Cranborne Chase AONB Management Plan (*2014-2019*)

'Working with you to keep this living landscape special'

Ministerial Foreword

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are some of our finest landscapes. They are cherished by residents and visitors alike and allow millions of people from all walks of life to understand and connect with nature.

I am pleased to see that this management plan demonstrates how AONB Partnerships can continue to protect these precious environments despite the significant challenges they face. With a changing climate, the increasing demands of a growing population and in difficult economic times, I believe AONBs represent just the sort of community driven, collaborative approach needed to ensure our natural environment is maintained for generations to come.

AONB Partnerships have been the architects of a landscape-scale approach to land management. This approach is a key feature of the Government's Natural Environment White Paper and emphasises the need to manage ecosystems in an integrated fashion, linking goals on wildlife, water, soil and landscape, and working at a scale that respects natural systems.

This management plan also makes the important connection between people and nature. I am pleased to hear that local communities have been central to the development of the plan, and will be at the heart of its delivery. From volunteers on nature conservation projects, to businesses working to promote sustainable tourism, it's great to hear of the enthusiasm and commitment of the local people who hold their AONBs so dear.

AONBs are, and will continue to be, landscapes of change. Management plans such as this are vital in ensuring these changes are for the better. I would like to thank all those who were involved in bringing this plan together and I wish you every success in bringing it to fruition.

Lord de Mauley, Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries.

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Foreword from the Chairman James Stanford OBE

1. What makes this area special?

1.1. Forming part of the extensive belt of chalkland that stretches across southern central England, the Cranborne Chase AONB is a landscape of national significance. Its special qualities include its diversity, distinctiveness, sense of history and remoteness, dark night skies, tranquillity and undeveloped rural character. With mists slowly forming over expansive downlands, it can be a moody, evocative landscape, with sights and sounds of bygone times never far away. It is an unspoilt and aesthetically pleasing landscape.

1.2. Natural beauty is not just the visual appearance of the countryside, but includes flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features, manmade, historic and cultural associations and our sensory perceptions of them. These factors in combination give each locality its own sense of place, contributing immensely to the quality of life.

1.3. The AONB designation embraces a collection of fine landscapes, each with its different landforms, soils and wildlife habitats. Whilst the chalk downland is a dominant feature, the escarpments, valleys, greensand terraces and clay vales reflect the geomorphology and impact of the underlying geology. Sometimes the changes between these landscapes are slow and gentle; in other cases such as above and below escarpments, they are quite swift and obvious. Views across and along these landscapes can be wide and expansive whilst in the valleys they are more focussed and channelled. Unspoilt and panoramic views are characteristic of this AONB.

1.4. Hilltop earthworks, monuments, and tree clumps are features of the chalk downlands, serving as landmarks to help orientate ourselves in these extensive landscapes. In historic terms, the landscapes of the AONB today are extraordinarily rich. Evidence of successive eras of human activity and settlements can often be lost but not in this AONB; the landscapes offer up evidence of the imprint of man, carved out over the centuries; a continuous timeline throughout British history. Prehistoric monuments of national importance, historic borderlands, ancient field systems, droves and routeways all have stories to tell. The pioneering excavations and findings of General Pitt-Rivers, of the present day Rushmore Estate in Cranborne Chase, led to him being known as the ‘father of modern archaeology’.

1.5. Eight thousand years ago, Neolithic peoples first started to change and manage this land. They built burial mounds and mysterious constructions, with many still seen today. The Bronze and Iron Ages saw the creation of large areas of pasture and arable farmland. The pastures on the Downs date from this period. During the Anglo Saxon period, large landholdings began to change rural society. This was already a royal hunting area when the Normans invaded. They imposed forest law on the area then known as Cranborne Chase. Agricultural expansion continued outside the Chase and by the fifteenth century, hedges and walls divided the land into large blocks. This trend continued as sheep production became very profitable and the wealthy built large houses with extensive parks. Forest law persisted in the Chase until 1829.

1.6. Since then, agriculture has changed rapidly but the settlement patterns are very similar to those that existed in the eighteenth century. There are more than 550 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, over 2,000 Listed Buildings and 16 Registered Parks and Gardens within the AONB.

1.7. The AONB is of great ecological importance. It has 5 internationally, and 60 nationally, protected sites. These range from ancient downland, chalk rivers and meadows to scattered semi-natural ancient woodland, which include remnants of the medieval Cranborne Chase royal hunting area and the former Royal Forests of Selwood and Gillingham. There are also around 520 sites of local importance for wildlife comprising just over 9% of the AONB.

1.8. Large, rectangular fields emphasise the open character of the chalk downs. The chalkland valleys of the Rivers Wylye, Nadder and Ebble are mainly in permanent pasture, with many copses and hedgerows, whilst the ridges are predominantly arable. In the northwest, the sandstone fringe of wooded ridges and valleys includes rich parklands such as Longleat and Stourhead. Agriculture and its associated businesses are still a significant employer together with commercial forestry and limited mineral extraction.

1.9. The lush, wooded clay Vale of Wardour spreads out throughout the centre of the AONB, separating two large and distinct areas of largely arable chalk downland. To the south is the unusually wooded downland of Cranborne Chase itself with its steeply cut coombes and dry valleys so typical of chalk landscapes; to the north, the West Wiltshire Downs are generally more elevated, rising up to Grovely Wood on the eastern ridge and from where, on a clear day, the huge chalkland plateau that is Salisbury Plain can be seen stretching northwards in the distance.

1.10. The Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) (2003) draws together the features and attributes that contribute to the distinctive and outstanding character of the AONB. It explores the physical, ecological, visual, historic and cultural forces that shape the present day dynamic, working landscape, encompassing its social, economic and recreational characteristics. It identifies eight Landscape Types, each with distinct and relatively homogenous character with similar physical and cultural attributes, including geology, landform, land cover, and historical evolution. Four cover the chalk landscapes, two the greensand areas, and one each the clay vale and the hills between the chalk and the heathland outside the AONB. The individual characteristics of the fifteen Landscape Character Areas are set out in the LCA.

1.11. The Historic Landscape Characterisation (2008) describes and maps the historic and archaeological dimensions of the present day AONB landscape. Together, these two documents are a huge educational and management resource, charting the ever changing, living landscapes and the lives of those who made, and make, this their home; in essence a ‘living library’.

1.12. The immense historic and ecological riches are held in high esteem by both local communities and visitors, as are the many diverse cultural associations with inspirational artists, writers, sculptors, poets, photographers and musicians. To name but a few, Heywood Sumner, Thomas Hardy, Desmond Hawkins, Cecil Beaton, Lucien Freud and Elisabeth Frink all took inspiration from Cranborne Chase and its

hinterland. Cultural associations offer a greater awareness, understanding and appreciation of these evocative landscapes.

1.13. As sustainable rural tourism begins to evolve, panoramic views, dark skies awash with stars, the wealth of wildlife, plethora of historic sites, ancient droves and routeways all offer opportunities for exploration, relaxation, walking and cycling, which, in turn, offers growing potential to support this fundamentally rural economy.

1.14. This AONB is a deeply rural area with widely scattered hamlets, villages and narrow roads. This mainly agricultural landscape has no large settlements within its boundaries. Nearby market towns such as Salisbury, Shaftesbury, Blandford, Fordingbridge, Wimborne and Warminster are growth areas.

The setting of the AONB

1.15. The setting of an AONB is the surroundings in which the area is experienced. If the quality of the setting declines, then the appreciation and enjoyment of the AONB diminishes. The construction of high or expansive structures; or a change generating movement, noise, odour, vibration or dust over a wide area will affect the setting. As our appreciation of the relationships between neighbouring landscapes grows, so our understanding of what constitutes the setting continues to evolve.

1.16. Views are one element of setting, being associated with the visual experience. Views are particularly important to the AONB because of the juxtaposition of high and low ground and the fact that recreational users value them. Without management, views within, across, from and to the AONB may be lost or degraded.

2. What is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

2.1. An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is one of the nation's finest landscapes; an area of high scenic quality that has statutory protection in order to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of its landscape. Designation is under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The intent is to secure their permanent protection against any development that would damage their special qualities. The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 brought in new measures to help protect AONBs further and confirmed that the landscape qualities of National Parks and AONBs are equivalent. The protection given to both types of area by the land use planning system should therefore be equivalent.[1] There are currently 46 AONBs in Britain. In all, AONB designation covers approximately 18 per cent of the land area of the country.

2.2. Designation of the Cranborne Chase AONB was in 1981 and it extends over 981 square kilometres (Map A). The AONB is the sixth largest and is one of twelve AONBs in the South West (Map B). The majority of AONB lies within the South West though 6.8% of the AONB (the Hampshire section) falls within the South East. In the

[1] National Planning Framework: Paragraph 115, Department for Communities and Local Government, ISBN: 978-1-4098-3413-7 (March 2012)

South West, together with the two National Parks (Exmoor and Dartmoor), the family of protected areas cover some 38% of the countryside.

Primary purpose of designation

2.3. The primary purpose of AONB designation is 'conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area'[2].

2.4. 'In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of economic and social development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.

2.5. 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.'[3]

What is natural beauty?

2.6. The primary purpose of AONB designation is rooted in *natural beauty*. The term was enshrined in the 1949 Act when a romantic idea of scenic value still prevailed. Over the years qualification and amendment to the legislation has made it clear that natural beauty includes considerations such as wildlife, geological features and cultural heritage[4]. 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'[5]. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 clarified that land is not prevented from being treated as of natural beauty by the fact that it is used for agriculture, or woodlands, or as a park or that its physiographical features are partly the product of human intervention in the landscape[6].

2.7. The AONB is a cultural, living landscape by virtue of both the species and habitats within it but also due to its special qualities, that human activity maintains. The natural beauty of the AONB is a blend of both the rich natural, historic and cultural heritage. The AONB Partnership believes that the presence of the expansive, open downlands; the many historic and literary associations; and the high levels of tranquillity, comprise important elements of the natural beauty of the AONB. Those who manage the land are central to the future of this landscape. It is inevitable that this cultural landscape will continue to develop but this needs to be in ways that conserve and enhance its special qualities.

[2] Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000: Section 82
[3] Countryside Commission Policy Statement on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty 1991
[4] *A draft statement on natural beauty*, The University of Sheffield, January 2006
[5] Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A guide for AONB Partnership members, Countryside Commission, CA24, November 2001, p.6.
[6] Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006: Section 99

International context

IUCN Protected Landscape

2.8. The AONB landscape is of international importance, recognised as a Category V Protected Landscape by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (Appendix 1). In 2013, the IUCN UK Committee reaffirmed the Category V status of all AONBs, confirming the significant impact they have on conserving the UK's biodiversity.

European Landscape Convention

2.9. The European Landscape Convention is a Treaty devoted exclusively to the protection, management and planning of all landscapes in Europe (Appendix 2). The Convention also encourages the integration of landscape into all relevant areas of policy, including cultural, economic and social policies.

2.10. The ELC defines landscape as "An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors." (Council of Europe 2000)

2.11. There is a particular emphasis on the need for co-operation in undertaking programmes of landscape work that cross administrative and national boundaries. This AONB is in a prime position to showcase the UK's commitment to the Convention.

3. A vision for the AONB

What is the Vision?

3.1. In 2030, the Cranborne Chase AONB will be an inspirational example of sustainable management in action.

3.2. A place where:

- its distinctive local landscapes, historic heritage and wildlife are conserved and enhanced by those who work and manage the land, nurturing a valued and treasured countryside for future generations;
- its characteristic vibrant villages, profoundly rural character and local sense of pride are tangible to all who live and visit here or just pass through;
- the breadth and depth of historic land use still offers up its story in the landscape today;
- its cultural heritage is understood, enhanced and valued; and
- the quality of life remains high and the aspirations of those who live and work here are supported.

The AONB Partnership wants to achieve the following:

Conserving and enhancing Outstanding Landscapes – our Aims

- We want the unique character, tranquillity and special qualities of the landscapes in the AONB to be conserved and enhanced. We want a widespread understanding of the area's special qualities. We want these qualities strengthened by informed decision-making. When change happens, it

is consistent with the character of the landscape. We will take opportunities to restore landscape features that require it.

- We want the sustainable management of all natural resources in the AONB. We will use minerals, energy, waste products, soil and water wisely. We will look after the rich diversity of wildlife. We will increase the resilience of the natural environment to the effects of climate change.

- We want to conserve and enhance the historic and cultural environment of the AONB. We want everyone to understand, value and enjoy its cultural and heritage assets. The story of the area's evolution over time should be clear to everyone.

Conserving and enhancing Living and Working Landscapes – our Aims

- We want the sustainable management of rural land. There will be a diverse range of viable and environmentally responsible land-based businesses. They will meet the demand for food, fuel and other produce in ways that conserve and enhance the landscape character of the AONB whilst delivering increased public benefits.

- We want a thriving rural economy that will sustain the landscape and ensure economic and social wellbeing.

- We want planning and transportation strategies and policies that affect this nationally important AONB to conserve and enhance its special qualities. Where development is necessary, we want it located and designed to integrate fully with the landscape character and natural beauty.

- We want all management of, and improvements to, roads to enhance the distinctive character of the area. We want a range of more sustainable options for transport that reduce its effects on tranquillity and the natural environment of the AONB.

- We want communities that appreciate and care for the AONB; and their residents enjoy a high quality of life.

Conserving and enhancing Special Landscapes to Enjoy – our Aims

- We want the area's special qualities and landscape character, its traditions, and its historic and natural assets understood and valued by all. We want everyone to understand what the AONB designation means and why the area was designated. We want everyone to promote and support the AONB.

- We want people to learn about the natural, historic and cultural heritage of the AONB. We want people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to have the opportunity to take up countryside skills training and volunteering in the AONB.

- We want everyone to explore and enjoy the AONB in ways that respect the purposes of designation. We want people to use the quality environment of the AONB to refresh the mind, body and soul.

Who is going to make it happen?

3.3. The AONB Partnership developed and agreed the Vision after listening to the many people who care about this very special place. The AONB Partnership is an alliance of eighteen national and local organisations that steers the implementation of the Management Plan (Appendix 3 and Section 18). The AONB team works on behalf of the Partnership.

3.4. The Vision is a call for action. Landowners, farmers, local people, visitors, and the many organisations working in the AONB, or who have a contribution to make to it, must unite to achieve this Vision.

4. What is an AONB management plan?

4.1. Local authorities with an AONB in their area must prepare and publish a management plan, and review that plan every five years[7]. All public bodies have a statutory duty to 'have regard' to the 'purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area'[8] (Appendix 4).

4.2. This document is the second review of the Cranborne Chase AONB Management Plan first published in 2004. This plan runs from 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2019. It is a statutory document and forms an important role in the delivery of services by the local authorities. It is a plan for all those that have a responsibility to look after this precious and treasured landscape. The plan sets out realistic objectives and policies for AONB partners to achieve in the next five years. Working together, these targets can be realised to the benefit of the landscapes and communities of this nationally designated area. The review process is set out in Appendix 5.

How does the management plan fit with the policies and plans of others?

4.3. National and local policies already provide a considerable level of protection for the natural beauty of the AONB. In addition, many partner organisations prepare strategies and plans that deal with a range of other issues that affect the area (such as the management of development, transport, tourism, recreation, energy, water resources, and biodiversity).

4.4. These policies, plans and strategies will inform the AONB Management Plan. Implementation of this Management Plan will complement them and influence the preparation and delivery of other key policies, plans and processes affecting the area. This covers, for example, Local Development Frameworks and other planning documents; and Sustainable Community Strategies. An explanation of the policy context is set out in Appendix 6.

[7] Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000: Section 89
[8] Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000: Section 85

Who approves the plan?

4.5. Many people and organisations commented on this Management Plan during its preparation. The plan was subject to assessments under European directives and to public consultation between February and November 2013. The AONB Partnership (see section 18) endorses the plan and relevant local authorities have formally adopted it. It is published with the assistance of the partners responsible for much of the plan's delivery. The Partnership Panel will review the Partnership Delivery Plan, which sets out the programme for achieving the Management Plan's aims and objectives, annually.

This Management Plan, the Strategic Environmental Assessment, the Habitat Regulations Assessment and the Equalities Impact Assessment, the Partnership Delivery Plan and supporting documents are all available on the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB website:

www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk

You can make enquiries about these documents to the Cranborne Chase AONB team through the website or via info@cranbornechase.org.uk.

5. Context for this plan

The statutory planning process

5.1. At the time of writing this plan most of the Local Planning Authorities of the AONB are moving towards adopting their Core Strategies and this has already been done for the New Forest. The previously adopted South Wiltshire Core Strategy is in the process of being subsumed into the Wiltshire-wide Core Strategy. The Core Strategies will be the primary planning documents for the coming 15 years and it is therefore important that AONB topics are clearly and appropriately identified and handled.

5.2. Virtually all of the extensive governmental planning policy guidance documents were replaced at the end of March 2012 by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)(Appendix 7), which is very much shorter. Whilst there is clear support for the protection of AONBs, the brevity of the Framework means there is considerable scope for interpretation. The Framework makes clear there is a general presumption in favour of sustainable development but within AONBs more restrictive policies apply. Furthermore planning permission should be refused for major developments except in exceptional circumstances and only when they are in the public interest. There is however, obvious emphasis on social, economic, and environmental improvements being sought together through the planning process with the clear implication that one aspect, for example the economic benefits, does not override the others.

5.3. There has also been considerable concern due to a statement that development proposals could be approved if appropriate planning policies were not in place by March 2013 and the requirement to have at least a five year supply of housing land identified. In reality developers and the Planning Inspectorate have had to recognise

that it is appropriate to give considerable weight to Core Strategy / Local Plan Policies that are a long way down the path to being adopted.

5.4. Most people encounter the planning process through what used to be called 'development control' and is now referred to as 'development management'. By providing extensions to permitted development rights, charging for planning applications and pre-application advice, and making provision for community infrastructure levy, there are however more, not less, matters for an applicant to address.

5.5. The Localism Act 2011 and the NPPF make provision for Neighbourhood Plans (Appendix 8) and Neighbourhood Development Orders at a parish or group of parishes level. These plans can increase the amount of development and speed up the implementation of that development as long as they are compliant with the relevant Core Strategy. Such plans must involve a local referendum. Village Plans and Village Design Statements are separate matters which can, if appropriately prepared, still be adopted by the planning authority as Supplementary Planning Documents.

External factors

5.6. Three main factors are external to the AONB but will have ongoing effects on it:
- climate change
- fluctuation world demand and prices
- severe economic conditions

5.7. Whilst the Partnership cannot pro-actively influence theses three factors, it will make every effort to respond to the impacts they have. They are all facts of everyday life that we need to be aware of, keep up to date with, and act accordingly. They are accepted as strands that run throughout this document.

Climate change

5.8. A changing global climate, principally caused by the activities of man, is now regarded as an indisputable fact by the UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP)[9], the Government and local authorities. There is a broad consensus on the likely changes to the climate of Southern England, and therefore the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB, over the next few decades (Appendix 9).

5.9. In summary, the likely changes are that:
- summers will become warmer and drier
- winters will become milder and wetter
- extreme weather conditions will become more frequent

5.10. These changes have the potential to affect the landscapes, wildlife and communities of the AONB. The range of crops grown by farmers will change and water flows in rivers and streams could become more erratic. Habitats may expand, contract or migrate. New species may enter the area, some bringing disease or pests that 'native' species are not immune to. Tourism pressures could increase as more

[9]The UKCIP web site as the authoritative source for scientifically sound research and government policy. www.ukcip.org.uk

people decide to holiday in the UK. All of these factors would affect which flora and fauna can flourish in the area[10].

5.11. Climate change mitigation describes measures or actions aimed at reducing the long-term risk and hazards of climate change. Climate change adaptation describes measures or actions that help individuals, groups and natural systems to prepare for and respond to changes in the climate. Alongside other organisations and individuals, the AONB will support and promote mitigation and adaptation measures wherever practicable.

Fluctuating world demand and prices

5.12. The landscapes of the AONB are dominated by farmland and woodland, and changes in these land uses will always have a major influence on the natural beauty of the area.

5.13. Fluctuations in the price received for cereals and associated products together with variable costs of growing those products, are making future arable profitability hard to predict. Livestock farming, which is crucial to the management of special habitats like chalk grassland, has been in decline for some time.

5.14. The fluctuating market for UK timber has had a pronounced effect on the area's woodlands. Many woodlands no longer produce significant volumes of timber and are often more valuable for recreation, conservation, and game management than timber products.

5.15. Within Europe, reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy and new agri-environment schemes in the UK, directly affect farming practices and the extent to which farmers undertake conservation work as part of their operations.

5.16. At a global scale, the fluctuating demands for food and timber worldwide have direct impacts on market conditions. Farmers and foresters have to deal with a huge amount of uncertainty, regarding the potential demand for their produce and the price it will fetch when sold. Planning and developing their businesses is made difficult amidst these ever-changing conditions.

Severe economic conditions

5.17. For a number of years now, the UK economy has been in recession with periods of slow, or minimal, growth. Government and Local Authority budgets have been cut whilst the demand for services remains. Many charity and volunteer organisations have also been badly affected by the economic downturn, whilst there is an expectation that the 'Big Society' (Appendix 10) will take on providing many of the services that were once publically funded. The competition for grant funding through various programmes is now more intense than ever, mainly from a noticeable increase in applications.

5.18. The severe economic conditions being felt across the country are referred to specifically in the Rural Economy section of the Plan. It is clear, however, that whether it is agriculture, a village shop, number of visitors, public transport or the

[10] 'Natural Solutions to a changing climate on the Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase', 2010

type of planning applications received, that the current austere economic conditions affect every facet of life.

What does the natural environment mean to us?

5.19. The natural world touches our lives every day. Whether we live in a rural village or in the wider countryside, we rely on the natural systems that support us. Our natural environment underpins our health, wealth and happiness and gives us a sense of place, pride and identity.

5.20. A healthy natural environment helps local authorities in their responsibilities to:

- support economic and social regeneration,
- improve public health,
- improve educational outcomes,
- reduce crime and antisocial behaviour,
- help communities adapt to climate change; and
- improve the quality of life across an entire area.

5.21. Natural goods and services (or 'natural capital') provided by the environment are important for business. Businesses can gain value from managing their impact on natural capital. They are aware of the risks to their brand image, security of resources, and their financial bottom line if they do not.

5.22. Land managers have shaped our landscapes and wildlife heritage over thousands of years. Some 95% of the AONB's land is under agricultural or woodland management. The decisions that farmers and land managers take determine, largely, whether society can achieve its ambitions for water, wildlife, healthy soil and food production.

5.23. Like other AONB Partnerships, we utilise an ecosystems approach that values, sustains and promotes the benefits that the natural environment of the AONB provides for society, including clean air and water, food, carbon storage and other services vital to the nation's health and well-being[11]. An appreciation and valuation of our 'Natural Capital' (Appendix 11) makes explicit the link between the health of natural systems and the natural goods and services that support human well-being. It seeks to maintain the integrity and functioning of natural systems as a whole to avoid rapid, undesirable ecological change. It also recognises that the impacts of human activities are a matter of social choice, and are as integral to natural system interactions as natural systems are to human activities. The national network of Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) has been set up to champion the idea of valuing nature and the AONB Partnership will work with LNPs within the area to this end

5.24. Local Authorities in the AONB either have developed or are developing Green Infrastructure (GI) (Appendix 12) policies for their areas. GI is the physical environment within and between the towns and villages. It is a network of open spaces, including formal parks, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, waterways, street trees and open countryside that aims to deliver multiple benefits to people and wildlife. These include ecosystem services, the improvement and linking of habitats

[11] Defra and Natural England advice note to AONB Partnerships 2012

for wildlife and increased opportunities for open air recreation, improved health and well being.

Benefits from the natural environment

5.25. To maintain natural systems within environmental limits, the value of environmental goods and services needs consideration, as well as the future costs arising from any increase in environmental risks resulting from actions that affect the AONB. This Management Plan aims to sustain the area's environmental capital. Table 1 lists the component environmental goods and services.

Table 1: Component environmental services[12]

Provisioning services	**Cultural services**	**Regulating services**
Biomass energy	Biodiversity	Pest regulation
Food provision	Genetic diversity	Pollination
Timber provision	Geodiversity	Regulating climate change
Water availability	Recreation	Regulating soil erosion
	Sense of history	Regulating soil quality
	Sense of place/inspiration	Regulating water flow
	Sense of tranquillity	Regulating water quality

Five Principles on which this Plan is founded

5.26. There are five principles that underpin this Management Plan and provide a framework for managing change within the AONB. These are:

1. *Partnership Working* – The AONB Partnership does not have the resources to undertake all the work determined in this Plan. It is understood that current and new partners will work together to achieve its objectives.

2. *Landscape Scale Approach* – Sites and projects within the AONB will not be seen in isolation, instead the landscape scale approach involves enlarging, improving and joining up areas of land to create a connected ecological network across the AONB, for the benefit of both wildlife and people.

5.27.

3. *Landscape Functions* – or what the landscape provides for us. The landscapes of the AONB provide us with many 'goods and services'. These range from measurable things such as fresh food, water, energy and clean air, along with less easily defined benefits such as inspiration, awareness, health and well-being. These landscape functions embrace 'ecosystem services'. The objectives in this Plan all aim to conserve and enhance these landscape functions.

4. *Ecosystem Approach* – Conserving and enhancing how the landscape functions and provides us with the benefits above, is called the 'ecosystem approach' (Appendix 13). This approach has three strands:

[12]Adopted from Natural England's National Character Area Profiles 132,133 & 134 - http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/587130

- 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 all benefit from services provided by the natural environment.
- Those that benefit from the services provided within the AONB, and those who are involved in the management of them, should play a central role in making decisions.

5. *Sustainable Development* – this has been defined as 'development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'[13]. This Plan is underpinned throughout by the principle of sustainable development (Appendix 14).

6. Plan Structure

6.1. Building on the purposes of designation, the issues affecting the AONB are presented under three themes:

- Conserving and enhancing Outstanding Landscapes
- *Conserving and enhancing* Living and Working Landscapes
- *Conserving and enhancing* Special Landscapes to Enjoy

These themes are prefaced by an overview of the landscape character types, their special qualities, and associated spatial issues.

6.2. The three themes are then separated into ten topics, which are followed by three aspects of 'getting things done':

Outstanding Landscapes

1. Landscape
2. Natural Environment
3. Historic and Cultural Environment

Living and Working Landscapes

4. Rural Land Management
5. Rural Economy
6. Planning and Transport
7. Viable Rural Communities

Special Landscapes to Enjoy

8. Awareness and Understanding
9. Involvement and Learning
10. Access and Wellbeing

Partnerships, Funding, and Implementation

i. The AONB Partnership
ii. Funding
iii. Implementation

[13] Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission), *Our Common Future*, published by Oxford University Press (1987)

6.3. For each of the ten topics, the plan includes:

Special Characteristics
These are particular features, for each element, that are unique to this AONB

The Aim (the eleven aims make up the overall 'Vision' for the AONB)
The difference we want to make for the AONB.

Achievements to Date
Work the AONB and partners have already undertaken

The Key Issues
Many issues affect the AONB.. The key issues identified are those the Partnership feels it can address during the life of this plan.

The Issues Explained
This is information that explains the key issues in more detail.

Objectives
Specific things (not in any order of priority) that we want to achieve in order to make progress towards the aim. Wherever possible, we have tried to make these measurable, with a realistic timescale for completion.

Policies
How we will achieve the objectives.

6.4. The ten sections are not a checklist of all the activities that affect the AONB. Rather, they provide a framework for setting out the range of topics relevant to the statutory purpose for designating the area as an AONB.

6.5. None of the sections of this plan operates in isolation. There are many connections between them. Many of the objectives and policies relate to more than just the topic in which they appear. Tackling the issues identified depends upon integrated action. Action taken to achieve one set of objectives should complement and reinforce the achievement of objectives elsewhere in the Plan (Appendix 15).

6.6. Work undertaken to implement this Management Plan will be set out annually in the AONB Partnership Delivery Plan. Rather than set out work for a five year period, the Partnership feels that an annual Delivery Plan can best reflect current circumstances, opportunities and resources.

7. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER, QUALITIES AND SPATIAL ISSUES

Introduction

7.1. The characteristics and qualities of the landscapes of this AONB are the fundamental basis for the area being designated of national importance.

7.2. These are described by broad landscape character type and specific landscape character area in the *Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2003)*. The key characteristics of the landscape types are set out here to provide an understanding of the scope, range, and scale of these landscape qualities.

7.3. Further details of the character of the landscape areas are in both the *Integrated Landscape Character Assessment* and *Sustaining Landscape Character (2006)*. The inherent sensitivities of the landscapes of the AONB are detailed in the *Landscape Sensitivity Study (2007)*. The *Integrated Landscape Character Assessment* – carried out in accordance with the 2002 good practice guidance - has been supplemented by the detailed *Historic Landscape Characterisation (2008)*. Important woodland, habitat, and landscape matters are addressed in *A Landscape view of trees and woodlands (2009)*. Topic by topic and area by area attention is given to sustaining our cultural heritage in the *Historic Environment Action Plans (2012)*.

Issues and Challenges

7.4. Clearly this wealth of information and analysis contributes to our understanding of the character of the AONB, and although it is too substantial to repeat here all the documents should be referred to for a fuller understanding of the character and qualities of this AONB.

7.5. There are issues and challenges faced by the landscapes and communities of Cranborne Chase AONB that apply to many or most landscape character types. Whilst the viability of family farms and development pressures arising from demographic changes are two examples the challenges of renewable energy are probably the most widespread. The growing of crops, such as oil seeds and biomass, on agricultural land as alternative fuels stimulates a debate on whether farms are primarily food or fuel producers. Proposals to install fields of photovoltaic (PV) panels provide an additional strand to that debate as well as instigating long term, almost permanent, changes to the appearance of the countryside.

7.6. Visually intrusive energy developments impact not just on the aesthetics of the AONB landscapes and associated views but also the integrity of these finest of the nation's landscapes.

7.7. The appearance, and appreciation, of the AONB from areas outside relates to all landscape types, as do the qualities of the views to and from the AONB. Nevertheless, this is particularly relevant to the escarpment, hill, and downland landscapes where elevated positions facilitate long and wide ranging views. The

areas within those views contribute to the setting of the AONB, an aspect that is increasing valued for heritage assets.

7.8. Furthermore the funding of incentives and actions to conserve and enhance at a landscape scale is a challenge for the whole AONB.

7.9. This appraisal outlines the landscape characteristics and qualities of the eight landscape types of this AONB. It then focuses on the additional issues and challenges that are particularly pertinent to each of them.

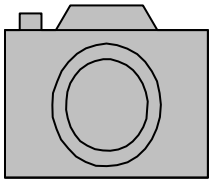
Landscape type 1: Chalk Escarpments

Character Area 1A Melbury to Blandford Chalk Escarpment
Character Area 1B West Wiltshire Downs Chalk Escarpment
Character Area 1C Fovant and Chalke Chalk Escarpment

- Dramatic chalk escarpments eroded into spurs and deep coombs
- Underlying geology of Lower, Middle and Upper Chalk giving rise to predominantly calcareous soils
- Areas of unimproved chalk downland of international importance
- Steepness of slope leads to an absence of farmsteads and settlements
- Field systems on lower slopes, including strip lynchets close to Medieval villages sited along the spring line
- Improved pasture and arable fields occupy the shallower, more accessible slopes where straight-sided fields represent late 18th / early 19th century enclosure
- Cross dykes and Bronze Age features on the escarpment edge
- Hanging woodland and sunken lanes are features of the steep, enclosing chalk coombs
- Panoramic views over adjacent landscapes

Issues and challenges

- Decreases in livestock grazing leading to loss of grassland habitat
- Visibility of changes within the landscape and areas round it
- A350 corridor, intensification of use and highway paraphernalia, and potential visibility of any development
- Maintenance of heritage assets



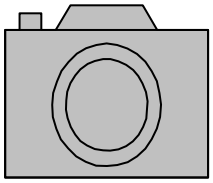
Landscape type 2: Open Chalk Downland

Character Area 2A West Wiltshire Downs
Character Area 2B Southern Downland Belt

- Large-scale landform of broad rolling hills interspersed by dry river valleys
- Dominated by Upper Chalk geology with drift clay with flint capping, and associated woodland and tree clumps, on higher ground
- A predominantly arable landscape divided into large, rectangular units with straight-sided fields representing late 18th / early 19th century enclosure
- Remnant chalk grassland, ancient broad-leaved woodland and yew woodland are important habitats
- Main roads cut across the undulating landscape linking major settlements on either side of the AONB
- Large open skies and distant panoramic views
- Low density scattered settlement of farmsteads and the occasional downland village
- Numerous Neolithic burial and ritual monuments and Bronze Age barrows
- Later pre-historic and Romano-British ditches and defensive earthworks

Issues and challenges

- Arable crop changes influenced by globalisation, commodity prices, farm inputs and costs
- Exposed transport corridors – A303 / A350 / A354 – intensification of use and highway paraphernalia, and potential visibility of any development
- Erosion and truncation of Ancient Monuments
- Hedge planting blocking views and modifying character



Landscape type 3: Wooded Chalk Downland

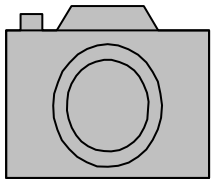
Character Area 3A Cranborne Chase

- An elevated downland landscape with dramatic intercecting combe valleys and rounded upstanding ridges
- Dominated by an Upper Chalk geology with drift clay with flints capping higher ground
- A well wooded landscape with large woods, shelter belts, copses and clumps creating a series of enclosed spaces or ‘rooms’ surrounded by trees
- Mosaic of unenclosed downland, improved grassland and arable fields, dating from 19th century enclosure, between the woodland

- Chalk grassland and ancient woodland provide important nature conservation habitats
- Typically low density, scattered settlement of individual farmsteads with the occasional downland village or Medieval hunting lodge
- Visible archaeological features including Neolithic long barrows, Bronze Age round barrows, prehistoric to Romano-British earthworks and field systems
- Panoramic views from upstanding chalk ridges to adjacent ridges and into valleys / coombs

Issues and challenges

- Conservation of heritage / archaeological interests
- Impacts of climate changes on mixed farming and forestry / ancient woodlands
- Connectivity between woodlands and maintenance of enclosures
- Hedge planting and reduced management blocking views and modifying character



Landscape type 4: Downland Hills

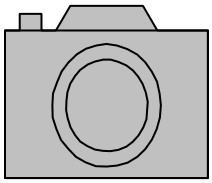
Character Area 4A Martin – Whitsbury Downland Hills

- A series of prominent hills and knolls
- Dominated by Upper Chalk geology giving rise to argyllic brown earths
- Land cover is predominantly arable, with improved pasture on lower ground towards the river valleys
- Dominated by a pattern of medium to large Parliamentary type fields
- Deciduous and coniferous woodland silhouetted against the skyline, clothing the crests of the slopes
- Low density, dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads
- The absence of major roads contributes to the feeling of remoteness
- A number of ancient woodlands including Burwood, Ashwood Copse and Boulsbury Wood (SSSI)
- Neolithic and Bronze Age burial monuments, prehistoric and Romano-British enclosures, settlements, field systems and hill forts contribute to the plethora of visible, historic features of the landscape
- Panoramic views from hill tops

Issues and challenges

- Conservation of archaeology and ancient woodlands

- Development pressures on the villages
- 'Horsiculture' and change of sense of place
- Decrease in agricultural stock grazing



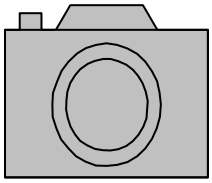
Landscape type 5: Chalk River Valleys

Character Area 5A Wylyle Chalk River Valley
Character Area 5B Ebble Chalk River Valley
Character Area 5C Stour and Avon Tributary Valleys

- Strongly enclosing valley sides, frequently eroded to form dry valleys
- The steepest valley slopes have retained their semi-natural chalk grassland or are clothed in 'hanging' woodland while the shallow valley sides have been exploited for cultivation
- The clear, fast-flowing chalk rivers are a key habitat
- The floodplains support water meadows, cress beds and damp pasture
- The valleys typically provide convenient transport corridors, containing major roads and railways
- Straight-sided fields represent late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary enclosure, with large scale fields resulting from 20th century boundary loss
- Field boundaries and footpaths often reflect the tracks, droves and hollow ways that took livestock from and to the downs in the Medieval period
- A series of linear spring line villages typically lie at the foot of the valley slopes
- Isolated Neolithic long barrows, Bronze Age round barrows and water meadow channels on the valley floor contribute to visible archaeology
- The rural landscapes are sometimes interrupted by the large volumes of traffic that use the valleys as transport corridors

Issues and challenges

- Waterflows and water resource management
- 'Horsiculture' and loss of sense of place
- Development pressures (expensive properties and high demand)
- Highway 'improvements'
- Infrastructure clutter (eg telephone & electricity poles, signs)



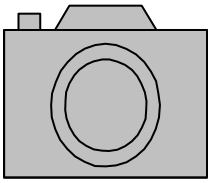
Landscape type 6: Greensand Terrace

Character Area 6A Fovant Greensand Terrace
Character Area 6B Kilmington Greensand Terrace

- Flat aprons of land from which the dramatic chalk escarpments and hills rise
- Dominated by arable fields of Parliamentary enclosure
- Large, geometric fields and open skies contrast with the smaller scale, enclosed landscape of the adjacent Greensand Hills
- Upper Greensand geology giving rise to rich brown earth soils that have a high agricultural value
- Land use is predominantly agricultural, including cereal cropping, grass rotations, dairy farming and stock rearing
- Mixed woodland runs in discontinuous belts along the base of the chalk escarpment
- Coniferous belts shelter dispersed and isolated farmsteads
- Settlements tend to be at the interface with, or within, the Greensand Hills
- General absence of prehistoric earthworks

Issues and challenges

- A30 corridor
- Highway paraphernalia, traffic volumes, and loss of tranquillity
- Field sizes, hedge management, and pressures on farming
- Development pressures



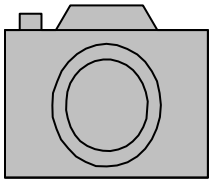
Landscape type 7: Greensand Hills

Character Area 7A Donhead – Fovant Hills
Character Area 7B Penselwood – Longleat Hills

- Upper Greensand is exposed as a band between the older clays and younger chalk
- The Greensand typically forms upstanding hills that have been eroded by tributaries of the major rivers into a series of rounded knolls and deep valleys
- Hills support a large proportion of woodland, both deciduous and coniferous
- Country houses and estates, set within landscaped parkland contribute to the scenic beauty of the area
- Distinctive patterns of settlement include villages hidden in the shelter of the deep valleys
- Fortifications are strategically located on the hilltops
- Ancient sunken lanes wind their way through the hills
- Small and irregular fields characterise areas of agricultural land use
- Meadows and wet woodland are typical of the valley floors

Issues and challenges

- Heritage conservation especially parklands
- Infrastructure clutter (eg telephone & electricity poles, signs)
- Viability of commercial forestry
- Livestock grazing



Landscape type 8: Rolling Clay Vales

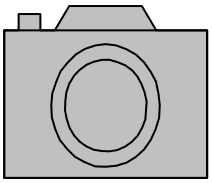
Character Area 8A The Vale of Wardour

- Predominantly clay vale occupying a series of eroded anticlinal axes between the chalk downlands
- Varied underlying geology with many different geological exposures
- A mixed agricultural landscape with small scale fields of lush improved pasture and arable with water meadows on the valley floor
- Wooded character, with broadleaf and mixed woodland and copses (some of ancient origin) scattered across the vale, reinforced by lush hedgerows
- Layout of fields, farms and villages illustrate the pattern of Medieval settlement, clearance and farming

- Rivers and their tributaries meander through the vale
- A sense of enclosure is provided by the surrounding upland landscapes
- Villages dispersed over the floor of the vale

Issues and challenges

- Viability of family farms and dairying
- Water regimes (Nadder and Sem rivers)
- Transportation and vehicle accessibility
- Infrastructure clutter (eg telephone & electicity poles, signs)
- Development pressures, particularly around Tisbury, and potential loss of character



CONSERVING AND ENHANCING OUTSTANDING LANDSCAPES

8. Landscape

The topography, geology and vegetation, and the ways they have evolved with the climate and human usage, come together to form the landscapes we experience around us today. All landscapes have character; however, that character is more substantial, obvious, and extensive in the especially important Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We use characteristics and qualities to describe and assess those cherished landscapes.

8.1. Special characteristics and qualities that make this AONB special, as a whole, with regards to landscape:

- A peaceful, tranquil, deeply rural area; largely 'unspoilt' and maintained as a living agricultural landscape.
- The actual scale of the landscape is often grand and dramatic with the 'intensity' of landscape character almost palpable.
- The open downland offers wide expansive skies, dominant skylines, dramatic escarpments and panoramic views.
- Unity of the underlying chalk expressed in the distinctive and sometimes dramatically sculpted landforms, open vistas, escarpments and coombes.
- A rich land use history with many ancient hilltop forts and barrows
- Overlain by a woodland mosaic – including the eye-catching hill-top copses, veteran parkland trees and avenues, extensive areas of wooded downland and ancient forest together with more recent game coverts.
- Three major river valleys with their individual distinctiveness.
- Distinctive settlement pattern along the valleys and vales, and small Medieval villages along the scarp spring line.
- Local vernacular building styles include the patterns of knapped flint, brick, cob, clunch, clay tiles and straw thatch.
- Strong sense of place and local distinctiveness represented by the use of local building materials and small-scale vernacular features such as the sunken lanes and distinctive black and white signposts.
- Strong sense of remoteness.
- Expanse of dark night skies.

Aim

8.2. We want the unique character, tranquillity and special qualities of the landscapes in the AONB to be conserved and enhanced. We want a widespread understanding of the area's special qualities. We want these qualities strengthened by informed decision-making. When change happens, it is to be consistent with the character of the landscape and the setting of the AONB. We will take opportunities to restore landscape features that require it.

Achievements to date

- Publications
  The AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Sensitivity Study, and Tranquillity Study are being effectively used by planning policy and development management officers within the nine local planning authorities. The AONB team clearly identifies landscape character in all planning application responses.

- Landscape Protection
  Potentially negative impacts on the landscape have been avoided through advice, guidance and input to specific development applications and appeals

- Landscape Enhancement Advice
  Detailed discussions with Wessex Water led to a four-year funding package to enhance the landscapes surrounding a major pipeline development.

- AONB Tranquillity Study
  The methodology behind the Tranquillity Study is now valued as good practice. This is now being used by the New Forest National Park and other Protected Areas in the southwest to determine their own levels of tranquillity.

- Undergrounding of Power Lines
  Power lines have been laid underground to enhance the landscape from the viewing area in front of the Fovant Badges (eight military badges cut into the chalk) and around the site of the 13th Century chapel at Fifield Bavant and in the conservation area of Horningsham.

Key Issues

1. Understanding and Sustaining Landscape Character
   It is crucial that all landscape managers and planners understand, appreciate, and use the Landscape Character Assessment.

2. Monitoring Landscape Change Over Time
   Long-term, objective monitoring of landscape change takes time and resources. Fixed-point photography locations will be used to track changes although it will be a while before it helps to determine long-term trends. Such trends may be a result of global issues such as climate change, food prices and/or demand affecting rural land management.

3. Enhancing Tranquillity and Dark Night Skies

National data shows the general loss of dark night skies and the risk of light pollution encroaching on the dark skies of the AONB[14].

The Issues Explained

8.3. The AONB is a large area with both consistent character, for example the downlands of West Wiltshire, and considerable diversity and contrast. There are the ancient forests and woodland of Cranborne Chase that contrast with the deeply incised chalk coombes close by. In addition, there are the more intimate and secluded chalk river valleys with their distinctive pattern of settlement.

8.4. Its special qualities include its diversity, distinctiveness, sense of history and remoteness, dark night skies, tranquillity. It is deeply rural and free from development. Landscapes are sensitive to many factors to a greater or lesser degree. Some crops create a change that lasts a few months while the planting or felling of woodland can cause change that persists for decades. Built development can introduce changes that are rather more permanent. There is a decline in the quality of some characteristic features. This is brought about by machine trimming of hedgerows; the planting of hedges contrary to landscape character; or planting that cuts out views. A greater understanding of the character of the landscapes will inform decisions that help to conserve and enhance the AONB.

8.5. Meaningful analysis of landscape change over time can use considerable resources, depending on the aim of any such study. A tried and tested methodology using fixed-point photography in Devon produces a series of repeatable images through time. This is now being applied in this AONB. There is a strict timetable in place for the taking of a series of photographs at twelve locations.

8.6. Tranquillity is important for our mental and physical well-being. It improves our quality of life. Power lines, masts, cars, roads, light pollution and building developments can erode the tranquillity that means so much to all of us. We want to ensure the dark starry skies of much of the AONB continue to exist and are appreciated. Security lights, floodlights and some street lighting can break into the darkness, lighting up the surrounding area. Some of this light is necessary in order to keep people safe. However, inappropriate lighting can waste energy and reduce landscape quality[15].

[14] National Framework Data sheet PLNB9 2013: based on National Tranquillity Mapping Data 2006 developed for the Campaign to Protect Rural England and Natural England by the University of Northumbria. OS Licence number 100018881.

[15] E.g. Dorset County Council Local Transport Plan (LTP3) 2011 to 2026 Policy LTP C-4 - The street lighting network will be managed and improved to increase energy efficiency, to minimise environmental impact and to enhance conservation areas and areas identified for public realm improvements. Alterations to street lighting should not compromise road safety or personal security.

Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE		**POLICIES**	
LAN A	The landscape character, tranquillity and special qualities of the AONB are fully understood by policy makers and land managers.	**LAN1**	Review the 2003 Integrated Landscape Character Assessment to include relevant elements of the Historic Landscape Characterisation, Sensitivity, Tranquillity and other studies.
		LAN2	Develop guidance from the reviewed Integrated Landscape Character Assessment to inform and assimilate with land use planning and landscape management.
LAN B	The landscape character, tranquillity and special qualities of the AONB and its settings are conserved and enhanced.	**LAN3**	Encourage, support and analyse research on landscape issues affecting the AONB and its surroundings to inform policy formulation and the consequent action required.
		LAN4	Determine the factors that contribute to, or detract from, tranquillity in order to more effectively conserve and enhance levels of tranquillity through additional policy formulation and action.
		LAN5	Pursue opportunities to underground and remove power and telecommunications lines and poles.
LAN C	Understand the rate and degree of landscape change within the AONB.	**LAN6**	Undertake fixed point photography biannually and prepare a 'Landscape Change' report every five years) to identify areas and/or features where landscape character, condition or quality has been or is being lost to inform potential restoration and enhancement measures.
		LAN7	Maintain an appropriate and effective record of the presence and condition of the AONB's visual, natural, historical and cultural resource primarily through collation of external sources of data or surveying.
LAN D	Dark Night Sky status is secured for the AONB.	**LAN8**	Actively promote the benefits that Dark Night Sky status would bring to the AONB and surrounds to partners and communities, to encourage action and support for an application to the International Dark-Sky Association by end of 2016

(Additional Information: Landscape Appendix 28)

9. Natural Environment

Our natural resources such as geology and soils, air and water provide the fundamentals of life itself; both for the rich diversity and abundance of wildlife that thrives across the AONB, and ourselves. We need to better understand, promote and value all that the natural environment provides us with, to conserve and enhance it and address the increasing uncertainties caused by climatic, economic and social change.

9.1. Special characteristics and qualities that makes this AONB special, as a whole, with regards to the natural environment:

- Main geological features are chalk plateaux, scarp and dip slopes, clay with flint deposits and valleys – both dry and occupied by rivers and streams.
- Rich ecological character – expressed in the diversity of habitats including the distinctive species-rich chalk downland, clear fast flowing chalk streams and rivers, ancient and calcareous woodlands and rare chalk heath and water meadows.
- Clear water supporting important fish and other aquatic species that are sensitive to changes in water quality.
- Extensive tracts of arable land supporting some rare farmland birds and arable plants.
- Cranborne Chase is particularly notable for its unusually high proportion of ancient woodland within a chalk landscape. This is largely due to its historic status as a royal hunting area.
- Areas of woodland actively managed by coppicing.

Aim

9.2. We want the sustainable management of all natural resources in the AONB. The AONB will be a place where wildlife thrives and is able to move freely across the area. The natural environment will be resilient to the effects of climate change.

Achievements to date

- South Wiltshire Farmland Bird Project
  The project concentrates on working with farmers to provide habitat for six bird species, which have suffered the worst declines (see Appendix 16). Farmers are encouraged to adopt measures that provide nesting habitat and foraging areas. There are other wildlife benefits, particularly for rare arable plants and the brown hare. Our work is supported by Wessex Water and Natural England. Since 2009, 85 farmers have received advice on creating and managing habitat for farmland birds. Over 600ha of habitat has been created specifically for farmland birds and rare arable plants. The Project Officer appeared on the BBC Countryfile programme to promote the project in 2013.

- Arable Plant Distribution 2013
  Report on rare arable flora 'hotspots' together with indications of where good arable flora communities are likely to be present.

- Stepping Stones Project
  In collaboration with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and North Wessex Downs AONB, creating wildlife networks that link good chalk grassland habitats. This is a three-year project involving communities, farmers, biologists and volunteers across 60,000 hectares around Salisbury Plain.

- Training of Volunteers
  Around 50 volunteers have been trained to provide the Environment Agency with early warning of water pollution at 24 sites; to identify signs of Ash Dieback caused by the fungus *Chalara fraxinea*; and to identify and record ancient, veteran and 'notable' trees through the Hampshire County Council funded Ancient Trees Project. Over 150 trees have been recorded in five parishes.

Key issues

1. Fragmented and Isolated Habitats.
   The Government is committed to halting the loss of wildlife and expects AONB Management Plans to deliver a part of the solution. It wants natural systems and networks that are fit for purpose, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people[16].

2. Farmland Wildlife
   Many species of birds, butterflies, plants and mammals that were once common across the AONB are in decline.

3. Valuing the Benefits We Receive from the Natural Environment
   There is a need to prove that the natural environment provides benefits of measurable value to society and to improve understanding of that fact to all.

4. Land Management Practices
   Some land management practices can lead to a decline in wildlife and reduce soil and water quality.

5. Alien Species, Pests and Pathogens
   These increase costs for farmers, foresters and landowners and increase uncertainty.

6. Climate Change
   Ongoing climate change may pose a threat to the characteristic landscapes and natural beauty of the area as habitats evolve.

The Issues Explained

9.3. The natural capital[17] that the AONB area holds in trust is very high in quality and quantity. The chalk grassland and rivers, with their rare wildlife, are of international

[16] Defra (2011) Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services
[17] The natural environment of the AONB is of very high quality. This is sometimes referred to as its 'natural capital'.(see Appendix 11)

importance. A significant proportion of the woodland is of ancient origin and the area contains some of the best stands of ancient trees in Europe[18]. The extensive tracts of arable land support rare arable plants and are a stronghold for farmland birds.

9.4. As stated in '*Making Space for Nature*', the creation of a landscape that has 'bigger' wildlife sites of 'better' quality, more species and individuals, and is 'better joined up', is a key aspiration in this Plan[19]. The majority of the land needed to achieve this is currently under some form of agricultural, forestry or game management. It is vital that habitat improvement and creation becomes a part of viable land management systems and businesses.

9.5. During the last few decades, management regimes that were focussed solely on creating higher crop yields have led to habitat change and the loss of wildlife. Since the 1970s, the UK populations of many of our farmland birds have been in steep decline. In the south west, farmland bird numbers fell by 45% between 1970 and 1994; and a further 8% between 1994 and 2007. Populations of rare arable plants have declined dramatically over the past 60 years. They are the most critically threatened group of wild plants in the UK.

Ecosystem Markets Task Force

9.6. On 5th March 2013, the Ecosystem Markets Task Force published its Final Report. The report states the business case for why nature matters. It makes practical recommendations for both Government and business, where interventions would assist in the creation and development of new markets, enhancing opportunities for growth that also benefit the environment. The report affirms that business is often unaware of its true reliance on nature, and that a new approach is needed to maximise opportunities and manage future risks.

Report to Defra from the Ecosystem Markets Task Force March 2013

"Business is often unaware of its true reliance on nature. Natural systems provide us with food, shelter, water, energy, health and air and protect us from costly floods. In many cases, nature's resources and services can provide all these dividends indefinitely, provided we look after them".

The Task Force presents five priority business opportunities that deliver substantial benefits for both nature and business:

- Biodiversity Offsetting: securing net gain for nature through planning and development
- Bio-energy and anaerobic digestion on farms: closing the loop by using farm waste to generate energy
- Sustainable Local Woodfuel: active, sustainable woodland management supporting local economies
- Nature-based Certification & Labelling: connecting consumers with nature
- Water Cycle Catchment Management: integrating nature into water, waste water and flood management

'Realising nature's value: The Final Report of the Ecosystem Markets Task Force'. March 2013
www.defra.gov.uk/ecosystem-markets/files/Ecosystem-Markets-Task-Force-Final-Report-.pdf

[18] http://www.ancient-treehunt.org.uk/ancienttrees/findingthem

[19] Lawton, J.H., Brotherton, P.N.M., Brown, V.K., Elphick, C., Fitter, A.H., Forshaw, J., Haddow, R.W., Hilborne, S., Leafe, R.N., Mace, G.M., Southgate, M.P., Sutherland, W.J., Tew, T.E., Varley, J., & Wynne, G.R. (2010) *Making Space for Nature: a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network*. Report to Defra.

9.7. There is an increase in the number of alien species, pests and pathogens entering the natural environment. Currently there are around 30 new pests and diseases affecting livestock, and 15 affecting trees in the UK. These are having a harmful effect on the natural environment, our places and our livelihoods. Several alien species, pests and pathogens (specific figures unavailable) are affecting the natural environment of the AONB.

9.8. Climate change continues to influence the natural world. The AONB's climate is likely to become warmer and wetter in winter, and hotter and drier in summer. There will be more extreme weather events resulting in droughts and floods. County councils now have a duty to manage surface water flood risks[20] and this is likely to involve the AONB team. Uncertainty and severity in the weather system poses very real threats to our way of life and our environment.

9.9. Although it is possible to reduce the effects of climate change with positive action, significant changes will still occur. This is because past emissions have already raised carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere. The area needs help to adapt to the impacts of climate change in a way that helps to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB. Further climate change information and the range of mitigation and adaption measures are shown in Appendix 9[21].

Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE		**POLICIES**	
NEA	Coherent and resilient ecological networks are established and maintained across the AONB	**NE1**	Work with partners, such as relevant Local Nature Partnerships, to initiate, encourage and support landscape scale projects which seek to enlarge and link important habitats that are fragmented or isolated, restoring those that are damaged or degraded, and improving the quality of the surrounding environment.
		NE2	Support landowners, managers, communities and volunteers to protect, conserve and enhance biodiversity including veteran trees, ancient woodland, species-rich grassland, arable landscapes, rivers and wetland areas as vital components of the AONB landscape, alongside more uncommon habitats such as still waters and marshes.
		NE3	Encourage agri-environment schemes and specific prescriptions that deliver the improvements in habitat quality consistent with the establishment of a coherent and effective ecological network.

[20] Flood and Water Management Act 2010
[21] Responding to the impacts of climate change on the natural environment: Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase (NE116), Natural England, March 2009
http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/52003?category=10003

NE B	The benefits and services provided by the natural environment are understood and accurately valued by decision-makers at all levels.	**NE4**	Research and distribute relevant information that will provide decision-makers with the accurate and appropriate data for better decision-making.
		NE5	Support research programmes, such as Wessex BESS[22], which enable option evaluation and decision-making.
NE C	Everyone, particularly business and community leaders, have a better understanding of the potential effects of climate change in the AONB and the actions they can take.	**NE6**	The AONB Team will record its own carbon footprint, in order to encourage others to do the same, by the end of 2015 and undertake action to reduce it.
		NE7	Promote and work with relevant organisations on climate change mitigation and adaptation measures that are appropriate for the AONB landscape and communities
		NE8	Promote good practice for climate change adaptation to businesses in the AONB.
NE D	All pests, pathogens, and invasive non-native species causing harm in the AONB are being effectively addressed	**NE9**	Work with partners and landowners, such as the Wildlife Trusts, the River Avon Invasive Species Forum, the Source to Sea project and others to prevent the importation of pests and pathogens and initiate, encourage and support action that will reduce the harm caused by alien invasive species.

(Additional Information: Natural Environment Appendix 29)

[22] Wessex BESS, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for Sustainability, Natural Environment Research Council funded research programme 20011-17

10. Historic and Cultural Environment

The way the land has been used over the centuries has influenced the character of the landscape we see around us today. The remnants and artefacts of working life, together with the layout of settlements, routeways, and buildings contribute to the historic character of an area. This includes buried archaeology, buildings, designed landscapes and cultural features. Many acclaimed writers, artists, poets and photographers are associated with the AONB

10.1. Special characteristics and qualities that make this AONB special, as a whole, with regards to the historic and cultural environment:

- A landscape etched with the imprint of the past – visible archaeological features including prehistoric earthworks, settlements, field systems, water meadows and former settlements.
- The former Medieval hunting areas of Selwood, Grovely Forest and the Cranborne Chase
- A rich legacy of landscape scale prehistoric archaeological features such as the Neolithic Dorset Cursus, as well as later historic features including the Saxon Bokerly Dyke.
- Historic borderlands, with important Saxon and even Roman roots, once marginal land and often subject to late enclosure.
- A rich land use history, with areas which have a concentration of ancient enclosure, ancient woodland, and former common land.
- An historic settlement pattern (pre 1750) which has seen minimal infilling associated with a dense concentration of historic listed buildings.
- A concentration of historic parklands, estates, and manor houses together with Historic Parks and Gardens of national and county importance.
- Literary, artistic and historic connections of national distinction

Aim

10.2. We want to conserve and enhance the historic and cultural environment of the AONB. We want everyone to understand, value and enjoy its cultural and heritage assets. The story of the area's evolution over time should be clear to everyone.

Achievements to date

- Publications
  Our AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) and subsequent Historic Environment Action Plans (HEAPs) are promoted by English Heritage as exemplar documents. These provide an evolving targeted framework for ongoing Historic Environment action.

- Historic Farmsteads
  The AONB funded a volunteer training day by the Wiltshire Buildings Record. Over thirty people were trained to identify and record historic farmsteads. The aim is to create a computer-based record of Wiltshire's farmsteads for future generations.

- Well attended conferences
  Between them, two conferences covering different aspects of the historic and archaeological treasures of the AONB attracted over a hundred attendees in November 2006 and July 2011. Both comprised well renowned speakers alongside the AONB's Historic Environment Officer.

- Input to planning
  Consultation responses have influenced the drafting of national and local planning policy. Advice given to planning authorities on proposals affecting heritage assets has been effective.

Key issues

1. Poor access to knowledge about the historic and cultural environment
   There is a need to circulate known information more effectively.

2. Low appreciation of the historic environment
   The AONB has a vast and precious historic setting. Greater knowledge of this legacy will underpin practical action to conserve and enhance it.

3. Inappropriate management of the historic environment
   Ploughing, planting or grazing can seriously damage historic sites and features.

4. Heritage at Risk
   The AONB has heritage assets that are considered by English Heritage to be vulnerable or 'at Risk'. There is a need for partners to take practical action to conserve and enhance these assets.

5. Funding for the historic environment
   Pressure on specific funds to safeguard and enhance the historic environment is acute. Much of the funding for this area of work is discretionary

The Issues Explained

10.3. The landscapes of the AONB are an expression of the interaction between people and the land over thousands of years. Every part of these landscapes has a history that contributes to the special qualities of the AONB. The landscapes of the AONB bear the mark of successive periods of human activity. This is one of the richest and most closely studied parts of prehistoric Wessex. It is the haunt of General Pitt-Rivers, Heywood Sumner, Richard Bradley and Martin Green. However, there is still much to be discovered.

10.4. Important literary figures associated with the area include poet and barrister Sir John Davies, naturalist and writer W H Hudson and author and broadcaster Desmond

Hawkins, amongst many. Other artistic and cultural connections include the architect Sir Christopher Wren and photographer Sir Cecil Beaton.

10.5. The work of Augustus John, Henry Lamb, Ben Nicholson, John Craxton, Lucian Freud, Stanley Spencer, Elisabeth Frink, William Nicholson and over 25 other artists connected with Cranborne Chase, provided the focus of an exhibition at Salisbury and West Wiltshire Museum during 2012. The Museum suggests that artists *'have found in Cranborne Chase and its hinterland a landscape of inspiration, seclusion and 'bare-boned' beauty'* and that the AONB *'has always had an air of isolation which has attracted an exceptional array of artists and writers'.* (Appendix 30)

10.6. Awareness of sources of information on historic resources is limited. There is a need to promote better awareness of HEAPS as a key source (while acknowledging that these often record some types of heritage better than others, so other sources should also be used). The 'Buildings at Risk' register of English Heritage is not widely known nor its local relevance appreciated. There is not a record of all the historic sites. Those without records are almost certainly being damaged or lost. There is a need for greater knowledge of the location and importance of the heritage assets of the AONB. The promotion of the Historic Landscape Characterisation Project and HEAPS can help deal with this. This will require new funding.

10.7. The four county Historic Environment Records (HERs) in Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset and Wiltshire are an essential source of information for managing, caring for and understanding the historic environment. They curate information on all known heritage landscapes, buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas and archaeological finds as well as information on previous archaeological and heritage work in each county.

10.8. No such record, however, is ever complete and the AONB Historic Environment Action Plan has identified ways in which the AONB can work with the HERs to enhance knowledge and understanding for example for the Medieval and Post Medieval period and in woodland. It has also identified areas where the significance of particular heritage could be better understood.

10.9. Information and interpretation of the historic environment of the AONB as a whole could also be vastly improved. There is a wealth of historic riches throughout the area that is a visible legacy of human involvement with the landscape through time. In addition, artists, writers and other cultural connections, past and present, are not widely known about or fully appreciated. Resources need to be found to develop educational and interpretative media to increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of the AONB's historic and cultural environment.

Nationally designated heritage in the AONB

10.10. Designation is a way of marking that a building, monument or landscape is of 'special architectural or historic interest' in a national context and is made on the recommendation of English Heritage (Appendix 17). It is a stage that identifies a site as being architecturally or historically important before any planning stage that may decide its future. In the AONB there are:

- 556 Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- 2015 Listed Buildings, 77 of which are Grade I and 106 Grade II*

- 16 Registered Parks and Gardens

10.11. When English Heritage says that a Listed Grade I or II* Building is 'at risk', they mean it is vulnerable through neglect or decay rather than alteration or demolition. This is what leads us to the 'At Risk' Register.

10.12. English Heritage prepares and publishes an annual Register of Heritage at Risk of those nationally designated heritage assets which are at risk of being lost through neglect, decay or inappropriate development. In 2012 in the AONB there were:

- Buildings at Risk – 5
- Monuments at Risk – 111
- Parks and Gardens at Risk – 1

10.13. Some local authorities produce their own registers that record all buildings and structures 'at risk', irrespective of grade. As English Heritage only lists Grades I, II* and II in the Register of Heritage at Risk, the total number of buildings or structures 'at risk' is much greater than the register might at first suggest.

Local heritage designations and records

- 63 designated Conservation Areas
- Historic Parks and Gardens of county importance
- Historic designed landscapes of local importance
- The four county archaeological services record and protect the archaeology within the AONB, and maintain individual Historic Environment Record/Sites and Monuments Record

10.14. The Historic Environment Action Plans (HEAPS)[23] identify the key issues affecting the heritage assets of the AONB. They summarise the key characteristics of the historic environment of the AONB at a landscape scale. They set out the significance, condition and pressures affecting the heritage assets, including those 'at risk'. They identify the actions needed to conserve and enhance these special characteristics. These provide the central actions to enable the AONB to effectively conserve and enhance its historic environment assets

10.15. Digging the land can destroy buried and extant archaeological features. Lack of grazing leads to the development of scrub. Historic sites are harder to recognise when overgrown and are prone to severe damage if trees or shrubs establish themselves. Overgrazing can cause erosion and destroy sites. Burrowing animals, such as badgers and rabbits, can damage underground remains. Planting and harvesting trees and energy crops may also cause damage to sites. Badly designed buildings and structures may spoil the setting of many sites and monuments. The historic cohesion of the landscape may be lost.

10.16. Funding – English Heritage commissioned a research report in 2011[24] to review the issues facing local authorities as they manage their heritage assets at a time of acute financial stress. The funding available through English Heritage itself and Local Authorities has greatly diminished over recent years. The research found a

[23] http://www.historiclandscape.co.uk/conserving_heap.html

[24] English Heritage: *Local authority heritage assets: Current issues and opportunities* by Green Balance with Grover Lewis Associates Ltd March 2012.

wide variation in the ways that local authorities manage their heritage properties and describes the issues that are affecting them, including the economic downturn, declining budgets, changing patterns of use and fewer conservation officers.

10.17. There are some external funding programmes however, that could be aimed at the historic environment, eg Heritage Lottery Fund. When bidding for funds, the competition has greatly intensified over recent years. This has lead to a situation where there is insufficient funding available to protect and conserve the historic wealth of the AONB.

Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE		**POLICIES**	
HE A	The historic environment and cultural heritage of the AONB is conserved and enhanced	**HE1**	Promote the Historic Landscape Characterisation and related Historic Landscape Character Areas and Themes descriptions as a tool for managing the historic and cultural environment of the AONB, providing a framework for policy-making, planning decisions, research agendas and positive action.
		HE2	Encourage appropriate and improved identification, recording and management of the distinctive historic landscapes of the AONB through working with appropriate partners including the County HERs, farmers and others to undertake action identified in the AONB Historic Environment Action Plans.
		HE3	Enhance the management of historic sites and features through agri-environment scheme options.
		HE4	Work with relevant partners to protect, conserve and enhance heritage assets 'at risk' within the AONB
		HE5	The AONB will normally only support 'enabling development' that seeks to secure the conservation or restoration of an historic feature if it is not at the expense of another historic feature or the setting of that historic feature or another[25].
		HE6	Encourage the appropriate reuse of redundant historic farm buildings in harmony with landscape character and local distinctiveness
HE B	The historic environment, cultural heritage and traditions of the AONB are understood, valued and celebrated	**HE7**	In relation to additions/alterations to the built heritage or nearby structures, support Local Planning Authority Conservation Officers in seeking the highest standards of design and materials.
		HE8	Promote the historic landscapes of the AONB, the Historic Landscape Characterisation, HEAP documents together with past and present cultural associations, as educational resources to increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of the AONB's historic and cultural environment.

[25] Also, refer to English Heritage 2008-Enabling Development and the Conservation of Significant Places.

(Additional Information: Historic and Cultural Environment Appendix 30)

CONSERVING AND ENHANCING LIVING AND WORKING LANDSCAPES

11. Rural Land Management

Rural land management encompasses farming, forestry, fisheries and game management. In this deeply rural AONB, landowners and managers have been the custodians and sculptors of the landscape for centuries. Today and tomorrow, their activities will continue to shape and mould the landscape we see around us.

11.1. Special characteristics and qualities that make this AONB special, as a whole, with regards to rural land management:

- The agricultural character of the AONB is typified by arable cropping, especially the south-eastern sector and on the West Wiltshire Downs.
- The Vale of Wardour and the north-western edge of the area are mostly grasslands.
- A typical AONB farm is slightly larger than the regional average and consists of predominantly arable land with some permanent pasture and woodland. It is the mixed nature of the holdings that contributes significantly to the special qualities of the landscape and its biodiversity.
- The mosaic of broad-leaved, mixed and coniferous woodland, shelterbelts, copses, hedgerows and veteran trees is a distinctive and key element in the AONB landscape.
- The AONB is one of the most intensively managed game landscapes in the country. This reflects the heritage of the area as a Chase and supports the social and economic development of rural businesses and communities.
- The legacy of previous land management adds to the historic dimension of the landscape.

Aim

11.2. We want the sustainable management of our rural land. This will meet the demand for food, fuel and other produce in ways that conserve and enhance the landscape character of the AONB and deliver increased public benefits.

Achievements to date

- 'Raising Our Game'
  Production of the first integrated landscape management advice for game managers in a protected landscape. Research conducted with game managers by the AONB with analysis by The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust
- 'A Landscape View of Trees and Woodland'
  Guidelines for tree planting for each landscape character type within the AONB

- Co-ordinated Wood Fuel Initiative (2007-2009)
  This was undertaken jointly with Protected Areas in South West England. It included distribution of a wood fuel information and questionnaire leaflet, two demonstration projects and two practical seminar events attended by 50 interested parties. A Wood Fuel Fayre attracted 150 attendees.

- Biennual Cranborne Chase Woodfair
  This major event attracts around 7,000 visitors over a weekend. It acts as a showcase for the AONB and its woodland management, woodland owners, crafts people and allied industries.

- Land Managers Seminars
  Since 2013, the AONB has instigated regular land managers seminars that focus on topics of current interest.

Key issues

1. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union steers the agricultural industry. The reform of the CAP, and the new schemes that will come out of it, will affect the AONB. Increased levels of targeting and reduced budgets for the agri-environment schemes will mean less area covered by pro-nature activities.

2. The predominance of the agricultural sector in the AONB makes it essential, for the sustainable development of our rural land, that farmers are encouraged to adopt good environmental and agricultural practices and that the sector is supported by pro-nature policies.

3. Many woodlands are either under-managed or do not have a coherent management plan. The burgeoning wood fuel market offers an opportunity to bring more small woodlands into positive management.

4. The AONB is one of the most intensively managed game landscapes in the country and the effects of this are not fully appreciated and valued. This sector can create significant social, environmental and economic benefits but, if poorly managed, can have negative impacts

5. The impact of pests (and particularly pest and wildlife management) is a major issue for forest managers, landowners and nature conservationists.

6. The rivers of the AONB, particularly in the catchment of the Hampshire Avon, are some of the finest trout streams in the world, valued highly by fishermen. However, this heritage and the benefits that flow from it are threatened by climate change and other factors.

The Issues Explained

11.3. Farmland covers over 80% of the AONB. The landscapes we cherish are the result, in part, of the stewardship of land managers over past generations; and to the commitment of many today. European farming grant schemes are the largest single public investment in the AONB. In 2008, they provided some £3.5 million of grant aid

per year[26]. The uptake of environmental stewardship schemes within the AONB has been above the national average. However, some landowners are now coming out of the scheme or did not go in because the payment rate did not keep up with potential profits from arable cropping.

11.4. There are many practices that can be adopted by farmers that will bring environmental and commercial benefits, such as:

- sustainable utilisation of soil, minimising erosion;
- effective water catchment management;
- avoidance of direct pollution and measures to reduce diffuse pollution;
- farm waste minimisation and recycling.

National and local policies must support and encourage farmers in making decisions that bring these "win-win" solutions to the challenges of the future.

11.5. Creating local woodfuel supply chains is one of the top five recommendations in a recent review of the business opportunities that arise from valuing nature correctly[27]. Businesses using the wood fuel may enjoy reduced costs with local and secure fuel supplies. They may also benefit from the Renewable Heat Incentive. There may be marketing benefits for some companies from using green energy. The report identifies the main barrier to be a lack of confidence in the long-term consistency of the supply chain preventing demand. This lack of demand then holds back the confidence to increase the supply. There is a need for technical support and training to ensure managing woodland for fuel is done sustainably. The need is to develop local cooperatives surrounded by groups of users. This will help link local supply chains.

11.6. Our research for the 'Raising Our Game' document high- lighted the importance of game shooting as a reason for acquiring, retaining and managing land. It has a significant effect on the local economy:

- It provides significant employment and housing, 30.5 full-time equivalents in our sample of 42 shoots.
- There are approximately 120 shoots in the AONB, mainly being of modest size that barely, or rarely, make a profit from their activity. A few shoots are larger concerns with the turn-over of a medium-sized company.
- It attracts a large number of day and weekend visitors to the AONB and therefore can support a significant hospitality service.

11.7. The biodiversity of woodlands is being reduced by the impact of deer and grey squirrels. Most commentators regard deer browsing as being an important threat to woodland biodiversity in the UK[28]. Grey squirrels also have an economic impact so there is a need for collaborative deer management and grey squirrel control.

11.8. A significant proportion of the River Avon System is within the AONB. It holds two Natura 2000 sites (The Hampshire Avon SAC and Avon Valley SPA). The advent of the Catchment-based Approach and the priorities under the Water Framework

[26] 'Strengthening the Landscape Character through Entry Level Stewardship', Dr J Batten 2008
[27] 'Realising nature's value: The Final Report of the Ecosystem Markets Task Force'. March 2013 www.defra.gov.uk/ecosystem-markets/files/Ecosystem-Markets-Task-Force-Final-Report-.pdf
[28] See http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1469-8137.2008.02579.x/full

Directive provide the policy and delivery environment in which beneficial programmes such as "Keeping Rivers Cool" and "The Strategic Framework for the Restoration of the River Avon System" can be implemented faster than before. Much good work has already been done such as the Wild Fishery Protection Zone that was instigated by the Ebble Valley Conservation & Fishing Association and the river restoration work of the Wessex Chalk Streams Project. Much more remains to be achieved if our world-class fisheries are to be sustainable in the face of climate change and other challenges.

Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE		**POLICIES**	
RLM A	Farmers, foresters, fishery managers and gamekeepers are aware of how their activities can strengthen landscape character and enhance the natural environment of the AONB	**RLM1**	Encourage the take-up of agri-environment scheme options that benefit the natural and historic environment of the AONB.
		RLM2	Support and encourage appropriate woodland management that increases biodiversity, including PAWS restoration.
		RLM3	Work with partners, such as the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, to disseminate appropriate information and advice on how game management practices can positively contribute to AONB purposes and collaborate in further research to this end.
RLM B	Good agricultural practice examples are widely disseminated	**RLM4**	Identify good agricultural practices that that are appropriate to the challenges facing the farmers of the AONB and disseminate through networks, partnerships and events.
RLM C	Collaborative approaches to the problems caused by pests, particularly deer and grey squirrel, are in use where appropriate	**RLM5**	Work with partners, such as Deer Initiative and key estates, to encourage collaborative deer management.
		RLM6	Work with partners to instigate grey squirrel control in areas where timber quality is being severely affected.
RLM D	The development of practical pro-nature policy supports the wide-spread adoption of good practice in environmental and resource management.	**RLM7**	Work with Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, National Association of AONBs, National Farmers Union and other appropriate partners to develop national and local policy and grant aid that supports the sustainable management of high nature value farmland, prioritises biodiversity conservation and rewards land managers for delivering environmental and other public benefits.
RLM E	The Hampshire Avon and its tributaries in the AONB, has a secure future as a fishery and the services it provides are enhanced by enlightened	**RLM8**	By working with and supporting partners such as Environment Agency, Wessex Chalk Streams Project, private land owners, fishery managers and Natural England, encourage the excellent delivery of programmes and

	management and restoration.		projects that bring environmental benefits to the catchment while at the same time securing an economic future for fisheries.

(Additional Information: Rural Land Management Appendix 31)

12. Rural Economy

Alongside the land-based industries, the rural economy of the AONB also comprises a range of small to medium sized businesses, with the majority of employees commuting out to the administration and hospitality sectors in the market towns. The high quality environment offers immense, as yet untapped, opportunities for the development of low impact, sustainable rural tourism.

12.1. Special characteristics and qualities that make this AONB special, as a whole, with regards to the local economy:

- Generally the AONB has an outward looking economy.
- There is a concentration of employment in public administration just outside the AONB, creating a dependence on a few large employers.
- The majority of employment opportunities are in the boundary towns with less than 20% located in the rural areas.
- Strong 'high tech' business growth occurs at the periphery of the AONB
- The diverse landscapes, wildlife, historic and cultural features are very attractive to visitors.
- A number of notable visitor attractions based around historic parks, lie within the area,
- Local village businesses acknowledge the relatively high value of the tourist/visitor trade within the local economy.

Aim

12.2. We want a thriving rural economy that will sustain the landscape and ensure economic and social wellbeing.

Achievements to date

- LEADER funding
  The AONB, the Community Partnerships Executive of North Dorset (CPEND) and East Dorset District Council worked together to secure £1.5m European LEADER funding to improve the economic wellbeing of the area. The funding was delivered through the Sowing SEEDS Local Action Group (LAG) and over 30 projects were funded during the five year programme. (See Appendix 18)
- Sustainable Rural Tourism

Amongst many projects, the Sowing SEEDS programme grant aided the 13 month AONB Sustainable Rural Tourism Project and a co-ordinator for Tisbury Business Association

- Community Shops
  East Knoyle, Hindon and Maiden Bradley have community shops, primarily run by volunteers, developed with Sustainable Development Fund and LEADER support

- 'Open Femto' – 3G mobile phone reception arrives in Cranborne, DorsetThe AONB team, Cranborne Estate and local businesses applied for this trial technology from Vodaphone on behalf of the community in 2011. It was an action in the Parish Plan and the application was successful in 2013.
  The local MP said "*bringing a mobile phone signal to the area will not only make the day-to-day lives of residents, both young and old, considerably easier, but will also help to sustain the economy of this rural village and create jobs and growth at a time when many rural villages are stagnating*".

- Outstanding Shopper Campaign
  Local businesses joined in the campaign involving promotional shopping bags, stickers and shop banners, whilst 10,000 'Outstanding Local Enterprise' leaflets have been distributed encouraging shoppers to support local AONB businesses

Key issues

1. Many rural businesses are under serious financial pressure during current (2013) economic conditions .

2. Several villages have lost local facilities such as a shop, Post Office or fuel station, leaving local communities with no public transport struggling to access services

3. The wealth of local products and services lack consistent and focussed marketing.

4. The effective development of green tourism is only just developing, which can provide an income for local people and support awareness and enjoyment of the landscape.

5. Serious barriers to the growth of rural businesses are poor broadband speeds and mobile reception.

The Issues Explained

12.3. It is the special landscape character and local environments that attract people to live, work and play in the AONB. Sustaining the quality environment of the AONB is essential to the success of many of its key economic sectors. The recent review of the commercial opportunities that arise from valuing nature found that business is often unaware of its true reliance on nature[29]. Working as one, there is the chance for both nature and business to thrive. A key proposal in the report suggests a

[29] 'Realising nature's value: The Final Report of the Ecosystem Markets Task Force'. March 2013 www.defra.gov.uk/ecosystem-markets/files/Ecosystem-Markets-Task-Force-Final-Report-.pdf

certification and labelling scheme to connect consumers with nature. Such schemes play an important role that benefits business and consumers. New markets will emerge when the natural environment is at the heart of selling. These will include livestock and food production, tourism and woodland products.

12.4. Farmers markets and campaigns such as *'Taste of the West'* encourage consumers to purchase locally sourced food. This helps forge closer links between producers and customers. It can increase consumers' understanding of the countryside; how food is produced; and where food comes from. Although a number of rural shops and Post Offices are being lost, several community shops are emerging. They stock and promote mainly local produce.

12.5. The AONB provides a high quality setting for the tourism sector. There is therefore a good business case to have the AONB at the heart of 'green' tourism. There are many sustainable, low impact tourism opportunities in the area. They include walking, cycling, horse riding, visiting historic sites or enjoying a range of local events. The sector can improve the quality of the visitor experience and the quality of life of the local community. This is achieved by improving local facilities and raising local incomes.

12.6. Until the 2012/13 Sustainable Rural Tourism Project there had been little promotion or marketing of the opportunities. Local tourism networks are only now just emerging. However, there are existing initiatives that can give a boost to the sector. One such is the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. It is a voluntary agreement that sets standards and recognises areas that meet them.

12.7. Good communications are essential if the local economy is to grow. Business satisfaction with broadband speeds is low. The average broadband speed across the UK is 6.2 megabits per second. In the AONB, many people cannot access an acceptable level of broadband service. Superfast broadband allows easier and more efficient ways to do business. People can be in touch with family and friends. They get new ways of receiving public services. Superfast broadband makes it possible to work from home or access education. For example, the key aims in Wiltshire and Dorset for superfast broadband are:

- At least 85% and 95% of premises respectively, being able to access superfast broadband (over 24 megabits per second)
- All premises in both counties to have access to a minimum broadband service of 2 megabits per second

Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE		**POLICIES**	
REA	Local communities benefit from a sustainable rural economy, based on the resources of the AONB, that also conserves and enhances its landscape character and special qualities	**RE1**	Utilise opportunities within the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) and other funding initiatives, to help achieve the needs of the local economy without compromising the special qualities of the AONB landscape and environment
		RE2	Work with all relevant Local Enterprise Partnerships to influence emerging economic

			strategies and policies to promote appropriate sustainable development within the AONB and in neighbouring market towns
		RE3	Work with relevant businesses, associations, and chambers of commerce to draw down external funding to develop local markets and add value to local products through embracing sustainable development principles investigating the development of a certification/labelling scheme and developing business networks promoting each others services/products
		RE4	Support all efforts to provide superfast broadband to AONB communities.
RE B	The AONB is promoted as a high quality Sustainable Rural Tourism destination	**RE5**	Implement actions set out in the 'Enhancing the AONB Visitor Economy' strategy through partnerships with tourism related providers, suppliers and relevant marketing organisations
		RE6	Seek to gain European Charter for Sustainable Tourism status by the end of 2019

(Additional Information: Rural Economy Appendix 32)

13. Planning and Transport

The planning functions of the AONB Partnership, including transport matters, naturally interlink very closely with landscape and rural economy issues in particular. Land use and development topics are inherently central to 'conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the landscape.

13.1. Special characteristics and qualities that make this AONB special, as a whole, with regards to planning and transport:

- Organisationally complex; nine Local Planning Authorities, four Highways Authorities together with The Highways Agency, Network Rail.
- A largely rural, open, and undeveloped landscape sensitive to change.
- Distinctive settlement patterns with historic elements readily visible and central to the character of settlements.
- Architectural styles vary considerably throughout the AONB, dependent on availability of building materials.
- The built environment forms an integral part of local character and distinctiveness and adds to the diversity of the AONB landscape as a whole.
- Large historic country houses at the centre of historic parklands and gardens and other characteristic buildings.
- A minor road network that reflects the deeply rural, tranquil character of the AONB, with few realignments and improvements.

Aim

13.2. We want planning and transportation strategies, policies and decisions that affect this nationally important AONB to conserve and enhance its special qualities. Where development is necessary, we want it located and designed to integrate fully with the landscape character and natural beauty.

13.3. We want all management of, and improvements to, roads to enhance the distinctive character of the area. We want a range of more sustainable options for transport that reduce the effects of transport on tranquillity and the natural environment of the AONB.

Achievements to date

- Planning Protocol
  All local planning authorities signed the planning protocol in 2005 (Appendix 19). It was refined in September 2006. All applications over a certain size, or any applications that may have an adverse impact on the AONB, are sent to the Partnership for comment.

- Guidance Documents
  There are five AONB Position Statements, and six Fact Sheets and Good Practice Notes (See Appendix 20). They provide information on topics of relevance to the landscape and planning within and around the AONB for the guidance of applicants and planning officers.

- Planning policy and applications
  Since 2006, relevant AONB information has been made available to Local Planning Authorities in response to 132 policy documents and 967 planning applications. This input enabled them to take proper account of the AONB and its setting.

- Appeals and Inquiries
  The Partnership has provided 26 planning appeal responses to the Inspectorate since 2006, given evidence at major appeal Inquiries securing successful outcomes for the AONB and its setting, and contributed to future strategies at two Plan Examinations in Public.

- Planning and Transportation Seminars
  There have been eight annual seminars since 2005 with, on average, over thirty delegates at each. Focusing on a topic relevant to the time, these seminars are highly valued as continuing professional development.

- Section 85 leaflet
  This guidance on the 'duty of regard' for the purposes of AONB designation for public bodies, organisations, and persons in public office was included as an example of good practice in Natural England's advice publication on the topic.

- Landscape Sensitivity
  This study was completed in 2007 and assessed the inherent sensitivity and robustness of the landscapes of the AONB

- Tranquillity
  The team has worked with the CPRE data to relate the findings more precisely to the landscape character areas of this AONB. Our work has been presented as good practice internationally as well as to two National Parks.

- A Guide to Conserving and Enhancing the Setting of the Rural Road Network of the AONB
  This document provides guidance on the management of the highway network across the AONB and has been endorsed by the Highways Departments of the four County Councils after extensive consultation

Key issues

1. Development pressures
   Proposals for renewable energy generation, waste treatment, and large-scale agricultural storage, along with general warehousing and distribution, have been rising. There is a shortage of affordable housing for local people and the

annual invitation by Local Planning Authorities to identify housing sites, along with the current round of Core Strategy / Local Plan consultations, can encourage speculative market housing proposals from landowners or developers.

2. Sustainability
   The exception to the presumption in favour of sustainable development in the National Planning Policy Framework in relation to AONBs is not fully understood. At a more detailed level, developers appear reluctant to provide appropriate renewable energy generation and adequate storage space for recycling in domestic and commercial, new build and extension situations.

3. Diversification
   Whilst appropriate diversification, particularly regarding redundant farm buildings, can be very beneficial to the local rural economy, a rising number of applications are being received that are not appropriate in a nationally designated area. This can relate to form, scale and appearance that affects the special qualities of the AONB or an increase in traffic and loss of tranquillity.

4. Transport
   Effective and frequent public transport for an extensive area with a low population is prohibitively expensive so buses are few and private vehicle ownership is high. There is a shortage of affordable parking at transport nodes to facilitate greater use of public transport. A lack of stopping points on the two railways through the AONB means they are an underutilised resource.

5. Roads
   Highway management and maintenance does not always reflect the special characteristics of the AONB. The routing of freight traffic through the AONB impacts adversely on tranquillity.

The Issues Explained

13.4. Nine local authorities are responsible for planning policy, transport policy and development management within the AONB. Neighbourhood Plans, explained in paragraph 5.5, can refine the policy details for a parish or group of parishes. All public bodies have a statutory duty to 'have regard' to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB[30]. In terms of land-use planning this requires two principal actions. Firstly, there must be consistent and coherent policies in place to achieve the purpose. Secondly, there must be understanding and timely use of these policies. One role of the AONB Partnership is to ensure that these happen.

13.5. Applications for planning permission are determined in accordance with the Local Planning Authority's Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework (Appendix 7) does not change the legal status of the Development Plan as the starting point for decision-making. At the heart of the framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development

[30]Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000: Section 85

although restrictive policies apply to AONBs, Green Belts, SSSIs, and similar designations.

13.6. The National Planning Policy Framework instructs local planning authorities to make a distinction between Protected Areas and 'other' countryside[31]. In an AONB, great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty (Appendix 21). Planning permission should be refused for 'major developments' (Appendix 22), except in exceptional circumstances; and only where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest. All relevant local planning policy must distinguish between this AONB and non-designated countryside.

Development Pressures

13.7. Development proposals need to be of an appropriate form, scale, and materials and in appropriate locations. This will enable them to integrate with landscape character both within and adjacent to the AONB. All Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAAs) should include Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) to demonstrate that potential landscape impacts, including both location and integration within the landscape, have been taken into account.

13.8. The sense of place is easily lost. Suburbanisation and the cumulative effect of 'permitted development' can break down local distinctiveness. Replacing small-scale, locally distinct features with ones of a standard design erodes local character.

13.9. There are new (2013), and temporary, changes to the General Development Order (Appendix 23) extending Permitted Development Rights. This could potentially lead to increases in traffic and changes to the appearance of buildings and land.

13.10. The four County Councils produce Minerals and Waste Local Plans. Whilst there is generally minimal mineral extraction from the AONB, there is a long history of providing locally distinctive building materials, mainly from greensand and sandy limestone (Chilmark stone). The need to safeguard local identity and distinctiveness through the use of local materials to strengthen the local vernacular needs to be balanced against the potential disruption, visual and other impacts resulting from the extraction of materials to achieve this. An AONB Position Statement regarding minerals and waste could be prepared with constituent Local Planning Authorities should this be helpful to them.

13.11. Developments in the setting of the AONB can also have significant impacts on the area and need to be considered in relation to the purposes of designation. Construction of high or expansive structures; development or change generating movement, noise, odour, vibration or dust over a wide area will affect the setting. As our appreciation of the relationships between neighbouring landscapes grows, so our understanding of what constitutes the setting continues to evolve.

Sustainability

13.12. There is increasing pressure for the AONB to accommodate within its boundary or its setting or impairing significant views to or from it very tall or substantial structures such as wind turbines and telecommunication masts. Similarly, extensive farm scale

[31] National Planning Framework: Paragraphs 14 (and footnote 9), 17, 109, 110, 113, 115 & 116, Department for Communities and Local Government, ISBN: 978-1-4098-3413-7 (March 2012)

photo-voltaic arrays also seek to occupy productive farmland. These types of developments can introduce a sense of 'industrialisation' into an otherwise unspoilt or tranquil landscape. They are frequently visually intrusive and fail to harmonise with the scale and character of the area.

13.13. Recycling storage space, composting areas, and roof based PV installations should be integral to the design of all new build, extensions and conversions.

13.14. This AONB appears, from house price surveys[32], to add a premium to property prices. It therefore seems appropriate that such properties when constructed or extended should contribute to the management of the high quality landscapes this is enhancing the property price and profit. The Community Infrastructure Levy (Appendix 24) is a mechanism whereby a contribution could be made towards AONB management.

Farm diversification

13.15. Some farm diversification proposals risk industrialisation of the countryside and a loss of tranquillity. There is potential for AONB locations to be viewed as cheap options for activities that should be located in a business park outside the AONB e.g. waste processing/treatment. AONB broadly supports farm based diversification activities such as 'from the farm, on the farm, for the farm'.

13.16. Diversification and re-use of redundant rural buildings for economic activities that sustain the local economy are supported, providing it benefits the communities of the AONB whilst conserving and enhancing natural beauty.

Roads and Transport

13.17. Most people see and appreciate landscape from roads. The highway estate often echoes the adjacent landscapes. Both of these factors are particularly important in AONBs. Therefore, the highway environment warrants special attention to reflect and sustain the special qualities and characteristics of the AONB. The effect of transport in the AONB is managed through the policies and programmes in the Local Transport Plans of the highway authorities. These plans aim to:

- improve access to key services;
- integrate transport provision and infrastructure improvements; and
- promote sustainable forms of transport.

13.18. The AONB has four A-roads running east to west (A354, A30, A303, A36) and one (A350) running north to south on its western edge. On B and C roads, 'rat runs' develop avoiding the busy A roads. Heavy traffic flows on these more rural roads, especially through daily commuting, can cause congestion, pollution and loss of tranquillity; and damage to verges, minor roads and buildings.

13.19. Road design that does not consider the special qualities of the landscape can harm the character of the AONB. Road safety will always be a prime concern but that does not dictate the insensitive design of schemes and street furniture. Traffic management schemes, usually involving reduced speed limits, have not reduced the daily 'rat runs' caused by those avoiding A-road congestion. The safety of vulnerable

[32] Strategic Land Availability Assessment Methodology, Table 5; Wiltshire Council, Sept 2011

road users such as pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders remains an issue in the AONB.

13.20. There is little incentive to use public transport. There are infrequent bus services and just one rail station in the AONB, with parking limited and costly. The use of public transport would increase if there were better and affordable parking facilities near-by. Village 'hubs' could be created to provide parking, easy access to public transport and village facilities. This merits further research.

Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE		**POLICIES**	
PT A	The AONB inputs effectively to national, regional and local strategies, policies and plans	**PT1**	Ensure the purposes and objectives of AONB designation are fully recognised in the development and implementation of Core Strategies/Local Plans, Local Development Frameworks, Local Transport Plans, Neighbourhood Plans, Green Infrastructure Plans and other public policies, strategies and programmes.
		PT2	Encourage and contribute to coherent and consistent formulation and implementation of planning policies, including across Local Authority boundaries, to ensure they take full account of the local distinctiveness, character and quality of the AONB and its setting.
		PT3	Encourage, support and inspire local communities to prepare and develop Neighbourhood and Parish Plans, Village Design Statements, and other similar initiatives that respect the special landscapes of the AONB and the objectives of this Management Plan.
		PT4	Encourage and assist local communities to identify local needs / environmental projects that help offset impacts of development and conserves and enhances local character and distinctiveness.
PT B	Strategic and local decisions are formulated taking full account of the purposes of designation and are implemented in a comprehensive,	**PT5**	Work with local planning authorities to identify and remove any barriers to agreeing appropriate and costed projects / activities that help achieve Management

	coherent and consistent way with regard to the character and quality of the area and its setting, together with views into and out of the AONB such that these decisions result in no net detriment to the special qualities of the AONB		Plan objectives or projects, as set out in NPPF 157 [33], to be then included in their Infrastructure Delivery Plans (IDPs).
		PT6	Strongly encourage Local Planning Authorities to direct Community Infrastructure Levies (Developer Contributions) towards agreed and appropriate AONB Management Plan objectives, projects or activities, as set out in their IDPs
		PT7	Encourage and seek to assist with Biodiversity Mitigation Strategies where and when appropriate.
		PT8	The Partnership will positively promote AONB purposes, aims and objectives to relevant policy and decision makers both within and outside the AONB through provision of regular information, training sessions and/or through the Annual Planning and Transportation Seminar.
		PT9	Ensure that all relevant authorities have due regard to the purposes of AONB designation in carrying out their functions and duties as required by Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
		PT10	The AONB planning protocol continues to be used by local planning authorities to ensure that the AONB Partnership is consulted on all development and land use change proposals that meet the criteria or may have a significant impact and/or effect on the characteristics, special qualities, or setting of the AONB including views into and out of the AONB.
		PT11	Encourage Local Planning Authority partners to adopt Supplementary Planning Documents that ensure the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty and setting of the AONB.
		PT12	Encourage Local Planning Authority partners to be guided by AONB Position Statements, Fact Sheets and Good Practice Notes, along with other published guidance that reinforces AONB purposes, when preparing and using planning policies.

[33] NPPF 157: Local Plans should contain a clear strategy for enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

		PT13	Local Planning Authority partners ensure that where new development is permitted it complements the special qualities of the AONB and takes full account of the area's setting and context through the consideration of appropriate Landscape Character Assessments and sensitivity and design studies.
		PT14	Support renewable energy generation by technologies that integrate with the landscape character, are neither visually intrusive to the AONB or its setting, nor impair significant views to or from it, are not harmful to wildlife, and are of an appropriate scale to their location and siting.
		PT15	Support farm diversification activities that facilitate rural tourism, land based enterprises, and the reuse of rural buildings that do not result in an increase in traffic, loss of tranquillity, and that help sustain local communities
		PT16	The Partnership will rigorously assess and respond to all planning applications that meet the planning protocol criteria.
		PT17	The Partnership will develop further Position Statements, Fact Sheets and Good Practice Notes together with a Development Management 'checklist' to inform decision makers at all levels on issues affecting the AONB.
PT C	Policies and schemes to meet the housing and employment needs of local communities enhance the special qualities and characteristics of the AONB, including its built heritage	**PT18**	Work with Local Authority partners to establish policies that encourage appropriate use of sustainable technologies, such as solar thermal, photovoltaics and wood fuel (at the appropriate scale) and provide sufficient space for short term handling of waste and recyclable materials, in both domestic and employment situations and, in particular, within all new build.
PT D	Transportation planning and management takes full account of the AONB designation, protects the tranquillity and special qualities of the landscape and reduces transport impacts on the environment and communities of the AONB	**PT19**	AONB partner organisations utilise a consistent approach to the design, provision and maintenance of highways and associated features through joint implementation of the 'Conserving and Enhancing the setting of the AONB Rural Road Network' highways guidance.
		PT20	Promote and help develop an integrated system, whereby roads, railways, public

			transport and Rights of Way networks interconnect, minimising the impact of traffic on the AONB and encouraging a safer and more attractive environment for walking, cycling and horse riding.
		PT21	Seek to minimise freight transport through the AONB to help protect tranquillity, the rural nature of settlements and the special qualities of the AONB
		PT22	Promote the provision of affordable parking facilities at public transport nodes, car sharing and community transport initiatives to enable and encourage a reduced reliance on private cars.

(Additional Information: Planning and Transport Appendix 33)

14. Viable Rural Communities

The low population density, the absence of large settlements within the AONB and daily commuting to the larger settlements on the AONB's periphery, all threaten the viability of remaining local services such as post offices, pubs, doctor's surgeries, village shops and village halls. Many services are not easily accessed from smaller villages and do not meet the demands of a growing elderly population. The Localism Act 2011 gives people more control over the development of their local area.

14.1. Special characteristics and qualities that make this AONB special, as a whole, with regards to viable rural communities:

- Sparsely populated with absence of any large-scale settlements, reinforcing a deeply rural 'sense of place' amongst AONB communities
- Many parishes or groups of parishes are positively taking up the opportunity of producing Neighbourhood Plans
- Several communities have developed a community run or 'on call' system of minibus transport
- Several community owned and run village stores are run either entirely, or mainly, by committed groups of volunteers
- Community spirit is strong in many settlements, as demonstrated through participation in "Village of the Year" competitions, development of parish archives, restoration of lost parish features and organisation of annual fetes, festivals or traditional events

Aim

14.2. We want communities that appreciate and care for the AONB; and their residents enjoy a high quality of life.

Achievements to date

- Rural Post Offices and Community Shops
  Advice and written support given to several communities to retain their Post Office services, whilst new community shops and the re-ordering of a rural church were funded through LEADER[34]
- Sustainable Development Fund
  Efficient and effective use of Sustainable Development Fund (see table below and Appendix 25)

[34] LEADER is a delivery mechanism for the EU Rural Development Programmes and covers all of Europe. The French acronym, 'Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale', means integrated action for rural development. The 2009-2013 LEADER programme, and the money allocated to England provided rural grants for farm diversification, community projects and small businesses

Eight year summary of the Sustainable Development Fund				
Year	**Total Fund (£)**	**No. of Projects**	**Total value of all Projects (£)**	**No. of firm enquiries**
05-06	58,000.00	10	140,000	19
06-07	80,000.00	19	700,000	46
07-08	70,000.00	12	530,000	25
08-09	60,247.00	24	960,000	50
09-10	25,736.00	10	158,000	30
10-11	14,096.00	7	136,000	20
11-12	10,861.00	10	66,000	20
12-13	7,540.00	7	54,184	20
Totals	**326,480.00**	**99**	**2,744,184**	**230**
Leverage of 1:8.4				

Key Issues

1. Influencing the planning system
   Local people want to influence the outcomes of the planning system. Neighbourhood plans, village plans[35] and village design statements are all ways for local people to get together and set out a vision for their area[36]. Communities need support in putting these plans together .

2. Facilities and services
   People cannot always get to the facilities and services they want without using personal transport, which is not available to many. Money is in short supply leading to the closure of some local facilities and services. At the same time, some communities are growing and the lack of local amenities puts the sustainability of the community at risk.

3. The young and elderly can feel cut off.
   Few affordable homes, facilities and services in the AONB are for the young or elderly. This can lead to their isolation.

4. Some communities can lack a sense of spirit or local pride .
   Most people have to travel outside the AONB to schools, shops and work. Little time is left to build any sense of community. The lack of facilities, such as a village hall, can make the situation worse, as can the loss of a local church or village shop.

The Issues Explained

14.3. Many people want to exercise their right to get involved in development decisions that affect them but, in practice, they have often found it difficult to have a meaningful say. The Localism Act 2011 gives people more control over the development of their local area through the creation of neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood development orders. Support and encouragement is needed to enable communities

[35] Village plans have different names within the 4 counties eg in Hampshire they are Parish Plans or Community Plans
[36] These matters are set out earlier in greater detail in paragraph 5.4

engaging with the planning process and their local planning authority to ensure that they meet statutory requirements and take account of all aspects of what makes rural communities viable.

14.4. This will include the wider landscape, environmental, cultural and historic aspects of their community area as well as the social and economic factors that may affect it. It is important that the Neighbourhood Plan process involves as wide a range of community interests as possible.

14.5. Just over 33,000 people live in the AONB[37], which gives 34 people per sq km. This is very low when compared to the average of 129 persons per sq km for rural England. The lack of large settlements and work places within the AONB put the remaining local services at risk. There are not enough people to generate the income needed to cover the costs of providing these services. Post offices, pubs, surgeries, village shops and village halls may disappear. Some local people have low incomes. They need access to local facilities because transport costs are high. They cannot afford the cost of travel.

14.6. Access to housing and services in the AONB is worse now than it was in 2007. This is particularly true for the northern half of the AONB. In the southern half, the situation is now better than in 2007[38].

English indices of deprivation Scale runs from 1 (most deprived) to 32,482 (least deprived)	
England average 2010	16,241
AONB in 2010	2,763
AONB in 2007	3,139
Department for Communities and Local Government 2010	

14.7. Approximately thirty percent of the population living in the AONB is over 60 years and that figure rises to 32% in the southern half of the AONB (in the national population 21% are over 60 years of age)[39]. In-migration appears to be a result of those retiring here rather than people moving to the area to work, resulting in an imbalance in the age structure of most communities. Services may not be adequate for an ageing population.

Population over 60 years of age
30% in the AONB
32% in the southern half of the AONB
21% of the national population

14.8. The number of people living in the AONB has grown, particularly close to the southern boundary. This has led to a high demand for housing and rise in house prices. People with high incomes are moving into this area and commuting to work.

[37] National Census 2011.
[38] With reference to the English indices of deprivation 2010 - Department for Communities and Local Government.
[39] National Census 2011.

Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE		**POLICIES**	
VRC A	Proactive and cohesive communities enjoy a high quality of life	**VRC1**	Encourage and support communities to engage with the Neighbourhood Plans process and to take account of the wider landscape, environmental, cultural and historic aspects of their community area as well as the social and economic factors that may affect it.
		VRC2	Support community initiatives that promote sustainable lifestyles such as those embracing community shops or combined community facilities, appropriate renewable energy schemes, energy efficiency, community woodlands, recycling and community transport that encourage and maintain the viability and diversity of rural community life.
		VRC3	Assist and/or advise local communities/groups, wherever possible, in drawing down external funding for projects that help achieve the objectives of the Management Plan
		VRC4	Work with partners to emphasise the need for more affordable housing in and around the AONB where that is consistent with the primary purposes of AONB designation
VRC B	Communities understand, appreciate and care for the AONB	**VRC5**	Engage more closely with parish councils and communities to inspire 'local champions' to improve mutual understanding and increase joint working on projects/activities/issues of shared interest
		VRC6	Encourage and work with partners to develop volunteer opportunities, activities and/ or events that conserve, enhance and celebrate the AONB

(Additional Information: Viable Rural Communities Appendix 34)

CONSERVING AND ENHANCING SPECIAL LANDSCAPES TO ENJOY

15. Awareness and Understanding

The AONB is a living, working landscape shaped and managed by people. Its natural beauty, historic and cultural heritage has long provided inspiration for artists, crafts people, writers and musicians, many of whom have made the area their home. Improving awareness and understanding of the AONB is a critically important task to ensure the landscape is recognised, enjoyed and valued by all.

15.1. Special characteristics and qualities that make this AONB special, as a whole, with regards to awareness and understanding:

- The AONB is an inspirational area; a 'hidden gem' with a wealth of visual, natural, historical and cultural characteristics.
- Cultural footprints through the ages are visible throughout the landscape.

  The diverse, distinctive and often unique elements that comprise the AONB are a valuable, mainly untapped, educational resource.
- The special qualities of the area have been recognised and valued by many local people and visitors for many years.
- There are ½ million people within thirty minutes drive of the AONB in surrounding market towns and the Bournemouth and Poole conurbations
- The landscape character of the AONB is clearly understood and valued by non-experts

Aim

15.2. We want the area's special qualities and landscape character; its traditions; and its historic and natural assets understood and valued by all. We want everyone to understand what the AONB designation means and why the area was designated. We want everyone to promote and support the AONB.

Achievements to date

- AONB Annual Forums
  These have attracted almost a thousand attendees since 2004, the Annual Forum regularly attracts around 100 representatives from different interest groups each year, both from within and outside the area. Presentations, workshops and site visits focus on topics of current interest.
- The Hart newsletter

This has been delivered to over 14,500 homes and businesses twice a year for the past 8 years. It covers news, views, events and the work of the team and Partnership. Over 2,000 people receive the AONB E Bulletins

- The AONB website
  This receives around 12,000 visits per year, doubling in the last 5 years Appendix 26). There are now linked sites for the Historic Landscape, the Wood Fair and the sustainable tourism site 'Discover Nadder'

- The AONB blog
  The blog receives 500-600 visits per month. The AONB currently has many hundreds of 'followers' on Facebook and Twitter

- Social Media training
  The AONB Team devised and delivered social media training days for over 20 tourism businesses

- AONB leaflets and the events programme
  Both are in increasing demand. Nearly 50% of respondents to a recent online survey[40] said they would like to take part in more events such as guided walks. Assisted the National Association of AONBs (Appendix 27) in the 50th anniversary promotion of 'Diamonds in the Landscape' celebrations through producing the round walk information for each AONB, together with promotion of the AONB's own 30th anniversary in 2011

Key Issues

1. Low public profile
   There is limited understanding and appreciation of the purposes of the AONB. There is an ongoing lack of awareness amongst some of the AONB population of the designation purpose or boundaries. People are often unaware of the benefits gained from the designation (high quality environment, recreation, health and well being) or the role they can play in caring for the area.

2. Profile with partners and other organisations
   Being at the edge of the counties of Wiltshire, Dorset, Hampshire and Somerset means that the AONB can suffer from the 'edge effect' in that it can be overlooked. Partners and other organisations the AONB works with do not always have a full understanding of the designation or of the work undertaken by the Partnership.

3. Engaging young people
   To date it has been difficult to engage young people. To do so is vital, as they will be future custodians of the landscape.

The Issues Explained

15.3. Despite the AONB being designated over 30 years ago and having a small team of officers in place since 2004, the AONB Partnership continues to find that there is limited understanding of where the AONB boundaries are, why the area was designated, what the AONB designation means and the benefits that it brings. The

[40] Management Plan Survey, May 2013

area's special qualities and landscape character; its traditions; and its historic and natural assets are not well understood.

> *'When meeting members of the public when on the land, I feel there is a lack of awareness in the population both locally and nationally that this AONB exists. This probably needs to be addressed. It has the potential to bring more business to the local shops and pubs in communities within the AONB and so help them become more sustainable and build up village communities again as opposed to allowing them to become only satellites for the wealthy who wish to live in the country'.*
>
> *Member of the AONB's Land Manager's Forum*

15.4. Awareness of the AONB will improve with good information. Understanding will grow with relevant, good interpretation. There are a variety of ways to offer information and interpretation. However it is done, it must be of high quality and in keeping with the environment.

15.5. It will always be important to meet people:

- The 'Annual Forum' brings all stakeholders together and keeps them informed about the needs of the area and the role they can play in its care, alongside the AONB Partnership.
- The biennial Wood Fair attracts around 6,000-7,000 visitors and showcases the AONB, the value of woodland management and associated skills, products and crafts
- The AONB team attends various events, large and small, in the area to promote the AONB designation, purpose and work of the Partnership

15.6. The 'Local Distinctiveness' toolkit shows all the 'special' places, views, activities and wildlife of the AONB. These were chosen by local people. Anyone can copy the text and pictures to use in their own marketing material. This sends out consistent messages about the area in which they are based. This offers businesses and community groups the chance to promote their business, activities and the AONB, with one voice.

15.7. Electronic media sources offer a range of ways of reaching new people, especially the younger generation. To this end, the AONB website is a significant resource offering a wealth of information about the area. Up to date material and examples of good practice all help to inform. Moreover, ideas can be swapped, information given via regular blogs and use of different social media, such as Facebook and Twitter.

Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE		**POLICIES**	
AUA	The purposes of AONB designation are known and understood by all	**AU1**	Develop and promote a strong and distinctive identity for the AONB to all
		AU2	Investigate the potential for distinctive AONB signage at boundaries of, and within the AONB
		AU3	Work with Local Authorities, parish councils, councillors and community groups to develop

			AONB information and learning opportunities (information, training, presentations) relevant to their work
AUB	The AONB landscapes, natural beauty and high quality environment are understood, valued and supported by all.	**AU4**	Evaluate the number, scope and effectiveness of publications and other information media to improve understanding of the AONB
		AU5	Develop the existing 'Interpretative Statement' for the AONB into a strategy that sets out aims, objectives and action for increased awareness, understanding and interpretation across the AONB
		AU6	Seek specific opportunities to promote awareness and understanding of all aspects of the AONB to young people in particular, using the most appropriate media
		AU7	Work with relevant partners such as CreativeWiltshire, Dorset Arts Trust and others to develop opportunities for organisations, communities and visitors to better understand and appreciate the AONB eg volunteering, learning, artistic expression

(Additional Information: Awareness and Understanding Appendix 35)

16. Involvement and Learning

Volunteering is a means of becoming more personally involved in the local area whilst developing a range of practical and personal skills to help conserve and enhance it. Using the AONB as an educational resource for schools will help youngsters gain a better insight into the countryside around them.

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

- The quality and diversity of the AONB's natural, historic and cultural environment provides the widest range of opportunities for volunteering and learning
- Requests for AONB presentations continue to rise
- The AONB can be reached in 20-30 minutes by around ½ million people.
- There is a wide range of opportunities for involvement in practical tasks, educational activity with schools or desk-based research in the AONB
- There is a growing recognition and interest in the value of learning and developing rural skills for young people in the AONB
- There is great potential for dovetailing and complementing activity at the proposed Tisbury Community Hub and the existing Shaftesbury Technical Skills College.
- There is interest from three agricultural colleges and independent trainers in establishing an AONB based countryside skills training centre.

Aim

16.2. We want people to learn about the natural, historic and cultural heritage of the AONB. We want people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to have the opportunity to take up countryside skills training and volunteering in the AONB.

Achievements to date

- School visits
  The Team engaged in 40 school visits across the AONB, over three years reaching approximately 1,000 primary school children. The Team also hosts annual visits from Heritage Conservation undergraduates from Bournemouth and Bath Universities
- Talks
  The Farmland Bird Adviser has given talks to a total of 127 attendees, whilst delivering related training to 195 landowners, farmers and other advisers

- Volunteers
  186 potential volunteers have offered time for a variety of work or research

- Guided walks
  Over 420 people have taken part in guided walks since 2009

Key issues

1. Although some conservation bodies manage their own land or reserves for nature, there are fewer opportunities to undertake conservation work in the wider countryside of the AONB.

2. Although volunteers are willing to give their time for conservation work in the area, there are currently limited opportunities for involvement. The AONB has been recognised by many as an area with few opportunities or a base for volunteering; a 'black hole'.

3. There is a growing acknowledgment of, and interest in, the value of learning and developing rural skills. However, there is a recognised loss of traditional countryside skills in the AONB.

The Issues Explained

16.3. There are few substantive practical volunteer activities in the wider countryside of the area. Local and national nature reserves offer localised volunteer opportunities and the 'Leisure Credits' scheme[41] in the AONB engages young people in practical environmental tasks and would like to expand. There are also several active volunteers and groups focused on access .

16.4. There is continued interest in active participation in caring for and learning about the AONB. A number of events organised by the AONB, such as guided walks and a one day conferences, have often been over-subscribed. Requests for AONB presentations continue to rise.

16.5. There is now an identified need[42] and support for a 'hub', or central base, for all types of volunteering, countryside skills training and a low key visitor centre. This could be achieved through a multifunctional AONB Countryside Centre.

16.6. This concept has generated interest from a wide range of people and organisations, many of whom would become partners. These partners will devise training and volunteering programmes for use in the centre that will harness the knowledge, experience and enthusiasm of many.

Partners could include:
The BCTV, local agricultural colleges and training centres, Wiltshire College, and the Dorset Opportunities Programme, Duke of Edinburgh providers, Tisbury Community Hub, Leisure Youth Credits and other local projects.

[41] The Leisure Credit Scheme involves young people in undertaking voluntary work and receiving Leisure Credits which are redeemed for reward trips or activities. The number of Credits a young person receives is based on how hard they worked and how well they worked as part of a team.
[42] Evidence compiled since 2005 and presented in bid for Leader funding 2011/12.

'I believe that this would be an exciting opportunity for young people in the South West Wiltshire and North Dorset areas. There are lots of developing projects that this would link in with and there is some great potential to provide a centre that could offer training courses in rural skills and enable young people to access apprenticeship or employment opportunities within the local community. This would add significant value to the work of the Leisure Credits Young Enterprise Initiative supporting some of our young volunteers to move into Education, Employment or Training places'.

Wiltshire Youth Partnership

16.7. As well as providing a focus for this nationally important landscape, a Countryside Centre would offer:

- Accredited training opportunities in countryside management skills, conservation, agriculture, forestry, livestock/animal husbandry and a variety of rural industry skills (e.g. blacksmithing)
- A wide range of volunteering opportunities including natural history surveys, historic research and countryside management tasks
- Exciting recreational opportunities such as guided walks, dark night skies events and utilising all terrain mobility scooters for the less able
- An opportunity to take part in or attend various art based activities focussed on the special qualities of the AONB
- Professional, environmentally related CPD training courses for environmental professionals locally, regionally and from further afield, which could include for example, countryside, agricultural, forestry and land agency staff, those attached to all the nationally Protected Areas, the renewable energy sector and teachers/lecturers. Participants would be encouraged to stay locally.
- It will also act as a visitor centre for the area providing information on which events are on, what there is to see and do in the AONB and surrounding market towns, encouraging visitors to stay longer and spend more locally
- A facility for hire to external companies or organisations wanting to hold their own events or seminars
- Environmental play schemes during the holiday periods , encouraging exchange of town/country experiences

16.8. The countryside management tasks completed by the volunteers will help to conserve and enhance the landscape of the AONB. The construction and running of the centre will demonstrate best practice. The intent is to use a variety of sustainable construction techniques and methods. It will demonstrate the use of green energy sources such as wood chip and solar power. Where feasible, volunteers or trainees will complete some of the construction work. The skills gained through the centre will improve the job prospects of trainees.

16.9. The loss of traditional skills is a significant issue for the future management of the landscape. A revival in such skills, and the ability to make a living from using them, should be encouraged.

16.10. With the increasing relocation of workers to the towns, traditional crafts and skills are being lost from communities within the AONB. Such workers are often less well paid and may move out of the AONB because of high house prices. Young people in the

area have to travel a long way to attend county agricultural colleges and other training centres. For many, the lack and cost of public transport mean that accessing training in countryside skills is very difficult. Access to training (with accreditation) needs to be made available to everyone. The supply must be tailored to individual needs.

Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE		**POLICIES**	
IL A	A wide range of opportunities exist for residents and visitors to learn more about the AONB, volunteer or develop heritage and countryside skills	**IL1**	Proactively engage with volunteers offering their time and skills to the AONB from 2014 onwards
		IL2	Develop an Involvement and Learning Strategy setting out aims, objectives and action for increasing volunteering opportunities and improving countryside and heritage skills training within the AONB by the end of 2015.
		IL3	Establish an exemplar Countryside Centre; • Continue work to establish the first phase of an environmentally and financially sustainable 'Countryside Centre' within the AONB by the end of 2015, to act as the base for the AONB Partnership, volunteers, trainees, students and visitors • Ensure the 'Countryside Centre' is an exemplar with regard to green credentials e.g. green build techniques, energy efficiency, use of relevant renewable energy, waste minimisation, along with recognised green accreditation • Pursue two further proposed phases of Countryside Centre development by the end of this plan period through seeking additional funding and partners, as appropriate, to deliver interpretative provision for visitors and schools and supplementary opportunities to expand income streams
		IL4	Harness community and volunteer commitment and interest in the AONB to develop art based learning and/or appreciation projects and activities

(Additional Information: Involvement and Learning Appendix 36)

17. Access and Wellbeing

The extensive web of Rights of Way, access land and promoted routes offers an unrivalled opportunity for people to link to the landscape through exploration. Discovering hidden hamlets, and ancient monuments whilst experiencing the deep rurality and tranquillity the area offers, refreshes the mind, body and soul.

17.1. Special characteristics and qualities that make the AONB special, as a whole, with regards to access and wellbeing:

- The AONB has an extensive web of countryside access (Rights of Way, open access, permissive and named routes); the combined length of which would take you from Southampton to Edinburgh and back again.
- Enthusiastic user groups readily welcoming new members
- There are many instances of local community volunteers undertaking regular work on Rights of Way maintenance, signage, and promotion
- A contrast of high open downlands with ridge top routes and secluded, intimate lush valley trails
- Ancient droves and track-ways bristling with history
- Far reaching panoramic views uncluttered by industrial intrusions
- A peaceful, tranquil, deeply rural area
- Strong sense of remoteness
- Expanses of dark night skies.

Aim

17.2. We want everyone to explore and enjoy the AONB in ways that respect the purposes of designation. We want people to use the quality environment of the AONB to refresh the mind, body and soul.

Achievement to date

- PathWatch Initiative
  A scheme, successful in the South East, that allows reporting of illegal or irresponsible Rights of Way usage to police. This scheme requires ongoing work.
- Vehicle Loggers
  Twelve vehicle loggers have been positioned around the AONB at locations determined by the relevant Rights of Way teams to record ongoing usage of the routes by different users, but in particular usage by motorised vehicles

- New circular routes
  26 new circular walking, cycling and horse riding routes created in the Nadder Valley

- Rights of Way liaison across four Counties
  Liaison and exchange of information, experience and ideas between the four County Rights of Way teams

Key issues

1. The AONB does not currently work in partnership with the health sector and in particular, the new public health boards. Relevant professionals may not know of the AONB and the opportunities it offers for health and wellbeing.

2. Residents and visitors, including the elderly and mobility impaired, could make more use of the AONB for health and wellbeing improvement due to the proximity of numerous routes to villages

3. The Rights of Way across the AONB do not form a true 'network', with many gaps where routes might be linked up

4. There is insufficient promotion of the wide variety of opportunities for outdoor recreation and exercise that exists in the AONB for all ages and abilities.

5. Signage and maintenance of Rights of Way is not consistent across the area leading to a variable quality of experience, whilst reduced budgets for maintenance means a likelihood of greater reliance on local groups and volunteers to undertake practical work.

6. Recurring conflict amongst some users of RoW endures (e.g. walkers, cyclists, horses and vehicles) and some users do cause material damage in some areas.

The Issues Explained

17.3. It is important that the relatively new Health and Wellbeing Boards, together with the relevant professionals, are aware of the potential opportunities for improving health and wellbeing through access to the quality environment of the AONB. The population of around 33,000 within the AONB has the area on its doorstep; approximately ½ million people live within thirty minutes of the AONB in the surrounding market towns and the Bournemouth/Poole conurbation.

17.4. Continuing to close gaps in the countryside access network and providing and promoting further circular routes in close proximity to villages and the market towns would increase opportunities to access the outdoors for the elderly and less mobile. It would also benefit those who may not venture out due to cultural barriers or lack of awareness or confidence.

17.5. The 'green gym' concept, developed by The Conservation Volunteers, that provides people with a way to enhance their fitness and health while taking action to improve

the environment, could potentially be promoted by the AONB together with the Health and Wellbeing Boards and other partners.

17.6. Well maintained and managed Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs) provide opportunities for people with restricted mobility to access the more remote parts of the AONB. The routes are usually well defined and, provided that surfaces are in good condition, they are generally free from stiles, gates and other obstructions, so can easily be used by older people and families with young children, cyclists, carriage drivers and those using vehicles designed for the less able. There is a need for a byway/off road vehicle management strategy that deals with both public and land management access requirements.

17.7. There are immense opportunities for walking, cycling, horse riding and responsible off road driving throughout the vast web of Rights of Way (1,655kms) and way marked routes, such as the Monarch's Way, Wessex Ridgeway, Jubilee Trail and others. Users are frequently rewarded with spectacular panoramas unseen from the road. These provide a great opportunity to link people with the landscape whilst providing enjoyment and improved physical and mental health. These opportunities require much improved promotion through the AONB web site, leaflets, events and through relevant partner organisations and groups.

17.8. The visitor economy benefits from considerable numbers of walkers and cyclists. They stay overnight and use local services. There are many active groups using the paths and tracks, such as ramblers groups, cyclists clubs, and horse riding societies, carriage drivers and the Trail Riders.

17.9. The four County Councils have prepared and reviewed Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs) for their networks that reflect the modern patterns of demand and land use. RoWIPs explore linkages between the off-road network, permissive routes, open access areas, minor roads and local transport routes together with local facilities and services. They also strive to ensure the network is as accessible as possible to people with disabilities or who are disadvantaged.

17.10. The County Councils each give support to committed and active Local Access Forums. These are independent organisations that bring all interested parties together to provide balanced advice the improvement and promotion of responsible access.

17.11. Vehicle logger equipment is currently in use around the AONB. The loggers record movement and speed (with some exceptions) and experienced interpretation of the data can indicate the type of vehicle detected (tractor, cyclist, 4x4 or motorbike) which continues to help gather evidence of usage of various Rights of Way

Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE		**POLICIES**	
AWA	Everyone has the opportunity to access the AONB for responsible enjoyment, in accord with	**AW1**	Continue liaison with Rights of Way Officers, Local Access Forums, landowner and user representatives to encourage and support the development and promotion of safe walking,

	the purposes of designation.		cycling and horse riding routes, including those that are accessible to the less able
		AW2	Develop, support and promote programmes of guided walks, events and activities throughout the AONB with partners
		AW3	Investigate revitalising the PathWatch initiative as a means to reduce illegal and/or irresponsible use of Rights of Way
AW B	Improved health and well-being opportunities are developed and promoted throughout the AONB	**AW4**	Liaise with Public Health Boards, Local Nature Partnerships and Local Enterprise Partnerships to see how best the AONB can assist with opportunities to improve health and well being
		AW5	Investigate funding opportunities to enhance the Rights of Way / countryside access network for all, including the provision of vehicles suitable for use by the less able and appropriate trails

(Additional Information: Access and Wellbeing Appendix 37)

PARTNERSHIPS, FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTATION

18. The AONB Partnership

18.1. Special characteristics regarding the Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership:

- Inter-authority, cross border joint working to further the purposes of AONB designation. The nine Local Authorities involved are: Wiltshire Unitary Authority, Dorset; Hampshire and Somerset County Councils and five District Councils namely East Dorset; North Dorset; New Forest, Mendip and South Somerset. The percentage covered by each of the constituent Local Authorities is given in Map X

- A total of eighteen national and local organisations of the Partnership contributing to the development of the strategic AONB Management Plans

- A consistent commitment to 'bottom up' community involvement and engagement in AONB matters

- The AONB covers the administrative areas of nine Local Authorities: Wiltshire Unitary Authority, Dorset; Hampshire and Somerset County Councils and five District Councils namely East Dorset; North Dorset; New Forest, Mendip and South Somerset.

- The national, regional and local organisations represented on the AONB Partnership have contributed to this Management Plan as have a large number of interest groups, local communities and individuals. The Partnership Structure is shown in Appendix 3.

Aim

The organisations that make up the AONB Partnership fully understand and take responsibility for 'conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the landscape.

Achievements to date

- The preparation, publication and implementation of Cranborne Chase AONB Management Plans 2004-9 and 2009-14

- Encouragement of additional partners and joint working, such as:

- Historic Environment Actions Plans – partners include English Heritage, archaeology groups, relevant Local Authority Officers, Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), local experts and volunteers amongst many others

- South West Farmland Bird Initiative – partners include, Wessex Water, Natural England, the National Farmers Union and farmers/landowners

- Ancient and Veteran Trees Pilot Project – partners include Hampshire County Council, Woodland Trust and volunteers

- Tranquillity Study – partners include CPRE and volunteers

- Sustainable Rural Tourism Project – partners include Sowing SEEDS Leader funding, SW Area Board, local Chambers of Commerce, local businesses and volunteers

- Sowing SEEDS LEADER programme – with Community Partnership Executive of North Dorset, Local Action Group (LAG) members and local communities

Key Issues

1. The commitment of partners to be directly or indirectly involvement in delivering Management Plan objectives varies widely amongst the 18 partner organisations

2. Some partners are not fully aware of the range of documents and guidance produced by the AONB Partnership that could assist them in their duty to 'conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB'

3. Frequent personnel changes within Local Authorities and other organisations often results in a lack of awareness and knowledge about the AONB, from new staff

The Issues Explained

18.2. The AONB Management Plan 2014-2019 is a strategic plan for the conservation and enhancement of the AONB drawn together on behalf of the 19 organisations that make up the Partnership. It has been endorsed by all 19 partner organisations and, in addition, has been formally adopted by the 9 Local Authorities.

18.3. Under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 it is a legal duty for all relevant authorities to 'have regard to' the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB in exercising or performing any functions affecting land in the area. These relevant authorities include all statutory bodies and all tiers of government, including parish councils and holders of public office.

18.4. For government, local authorities, other public bodies and other 'relevant authorities' active support of the implementation of this plan is the key to satisfying their 'Section 85 ' duty.

18.5. The fundamental purpose of this Management Plan is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB. Co-ordinated action is needed by a wide range of interests to ensure collectively that it continues to provide valued environmental benefits, including clean air, water and food, maintains strong, vibrant local communities and is enjoyed by future generations.

18.6. The AONB Partnership has worked with a wide range of partners in the delivery of actions on the ground. It will be increasingly important throughout this next plan period to retain existing partners and to attract new partners.

18.7. Local Authorities are large organisations and often have staff changes. The communication skills of Partnership representatives need to be exceptionally good to ensure relevant documents are continually fed down through each organisation and contact between the AONB and relevant staff is maintained

18.8. It is vital that as many people as possible are engaged in helping to achieve Plan objectives. More emphasis will be placed on encouraging volunteers and communities and interest groups to become involved in helping make the vision for this AONB a reality.

18.9. The success of Plan depends upon good relationships and joint working between public bodies at all levels, statutory and non-statutory agencies and organisations, farmers and land managers, community groups, interest groups and individuals. The diverse challenges and accelerating pace of change that face the AONB must be seen as an opportunity for all sectors of the community, in its widest sense, to work together. Pooling resources, sharing expertise and working together present the best opportunities for conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of this AONB.

Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE		**POLICIES**	
P	All current and new AONB partners work pro-actively together to jointly achieve Management Plan objectives	**P1**	Existing and new partners identify and deliver shared aims/objectives.
		P2	Each AONB partner signs up to deliver at least two actions in the annual AONB Delivery Plan by the May/June Partnership Panel meeting.
		P3	Each partner ensures that all protocols, Position Statements, Fact Sheets, Good Practice and other Guidance documents are known about, understood, used by all relevant departments and officers.
		P4	Ensure high-level officers and Members are aware of the AONB designation, purpose(s) and duty towards it, through Member briefings, training sessions and the Annual Forum.

19. Funding

Aim

19.1. Funding is secured to support the core work of the Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership and Team and project work is underway utilising pooled resources of several partners or externally acquired funding.

Achievements to date

- Sowing SEEDS Leader programme - £1.5m
- Heritage Lottery Fund, Parish Archive Project - £50k
- Natural England, SW Farmland Bird Initiative – £28k pa (4 years)
- Wessex Water partner funding for SW Farmland Bird Initiative - £25k pa until 2017
- Additional Local Authority contributions for specific projects e.g. Ancient and Veteran Trees Pilot Project (Hampshire County Council) and Heritage Lottery Fund application (Dorset County Council)
- Campaign to Protect Rural England - contribution to AONB tranquillity study and the Parish Appraisal Good Practice Guidance

Key issues

1. Exchequer funding is likely to continue to decrease and may yet experience more severe reductions, whilst government expects the highest level of protection for AONBs
2. Local Authority budgets are diminishing whilst demand for their services and funding increases
3. Applications to external grant programmes are becoming increasingly competitive with many organisations and conservation groups experiencing reductions or cuts to funding
4. Opportunities to pursue additional and alternative funding sources and mechanisms are crucial and demand the necessary resources to be allocated to this task
5. Local Authority Partnerships, such as the AONB, are ineligible to apply to certain funding programmes e.g. Reaching Communities and some Trusts and Foundations

The Issues Explained

19.2. Central Government and Local Authority funding is likely to continue to reduce over the plan period. Potential income has been lost through grants being cut or reduced;

Local Authorities are often no longer able to continue their work, such as biodiversity partnership coordination and there is increased competition for funding to key funders such as the Heritage Lottery Fund.

19.3. It will be increasingly important to ensure that the purpose of AONBs is widely communicated both locally and nationally. Cranborne Chase AONB will maintain a close relationship with, and input to the work of, the National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONBs). This body represents the AONB Family on national issues including policy and advocacy, communications, training and securing resources.

19.4. The Partnership must have regard to the financial and skilled staff resources at its disposal and the projections over the next five years. The resources for delivering all Plan objectives have not been secured at the time of writing this Plan. Many of the most significant actions will require the pooling of resources by several organisations and/or success in attracting funding from a range of public, private and voluntary sector sources.

19.5. Given the increasingly tight financial circumstances there will be a need for all partners and the AONB team to prioritise workloads to ensure a strong focus on the core AONB purpose, to 'conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area'.

19.6. It will be increasingly important for the AONB Partnership to secure external funding to deliver project work on the ground, particularly with ongoing reductions from central and local government. The Partnership proposes to set up a charitable enterprise such as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. This entity would sit alongside the AONB Partnership and have purposes that align with those of the Partnership. The charitable enterprise would be able to apply for funds which are currently unavailable to a local authority partnership organisation.

Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE		**POLICIES**	
F	Secure resources are in place to support the core functions and project aspirations of the AONB Partnership throughout this Plan period and beyond	**F1**	Undertake an assessment of current and future resource requirements to devise a future strategy to attract external funding to achieve objectives throughout this Plan period and beyond (Friends Group, Visitor Payback etc)
		F2	All funding partners transfer their agreed percentage contribution to the core AONB budget each year, as set out in the Memorandum of Agreement
		F3	Work with the National Association of AONBs to lobby the appropriate government department, currently Defra, for a long term, secure funding commitment
		F4	Assess options for development of a charitable enterprise (e.g. Charitable Incorporated Organisation) to submit external bids to funding

			programmes that are ineligible to the Partnership, to help achieve AONB purposes
		F5	Actively seek funding, and partnership working, from non Local Authority partner organisations for specific core and project work, such as Local Enterprise Partnerships, Local Nature Partnerships, Area Boards and Health and Wellbeing Boards
		F6	Actively engage with future Leader and other EU/national initiatives to secure funding for appropriate project work

20. Implementation

Who implements the Management Plan?

20.1. The whole Partnership has a key role to implement the Management Plan through individual actions as well as partnership working. Whilst the team takes a lead in much of the implementation work and initiates new and innovative projects, it is the responsibility and duty of all partners to take positive action to conserve and enhance the AONB.

20.2. An annual Delivery Plan sets out work or 'action' to be taken in each of the 5 years covered by the Plan. The small AONB team has the role of facilitator or advocate for part of the annual work, whilst leading in some areas. However, significant parts of the annual Delivery Plans will only be effectively delivered with the assistance of partner organisations, working together in an integrated way to achieve multiple objectives.

20.3. There is a growing body of volunteers both within and outside the area and it will be increasingly important to engage and support them to assist with delivering work programmes.

20.4. This is an ambitious Management Plan. Successful implementation is beyond the resources of just the Partnership Panel or AONB team alone. The whole Partnership has a key role to implement the Management Plan through individual actions and partnership working.

20.5. By helping to implement this Plan, government, local authorities, public bodies and other 'relevant authorities' will be contributing to their 'Section 85' duty to "have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB". It is important that the strategies, plans and action plans of key local, regional and national authorities, agencies and organisations take account of and reflect the vision, objectives and policies of this plan.

Partnership Delivery Plan

20.6. The annual Delivery Plan sets out work or 'action' to be taken in each of the 5 years covered by the Plan. The small AONB team takes on the role of facilitator or advocate for part of the annual work, whilst leading in other areas.

20.7. It is recognised that it is absolutely essential to involve partners fully in agreeing actions, responsibilities and resource allocations to secure their real commitment to Management Plan tasks that require their involvement.

20.8. There is a growing body of volunteers both within and outside the area and it will be increasingly important to engage and support them to assist with delivering work programmes.

Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE		**POLICIES**	
I	All current and potential partners are committed to and involved with the achievement of Management Plan objectives	**I1**	Foster closer working relationships with local authority officers and members to ensure understanding of management plan objectives and integration of work where appropriate
		I2	Ensure the work of topic groups is focused on the management plan objectives
		I3	Establish and maintain close relationships with external organisations and bodies, both public and private, whose programmes of work could support the delivery of management plan objectives
		I4	Strengthen working relationships with local parishes, communities, landowners, volunteers and other stakeholders to improve local delivery of the management plan objectives

21. Monitoring and Evaluation

21.1. Monitoring and evaluation of this Management Plan and the actions outlined within the Delivery Plan is an essential task for the AONB Team and is grant-aided as part of the core activities undertaken. There are essentially two types of monitoring work:

- **Performance monitoring** - to establish whether actions outlined within the Delivery Plan have been undertaken. This is an important activity and will be reported on a regular basis to the AONB Partnership and Partnership Forum.
    - An Annual Report will summarise the activities of both the AONB Team and partners. It will include details of the tasks undertaken, the effect upon the AONB (outcomes) and the funding and other resources employed.
- **Condition monitoring** - to establish if actions undertaken have had the desired effect, or impact, on the AONB. To monitor condition effectively, initial base line information is required in order that comparisons can be made and an evaluation of change over time. Some base line data is currently held by the AONB.

21.2. Monitoring and evaluation requires resources and it is therefore crucial that those attributes, or features, of the AONB that are a meaningful measure of AONB quality are chosen. These form a suite of indicators that can be measured, monitored and evaluated over time.

21.3. Natural England has developed a 'Monitoring Framework for Protected Landscapes' to provide a consistent framework for measuring environmental outcomes in protected areas. It will provide evidence to inform the next review the AONB Management Plan, review the 'State of the AONB' and demonstrate the benefits of protected landscape designation.

21.4. Indicators have been chosen, set out for each of the ten chapters in this Plan, for the following reasons:

- they focus on the primary reasons for designation ie landscape, special qualities, natural and historic environment and management of land
- they are readily available and can be cut to the AONB boundary
- they add to baseline data for measuring the 'State of the AONB'
- they add to evidence required for funding bids
- desired indicators that will only be acquired through additional resources or with the assistance of volunteers. *The latter indicators are in italics.*

Landscape:

- Changes identified through analysis of fixed point photography at a minimum of every five years (AONB)

- land use change (Defra)

- take up of relevant themed groups of ES options that contribute to conserving and enhancing landscape character (NE)

- Change in % of AONB recorded as 'most tranquil'

- changes in extent of dark night skies (Skyglow map; Dark Sky Association)

- length of overhead power cables laid underground (SSE)

Natural Environment:

- number and capacity of renewable energy applications permitted/constructed (LAs)

- change in ecological status of rivers and surface water bodies (EA)

- change in % of protected landscape managed under ES agreements (NE)

- change in total annual values of AE schemes in AONB (NE)

- % change in condition of SSSIs (NE)

- Area of broad and priority habitats within AONB (NE)

- % change of area under relevant themed groups of ES options (NE)

- Frequency and abundance of farmland bird species at selected holdings (NE/HLS)

- Existance of rare arable plants identified in 2011 survey as potential 'hot spots' (£/vols)

- Change in carbon footprint of AONB team office and activities (£/vols)

Historic and Cultural Environment:

- change in number of heritage assets (EH)

- change in number of heritage assets 'at risk' (EH)

- change in ES area for the management and protection of archaeological features

- number of Conservation Areas with Conservation Area Appraisals (District Councils)

- number of readily accessible HERs (County Councils)

- increase in awareness of, and involvement in, cultural environment (£/vols)

Rural Land Management:

- changes in farmland type (arable/grazing etc) (Defra)

- changes in farm numbers / sizes / employment (Defra)

- changes in numbers of livestock (Defra)

- changes in total area of woodland (subdivided) (FC)

- changes in area of woodland managed (including EWGS/felling licences) (FC)

- changes to game and pest management practices (£/vols)

Rural Economy:

- changes in tourism related business performance (£/vols)

- changes in number of businesses taking up green/other accreditation (£/vols)

- performance of LEADER funded business projects (£/vols)

- repeat of Economic Survey of AONB (£)

Planning and Transportation:

- change in % of Local Authority adopted Plans (Local Plans, Minerals and Waste Plans) or strategies with specific reference to AONB Management Plan/policies (AONB)

- change in number of relevant/major applications coming to AONB for comment (AONB)

- availability of Design Guidance (District Councils)

- change in number of parishes/groups of parishes with Neighbourhood Plans (LAs/AONB)

- number of applications where, after response from AONB Partnership, positive change has occurred relating to designation purpose (£/vols)

Viable Rural Communities:

- change in Parish Facilities and Services (County Councils)

- number of Neighbourhood Plans published (LAs/AONB)

- number of community projects applying for external funding / successful (£/vols)

Awareness and Understanding:

- changes in number of survey respondents aware of designation, purpose, 'highly valuing' the CCWWD AONB (£/vols)

- change in number of 'followers' / active participants in social media/web blog (AONB)

- change in numbers of enquiries for information, presentations, assistance (AONB)

- number taking up Information Pack for parishes/councillors (AONB)

Involvement and Learning:

- number of volunteers engaged in assisting the AONB (AONB)

- number of people attending guided walks and events organised by/through AONB (AONB)

Access and Wellbeing:

- Number/length/condition of countryside access (County Councils/£ vols)

- Number of volunteers actively engaged in access work (County Councils/AONBvols)

- Satisfaction from visitor / resident surveys (£/vols)

- NHS health indicators (vols)

Compliance note to accompany the AONB Management Plan 2014-19

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Sustainability Appraisal (SA), Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Equalities Impact Assessment (EiA) were all undertaken for the AONB Management Plan 2009-14. These have all undergone review to ensure the Management Plan 2014-19 continues to comply with these legislative requirements.