

**Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**



FACT SHEETS & GOOD PRACTICE NOTES

Number 1

Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000:

Section 85 Duty of Regard to purposes of the AONB

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are nationally designated areas of especially fine landscape. The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB has been established under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act to conserve and enhance the outstanding natural beauty of this area which straddles four counties and seven district councils. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 reiterates the purpose and designation procedures for AONBs as well as making provision for national funding of the local management of these national resources. Natural beauty includes wildlife, scientific, and cultural heritage, and it is also recognised that in relation to their landscape characteristics and quality, National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are equally important aspects of the nation's heritage and environmental capital. In addition, the setting of an AONB has been incorporated in Policy ENV3 of the emerging South West Regional Spatial Strategy.

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a **general duty** on public bodies and persons holding public office to:

“In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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