-monetary.
- Those that benefit from the services provided by the AONB and those who are involved in the management of them should play a central role in making decisions about them.

Natural and cultural capital and their relation to natural beauty is more fully discussed in Chapter 8.

Using the Ecosystem Approach means that the Dorset AONB Partnership is helping deliver the aspirations of Biodiversity 2020, the Government's commitment to the delivery of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity. The mission for Biodiversity 2020 is "to halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people".

## 5.3 Landscape approach

The landscape approach and an understanding of landscape character guide the AONB Partnership's work. This fits well with the ecosystems approach as both encourage consideration of the links between various elements of the landscape in their management.

The European Landscape Convention (ELC) promotes the protection, planning and management of landscapes and seascapes and reinforces the approach to landscape character assessment. In line with the convention and the principles of sustainable development, this Management Plan uses an understanding of landscape character to help guide local activity and ensure that planning decisions and management practices conserve and enhance the distinct character and quality of the AONB's landscapes.

### Using landscape as a guide

The ELC applies to all landscapes; it includes open countryside and urban areas, as well as the coastal and marine environment. Landscape character assessment recognises the holistic nature of the landscape, defined as "part of the land, as perceived by local people or visitors, which evolves through time as a result of being acted upon by natural forces and human beings." Landscape character goes beyond landscape and scenic beauty - it is about the interaction of people and place over time, encompassing a suite of perceptual and aesthetic qualities and historical, cultural, ecological and economic aspects.

Conservation and enhancement of the character and quality of the AONB landscape lie at the heart of all the chapters in this Management Plan. There are four landscape management strategies that can be used:

- **Conserve** - for landscapes in good condition with strong character where the emphasis is on protecting the key characteristics of the area.
- **Enhance** - for landscapes where some features have fallen into decline. Management should aim to reintroduce features, improve their management and remove features that detract from the overall character.
- **Restore** - for landscapes where features have been lost or are in a severe state of decline. Management should aim to repair and re-establish characteristic features.
- **Create** - for landscapes where condition is poor and character weak beyond repair. Management should consider creation of a new landscape.

In taking forward these approaches, AONB management tends to focus on large or 'landscape scale' initiatives rather than small sites. Initiatives also tend to be integrated to include many different interests. decisions and management practices conserve and enhance the distinct character and quality of the AONB's landscapes.



## THE NEXT CHAPTERS

The following 3 chapters take differing but related approaches to describing the landscape assets of the Dorset AONB.

Chapter 6 Statement of Significance describes the area's Special Qualities: landscape elements which make the Dorset AONB particularly special and underpin its natural beauty.

Chapter 7 describes the AONB's landscape and seascape character, based on assessments following a generally standard methodology. This outlines the characteristics of individual sub-compartments of the AONB, more fully described in the AONB Landscape Character Assessment 2018.

Chapter 8 describes what Natural Capital is and how that concept can be applied to the elements of the AONB's landscape.

## 6. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

AONBs are designated for their outstanding natural beauty. Natural beauty goes beyond the visual appearance of the landscape, including flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features, manmade, historic and cultural associations and our sensory perceptions of it. The combination of these factors in each area gives a unique sense of place and helps underpin our quality of life.

The natural beauty of this AONB is described in a suite of special qualities that together make it unique and outstanding, underpinning its designation as a nationally important protected landscape. These are the elements we need to conserve and enhance for the future and they should be considered in all decisions affecting the AONB. This Statement of Significance is based on the 1993 Assessment of the Dorset AONB produced by the Countryside Commission.

The special qualities of the Dorset AONB are...



NATURAL  
BEAUTY

## 6.1 Contrast and diversity – a microcosm of England’s finest landscapes...

The AONB is much more than one fine landscape – it is a collection of fine landscapes, each with its own characteristics and sense of place, including different landforms, soils and wildlife habitats. Contrasting and complex geology gives rise to the chalk downland, limestone country, greensand ridges and clay vales that occur in the Dorset AONB; they are often closely juxtaposed to create striking sequences of beautiful countryside that are unique in Britain. The transitions between the component landscapes of the mosaic are often particularly attractive, with strong contrasts in some areas and a gentle transition of character in others.

The ridge tops and chalk escarpments add an extra dimension to the Dorset AONB landscape by providing stark contrasts of landform that serve to increase and emphasise its diversity. These areas of higher ground also allow the observer uninterrupted panoramic views to appreciate the complex pattern and textures of the surrounding landscapes.

Nowhere is the contrast and diversity of this rich assemblage of landscapes more graphically illustrated than in the Isle of Purbeck. Here, many of the characteristic landscapes of the Dorset AONB are represented on a miniature scale to create scenery of spectacular beauty and contrasts, which mirrors that of the whole AONB.

Within this overall context, there are numerous individual landmarks, such as hilltop earthworks, monuments and tree clumps that help to contribute an individuality and sense of place at a local scale.

In addition to its outstanding scenic qualities, the AONB retains a sense of tranquillity and remoteness that is an integral part of these landscapes. It retains dark night skies and an undeveloped rural character. The AONB’s Landscape Character Assessment, ‘Conserving Character’, adds further understanding of the contrast and diversity of the AONB landscapes and their management requirements.



### 6.1.1 Landscape character

The area’s diverse landform and striking changes in topography are dictated by the AONB’s varied geology, upon which subsequent erosion has occurred. This ‘land-shape’ has then been inhabited, built upon and in some places modified by several thousand years of population.

#### Landscape and natural beauty

Landscape is a framework which encompasses geological, hydrological, biological, anthropological and perceptual qualities. The Dorset AONB’s Landscape Character Assessment describes these features and qualities in more detail, by subdividing the area into character types and character areas.

Running throughout each character area are qualities that make the AONB inspiring and special, such as the sense of tranquillity and remoteness and sweeping views across diverse landscapes. The variety of landscape types found within the area is a defining feature of the AONB underpinned by diverse geology, with dramatic changes from high chalk and greensand ridges to low undulating vales or open heaths. It is often the transition from one landscape type to another that creates drama and scenic quality. At the local level, individual landmark features and boundaries add to character.

Under this aspect of the AONB’s special qualities and natural beauty, however, the main consideration is for the characteristics and qualities of the landscape, such as the undeveloped rural character, tranquillity and remoteness, dark night skies and panoramic views. Through the main modes of interaction with the place, this plan considers some of the broad issues that can affect them. Landscape character and condition are more fully described in Chapter 7.

## 6.2

### Wildlife of national and international significance...

The contrast and diversity of the AONB is reflected in its wildlife. The range of habitats and associated species is unusually rich, including 83% of all British mammal species, 48% of bird species and 70% of butterfly species. The UK's richest grid squares for vascular plants and mammals are both found in the Dorset AONB. The AONB's southern location and relatively warm climate make it hospitable to many species unable to survive further north and home to species new to Britain, naturally expanding their ranges with the changing climate. The AONB includes many areas of international significance, including Poole Harbour and the Fleet which are key sites for breeding and overwintering birds, lowland heath areas in the east, calcareous grasslands in the Cerne and Sydling Valleys and Purbeck Coast, ancient woodlands at Bracketts Coppice and the West Dorset alder woods, and important cliff and maritime habitats along significant sections of the coast. Two marine SACs are adjacent to significant lengths of the AONB's coastline; there are two candidate marine SPAs and three Marine Conservation zones adjacent to the AONB boundary. Further coastal and marine areas are proposed for protection.

Many other areas are important at the national level and are supported by a large number of locally significant sites.

The quality of the wider AONB landscape offers high potential to rebuild extensive mosaics of wildlife habitat and to improve the linkages between them.

#### 6.2.1

##### Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants, and the natural systems that support them. Biodiversity matters because it supports the vital services we get from the natural environment. It contributes to our economy, our health and wellbeing and it enriches our lives. Dorset has an exceptional wealth of biodiversity and this plan addresses the issues and opportunities for the species, habitats and natural systems in the Dorset AONB. There has been a long history of partnership working to deliver biodiversity conservation in the county, and this plan seeks to complement this.



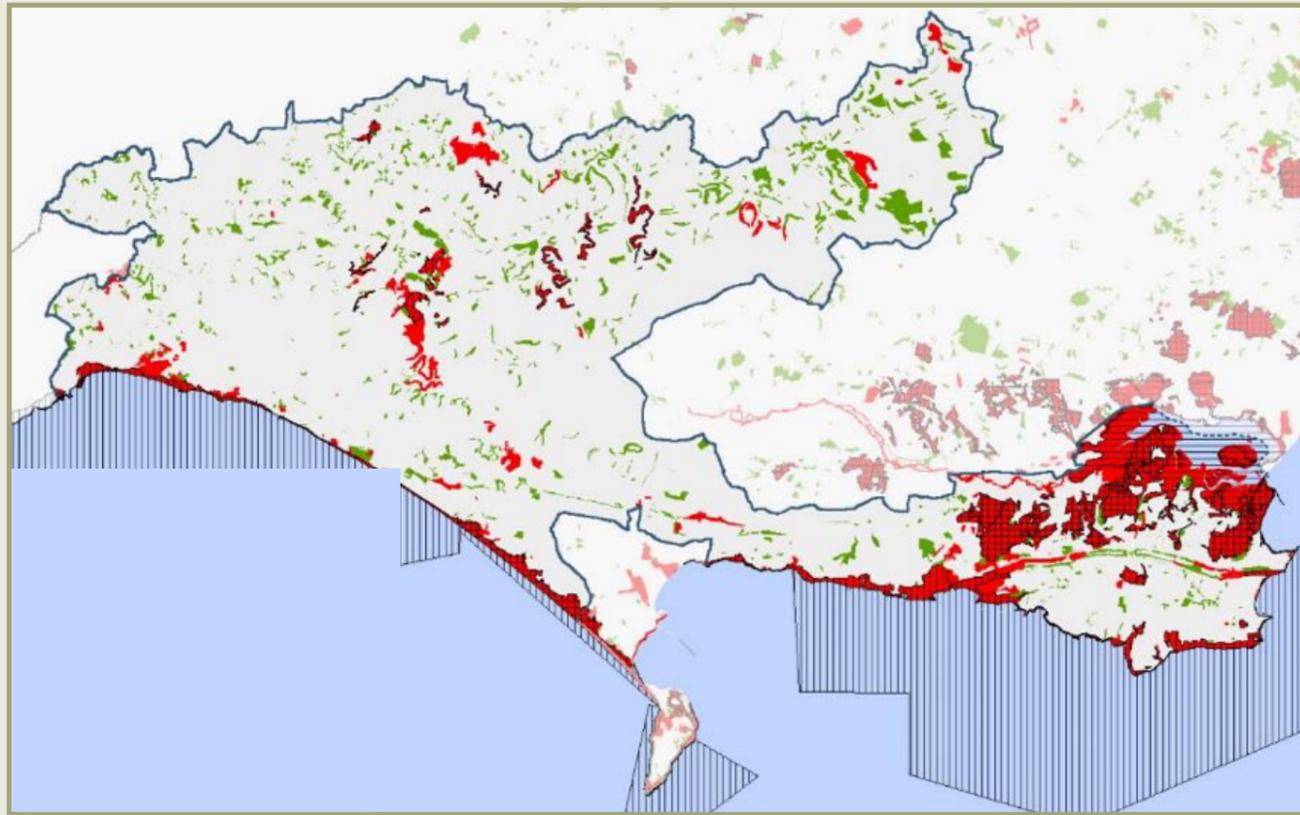
##### Biodiversity and natural beauty

Biodiversity is a fundamental element of natural beauty. The AONB's wealth of wildlife, from the common and widespread to the globally rare, is one of the outstanding qualities that underpin its designation. The biodiversity of the AONB is shaped by the underlying geology and its influence on soils and hydrology. It is also influenced by the social, cultural and economic activities of past and present land use, which biodiversity supports by providing resources such as food, timber, clean water and crop pollination amongst others. Biodiversity also provides us with opportunities for recreation, relaxation and inspiration and a range of associated tourism opportunities.

Dorset is particularly rich in some habitats and species. For example, lowland heathland and the characteristic species associated with it form a recognisable landscape across southern England, but in Dorset there is a concentration of species such as sand lizards and smooth snakes that do not occur in such numbers anywhere else in the country. The same could be said of the coastal habitats of Poole Harbour and the Fleet within the boundary and the marine SACs on its southern boundary. Since 1945, the landscape has changed markedly in response to changes in economic, agricultural and forestry policies. For example, some of our most cherished wildlife areas have become degraded over time through habitat loss and fragmentation associated with agricultural intensification and increasing development pressures. Current and future pressures and competing land uses will continue to have impacts, including agricultural policy, climate change, invasive species (new pests and diseases).

A step-change in our approach to nature conservation is required to ensure that natural systems are repaired and rebuilt, creating a more resilient natural environment for the benefit of wildlife and ourselves. "Biodiversity 2020", Defra's strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services, will guide this step change, in conjunction with local data on functioning ecological networks and habitat restoration opportunities.

## Nature conservation designations



### Key

- AONB boundary
- Special Protections Areas (SPA)
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI)

## Description of the resource

The Dorset AONB encompasses a breadth of biodiversity – chalk and limestone grassland which is found across the AONB and along the coast; lowland heathland concentrated in the eastern part of the AONB; ancient meadows and woodlands scattered throughout; the coastal habitats of Poole Harbour and the Fleet; and maritime coast and cliff along much of the Jurassic Coast. This is reflected through a number of nature conservation designations:

- Three Ramsar Sites; wetlands of global importance: Chesil Beach and the Fleet, Poole Harbour and Dorset Heaths.
- Nine Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) of international importance for habitats and species: Cerne and Sydling Downs; West Dorset Alder Woods; Brackett's Coppice; Chesil and the Fleet; Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland Dunes; Dorset Heaths; Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs; St. Aldhelm's Head to Durlston Head; and Sidmouth to West Bay.
- Three Special Protection Areas (SPAs) of international importance for birds: Poole Harbour; Dorset Heathlands; and Chesil and the Fleet. Together, SACs and SPAs form a network of 'Natura 2000' sites - European sites of the highest value for rare, endangered or vulnerable habitats and species.
- Nine National Nature Reserves (NNRs) lie wholly within the AONB: Stoborough Heath, Hartland Moor, Studland and Godlingstone Heath, Arne Reedbeds, Hambledon Hill, Hog Cliff, Horn Park Quarry, Durlston and the Valley of the Stones.
- 67 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), of national importance for their wildlife and/or geological interest, which cover 7% of the AONB.

- 646 Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) covering nearly 5.5% of the AONB.
- 1,581 hectares of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland.
- Five Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). These are for people and wildlife, their designation reflecting the special value of wildlife and greenspaces to a local community: Jellyfields, Walditch, Bothenhampton Nature Reserve, Hilfield Hill and Woolland Hill.

The AONB includes 25 of the 65 England Priority Terrestrial and Maritime Habitats, along with 281 of the 639 Priority Species, including early gentian, southern damselfly, Bechstein's bat, marsh fritillary, sand lizard and nightjar. The majority of the land-based habitats are under agricultural or forestry management and in private ownership.

Much of the biodiversity is linked to a range of habitats across the AONB, which, whilst previously much more extensive, remain as a core of high biodiversity and the basis of a functioning ecological network. Strengthening the network will enable the landscape to tolerate environmental change and will also greatly contribute to the aesthetic quality. Hedges, stone walls, streams, ancient trees, copses, rough grassland, scrub, small quarries, ponds, fallow fields and uncultivated margins; all these are valuable assets to the AONB's biodiversity, landscape character and cultural heritage.

## 6.3

### A living textbook and historical record of rural England...

The Dorset AONB boasts an unrivalled expression of the interaction of geology, human influence and natural processes in the landscape.

In particular, the Dorset AONB has an exceptional undeveloped coastline, renowned for its spectacular scenery, geological and ecological interest and unique coastal features including Chesil Beach and the Fleet Lagoon, Lulworth Cove and the Fossil Forest, Durdle Door and Old Harry Rocks. The unique sequential nature of the rock formations along the Dorset and East Devon's Jurassic Coast tells the story of 185 million years of earth history. The significance and value of this to our understanding of evolution is reflected in the designation of the coast as a World Heritage Site. The dynamic nature of the coast means that it is constantly changing and new geological discoveries are constantly being made, emphasising the importance of natural coastal processes.

With relatively little large-scale development, the Dorset AONB retains a strong sense of continuity with the past, supporting a rich historic and built heritage. This is expressed throughout the landscape, as generations have successively shaped the area. It can be seen in field and settlement patterns and their associated hedges, banks and stone walls, the wealth of listed historic buildings and the multitude of archaeological sites and features. The South Dorset Ridgeway is a fine example of this, with a concentration of prehistoric barrows and henges to rival that at Stonehenge and Avebury giving a focus to this ancient landscape.

Industrial activity has also left its mark. Examples of our industrial heritage include traditional stone quarrying in Purbeck, and the thousand-year-old rope industry around Bridport which have shaped the landscape, local architecture and town design.



### 6.3.1 Geodiversity

Geodiversity can be defined as the variety of geological processes that make and move those landscapes, rocks, minerals, fossils and soils which provide the framework for life on Earth.

The geology of the Dorset AONB spans some 200 million years of Earth history. Much of West Dorset is formed from Jurassic sediments that record changing marine conditions and contain an exceptional fossil record. Cretaceous chalk and sands lie across the central swathe of the AONB covering the Jurassic beds. In the east more recent deposits from the Cenozoic – sands, gravels and clays – overlie the Cretaceous rocks, giving rise to important heathland habitats. In addition to the geology and fossils, the Dorset coast is renowned for its geomorphology and active erosion processes. Key sites and features include Chesil Beach, one of the world’s finest barrier beaches; West Dorset’s coastal landslides; Horn Park Quarry National Nature Reserve; the fossil forest and dinosaur footprints in Purbeck and the Weymouth anticline and the Purbeck monocline structures.

Many of the rocks and mineral resources are important for the extraction industries; the variety of building stones found in the AONB is a major contributor to the local distinctiveness of our settlements.

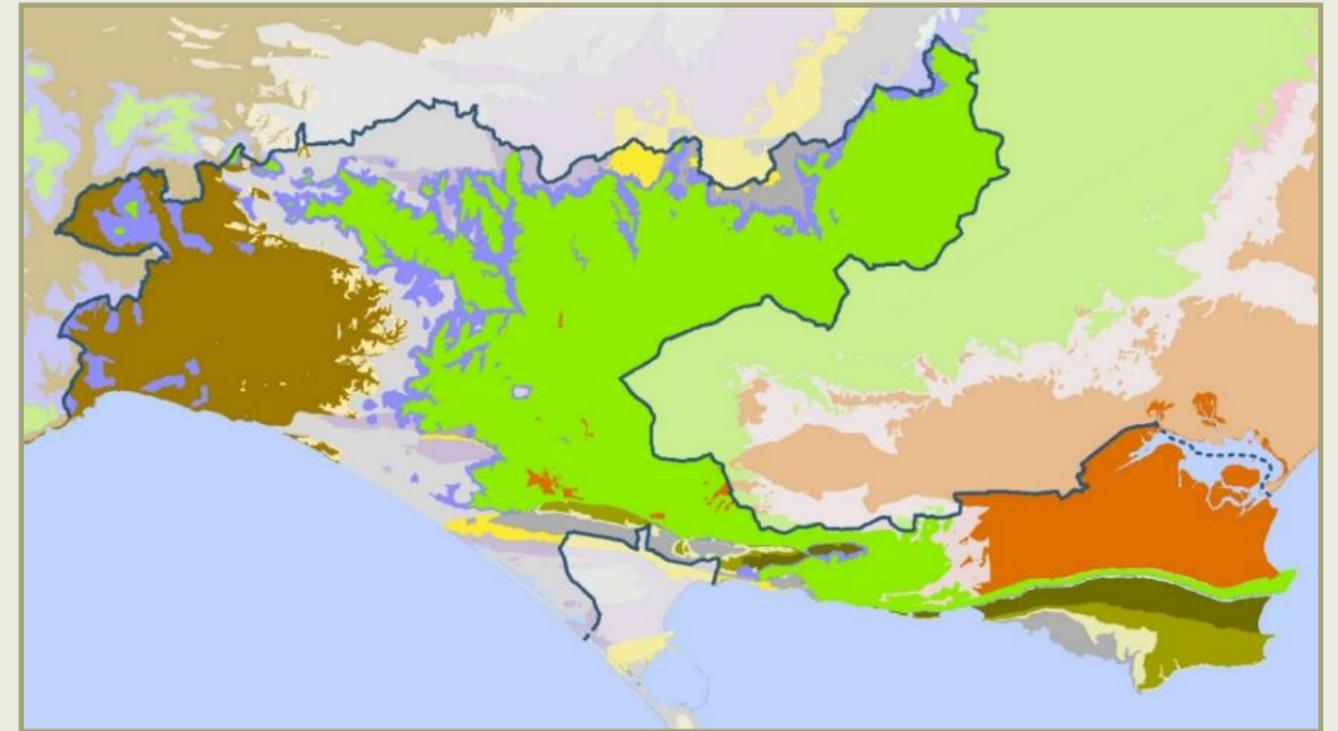
### Geodiversity and natural beauty

Geodiversity underpins the natural beauty for which the AONB is designated. The diverse underlying geology and geological/geomorphological (i.e. landform-related) processes are intrinsic to ecosystem service delivery, influencing soils and hydrology, wildlife habitats, landform, land use and architecture

that make up the character and distinctiveness of the landscape. Dorset has an extremely rich geodiversity, most notably recognised through the designation of the coast as part of England’s first natural World Heritage Site (WHS). The Dorset and East Devon Coast WHS was selected for its unique exposure of a sequential record through Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods; this diversity is reflected throughout the Dorset AONB. The network of inland geological and geomorphological sites represents a valuable but less well-known scientific record of the geology and environmental history of the area and often link to the local stone industry.

Geodiversity contributes to the cultural life of the AONB: the Jurassic Coast is a key part of the AONB’s ‘living textbook’ special quality, and the qualities of stone for building have long influenced the area’s villages, towns and field boundaries.

### Solid Geology in the Dorset AONB



## 6.3.2 Coast & Sea

The AONB includes approximately 120 miles of coastline, much of which is covered by nature conservation designations. Key marine habitats in the AONB are at Chesil Beach and the Fleet, which is the UK's largest tidal lagoon and a marine Special Area of Conservation (SAC); Poole Harbour, the UK's largest lowland natural harbour and a Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds; Kimmeridge where there is a voluntary marine reserve and the subtidal rocky reefs adjacent to the coast between Swanage and Portland which have been designated as Marine SACs. Many important wildlife species depend on both marine and terrestrial habitats for their survival, emphasising the need for integrated management.

Being a coastal AONB, Dorset also supports a range of maritime industries and a rich coastal and marine heritage. The main ports along the coast are at Poole and Portland, both just outside the AONB boundary. Fishing harbours and anchorages that support the inshore fishing community are located at Lyme, West Bay, Weymouth, Lulworth, Kimmeridge and Chapman's Pool. Coastal resorts provide a link between land and sea where people live, come to visit and carry out the increasing trend of water-based recreation. The South West Coast Path National Trail (to be succeeded by the England Coast Path) is a significant recreational resource.

The AONB's coastline also has significant marine archaeology (see 6.3.3).

### Coast, sea and natural beauty

There are unique qualities and challenges associated with the coast and marine environments and activities both within and integrally linked to the Dorset AONB. While there is considerable cross over with other special qualities in relation to wildlife, geodiversity, heritage, access and local products, the nature of the AONB's coast merits a specific consideration. The coast and marine environments of the AONB are among its most popular and defining characteristics. Our unique World Heritage Site is globally significant, but also one of the most dynamic and changing parts of the AONB.

Over half of Poole Harbour lies within the AONB boundary and habitats along the coast are particularly special due to the maritime influence. Much of the coastline is within the Dorset and East Devon World Heritage Site; the AONB designation provides the statutory landscape protection for its setting and presentation. There are also two Heritage Coasts within the AONB – West Dorset and Purbeck. Heritage Coasts are stretches of largely undeveloped coastline of exceptional or very good scenic quality. While not a statutory designation, they are a material consideration in planning terms and are defined with the aim of protecting their special qualities from development and other pressures. Their statutory protection is delivered through the AONB designation where they overlap.



### 6.3.3

## Historic & built environment

The Dorset AONB has an exceptional wealth of heritage, in particular nationally important prehistoric features that reveal the evolution of the landscape and human history during this period. Its transport, settlement patterns and administrative boundaries have Roman and Saxon origins and its villages and hamlets contain fine historic churches and houses. Underpinned by a complex and diverse geology, the AONB contains a wealth of traditional building materials that have helped develop a unique sense of place and time depth to our villages and towns. The settlement patterns are constrained by the surrounding landscape and, along with a range of rural industries such as coppicing and water meadows, have further strengthened the sense of place.

The Dorset AONB boasts some of the finest visible archaeological remains in the country, such as Maiden Castle and the extensive Neolithic / Bronze Age ceremonial landscape of the South Dorset Ridgeway. Significant features span all ages, from the Neolithic to the present day, and are visible in the AONB's landscape; there is even some evidence of earlier human activity. The Dorset AONB has 547 Scheduled Monuments totalling over 1100 ha. Also within the AONB are 18 registered parks and gardens covering over 2400 ha (1 Grade I, 9 Grade II\*), 17 locally important parks and gardens, 82 conservation areas, and nearly 4000 listed buildings (113 Grade I, 2221 Grade II\*).

The Dorset AONB also has one of the highest proportions of listed buildings in the country, many of which are thatched, lending a local distinctiveness to most of its settlements. Offshore, there are 1,727 reported shipwrecks between Lyme Regis and the mouth of Poole Harbour, 270 of which have been located on the

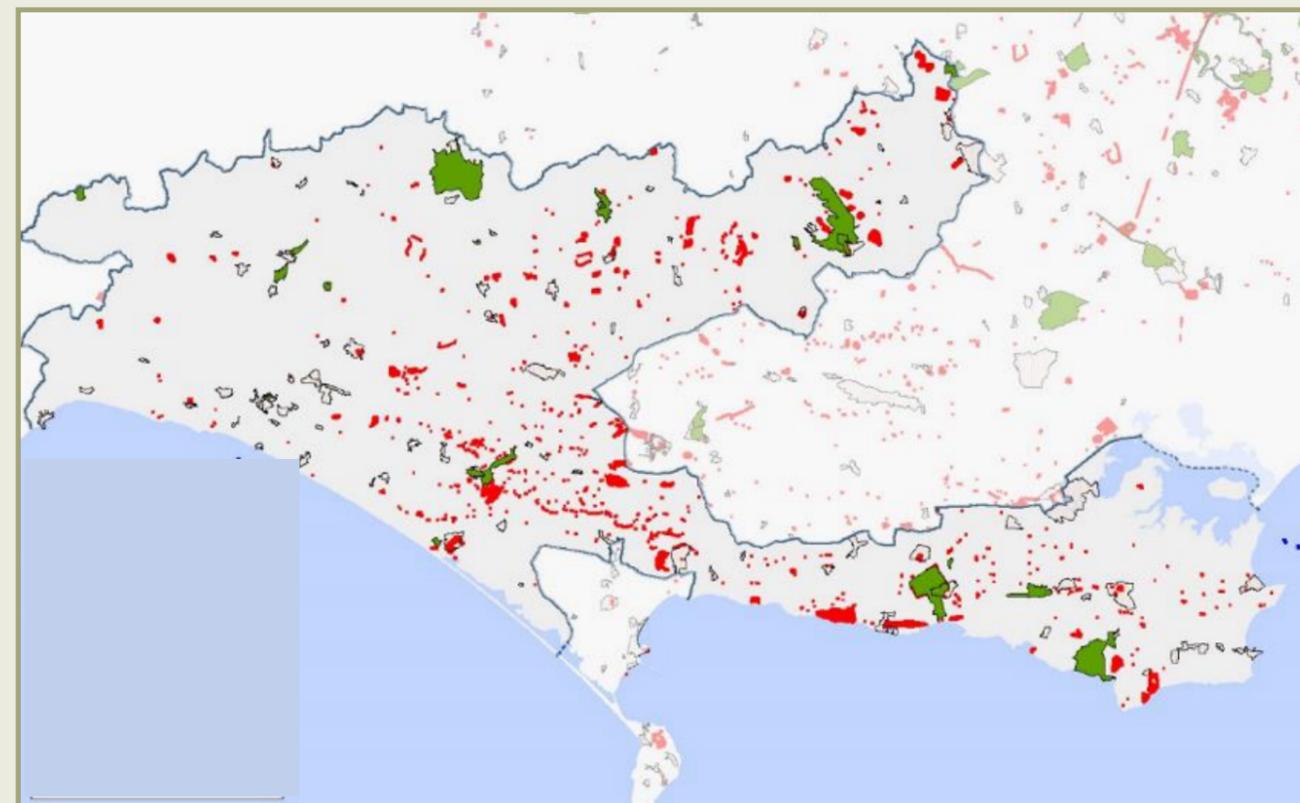
seabed. Of these, three are protected wrecks and there are 7 sites designated under the Protection of Military Remains Act (of only 56 such sites in British waters).

Archaeology is under-recorded in the AONB, both for specific features, such as historic agricultural buildings and rural industries, and geographically, such as the vales in the west of the area. Woodland archaeology is also under-recorded, both in terms of archaeology beneath woodlands which is hard to survey and archaeology relating to past woodland management, such as sawpits and wood banks.

## Historic and built environment and natural beauty

The marks of human occupation are integral components of the 'natural' landscape; a record of how people have used the environment and the resources it provides over time. Alongside giving an insight into the lives of previous occupiers of the landscape, they provide a sense of time depth and contribute to uniqueness in a sense of place.

## Historic and built environment conservation designations



## 6.4

### A rich legacy of cultural associations...

Over the centuries, Dorset's landscapes have inspired poets, authors, scientists and artists, many of whom have left a rich legacy of cultural associations. The best known of these is Thomas Hardy whose wonderfully evocative descriptions bring an extra dimension and depth of understanding to our appreciation of the Dorset landscape. Other literary figures inspired by Dorset's landscapes include William Barnes, Jane Austen, John Fowles and Kenneth Allsop. Turner, Constable and Paul Nash are just a few of the many artists associated with Dorset, while Gustav Holst captured the character of the Dorset heathlands in his work 'Egdon Heath'. Such cultural associations past, present and future, offer a source of inspiration to us all and may help develop new ways of understanding and managing the AONB.

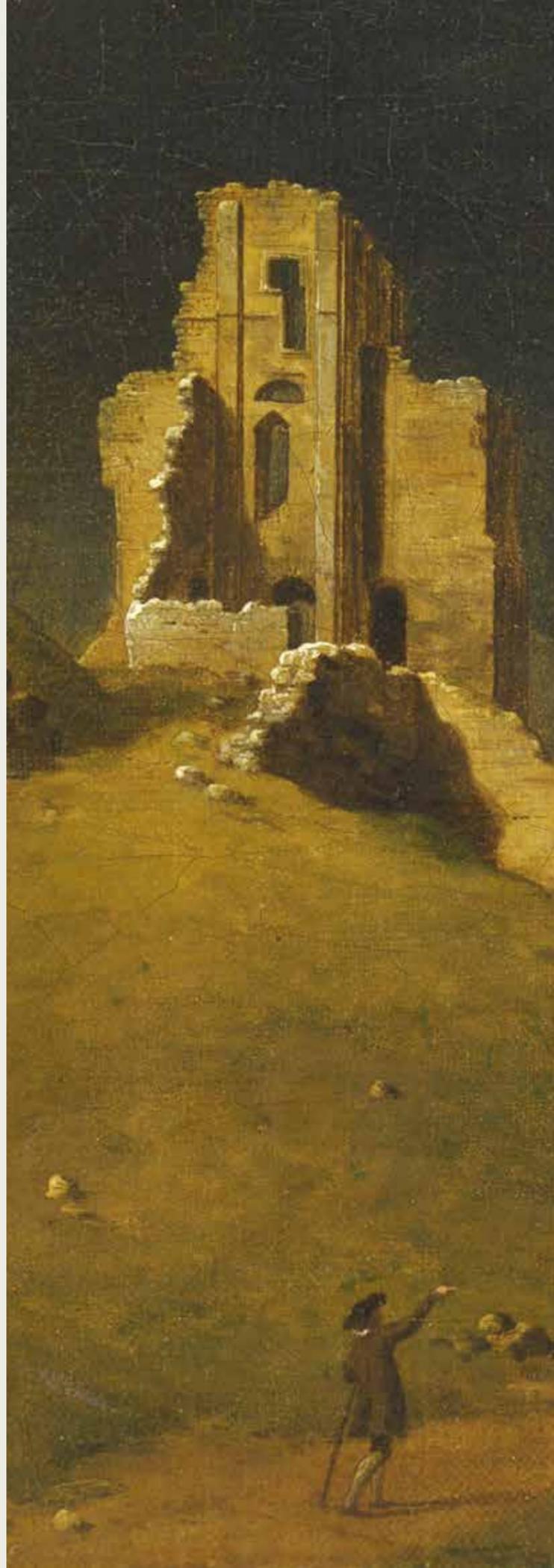
#### 6.4.1

### Cultural landscape

Dorset AONB's landscape quality has inspired numerous renowned visual artists who lived or visited the area in the past. It was in the 19th century with new connections by rail that Dorset began to attract a wealth of artistic talent with JMW Turner and John Constable visiting. Into the 20th century Paul Nash and members of the Bloomsbury group were amongst those producing an abundance of work during this time. There remains a strong body of visual art representing the landscape; the distinctive topography and structure of the landscape unifying very diverse styles of representation as it did with past artists.

There is also a rich heritage of writing inspired by the landscape. Perhaps the best known is the work of Thomas Hardy, who embedded the landscape deeply in his work not only depicting its qualities but also how it shaped the lives of people who lived here. Reverend William Barnes also captured the essence of the Dorset landscape and dialect in his works, as well as the traditions of rural life. Other writers include Jane Austin, Daniel Defoe, John Fowles and Kenneth Allsop.

Musical inspiration can be heard in the work of Gustav Holst in his Egdon Heath work and music was a central part of rural life – Thomas Hardy took part in the West Gallery musical tradition here. Materials from the AONB landscape have made a significant contribution to artistic work around the world. For example, Purbeck stone was crafted into celebrated decorative



work in St Paul's Cathedral and Blenheim Palace by Sir James Thornhill. High profile architectural advances continue at Hooke Park promote contemporary use of natural materials derived from the AONB landscape.

The Dorset landscape continues to attract artists, writers and musicians to visit and live, with over 3% employment in the creative industries in Dorset. The landscape provides inspiration and a backdrop for renowned artists and cultural organisations including PJ Harvey, Cape Farewell, Common Ground and John Makepeace. Over 600 artists open their studios during Dorset Art Weeks with Purbeck Art Weeks and other open studio events also very popular. There are also 7 National Portfolio Organisations funded by the Arts Council in Dorset (Activate, Artsreach, Bridport Art Centre, B-Side, Diverse City, Dorchester Arts and Walford Mill) which form a backbone for visual art and performance activity and strive to provide a rich cultural programme for people who live, work and visit the AONB. They have exemplary experience of delivering high quality engaging arts project in the landscape, and these organisations and artists represent a network for partnership projects between artists, producers and the AONB.

### Cultural landscape and natural beauty

The rich legacy of landscape-inspired work by writers, artists and musicians of the past has been recognised as one of the special qualities of the Dorset AONB. The work created by these nationally and internationally renowned figures not only depict landscapes of the past but help us understand more about how people lived and how both landscape and lives have changed over time.

Artistic responses to landscape also help us interact with and be sensitive towards natural beauty in ways which scientific, reductive approaches cannot. It is essential that this experiential element of landscape is recognised, and access to it is enhanced for the benefits it can bring to people's lives. The creative exploration of place, through music, painting, written and spoken word, and dance opens up the experience of landscape beyond the world of science and policy and helps us better understand our place in the world. With better understanding comes better choices and better stewardship; the basis of a more sustainable future.

## 7. LANDSCAPE & SEASCAPE CHARACTER

The AONB's special landscapes and seascapes are described by character areas, each with a coherent sense of place. Understanding the landscape as a set of individual areas helps tailor action and gives focus to areas of need.



SENSE OF  
PLACE

## 7.1 National Character Areas

At a national level, England is divided into 159 National Character Areas (NCAs), large areas that share similar landscape characteristics. The Dorset AONB covers NCAs 136 South Purbeck and 139 Marshwood and Powerstock Vales in their entirety, and a significant area of 134 Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase and 138 Weymouth Lowlands. Towards the boundary, the designation overlaps smaller areas of 133 Blackmoor Vale and the Vale of Wardour, 135 Dorset Heaths, 140 Yeovil Scarplands and 147 Blackdowns.

Natural England has authored the NCA profiles; each has a description of the natural and cultural features that shape the landscape and outline the ecosystem services it provides and the key drivers for change. These inform Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs) designed to achieve sustainable growth and a more secure environmental future. The NCA profiles can be viewed at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

## 7.2 Dorset AONB Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment

A Landscape Character Assessment for the Dorset AONB – Conserving Character – was published in 2008 and revised in 2018 (available at [www.dorsetaonb.org.uk](http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk)). The Dorset Coast Landscape & Seascape Character Assessment was published in September 2010 (also available via the Dorset AONB website).

These documents provide an understanding of:

- The qualities and features that make the landscape/seascape special
- How these features combine in different ways in different places to give each area its own unique character
- The strength and condition of these features and how they are changing.

In this section we have summarised the key characteristics of the different landscape and seascape types. This provides a spatial framework for AONB management.



The Dorset AONB landscape character assessment identifies 14 landscape types, such as open chalk downland, clay vales, limestone hills and rolling wooded pasture. These landscape types share common combinations of geology, topography, vegetation and human influence but are not specific to a particular location. The landscape character assessment breaks these landscape types into individual and unique geographical areas called landscape character areas, such as the Upper Piddle Valley or Marshwood Vale. The assessment identifies 35 landscape character areas in the AONB.

The character and quality of the land and sea interface is an important aspect of the AONB, however the coastline is constantly changing, subject to powerful coastal and hydrological processes. The Dorset Coast Landscape and Seascape Assessment is a valuable tool, promoting an integrated approach to decision making in this transitional area. The assessment reflects the terrestrial landscape character types identified in Conserving Character, plus it identifies 11 seascape character types of coast and sea.

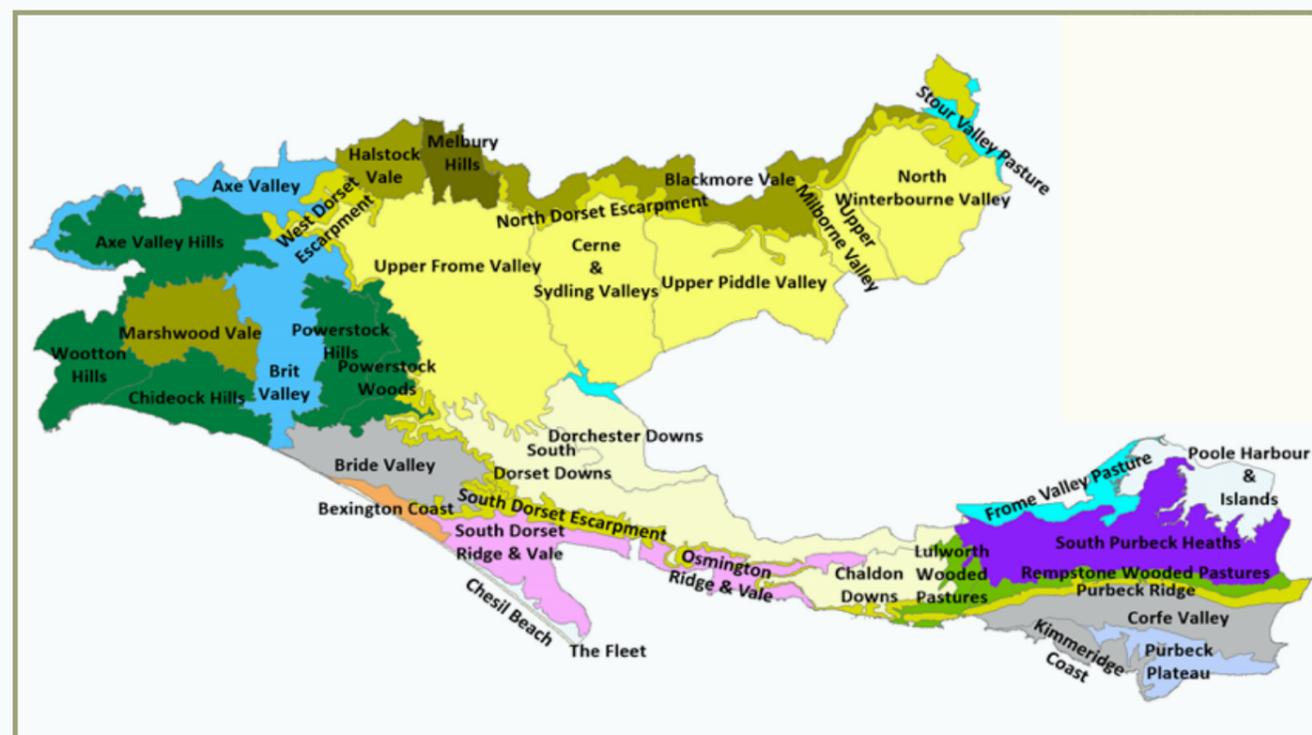
It is important to identify and recognise the landscape and seascape character types/areas that lie outside the AONB boundary as they contribute to the setting of the AONB.

## Landscape character types

The following descriptions give a summary of the character or the key characteristics of the landscape and the seascape types that are within or contiguous with the AONB boundary as they contribute to the setting of the AONB.

### Map of Landscape Type

(by colour); individual Landscape Character Areas are labelled



Landscape type

- |  |                         |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|--|-------------------------|
|  | Chalk Ridge/Escarpment  |  | Open Chalk Downland     |
|  | Chalk Valley & Downland |  | Ridge & Vale            |
|  | Clay Vale               |  | Rolling Wooden Pasture  |
|  | Clay Valley             |  | Shingle Beach           |
|  | Coastal Grassland       |  | Tidal Water             |
|  | Limestone Hills         |  | Undulating River Valley |
|  | Limestone Plateau       |  | Valley Pasture          |
|  | Lowland Heathland       |  | Wooded Hills            |

### Chalk Downland



The open chalk uplands of the Chaldon Downs, Dorchester Downs and South Dorset Downs form significant areas of the AONB. They are the AONB's

largest-scale landscapes of simple, rolling open hills and dry valleys with large agricultural estates mainly under arable production. Partly circled by a narrow face of steep escarpments, the open uplands provide the setting for a series of intimate chalk river valleys. There are strong cultural associations with Thomas Hardy.

### Chalk Ridge / Escarpment



The North, West and South Escarpments and the Purbeck Ridge form dramatic backdrops to, and give views of, much of the surrounding AONB. With an

undeveloped and open character, this landscape type with its steep sides supports important patches of chalk grasslands and hanging woodlands.

### Chalk Valley & Downland



The distinctive, secluded chalk valleys of the AONB drain the surrounding open chalk downlands. Flowing southwards into the larger Stour, Piddle and

Frome rivers, each valley has its own unique character and sense of place, with a diversity of important habitats and cultural features. With traces of old water meadows, distinctive church spires, country houses and characteristic settlements of stone, brick and flint, the chalk valleys display a rich rural cultural heritage.

### Clay Valley



The sweeping landscapes of the Kimmeridge Coast, Corfe, and Bride Valleys each have a unique identity. Enclosed by surrounding escarpments and ridges, they

generally have a settled rural character with coastal influences. A patchwork of rolling pastures and scattered woodlands have been shaped by centuries of woodland clearance and agricultural improvement. Small farmsteads and nucleated villages with landmark churches are dotted throughout the landscape.

### Lowland Heathland



The internationally important lowland heathland landscape of the South Purbeck Heaths, similar to many other heathland landscapes around the Poole

Basin, is a complex and diverse mosaic of open dry and wet heath and wooded scrubby heath. A range of land uses affect condition, with the fragile heaths under constant pressures. Remaining heathland patches, many of which are internationally important habitats, are fragmented by significant conifer plantations, with a variety of land uses including mineral extraction and planned farms.

### Valley Pasture



The valley pasture landscape type is found along the Rivers Stour and Frome, formed from alluvial deposits. They have wide, open meandering floodplains that historically support transport routes and market towns around the fringes. A series of wet woodlands, large pastures and water meadows are typical of this landscape type.

### Limestone Plateau



The Purbeck Plateau is the only limestone plateau in Dorset. It has a simple but striking character represented by its exposed and treeless appearance. A long tradition of stone extraction has left its mark, shaping a near continuous network of stone walls, extraction routes and small quarries dotted across the area. Limestone villages and open grasslands add to the character of this distinct landscape type.

## Ridge & Vale



The ridge and vale landscape type covers two character areas to the east and west of Weymouth. Backed by the South Dorset Escarpment, these types are characterised by low lying limestone ridges running east to west, with undulating clay vales of mixed farming and nucleated villages.

## Rolling Wooded Pasture



The rolling wooded pasture landscape type is found around the margins of the Dorset Heaths. Although land cover varies, the areas are unified by remnant heathy patches within a well wooded landscape of pastures and dense hedgerows, shaping an intimate and rural landscape. Rempstone has a more agricultural character; towards Lulworth the area has strong parkland character.

## Coastal Grassland



Coastal grasslands as habitat are found along much of the immediate coastline. It becomes a landscape type where the characteristic coarse grasses, exposed by the full force of the coast, are backed by the southern escarpment and divide it from the inland landscapes. A lack of development and the sweeping coastal views underpin a natural appearance.

## Clay Vale



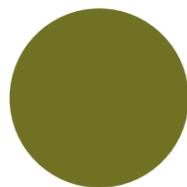
The clay vale landscape type is represented by the intimate and rural Marshwood, Halstock and Blackmore Vales. They have predominantly small pastoral fields with trimmed hedgerows and hedgerow oaks, patterns of medieval settlement and clearance and a long tradition of dairy farming. Scattered farmsteads underpin the largely undeveloped and tranquil character.

## Wooded Hills



Significant areas of the western end of the AONB form the intimate wooded hills landscape type, with several clusters of conical shaped hills formed around the Marshwood Vale. Typically, woodland is found on the valley sides with a network of dense hedgerows, holloways, winding lanes and small clustered settlements dotted throughout the pastoral landscape. The market and coastal towns in and around the area support a long tradition of artistic interpretation of the landscape and local cultural traditions.

## Limestone Hills



Although found elsewhere around the northern part of the county, the only limestone hill landscape within the AONB is found at Melbury Park. Much of the area is dominated by the designed parkland at Melbury with its distinctive, sweeping landscape. Elsewhere, a series of low, rounded limestone hills with dense wooded sides contrast to the broad, clay valleys of pastures, arable fields, winding lanes and springs.

## Undulating River Valley



The undulating river valleys of the Brit and Axe are centred on the floodplains and associated surrounding branching valleys and undulating hills. They have a diverse character ranging from open countryside to market towns and villages dotted along the upper terraces. Characteristic features include damp pastures, linear wet woodlands along the valley floor with small broadleaved woodlands dotted around the surrounding hills.



## Landscape condition

Each landscape character area has been assessed in 2018 for its condition and the direction of travel. This assessment helps to prioritise action geographically. More detail can be found in the Dorset AONB Landscape Character Assessment.

Application of the Management and Planning Guidelines for each character type in the Landscape Character Area will help address character weaknesses and reverse declining quality. These are particularly supported by the Dorset AONB Partnership through the following activity:

### Map of Landscape Condition



#### Key

#### Landscape condition

- Good
- Moderate-good
- Moderate
- Moderate-weak

#### Direction of change

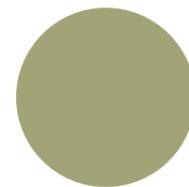
- Improving
- Stable
- Stable-declining
- Declining

Two Ridge & Vale and two Open Chalk Downland landscape character areas showing declining quality are to see improvement through the National Grid's priorities for investment from National Grid's project to put underground 8km of high voltage transmission lines. They are also candidates for investment from the National Grid's related Landscape Enhancement Fund, aimed at improving landscape character around transmission lines that are to remain.

The declining Brit Valley character area and the neighbouring Marshwood Vale are where the AONB Partnership is developing a new landscape-scale multi-objective conservation project. This project requires new external funds.

## Transition to the sea: character types

### Sandy Beaches



These predominantly sandy beaches are generally not associated with extensive sand dune systems, except at Studland. They are

important recreational beaches, have warm sea temperatures and are important for marine and coastal biodiversity. Coastal defences are present on some beaches.

### Shingle Beaches and Spits



Chesil Beach is an impressive example of this type due to its height and extent and is a unique feature on the Dorset coast.

These areas have large, often raised shingle beaches and spits. Dominated by shingle, the grain size varies from very fine to large shingle and sometimes mixed with sand. They are often important for protection of cliff bases.

### Slumped Cliffs



These are softer rock cliffs, susceptible to erosion and landslips although may be stable for long periods. The softer substrate provides habitat for

colonisation of cliffs with vegetation over time. Beaches, usually shingle, protect cliff bases. Significant fossils are often present and they are an important cliff type within the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

### Hard Rock Cliffs



These hard cliffs are variously made of sandstone, chalk or limestone with vertical or near vertical faces and ledges. They are often dramatic,

with pinnacles and pillars, and are often highly visible from long distances - conversely, they

also provide significant panoramic viewpoints. They are generally un-vegetated with ledges important for nesting seabirds. While still mobile, in comparison to the slumped cliffs seascape type they are more stable and resistant to erosion. They are also an important cliff type within the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

### Intertidal Rock Ledges



These horizontal rock ledges within the intertidal zone include loose rocks and boulders and experience varying levels of inundation depending on tides

and location. They often include important intertidal habitats and are frequently in remote, inaccessible locations.

### Natural Harbour



This is the type for Poole Harbour (the world's largest natural harbour), the majority of which lies within the AONB boundary. With a distinctive mix of tidal mudflats,

marshland, reed bed, open water and shingle bank it has indented and shallow shorelines to the harbour which resemble large lakes. Characterised by a large scale, open, tranquil and generally unspoilt landscape it is of significant conservation value and offers important vistas and views of historic and cultural importance.

### Saline Lagoon



The Fleet is the tidal water impounded by Chesil Bank; open to the sea through Portland Harbour. Described as the finest example of a lagoon

of its type, it includes a distinctive mix of tidal mudflats, marshland, reed bed, open water and shingle bank, has an indented and shallow shoreline and is of a large scale: open, tranquil and generally unspoilt. As with Poole Harbour, it is internationally important for wildlife and has important vistas and views of historic and cultural importance particularly related to Abbotsbury and the ancient Swannery.

## 8. NATURAL CAPITAL

The natural capital approach helps us understand how nature and natural systems support human health and wellbeing.



LIFE  
SUPPORT

## 8.1

### Why this is relevant to the Dorset AONB

Natural capital and the elements of natural beauty have a natural overlap: largely they are ways of categorising the landscape and some of the benefits we derive from it.

Understanding natural capital underlines the AONB commitment to delivering the Government's 'Biodiversity 2020 A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services'. This identifies a series of 'desired outcomes' including that "by 2020, at least 17% of land and inland water, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, [will be] conserved through effective, integrated and joined up approaches to safeguard biodiversity and ecosystem services including through management of our existing systems of protected areas and the establishment of nature improvement areas."

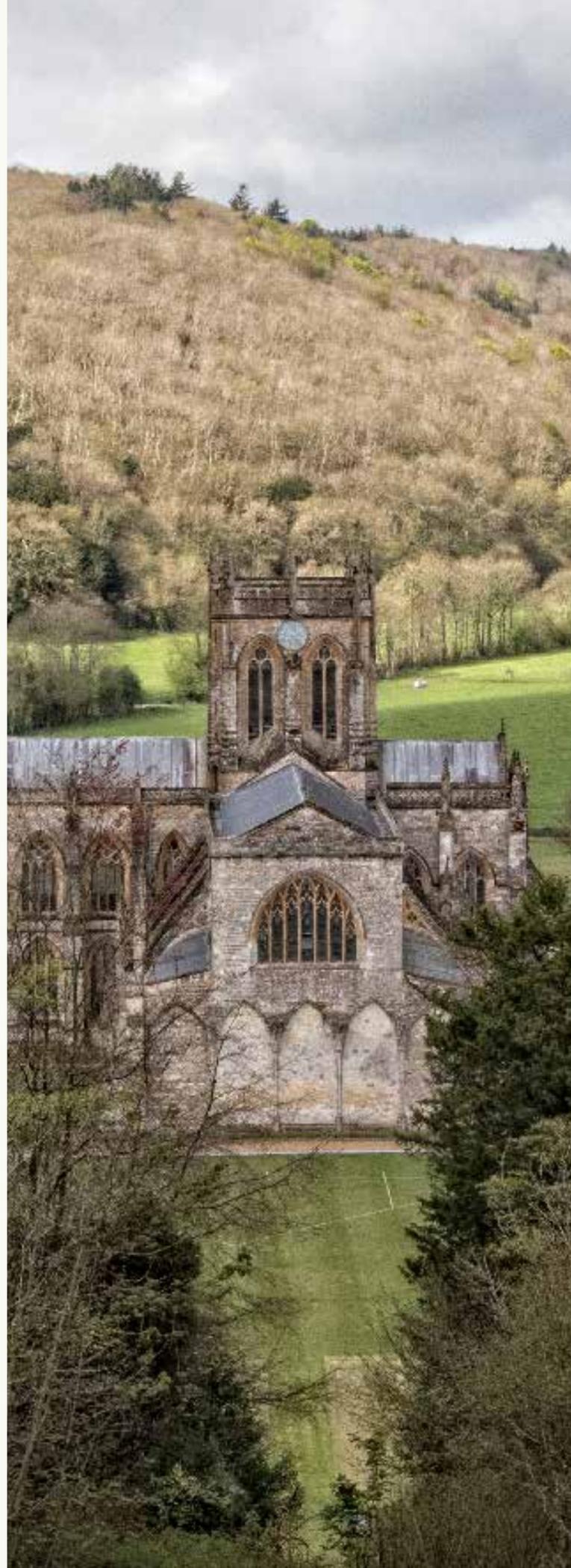
## 8.2

### Definitions

Many of the elements which make up the natural beauty of the Dorset AONB can be described in terms of natural and cultural capital. Natural capital refers to both the living (e.g. fish stocks, forests) and non-living (e.g. minerals, energy resources) aspects of nature which produce value to people, both directly and indirectly. It is this capital that underpins all other capital in our economy and society, including cultural capital which is the historic environment and cultural landscape (as described in chapter 6). Cultural capital is increasingly being seen as a 'missing element' of a purely 'natural' approach to this way of categorising and defining the environment.

Natural and cultural assets are the actual stock: living and non-living parts. From these assets we derive a flow of benefits known as ecosystem services. Essentially, natural capital is about nature's assets, while ecosystem services relate to the goods and services derived from those assets.

The landscape of the Dorset AONB provides a lot to those that live, work and visit here, from the quantifiable benefits of fresh food and clean water to those that are harder to define such as mental health benefits from contact with the natural environment. These benefits can be defined



as 'ecosystem services', all critical to maintaining human health and wellbeing. They are categorised into four:

- Provisioning services: the products we gain and use from the AONB, such as food, energy, and water.
- Regulating services: a well-functioning landscape helps purify air and water, alleviate flooding, and pollination.
- Cultural services: non-material benefits derived from interaction with the AONB, such as inspiration, education and spiritual connection.
- Supporting services: the foundations for all other services – primary production, the formation of soil, nutrient cycling and water cycling.

Some ecosystem services have related economic markets, some do not. Those that don't can be considered public goods (see 8.4).

## 8.3

### Natural capital and valuation

Using the natural capital concept's division of assets and flows, a monetary value can be placed on some elements of the natural system. For instance, an experimental Defra pilot study for the Dorset AONB, reporting in 2015, calculated that the AONB's woodlands delivered an annual value of over £26.7 million (2013 prices). Most of this value was calculated as reduced healthcare costs due to woodland-derived air quality benefits (£20.4M). While the accuracy of these figures can be disputed, they help to underline the importance of an ecosystem asset ('stock') to society. It is critical in undertaking any valuation exercise that intrinsic and incalculable value delivered by ecosystem and cultural assets are recognised. A balanced approach to natural beauty and its conservation and enhancement cannot be fully economically valued, so cannot be fairly weighed against developments which would destroy or damage those ecosystem stocks in simple economic terms.

Such valuation is not a reflection of the economic impact of designation, but this is worth consideration. A high-quality landscape (of rich natural and cultural heritage) delivers wide economic benefits. An economic study in 2015 reported that total economic activity (annual output) within the Dorset AONB equates to around £1.65 billion: approximately a third of Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole's economic output. In addition, the AONB's green economy had an output of almost £200 million. The AONB designation and the work of its partnership were also estimated to influence around £70 million annual output.

## 8.4 Public goods

Some ecosystem goods and services that flow from the landscape's natural and cultural assets have a market which rewards the producer: farming and forestry, frequently not high return enterprises, are nonetheless producing goods for a functional marketplace. Likewise, wild fisheries for brown trout on the AONB's chalk streams and rivers have a market: fishing rights and permits are bought and sold; some of that investment is returned to conserving fish stocks.

However, some goods and services do not have a fully functional marketplace. Although niche markets exist for conservation grade meat products (private value), farmers who maintain species-rich grasslands are not rewarded by the market for the external value of that work. This includes the intrinsic value of biodiversity conservation and maintaining the fabric of natural beauty in the landscape. Additionally, they include maintaining populations of pollinating insects which benefit crop production elsewhere and allowing clean water to infiltrate into the underlying aquifer. The former are 'public goods', the latter quasi-public goods. The definition of true public goods is that they are non-excludable (i.e. no-one can be stopped from benefiting from that good) and nonrival (one person's enjoyment does not preclude another's).

Private markets may develop for some of these goods in the future, but while they do not exist public investment should be made to adequately reward the conservation of natural assets for their own sake as well as for their fundamental contribution to human health and wellbeing.

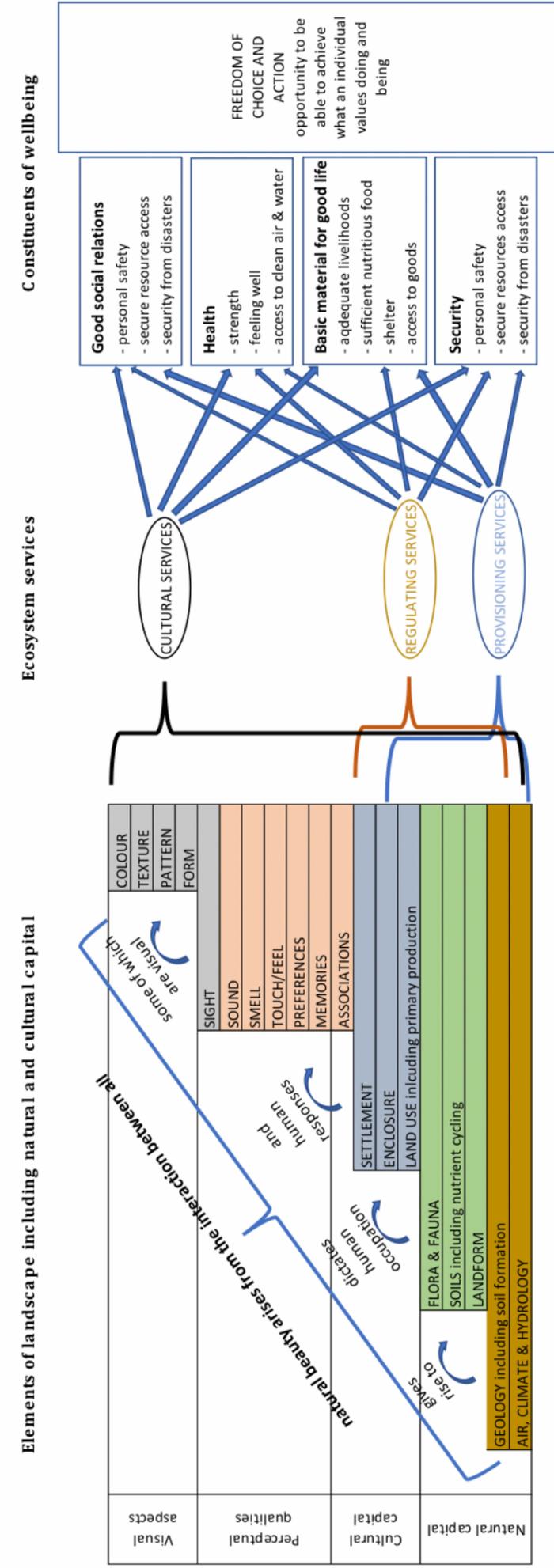
Public goods for the Dorset AONB can be considered to include:

- Conservation of biodiversity.
- Conservation of built heritage.
- Maintenance of characteristic landscape features such as stone walls, hedges and tree clumps (these will vary by landscape character area).
- Providing clean air and water by taking uneconomic land management choices to reduce pollution (e.g. stopping fertiliser applications).
- Maintaining rights of way.
- Providing educational access.

### Elements of landscape including natural and cultural capital

This diagram seeks to show the connection between the natural capital and the elements of landscape that contribute to the AONB's natural beauty, ecosystem services provided by them and their contribution to human health and wellbeing. Natural beauty arises from natural capital, other landscape elements arising from it and our perceptual responses to it. Together these contribute to ecosystem services which support our health and wellbeing.

**\*Diagram to be updated for PB meeting on 15th November**



## 9. POLICY FRAMEWORK

This Policy Framework sets out our objectives (what we want to achieve) and policies (broadly how we will meet the objectives) for managing the AONB to achieve the Vision. The policy framework concentrates on three key areas of interaction with natural beauty and the AONB's landscape.



POLICIES  
&  
OBJECTIVES



The policy framework concentrates on three key areas of interaction with natural beauty and the AONB's landscape:

### The working landscape

covering farming, forestry, fishing and conservation land management within the AONB.

### Exploring, understanding and engaging

covering access, tourism, recreation and educational use of the AONB.

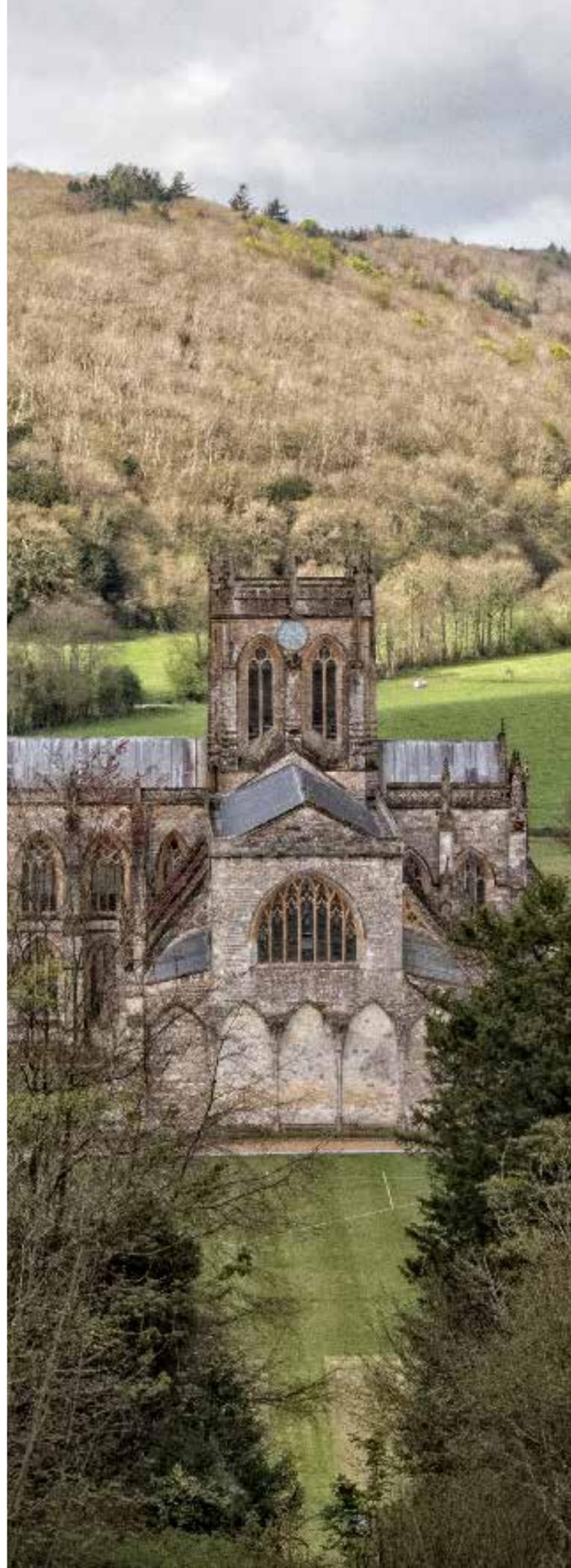
### Planning for landscape quality

covering forward planning, development management and infrastructure.

In addition, there are objectives and policies which refer to the methods by which the conservation and enhancement of the AONB's natural beauty will be best achieved.

This is called:

### Ways of working



Each chapter includes background information to describe the topic, its significance to the AONB and its purposes, and a description of the current pressures and opportunities that relate to the topic.

There is also a description of the organisations with which the AONB Partnership works on each topic: this list is not exclusive, and all parties interested in delivery are welcomed.

### Policy context

This Management Plan sets out the priorities specifically for the Dorset AONB in relation to the purposes of the AONB designation. Delivery of the plan will need to address several key challenges which have implications for the AONB in coming years, described in Chapter 4.

There are many other plans, strategies and policies that affect the management of the AONB. These are presented in the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the AONB Management Plan and are not repeated within this document.

### Action planning

Annual, rolling action plans are drawn up by the AONB team. These concentrate on delivery directly by the team and its immediate partners and are available on the AONB website. 'Offers' of delivery are welcomed and should be made directly to the AONB team manager.

## 9.1 The working landscape

This chapter is largely focussed on land management, fishing, and the products that come from them. While this is largely farming and forestry for producing agricultural or woodland products, this chapter also encompasses land management for conservation and/or recreational uses. On some sites, these are the primary aims, but even sites managed intensively for food/wood production support a range of wildlife and other ecosystem services.

This chapter also considers fishing as an industry – primarily commercial sea fishing but also freshwater fishing interests; recreational uses are considered in chapter 9.2. The fishing industry holds an important place in the community and identity of coastal parts of the AONB.

All these activities are, or have traditionally been, about providing food, drink, wood and fibre and biomass. There is also important public investment in conservation ‘products’ such as increased farmland bird populations or enhanced grassland flora which can provide an important income stream to support sensitive forms of these activities. These products are considered here, particularly as people’s consumption choices can influence forms and styles of production.

The AONB is largely a farmed landscape with farming occupying 77% and forestry 11% (unchanged since 2013). The number of land holdings in the AONB is 1,057 (up from 984 in 2013) and the number of registered fishing boats operating from ports within and adjacent to the AONB is 83 (down from 125 in 2013).

There are many businesses which operate in the AONB which are beneficial for its economy, particularly the green economy. There are relevant policies throughout this plan which should encourage those enterprises.

### 9.1.1 Significance

Natural beauty and the AONB’s special qualities:

#### Landscape & landform

Many of the landscape features of today are the result of land management practices over the last 8,000 years, including the extent and type of woodlands and hedgerows, the presence of grasslands, heathlands, downlands and arable land. The ongoing management and existence of those features most frequently depends on viable land management businesses. In 2017 **48%** of the AONB was covered by environmental stewardship and **58%** of woodlands were managed.

#### Wildlife

Relatively continuous land management practices for hundreds, even thousands of years, has created the AONB’s main valued terrestrial habitats. Agricultural intensification (and in some cases, abandonment) over the last century has caused the loss or shrinkage of these. There is a significant area of biodiversity designations in **9 Special Areas of Conservation** and **3 Special Protection Areas** in the AONB plus two Marine SACs on its boundary. Together with **67 Sites of Special Scientific Interest** and **646 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance**, they form the building blocks of a wildlife-rich landscape.

#### Living Textbook

The AONB’s history of agricultural occupation has left significant marks in the landscape, from ‘Celtic’ field systems to vernacular farm buildings and related structures. Many of the AONB’s villages’ historic buildings also relate to an agricultural background. In 2017, there were: **4,009 listed buildings** (7 at risk); **543 scheduled monuments** (117 at risk); **18 registered parks and gardens**; a World Heritage Site and **9 National Nature Reserves**.

#### Cultural legacy

Over the centuries, Dorset’s landscapes and their management have inspired poets, authors, scientists and artists, many of whom have left a rich legacy of cultural associations. Their output is part of the record of rural life, as well as a collection of emotional and artistic responses to the place. Some of Dorset’s strong current cultural sector have engaged with land management, in some cases raising questions or making provocations about sustainability, the origins of our food and the artistry inherent in managing the land.

## Opportunities

- Delivery of the Government's 25-year plan to improve the environment, including
  - The review of designated landscapes, scheduled for completion in 2019.
  - Delivery of Environmental Land Management Schemes: their design and resourcing are critical to achieving much of the following policy
  - Delivery of a new Sustainable Fisheries Policy
  - Planting new woodlands at appropriate locations that deliver multiple environmental benefits.
  - Natural Flood Management in high-risk catchments to collectively reduce the impacts of flooding events.
  - The proposed Nature Recovery Network
  - New Marine Conservation Zone designations
- Opportunities arising from our exit from the Common Agricultural Policy, particularly the concept of public payments for public goods and the transition from the Basic Payments Scheme to the Environmental Land Management Scheme.
- Expanding forestry and woodland product markets alongside strong markets for organic and/or locally-produced food.
- Effective Catchment Partnerships and farmer clusters, exist; the AONB team leads a delivery pilot in the West Dorset Rivers & Coastal Streams Catchment.
- Beneficial landscape character and quality change could be delivered by measures to reduce nutrient loading in the AONB's watercourses
- Forest Design Plans and the Forestry Commission's Open Habitats Policy are key to heathland restoration in the South Purbeck Heaths.
- Increased recognition of the natural assets and ecosystem services that benefit people in and surrounding the Dorset AONB and the adoption of a Natural Capital approach. This can facilitate the emerging markets for Payments for Ecosystem Services and Nutrient Offsetting to help improve the condition of landscape and the water environment. It could also facilitate habitat management for carbon sequestration, for example.
- Developing focus on air quality, particularly with regard to agricultural emissions of ammonia and nitrogen, alongside an existing focus on water quality and the catchment-based approach.

## Pressures

- Climate Change, will lead to:
  - Shifts in species ranges, with more cold-loving species moving northwards and new species arriving.
  - Reduced species diversity and abundance, with the forecast changes favouring species that can tolerate a range of conditions rather than those that have specialised.
  - Increased pests & diseases, exacerbated by global trade.
  - Changing growing conditions requiring land managers to change what they grow and how they grow it;
  - Sea-level rise, with particular impacts in low-lying areas such as the shores of Poole Harbour.
- Market failure, where global economic forces result in decreased returns for agricultural products may lead to:
  - Inappropriate or lack of management that will favour generic species and habitats, rather than specialists.
  - Land abandonment (which may be harmful to the landscape in some areas)
  - Homogenisation of the landscape as land management practices become more intensive and uniform.
- Adoption of more damaging practices to extract maximum productivity at the expense of natural assets.
- Biodiversity, natural assets and ecosystem services being undervalued in decision making
- Poor succession planning in farming businesses will lead to fewer, larger agri-businesses and reduced opportunities for new entrants
- The phase-out of the Basic Payment Scheme will affect the profitability of many farms, particularly smaller farms. This may lead to land being managed in larger holdings with fewer workers per unit area which limits the ability to engage in standard operations in a timely manner to avoid environmental damage, or in conservation activities.
- Agricultural infrastructure needs (livestock sheds, slurry lagoons, etc.)
- Loss of traditional skills from land management businesses
- Recreation & traffic pressure, from both residents and visitors, is impacting rural road and footpath networks, particularly along the coast.
- Lack of current data and regular monitoring does not allow effective planning.

## Organisations important to delivery

Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Historic England, farmers and landowners and their representatives, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SW, National Trust, RSPB, Local Authorities, Dorset Food & Drink, Kingston Maurward College

## 9.1.4 Objectives and policies

A1

### MANAGEMENT OF LAND AND SEA CONSERVES & ENHANCES NATURAL HERITAGE, NATURAL ASSETS, ECOSYSTEM FLOWS AND THE SERVICES THEY PROVIDE

The Dorset AONB Partnership will work with agencies, organisations, businesses and individuals to promote and support management activities that conserve & enhance the special qualities and natural assets of the AONB, from which flow the ecosystem services that we all benefit from. This includes the geodiversity that exists within the AONB. Examples include supporting action to mitigate Climate Change and programmes that work with land managers to adopt best practice, such as Environmental Land Management Schemes and Catchment Sensitive Farming. It also includes creation and restoration of local landmarks, such as tree clumps and hedgerows. The Partnership will also support incentives, advice and alternatives which promote the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and its constituent elements, alongside regulation and enforcement that discourages adoption of practices that are harmful to it.

- a. Safeguard existing priority habitats and the species they support
- b. Restore lost or declining habitats and their associated species
- c. Provide targeted, integrated advice and support on best-practice management of the AONBs natural assets, ecosystem flows and the services they provide.
- d. Develop and support measures and activities which conserve and enhance the AONB's natural assets including priority habitats and species, ecosystem flows and the services they provide.
- e. Develop and support measures and activities which connect and expand ecological networks.
- f. Develop and support measures and activities which conserve and enhance the coastal and marine environment, including the creation of Marine Protected Areas at appropriate locations.
- g. Discourage practices which are harmful to the AONB's natural assets and the services they provide.

A2

### MANAGEMENT OF LAND AND SEA CONSERVES & ENHANCES THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

The Dorset AONB Partnership will work with agencies, organisations, businesses and individuals to promote and support management activities that conserve & enhance the various components that make up the historic environment, from the Neolithic through to present day. This will include addressing the Heritage at Risk register, utilising Historic Landscape Characterisation and promoting the Monument Management approach. The

- Partnership will also support advice, alternatives, regulation and enforcement that discourages adoption of practices that are harmful to the historic environment.
- a. Provide targeted, integrated advice and support on best-practice management of the AONB's historic environment.
  - b. Develop and support measures and activities which conserve and enhance the AONB's historic environment.
  - c. Discourage practices which are harmful to the AONBs historic environment.

A3

### MANAGEMENT OF LAND AND SEA SUPPORTS NATURAL PROCESSES AND ALLOWS EVOLUTION WITH ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

The Dorset AONB Partnership will work with agencies, organisations, businesses and individuals to promote and support activities that improve environmental resilience in the face of a changing environment, including climate change adaptation, natural coastal management, water quality improvements and the control of pests and disease.

- a. Ensure environmental resilience and adaptation to change at a landscape scale.
- b. Support coastal management which promotes natural processes.
- c. Discourage practices that do not support natural processes or allow evolution with environmental change.

A4

### SKILLS FOR SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT AND THE GREEN ECONOMY ARE FOSTERED

To ensure the required knowledge and skills to conserve & enhance the special qualities of the AONB are maintained and its green economy is thriving, the Dorset AONB Partnership will work with training providers and education establishments alongside agencies, organisations, businesses and individuals to ensure that relevant opportunities are created, promoted and supported. Support will be

- for primary producers, those working within the supply chain that deliver sustainably produced goods to market, and those in the area's green economy.
- a. Maintain and develop appropriate skills in sustainable management of land and sea.
  - b. Maintain and develop appropriate skills required for the AONB's green economy
  - c. Promote training in, and use of, natural and historic environment conservation skills to protect the special qualities of the AONB.

A5

### MARKETS FOR SUSTAINABLY PRODUCED GOODS ARE PROMOTED AND SUPPORTED

The Dorset AONB Partnership will work with Dorset Food & Drink, and other relevant organisations, to ensure that sustainably produced goods are produced, distributed and available to all.

- a. Promote production, distribution and use of products that deliver positive economic, environmental and social outcomes for the AONB.
- b. Promote the use of local woodland products, including wood fuel and timber for construction, that are economically, socially and environmentally sensitive for the AONB.

## 9.2

# Exploring, Understanding, Engaging

This chapter focuses on how the Dorset AONB supports local people and visitors to explore, understand and engage with the landscape in a positive way.

The coast and countryside of the Dorset AONB is a popular area for recreation and leisure. Our remit is to manage the demand for recreation within the context of the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses. In 2016, there were estimated to be 12.6 million day trips to the AONB and 1.8 million staying trips. The landscape underpins our tourism-based economy and supports local services. Tourism supports nearly 13,000 full time equivalent jobs in the AONB districts (West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland, North Dorset and Purbeck), with visitor spend contributing nearly £860 million to the local economy (2016 figures). The impact of visitors needs to be carefully managed to ensure that the AONB can continue to sustain these benefits for generations to come, while retaining its natural beauty.

The AONB's high quality landscape and heritage makes a substantial contribution to people's physical health and mental wellbeing, providing opportunities for physical activity, social interaction, relaxation and inspiration. Dorset has an extensive public rights of way network of 2,383 miles of footpaths, bridleways and byways. The AONB includes 71 miles of the South West Coast Path National Trail (this includes the first section of the England Coast Path which will eventually succeed the SWCP) and a number of other promoted long-distance walking and cycling routes. Walking is the most popular recreational activity nationally and it is the main activity of leisure trips. Nearly 75,000 people live within the AONB boundary, making it one of the most heavily populated AONBs in the country – though as the fifth largest AONB, it remains sparsely populated in many areas. Local communities have a fundamental role in safeguarding its future; the more people enjoy, understand and appreciate the importance of the area the greater their support and involvement in its protection and sense of pride of place.

## 9.2.1

# Significance

### Landscape & landform

The varied landscape offers a range of experiences for recreation and learning, both inland and along the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. The AONB includes coastal and market towns, attractive villages and a wide range of natural and cultural heritage assets, with key sites such as Corfe Castle, Studland, Maiden Castle and Durdle Door. Away from these key 'honey-pot' sites, visitors and local communities can experience tranquillity in less well known but equally beautiful countryside and coastal locations.

### Wildlife

The sites managed for wildlife by the National Trust, Natural England, Dorset Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Dorset Countryside and others often provide accessible countryside for visitors through provision of car parking, links to public transport and other visitor facilities. Wildlife also provides an inspiration for people to explore and help conserve the landscape. Additionally, there are 5,461 hectares of open, accessible countryside in the AONB.

### Living textbook

The AONB offers a 'living textbook' for people of all ages to experience, spanning geology, wildlife, human influence and natural processes in the landscape and adjoining marine environment. The landscape is firmly embedded in many educational initiatives in Dorset e.g. a strong Forest Schools network, outdoor education centres and Kingston Maurward College. There are also established networks of adult learning for the large population of active retired such as U3A, village societies and the WI.

### Cultural legacy

The legacy of landscape inspired work by authors, poets, scientists and artists is an important resource that can galvanise an appreciation of landscape and landscape change. The AONB today remains a source of inspiration and has a vibrant contemporary arts community, which together with a rich cultural tradition, adds to the quality of life of residents and draws many visitors. The landscape is used effectively as a venue for cultural performance - such as the Inside Out Dorset festivals as well as many smaller scale local productions. The strong arts community in Dorset also provides a creative way to engage hard to reach audiences and communicating complex issues.

## Opportunities

- Dorset AONB provides outstanding health and wellbeing opportunities through the natural landscape and its heritage assets and has a key role to play in social prescribing.
- The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan – recognising the value of the natural environment for health and wellbeing and setting some 'targets' around use of green space for health services, getting children close to nature and encouraging young people to take action to improve the environment.
- Dorset's NHS Sustainability and Transformation Plan is innovative in its prioritisation of 'prevention at scale'. This underlines the importance of active recreation and nature connection and provides a mechanism to attract resources to facilitate it.
- A growing active retired community offers a potential resource, and the opportunity to reduce health problems through active engagement with the landscape.
- Engaging communities, local businesses and cultural organisations to develop joined up tourism offer inland. A year-round, high-quality cultural or wildlife tourism offer would help extend the season, reduce pressure at peak times and spread economic benefits throughout the year.
- Promote and encourage festivals which celebrate the natural beauty of the area to attract people in shoulder seasons.
- Brexit may further increase the popularity of the 'staycation'.
- Voluntary codes of conducts developed to reduce conflict and pressure e.g. Fossil collecting, coasteering.
- Promotion of inland walking (e.g. Wessex Ridgeway) and cycling routes to spread visitor economic benefits inland and reduce the pressure on the coast, though better maintenance and waymarking of some inland routes is required.
- An increased awareness of environmental issues ('the Blue Planet effect') amongst the general public offers opportunity to communicate issues at a local level, including climate and coastal change, and the impact on landscape and communities. This heightened awareness may lead to opportunities for behavioural change, working with and learning from organisations such as Litter Free Coast & Sea and Litter Free Dorset, and engaging visitors in contributing to the management of rural and coastal areas.
- Better promotion of existing public transport, including links to walks. Community transport could be further developed and promoted to provide better access to the countryside.
- Dorset Countryside are developing support for parishes to manage and prioritise maintenance of their own Public Rights of Way (PROW), including monitoring user impact on routes through fixed point photography.
- Artist-led approaches to improving the public realm, visitor welcome and experience in consultation with local communities.
- Further development of well-established volunteer base, working with partners such as NT, DWT, JCT and Parish Councils.
- Rationalisation and improved quality of landscape interpretation, using JCT interpretation framework for coastal initiatives. There are also opportunities for artist-led approaches including temporary, site specific and permanent interpretative materials.
- High quality, engaging on-line content, including virtual experiences for those unable to visit the countryside.
- Help coordinate and sustain the development of 'models of good practice' to support schools, Higher and Further education establishments and lifelong learning groups to embed learning about the landscape and increase educational visits.
- Promote the landscape within Public Health Dorset's 'Whole School Approach'; an integrated strategy for pupil health and wellbeing in schools.

## Pressures

- High visitor numbers, particularly along the coast in summer and public holidays; conversely a lack of visitors and the associated economic benefits in many parts of inland Dorset. Some areas experience great recreational pressure in excess of a carrying capacity with impacts on wildlife and rural character; careful visitor management is required.
- Majority of visitors use their car to get around, impacting significantly on the AONB's landscape and environment. Public transport provision has declined for many locations, especially in more rural areas. Where there are reliable bus services, a high level of bus-pass impacts upon the economic sustainability of services while highlighting the importance of bus travel for that demographic.
- Intensive pressure on some areas, e.g. an increasing number of organised long-distance runs, walks and rides with very high numbers of participants can be detrimental to the landscape and the visitor experience. Group visits from cruise ships also exacerbate capacity issues at some locations.
- Marine and beach litter as well as road litter and fly tipping continue to be an issue.
- Climate and coastal change means an increase in rockfalls and landslips, posing potential danger to people visiting the coast. Engaging people in understanding the hazards is challenging; warning signs are regularly ignored. The plethora of warning signs in some locations impacts negatively on the landscape.
- A significant number of people don't visit or have access to the AONB due to poverty, rural isolation, exacerbated by lack of public transport or lack of easy access to public rights of way.
- In many places the rights of way network is fragmented often forcing walkers and riders on to country roads, often alongside traffic travelling at the national speed limit.
- There is limited awareness about the AONB and the work of the AONB Partnership amongst visitors and local people.
- Ongoing budget constraints and increasing pressure on funding sources which may be exacerbated post Brexit.
- Organisational and curriculum changes in schools and budgetary constraints make it difficult to sustain engagement and support for landscape focussed learning with schools.
- Second homes and relatively wealthy incomers driving costs of housing up and impacting on viability of communities.

## 9.2.3

### Organisations important to delivery

National Trust, Natural England, South West Coast Path Association, Jurassic Coast Trust, Local Highways Authority, Local Authority Ranger Service, Dorset Coast Forum, Litter Free Coast & Sea, Litter Free Dorset, Dorset Tourism Association, Visit Dorset, Arts Development Company and other cultural partners, educational institutions, Dorset Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Public Health Dorset and East Devon AONB.

## 9.2.4 Objectives and policies

**B1**

### OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPERIENCE AND ACCESS THE LANDSCAPE FOR HEALTH & WELLBEING BENEFITS ARE PLENTIFUL

**a.** Support and develop activities that increase health and wellbeing by establishing and strengthening connections to the landscape and nature.

- b.** Develop and support measures to improve accessibility to the coast & countryside for all where compatible with the purposes of AONB designation.
- c.** Develop and support measures to enable people to experience the landscape remotely.

**B2**

### HIGH QUALITY SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND ACCESS IS WIDELY AVAILABLE

- a.** Develop and support inland visitor experiences compatible with the purposes of AONB designation to spread economic benefits and reduce pressure on the coast.
- b.** Develop and support measures to engage communities, cultural organisations and tourism businesses to create and promote sustainable visitor experiences, including use of assets such as local food and drink.

- c.** Support measures to improve connectivity and functionality of the public rights of way network, including long distance routes, to meet local and visitor needs.
- d.** Develop, support and promote integrated sustainable access and travel options in the AONB.
- e.** Support and promote measures to reduce litter, including marine and beach litter, and encourage safe and considerate use of the coast and countryside.

**B3**

### THERE IS WIDE AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE DORSET AONB LANDSCAPE, ITS SPECIAL QUALITIES AND MANAGEMENT

- a.** Support and develop a wide variety of visitor experiences to showcase and celebrate the special qualities of the AONB.
- b.** Rationalise and improve interpretation to enhance visitor experience, reduce clutter in the landscape and inform the public about the landscape and safety

- c.** Support initiatives for children and young people to understand more about the Dorset AONB and its special qualities through learning outside the classroom, curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- d.** Support lifelong learning opportunities in the Dorset AONB.
- e.** Develop understanding of a dynamic landscape and changing climate.
- f.** Promote the significance of the AONB designation and the work of the Dorset AONB partnership and the wider family of protected landscapes.

**B4**

### LOCAL PEOPLE ARE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN CONSERVING AND ENHANCING THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE AONB, ITS SPECIAL QUALITIES, NATURAL PROCESSES AND ECOSYSTEM BENEFITS

**a.** Support and encourage opportunities for parish and town councils, community groups, businesses and individuals to conserve and enhance the AONB

- b.** Support volunteer activity that contributes to the conservation and enhancement of the Dorset AONB landscape.
- c.** Promote sustainable living among communities in the AONB to reduce impacts on the local environment and increase access to environmental benefits.
- d.** Involve local people in monitoring and recording landscape change.
- e.** Promote and support the celebration and conservation of local distinctiveness

## 9.3 Planning for landscape quality

The high quality of Dorset's AONBs landscapes must be conserved and enhanced. To achieve this the national importance of the AONB needs to be recognised and reinforced, thereby ensuring that changes within the AONB meet the highest standards of sustainability, design and quality.

Development affecting the AONB should be compatible with the character and appearance of the AONB and we should also aim to achieve landscape gain from development, wherever possible. This chapter contains objectives and policies that support sustainable development that conserves and enhances the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB, while minimising impacts to natural processes and ecosystem flows. The National Planning Policy Framework 2018 confirmed that the whole purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development, and its paragraph 172 states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and natural beauty in AONBs. In defining sustainable development, national policy acknowledges the diverse role of the environment, contributing to the protection and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, habitats and species, and the reduction of pollution.

The AONB is a living and constantly evolving landscape, the result of human interaction with the natural environment. Sensitively sited and designed development can make a positive contribution to the AONB, not only in the way it appears in the landscape but how it contributes to sustaining local communities and the landscape itself. However, inappropriate development is one of the greatest threats to the AONB, if its scale, siting and design is unsympathetic to the landscape, has a negative impact on character or affects the ability of residents and visitors to enjoy the landscape. Most planning decisions in the AONB are made by a local planning authority who, under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, has a statutory duty of regard for the primary purpose of the AONB to conserve and enhance natural beauty when discharging this and other functions. As the Government's statutory advisor on landscape, Natural England may provide advice on landscape matters, particularly in response to larger proposals. The AONB Team also provides landscape advice through an agreed planning protocol.

### 9.3.1 Significance

#### **Landscape & landform**

The physical and perceptual characteristics of a landscape are what makes a place. The AONB is valued for its special qualities, which include its undeveloped rural character, exceptional undeveloped coastline, tranquillity and dark night skies. Such landscape attributes need to be maintained for the future and this is best achieved through development that respects the pattern and character of the places in which it is located.

#### **Wildlife**

When development impacts upon the wildlife of its environs, the planning system must ensure that these effects are dealt with appropriately. Ranging from locally important features to internationally significant sites, all habitats within the AONB make some form of contribution to a supporting structure of the area's natural beauty. Securing mitigation and enhancement measures that are appropriate to site specific considerations is a key output of positive landscape planning.

#### **Living Textbook**

The AONB contains highly important natural and manmade landscape features that tell us about the past, including our natural history and civilization. Planning has the potential to both safeguard historical assets and reveal their significance. The ongoing appreciation of these assets relies on their conservation and ongoing positive management, as well as measures that improve our interpretation and understanding of them.

#### **Cultural legacy**

Changes to culturally significant landscapes can often evoke deep feelings from those who value them. The planning system has a key role to play in delivering sensitive change in areas with strong cultural identities, by safeguarding assets and better revealing their significance.

## Opportunities and pressures

### Opportunities

- New development and planning gain may provide opportunities to conserve, enhance restore and create valued landscape features. Established compensatory mechanisms (such as that related to Wytch Farm) provide a functional model for ameliorating landscape impacts that cannot be avoided or directly mitigated.
- NPPF 2018 reinforces the net gain principle in development for establishing coherent ecological networks.
- The requirement for developments in the Poole Harbour catchment to be nutrient neutral creates opportunities for beneficial landscape change).
- The popularity of Dorset as a destination to live and work and the resultant development pressure will create opportunities for securing planning gain, including landscape enhancement and biodiversity measures, such as those that can be achieved through the Dorset Biodiversity Appraisal process.
- There are opportunities to enhance the sustainability and vitality of communities through increased provision of affordable housing in response to recognised local need.
- Emerging techniques in remote sensing and tranquillity modelling provide opportunities for monitoring landscape condition.
- Neighbourhood planning provides a tool through which communities can direct growth toward locations that conserve and enhance local character.
- Investment in landscape enhancement by major infrastructure providers, being led and exemplified by National Grid through the Visual Impact Provision.
- There are opportunities to soften the impact of traffic management schemes within villages through sensitive design measures, such as those contained within the traffic in villages toolkit.
- There are opportunities to improve sustainability through the implementation of small scale-renewable energy projects and community energy initiatives. Published Dorset AONB guidance on wind energy development provides spatially-relevant context and detail.
- Changes in agriculture may result in opportunities for the redevelopment of brownfield countryside sites that can serve emerging purposes.
- Continued growth in demand for camping, particularly glamping, can provide good diversification opportunities if sensitively designed and situated.
- Advances in communication technology has the potential to diversify the traditional nature of the rural economy
- Partnerships with artists and cultural organisations provide a creative approach to enhancements the public realm.
- Longevity and value-for-money in development can be achieved with high quality design and good materials.

### Pressures

- Demographic changes:
  - An increase in population brings a need for wider infrastructure and service upgrades;
  - Housing stock not well aligned with demand;
  - An increasing number of second homes distorts the housing market;
  - An ageing population affects the sustainability of some community facilities and services.
- Visitors and recreation:
  - The ability of popular areas to absorb further visitor pressure is finite and requires careful management;
  - Changes to recreational uses within the countryside, including increased activity, affect landscape character;
  - Overprovision of visitor accommodation affects levels of residential housing stock;
  - The popularity of some areas, particularly along the coast, brings significant pressure for expansion of camping and caravanning sites in sensitive locations;
  - Glamping can introduce semi-permanent features in sensitive areas;
  - Incremental changes are affecting rural roads, including signage, traffic management and road improvement initiatives.
  - Ongoing interest in oil and gas extraction within parts of the AONB
  - Changes to farming practices include a trend toward an increasing scale of operations with associated landscape and visual effects from farms;
  - Coastal change and management will result in pressure to defend and/or relocate assets.

### 9.3.3

## Organisations important to delivery

Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Historic England, farmers and landowners and their representatives, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SW, National Trust, RSPB, Local Authorities, Dorset Food & Drink, Kingston Maurward College

## 9.3.4 Objectives and policies

C1

### THE AONB AND ITS SETTING IS CONSERVED AND ENHANCED BY GOOD PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- a. Support development that conserves and enhances the AONB, ensuring sensitive siting and design respects local character. Development that does not conserve and enhance the AONB will only be supported if it is necessary and in the public interest. Major development decisions need to include detailed consideration of relevant exceptional circumstances.
- b. The conservation, enhancement and creation/restoration of appropriate landscape features such as landmarks, artworks, boundary features, tree clumps etc, will be regarded favourably. There should be a net gain in terms of the landscape and its constituent elements.
- c. High quality design, materials and standards of workmanship are required of developments within the AONB. Good design and material use does not have to be a cost burden, however where this requirement affects development viability consideration will be given to the balance between the public benefits of a proposal and the significance of its landscape and visual effects. When the landscape and visual effects of a development cannot be fully addressed through primary design measures, appropriate and robust secondary mitigation measures that can be delivered, enforced and maintained will be required.
- d. Developments will be required to make a positive contribution to the overall green infrastructure and ecological networks. All aspects of green infrastructure, e.g. sustainable drainage, also require good design that respects local character and must also make an appropriate contribution to landscape ecology. The net result of these contributions should be landscape gain.
- e. Full consideration of geodiversity conservation is required in plans and strategies affecting the AONB, e.g. local plans, mineral plans and shoreline management plans. The close links between geodiversity conservation, extraction industries, landscape and built environment conservation should be recognised.
- f. The AONB's coast will be conserved and enhanced and significant weight will be given to maintaining its undeveloped and tranquil nature. The importance of the AONB's coastal areas as the setting for the World Heritage Site (WHS) will be recognised and the presentation and visitor experience of this asset will be protected from both individual developments and cumulative effects of incremental change.
- g. Approaches to coastal management that promote natural processes will be adopted wherever possible and the objectives of coastal change management areas will be implemented.
- h. The landward and seaward setting of the AONB will be planned and managed in a manner that conserves and enhances the character and appearance of the AONB. Views into and out of the AONB and non-visual effects, such as noise and wider environmental impacts, will be appropriately assessed.
- i. Within the seaward setting of the AONB, support will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the coastal and marine environment. Support will be given to sustainable management, including the creation of Marine Protected Areas at appropriate locations.

C2

### LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT & MONITORING IS EFFECTIVE AND SUPPORTS GOOD DECISION-MAKING

- a. Proposals affecting the AONB will be assessed to a high standard.
- b. Landscape and seascape character assessment will be used to consider the effects of proposals on the character and appearance of the AONB.
- c. Local and Neighbourhood Plans must be supported by a robust landscape evidence base.
- d. The key test of a proposal against the statutory purpose of the AONB will be its ability to demonstrate that the proposed change would conserve and enhance landscape and scenic beauty.
- e. The conservation and enhancement of the AONB's special qualities will be a significant consideration in the planning balance.
- f. Proposals that are harmful to the character and appearance of the area will not be permitted unless there are benefits that clearly outweigh the significant protection afforded to the conservation and enhancement of the AONB. Where impacts cannot be mitigated, planning gain and compensatory measures will be considered.
- g. Changes in landscape condition will be monitored and assessed to inform appropriate action.

C3

### NECESSARY DEVELOPMENT IS SUPPORTED

- a. Support appropriate farm diversification schemes, particularly where these contribute to the conservation, enhancement and sustainable development of the AONB.
- b. Support affordable housing within appropriate rural exception sites that meet proven local need. Good, locally-sensitive design should be pursued.
- c. Support restoration of traditional barns, buildings and other structures that maintains or enhances landscape character quality, ensuring diversification benefits are not outweighed by adverse effects on the environment.
- d. Support the working of minerals sites at an appropriate scale and density in the AONB for the supply of building materials to conserve and enhance local character. Secure appropriate and high-quality restoration of minerals sites to benefit landscape, biodiversity and access.
- e. Support measures to increase energy efficiency.
- f. Support renewable energy production where compatible with the objectives of AONB designation.
- g. Support well designed projects that reduce the impact of traffic in the AONB.
- h. Support woodland planting and management proposals that are appropriate to landscape character and deliver clear enhancements for biodiversity, habitat connectivity and public amenity.

**DEVELOPMENT WHICH HAS NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE AONB, ITS SPECIAL QUALITIES, ECOSYSTEM FLOWS AND NATURAL PROCESSES IS AVOIDED**

- a.** Remove existing and avoid creating new features which are detrimental to landscape character, tranquillity, and the AONB's special qualities.
- b.** Require the use of previously developed land where this will limit the expansion of built development into sensitive undeveloped countryside.
- c.** Protect and where possible enhance the quality of views into, within and out of the AONB.
- d.** Protect the pattern of landscape features, including settlements, that underpin local identity.
- e.** Avoid and reduce the impacts of development on biodiversity. Require development to follow the hierarchy of avoid, mitigate and compensate and to achieve a net gain for biodiversity.
- f.** Avoid and reduce cumulative effects that erode landscape character and quality.

- g.** Protect the AONB from an overprovision of visitor accommodation including camping, caravanning and glamping sites particularly where existing development weakens the character and appearance of the countryside. Changes in landscape condition will be monitored and assessed to inform appropriate action.

Avoid large scale and/or high density housing and employment development at settlement edges when such development weakens the character and appearance of the countryside.

- h.** Discourage growth in the number of second homes within the AONB.
- i.** Resist proliferation of masts and other vertical structures, requiring the sharing of infrastructure by service providers.
- j.** Ensure coastal and flood defences, as well as aquaculture and fishery development, are compatible with the AONB's exceptional undeveloped coastline
- k.** Require further permanent oil and gas infrastructure to reuse/augment existing areas of development and contribute to restoration of the wider landscape.
- l.** Avoid urbanisation and other negative impacts of highway management.



## 9.4 Ways of working

This chapter sets out principles by which the AONB Partnership operates. Abiding by these principles will encourage coherent, coordinated activity to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and special qualities of the

### 9.4.1 Significance

This chapter relates to the community and organisational environment in and around the Dorset AONB, rather than directly to its special qualities and natural beauty.

## 9.4.2 Opportunities & pressures

### Opportunities

- The Dorset AONB is home to over 75,000 people: this is a considerable potential resource for activity which contributes towards the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty.
- Provision, curation and development of environmental data and information is supported by strong organisations in Dorset.
- The AONB Partnership occupies a position of trust and can act as an 'honest broker' bringing various interests together for project development or information provision.
- The AONB Partnership has a strong track record in managing collaborative projects in practical delivery and engagement.
- There exist some exemplar partnerships working in and across the AONB facilitating the delivery of the aims within this management plan. These include Dorset Coast Forum, Dorset Food & Drink, Dorset Cultural Partnership, Dorset Tourism Association, Wild Purbeck Partnership and the Dorset Local Nature Partnership.

- Local Government Review could potentially result in more consistent application of related policy across the AONB

### Pressures

- Many people experience barriers to getting involved in activities related to their local environment. Barriers are both real and perceptual, ranging from a sense that 'the countryside is not for me', to a lack of either time or resources to engage.
- Local Government Review could potentially result in fewer local authority staff covering a larger area; alongside an inevitable loss of skills and experience there may be reduced capacity for engaging in new initiatives.
- Financial pressures on the wider delivery partnership have meant that there is reduced capacity to engage in new partnerships or initiatives; there is also reduced capacity to effectively engage community stakeholders.

### 9.4.3 Organisations important to delivery

Local Authorities, Town and Parish Councils (including the Association for Town and Parish Councils), Catchment Partnerships, Community Partnerships, Dorset Environmental Record Centre, Dorset History Centre, Kingston Maurward College, Natural England, National Trust, Jurassic Coast Trust, arts and culture partners.

## 9.4.4 Objectives and policies

D1

### LOCAL PEOPLE ARE ENGAGED IN KEY DECISIONS RELATING TO THEIR LOCAL ENVIRONMENTS IN THE AONB

Achieving sustainable change in the AONB requires the participation of large numbers of people, through organisations or individually. In seeking to achieve the aims of this management plan and the purposes of AONB designation, it is important that this participation is fostered and encouraged.

The plan will not succeed if it is widely felt that conservation is something that is imposed upon communities, individuals and organisations as opposed to something done with their knowledge, understanding and support.

- a. Carry out effective engagement and consultation in plan-making and project development

D2

### DECISION-MAKING IS SUPPORTED BY THE BEST AVAILABLE INFORMATION, UNDERSTANDING, GOOD PRACTICE, TOOLS AND ORGANISATIONS

- a. Promote research and deeper understanding of the AONB its special qualities, landscape elements and neighbouring marine environment
- b. Promote the use of landscape and seascape character assessment to shape decisions affecting the AONB and assist planning for positive change

- c. Promote understanding and application of conservation resources and tools for the natural and historic environment
- d. Promote the training in, and use of, conservation skills to conserve and enhance landscape character including the natural, historic and cultural environment
- e. Support the development and use of key information resources, repositories and their managing organisations. This includes, but is not limited to, Dorset Environmental Record Centre, Dorset Historic Environment Record (HER), Dorset History Centre, Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England (SHINE) and the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS)

D3

### MONITORING INFORMS AND ENABLES ADAPTATION TO ACHIEVE BEST OUTCOMES

The principle of adaptive management requires ongoing monitoring to ensure desired aims and outcomes are being achieved. With effective monitoring, when progress towards desired outcomes slows or stalls, the methods can be changed. The AONB Partnership works with a wide range of bodies to gather, hold and share data relevant to AONB management. The AONB

Partnership is responsible for monitoring landscape condition, a full assessment of which should be undertaken every management plan period.

- a. Promote monitoring of key habitats, indicator species, geological and historic assets, and perceptual qualities of the AONB
- b. Promote observation of landscape condition to prioritise changes in management
- c. Promote understanding of which people are affected by this plan's policy and related actions, and how

D4

### COLLABORATIVE WORKING IS DEVELOPED THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

Support key partnerships and initiatives which bring organisations and individuals together to deliver AONB objectives. Wide partnerships can deliver on many fronts and achieve greater output and to a wider audience than could be done individually. Learning and trust built between organisations and individuals also aids future delivery.

- a. Promote links between organisations where this will help achieve AONB Management Plan aims
- b. Management decisions are integrated across the land/sea boundary
- c. Cultural initiatives, opportunities and organisations are embedded in delivery

## 10. DELIVERY

This is an aspirational plan which requires the combined effort and resources of a wide range of partners. The AONB Partnership acknowledge that this is not a central remit for many of these partners but assert that investment in delivery has returns for the environment, the community and for sustainable businesses.



COMBINED  
EFFORT

Over the next 5 years, the AONB Partnership will produce an annual business plan with a time horizon beyond the year of the plan to ensure multi-year activities are supported. This will be primarily for those resources within its direct control. However, where partners view the value of their work's endorsement by inclusion within this annual plan, it will be welcomed.

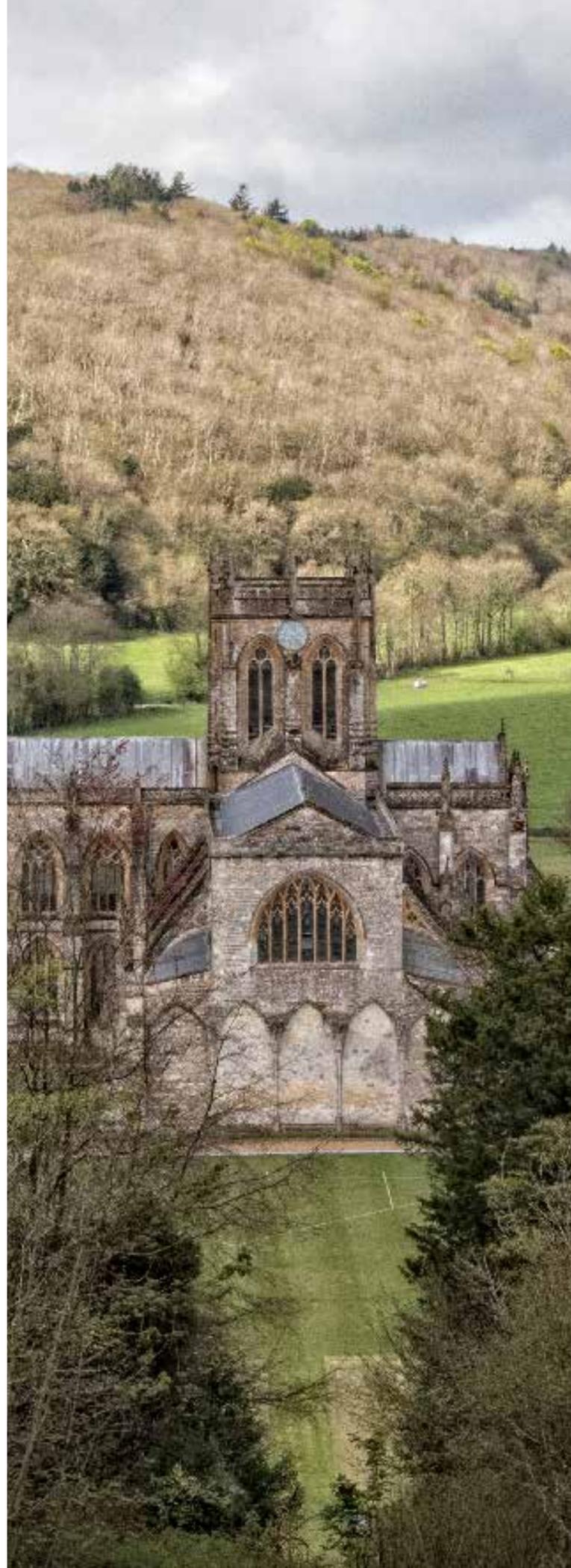
At the time of writing the Partnership's annual income from Defra and its local authority partners is around £290,000. This is cut to provide for the core team of 6 (4.5 FTE), support its largely externally-funded projects and provide a Sustainable Development Fund to enable community implementation of this plan.

The Partnership's team will prioritise its core responsibilities:

Provision of high-quality advice on strategic planning, development management and agri-environment delivery.

Securing additional resources to implement programmes of delivery which meet the objectives of this plan.

Promoting this plan, its vision and objectives to secure support for delivery



In addition to its core roles, the AONB Partnership's team will prioritise the following areas of project activity:

## Area-based

- A landscape-scale project conserving natural and cultural landscape heritage in the Marshwood Vale and Brit Valleys. This should provide opportunities for local people to increase their understanding of and engagement with the landscape heritage and develop a skills base for its ongoing management. It will also explore the future of farming in the area and develop models for modern sustainable land use.
- Landscape enhancements in the South Dorset Ridgeway as a legacy of the South Dorset Ridgeway Landscape Partnership and support for National Grid in its endeavours to place underground 8km of high voltage electricity transmission line.
- Landscape enhancements across the Wild Purbeck Nature Improvement Area by convening and chairing its partnership, and by promoting and administrating the Wytch Farm Landscape and Access Enhancement Fund.
- Visitor management and visitor experience enhancement across the Jurassic Coast and using that expertise to develop greater inland opportunities.

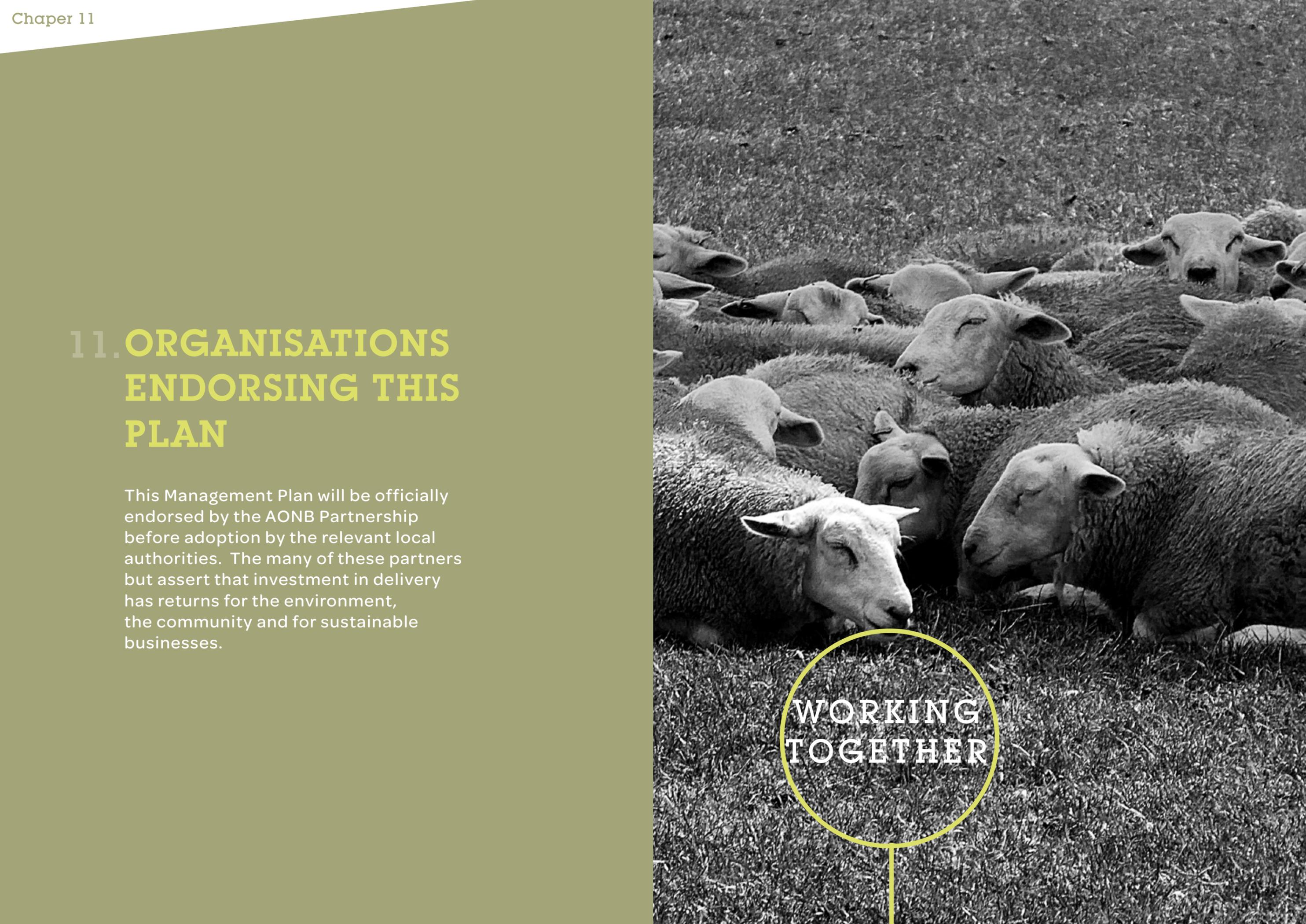
## Thematic

- The development, implementation and rollout of a new agri-environment scheme.
- Promotion of local food and drink products, particularly those that are related to the beneficial management of the AONB's landscape.
- Activities which connect people with nature and the natural landscape, particularly younger people, older people, those living with dementia and their carers and anyone isolated by rurality. There is a strong role for developing cultural activities to support this aim.
- Promotion of landscape management skills.

The Partnership will remain flexible enough to support, shape or lead relevant opportunities to deliver this policy framework where they arise.

## 11. ORGANISATIONS ENDORISING THIS PLAN

This Management Plan will be officially endorsed by the AONB Partnership before adoption by the relevant local authorities. The many of these partners but assert that investment in delivery has returns for the environment, the community and for sustainable businesses.



WORKING  
TOGETHER

The AONB Partnership Board includes representation from:

- Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils
- Dorset County Council
- Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership
- Dorset Local Nature Partnership
- Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society
- Dorset Country Land & Business Association
- Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership
- Devon County Council
- East Devon District Council
- Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Jurassic Coast Trust
- National Farmers Union
- National Trust
- Natural England
- North Dorset District Council
- Purbeck District Council
- Purbeck Heritage Network
- Somerset County Council
- South Somerset District Council
- West Dorset District Council
- Weymouth & Portland Borough Council
- [The Board is seeking a sector representative to replace the Dorset Cultural Partnership]

In addition, we are seeking endorsement from a wide range of organisations with whom the AONB Partnership works on delivery. They will be listed here.

**Logos and  
delivery list to  
be updated for PB  
meeting on 15th  
November**