

**ENCOURAGING A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH
TO THE VISITOR ECONOMY OF
CRANBORNE CHASE AND WEST WILTSHIRE
DOWNS AONB
STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2012-17**

FINAL REPORT

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A Sustainable Visitor Economy for Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB

Strategy and Action Plan 2012-17 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Context

Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (CCWWD AONB), has been attracting visitors for centuries. The visitor appeal is linked to the expansive, open chalk downlands and large tracts of woodland, as well as many literary and historic associations, including prehistoric monuments and medieval royal hunting forests. The AONB is a nationally designated protected landscape, however, it is not particularly well known as a visitor destination. There are some major 'brand names' lying on its periphery including Longleat and Center Parcs, as well as major National Trust estates at Stourhead and Kingston Lacy. Proximity to historic destinations such as Salisbury and Shaftesbury enable visitors to mix heritage town and countryside during trips. The AONB lies across four counties, but this means it suffers a 'being on the edge' effect for the tourist promoting organisations in each county.

The aim of this visitor economy strategy is to develop an approach to sustainably managing visitors, through consulting with those engaged in visitor activity and host communities 'receiving' visitors. This is a balancing act between encouraging visitors to make a greater contribution to businesses, stay longer, and find out more about the special landscape whilst minimising their impact on the environment and host communities. The AONB Management Plan 2009-14 notes that the primary purpose of AONB designation is "*conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area*". There is a focus towards promoting sustainable forms of economic and social development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment. Recreation is not a formal objective of AONB designation, but clearly forms an intrinsic part of the makeup of the area.

Many businesses are involved in serving visitors – from Bed and Breakfast providers, inns, camp sites, village shops and guided walks organisers to hotels, National Trust properties, the Royal Signals Museum, game shooting on estates, horse trekking, farms, artists and South West Trains.

All visitors or customers within the AONB contribute and impact on the 'Visitor Economy', whether as local residents on a day out or tourists from across the UK and overseas. Neither the AONB Partnership nor Team directly delivers tourism services; however it does have relationships with estate land managers, parish councils, rural businesses, and the tourism officers of the local authorities and 'destination management partnerships'.

Tourism in rural areas is an important part of the economy; it can create employment and opportunities for business growth where other sectors and opportunities may be limited. It also maintains many existing jobs, often with the smaller micro businesses and for the self-employed. Visitors support the economic viability of many communities. Many local services and amenities are under pressure; closing or seeing reductions, such as village shops, pubs, bus services. Visitors can help to sustain services for local regular users in rural areas. However, there can be traffic congestion, increased littering, indiscriminate parking and other impacts onto the local community and environment from visitors. High seasonality, focused on spring to early autumn, can leave many businesses with limited off-peak season trading and reduced employment.

2. Purpose and Vision of the Strategy

The strategy for a sustainable visitor economy follows the established 'VICE Model', adopted by many organisations, including the partners across the New Forest. This examines and seeks to balance the needs of **V**isitors, **I**ndustry, **C**ommunity and **E**nvironment. The strategy for the visitor economy of Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs builds on and supports the Community Priorities, Objectives and Policies within the AONB Management Plan 2009-14.

The purpose of this strategy is to set out a sense of direction and shared priorities for where those living and working in the area would like to see the visitor economy be over the next five years. The Vision for the Visitor Economy is that:

“By 2017 Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB will become better known as a place to visit for its outstanding landscapes, views and historic sites. Visitors will discover a series of hidden gems across the AONB landscape, appealing to a variety of informed audiences. The area will celebrate its natural, historical and cultural heritage and will provide many opportunities for quiet recreation. Quality hospitality will be rooted in local independent businesses.”

3. Strategic Aims

Ten core Aims underpin creating a more sustainable visitor economy for the AONB.

Strategic Aims

- 1 Raise awareness of the AONB and its constituent areas as a quality accessible rural destination offering varied outdoor experiences
- 2 Provide better orientation and information across the AONB for visitors when they are here
- 3 Give a high profile to the natural heritage, environment and landscapes that underline the visitor experience
- 4 Improve the cultural and historical experience of the AONB and increase understanding and appreciation of this heritage through interpretation, events, etc.
- 5 Support local enterprise, developing business clusters and networks to increase business success, sustainability and increase the quality of local provision
- 6 Strengthen links between the AONB and the surrounding market towns and destinations, to encourage a two way flow of visits, relieving some visitor pressure on neighbouring locations
- 7 Develop products, food and drink, arts and crafts, trails, directories and access to producers, celebrating the local sense of place and character of the area
- 8 Encourage visitors to leave the car behind; improve the availability and range of routes for walking, cycling and horse riding around the AONB, to allow accessible, quiet recreation
- 9 Build better links and packages between operators in order to link up accommodation, activities and places to eat and drink
- 10 Develop improved communication and sharing of visitor information, as well as market intelligence amongst businesses and organisations involved in the visitor economy

4. Key Strategic Themes

Action Plans based around Key Strategic Themes set out a prioritised programme of activities to enhance the visitor economy.

Strategic Themes

- A Working with Others - Developing Business Clusters and Broadening Partnerships
- B Improve Marketing, Communication & Information
- C Extending the Length of Visit and Season
- D Making more of Walking Opportunities
- E Strengthen the Relationships with Surrounding Market Towns
- F Strengthening Arts, Culture, Events and Festivals
- G Celebrate the Natural Landscape and Cultural Heritage
- H Develop the Interpretation of the Natural Landscape and Heritage
- I Maximise Local Distinctiveness of the Rural Destination
- J Encourage Creative Approaches to Sustainable Transport
- K Encourage Cycling Opportunities
- L Develop an Equestrian Tourism Destination
- M Growing the Profile of Accommodation Establishments

5. Taking the Strategy Forward

Many of the key themes and actions are about relationships, raising the profile of the visitor economy and pressing more firmly for actions to benefit the local area. Taking this forward requires the AONB Team and key partners to focus on the key priorities. Using the action plan, partners should seek to implement the project recommendations, drawing in additional funds, and support from a broad range of those involved in the visitor economy, as well as drawing in new partners.

The AONB Team has some capacity to undertake more activity related to the visitor economy. However, many elements in the action plan require dedicated staff time in order to make enough progress to drive projects forward. The team is not structured, tasked or funded to be an active tourism management and marketing organisation. Public and private sector partners already have differing degrees of involvement in the visitor economy, and it is those that have a direct vested interest that should be most supportive of taking the strategy forward.

In order to build on the momentum that the strategy is generating, it is recommended that a dedicated Sustainable Visitor Economy Project Coordinator post is created to coordinate and implement the priorities. Ideally, hosted by the AONB Partnership for two or three years. Funding will be required, not only for a Coordinator salary (including on costs at around 20% to cover National Insurance, Pensions, etc), but also a programme budget in order to deliver revenue and capital project actions.

The AONB Team will seek additional funds in order to put a realistic package of support together. Funding is potentially available for projects through LEADER+ Sowing SEEDS, the Rural Development Plan for England, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Heritage Lottery Fund and other local and national sources. Additionally it is recommended that a local visitor economy development fund should be created with private sector businesses including major landowning estates contributing to a fund pot to provide match support to enable projects progress for the benefit of the greater area.

Having begun a dialogue with businesses involved in the visitor economy, it is important to maintain an ongoing relationship with them. Communication more regularly about issues relating to the visitor economy and hosting an annual Tourism Forum will enable closer dialogue.

The AONB Partnership should learn from its existing links with the neighbouring AONBs of Dorset and North Wessex Downs, as well as the New Forest National Park. Each has similar experiences of balancing visitor economy management, pressures, and marketing with sensitive landscapes and local communities. Meeting, listening and sharing experiences between these destinations can benefit CCWWD AONB.

6. In Conclusion

Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is undoubtedly a well loved area by residents and visitors. It is host to a rich legacy of natural, cultural and historic gems, set within a landscape that has been lived in and worked for millennia and which provides the backdrop to many visitor activities today. A growing consensus supports the sensitive enhancement of the visitor economy, as it supports local jobs and provides services for local residents. Taking the action plan forward will balance the need to support local businesses and employment with the tranquility of the area and the quality of landscape that people live in. Many practical opportunities simply require greater partnership, coordination and collaboration to make more of existing businesses and visitors, by linking places, providers and products. New initiatives are based upon realistic levels of funding and support, using the potential for local and national funding programmes to generate fresh activities. A more outward looking and welcoming approach will encourage visitors, generate greater enjoyment, gain repeat business and help all to have a better appreciation in this special landscape.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE AONB'S VISITOR ECONOMY

101. Why the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB is Special and Attracts Visitors

Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (CCWWD AONB), designated an AONB in 1949, has been attracting visitors for centuries. Coaching roads have linked the South West to London for centuries, and antiquarians and archaeologists studying the landscape have been visiting the area for over three centuries. The special landscape of open chalkland, ancient woodland and chalk valleys is a draw, renowned for its peacefulness and long distance views.

Key attractions (such as the Longleat Estate, Center Parcs) and historic properties (e.g. the National Trust's Kingston Lacy and Stourhead estates) as well as popular cultural events (Larmer Tree Festival and Great Dorset Steam Fair) bring in many thousands of visitors each year, particularly during peak months. At the same time, the overall area is not a destination 'brand name' and does not see excesses of visitors spoiling the countryside in the same way that honeypot locations within the nearby New Forest National Park are pressured.

The AONB is a nationally designated protected landscape. The AONB Management Plan¹ notes how the natural beauty of the AONB reflects *"the landform, geology, plants, animals and landscape features as well as the rich history of human settlement over the centuries. AONBs are cultural, living landscapes both by virtue of the species and habitats within them but also due to the fact that their special qualities can only be maintained by continuing human activity. The natural beauty of the AONB is seen as a blend of both the rich natural and cultural heritage."* For the visitor, the attributes that appeal are linked to the expansive, open downlands, as well as many literary and historic associations, including prehistoric monuments and medieval royal hunting forests and literary figures, including Thomas Hardy. More recently, the concept of tranquillity, confirmed by the Campaign to Protect Rural England in 2007, identifies the area as being particularly quiet and with little light pollution, creating dark night skies. These elements bolster the natural beauty of the AONB and appeal to a variety of types of visitor.

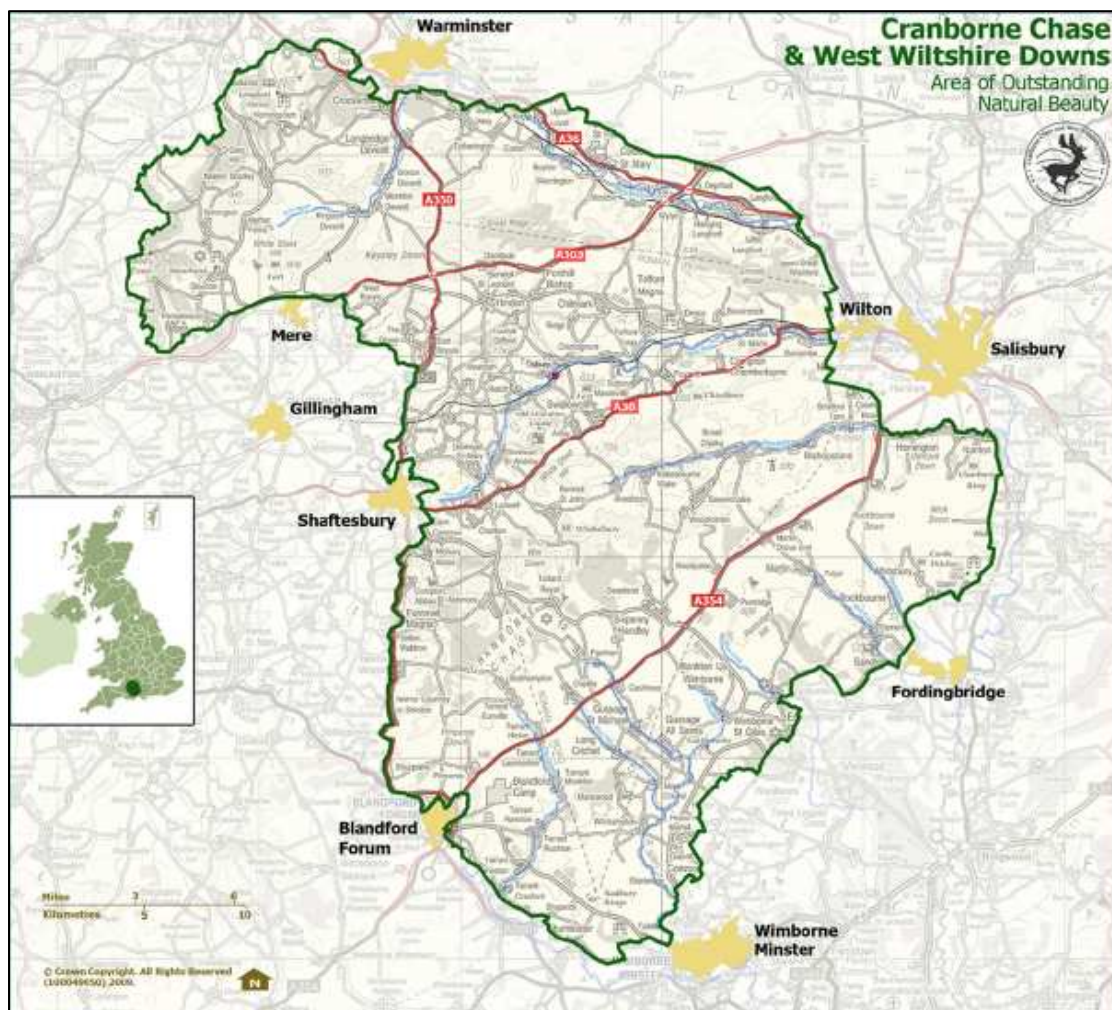
Forming part of the extensive belt of chalkland that stretches across southern central England, the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB is a varied landscape. The central lush, wooded clay Vale of Wardour with villages and woodland separates two large areas of chalk. To the south is the unusually wooded chalk downland of Cranborne Chase with its steeply cut coombes and dry valleys with more open chalk downland. To the north, the West Wiltshire Downs are more elevated, rising up to Grovely Wood on a major ridge. The AONB has great ecological importance and internationally and nationally protected sites ranging from ancient downland, chalk rivers and meadows to scattered deciduous woodland. These include remnants of the ancient Cranborne Chase royal hunting area and the former Royal Forests of Selwood and Gillingham.

Human impact on the landscapes of the AONB has left evidence of activity and settlements; from prehistoric monuments of national importance, historic borderlands, ancient field systems, farming droveways and historic buildings and estates; all have stories to tell.

¹ Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 - 2014

102. Living in and Managing the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

There are 41 AONBs nationally; Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs is the 6th largest and is one of twelve AONBs in the South West region. The formal AONB area is highly rural, with only 33,000 people living across the 981 sq km (380 sq miles), at a very low population density, mostly in villages, hamlets and dispersed dwellings. Only a small number of people live within the four 'larger' settlements of Tisbury, Cranborne, Sixpenny Handley and Hindon. However, there is a relationship with the surrounding eight small market towns and historic city of Salisbury that border the AONB. Visitors and residents flow between these urban locations and the countryside, visiting and using services, providing opportunities for improved linkages that this strategy will build on.



National statutory legislation recognises the landscape qualities of National Parks and AONBs as being equivalent. The protection given to both types of area by the land use planning system is viewed as being if the same status. Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs is a complex landscape, the Management Plan 2009-14 notes it to be *“an evolved cultural landscape, managed and nurtured by people over millennia. Those who manage the land are central to the future of this landscape. It is inevitable and appropriate that this cultural landscape will continue to develop but this needs to be in ways that conserve and enhance its special qualities.”*

The AONB Management Plan 2009-14 notes that **the primary purpose of AONB designation is “conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area”**. Actions should “take account of the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities.” There is a focus towards promoting sustainable forms of economic and social development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.

Recreation is not a formal objective of AONB 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.” Thus, the setting out of a plan for a sustainable visitor economy will aid the prioritisation of activities that already take place and the relationship between visitors and local communities and businesses within the landscape.

The Management Plan sets out agreed objectives and policies for AONB partners to be achieved over the five years. All relevant public authorities “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. The AONB Partnership Panel is an alliance of 19 local, regional and national organisations guiding the implementation of the Management Plan. However, conserving and enhancing the natural beauty is about partnership. The successful implementation of the Management Plan is beyond the resources of the Partnership Panel or AONB Team alone, requiring active collaboration and participation of all those involved in its management. The AONB Team of 4.5 Full Time Equivalents, employing nine persons, ensures the Management Plan is acted upon; responding to statutory consultations, providing community and partner communication and engaging in specific partners funded projects.

103. Purpose of the Visitor Economy Strategy

The AONB is not particularly well known as a visitor destination despite its formal designated role for national landscape importance. The AONB lies across four counties, mainly in Wiltshire (62% of the AONB area) and Dorset (29%), but also with fringes in Hampshire (7%) and Somerset (2%), and is far less well known than the New Forest or the Cotswolds. This impacts into the relationships with differing local authority area based initiatives for visitor marketing, product development and community support. ‘Cranborne Chase’ is the better known component of the area, but this does not reflect the entire AONB, and Cranborne Chase itself is not very well known as a location to the UK population at large.

The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership (CCWWD AONB) recognises the importance that the landscape and destinations across the area have in attracting a great many visitors to the AONB throughout the year. Many businesses are involved in serving visitors – from Bed and Breakfast providers, inns, camp sites, village shops and guided walks organisers to hotels, National Trust properties, Longleat, Center Parcs, horse trekking, farms, artists and South West Trains.

All visitors or customers within the AONB contribute and impact on the ‘Visitor Economy’, whether as local residents on a day out or tourists from across the UK and overseas. Neither the AONB Partnership nor Team directly delivers tourism services; however it does have relationships with estate land managers, parish councils, rural businesses, and the tourism officers of the local

authorities and ‘destination management partnerships’. The AONB’s new website www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk contains detailed ‘sign posting’ of where to visit and what to do across the area and its fringes, with the “Discover the Area” section being the most visited element of the site.

Within the current statutory AONB Management Plan there are many references to issues and policies that relate to visitors as well as to the landscape and communities. The Partnership is starting to address in a ‘joined-up’ manner the multitude of elements that relate to visitors, the AONB, their impact and future engagement and management of them. The AONB Partnership recognises the difficult economic conditions that many small businesses (comprising the vast majority of the AONB’s enterprises) currently face, and changing arrangements in how the local authorities are engaged in visitor marketing and destination management.

The aim of this visitor economy strategy is to develop an approach to sustainably managing visitors, through consulting with those engaged in visitor activity, and host communities ‘receiving’ visitors. This is a balancing act between encouraging visitors to make a greater contribution to businesses, stay longer, and find out more about the special landscape whilst minimising their impact on the environment and host communities. The sustainable approach to the visitor economy is sensitive to the views of the community and businesses, not all of whom are pro-visitors. **The purpose of this strategy is to set out a sense of direction and shared priorities for where those living and working in the area would like to see the visitor economy be over the next five years.**

The strategy is:	The strategy does not:
about providing better communication and information to communities and visitors	simply belong to the AONB Partnership, it is a tool for all involved in the visitor economy across the area
to help the AONB Partnership highlight the value of the landscape to tourism partners	discourage creating ‘artificial’ experiences, but it encourages schemes ‘belonging’ within the AONB landscape, having a ‘sense of place’
to provide guidance on ways of extending the length of the visitor season, and grow sustainable increases in visitor numbers	prioritise the creation of a new branded tourist destination, as the area is too large and complex - it favours local solutions and collaboration
about making better use of bridleways, footpaths and cycling	favour increasing car borne traffic, rather it looks to encourage public transport, foot, cycle, etc.
identifying better linking up of things to do with places to eat/stay - encouraging longer stays	seek to generate a rapid increase in numbers of visitors to the area that is out of scale with local capacity
about explaining the key attributes of tranquillity, open spaces, healthy recreation	recommend large scale interventions that are out of context
laying foundations, giving a sense of agreed direction	take a fixed, cast in stone approach; it is linked with evolving rural initiatives in times of financial restraint
rooted in small scale and authenticity, supporting local independent businesses and locations	present a finished agenda, rather it is the start of the beginning of a new outlook towards the local rural visitor economy
in favour of strengthening marketing, product development and communication partnerships with those best able to lead such activities	

Thus the strategy for a sustainable visitor economy follows the established 'VICE Model', adopted by many organisations, including the partners across the New Forest. This examines and seeks to balance the needs of:

- Visitors
- Industry
- Community
- Environment.

Countless national studies note how tourism in rural areas is an important part of the economy; it can create employment and opportunities for business growth where other sectors and opportunities may be limited. It also maintains many existing jobs, often with the smaller micro businesses and for the self-employed. For many businesses, the value from visitors can provide much needed supplementary income to main income streams, such as farm diversification with conversions to self catering cottages or offering activities on farmland. For many land managers, tourism makes a contribution towards maintaining the environment and landscape which are important to communities and visitors. Redundant buildings may be converted into accommodation or retail/crafts establishments, whilst accessible footpaths provide links to villages, pubs and shops.

There is no doubt that visitors support the economic viability of many communities. Many local services and amenities are under pressure; closing or seeing reductions, such as village shops, pubs, bus services. The use by, and spend from, visitors can help to sustain services for local regular users in rural areas. However, there can be traffic congestion, increased littering, indiscriminate parking and other impacts onto the local community and environment from visitors.

However, when put into perspective, the area of Cranborne Chase and the West Wiltshire Downs is far less well known than hotspots such as the New Forest, Dorset Purbeck Coast/Jurassic Coast or the Cotswolds. In relative terms, tourism is less developed and less intense across this AONB, which in its own way contributes to the isolated and tranquil landscape and quality of the 'visitor experience'.

The strategic approach continually reflects the four VICE parameters, and being an AONB, respects the priority for the conservation of the landscape.

104. Some Definitions

The broader role of the 'visitor economy', rather than simply 'tourism' is seen nationally as a key driver of economic growth; the variation in definitions being:

- **Tourism** - a tourist visits somewhere that is **outside their usual environment**, i.e. coming from beyond the AONB area. Thus it is *where you are* and *where your purchasing* takes place that defines you as a tourist. Tourists are considered as both day visitors or those staying overnight, for leisure, visiting friends and relations, or for business. 'Tourism' is normally perceived of as being mainly about accommodation, attractions and eating/drinking out

- **Visitor Economy** – there will be consumers taking part in a leisure visit *within their regular local economy* – such as Wimborne residents at the Larmer Tree Festival or Tisbury residents bringing visiting friends to Stourhead Garden. When considering *all visitors or customers* within a destination, whether ‘outside’ tourists or local residents, the ‘Visitor Economy’ is described. This encompasses the aspects that affect the visitor experience: all the elements that attract people to the place, the quality of public places, villages, transport systems, architecture, arrival points, parking, cultural activity, etc. These all require management for communities and tourists.
- **Indirect benefit to non-tourism businesses** - enterprises not delivering tourism also benefit through local supply chains; such as the food wholesaler or baker who supplies restaurants and the local garage where visitors are supplied with fuel and buy top-up food. Holiday cottages, pubs, hotels, farm attractions, etc. all support many window cleaners, accountants and painter/decorators, all of whom would see reduced levels of business if the visitors stopped coming to the tourism operators
- **Sustainable Tourism** – as defined by the World Tourism Organisation², sustainable tourism is “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities”.

105. A Consultative Approach to Developing the Strategy in Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs

The AONB Team has good relations with many of the local representatives across the AONB – Parish Councils, land managers, public sector organisations involved in planning, and rights of way, as well as many local businesses. Thus, an inclusive approach to consulting about the priorities for the visitor economy has been taken, with the strategy rooted in the feedback from those living, working and managing the assets across the AONB.

Several strands of consultation have been undertaken; Appendix A notes consultees:

- Direct one-to-one and small group meetings and telephone consultations with around twenty representatives of businesses and organisations
- A workshop at the AONB’s Annual AGM Forum on 1st June with over 70 attendees
- A stakeholder workshop held in Tisbury on July 11th with around twenty participants
- An online email survey sent to around 1,500 contacts in the AONB and surrounds, resulting in 148 completed responses (10% response rate), with varying degrees of completion.

The profile of respondents to the online survey shows that:

- Most were located in or had responsibilities in Wiltshire (50%) or East Dorset (30%) or North Dorset (27%). There were smaller numbers in Hampshire/New Forest (18%) and Somerset

² Making Tourism More Sustainable, World Tourism Organisation/United Nations Environment Programme, 2005

(13%). Respondents could identify multiple authorities if they were multi-site organisations such as the National Trust or public agencies, hence the figures are more than 100%

- The majority of those stakeholders responding were representatives of public or public interest bodies; as Parish Councils (20%), local authorities/public sector/tourism bodies (16%) or wildlife /countryside organisations (9%)
- Other main sectors were agriculture/estate management/smallholdings (11%) and visitor attractions and activity providers (11%)
- Relatively small numbers of private sector businesses responded; accommodation providers (8%) and restaurants/ cafes/retail (8%)
- A broad section of others (23%) included management consultants, residents, artists, food producers, representatives of sport/recreation, etc. and numerous other types.

The breadth of discussions, alongside numerous site visits, significant website and publication research has enabled a comprehensive approach to be taken. As a first time detailed exercise across the AONB it has been essential to ensure that the key issues arising, and priorities for the visitor economy should reflect local concerns and sensitivities. This will enable greater 'ownership' of the way forward, by businesses, communities and public organisations, rather than it being artificially imposed. This strategy for a sustainable approach to the visitor economy across Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs reflects a starting point providing a sense of direction, which will evolve as partners engage in supportive activities influencing the local visitor economy.

SECTION 2: THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

201. The Visitor Economy and the AONB Management Plan 2009-14

Several of the Community Priorities, Objectives and Policies within the current AONB Management Plan directly and indirectly relate to the visitor economy and links with communities, environment and businesses. Appendix B provides greater detail; in summary the relevant Priorities are:

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

Community Priority 2: *Conserve and enhance the landscape character, habitats, species and tranquillity of the AONB*

Community Priority 3: *Conserve and enhance the historic, archaeological and cultural features within their distinctive landscape settings*

Community Priority 4: *Support and influence innovative ways of maintaining and providing access to community facilities and services*

Community Priority 5: *Conserve and enhance the distinctive character of the built environment within its historic, cultural and landscape setting*

Community Priority 6: *Promote the management of the impact of traffic on the AONB*

Community Priority 7: *Support the rural economy in ways that are sustainable*

The issues, conflicts and opportunities that are noted, as well as the policies set out in the AONB Management Plan, provide key starting points for this visitor economy strategy. They have been reiterated throughout the consultations held with a variety of parties.

202. The Strategic Framework – Tourism in England

Britain is one of the world's leading visitor destinations, both for visitors from within the UK and from overseas. Visitors contribute significantly to Britain and England's economic and social wellbeing. The English visitor economy is now worth £97bn a year and employs in excess of two million people³. In 2010 there were:

- 95.5 million domestic overnight trips in England, generating a total spend of £16.4bn
- 27.3 million inbound visits, together accounting for £14.3bn in expenditure
- 872 million tourism daytrips, with estimated spending of £39bn.

The large volumes of day visitors should be noted, spending less per head and with greater impact into the environment than those who stay overnight. In 2009 domestic tourism achieved its best performance this decade, following a difficult year in 2008 affected by the economic recession. The

³ Strategic Framework for Tourism in England, VisitEngland, 2010

increase in 2009 was due to a rise in demand for domestic holiday trips during the year as people took holidays closer to home. However, value has not grown as much with holidaymakers spending less and taking advantage of many discount offers and late booking rates.

Employment generated is far higher than from other sectors such as farming, and the visitor economy as previously described, supports employment directly across attractions, accommodation, catering and hospitality as well as in retail, transport and petrol filling stations.

As a major foreign exchange generator, tourism is an 'invisible export industry' and it makes substantial tax contributions to the UK. It provides routes into employment at all levels and is fertile ground for entrepreneurs. With continued growth, tourism is regarded as one of the few industries that will create new employment opportunities.

VisitEngland, the national tourism agency sets out the ways in which the industry can work together to make improvements in key areas. The aim is to seek an ambitious 5% growth in value, year on year, over the next decade. The **VisitEngland Vision** is to "maximise tourism's contribution to the economy, employment and quality of life in England." To achieve this, the key Objectives are:

- To increase England's share of global visitor markets
- To offer compelling destinations of distinction
- To champion a successful, thriving tourism industry
- To facilitate greater engagement between the visitor and the experience.

At national level, a collaborative England marketing plan is in place which builds on demonstrable best practice to get the highest returns for England from public and private investment. This focuses on a strategy of 'attract and disperse' – using England's long established and world famous 'attract' brands such as London, the Lake District and the Cotswolds and exceptional cities and towns alongside well-known themes, such as walking, heritage and sport, to attract visitors and encourage them to travel and spend more widely in the country.

Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB has a role to play in contributing to this national agenda, whilst recognising local views about the need for sensitive ways that any strategic growth may be achieved in relation to the environment and communities.

Rural recreation – including local leisure and tourism - contributed £17bn to the national economy in 2010/11 with nearly 2.5 billion visits made to English countryside, coast and open spaces⁴. Over half those surveyed visited the countryside or natural environment at least once a week. Within these figures, the number of visits taken to farmland, mountain, hill, moorland and woodland increased.

The number of holiday trips to the English countryside is increasing and is highly time specific. Around 70% of visits to the countryside take place in spring and summer. This is a much higher focus

⁴ Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE), Natural England, Forestry Commission, Defra, 2011

on these two seasons for countryside trips, compared to only 52% of visits being made in these seasons to all destinations (including coast and major city).

Thus there tends to be very quiet autumn and winter off peak seasons which affect business viability and employment opportunities. For many visitors from urban locations, the rural environment is ‘an escape’ associated with recreation, tranquillity and nature. Other reasons for visits can include heritage, food, culture and community. Local food is an opportunity, providing benefits for producers, shops and restaurants/cafés. The local distinctiveness of an area, the “sense of place” is a key driver for many visits – the reason can be for the landscape, heritage, food, or events/traditions specific to that location.

In response to the national headline for growth, VisitEngland has published a series of Action Plans, including the **Rural Tourism Action Plan 2010**. This has a specific rural Vision “To maximise the potential of the rural tourism offer, which will bring substantial benefits to local economies and communities and contribute to 5% growth, year on year, in the England tourism market by 2020.”

Its Objectives are:

- To diversify and modernise rural tourism products to generate business opportunities suited to local environments and communities and to develop a year round visitor offer
- To increase consumer awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the products and experiences available in rural areas, using advertising to reach a wider audience
- To encourage rural communities and economies to benefit from the value of rural tourism by taking ownership for the development, management, protection and conservation of rural assets and locations.

Many of the consultations to date across Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs have reflected these nationally recognised topics, suggesting that there is a positive way forward that can be set out in the local area. Rural tourism creates opportunities for business growth and employment in areas where there is often a shortage of other opportunities. Also, it can provide opportunities for diversification and increased trade for local businesses.

203. The Strategic View of Visitors from Dorset

The **Dorset tourism partnership** known as Destination Dorset, takes a private and public sector collaborative approach to destination management. The **Destination Dorset Business Plan 2008-2011** has a Vision that “Dorset will become a leading destination regionally, nationally and internationally in the eyes of visitors, community and industry through offering visitors experiences that are of a world class quality and distinctive nature.”

Five strategic aims seek to manage future tourism activity as a single destination and provide a focus for action and delivery. The first aim is about creating a structured partnership organisation responsive to change and able to make efficient use of skills and resources. The second is about investing in market intelligence, valuing it and acting upon it. Other aims are to create an

organisational culture to grasp opportunities, addressing issues in relation to destination management and marketing of the destination. A series of key Themes in the Business Plan set out more detail of how Dorset will grow as a destination:

Quality is important, with key aims:

- To build participation in nationally recognised quality schemes across all sectors
- To work through and with the Dorset New Forest Tourism Partnership to contribute to up-skilling within the local tourism (and related) workforce.

Sustainability has key aims:

- To ensure integration of sustainability objectives into Destination Dorset's structure, activities and outputs
- To promote and increase 'green' accreditation in Dorset (through validated schemes)
- To promote and increase responsible businesses and visitors
- To promote and develop responsible tourist travel.

Marketing and Branding key aims include:

- To increase overall value of tourism in Dorset
- To increase average spend per visitor
- To increase out-of-season number of visitors
- To ensure visitor 'circulation' between both coastal and rural Dorset (both in terms of visits during the day and overnight stays).

Visitor Management aims:

- To enhance existing TIC network and services.
- To assist Dorset Tourist Information Centres to work in partnership and provide structured support for information provision.

Whilst Dorset is a large county, and much of the high profile tourism product is located towards the coast, many of these aspirations are equally valid for inland rural Dorset including the areas within CCWWD AONB. Indeed, a large proportion of the whole county comprises protected landscapes with AONB and World Heritage Site status, and where the same issues are being addressed, but in areas of greater visitor pressure.

204. The Strategic View of Visitors from Wiltshire

Visit Wiltshire is also a public-private sector partnership, with core funding from Wiltshire Council underpinning its services. It has an important role as a membership based organisation in delivering targeted marketing activity. Key objectives for the organisation are:

- To grow the value of tourism in Wiltshire by increasing the length of stay and average spend per visitor, targeting the high value sectors
- To raise the profile of Wiltshire nationally and internationally
- To increase the number of visitors and achieve a more equal distribution throughout the year
- To spread the business across the county
- To encourage residents to 'stay local and buy local'
- To ensure that visitors enjoy positive, quality, sustainable experiences.

Wiltshire marketing activity is a key priority for members, and there is investment in targeted website presence, with campaigns linked to rural and heritage themes. Strong play is made on the fact that the county is extremely accessible, particularly to key audiences in the South East and London, who are encouraged to make short and longer staying breaks.

Again, it can be seen that many of these key objectives and activities relate to the 'ethos' of the CCWWD AONB, and inform the subsequent strategic plans for the CCWWD visitor economy in later sections of this document. Consultation with the new management team at Visit Wiltshire has identified a number of areas of synergy that can be developed with the AONB Team and other partners.

205. The Strategic View of Visitors from the New Forest

The **Our Future Together II New Forest Tourism Plan 2009** summarises the themes, policies and actions that New Forest District Council, the New Forest National Park Authority and the many partners have prioritised. The destination is well established and has had many years of proactive visitor management to deal with high levels of visitor numbers and issues of capacity at popular locations during peak periods.

New Forest District Council has for many years worked with a wide range of local interests to improve the management of the New Forest, closely following the VICE (Visitor, Industry, Community, Environment) model strategy. The quality of life in the forest is the primary reason for visits and people come to enjoy the clean air, recreation and tranquillity. It is the quality of local culture and landscape that underlies the reason for its popularity, yet inappropriate tourism activity has the potential to damage the very assets on which the industry depends.

Recognising the economic and employment situation of the times, there is a greater emphasis in the updated tourism plan (building on the 2001 Plan) on how tourism can better support local retail centres, and promote local tourism job opportunities through schools and colleges. Skills training is important, with a need to further develop vocational training for existing staff to continue to improve the quality of visitor offer.

The broad aim in the New Forest is to provide a plan to ensure that all tourism and visitor activity becomes environmentally sustainable, economically viable and ethically and socially fair for all (on a long-term basis). The two main themes of the strategy are:

- continuing to develop a sustainable approach to tourism; and
- management through partnership.

The strategy seeks to maximise local income and employment from tourism in the medium and long term by providing a warm welcome and a high quality of planned facility and service for visitors. In exchange partners want visitors to understand and adopt a sense of stewardship for the unique landscapes and the special way of life of the destination area and its host communities.

206. Responding to Changes in Society

The visitor economy in 2011 has moved on from that of 2001. Whilst much remains familiar, there has undoubtedly been a decade of change. In 2001 the national outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease caused widespread closure of the countryside and affected many businesses in the rural economy. This highlighted the importance of the broad range of businesses that suffered from the temporary loss of visitors – from pubs and village shops to diversified farms, food producers and outlets as well as rural attractions. Since then, a greater awareness exists of the role of visitors supporting local communities and businesses.

It is valuable to look externally at a range of factors influencing the visitor market and consumer behaviour. Other major changes affecting the visitor economy over the past decade can be expected to continue, and Cranborne Chase as a destination, and businesses within it need to respond to these changes in technology, society and the economy. These include:

- A growth in people seeking rural recreation, healthier lifestyles and authenticity in their visit experiences
- Greater environmental awareness, reducing carbon footprint and seeking locally produced food and drink as well as products and crafts
- Internet access has increased with faster coverage and greater access to mobile 3G smartphones allowing internet access on the move, as well as satnav GPS in vehicles. Lack of fast broadband connections and access to mobile networks is an issue across the AONB
- More trip research and bookings, as well as peer reviews and social media are made in advance using the internet, itself faster in speed than a decade ago

- For some visitor markets, there is a conscious desire to get away from communication, switch off and be in splendid isolation
- Fuel prices have increased and some markets have begun to reduce travel distance and frequency of trip taking – a destination now has to be worth the effort
- An ageing population continues to see a greater number of older people and fewer younger people, especially throughout the countryside. Older ‘empty nesters’, where the children have grown up and left home, are having to work for more years before retirement and for potentially lower pensions than a decade ago
- The main holiday week or fortnight continues to decline in Britain, although recent recession years have seen a small UK boom, particularly in less expensive camping and self catering. Domestic holiday tourism nights in England increased by 19% in 2009, dropping back in 2010, but still higher than in recent years
- However, overseas long holiday taking and use of no-frill flights continues to grow. Many UK rural destinations remain short break secondary holiday locations and holiday trips to the countryside increased 22% between 2006 and 2009. More trips involve outdoor leisure pursuits
- Increased expectation of quality and better than at home fit out of holiday accommodation; the growth of boutique hotels, lodges with hot tubs and fully fitted kitchens in self catering units
- A growth in the localism agenda which along with changes to the planning system may bring greater opportunity for communities to differentiate themselves and their local area.

Change and evolution will continue to take place, nowhere stands still. The businesses and communities of Cranborne Chase and the West Wiltshire Downs will evolve at differing paces. Visitors will continue to come, pass through, stay and experience this area. For those willing to embrace the existing, and potential new visitor markets, this strategy for the visitor economy sets out an approach that has been broadly signed up to by managing organisations and the private sector, as well as community representatives.

SECTION 3: PRODUCT AND MARKET ASSESSMENT

301. Introduction

Whilst the AONB Management Plan takes the landscape, ecology and community as its starting point, the review of the visitor economy needs to consider what the visitor looks like, what there is that appeals to them to visit and what they do during their stay. They may come as a day visit or overnight stop in paid for accommodation, or visiting to friends and family; some will be passing through, others with special interests related to the area or places within the AONB.

A comprehensive review has been made using the web, on the ground visits, consultation, guide books, looking at the product and market, and where this sits alongside near neighbours.

302. Visitor Economy Facts and Statistics

Economic Impact of Tourism to the local area

To provide some indication of the scale of tourism activity to the AONB, reference is made to the surrounding local authorities within which most of the AONB lies.

Impact Assessment	Salisbury District 2008	East Dorset 2009	North Dorset 2009	Total
Trips by staying visitors	347,000	232,000	155,000	734,000
Staying visitor nights	1,085,000	1,011,000	675,000	2,771,000
Spend by staying visitors	£59,279,000	£37,828,000	£28,552,000	£125,659,000
Day visits	2,862,000	1,462,000	1,091,000	5,415,000
Spend by day visitors	£120,840,000	£64,349,000	£48,068,000	£233,257,000
Other tourism related spend	£7,478,000	£6,118,000	£4,665,000	£18,261,000
Jobs related to tourism spending	4,208	2,440	1,975	8,623
% of employment supported by tourism	6%	7%	6%	6.5%

Sources: Dorset and Wiltshire Local Tourism Economic Impact Assessments, Destination Dorset, Visit Wiltshire

These impacts include the high level of heritage city based visits to Salisbury, as well as impacts based on visitors to the other surrounding market towns. In all, across the three local authorities, there are over 700,000 overnight staying visitors and 5.4 million day visitors, spending £380 million (around two thirds from day visitors). This supports 8,600 jobs related to tourism spend in the three local authorities (around 6.5% of all employment).

The figures within the AONB area will be significantly less, not least because the area excludes the larger population centres and main hotels and retail and catering outlets where visitors spend. However, the relative importance of visitors spending and supporting local employment in the AONB is likely to be notable.

Visitor Numbers to Main Attractions/Festivals

The larger attractions within the AONB generate substantial numbers of visits – which will include trips made by local people, and repeat visits by some:

- Longleat Enterprises Ltd (both Longleat and Cheddar Caves); combined visitor numbers of over 875,000 pa. Estimate of c.600,000+ at Longleat location
- Center Parcs; research in 2005 into the economic impact of the four existing UK sites indicated an average of 310,000 guests per year or 75,000 parties per village per annum
- Stourhead estate, National Trust; 340-380,000 visits p.a. made to whole estate over recent years, by approx 300,000 individuals. 72,000 of these visits specifically into the house
- Kingston Lacy estate, National Trust; 180,000 visits
- Great Dorset Steam Fair; claims 200,000 visitors a year over the 5 days, with over 40,000 on site during peak days
- Wardour Old Castle, English Heritage; 36,000 p.a. 50%:50% members: non-members.

303. What is There for Visitors to do?

Clearly visiting the AONB is not only all about seeing the largest and best known paid for attractions. The diversity of the area, not least of all the natural environment, with its chalk downland, large open spaces and river valleys with thatched cottage villages is a major draw for many visitors.

A broad audit of the area identifies a breadth of factors appealing to visitors, indeed there could be a comprehensive A-Z of places to visit and things to do including:

Longleat Estate	Cranborne Ancient Technology Centre	Network of paths/ bridleways
Center Parcs	Cranborne Garden Centre	Walking
Stourhead (NT)	Win Green and viewing points	Cycling
Breamore House	Compton Abbas Airfield	Field sports– hunting, shooting
Larmer Tree and Festival	Wood Fair (6,200 visitors)	Horse riding
Kingston Lacy (NT)	Great Dorset Steam Fair	Tollard Royal Golf Course
Royal Signals Museum	End of the Road Festival	Prehistoric monuments
Phillips House (NT)	EnDorset Festival	Knowlton Church/henge
Farmer Giles Farmstead	Village fetes and shows	Badbury Rings
Bush Farm Bison Centre	Wylve Valley Arts Trail	Rockbourne Roman Villa
Old Wardour Castle	Chalke Valley History Festival	Fovant Badges

In reality, the AONB covers an extremely large area and has close physical links with the surrounding eight market towns, such that for most visitors there is likely to be a co-visit made to at least one of the towns. Indeed, Shaftesbury and Wimborne Minster lie immediately adjacent and are better known ‘destinations’ in their own right. This suggests that the ‘fuzzy edges’ factor should seek to include the market towns in the broader destination identity, as in many cases they provide retail,

food and drink, heritage, cultural and other opportunities that build upon the AONB's rural experience, as well as access to incoming transport routes.

304. Cranborne Chase (and West Wiltshire Downs) as Promoted in Marketing Guides

There is limited direct reference to Cranborne Chase and the rest of the West Wiltshire Downs that comprise the AONB in the major visitor guide books and online presence:

- Lonely Planet makes no references to Cranborne Chase – it is referred to in Lonely Planet Walk Britain 2007 on a map of Wessex. However, the area is bypassed in favour of highlights about other locations – Salisbury/Plain, Stonehenge northwards to Ridgeway and River Thames and also Bath/Bradford on Avon
- Rough Guide to Britain makes no reference to Cranborne Chase
- Frommers does not refer to Cranborne Chase, but lists Stourhead and Longleat.

Googling “visit cranborne chase” online brings up the AONB's own home page as leading results www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk, along with the two local destination management partnerships' websites

- <http://www.ruraldorset.com/area/a2z.asp?ID=5> This is the joint East and North Dorset District Councils' website, soon to be amalgamated into Visit Dorset
- <http://www.visitwiltshire.co.uk/site/around-wiltshire/areas-of-outstanding-natural-beauty/cranborne-chase-aonb> This is the main Wiltshire tourism website.

Within both these – as websites and printed guides - which encompass around 90% of the AONB - there is comprehensive coverage; featuring the landscape, open spaces, views, historic attractions, outdoor activities, walks, cycling and places to visit.

305. Accommodation Establishments in the CCWWD AONB

A limited number of sources provide information on where to stay across the AONB area. The leading sources are geographically led, with 'fuzzy boundaries'; mainly by Visit Wiltshire, Rural Dorset now part of VisitDorset, AA travel guides and Shaftesbury Where to Stay in Blackmore Vale (Shaftesbury and District Tourism Association). Additionally, individual businesses make use of their own local list of where to stay – such as those promoted within the Wylve Valley Arts Trail.

The list of 'accredited' accommodation businesses represents part of the overall accommodation stock available. This is the 'official' list of establishments that are quality assessed as used by public authorities promoting tourism enterprises. They have been inspected and meet designated criteria set out by **VisitEngland** or the **AA**.



Additionally, there are local standards set by the **Dorset Approved Visitor Accommodation Scheme**. This scheme ensures that all basic legal requirements regarding health and safety are met and that good customer practices are being implemented.

New Forest Tourism Association members are also offered a local assessment scheme (**NFTA Assessed**) based on the basic principles of the minimum criteria for the National Grading by VisitBritain and the AA. Businesses that have been assessed will have achieved the required standard in all sections. Cleanliness and hospitality are a high priority for these businesses.

The following observations present an overview of the volume and breadth of types of visitor accommodation within the AONB and its immediate fringe of around a half mile beyond the AONB border. It specifically excludes the eight surrounding market towns and Salisbury.

Serviced paid for accommodation – B&Bs, guest houses, inns, hotels

- Most businesses are B&B/guest houses – a total of 36. Of these, two thirds (23) are quality assessed with one third not in any quality grading scheme
- B&B businesses are small, with only 95 rooms in total between them - less than 3 rooms average per establishment
- There are a small number of larger inns/hotels, approximately 21, with only 9 (under half) being quality assessed
- However, these inns/hotels are larger establishments with at least 120 rooms between them
- There are only around 5 hotels /larger inns in the entire AONB – Howard’s House Hotel at Teffont Evias, the Lamb Inn at Hindon, the Castleman Hotel at Chettle, The Museum Inn at Farnham and The Anvil Inn at Pimperne
- Overall across most serviced businesses, prices tend to be average southern/central England rural rates of between £40-£65 for a single room, £60-£85 for a double room per night
- There are a small number of high end £100+ per room/per person rates for centrally located high quality inns/hotels
- Several inns are located on the fringes of the AONB and on the main roads, whilst outside the borders, they have a relationship with travellers to the area, both for daytime hospitality and in providing accommodation

Non serviced – self catering, camping, caravanning

- With self catering there is a surprisingly high and hidden volume of establishments - many being accessed and booked through two main agencies – Hideaways, a local Shaftesbury company and Cottages 4 You, the online umbrella for many brands such as English Country Cottages, Stillwells and others
- A total of 56 properties provide 78 rental units ranging from sleeping 2 to 12 people per unit
- Where assessed, most are around 4*, although many do not have formal quality grades
- Published rental rates before any discounts range from £250 to £1200 per unit per week, with most self catering units being for 2 to 6 people. There are very few larger units, although a couple of farms have multiple barn conversions with more total spaces across all the units

- There are 15 camping and caravan sites, with approximately 450 pitches, mainly accounted for by 3 larger sites; most are small seasonal Certificated Locations
- The Camping & Caravanning Club promote small five-van only sites, Certificated Locations, reserved exclusively for members, often on farms as part of site diversification

Known Visitor Accommodation Across the AONB			
Property Type	Grading (mainly by Visit Britain)	Rooms	Main Accommodation Guides
Bed & Breakfast/ Guest House	Assessed		
18 establishments	3* 5no. 4* 10no. 5* 1 no. Local grading 2no.	54	Mainly VW, also VD, SD and NFT and AA
B&B/Guest House Properties	Not Assessed		
11	Not assessed	23	Mainly SD
B&B/ Guest House Just beyond AONB			
7	3* 1no. 4* 4no. Not assessed 2no.	18	Mainly VW
Inn/Hotel Assessed			
9	3* 1no. 4* 8no.	63+	Mainly AA
Inn / Hotel Not Assessed			
12 (almost certainly more)	Not assessed	64+	
Total approx 57 serviced businesses		220+ rooms	
Self Catering - both assessed /	non assessed		
56 self catering properties	3* 5no. 4* 11no. 5* 1no. Local 4no. Unass 35no. Gold 4no.	78 units	Mainly VW, Hideaways Agency and Cottages 4 You
Camping and Caravan Sites			
7 main sites		410	
8 Certificated Locations	Max 5 pitches	40	

Main Accommodation Guides:

AA = AA Hotel/Guest House

SD= Shaftesbury & District

VW = Visit Wiltshire

NFTA = New Forest Tourism Association

VD = Visit Dorset

C4Y = Cottages 4 You

The area distinctly 'lacks' large size hotels of any kind, it is very much based upon 2-4 bedroom bed and breakfast establishments, as well as inns with 3-8 rooms. Most businesses are independent, locally owned, although some pubs are part of chains, such as Marstons. There is virtually no branding or national chain name present.

Compared to other areas of Salisbury, Wilton and Bradford on Avon, the quality level of the accredited establishments is comparably good with most across CCWWD being graded 4*, but there are very few 5* or extra awards such as Gold and Silver for quality of service.

Only a couple of businesses have the additional Walker Welcome and Cyclists Welcome accreditations, reflecting the presence of drying and storage facilities as well as support information. In a rural area, these would be valuable marketing additions.

Self catering is probably quite important to the local economy, as visitors will make use of the local amenities, shops, pubs and market towns. However, to date, the sector has appeared hidden and requires further exploration as to its role in terms of attracting visitors who will, based upon national trends, stay for either 3 or 4 day short breaks, or full week lets.

306. The Nature of Visitor Economy Businesses

For such a large area of land, 380 sq miles, there are very few leisure operators and visitor economy businesses, a reflection of the largely dispersed and sparsely populated settlements and businesses lying in a very rural landscape.

There are several land based businesses; the major centuries old established landowning estates, which include leisure businesses such as Cranborne Garden Centre (Cranborne Estate), Tolland Royal Golf Course (Rushmore Estate), pubs and equestrian centres (Rushmore Estate), and Castleman Hotel (Chettle Estate). Additionally, the National Trust has several historic properties, holiday letting accommodation and tenanted pubs.

Most businesses are small in size, locally independently owned and with links to local business supplier networks. A number of independent pubs lay across the area, often with good food and drink reputations, similarly a small number of cafes/coffee shops and farm shops, locally owned and with loyal repeat visitors.

There are very few national /chain businesses, only some of the pubs located on the fringes of the AONB eg Horton Inn (Marstons). The area does not have any Whitbread/ Compass/ Travelodge/ Harvester/ Costa Coffee/ Brewers Fayre type outlets. A number of these can be found on the trunk roads and market towns surrounding the AONB.

As noted, most accommodation businesses are very small in scale of rooms.

The counterpoint to this general picture of smaller enterprises is the large scale of the major National Trust properties, Longleat Estate and Centre Parcs. As noted above, these attract significantly higher volumes of visitors, are larger employers and are better known brands.

A number of businesses, particularly those associated with the older estates have significant levels of visitor activity that can be considered as niche and upmarket. Game shooting on the estates is widespread with private parties, often from London, spending substantial sums per day (over £1,000 per head), and staying overnight in the more expensive distinctive hotels/ inns.

Businesses across the area (neither attractions nor accommodation) appear to have taken up the Green Tourism Business Scheme, virtually none are accredited with this, whereas in Devon, Cornwall and the Dorset coastal areas there are many using this additional marketing opportunity by demonstrating their green business credentials. In an AONB environment, this could be a valuable aspect in encouraging visits to businesses.

307. Access and Transport

The AONB is traversed by several main routes, which are particularly busy in summer months, most notably the A303 and A30 as well as A350, often congested holiday travel routes to the South West. Most other roads, including A roads, are less used, more for local communication.

Two rail routes pass through the AONB; the only station within the area is at Tisbury, itself the largest settlement, on the South West route from London to Exeter. Nearby Gillingham and Salisbury also provide potential access. The Bristol/Bath to Portsmouth line does not have any station within the AONB, but Salisbury lies along its route.

Local bus services link between the market towns, using both A road and cross country routes; however as with many rural services, their frequency is under constant reduction.

Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB comprises such a large area that it is not really a single visitor destination. The associations with neighbouring landscapes and heritage towns mean that visitors to say the north are unlikely to have much time to explore the south, and *vice versa*. Overall, away from key attraction destinations, the area is relatively undiscovered, providing much of the tranquillity and special character for residents and those that do visit the area. Outward links to higher profile destinations such as the Jurassic Coast, Purbeck, Bath, Stonehenge and Salisbury mean that overnight visitors can be based within the AONB, and use it as a central hub to explore out from. Others make more localised visits, to the landscape and attractions within the immediate area.

308. Rights of Way, Walking, Cycling and Horse Riding Across the AONB

As a large area, it is not surprising that there is a substantial amount of public Rights of Way (RoW), with over 1,655km of accessible routes across the AONB. What is notable is the sheer volume when compared with other similar sized areas in the south east of the country. These Footpaths, Bridleways, Restricted Byways and Byways Open to All Traffic enable walking, cycling and horse riding as well as less desirable use by vehicles such as 4x4 cars and motorbikes. The visitor economy benefits from notable numbers of walkers and cyclist in particular, passing through, following circular routes in guide books, and staying overnight and using local facilities. There are many active groups using paths and tracks, such as ramblers groups, cyclists clubs, horse riding societies, carriage drivers and users of motorised vehicles, such as Trail Riders.

Responsibility for maintaining and recording the RoW network is spread across four local authorities, and the AONB Team has good working relationships and seeks to maximise the opportunities for

local and visiting users. In Wiltshire the percentage of Byways Open to All Traffic (13% of network) and Bridleways (25%) is higher than the national average⁵. Dorset also has a central sweep from Sixpenny Handley through Blandford Forum onwards to Askerswell that is especially dominated by bridleways over the higher ground⁶. This gives greater opportunities to improve access to a wide range of groups.

The promotion of local recreational routes and the integration of public transport is an aim of the various local councils in order to improve sustainable transport. By attracting visitors to the wider countryside, the economic impact could be more widely distributed. This could also reduce congestion in areas attracting high numbers of visitors, such as Avebury World Heritage Site and the New Forest National Park, encouraging visitors to explore areas of the AONB.

A range of elements support the network:

- Existing trail leaflets and binders of routes are produced by various local authorities, usually through the Countryside Services or Tourism teams, notably East Dorset Council. VisitWiltshire's walking section of the website has trails that can be printed off. There are also numerous commercial print and web based outdoor magazines, guides, collections of routes and GPS downloadable trails
- Two walking holiday companies (Footscape and On Foot Holidays) are based near to the AONB, offering packaged short break self guided walks across the area. They provide themed trails, using Dorset's literary (Hardy), heritage, gardens and key sites as the linking threads, with visitors staying at local inns and guest houses within or near to the AONB on 2 to 5 night long trails.
- Cycling is more problematic, there are not any cycle hire outlets in the AONB, although they do exist further afield, such as in Salisbury and Ringwood, and until recently in Shaftesbury. Limited opportunities are presented to those that do not come with their own bikes; there is a cycle repair shop in Tisbury
- Local cycling groups such as those in Ferndown and Wimborne as well as CTC Wessex Blackmore Vale hold regular weekly and monthly excursions, often crossing areas of the AONB
- For horse riders there are relatively few stables across the AONB, although some do offer horse riding lessons and packages such as White Horse Trekking Centre at Codford. The British Horse Society www.horseswelcome.org/ quality assurance scheme and the list of riding centres providing holiday riding centres across the country www.bhs.org.uk/Riding/Riding_Holidays/Find_A_Riding_Holiday_Centre do not identify any centres in the AONB area; the closest being east of Salisbury and near to Southampton

⁵ Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Wiltshire County Council 2008-012

⁶ Towards A Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Dorset, Dorset County Council 2007

- Very few accommodation businesses are accredited as Cyclists Welcome and Walkers Welcome, despite it being a highly rural area, and with nearby middle distance and long distance routes such as the Wessex Ridgeway, Monarch's Way, Jubilee Trail as well as the Wiltshire and North Dorset Cycleways. Accredited businesses are able to help visitors dry their clothes overnight, or provide secure, lockable and weatherproof cycle storage. They will also be happy to give information on the nearest cycle shops or provide advice on suitable routes from their location. Developing more of these 'Welcome' businesses is an opportunity for the AONB.

309. The Customer - Some Insights from Visitor Surveys

A small number of visitor surveys have been undertaken over recent years across Wiltshire and Dorset, giving some indication of the profile of visitors – although not specifically of those to the AONB area.

Wiltshire Visitor Survey 2005, The Market Research Group

- 35% of visitors were on a day visit, and 65% were staying visitors
- 25% were aged 25 - 44, 23% were aged 45 - 64, and 11% were over 65 years of age. 24% of visitors were children under 16 years of age. A further 8% were aged 17 – 24. The average party of visitors consisted of 2.8 people
- 58% of visitors were in the ABC1 socioeconomic groups, compared with 43% of the general UK population
- 78% of day visitors came from the South West (excluding Wiltshire). 9% were from London or the South East, and 4% were from within Wiltshire
- 27% of staying visitors were from overseas. 21% of visitors were from London / South East, 11% the North of England, 9% the South West, 5% the Midlands, 3% East Anglia, and 3% from Scotland
- 28% of staying visitors were on a main holiday. 27% of staying visitors were on an additional/second holiday and 24% were on a short break. A further 8% of staying visitors were on business, and 13% were visiting for various other reasons
- 39% of staying visitors were on their first visit to Wiltshire, and 61% were repeat visitors
- Visitors received information about the area from Tourist Information Centres in Wiltshire (39%), brochures for the area (39%), from friends or relatives (38%), previous visits (32%), the Internet (23%) and brochures for their accommodation (19%)

- The average visitor to Wiltshire spent £21.39 per day on non-accommodation items. This includes £7.26 on food and drink, £2.11 on convenience goods, £6.43 on durable goods, £2.09 on fares and petrol, £2.42 on entertainment and leisure and £1.08 on other goods
- Visitors expressed the highest level of satisfaction with the quality of festivals and events, and the lowest level of satisfaction with the provision of public transport.

'Dorset New Forest Perceptions Survey' February-March 2004, The Market Research Group

This was designed to gather information on how residents in the key markets of London and the South East view the Dorset and New Forest area as a holiday destination:

- Bournemouth was the most recognised location in the region, whilst beaches / coastline were the features most associated with the area
- Scenery and countryside, quality restaurants, peace and quiet and good weather were important requirements for a holiday destination. The Dorset and New Forest region is felt to offer a good level of the former three aspects
- Respondents took an average of 3 holidays or short breaks each year, and tended to book their accommodation directly with the provider
- A typical respondent who had visited the region tended to visit more than once a year for a short break and stayed in hotel accommodation. Bournemouth was the most popular destination in the region, followed by Poole, and the New Forest
- Over two thirds of respondents felt that they were likely to visit the Dorset and New Forest region in the next 2 years.

Dorset and New Forest Full Visitor Survey, 2005

- 21% of those interviewed in inland 'Countryside Towns' across Dorset and the New Forest originated from London and the South East
- Those interviewed in 'Dorset Countryside' locations were mainly visiting the area as their main holiday (47%), more so than those interviewed in the New Forest which tended to be more for short breaks
- The most popular area visited was the 'Dorset Countryside' which was visited by 81% of respondents interviewed in 'Countryside Town' locations and 87% of respondents in 'Dorset Countryside' locations, as well as by 87% of 'Coastal Resort' respondents. Few, only 35% of New Forest respondents visited out into 'Dorset Countryside'
- A key source of information was the Tourist Information Centres within the Dorset/ New Forest area (41%). The most influential information source in Countryside towns (32%), the New Forest (45%) and coastal resorts (27%) was that of a previous visit. 23% of Dorset

Countryside respondents considered the internet as their most influential information source with further 23% being most influenced by their previous visits to the area

- The main motivation for visiting the area across all groups was because they had visited the area before and liked it (60%)
- Respondents were generally in a group consisting of two adults and no children with the exception of the Dorset Countryside where the most common group type was a family group with children (38%).

All these surveys, now 5-7 years old, are likely to still reflect the main thrust of visitor characteristics and behaviour, as there has been limited change in recent years, apart from renewed destination marketing collaborations. It would be a valuable exercise to carry out specific visitor surveys within the AONB and the surrounding market towns in order to gain focused insight into attitudes and visiting behaviour, as well as awareness of non-visitors to the AONB in the fringe market towns.

Center Parcs Visitor Survey

A major economic impact assessment of the four Center Parcs (CP) sites was carried out in 2005, influencing the development proposals for a fifth site in Bedfordshire⁷. Within this study, some visitor research provides insight into who comes to the centres and Longleat in particular:

- Seven in ten visiting parties to Longleat CP contained children, visiting as families
- Most visitors come from the South East (36%), South West (34%), Wales (12%) and West Midlands (6%). The majority of visits are for three or four night stays
- About 1% of respondents bought snacks, meals or other supplies, at a café, restaurant or public house close to a holiday village, at an average expenditure of about £19 per party. 1% of the average number of guests per year is about 3,000 people or 750 parties per village per year. The expenditure in local cafes, restaurants and pubs is therefore estimated to be modest at around £15,000 per Village per year
- There is a common misconception that users of Center Parcs remain on site throughout the break and do not contribute or impact into local economies. However, the 2005 research into a sample of visitors shows that once arrived, around 18% of respondents left one of the CP villages to visit either a local shop/pub/restaurant or to visit a tourist/ leisure attraction. There was a variation between the villages. Whilst only 12% and 13% of respondents from Sherwood and Elveden left their villages, 27% of respondents left Longleat. This is almost certainly led by the proximity of Longleat historic house and safari park
- The survey also showed that 8% left the CP villages to buy something or visit somewhere other than a tourist attraction, spending about £35 per party. This translates to about

⁷ The Local Economic Impact Of Center Parcs Holiday Villages, Hallam Environmental Consultants Ltd & Sheffield Hallam University, 2005

25,000 guests per village or 6250 parties spending an estimated £220,000 per village per year into the surrounding economy

- About 4% of CP respondents overall left the village to go to a supermarket or other shop, spending over £34. This equates to expenditure in supermarkets and shops in the locality estimated to be over £100,000 per village. However, for Longleat it is likely that very little will be spent into the AONB, more likely into the surrounding market towns
- About 2% of respondents overall left the village to go to a café, restaurant or pub. The average expenditure for such visits was £27.49, leading to estimated expenditure in cafés restaurants and pubs in the locality of about £40,000 per holiday village
- Around 5% of respondents overall said they had visited a tourist attraction on their journey to the Center Parcs village. Most of these (44.4%) had visited a stately home or garden - and most of these had done so at Longleat House and Safari Park. 6% of respondents at Longleat Forest CP village had visited Longleat House on their incoming journey. The amount spent on such visits was £52.85 per party.
- At approximately 4 guests per party, it suggests that Center Parcs guests visiting Longleat House and Safari Park on the inward journey to the CPHV is estimated to be 18,000, and their expenditure is worth an estimated £250,000 per year
- Around 12% of respondents overall said they had visited a tourist attraction during their stay. 16% of respondents at Longleat Forest had visited Longleat House
- Center Parcs guests visiting Longleat may number over 70,000 per year. At a spend-per-party of over £64, this may be worth perhaps £1 million per year to the stately home
- An extremely high 96% of respondents overall said that they thought they will stay at their current village again
- 75% of Longleat CP respondents said that they thought they will make a leisure visit to the area again, not necessarily staying at Center Parcs. This is higher than the all parks average of 67%, implying the appetite has been wetted for visits to see more of the area.

This presents an opportunity for the AONB to raise its profile and capture a share of the future re-visits, whether staying in or nearby, encompassing visits to the AONB area and businesses.

310. Conclusions

In drawing together an evidence base through detailed audit, it is clear that there is a relatively large range of 'product' across the AONB that appeals to, and is experienced by, a broad range of visitors. The landscape provides the setting and the environment for trips, and much low key outdoor activity takes place through walking, cycling and general exploring the sights. However, it is the destination products – the visitor attractions, historic properties, key villages, key landscape viewpoints, cultural festivals, archaeological sites etc. that provide much of the core set of places to visit.

In many ways, the area is polarised, between a small number of very large venues – such as Longleat and Center Parcs, and to an extent the flagship National Trust properties, and the bulk of businesses and amenities that are very small in scale and locally owned.

The visitors themselves are varied, comprising a mix of those passing through, particularly with the A303 and A30 trunk roads, as well as those who come for a day to a location for a specific purpose or hobby. The casual visitor getting outdoors to explore, whether for a day or overnight break is probably of a recognisable character – generally older, often with grown up family (not visiting with them), interested in countryside and heritage. Particular groups also show some polarisation, between high end spenders engaging in game shoot packages focused around main estates, and those camping/ caravanning who discover the array of attractions and festivals. Understanding the different markets and their varying needs is a key part of providing them, and like-minded people yet to visit, with a quality authentic rural experience across Cranborne Chase and the West Wiltshire Downs.

SECTION 4: KEY ISSUES INFLUENCING THE STRATEGY

401. Key Issues Arising from Consultations and Site Visits

A multitude of issues have come through from various discussions, online survey, site visits and analysis of data. These issues directly influence the key priorities and recommendations for action in the following sections of the strategy. The issues have been grouped into the main themes and set out the aspects that are most relevant to the visitor economy, whilst in many cases reflecting issues that also affect communities and daily life for those living within the AONB. Appendix C covers many of the key responses to the online stakeholder survey.

402. Communication & Information Awareness

For many of those involved in the visitor economy, this is one of the main areas of greatest interest, with a variety of issues relating to awareness and communication about the area, and linked to marketing activity (the latter, marketing, not being an integral role of the AONB Partnership):

- For visitors, less so for residents, there is perceived to be a lack of AONB image or identity – no ‘welcome to’ signs are on the borders on the main roads, and there is limited AONB focused information or interpretation available from places where visitors may go, apart from some of the AONB’s own activity leaflets
- The online survey shows that awareness levels of communication materials produced by the AONB is mixed. With delivery through virtually every door in the area, most (85%) knew of ‘The Hart’ newspaper, sent out twice a year. The AONB website was known of by around three quarters of respondents (78%)
- However, only around a quarter (29%) were aware of the AONB’s ‘Our Outstanding Natural Playground, Map and Information Guide’ leaflet, and one third (36%) knew of the AONB’s ‘Our Outstanding Local Enterprises, A guide to local producers’ leaflet
- Information boards and site interpretive panels describing what visitors can see are very limited in presence and distribution, and within the main villages there is no tourist information referral
- 42% of online survey respondents feel that there is ‘definitely’ a need to strengthen the image and branding of the AONB for visitors and 34% feel there is ‘a little need’ – three quarters in total. The remaining 20% tend towards being neutral or do not strongly feel there is a need
- 23% would ‘definitely’ like to see welcome signs at main roads into the AONB to tell residents and visitors when they are entering the area of the AONB, and 47% would ‘like’ them. However, 25% were ambivalent or negative that such signage to be introduced – 14% would ‘not like’ and 11% were neutral. This suggests a limited and sensitive approach is required to this potential signposting

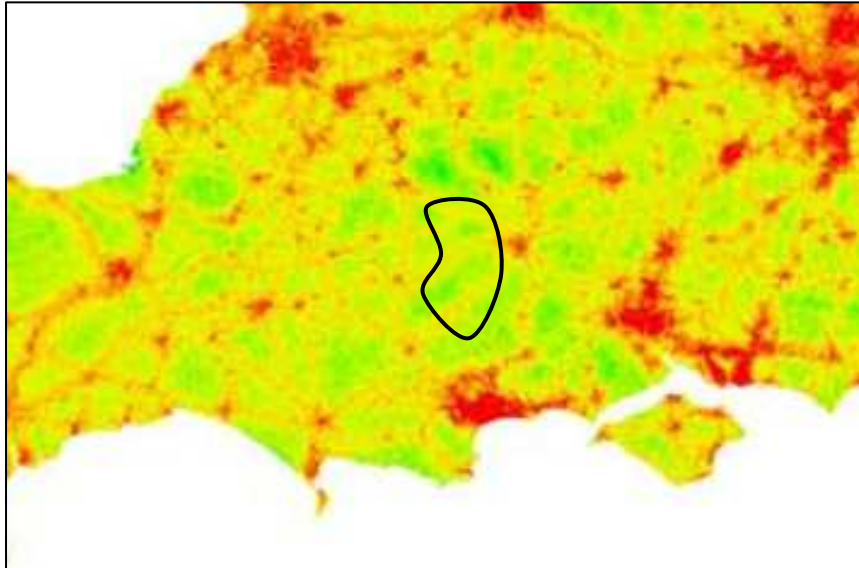
- Only 28% feel the current level of information for visitors and local communities to find out what to do, what to see and where to go across the AONB and surroundings is good, none say it is excellent. However, 20% feel it is poor or very poor, and 40% are neutral in their view, stating it is average
- The Tourist Information Centres in the surrounding gateway market towns have limited leaflets and information about places within the AONB, what's on and what there is to do
- Most commercial leaflets are based around the 'southern' Dorset attractions stretching into Devon and Somerset that lie beyond the AONB and are picked up by those living and visiting the more populous coastal areas
- The location of the AONB across four counties means that it is on the edge of all four, and is a contributing supporting element of all the tourism management partnerships, their marketing and information, not a leading element. Many of the key visitor themes – walking, food and drink, heritage etc. are lead themes for the destinations, so the AONB needs to ensure it has a presence across everyone's thematic led visitor promotion and information
- However, Ordnance Survey Explorer maps have the AONB boundary clearly marked on them, although the area straddles more than one map.

403. The Environment and Tranquillity

It is the special landscape character and local environments of the AONB which provide the backdrop and reason to live and work in the area for many communities and businesses and which attract visitors. Maintaining this relatively undisturbed environment is seen as an over-riding priority for most, whilst recognising that these merits, if sensitively used, can benefit visitors and local businesses and communities:

- Understandably, the wide open landscapes and tranquillity (including low noise and light pollution and low density settlements) are key assets of the area. For visitors these can offer an extremely different experience to a home city or urban environment
- Two thirds of online survey respondents felt that the AONB and its landscape are 'very important' in attracting visitors to the area, with almost one third feeling it to be 'slightly important'
- General visitor surveys across Wiltshire and Dorset as a whole show that 'scenery/landscape' and 'peace and quiet' are key motivators for visits and rate highly as assets of the two counties as a whole
- Formal tranquillity mapping shows clearly how Wiltshire in particular presents some of the largest areas of tranquillity in southern England, particularly for those coming out from London and the home counties

- An exercise in tranquillity mapping used by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England⁸ shows the AONB and surroundings on the following map. This map is centred on the AONB and Salisbury (in red with roads radiating from it) – Bristol, Swindon and London lie along the top of the map. Salisbury Plain is the darkest green, south of Swindon – CCWWD is varying degrees of dark green above Bournemouth/Poole



Source: Northumbria University

- Few local businesses really appear to be making the most of these elements of tranquillity; they appear to offer a good opportunity for sensitive use in promoting visitor packages. Church Farm Camping and Caravan site in Sixpenny Handley runs astronomy weekend events and other wildlife organisations run some night-time wildlife guided walks.

404. Rights of Way, Traffic and Public Transport

Consultation has noted that a number of negative issues, and several opportunities arise from the various means of travel into and around the AONB, as well as the related impact between travel for local communities and for visitors:

- The 1,655 kilometres of RoW within the AONB – particularly along ridges and ancient droveways, as well as along valleys offer good networks and excellent views across the landscape. Routes along higher ridges provide long distance vistas that drivers on roads rarely see
- As with most of the UK, there is felt to be insufficient funding to adequately maintain, waymark or improve all RoWs. Thus prioritised locations mean the entire RoW network across four local authorities, is of varying quality

⁸ Tranquillity Mapping: Developing a Robust Methodology for Planning Support, Centre for Environmental and Spatial Analysis, Northumbria University, 2008

- Increasing RoW use by local people and visitors can generate some new income through sales of trail leaflets, and participation in events, which can be put back into funding route management
- Issues such as traffic congestion are well known on the A303 and A30, particularly in the summer peak – used by hundreds of thousands of drivers weekly to pass through the area, with very few aware of specifically where they are or what is on offer locally
- Certain small destinations, such as the village of Mere and the National Trust’s Stourhead Estate have become discovered by regular travellers and act as informal ‘service stations’, and rest stops. Drivers leave the A303 and take breaks in these attractive locations, spending some time and money in the local businesses
- Whilst visitor numbers are relatively modest and spread across a large area, congestion can occur during the summer tourism season at key locations, not just on the main roads, but linked to through routes and key attractions
- Some major attractions (Longleat, Center Parcs) and events (Great Dorset Steam Fair) have particular impacts on heavy traffic flows in the peak season at specific weekend dates
- As noted earlier, there are a good many local complaints about the lack of volume and frequency of public transport into and around the AONB, mostly with limited rural bus services. The only direct rail access into Tisbury is used by leisure travellers, but is particularly important for work and out-commuting to surrounding towns
- Such limitations mean there are limited initiatives to encourage visitors to use public transport to get around between destinations and attractions
- 84% of the local online survey respondents are supportive of initiatives to better link footpath/ bridleway/ cycle route networks, only 6% would not support this. This would benefit local people as well as visitors.

405. Limited Understanding of Visitors and Their Needs

Relatively little market intelligence exists about visitors across the AONB. The occasional visitor survey has been either for broader areas such as Dorset or Wiltshire as a whole, or very specifically site based, such as for National Trust properties or Center Parcs:

- The views of visitors are not well understood across the AONB, whether as day trippers or of those staying overnight, for general leisure or for specific niche activities. Insight is needed into what they think, what would improve their experience and how best to communicate with them before and during their visit

- There is a tendency for most businesses to operate in isolation, with limited sharing of information about their visitors and packaging together of elements that could benefit all parties
- The area has distinct niche visitor markets; some being attracted by specific businesses and activities. Examples include field sports which generally attract high spending parties from London and the South East staying in quality accommodation for shooting on estates as low volume, high value groups. These are a very different type of visitor and channels to communicate with them are quite different from those camping or staying in a small independent guest house
- Event driven visitors, specifically attracted for example by the Dorset Great Steam Fair or Larmer Tree Festival, have different motivations to make their visit from a general touring/sightseeing visitor. For these events, the AONB and surrounding environment is likely to have only a limited, if any, part in making their visit – the event is the purpose and the venue happens to be here.

406. Economic and Social Impact of Visitors

The consultation process has generally reflected positive attitudes towards visitors; not surprising from those involved in running tourism and leisure based businesses; but also from local community representatives and organisations. The fact that the AONB is not awash with high visitor volumes and constant congestion as seen in other more famous honeypot areas is seen as a key reason for this:

- 51% of online survey respondents (including business, Parish Councils, landowners and other organisations) do not see any conflicts between visitors to the area and the needs of the local community, while 37% do see some conflicts, the remainder are unsure
- 83% feel that there are particular benefits from visitors to the area to the needs of the local community
- Local village businesses and parish councils acknowledge the relatively high value of the tourist/visitor trade within the local economy and the importance they provide in sustaining local shops, pubs, public transport, employment and services for the community
- Businesses consulted that work in the visitor economy note, not surprisingly, that in this time of economic downturn they want more visitors and more spend, in order in some cases, to survive, not just get by
- The strategy must be sensitive to the needs of those not involved in the visitor economy, who do not wish to see excessive numbers of visitors into the area

- Key observations about the negative impacts of visitors, including those noted in Appendix C, include traffic congestion, damage to roadside verges and off road parking locations, and noise from light aircraft at Compton Abbas Airfield
- Compared to high profile destinations such as the New Forest or the Lake District, there has been virtually no negative comment about second home ownership reducing local ability to buy houses, or congestion in villages and at key internal road locations within the AONB. These would appear to underpin the feeling that the level of visitors is not particularly high, and in fact could increase at certain quieter times of the year to support local businesses.

407. Local Amenities and Products

Some discussion has noted the fact that there are relatively few main clusters or settlements across the AONB; local facilities and producers are quite widely dispersed. However, networks and small clusters do exist, which provide opportunities to build upon for both local community and visitor benefit:

- There is a role for hub villages – but there are only a very few in the AONB – eg Tisbury, Sixpenny Handley, Cranborne, Hindon, East Knoyle and Maiden Bradley – with clusters of retail, supplies, catering, information, and other services
- There are a great many arts, crafts, food and drink producers across the area, not all currently linked into the visitor economy, some of whom are active in promoting their goods, others less so. These could offer local experiences and add to the perception of the area having local quality distinctiveness and a reason to visit, explore and spend
- The AONB area generally lacks elements of visitor infrastructure – such as many car parks/ laybys or public conveniences – which can put pressure on those provided by private businesses – such as pubs and cafés
- Whilst there are many roadside inns and pubs around the fringes on A roads and within the AONB, there are relatively few tea rooms and cafes – not everyone likes pubs or feel comfortable with visiting them. A comprehensive ‘places to eat and drink’ guide would be a valuable resource that can also link with local food and drink production
- Product development, particularly led by Wiltshire and Dorset Tourism organisations has been limited; most focus has been on marketing, although some walking, cycling and food and drink trails and packages have been developed in areas that include the AONB and its surrounds.

408. Visitor Accommodation

As set out in the analysis above in section 305, there is limited accommodation stock across the AONB:

- Due to choices made by local businesses about who to promote themselves with, and the policy exclusion of non-quality assessed businesses from the main Dorset and Wiltshire guide, there is no 'comprehensive' information on where to stay, or place to look for it that serves the AONB
- Camping and caravanning opportunities, along with 'quirky' and distinctive venues such as tipis, yurts and log cabins are limited across the area, yet would fit well with the 'great outdoors' identity that the AONB has
- The AONB does not have any youth hostel type accommodation, either YHA or independently provided, nor camping barns that could enable visitors use more modestly priced accommodation in the heart of the landscape
- The above opportunities could present some existing operators and farms to diversify at modest investment costs, and which would add to the perception of the area as having plenty of varied places to stay
- The immediate surrounding access roads and market towns do offer a great deal more volume of visitor accommodation, including larger establishments. There has to be a better relationship developed with these fringe locations as they host large numbers of visitors who do visit into the AONB, as well as the towns that they are within.

409. Attractions

There has been no suggestion of major development of new attractions during consultations (apart from current planning applications for development at the Longleat Estate). The area's strength is seen as being its landscape, particularly the chalk downland and valleys, as well as existing heritage sites, both built structures (castles, houses) and prehistoric monuments and their setting:

- The major 'fringe' location attractions – of Longleat, Center Parcs, and even Stourhead and the Royal Signals Museum are arguably not really related to the AONB experience of the landscape. They are main drivers of visits in their own right, offering full days out that do not need visitors to interact with the wider environment, although Alfred's Tower on the Stourhead Estate does provide a clear visual connection to the AONB with its views
- There is only limited awareness of how these sites explain the AONB setting that they lie within, and opportunities are seen to better 'educate' their visitors about the landscape they lie within and to interpret what there is to see in the surrounding areas

- Other small scale attractions – such as the Larmer Tree Gardens, Chettle House, Old Wardour Castle, etc. are more part of the landscape and the AONB environment, being set deep within the AONB and forming part of the ongoing historic story of the area.

410. Relationship with Surrounding Market Towns

Mixed views have been expressed throughout the consultations as to the role of the market towns with the AONB visitor experience. For local people, the surrounding towns are integral parts of life, with shopping, business, leisure and other services provided. Visitors do not perceive artificial or administrative boundaries; thus they do not see a border between the AONB and adjacent towns. Their visit will be to the location and groups of places that make up their trip experience, thus for many visitors, some of the towns, particularly higher profile locations, form a part of their enjoyment of the area:

- The towns can act as gateway to the AONB for some visitors, or a locator for the broader rural area. Self caterers may visit Shaftesbury and fill up with food and petrol before coming to a rural cottage for a week. Travellers may take the train from London to Salisbury, then a taxi to their guest house for the Chalke Valley History Festival; or follow the walking tour across the AONB onwards to Shaftesbury and beyond
- Online survey respondents considered the links with the surrounding market towns. They responded to how they saw the towns as being a part of the AONB visitor experience. The strongest links were seen as being:

○ Historic/ cultural places for days out	86%
○ Transport hubs/centre	76%
○ Main sources for shopping for visitors	69%
○ Venues for other entertainment	69%
○ Marketing as better known places	62%
○ Providing children’s activities	48%
- Interestingly, it appears that only 10% do not feel the market towns have ‘a separate identity, nothing to do with the AONB’, whilst 63% disagree, suggesting they feel they are part of the AONB experience
- It would appear that the towns’ own intrinsic heritage /attraction values are seen as the most important role, supported by the transport and retail function
- In addition, although not noted in the survey, is the role of the surrounding towns in generating visits into the AONB and of referring to places to see, things to do and locations to stop and eat for town visitors wishing to explore the surroundings.

411. Limited Visitor Business Clusters and Partnerships

Some exploration has been made into how businesses engaged in the visitor economy collaborate, network and gain from each other. Few local business groupings appear to exist, although there are variations on 'chambers of trade' based in the surrounding market towns and which some outlying rural businesses participate in:

- There are destination management organisations and local tourism partnerships in the form of Visit Wiltshire and Destination Dorset, as well as the New Forest Tourist Association and Shaftesbury and District Tourism Association, as well as the Tisbury Traders. However, levels of membership and active use of these bodies appears limited by those businesses across the AONB
- Attitudes towards these tourism organisations are generally not very positive with queries as to how beneficial they are to businesses in the AONB; this is partly a reflection of the fringe effect, lying at the lesser known edges of Wiltshire and Dorset in particular
- Some accommodation and attractions are members, whilst many are not, and those involved in providing visitor with other facilities such as coffee shops, public houses and retail are rarely members of any tourism body
- With the large size of the area, and links to Salisbury, Shaftesbury and Warminster, there is no existing Cranborne Chase/West Wiltshire Downs network that supports businesses, and consultation suggests there is no real appetite either
- However, the concept of local clusters of businesses involved in the visitor economy, tentatively located around Cranborne/Chase/Sixpenny Handley, Tisbury/Vale of Wardour, and Wylve Valley/West Wiltshire Downs may be valuable in developing closer business relationships.

412. Conclusions

The analysis indicates that whilst the AONB is well loved and cared for it is not so well known and there is an apparent willingness by community and business representatives to take a more outward looking approach than has been previously considered. The finely balanced state of the national and local economy after several years of financial belt tightening has seen some businesses fail, or margins tighten. Not surprisingly, those engaged directly in the visitor economy look forward with mixed optimism about future trading but strong desire to grow visitor numbers, extend the length of season and increase visitor spending. It is recognised that achieving growth in visitors, and any impacts of additional traffic must be balanced with the longer term environmental sustainability of the AONB. A review in the community workshop generated a table of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats to the AONB Visitor Economy (Appendix D) that is reflected in the strategic forward planning that follows in Section Six.

SECTION 5: DEVELOPING A VISION AND KEY OBJECTIVES FOR THE VISITOR ECONOMY

501. Towards a Shared Vision

The vision for Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB as set out in the Management Plan was adopted after substantial public participation in 2004. The AONB Vision includes three subdivisions based around the environment, community and economy. At the core of the Vision, *“this nationally recognised landscape sustains an evocative character that breathes a life of its own. 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.”*

Taking this starting point, the strategy for the Visitor Economy of Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs is for a five year series of initiatives and actions to benefit the landscape community, and businesses of the AONB. This will enable visitors to better appreciate the special natural and historic environment that gives the AONB its character. The Vision for the Visitor Economy is that:

“By 2017 Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB will become better known as a place to visit for its outstanding landscapes, views and historic sites. Visitors will discover a series of hidden gems across the AONB landscape, appealing to a variety of informed audiences. The area will celebrate its natural, historical and cultural heritage and will provide many opportunities for quiet recreation. Quality hospitality will be rooted in local independent businesses.”

502. Underpinning Principles Delivering the Vision

A set of underpinning principles will assist to achieve the Vision for the visitor economy:

- **Taking a sensitive approach**, rooted in consultations, business and community buy in; positive consultation has brought the strategy development this far, further ongoing discussions are needed to get the right balance of actions
- **Improving partnership working** in a complex area of multiple authorities and organisations, to support the destination, strengthening linkages between local groups, sectors and pan-area bodies
- **Improving integration** between those involved in the visitor economy, landscape management and access – particularly between private, public and third sector businesses and organisations delivering the visitor economy on the ground
- **Not forgetting it is the special landscape** of natural and heritage features that give the area its character and attract most visitors – the distinctiveness is the appeal to niche markets of a very rural experience within a crowded southern England
- **Raising awareness of the importance of the sector** with partners, funders, politicians and decision makers – in order to garner greater support for initiatives that enhance the AONB , its landscape, communities and economy

- **Balancing the need to improve the quality** of visitor experience and the length of stay with avoidance of increasing visitor numbers beyond a manageable capacity, particularly at honeypot locations
- **An approach of evolution, not revolution;** the nature of the area and many of the businesses mean it is not about major transformational changes, rather it is undertaking business led opportunities and packages that are right for the location and which enhance the AONB
- **Taking an ambitious but realistic approach to encouraging greater sustainability** within businesses and destinations – harnessing green credentials and minimising negative impacts to attract visitors and deliver exceptional rural experiences
- **Supporting local employment and more sustainable year round operation** for businesses that benefit communities and visitors - by emphasising increased length of stay, visitor spend and visits outside the core busy months, supporting viable enterprises.

503. Strategic Aims

The following Aims form the core of the strategic approach to creating a more sustainable visitor economy for the AONB.

Strategic Aims

- 1 Raise awareness of the AONB and its constituent areas as a quality accessible rural destination offering varied outdoor experiences
- 2 Provide better orientation and information across the AONB for visitors when they are here
- 3 Give a high profile to the natural heritage, environment and landscapes that underline the visitor experience
- 4 Improve the cultural and historical experience of the AONB and increase understanding and appreciation of this heritage through interpretation, events, etc.
- 5 Support local enterprise, developing business clusters and networks to increase business success, sustainability and increase the quality of local provision
- 6 Strengthen links between the AONB and the surrounding market towns and destinations, to encourage a two way flow of visits, relieving some visitor pressure on neighbouring locations
- 7 Develop products, food and drink, arts and crafts, trails, directories and access to producers, celebrating the local sense of place and character of the area
- 8 Encourage visitors to leave the car behind; improve the availability and range of routes for walking, cycling and horse riding around the AONB, to allow accessible, quiet recreation
- 9 Build better links and packages between operators in order to link up accommodation, activities and places to eat and drink
- 10 Develop improved communication and sharing of visitor information, as well as market intelligence amongst businesses and organisations involved in the visitor economy

504. Focus on the Leading Priorities

The concept of undertaking a more 'joined-up' approach to supporting the visitor economy across Cranborne Chase and the West Wiltshire Downs is still in the early days, and there is not an existing group tasked in coordinating the sector across the AONB. Therefore, it is recommended that a focused approach is taken by the partners and businesses. It is not realistic to set out '101 actions to achieve across the AONB'. Rather a prioritised set of key initiatives and component projects is proposed.

This is set within a realistic Vision of what the Visitor Economy of CCWWD AONB will look like in five years, a sensible time span to consider working in. A partnership based approach to moving forward underpins the emerging opportunities; undertaking projects that can bring tangible benefits to businesses and communities, enabling visitors to have improved experiences and better understand the AONB.

The online stakeholder consultation survey indicates a number of priorities from prompted lists that sit alongside the feedback from the wider consultations held. Key priorities to build into the strategic approach relate to:

Factors that would most help the local economy (online survey)	
Attracting visitors at less busy times of year/increase length of season	68%
Promoting local produce and crafts	60%
Clear awareness of the AONB and what's in the AONB to see and do	60%

Other factors were seen as far **less important**:

Better communication/enterprises working together	39%
Spreading visitor across the area	24%
Better management of the impact of visitors on the local community	23%

A number of options were presented that could enhance the visitor experience the most. By far the most popular were:

Options to Enhance the Visitor Experience (online survey)	
Better printed information on where to go, what to do in the area	38%
Improved /better promoted public transport	38%
Increased marketing of the AONB as a place to stay	36%
Improved information in AONB, Wiltshire, Dorset and New Forest tourism websites	36%
Better interpretation / promotion of the area's natural heritage / wildlife	32%

More and better promoted local events/festivals	31%
Better interpretation / promotion of the area's cultural/historic heritage	30%

Other options that can contribute to the area, but are of less priority from respondents are:

Providing better basic visitor services (e.g. car parking/toilets)	29%
Improved provision for walkers	26%
More, or better promoted, guided/organised activities such as cycle routes	15%
Improved provision for cycling	14%
Improved provision for horse riding	11%
More, diverse visitor attractions	11%

These indicators of potential priorities, along with consultation feedback, including the stakeholder workshop in Tisbury, provide guidance towards a broad range of recommended activities.

Whilst only around 30 respondents to the online survey reflected local businesses, they did identify some keen interest in packaging and marketing their business with several activities:

Promoting the natural environment	65%
Walking	52%
Cycling	48%
Birdwatching	39%
Hunting/shooting	39%
Promoting the historic environment	39%

Businesses would like to see more business in weekdays (53%) compared to weekends (21%), and in winter (53%), compared to summer (37%) and autumn (37%) an spring (31%). This indicates significant periods of the week and year where there is capacity for increased levels of visits, supporting these businesses, and potentially increasing their success and financial sustainability. In turn, this can safeguard existing employment, and even generate new jobs, including for local people.

505. Conclusions

The Vision, underlying Principles and key Aims provide a focused high level direction for the visitor economy strategy. Developed through wide ranging consultation, the reasoning behind why there is a need to support the visitor economy, and how it will be achieved is in place. As a strategic position, the document can enable bidding to partners and external funding programmes in order to progress the activities. Section 6 sets out in some detail the range of key opportunities and priorities, with associated actions to deliver the strategic aims.

Section 6: Emerging Opportunities for a Sustainable Visitor Economy

601. A Need to Reflect the Key Market Segments

The visitor economy represents a complex mix of location (environment, landscape), products (assets, facilities, places to see) and consumers (visitors, residents). In terms of how the area currently functions as a visitor destination, we need to be mindful of the product-market mix. That is, the character of visitors is reflected by the experience available, and product development needs to reflect the type of user or visitor and their desires and requirements.

There are many models of market segmentation, that is, categorising customers in smaller like-minded groups based on behaviour and characteristics. It is useful to understand a little more about consumer groups in order to define the varied nature of the audiences that the AONB currently and potentially is interested in engaging with.

At the most simplistic, visitors can be considered as being day or overnight; special interest or general explorers; in family groups, or as part of coach tours; active participants or passive onlookers. These can include ‘empty nesters’ – older people where children have grown up and left the home, or ‘young professionals’ – singles and friends, seeking new sights before having children. Some are motivated by personal discovery for off the beaten track authentic experiences, others for mainstream mass market activities and venues. People’s attitudes and values remain constant, but they can look for differing experiences – cheap camping ‘away from it all’ one time, but boutique hotel service on another trip.

To these broad groupings, more sophisticated segmentation is used by the destination management organisations such as Destination Dorset and Visit Wiltshire (including the ArkLeisure categories as used by VisitBritain). The National Trust also segments its visitors and their mindsets.

Northumberland National Park, whilst being a significant distance from Cranborne Chase, has some similarities, being remote and not highly visited. The segmentation of the UK Days Out market (not specifically overnight markets), devised by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre consultants, offers a model used by the National Park Authority that perhaps reflects similar segmentation for CCWWD AONB.

A number of main segments that are more inclined towards the rural experience are:

- Explorer Families – these are experience driven with over half stating that the most important aspect of the day out is to experience fascinating, beautiful and awe-inspiring things. They tend to act more spontaneously rather than carefully plan a day out and are pretty self-sufficient and enjoy an adventure. This segment comprises high-income ACC1 families, better educated parents
- Consumer Families - this segment is socially driven with day trips’ purpose to have a relaxing, social day out with friends and family. They want an easy life and select activities to please children. They have lower income levels but high spend on specific days out – high users of theme parks and safari parks.

- Young Explorers – these tend to be under 30, professionals, with no children. They like to experience fascinating, beautiful or awe-inspiring things as the most important factor when going on a day out. Nearly 3 in 4 like making discoveries on a day out
- Independent Eclectics – are also experience driven and are more likely to act spontaneously when on a day trip. They lead a busy lifestyle and are involved in a wide range of activities. They enjoy physical and intellectual pursuits and do not have young children. Generally older, they are ‘young at heart’ and like to make their own discoveries
- Intellectual Venturers – are the most likely group to plan a trip and tend to be older, intellectual and with no children. They hold a wide range of interests in gardening, antiques, architecture and history, particularly in Art

Other groups less likely to make rural trips are:

- Home & Hearth - this segment is the most likely of all segments to look for a social day out with friends and family, planned in advance. These visitors generally live in urban areas with little access to the countryside – they have least likely interest in the countryside. The majority are aged 30 and over
- Social Wanderers - this is the most likely segment to state ‘to see a major attraction in the area’ as the most important factor when on a day out. Relaxation and socialising is even more important to this segment. They have significant social motivation, generally with no children at home. They often choose ‘couple’ activities but also prioritise family and friends. They like a good quality café and facilities. They are more likely than any other segment to have little or no interest in green issues.

Alongside these key markets, CCWWD AONB offers appeal for several niche markets, with local businesses targeting customers with particular hobbies and activities. These include, amongst others:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| • Walkers | • Other outdoor pursuits |
| • Cyclists | • Heritage/archaeology |
| • Horse Riders | • Arts/crafts/ creative |
| • Amateur naturalists/ ornithologists | • Informal study/self development courses. |

Destination Dorset and Visit Wiltshire’s marketing priority segments broadly reflect most of the above key groups. Businesses working across Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire should ensure they take up all opportunities for more integrated marketing with Destination Dorset and Visit Wiltshire, as bodies covering 90% of the AONB, as well as with Hampshire County and New Forest Tourism organisations. Individual businesses will already service, and target particular markets that fit their product. Enhanced thematic marketing campaigns and short break packages should be built by the businesses, and promoted with the local partners and other organisations to raise the profile of the area and its attributes.

Better understanding how the needs of these various markets and niches can be met and fulfilled across Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire is needed in order for local businesses to benefit. There is a need for deeper insight into existing and potential customers across the AONB and surrounding market towns to inform businesses and future marketing activity. Undertaking a major visitor survey for the AONB will be highly beneficial. Getting targeting right can assist many of the priorities identified through the consultation and provide better facilities, packages and services that can benefit the local communities, businesses and environment.

602. Emerging Opportunities and Priorities

There is a multitude of opportunities that the AONB can capitalise on, using many of the assets for sensitive, often low key, but distinctive enhancement of the visitor experience. The following thematic priorities represent the steps towards an action plan. They are practical and rooted in the nature of the local environment and scale of businesses, in order to take many of the opportunities forward. There is a need to develop partnerships and funding packages for implementation. Not everything requires hard cash; some recommendations are based on developing partnerships and improving communication between operators to create new opportunities.

Key Strategic Themes to enhance the visitor economy are:

Strategic Themes

- A Working with Others - Developing Business Clusters and Broadening Partnerships
- B Improve Marketing, Communication & Information
- C Extending the Length of Visit and Season
- D Making more of Walking Opportunities
- E Strengthen the Relationships with Surrounding Market Towns
- F Strengthening Arts, Culture, Events and Festivals
- G Celebrate the Natural Landscape and Cultural Heritage
- H Develop the Interpretation of the Natural Landscape and Heritage
- I Maximise Local Distinctiveness of the Rural Destination
- J Encourage Creative Approaches to Sustainable Transport
- K Encourage Cycling Opportunities
- L Develop an Equestrian Tourism Destination
- M Growing the Profile of Accommodation Establishments

Strategic Themes	Rationale	Priority	Potential Benefit to Visitor Economy	Fit with AONB Management Plan Policies
		High	Medium	
A. Working with Others - Developing Business Clusters and Broadening Partnerships	A key factor in improving the visitor economy is to strengthen the component elements and relationships between those directly and indirectly involved in delivering the visitor experience. An approach of effectively engaging the private sector, public sector, community, conservation and heritage interests is essential in order to enact key actions. An area the size of CCWWD AONB, artificially defined in visitor terms, will better respond to initiatives at more meaningful local area level. Visitors generally will focus on particular areas; most will not be able to see everything across the whole AONB. Development of localised clusters of activity should be undertaken which will provide visitors with a deeper experience of the local environment.	H	H	T1, T2, U1, U2
B. Improve Marketing, Communication & Information	The key here is to strike the balance between improving communication to those already visiting the AONB and surrounding area, with raising the profile to potential new audiences. However, this should not be to the extent that communities feel overwhelmed by increase in visitors. The AONB is not an easy concept to publicise. Created for landscape designation purposes, it is not easy to define to visitors without a map. The awareness of the area should be raised, but it is not cost efficient to spend substantial sums creating a new visitor-facing brand that has little consumer perception.	H	M-H	T1, T2, U1
C. Extending the Length of Visit and Season	A key priority, and noted by Visit Wiltshire and the new England Rural Tourism Action Plan, is to encourage visitors to stay longer and not just pass through. This is relevant for day visitors, by encouraging those who stop off the A303 whilst heading onwards to spend a few hours in the area, and potentially consider future visits. The aim is also to encourage visitors to come at different times of the year and to package out of high season breaks.	H	H	T1, T2, U1
D. Making more of Walking Opportunities	There is a perceived high level of short, medium and long distance walking within the AONB as a major visitor activity. The desire to make more of the existing network of routes suggests that a work package can be developed.	M-H	M-L	T1, T2, U1, U2

Strategic Themes	Rationale	Priority	Potential Benefit to Visitor Economy	Fit with AONB Management Plan Policies
E. Strengthen Relationships with Surrounding Market Towns	Whilst the focus is on the rural AONB, itself a very large area of multiple destinations, there should be closer relationship with the surrounding market towns and historic city of Salisbury. In many cases the towns lie immediately bordering the AONB. Building a more integrated destination with links between the towns and countryside can help visitors in many ways, and generate visits from nearby residents. Creating clearer awareness of the area as a whole, with locations such as Shaftesbury and Salisbury helping to ‘anchor’ the large rural core can strengthen perceptions of the AONB visitor destination.	M-H	M-H	T2, U1
F. Strengthening Arts, Culture, Events and Festivals	The existing events, including the Great Dorset Steam Fair, End of the Road Festival, Larmer Tree Festival, Cranborne Chase Woodfair, Wylde Arts Trail and new events such as the Chalke Valley History Festival should be built upon. They provide an alternative prime reason for visits, based around both special interest niches, as well as broader interest. Events and festivals can act as the draw for some visitors to come for the specific purpose, with limited awareness of the area, and either stay on and explore the area, or make subsequent repeat trips outside of the festival date.	M	M	T1, T2, U1
G. Celebrate the Natural Landscape and Cultural Heritage	A major draw for many visitors is to come to visit the high quality landscape with the attractions and destinations within it. This underpins the whole experience of being within CCWWD. Along with the natural and human managed landscape, the heritage of the area is extremely important, but not high profile enough, more should be done to celebrate and promote the character.	M	L	T1, T2, U1, U2
H. Develop the Interpretation of the Natural Landscape and Heritage	A leading comment in the online stakeholder surveys was the importance to provide improved interpretation of the AONB’s wide diversity of landscapes and natural environments. Connected with the priority to better communicate to residents and visitors, more awareness will be raised about the area’s special characteristics. Interpreting the landscape and why it is so special can help residents and visitors to take more interest and look at sites and views with a deeper sense of awareness, enhancing visits	M	L	T1, T2, U1

Strategic Themes	Rationale	Priority	Potential Benefit to Visitor Economy	Fit with AONB Management Plan Policies
I. Maximise Local Distinctiveness of the Rural Destination	The AONB covers an extremely rural and relatively isolated destination in southern England. Its accessibility, particularly to visitors from London, the South East and M4 corridor across to Bristol and beyond, present opportunities to focus on the <i>outstanding</i> rural beauty of the area, its landscape, villages, local businesses etc. There is the potential to target a growing market that is aware of its impact on the planet and who seeks to minimise the carbon footprint of their travels. These visitors will actively seek locations and providers offering sustainable environmental businesses and where an authentic visit can be rooted in local identity.	M	M	T1, T2, U1
J. Encourage Creative Approaches to Sustainable Transport	It is clear that with limited public transport into and around the AONB, that the car is the main means of transport for visitors. However, plenty of people do use other means, including bus, train, bicycle and on foot. With increasing fuel costs having effects nationwide on how often and how far people are willing to use the car for trips, the area could suffer from reduced car borne visitors, but may gain from increased access by public transport or keenness to cycle. It is essential that other forms of non-car based transport are available, connected and link to places where visitors want to arrive, visit and stop at.	M	L	T1, T2, U2
K. Encourage Cycling Opportunities	Cyclists can lawfully cycle on bridleways, restricted byways, byways, and roads used as public paths (RUPPs). Cyclists have a clearly defined right to cycle on bridleways conditional on cyclists giving way to walkers and horse-riders. Cycling activity tends to make use of routes on public roads, ideally quieter lanes. Most off-road cycling takes place on bridleways or Byways Open to All Traffic. Highway authorities are not under a duty to maintain bridleways for cycle use, only for horse riders and pedestrians. However, many local authorities do repair and maintain bridleways to a standard suitable for cycling. This activity can generate circular trips, day and overnight in the AONB, benefiting local communities and businesses.	L	M-L	T1, T2, U1, U2

Strategic Themes	Rationale	Priority	Potential Benefit to Visitor Economy	Fit with AONB Management Plan Policies
L. Develop an Equestrian Tourism Destination	There are a number of stables and horse riding centres across and adjacent to the AONB, however, earlier headline analysis does not indicate a great deal of promotion towards visitors. Equestrian Tourism is seen in a number of areas, such as Shropshire, Sussex/Hampshire, Cumbria and southern Wales as offering a niche market to relatively high spending visitors, both young professionals, small groups and people with their own horses. Some insight into horse riding opportunities can be seen from rural Shropshire. In 2005, 90% of Shropshire riders surveyed ⁹ would consider taking their horse on an equestrian tourism holiday, prepared to travel for up to 3 hours on average to reach a destination. Many had previously been riding on impulse when on holiday, but had also participated in long distance riding and horse B&B holidays with their own horse. This can generate additional spend to local businesses and support use of existing bridleways across CCWWD.	L	M-L	T1, T2, U1, U2
M. Growing the Profile of Accommodation Establishments	With no comprehensive coverage in any one brochure/ web locations of accommodation establishments, there is a need to better highlight the range of venues across the AONB and immediate gateway locations. Analysis shows large numbers of ungraded, but often apparently high quality accommodation – particularly as small hotels, country house and pubs, but also self catering properties. It will be valuable to draw them into better local relationships, particularly pubs/inns as they offer larger numbers of rooms, and dining for visitors.	L	M-H	T1, T2, U1

Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014 Policies

T1: With relevant partners, develop an AONB-wide sustainable recreation and tourism strategy based on, and respecting, the special qualities of the AONB and purposes of designation.

T2: Investigate external funding opportunities to develop or support recreation, tourism, and access initiatives that are focused on the special qualities of the area.

U1: Encourage and assist local communities to take an active role in providing relevant information, interpretation, facilities and services for visitors in support of the special qualities of the AONB.

U2: Support Local Access Forums and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan implementation, funding and encourage consistency of approach towards access issues and AONB objectives.

⁹ Shropshire Equestrian Tourism Strategy, Shropshire Tourism Research Unit 2005

603. Strategic Theme A: Working with Others - Developing Business Clusters and Broadening Partnerships

Key Actions:

- Build on the momentum now underway, engaging across a variety of public and private sector organisations, as well as charitable and community groups. A multitude of issues relate to local authorities and Rights of Way, highways tourism promotion, rural economic development, digital/broadband take up, and business support that require greater focus on CCWWD specific needs where they impact on visitors and businesses in the visitor economy.
- Draw in leading local landowners, the National Trust, and numerous independent businesses and other organisations that should inform these local visitor economy agendas
- Develop several local areas of visitor economy clusters, with groups of businesses and community organisations working together in areas such as:
 - the Cranborne Chase/ Sixpenny Handley area
 - along the settlements of the Ebbel/Chalke valley
 - around Tisbury and the villages in the Vale of Wardour
 - along the Wylde Valley
 - and across the scattered communities of the northern West Wiltshire Downs
- Develop one or two pilot schemes, working with cluster of local businesses, to build a greater sense of a destination, enhancing packaging, promotion, cross-selling of attractions and places to eat, including local loyalty voucher/ discount scheme. Potentially at a central location, such as Tisbury and the villages in the Vale of Wardour, to draw visitors into the central area of the AONB, to then spread out
- Pockets of clustered activities, packages and businesses collaborating will require dedicated time and nurturing, aiming to bring out local champions to work up small scale initiatives that can in some cases seek additional external funding
- Increased collaboration between businesses such as riding stables, cycle shops and local food and drink producers that can be packaged with accommodation venues and local visitor attractions to encourage visitors to make the most of the outdoors
- Linkages to marketing and business support services across the local authorities and tourism partnerships should be maintained and strengthened
- Examination should be made of the role of key facilities such as roadside and village pubs. There are examples across the country of local schemes such as “Pub is the Hub” www.pubisthehub.org.uk/, revitalising rural pubs and their local communities where clustering activity at such venues helps to not only sustain the pub, but provide wider services that support community needs and help visitors get more from the area. Pub is the Hub has formed successful partnerships with regional development agencies, local authorities, rural community councils and other public and private sector organisations.

Examples include walking trails from local pubs, visitor information being distributed and some pubs diversifying into accommodation, bike hire and servicing and other activities

- Undertake a detailed business survey to better understand their needs, building on the consultation that informed this strategy. A telephone research exercise to businesses in and adjacent to the AONB would allow deeper understanding of how best to support them and the visitor economy.

Action Plan for Strategic Theme

Strategic Theme A: Working with Others - Developing Business Clusters and Broadening Partnerships	Priority High Medium Low	Timescale Yr 1 Yr2-3 Yr4-5	Cost <£5k £5-10k £10-£25k £25k+	Partners/Lead (lead in bold)
Strengthen working relations with public sector colleagues for visitor economy issues	H	Yr1, ongoing	Minimal, based on time and relations	AONB , DCC, WC, Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest, Defra, etc
Strengthen working relations with private sector for visitor economy issues	H	Yr1, ongoing	Minimal, based on time and relations	AONB , private sector, estate managers, NT, EH
Develop several local areas of visitor economy clusters	H	Yr 1	<£5k	AONB , parish councils, DCC/WC
Develop one or two pilot schemes	H	Yr 1, ongoing	£5-10k	AONB , parish councils, DCC/WC
Increased collaboration between businesses, form packages	H	Yr 1	Minimal, based on time and relations	Private sector , AONB, Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest
Link to local authority marketing and business support services	M-H	Yr 1	Minimal, based on time and relations	AONB, Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest
Explore and develop 'Pub is the Hub' partnerships	M-H	Yr2-3	Minimal, based on time and relations	AONB , DCC, WC, Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest
Detailed telephone based business survey	M	Yr2-3	<£5k	AONB

Key to partners – for all Strategic Themes Action Plans:

AONB – CCWWD AONB Team DCC – Dorset County Council Dest Dorset – Destination Dorset
 EH – English Heritage HCC – Hampshire County Council NT – National Trust
 New Forest Tm – New Forest Tourism Association WC – Wiltshire Council Visit Wilts – Visit Wiltshire

604. Strategic Theme B: Improve Marketing, Communication & Information

Key Actions:

- Improve marketing and communication of the AONB within the existing destination marketing led by Wiltshire, Dorset and New Forest. This should be a prime activity, as the AONB Partnership is not set up to act as a tourism promoter. The AONB team needs to regularly keep contact with the tourism teams, in order to keep the key messages about the AONB up to date
- Build on the existing layers of information by improving the awareness of where the AONB lies, what is special about it and what there is to see and experience require. Local communication should make best use of the AONB's The Hart newspaper as well as local commercial press and radio
- New elements should be created as a package; such as a more comprehensive website, redesigned 'Our Outstanding Natural Playground' leaflet with clearer listings of all places to see and things to do, and a coordinated distribution of this leaflet and others to accommodation venues and visitor attractions in and around the AONB
- Supply more comprehensive local visitor information by enhancing the AONB's website role, creating a comprehensive visitor micro-site. This should take the essence of the existing functions, particularly 'Discover the Area' section and build on this
- The website would link in with existing accommodation databases provided by Visit Wiltshire and Visit Dorset, it is too complex to create and maintain a stand-alone live database of establishments. However, as the tourism bodies use 'inspected only', this will exclude large volumes of bedstock, so a section of alternative accommodation providers may be necessary, caveated by the fact that they are non-accredited
- More detail on places to visit, things to do, what's on and events as well as links within the site to downloadable trails, maps, and audio tours as podcasts would bring the area to life in a more visitor friendly manner, whilst ensuring close linkages with the visitor sites particularly in Wiltshire and Dorset
- The AONB visitor micro-site should be cross-linked with the visitor websites of the surrounding lead destinations – Wiltshire, Dorset and the New Forest, and the organisation should ensure that it is better understood by these tourism organisations
- 'Welcome' border signs on the main roads at the entry points into the AONB would help local people and visitors to better appreciate where they are and raise awareness of the landscape
- Develop information and interpretation panels at key hubs, such as the main villages of Cranborne, Sixpenny Handley, Hindon, Tisbury, East Knoyle and key attraction car parks and main pubs. This helps to orientate visitors and inform them about the local area, its character and what there is to see and do. Local information maps of areas around hub

villages and places of interest, with footpaths, and bridleways, locations to visit, interesting routes, and places to eat and drink, as well as web links to AONB main visitor information

- Leaflet copies, along with other local literature to be made available from hub Local Information Points such as Post offices, village shops, libraries and websites. Seek appropriate small scale grant funding, with local business sponsorship to make this happen
- Generate better understanding of the customer through market intelligence to support decision making – there is a need for visitor surveys of existing visitors across the area, as well as to explore the attitudes of non-visitors in the surrounding market towns.

Action Plan for Strategic Theme

Strategic Theme B: Improve Marketing, Communication & Information	Priority High Medium Low	Timescale Yr 1 Yr2-3 Yr4-5	Cost <£5k £5-10k £10-£25k £25k+	Partners/Lead (lead in bold)
Improve marketing and communication of the AONB within existing partner destination marketing activity	H	Yr1, ongoing	<£5k Also free with good relations	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest Tm
Local communication strengthened using AONB's The Hart newspaper and local commercial press and radio	H	Yr1, ongoing	Minimal, based on time and relations	AONB , private sector, estate managers, NT, EH
Redesign 'Our Outstanding Natural Playground' leaflet and coordinated distribution	M	Yr 2-3	<£5k	AONB
Enhance the AONB's website, creating a comprehensive visitor micro-site	H	Yr 1	<£5k	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest Tm
Create downloadable trails, maps, and audio tours as podcasts	H	Yr 1	<£5k	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest Tm
'Welcome' border signs on the main roads at entry points	M-L	Yr2-3	£10-£25k	AONB , WC, DCC, HCC
Develop information and interpretation panels at key hubs, say 10no.	L	Yr4-5	£10-£25k	AONB , WC, DCC, parish councils
Leaflets and display racks for local information hubs, with local info and trails, say 6no.	M	Yr2-3	£5-10k	AONB , WC, DCC, HCC, parish councils
Visitor surveys of existing visitors and non-visitors in the surrounding market towns	M	Yr2-3	£10-£25k	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest Tm

605. Strategic Theme C: Extending the Length of Visit and Season

Key Actions:

- Encourage overnight visits of several nights, to explore the area, and use it as a base for visiting other locations beyond the borders. Develop concept as the area being a central location to explore out from. Such stays contribute more to the economy than day visits, and can encourage non-car based activity during visits
- Make use of the range of events, festivals and seasonal variations in the character of the landscape to generate short breaks throughout the year, with shoulder season and off-peak visits not adding pressure to peak summer time congestion
- Promote self catering sector with longer stays which generate high value spend into the local economy. There is evidence from the self catering sector that the visiting season is longer in this area than in Devon and Cornwall, a factor associated with the relative proximity to London and large markets
- Make more of the 'less than 2 hours from London' message to get out into a haven of rural space. This approach can enable development of autumn and winter short break packages, benefiting local businesses.

Action Plan for Strategic Theme

Strategic Theme C: Extending the Length of Visit and Season	Priority	Timescale	Cost	Partners/Lead (lead in bold)
	High Medium Low	Yr 1 Yr2-3 Yr4-5	<£5k £5-10k £10-£25k £25k+	
Encourage overnight visits of several nights, promote the area being a central location to explore out from	H	Yr1, ongoing	<£5k	AONB, Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts , New Forest
Use range of events, festivals and seasonal variations to promote shoulder season and off-peak visits	H	Yr1, ongoing	<£5k	AONB, Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts , New Forest
Promote self catering sector and longer breaks	H	Yr1, ongoing	<£5k	AONB, Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts , New Forest
Promote 'less than 2 hours from London' message	M	Yr2-3	<£5k	AONB, Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts , New Forest

606. Strategic Theme D: Making more of Walking Opportunities

Key Actions:

- Bring together the breadth of existing local and longer distance trail routes, including extension to Ridgeway, as well as circular routes and linear trails passing through the AONB. Create a set of easy to access trails, including web links to existing online resources, as downloadable and some printed trails. Production and distribution costs need to be low as local authority budgets are diminishing
- Create enhanced visitor information, or new routes that enable visitors to come into contact with villages, shops, pubs and attractions, in order to provide them with refreshment opportunities, and to benefit the local businesses
- Generate new themed circular trails that can link to the natural environment, appreciation of the landscape, heritage areas, church trails, food and drink related routes, literary trails etc. Use rural sustainable development funds, community projects and other private sector contribution; brought together to put information and leaflets together and make them available on websites
- Encourage more accommodation establishments to take up 'Walkers Welcome' accreditation, to the point that the area is seen as offering an adequate volume of such business, along with trails and transport, that it can proactively promote walking holidays in lifestyle and tourism guides
- Work with existing package walking holiday companies to increase the number of routes, frequency of holidays, or venues to stop at across the area. These will require luggage transfer and collaboration with willing accommodation establishments
- Existing community groups and walking societies should be involved to provide 'outreach' work, potentially building an AONB volunteer group supporting the local authority countryside and rights of way teams; such as assisting with adopting routes, footpath clearing and basic maintenance and reporting signage problems.

Action Plan for Strategic Theme

Strategic Theme D: Making more of Walking Opportunities	Priority	Timescale	Cost	Partners/Lead (lead in bold)
	High Medium Low	Yr 1 Yr2-3 Yr4-5	<£5k £5-10k £10-£25k £25k+	
Bring together the breadth of existing local and longer distance trail routes	M	Yr2-3	Time more than finances	AONB , DCC, WC, Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest
Create enhanced visitor information to support routes to local villages, shops, pubs and attractions	M	Yr2-3	Time more than finances	AONB , DCC, WC, Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest

Generate new themed circular route trails	L	Yr4-5	<£5k	AONB , parish councils, DCC/WCC
Encourage accommodation establishments to take up 'Walkers Welcome' accreditation	M	Yr2-3	<£5k	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest Tm
Work with existing package walking holiday companies to increase presence of AONB	M	Yr2-3	Yr4-5	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest Tm
Develop existing community groups and walking societies into volunteer support for local Rights of Way network	M-L	Yr4-5	Yr4-5	New Forest, DCC, WC, AONB

607. Strategic Theme E: Strengthen the Relationships with Surrounding Market Towns

Key Actions:

- Develop stronger partnerships with the eight market and heritage towns and city of Salisbury. The AONB partners should maximise efforts to communicate effectively with the towns, with Tourist Information Centres (TICs), accommodation providers, and visitor centres to make them more familiar with the AONB as a destination
- The AONB partners to provide familiarisation trips for TIC staff and visitor enterprises from the towns, by coach, out into the AONB. Also to hold 'outreach' sessions in the towns to explain about the AONB to the trade. These urban ambassadors can then better share their knowledge with visitors and offer insight to help them consider visiting the AONB during a trip, and better appreciate their visit into the countryside
- Create set of 'pop-up' temporary display panels about the AONB that can be put up in the local towns and used as promotional and interpretive 'tasters' to encourage local residents and visitors in the towns out into the AONB. These could be themed and related to the key messages about the AONB, and be used in museums, TICs, supermarkets, shopping streets, leisure centres, etc.
- Promote role of the market towns act as gateways generating public transport access into the AONB and helping via Tourist Information Centres. Local residents and touring visitors can use these locations to find out more about what there is to see and do, including temporary special events across the AONB
- Encourage the local museums in the surrounding towns that provide the access to heritage - interpretation and artefacts – to adequately cover the AONB, its landscape and society, and the historic sites and monuments lying across the AONB.
- For those on self catering holidays, the towns naturally provide the main supermarket facilities, however where a 'buy local produce' message is promoted, there are practical benefits to both urban and rural suppliers and outlets for residents and visitors.

Action Plan for Strategic Theme

Strategic Theme E: Strengthen the Relationships with Surrounding Market Towns	Priority High Medium Low	Timescale Yr 1 Yr2-3 Yr4-5	Cost <£5k £5-10k £10-£25k £25k+	Partners/Lead (lead in bold)
Develop stronger partnerships with the eight market and heritage towns and city of Salisbury	H	Yr1 ongoing	Time more than finances	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest
Provide familiarisation trips for TIC staff and visitor enterprises from the towns. Also hold 'outreach' sessions in the towns	H	Yr2-3	<£5k	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest
Create set of 'pop-up' temporary display panels	H	Yr2-3	<£5k	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest
Promote role of the market towns act as gateways generating public transport access	H	Yr2-3	Time more than finances	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest
Encourage the local museums in the surrounding towns to adequately cover the AONB	L	Yr4-5	<£5k	AONB , WC, DCC, HCC
Promote 'buy local produce' message in towns, supporting links to the producers in the AONB	M	Yr2-3	<£5k	AONB , WC, DCC, HCC

608. Strategic Theme F: Strengthening Arts, Culture, Events and Festivals

Key Actions:

- Use the broad range of cultural activities that already take place across the AONB as a means of encouraging visitors to come to the area, and be exposed to the character of the AONB. The current range of small to mid sized music festivals indicate that new audiences can be drawn into the area.
- Support events such as the Wood Fair and Chalke Valley History Festival to build stronger local linkages with businesses and be tailored to reflect the locality. Work with organisers to tie the events in with the local sense of place
- Build on existing arts – through live music, performance, creative maker/ designers and the significant efforts of the Wylde Arts Trail to grow the reputation of the area as offering creativity and culture in the countryside, tying in with regional and national arts festivals – and use these strengths in promotions

- There is a need to ensure that the limited range of accommodation businesses are fully integrated into events, and additional capacity can be opened up, perhaps with formal and informal camping/caravanning sites using farms
- Develop a festival of archaeology – linked into national Council for British Archaeology (CBA) Festival of British Archaeology, annual heritage events lasting for a fortnight each July. The AONB has had a first successful year of such activities in 2011 - building on examples such as a guided walk around Cranborne Chase visiting the sites of Pitt Rivers, and a day Seminar on the Archaeology and History of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs led by the AONB Historic Environment Action Plan project
- Create an AONB wide Walking Festival, linking some existing activities, as well as developing a series of themed walks, led by guides. Nationally, walking festivals are growing in popularity and numbers, with events across counties, districts, AONBs etc across the country. They attract regular and irregular walkers, and are often packaged with local accommodation, recommended pubs and places to eat, which help make contribution to varied aspects of local communities
- An initial small scale AONB Walking Festival could link in with the area development clusters and be trialled in one area, rather than AONB wide. Learning from this, building links and encouraging more walk leaders, and accommodation establishments would enable a programme to be developed over two or three years
- Work with event organisers to encourage visitors to festivals and events to stay longer before or after the event, by providing additional local visitor information with booking information, working with host organisations to promote the AONB as a destination.

Action Plan for Strategic Theme

Strategic Theme F: Strengthening Arts, Culture, Events and Festivals	Priority High Medium Low	Timescale Yr 1 Yr2-3 Yr4-5	Cost <£5k £5-10k £10-£25k £25k+	Partners/Lead (lead in bold)
Use the broad range of cultural activities that take place across the AONB as a means of encouraging visitors to come to the area	M	Yr1 ongoing	<£5k	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest
Ensure that the limited range of accommodation businesses are fully integrated into events, and additional capacity can be opened up	M	Yr2-3	Time more than finances	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest, private sector
Encourage events to build strong local linkages with businesses and be tailored to reflect the locality	M	Yr2-3	Time more than finances	AONB , event organisers

Develop new opportunities including a festival of archaeology	M	Yr1 ongoing	<£5k	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest
Create an AONB wide Walking Festival	M	Yr2-3	<£5k	AONB , WC, DCC, HCC
Work with event organisers to encourage visitors to festivals and events to stay longer	M	Yr2-3	<£5k	AONB, event organisers , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest

609. Strategic Theme G: Celebrate the Natural Landscape and Cultural Heritage

Key Actions:

- Ensure that all communications, marketing and visitor information reinforce the identity of the AONB and its special landscape character that provide the setting for visits. Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs is primarily an outdoor destination with millennia of human activity shaping the landscape
- Focus on key messages based around the key interpretive themes that have been identified by the AONB Partnership for the historic Cranborne Chase heartland, and which are generally relevant across most of the AONB. These can influence market positioning, explaining what is special about the AONB as a whole, to encourage visitors to want to make a visit and to get a deeper appreciation of the area. This includes:
 - A wealth of accessible prehistoric and Roman sites
 - Being a playground for medieval kings and nobles
 - An area characterised by large estates and important families in history
 - The birthplace of modern archaeology through the work of Pitt Rivers
 - Outstanding landscape quality based on chalk grassland, ancient woodland, long distance views and special biodiversity
 - An inspirational landscape for poetry, prose, drama and music
 - A landscape characterised by attractive small villages and hamlets with a rural community that is responding to the challenge of the 21st century
 - A modern landscape facing up to new challenges through development pressure, changing lifestyles, transportation, the globalisation of agriculture and climate change
- Engage with rural tourism marketing campaigns delivered by Destination Dorset, Visit Wiltshire, VisitEngland and others in order to place CCWWD into the public eye as an outdoor location to consider visiting. Promote the four seasons to encourage repeat visits at other times of the year

- Explore opportunities to promote key thematic strengths such as game sports, shooting and fishing, dark skies for astronomy and autumn/winter breaks in order to support rural economies during the quieter seasons.

Action Plan for Strategic Theme

Strategic Theme G: Celebrate the Natural Landscape and Cultural Heritage	Priority High Medium Low	Timescale Yr 1 Yr2-3 Yr4-5	Cost <£5k £5-10k £10-£25k £25k+	Partners/Lead (lead in bold)
Ensure all communications, marketing and visitor information reinforce the identity of the AONB and its special landscape character	H	Yr1 ongoing	Time more than finances	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest Tm, private sector
Focus on key messages based around the key interpretive themes	H	Yr1 ongoing	Time more than finances	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest Tm, private sector
Engage with rural tourism marketing campaigns by Destination Dorset, Visit Wiltshire, VisitEngland and others	M-H	Yr2-3	£5-10k	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest Tm, private sector
Explore opportunities to promote key thematic strengths such as game sports, shooting and fishing, and dark skies for astronomy	M-H	Yr2-3	£5-10k	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest Tm, private sector

610. Strategic Theme H: Develop the Interpretation of the Natural Landscape and Heritage

Key Actions:

- Undertake an AONB wide interpretive plan, to set costed proposals for telling the stories of the area more comprehensively and that are made more accessible to visitors and residents
- Use future funding opportunities such as the Heritage Lottery Fund to support local interpretation schemes across the AONB – providing physical media (leaflets, interpretive panels, etc. at key locations, such as car parks and settlements) as well as online resources, downloadable materials, podcasts and audio tours from the AONB website. Provision can also be made from land managing estates both privately owned and by the National Trust, as well as guided walks and talks by countryside and heritage organisations
- Build closer links between the Countryside services of the local authorities and the AONB Partnership should generate more readily accessible material, to provide more year round interpretation for visitors

- There should be greater efforts to promote the heritage landscape as an asset (with over 550 Scheduled Ancient Monuments of all ages). In isolation, the majority of sites are not high profile and not seen as being in the ‘big monument’ visitor number league of Stonehenge and Avebury. However, as historic monuments, many are extremely important and are significant to archaeology and the understanding of human occupation of this landscape
- There is an opportunity to promote the remoteness and groupings of types of monuments in the landscape; from the more obvious prehistoric hillforts to ‘lumps and bumps’ over the millennia, as well as churches and old village environments. All have a special character, in keeping with the tranquillity of the area – the sites are not overwhelmed by visitors and provide a sense of place that is lost in congested locations
- Develop shared stories and messages about all aspects of the AONB from prehistory to World War II. The AONB’s Historic Environment Action Plan Implementation Group plan to do more of this giving more access to the key stories/messages.

Action Plan for Strategic Theme

Strategic Theme H: Develop the Interpretation of the Natural Landscape and Heritage	Priority	Timescale	Cost	Partners/Lead (lead in bold)
	High Medium Low	Yr 1 Yr2-3 Yr4-5	<£5k £5-10k £10-£25k £25k+	
Undertake an AONB wide interpretive plan	M	Yr2-3	£5-10k	AONB , NT, EH, landowners
Present the AONB’s stories through a range of resources, onsite and downloads	M	Yr2-3	£25k+	AONB , NT, EH, private sector
Build closer links between the Countryside services of the local authorities and the AONB	H	Yr1 ongoing	Time more than finances	AONB , WC, DCC, HCC
Promote the heritage, remoteness and groupings of archaeological monuments	L-M	Yr2-3	<£5k	Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest

611. Strategic Theme I: Maximise Local Distinctiveness of the Rural Destination

Key Actions:

- Host seminars and promote businesses to take up The Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS) www.green-business.co.uk. This is the leading sustainable tourism certification scheme, now the only certification scheme validated by Visit Britain. There are very few GTBS accredited businesses across the AONB compared to many more in other areas of the South West (particularly southern Dorset, Devon, Cornwall)

- Subsidise local CCWWD businesses to take part in GTBS and become accredited to assist business performance, fitting well with the eco-attitude of the area, and creating a niche market association with the AONB for potential visitors. Being able to promote the area as a strongly 'green' location would add to its perception
- Actively promote and subsidise accommodation quality accreditation across all levels seeking to increase the number of quality accredited overnight accommodation establishments. Liaising between business clusters, local destination managers and existing participants, more businesses could be encouraged to become accredited, again improving the perception of the area in offering a quality visit
- Develop astronomy weekends and night wildlife safaris can be developed in Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs. Tranquility and dark skies have stood out as a key feature of the area, linked to its sparsely populated landscape. The tranquility offers specific opportunity for some visitors to absolutely get away from it all. Indeed the AONB could take inspiration from previous marketing campaigns by both Visit Wales and Visit Switzerland that relate to the poor mobile phone coverage and the ability to get away from it all and be undisturbed (Appendix E). Dark skies are seen as an asset in Northumberland, with an observatory and farm houses promoting sky watching short breaks in the National Park
- Embrace the concept of 'Slow Tourism'. This area of the country, based around small scale, local, independent and with distinctiveness rooted in the character of the area fits the slow tourism ethos. This growing European movement, with dozens of towns and small areas, focuses on the authentic, with tourism being immersed in real communities and spending on businesses using local products and experiences
- Develop more of the existing strong position of local food and drink production, with artisan products and quality catering. Food and drink trails to discover producers, encouraging use of local supplies in pubs, tea rooms, visitor attractions catering, etc. provides the chance for visitors to immerse themselves in the area. Creation of a comprehensive where to eat/drink guide and directory
- Similarly, develop crafts tourism support and packages. The depth of skills by local crafts makers, artists and those involved in traditional rural skills offers more opportunity for visitors to experience a real environment fast in decline elsewhere. This could include accommodation based packages 'having a go' at recreational crafts under skilled tutors, as well as building on events such as the biennial WoodFair, Dorset Centre for Rural Skills and Cranborne Ancient Technology Centre
- Linking up the existing range of arts and crafts trails, with completion of gaps, would enable the AONB and the visitor website to provide a more comprehensive coverage of what there is to see and do in the area, and support local businesses. Consider discount vouchers for those in accommodation to encourage local visits and tasters
- Other sustainable activities, rooted in local knowledge would include the guided and self guided walking holidays, and 'safaris' travelling the drove roads, all lead by enthusiastic local

people. These local guides should be offered training and skills development with employment opportunities for others to join. Support Welcome to Excellence customer care training courses, delivered locally to clusters

Action Plan for Strategic Theme

Strategic Theme I: Maximise Local Distinctiveness of the Rural Destination	Priority High Medium Low	Timescale Yr 1 Yr2-3 Yr4-5	Cost <£5k £5-10k £10-£25k £25k+	Partners/Lead (lead in bold)
Host seminars and promote businesses to take up Green Tourism Business Scheme	M	Yr2-3	<£5k	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest
Subsidise local CCWWD businesses to take part in GTBS and become accredited	M	Yr2-3	<£5k	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest
Actively promote and subsidise accommodation quality accreditation	M	Yr2-3	<£5k	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest
Develop astronomy weekends and night wildlife safaris	L-M	Yr4-5	<£5k	AONB, private sector Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest
Embrace the concept of 'Slow Tourism'	M	Yr2-3	<£5k	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest
Develop more with local food and drink, trails, guides, events	M	Yr2-3	£5-10k	AONB, private sector
Develop crafts tourism support, trails, and packages	M	Yr2-3	<£5k	AONB, private sector
Local Welcome to Excellence customer care training courses, delivered locally to clusters	M	Yr2-3	<£5k	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest

612. Strategic Theme J: Encourage Creative Approaches to Sustainable Transport

Key Actions:

- Carry out a review of car parking and traffic congestion issues in order to determine a formal response to the problem in the main villages, countryside sites and attractions. Survey number of spaces, locations where parking is under pressure and dates in the year when this is an issue. Then consider if it is appropriate to consider forms of small scale off road parking at seasonal hot spots, alterations to access points or a need to support alternative travel arrangements
- Support those in the visitor economy who, whilst wanting to keep the area tranquil, seek to bring in additional business and visitors. Work on schemes to minimise potential increases

in traffic during periods of greater visits (such as summer weekends, festivals and bank holidays)

- Encourage visitors to key gateways, including the railway station at Tisbury, as well as nearby Gillingham and Salisbury to reduce car borne visitors. Then direct them out into the local area, including by use of local buses and cycle hire, as well as accommodation providers picking visitors up, with ready-made arrival packages of transport, directions, trails and places to eat/ stay
- Working with local bus companies, creating visitor friendly routes, connections and driver familiarity could help to increase use, which will benefit local residents by sustaining routes. Certain routes may be promoted as named 'visitor lines' with hop on/hop off tickets including key attractions. Explore use of Local Transport Plan for the constituent counties and Rural Development Plan as collaborative funding opportunity on the basis that any visitor initiatives will benefit local people and businesses
- The network of Rights of Way (RoW) offers great opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding, often providing totally different perspectives on the landscape. Promote use of the RoW network as a key element of rural exploration
- Support guided 'safaris' to give the public an impression of exploration, with local landowners driving visitors across estates and along driveways, interpreting the landscape. Examples of this already take place. There are complex insurance and packing logistics to this that would need to be examined, but which could then be shared across several businesses.

Action Plan for Strategic Theme

Strategic Theme J: Encourage Creative Approaches to Sustainable Transport	Priority High Medium Low	Timescale Yr 1 Yr2-3 Yr4-5	Cost <£5k £5-10k £10-£25k £25k+	Partners/Lead (lead in bold)
Carry out a review of car parking and traffic congestion issues in order to determine a formal response	H	Yr1,	£5-10k	AONB , DCC, WC, HCC
Support schemes to minimise potential increases in traffic during periods of greater visits	H	Yr2-3	£10-£25k	AONB , private sector, estate managers, NT, EH
Encourage visitors to key gateways, including the railway stations	M	Yr2-3	<£5k	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts
Working with local bus companies, creating visitor friendly routes, connections and driver familiarity	M	Yr2-3	<£5k	AONB , DCC/WC, bus operators

Promote use of the RoW network as a key element of rural exploration	H	Yr 1	<££5-10k	AONB , DCC, WC, Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest, landowners
Support guided 'safaris'	M-H	Yr 1	Minimal, time and relations	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest, private sector

613. Strategic Theme K: Encourage Cycling Opportunities

Key Actions:

- Undertake cycle tourism study to look at existing routes, circuits, trails, facilities provided, current cyclists and the key markets. Consult with cyclists, individual, clubs and facility providers to identify growth opportunities and needs for intervention
- Agree target groups for cycling tourism to prioritise, using existing research such as in Wales¹⁰. The target markets and needs vary between segments, with on and off road uses attracting different types of cyclists:
 - Novice/irregular cyclists on holiday – shorter routes under 15km, half day, activity on holiday, prefer traffic free or gentle mountain biking, will hire or use own bikes
 - Novice/irregular cyclist attracted by a gentle cycling holiday package offer - couples/small groups of friends/ families with older children. Undemanding terrain, 25-40km a day, some off-road, places to stop. Accommodation, evening meal, cycle hire and luggage transfer
 - Irregular or more regular cyclists exploring an area - couples/ small groups of friends, occasional families with older children. Attracted by a named route on-road and surfaced traffic free trails, but also use off-road forest tracks, bridleways. Will hire or use own bikes
 - Experienced cyclists, seeking to travel on a touring holiday - small groups of friends (predominantly male), some couples. Use own bikes, good level of fitness. Mainly on-road but enjoy off-road sections. Happy to climb and tackle 55-100+km a day
 - Mountain bike owners using their bikes only irregularly off-road - groups of friends and singles (more likely male), occasional couples. Combining break or short holiday with off-road. Have a go but uncertain of own capabilities. Use managed trails
 - Regular mountain biker making repeat visits to near-to-home sites - enjoy regular activity, pretty proficient and reasonably fit. Try out new sites and trails with new challenges, prepared to travel. Mainly bring own bikes but may hire. Day visitor but may stay one night
 - Dedicated mountain biker seeking increasingly demanding trails - motivated by the technical quality, demands and reputation of a built trail, rather than by location.

¹⁰ Selecting the Right Gear, The Tourism Company for Visit Wales, 2009

Will travel some distance but requires frequent access to nearer to home sites. Has own bike

- Cycling event participants - includes road racing, on and off road endurance events and specialist competition with elite competitive riders. High level of fitness and capability. More likely male. Use temporary camping facilities and mainstream accommodation
- Secure partnership funding for a part time project co-ordinator and package of works to enhance the existing infrastructure for cycle tourism and fill gaps
- Identify key safe, well designed routes which meet cyclists requirements; segregated from highways or on quiet roads where traffic is minimal, bringing together existing and developing new well sign-posted or way-marked routes
- Create publicity and information in web and print format explaining the area and identifying facilities, refreshment outlets, cycle hire and repair service, etc. Work with existing and potential cycle-friendly accommodation, developing more Cyclist Welcome accredited establishments for overnight guests
- Highlight gateway sites within the AONB, and outside such as Moors Valley Country Park which provide support and starting points for circular trails. Make links with public transport for arrival access (eg bus and train stops and timetables).

Action Plan for Strategic Theme

Strategic Theme K: Encourage Cycling Opportunities	Priority	Timescale	Cost	Partners/Lead (lead in bold)
	High Medium Low	Yr 1 Yr2-3 Yr4-5	<£5k £5-10k £10-£25k £25k+	
Commission cycle tourism study to identify current situation and develop strategy	M	Yr2-3	£5-10k	AONB , DCC, WC, Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest
Develop package of works, agree target groups, identify routes, improvements, trail literature/downloads, signage	M	Yr2-3	£25k+	AONB , DCC, WC private sector

614. Strategic Theme L: Develop an Equestrian Tourism Destination

Key Actions:

- A more detailed scoping exercise should be carried out to examine the opportunity in more detail across CCWWD AONB. This should examine the volume and nature of service provided by equestrian centres, their views on local routes and infrastructure and the attitude towards developing visitors
- Identify the most realistic market opportunities, for day or overnight equestrian tourism. DEFRA categorise horse-related holidays under several broad headings, with differing needs for the type of holiday, and with some visitors bringing their own horses, requiring secure stabling and accommodation, while others hire the local horses and any tuition:
 - Riding as an ancillary holiday activity – riding is not central to the holiday experience, it is an activity undertaken at some time in the break
 - Pony trekking holidays – perhaps the most popular form, the activity forms the main purpose of the holiday
 - Trail riding – long distance circular rides for experienced riders, using both their own or hired horses
 - Specialist holidays – for people wanting to learn riding from scratch, or for more accomplished riders wanting to develop a particular skill
 - Horse B&B – stabling and/or grazing is provided for horses often alongside accommodation for the riders. Accommodation may be a base for several circular trail rides or a stop off on a long distance route.
- Develop the strongest strands of equestrian tourism, with a lead coordinator and seeking specific funding support. The human and horse needs must be equally considered in any developments and packages, and this sector has requirements in catering as use of pubs/village shops along the route may not be practical
- Support business investment grant funding scheme. Similar to cyclists and walkers, horse riders require circular bridleway routes, clear trail maps, secure storage and welcoming hosts, as well as interesting places to visit along the route.

Action Plan for Strategic Theme

Strategic Theme L: Develop an Equestrian Tourism Destination	Priority High Medium Low	Timescale Yr 1 Yr2-3 Yr4-5	Cost <£5k £5-10k £10-£25k £25k+	Partners/Lead (lead in bold)
Commission scoping exercise to examine the opportunity and consult venues, reviewing routes	L-M	Yr2-3	<£5k	AONB , DCC, WC, Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest, DCC, WC, Defra, etc

Identify the most realistic market opportunities, develop strands, with a lead coordinator and funding	L-M	Yr4-5	£5-10k	AONB , private sector, estate managers, NT, EH
Support business investment grant funding scheme	L-M	Yr4-5	£10-£25k	AONB , parish councils, DCC/WC

615. Strategic Theme M: Growing the Profile of Accommodation Establishments

Key Actions:

- The AONB Team should seek to encourage accommodation businesses to undertake entry level local quality accreditation or full AA/VisitEngland accreditation and become listed in the main visitor guides. AONB should not aim to set up an alternative directory or online accommodation guide
- A comprehensive accommodation guide to the area is needed to make it easier for visitors to see the full range of opportunities across the area. This should be supported and hosted by the destination management partnerships in Dorset, Wiltshire and New Forest, but not maintained by the AONB
- Work with self catering operators and leading booking agencies to gain a higher profile and easier to access information. The self catering sector has limited direct exposure on websites, but tends to focus on a small number of booking agency companies – eg Hideaways, and Cottages 4 U. There are many properties, but they do not have a clear local identity, due to ‘Cranborne Chase’ not being considered as a destinations, as most directories are local county based
- The self catering sector needs to be highlighted more, and linked into local suppliers and activity providers as the visitor stays longer (3 or 4 nights) than the average B&B short break or day tripper. More opportunities are needed to communicate with the self catering cottage visitor (and to those camping and caravanning) as they are embedded into the rural area and generally are likely to consider ‘local’ options.
- Encourage rural businesses to consider setting up, expanding or converting establishments or buildings to supply greater range of high quality accommodation, and to liaise with the shooting estates to look to support high value visitor needs
- Support business investment grant funding scheme to improve facilities, provide for Cyclists Welcome etc.
- Explore opportunities for barn conversions to provide camping barns or similar as the area does not have cheap group accommodation such as youth hostels/camping barns as alternatives to campsites.

Action Plan for Strategic Theme

Strategic Theme M: Growing the Profile of Accommodation Establishments	Priority High Medium Low	Timescale Yr 1 Yr2-3 Yr4-5	Cost <£5k £5-10k £10-£25k £25k+	Partners/Lead (lead in bold)
Seek to encourage accommodation businesses to undertake entry level local quality accreditation or full AA/VisitEngland accreditation	H	Yr2-3	<£5k	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest,
Collate a comprehensive accommodation guide to the area	H	Yr 1	<£5k	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest,
Work with self catering operators and leading booking agencies to raise and easier to access information	M	Yr2-3	<£5k	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest, private sector
Encourage rural businesses to consider setting up, expanding or converting establishments or buildings	M	Yr2-3	Minimal, time and relations	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest
Explore opportunities for barn conversions to provide camping barns or similar	L-M	Yr4-5	Minimal, time and relations	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest
Support business scheme	L-M	Yr2-3	£10-£25k	AONB , Dest Dorset, Visit Wilts, New Forest

SECTION 7: MAKING IT HAPPEN

701. Taking the Strategy Forward

The strategy has not sought an approach of setting out a list of '101 projects' to be undertaken. However, it is clear that the dozen key Strategic Themes include many dozens of potential actions that will contribute to enhancing the visitor economy of Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs. Many are about relationships, raising the profile of the visitor economy and pressing more firmly for actions to benefit the local area. Taking this forward requires the AONB Team and key partners to focus on the key issues and increase their priority. **Although the AONB Team has been indicated as being the lead body on the majority of the activities in the action plan above, it is not realistic for the existing team to progress all these actions. Moving forward requires buy in to the strategy from partners, in order to secure their role in taking the lead on specific projects.** Using the action plan, partners should seek to implement the project recommendations, drawing in additional funds, and support from a broad range of those involved in the visitor economy, as well as drawing in new partners.

The AONB Team has some capacity to undertake more activity related to the visitor economy; aspects of the 'day job' already include writing funding applications, provision of website information, community communication, and event organisation. However, wider elements affecting the visitor economy set out in the action plan require dedicated staff time in order to make enough progress to drive projects forward. The team is not structured, tasked or funded to be an active tourism management and marketing organisation. The varied public and private sector partners already have differing degrees of involvement in the visitor economy, and it is those that have a direct vested interest that should be most supportive of taking the strategy forward.

702. Dedicated Staff Resource

The AONB Team alone does not have the capacity or all the technical skills to implement and deliver all the tasks set out in the strategy and action plan. The working partnerships with the two key Destination Management Partnerships (DMPs) of Destination Dorset and Visit Wiltshire are informal, not yet strong, but there are synergies and willingness for progression. In order to build on the momentum that the strategy is generating, it is recommended that a dedicated **Sustainable Visitor Economy Project Coordinator** post is created to coordinate and implement the priorities. Ideally, hosted by the AONB Partnership for two or three years, the post holder would develop a range of geographical clusters, business sector networks, marketing packages of activities and venues, undertaking product development and improved information and tourism communication.

Working alongside the AONB Team, and building links with the DMPs and countryside partner organisations, the Project Coordinator would have a key role in generating private sector support, to enable projects happen quickly that deliver returns to businesses and communities on the ground. They would assist the AONB Team make funding applications for capital and revenue projects and be the local face of the visitor economy.

Existing examples of such posts exist around the country, including in recent times, the marketing and development of Salisbury and South Wiltshire as a visitor destination. From the prioritised

actions, the postholder would coordinate activities across the destination and take forward the action plan of the visitor economy strategy. Appendix F sets out an example of a job description for a Sustainable Visitor Economy Project Development Coordinator.

A potential alternative or additional post could be funded through the Sowing SEEDS Leader+ scheme, during its remaining 2011-2013 programme. Exploration of support for such a post is progressing, potentially to support a **pilot local area cluster** of visitor economy activity based around the central Tisbury/Vale of Wardour area, located between the A303, A30 and A350.

Funding will be required, not only for a Coordinator salary (including on costs at around 20% to cover National Insurance, Pensions, etc), but also a programme budget in order to deliver revenue and capital project actions.

703. Prioritising Tasks and Seeking Funding

With only limited budgets and staffing, both within the AONB Team and partner organisations, it will be essential to seek additional funds in order to put a realistic package of support together. Funding opportunities are limited at a time when national and local programmes and budgets are being closed or reduced, including core funding from DEFRA and local authorities towards the AONB Team. Potential funds include:

- The **Leader+ Sowing SEEDS** programme for a project postholder and activity budget to work across the AONB and work with a pilot business cluster
- There are potential follow on project grants through **Natural England and DEFRA/ Rural Development Programme England**, which can support schemes such as the **AONB's Sustainable Development Fund**, which in turn could fund specific projects
- As a very rural area, lying across multiple authorities, there is a need to entwine the area into the emerging **Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)**, better articulating the specific needs of the AONB and its businesses. It will be important to use the rural tourism and community employment opportunities to engage in local economic development agendas with the LEPs. Local businesses, Councillors and Officers should be calling for support towards actions that can generate employment across the highly rural AONB
- A number of the action plan recommendations can be brought forward by **collaborating with the public sector and existing budgets** and taking a co-ordinated approach to **engage local private sector businesses into contributing towards initiatives**, such as trail and package developments, where the local businesses are the ultimate beneficiaries
- The **Local Transport Plan** for each county could provide potential funding support towards some of the public transport and access initiatives
- A **local visitor economy development fund** should be considered, with financial support, and management interest from the private sector, match funding public sector grants. Leading businesses, landowners and employers engaged in the visitor economy would

directly fund into a project development pot. This would support action plan projects and provide match funding to draw down from external funding agencies. The set up would seek to avoid complex private-public sector partnership mechanism, whilst remaining transparent and for the benefit of the greater area, not individual funders

- Specific schemes can potentially tap into funding from other organisations such as the **Sports Council, Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund**; developing healthy, recreational, heritage and community benefiting projects, which can also attract and be used by visitors
- The proposals may not directly access, but can gain from the impetus of additional domestic **tourism marketing from VisitEngland**. A £3 million boost has been made from the Olympic budget to support VisitEngland's domestic tourism campaign in 2012, to ensure the full potential of the Olympics, the Diamond Jubilee, the Cultural Olympiad and all the events of 2012 are realised by the tourism sector across the country. A major joint marketing campaign with industry will promote stay in the UK tourism
- **VisitBritain** will also benefit from a further £27 million of funding to **help promote Britain in key overseas markets** to drive greater numbers of visitors to the country over the next four years. This initiative is part of the GREAT campaign to show the world that Britain is a great place to visit, to live, to invest and to do business with
- **VisitEngland** has successfully bid for additional funding from the **Regional Growth Fund (RGF)** to be used on a three-year project entitled, 'Growing Tourism Locally'. A key part of the project will be a national campaign aimed at inspiring Britons to take more short breaks and holidays at home and in doing so grow jobs in the tourism sector. Funding will be allocated to destination including Bath Tourism Plus. In addition to targeted activity in these areas there will be a series of thematic campaigns focusing on countryside, heritage, coastal and business tourism. It is important that Visit Wiltshire, Destination Dorset and New Forest Tourism ensure their activity in these campaigns encompass the AONB.

704. Keeping Communication with the Sector

Having begun a dialogue with businesses involved in the visitor economy, it will be extremely beneficial to maintain an ongoing relationship with them. Communication should focus on their interests as businesses managing the environment that visitors come into and delivering services and support to visitors. The Rural Economy strand of the AONB Partnership priorities clearly encompasses the visitor economy. Key Recommendations are:

- Existing resources such as 'The Hart' and AONB website already provide a level of communication with businesses and organisations, however, more effort should be made to directly liaise with the sector, and strengthen relations. It is recommended that an annual 'Tourism' Forum be held across the AONB to get businesses engaged and feed information back and forth. Local destination managers, the AONB, businesses and countryside organisations would share updates, best practice and engage businesses and communities

- Additionally, if resources can support, three or four local area events would be valuable within the recommended local clusters of Cranborne Chase/Sixpenny Handley, Tisbury and villages, Wylde Valley/northern Downs and Eble/Chalke Valleys
- Introductory meetings and developed relationships are needed between the AONB Project Coordinator and organisations such as Visit Wiltshire, Destination Dorset and Shaftesbury and District Tourism Association. These bodies have only limited perception of the AONB and managing team at present. Generally, they do not optimise the AONB as a destination within their tourism development and marketing activity
- An improved outward looking approach is essential from the AONB, making more of links with the wider destinations and market towns, particularly Salisbury, Shaftesbury and Wimborne Minster. This will counterbalance the internal focus on the designated AONB landscape, communities and businesses that is necessarily the lead for the AONB Team
- Ongoing communication with those engaged in the visitor economy takes place from a range of AONB staff and advisors, including planning, landscape and heritage advice. With potential interest growing from visitor economy businesses, it would be valuable to hold thematic workshops covering issues pertinent to the sector. Subjects may include conversion of properties for visitor businesses, increasing food and drink distribution and supply chains to outlets, impacts of visitors on heritage sites, arts and events advisers, etc.

705. Longer Term – Build Relations with other Protected Landscapes

The AONB Partnership has existing links with the neighbouring AONBs of Dorset and North Wessex Downs, as well as the New Forest National Park. Each has similar experiences of balancing visitor economy management, pressures, and marketing with sensitive landscapes and local communities. Meeting, listening and sharing experiences between these destinations can benefit CCWWD AONB.

In the South East Region, there is a new project underway with Rural Development Programme for England funding support for a sustainable tourism project over three years (2011-14). The South East Protected Landscapes (SEPL) project www.southeastprotectedlandscapes.com is based on developing sustainable tourism across the nine protected landscapes in the South East. These rural tourism experiences will put these landscapes at the heart of the tourist experience, contribute to the rural economy, and direct and indirectly support conservation.

The project comprises of working with businesses to complete the development of themed breaks and overnight visit options during 2011. It is also establishing unifying brand concepts and messages for the SEPL's programme of short breaks and developing and implementing a clear marketing strategy. In partnership with www.responsibletravel.com, a website/web platform is being created with associated marketing to generate bookings, and to manage marketing relationships with the tourism providers.

The scheme anticipates building more relations with other protected landscapes outside the South East as it evolves, and becomes self supporting after the initial funding period. As Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs lies partially in the South East and adjacent to the New Forest and close

to the North Wessex Downs, it will be valuable for the AONB Team to explore best practice learning and potential involvement in the scheme once it has settled down.

706. Improving Market Intelligence and Monitoring Strategy Progress

As with any package of activity, there is invariably a requirement to better understand aspects of the customer and business base. Within the action plan, three particular tasks are recommended:

- It has been noted how there is no comprehensive survey of visitors across the AONB; of their origins, demographic characteristics, preferences, desires for improvement, spend behaviour, etc. A dedicated **Visitor Survey**, across at least six months from April/Easter to October half term would provide insight into the variety of day and overnight visitors for leisure and visiting friends and relatives. Carried out by a market research agency, as a large scale face to face interview exercise, it could interview 800-1,000 people across the AONB, at commercial attractions, rural locations, events, villages and events
- In the surrounding market towns a **non-AONB visitor survey** would ask residents and visitors to the towns their awareness and attitude to the rural area of the AONB; their level of visiting into it, why/ why not, what puts them off trip taking. A survey of 400-500 people in up to eight towns would generate good insight from this immediate, easier to reach potential market
- In association with local economic development departments, business support and rural regeneration bodies, there would also be value in carrying out a comprehensive **Business Survey** of 150+ enterprises engaged in the visitor economy in and around the AONB. Elements of this have been touched on within the online stakeholder survey consultation supporting this strategy. However a more comprehensive approach, potentially undertaken as a telephone survey by a market research agency would be more useful to influence future planning.

Separately from the above market research is a need for monitoring progress with the strategy. Any successful funding applications are likely to require **Monitoring and Evaluating of the Impact** of the funding. This will need resourcing, setting baseline estimates of activity, and monitoring outputs from the delivery as well as how it has changed performance of businesses, and how it has benefited or influenced the local economy, environment, and people's attitudes.

Key tasks will include:

- Dedicate staff time to manage the programme delivery, monitoring progress of actions
- Monitor the budget and sub-contracted consultants
- Carry out quarterly/ annual reviews, project monitoring and accounting for impacts against any funder targets
- Manage relationships with other stakeholders, including local Councils, Destination Management Organisations, communities and businesses

- Monitor the effectiveness of improving communication with the visiting public and local communities/ businesses - satisfaction monitoring of businesses and organisations, including parish councils and public organisations
- Identifying which local area of the community have best and least engaged with the strategy
- Evaluating how the project was managed (including being to time and to budget) so that energy can be concentrated on those activities that are most important for bringing about change
- Evaluating the difference the project is making to heritage, the environment, employment, etc., and what that means for those who enjoy and benefit from it
- Identifying the difference the project is making for people who are directly and indirectly employed in tourism
- Evaluating the difference the project has made to the AONB organisation and the partner organisations worked with, and how it builds capacity to do things better
- Any other impacts on new businesses set up, businesses sustained, employment created, investment generated, business confidence, visitor satisfaction and community attitudes towards the visitor economy
- Reviews of what worked well, or did not, and why, sharing summary of any lessons learned for others to benefit from.

707. In Conclusion

Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is undoubtedly a well loved area by residents and visitors. It is host to a rich legacy of natural, cultural and historic gems, set within a landscape that has been lived in and worked for millennia and which provides the backdrop to many visitor activities today. A growing consensus supports the sensitive enhancement of the visitor economy, as it supports local jobs and provides services for local residents. Taking the action plan forward will balance the need to support local businesses and employment with the tranquility of the area and the quality of landscape that people live in. Many practical opportunities simply require greater partnership, coordination and collaboration to make more of existing businesses and visitors, by linking places, providers and products. New initiatives are based upon realistic levels of funding and support, using the potential for local and national funding programmes to generate fresh activities. A more outward looking and welcoming approach will encourage visitors, generate greater enjoyment, gain repeat business and help all to have a better appreciation in this special landscape.

APPENDICES

Appendix A Consultations

A breadth of consultations with public and private sector organisations has taken place. There has been an initial workshop exercise carried out with over 50 representatives from a range of organisations at the AONB's Annual Forum celebrating 30 years of the AONB designation. The follow on Stakeholder Workshop at Tisbury included some existing consultees and additional participants. A number of meetings including the AONB Partnership Panel Board, Rural Economy Group and Land Managers Advisory Forum considered and commented on the Draft Report.

Consultees:

Michael Mounde, Vice-Chairman AONB Partnership Panel, Chairman Warminster & Villages Development Trust

Steve Judd, Proprietor, Lee Money Penny, Church Farm Caravan and Camping Park, Sixpenny Handley Mark & Emmanuelle Hartstone, Proprietors La Fosse Guest House, Cranborne

David Shepherd, Chair Shaftesbury & District Tourism Association

Lindsay Lawrence, Manager, Wimborne Minster Tourist Information Centre

Keith Davies, Lead Volunteer, Shaftesbury & Gillingham Tourism Services, Shaftesbury

Nick Pash, Director, Hideaways Cottages, holiday letting agency, Shaftesbury

Emily Blanshard, Operations Manager /Acting General Manager, The National Trust, Stourhead

Jo Atkins, Marketing Consultant South West Region, The National Trust

Rachel Limb, Tourism Manager, East Dorset District Council

Nick Baumber, Tourism Coordinator, Visit Wiltshire

Cllr Richard Beattie, Portfolio Holder Tourism, Economic Development, Wiltshire County Council

Sue Lee, Proprietor, Greenbank B&B, Broadchalke

Jill Sutcliffe, Proprietor, Riverbarn Café and Guest House, Fonthill Bishop

Steve Preedy, Proprietor, Post Office and Stores, Sixpenny Handley

Sally Hughes, Manager, Wardour Old Castle, English Heritage

Jamie, Manager and Sam, Reservations Manager, The Museum Inn, Farnham

Janet Amos, Tisbury Post Office, Parish Councillor and Tisbury Traders

Malcolm Connor, Consultant, South East Protected Landscapes Tourism Project

Michael Roe, Proprietor, Lodge Farmhouse, Broad Chalke

Ruth Mason, Agent, Rushmore Estate

Cllr Mark Street , Dinton Parish Council

Cllr Roderick Fisher Bowerchalke Parish Council

Cllr Jerry Laker, Knowlton Parish Council

Cllr Helen Chion

Sarah Keyse

Chris Newman

Richard Broadhead, Countryside & Rights of Way Manager, Wiltshire Council

Cllr Roy Sims, Mere Parish Council

Rod Williams, Blandford Forum Tourist Information Centre

Irene Snook, Proprietor, Cornerways Cottage

Appendix B AONB Management Plan 2009-14: Priorities/Objectives Relevant to the Visitor Economy

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

There is recognised to be a need to increase the awareness of the AONB and the understanding of its special qualities to both residents and those living outside and beyond the AONB. However, 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.

Community Priority 2: *Conserve and enhance the landscape character, habitats, species and tranquillity of the AONB*

Community Priority 3: *Conserve and enhance the historic, archaeological and cultural features within their distinctive landscape settings*

Without a doubt, the special landscape and heritage characteristics of the area underpin the core of the AONB designation and the reason for many people to visit.

Objectives

- C The landscape character, tranquillity and special qualities of the AONB and its settings are conserved and enhanced.
- G The historic, archaeological and cultural elements of the landscape of the AONB are conserved and enhanced.
- H The culture and traditions of the AONB are celebrated, valued and supported.

Policies

- H1 Encourage and promote local traditions, customs and artistic expression that add to local identity, sense of place and reflect the special qualities of the AONB

Community Priority 4: *Support and influence innovative ways of maintaining and providing access to community facilities and services*

Community Priority 5: *Conserve and enhance the distinctive character of the built environment within its historic, cultural and landscape setting*

Community Priority 6: *Promote the management of the impact of traffic on the AONB*

In all areas of settlements, services, public transport and historic buildings there is as not only the local resident to consider, but the wider range of ‘users’, including a variety of visitors.

Objectives

- I The AONB is home to sustainable, active and cohesive communities who understand, appreciate and celebrate the special qualities of the AONB.
- J Thriving rural communities play an active role in fostering local services and conserving and enhancing the AONB.

Policies

- I1 Support community initiatives that encourage and maintain the vitality and diversity of rural community life.

Public transport

Objectives

- N 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 of the AONB

Policies

- N2 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.
- N3 Promote the provision of affordable parking facilities to enable and encourage people to leave their cars behind and use public transport.

Community Priority 7: *Support the rural economy in ways that are sustainable*

In 2000, Distribution, hotels and catering were estimated to provide 23% of total employment in the AONB. In reality, this sector is centred on the leisure industry and is concentrated in pubs, restaurants, hotels and B&Bs. The tourism sector is under-developed and needs additional accommodation, public transport and local services for visitors to attract over-night stays. Tourism partnerships need support.

Objectives

O Local communities benefit from rural regeneration opportunities that help conserve and enhance the AONB and its setting.

P The local economy is supported and valued by communities and visitors alike.

Policies

O1 Utilise opportunities within the England Rural Development Plan, and other initiatives and funding schemes, to achieve the needs of the local economy and objectives of AONB designation.

Recreation, Tourism and Access

The AONB, with its stunning landscapes, wildlife and historic riches, offers a very attractive environment for local people and visitors alike. One of the most distinctive features of the AONB is its extensive and diverse Rights of Way (RoW) network and open access areas.

Objectives

T The recreation and tourism sector is sustainable, contributes to the local economy and is in harmony with the distinctive visual, natural, historic and cultural qualities of the AONB.

U Everyone has the opportunity to access and enjoy the special qualities of the AONB for quiet enjoyment and improved health and well being both from within and outside the AONB, in accord with the purposes of designation.

Policies

T1 With relevant partners, develop an AONB-wide sustainable recreation and tourism strategy based on, and respecting, the special qualities of the AONB and purposes of designation.

T2 Investigate external funding opportunities to develop or support recreation, tourism, and access initiatives that are focused on the special qualities of the area.

U1 Encourage and assist local communities to take an active role in providing relevant information, interpretation, facilities and services for visitors in support of the special qualities of the AONB.

U2 Support Local Access Forums and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan implementation, funding and encourage consistency of approach towards access issues and AONB objectives.

Appendix C: Visitor Economy Business and Stakeholder Survey Summary Results

See separate document and pdf file

Appendix D: Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats

Relating to the Visitor Economy in the AONB – Stakeholder Workshop July 11 2011

Strengths

- Unique landscape
- Scenery/countryside
- Attractive villages
- History
- Archaeology
- Heritage
- Culture
- Wildlife
- Extensive rights of way network
- Opportunities for Walking/cycling/riding
- Places to visit
- Established attractions
- Access to population centres
- Tisbury railway station
- Location-Only 100 miles from London
- A303
- Traditional/peaceful/tranquil
- Relaxed atmosphere-chance to chill!
- Mild climate

Weaknesses

- Lack of public transport
- Lack of brand awareness
- Resistance to change
- Main roads 'pass through'
- Poor internal roads
- Accommodation stock
- No 'identity'
- 'Cranborne Chase' not well enough known
- Insignificant information
- Marketing
- Brown signs
- Lack of parking
- A303
- Railway
- Poor communications
- Failing facilities
- Fewer tourist offices

Opportunities

- Draw people in from market towns
- More and better information
- Information points/boards/leaflets
- Accommodation
- Specialist interest breaks
- Green sustainable holidays
- Universities-Students
- 'Grey' Students-Summer schools
- Foreign visitors
- Broadband investments-speed
- Making use of by-ways for walking/riding/cycling
- Association with world brands i.e. Stonehenge
- Destination Salisbury
- Destination AONB
- Destination campsites
- Develop new attractions
- Exploit existing attractions
- Mere + Stourhead-"service stations-and more"!
- Local produce

Threats

- Visitor pressure
- Over development
- Indifference and not doing anything
- Planning law changes
- Climate change
- Light aircraft noise from Compton Abbas
- Trespass
- Crime
- Too much success i.e. New Forest
- Lack of employment

Appendix E : Marketing Examples Based Upon Tranquillity and Landscape

Visit Wales, c.2005. Area of Outstandingly Bad Mobile Reception



Switzerland 2011. Holiday with no Internet or Mobile Reception

Holiday with no Internet or Mobile Reception. **Switzerland.** get natural. 

MySwitzerland.com

Dear Andrew,

We have discovered that a holiday in the great outdoors with no Internet or mobile reception would do a lot of people a lot of good.

Find out whether you're one of these people by letting our two experts analyse your online activities.



The advertisement features a red header with white text and a yellow sun logo. Below the header, there is a white box containing text and a photograph of a wooden cabin in a mountain landscape with a Swiss flag. The cabin is made of dark wood and has a gabled roof. The background shows green mountains and a clear sky.

Appendix F: Example Sustainable Tourism Projects Coordinator Job Description

Purpose of Tourism Projects Coordinator

To contribute to the marketing and development of the locations as a visitor destination, by assisting the tourism team in the promotion of the destination and coordination of the activities of the local tourism industry, and to take forward the action plan of the tourism strategy. Working in partnership with tourism businesses through the Tourism Partnership, the post holder is responsible for specific activities and projects, which are aimed at developing the local tourism industry, attracting visitors and raising the profile of the location.

Qualifications

A HND/degree qualification in tourism or a related discipline and to have a high standard of English and numeracy is essential. Full UK driving licence is desirable.

Knowledge

Essential: The Postholder is expected to have knowledge of the tourism industry and awareness of tourism issues at regional, national and local levels. Knowledge of Microsoft Office PC applications. Desirable: It is desirable to have an appreciation of design and knowledge of print and web based media. A high standard of numeracy and English is a prerequisite for the Postholder and to demonstrate creativity and accuracy.

Experience,

Essential: Strong project management skills

Desirable: Experience of the tourism industry, Experience of both public and private sector working, Understanding of local government/tourism/sustainability and issues affecting it.

Skills and Attributes

Essential: High standard of literacy, Creative thinker, Organised and efficient, Research oriented and good analytical skills, Enthusiastic and ambitious, Ability to cope with pressure and deliver to deadlines, Good interpersonal skills, Ability to work independently, plan ahead and prioritise work to meet demands, Capable of working in a team on corporate projects.

Desirable: Flexible attitude, Ability to cope with and adapt to new working environment quickly and easily, Customer focused.

The post holder is required to communicate effectively with other groups – including the wider business community as visitors and potential visitors – to highlight the range and variety of the tourism offer in the location and promoting the county as the tourism destination of choice for day visits/ short breaks/ holidays/ business tourism.

Tact and diplomacy, discretion and confidentiality, an awareness of local issues, knowledge of factors affecting tourism generally and sensitivity to cultural differences are essential attributes of this role.

Personal Competencies

Essential: Oral communications and presentation, Strong written communication skills, Numeracy, IT/keyboard skills, planning and organisational skills, keyboard skills, team player, able to take the initiative.

Desirable: Proven research skills.

Key Tasks

To support the Tourism Manager on tourism projects that form part of the Tourism Partnership Annual Work Programme.

To support the collection of tourism data and research, to aid the council's tourism development and economic development objectives.

To assist in the delivery of the marketing plan and annual work programme, by undertaking projects and campaigns targeted at key markets (days visitors, short breaks, activity)

To develop new products and innovative ideas which will further develop, expand and improve the locations as a visitor destination.

To maintain the Destination Management System, databases and develop and maintain an email update system to keep them informed of opportunities and developments.

To manage projects relating to tourism development (encompassing sustainable tourism and green tourism) and to facilitate business start-ups.

To contribute to the production of tourism publications.

To plan and host familiarisation visits for journalists, including planning itineraries and liaising with other members of the tourism partnership.

To contribute to maintaining the consumer and trade databases.

To support special events and product launches as necessary.

To assist with the maintenance of the visitor websites

To prepare and organise presence at exhibitions as required.

To attend meetings on external partnership groups and other bodies to ensure maximum benefit for the council, tourism partnership and other local businesses and organisations.