



Theme 1 - Cross Cutting

"A prosperous farming community will manage the land well"

Bowerchalke, 28th April 2003

Background

Three interlinked overarching external ‘forces for change’ are likely to impact significantly on the landscapes and special qualities of the AONB:

- pressures from development, changing lifestyles and transportation;
- the effects of globalisation on agricultural land use; and
- climate change and our response to it.

The implications are introduced in this section but the responses are set out under the appropriate topics in each theme.

The AONB is an unrivalled educational and recreational resource for both specialists and the casually inquisitive. It offers many exciting opportunities for low key, small scale tourism that could benefit the rural economy, whilst increasing awareness and understanding.

There are financial implications arising from the aims and objectives of this Management Plan. These are considered on pages 60 and 61.

Community Priority 1: *Increase levels of awareness and understanding of the AONB*

Topics:

- Forces for change
- Awareness and understanding
- Financial implications

FORCES FOR CHANGE

1 - Pressures from development, changing lifestyles and transportation.

The UK population is projected to increase by 10% (5 million) by 2026¹. Of this, a 750,000 increase is expected to be in the South West Region². (Similar increases are expected in the South East.) People are living longer and the average size of households is decreasing with more single occupancy. Much of the increase in population in rural areas is the result of migration for lifestyle reasons, including retirement. The scale of development required to provide housing, employment and services to

this expanding population will be considerable.³

The towns and cities which surround the AONB are all expected to accommodate significant housing and employment development in the next 20 years.

Whilst housing and employment development within the villages of the AONB is likely to address only local needs, market towns such as Shaftesbury and Wimborne can be expected to accommodate significant new development.

The increasing demand for quicker journey times between employment centres may lead to pressure for road widening and other ‘improvement’ schemes on roads in the AONB.

Increased prosperity enjoyed by some people leads to other environmental impacts such as; more over-flights by aircraft of all kinds; the use of roads and rights of way for motorised leisure pursuits; and a demand for second homes.

Unless effectively managed, all of these pressures will work individually and cumulatively to impact adversely on both the landscape character and special qualities of the area. The Partnership’s role is to ensure that the conservation and enhancement of the landscape is a key issue, effectively addressed in strategies and plans produced by other agencies.

This is taken forward in Planning and Transportation (pages 46 - 48, Objective K) with a call for a robust framework of strategies and plans to be in place to secure only appropriate development in and around the AONB. These must contribute to the social and economic well-being of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs whilst conserving and enhancing its distinctive character and enabling greater understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities.

2 - Globalisation of agriculture

The landscape of the AONB is dominated by farmland and woodland, and changes in these land uses have a major influence on the natural beauty of the area. The reform of the EU Common Agricultural Policy and the introduction of new agri-environment schemes in the UK are affecting farming, with a greater emphasis on wildlife conservation. The de-coupling of support payments from production is requiring farmers to respond more readily to world market conditions. Fluctuations in commodity prices and input costs

1. Office for National Statistics, 2001.

2. Draft South West Regional Spatial Strategy 2006.

3. Housing allocation is set by the Regional Spatial Strategy. A significant increase in new dwellings is proposed following the examination in public, with significant growth for Wimborne Minister. This would bring development close to the AONB boundary, with potential impacts upon its setting.



are making future arable profitability hard to predict but livestock farming, which is crucial to the management of special habitats like chalk grassland, has been in decline for some time.

The long term decline in the market for UK timber has had a pronounced effect on the area's woodlands, with many suffering from a lack of management. The ageing beech woodlands no longer produce significant volumes of timber and are more valuable as places for recreation than as a productive part of the rural economy. The promotion of wood as a renewable fuel may stimulate improved management of some woodlands.

The AONB Partnership will encourage appropriate, multiple use of agricultural and forestry land to provide benefits for all in ways that are sustainable. This is taken forward in Rural Land Management (pages 53 - 57 , Objectives Q and S) with a call for the potential impacts of globalisation on land use and biodiversity and natural resources to be identified and a strategic response to be in place to secure the conservation and enhancement of landscape character by 2014. Objective F (Natural Resources) and Policy C3 (Landscape) echo this call, which reflects the need for an integrated approach across a number of sectors.

3 - Climate change

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)⁴, the Government and local authorities. How much global temperatures will rise and how quickly are still under debate. 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. These changes will be gradual and may not be noticeable within the life of this plan but strategies are needed now because of the long lead-in time for actions to be effective.

The likely changes are:

- summers will become warmer and drier
- winters will become milder and wetter
- extreme weather conditions will become more frequent

These changes have the potential to affect the landscapes, wildlife and communities of the AONB and are taken forward in Landscape (pages 27 - 31 , Objective C).

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

Woodlands may be dominated by oak and ash which cope better than beech with the likely changes in climate. The range of crops grown by farmers will change and there may be more growing of bio-fuels. 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 people decide to holiday in the UK. All of these factors would affect which flora and fauna can flourish in the area.

Mitigation for climate change in the AONB

Mitigation requires the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, such as carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and methane, from whatever source that can be managed.

Mitigation measures include:

- Better on-farm management of fertilizer and animal waste.
- Increased reliance on renewable energies, biomass heating from local fuel stocks and appropriately scaled renewable energy generation.
- Enhanced domestic and commercial energy efficiency.
- Greater availability of alternative fuels for cars, commercial vehicles and plant machinery e.g. batteries, LPG, bio-fuels.
- Improved availability and accessibility of sustainable modes of transport (bus services, cycling).
- Greater use of timber in construction from sustainable woodland.
- Carbon capture as an objective of habitat creation and management of woodlands.

Adapting to climate change

Changing our behaviour to respond to the impacts of climate change is known as 'adaptation'. Adaptation measures include:

- Encouraging simple greenhouse gas and carbon accounting to monitor the effectiveness of changes.
- Dissemination of advice on bio-security and disease control in domestic and wild animals.
- Modelling groundwater response to climate change as a part of planning policy development.
- Increasing measures to manage the risk of flooding.

- Securing future water resources by water storage and transfer schemes that reduce abstraction.
- Encouraging water efficiency in homes and businesses and encouraging reuse.
- Linking fragmented habitats to improve opportunities for species migration and population stabilisation.

Next steps

By the time this Management Plan is reviewed in 2014, the likely impacts of climate change on the character of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB should have been identified. The AONB Partnership will encourage organisations, businesses and individuals to consider the implications of climate change upon their operations and aspirations. A strategic response will need to be developed that includes a comprehensive programme of measures to mitigate the effects of and adapt to the consequences of climate change. This is taken forward in Landscape (pages 27 - 31, Objective C).

AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

Community Priority 1:

Increase levels of awareness and understanding of the AONB

Overview

Since the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the requirement to publish a management plan, there has been a heightened awareness of the designation, purpose, and the benefits the AONB can bring to the environment, economy and the people who live and work in the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs. Listening to local people, hearing what makes the area special for them and how they would like to see the AONB evolve has started a dialogue that needs to continue.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty have been confirmed by the Government as having the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty⁵. At the national level, the National Association of AONBs works to ensure that the Government is aware of AONB needs and concerns when formulating policies and legislation. Regionally, the South West, and South East, Protected Landscapes Forums strive to ensure regional agencies and bodies take full account of AONBs and National Parks when developing strategies and policies. This AONB is involved in all these organisations and takes the opportunity for a local input to the ongoing management of these national assets.

For a decade after designation, the wider profile of this AONB was low. The quintessential qualities that led to its designation have been recognised and valued for many years. Local people and visitors alike have appreciated and treasured its stunning landscapes, panoramic views, peace and quiet, wildlife, historic and cultural riches and deeply rural nature for centuries. The task now is to widen appreciation of the area's needs and aspirations.

The AONB covers a large area (981 square kilometres), deeply rural and sparsely populated with widely scattered villages and hamlets. Parishes, local communities, schools and interest groups all need to be kept in touch with developments and initiatives which affect their AONB. Expanding market towns sit around the periphery and they, together with the much wider business community, must be kept aware of the AONB, its vision and aims for the future. Visitors from further afield enjoy the fantastic landscapes

5. PPS7 paragraph 21

and revel in the area's sense of peace and tranquillity. Each time they visit they take away new memories and a new message about the AONB's many special qualities.

Partnership promotion of the AONB

- The Annual Forum brings together around 100 people drawn from the Partnership Panel, local community and interest groups, individuals and the parishes to consider AONB matters.
- The AONB team is a point of contact to Government, the SW and SE region, Local Authorities, NGO's, voluntary groups and agencies as well as all AONB parishes and communities
- A network of Parish Partners act as ambassadors, providing a 'local' link for communities wishing to access AONB information.
- Twice a year, 14,000 households, local businesses, community shops and libraries each receive a copy of 'The Hart', the AONB newspaper.
- The AONB web site provides a wealth of AONB related information such as the Management Plan, maps and commissioned studies and is now also used to promote local produce, event and attraction information.
- The AONB Partnership has published reports, guides, leaflets and fact sheets on a range of topics.
- The AONB Team attends various events and fairs, increasing awareness of the AONB and its purpose locally.
- The Sustainable Development Fund and AONB Local Action Fund are both utilised to support community inspired projects that bring environmental, community and economic benefits to the area.

Special characteristics

- The AONB is an inspirational area with a wealth of visual, natural, historical and cultural characteristics.
- The diverse, distinctive and often unique elements that comprise the AONB are also a valuable educational resource.
- The AONB is a large area with a sparse population and scattered settlements.
- The many and varied special qualities of the area have been recognised and valued by local people and visitors for many years.

Key issues

Value for money - The Government needs to secure multiple benefits from its use of public funds. The role of the AONB in delivering such benefits needs explanation and promotion. The links between the productive use of land and maintenance of high quality landscapes that support biodiversity, lock up carbon, help ensure clean supplies of water as well as providing places for leisure and recreation show that the area is capable of providing such multiple benefits.

AONB profile - Although there are good examples of site specific information and interpretation, there are relatively few AONB-wide messages or themed interpretation to be found. The challenge is to increase the awareness of the AONB and the understanding of how the AONB's special qualities can be 'conserved and enhanced' in a sustainable way. There is a concern amongst some residents that any increase in information about the AONB will attract more attention to it and potentially lead to an increase in visitors, eroding the tranquillity valued so highly by local communities.

OBJECTIVES

A	The distinctive characteristics of the AONB are understood, valued and supported by all.
B	Strategic and local decisions are guided by a full awareness and understanding of the landscape designation and purposes.

POLICIES

A1	a) Promote awareness and understanding of all aspects of the AONB designation, purposes and management, including the role of traditional industries. b) Promote awareness and understanding of all aspects of the AONB to young people in particular.
A2	Promote best practice that focuses on conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the AONB.
B1	Develop position statements, fact sheets and good practice notes to inform decision makers at all levels on issues affecting the AONB.
B2	Promote AONB aims and objectives to relevant decision makers both within and from outside the AONB.