

2014-19

AONB Management Plan



North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

A 20 Year Vision for the North Devon Coast AONB

“The North Devon Coast AONB will remain as one of England’s finest landscapes and seascapes, protected, inspiring and valued by all. Its natural and cultural heritage will sustain those who live in, work in or visit the area. It will be valued by residents and visitors alike who will have increased understanding of what makes the area unique and will be addressing the challenges of keeping it special to secure its long term future.”



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North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Biosphere Reserve

Devon's natural and historic environment is notable for its high quality. Over 50% of the land in Devon is covered by environmental designations with the National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty together covering approximately 38% of Devon's area.

 North Devon Coast AONB
 Biosphere Reserve



Ministerial Foreword for AONB Management Plans 2013

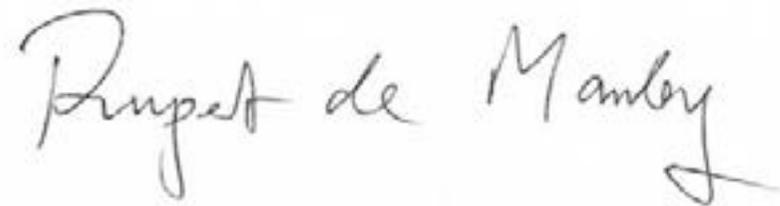
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are some of our finest landscapes. They are cherished by residents and visitors alike and allow millions of people from all walks of life to understand and connect with nature.

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

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

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

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



Lord de Mauley
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for
Natural Environment, Water and Rural Affairs



Andrew Wheatley

AONB Management Plan Review

Foreword

The North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation protects the distinctive and magnificent coastal landscapes between the Cornish border and Exmoor National Park, and encompasses all aspects of sustainable AONB coastal communities and wildlife, as well as promoting the economy, tourism, agriculture, fisheries, recreation, culture and heritage of the area.

Since the last Management Plan much has changed: the global economic crisis has resulted in severe cuts in national and local government spending and this is having a pronounced effect on the work that we can do. Changes to the planning system mean that for major planning applications that affect the AONB there are strict timetables and evidence demands that take up a great deal of officer time. On a more positive note with the advent of the Natural Environment White paper and Biodiversity 2020 we are working more and more in Partnership. This is something that AONBs have been doing successfully for many years and we are bringing our expertise to bear in the development of Nature Improvement Areas, Catchment Partnerships and landscape scale conservation projects. This new five-year Management Plan establishes a sustainable vision and strategy for the future of the AONB, and has been achieved through a statutory review of the previous Plan, together with a process of extensive public consultation. This is the Plan for the AONB and can only be delivered by working in Partnership. The five years covered by the previous Plan have seen many highlights - our highly successful 50th. Anniversary celebrations, the launch of the exciting Explore the North Devon Coast website, the prestigious EU CORDIALE project, and our support for a wide range of innovative community projects through our own annual Defra-funded AONB Sustainable Development Fund. We have also reached out to a national and international audience through the effective use of media and modern communications.

During the next five years, with your continued help and support, we are confident that the AONB will build upon these firm foundations, whilst embracing new opportunities and facing up to new challenges. Our AONB is a national treasure and this Plan will help us all to ensure it remains one of the country's finest coastal landscapes.



Steve Pitcher
Chairman North Devon Coast Areas of
Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership



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1. North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

1.1 Introduction

The North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was designated in 1959 and confirmed by the Secretary of State in 1960¹. It was the first of the five Devon AONBs to be designated. It covers 171 square kilometres (66 square miles) of mainly coastal landscape from the border with Exmoor National Park at Combe Martin, through the mouth of the Taw-Torridge Estuary to the Cornish border at Marsland Mouth.

Statement of Significance:

The extensive dune system at Braunton Burrows has an immense diversity of wildlife and lies at the heart of the AONB, it has earned North Devon the accolade of UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Status. The whole of the AONB is contained within the buffer zone of the Biosphere Reserve.

The North Devon Coast has a surprising diversity of scenery including some of the finest cliff scenery in the country, which was the primary reason for designation. Tall rugged cliffs and wave-cut platforms, contrast with wide sandy bays and sand dunes. In the north, steeply dipping rocks form hogs-back cliffs at varied heights in a natural continuation of Exmoor's coastline. To the south, facing the full force of the Atlantic, sheer crags and razor-like reefs present the coast at its most rugged and beautiful. The AONB reaches inland to the Hartland plateau, scored by deep valleys, which reach the coast as steep hanging gaps in the cliffs, often with spectacular waterfalls.

In contrast, the broad sweep of Bideford and Barnstaple Bay is a mixture of low cliffs, long sandy beaches and the dunes at Braunton Burrows.

Inland a pastoral landscape of hedged fields complements the steep-sided wooded combes and valleys where villages shelter from the Atlantic winds. Whilst skirting larger settlements such as Ilfracombe and Westward Ho!, the AONB boundary takes in bustling seaside resorts such as Woolacombe and Croyde and picturesque fishing villages such as Clovelly and Bucks Mills, along this spectacular coast.

Distinctive coastal scenery:

Walking along the South West Coast Path across the open, windswept cliff-tops, and gazing westward across the seemingly infinite expanse of ocean, there is a sense of timelessness and of raw nature devoid of human influence. The feeling is sharpened when Atlantic storm waves crash against the twisted strata of exposed rocky cliffs, sending thunderous sprays of surf into the air.

Dropping down into a coastal combe from the cliffs or farmland, a strong sense of refuge and shelter prevails, made more striking by the presence of enclosing woodland in the combes. Where stretches of coastline are distant from the coast road, a sense of tranquillity and remoteness is strong.

In Braunton Burrows, the vast sand-dune system, infinite sky and an expansive sandy beach are bordered by tranquil grazing marshes

Likewise, the Hartland Coast possesses a sense of wilderness, but this is a fragile quality, which can dissolve with the sight of a wind turbine or mast on a skyline, or a car parked in an open combe. Coastal landforms provide classic examples of erosion and deposition, as well as rare and characteristic landscape features.

A landscape and seascape of high visual quality:

Panoramic views from elevated areas across rolling countryside are an important feature of the AONB. Within the combes, framed sea views are characteristic, and coastal vistas across to Lundy are wide and empty. Further north the view is framed by intimate distant views of the Welsh coast. Inland, the countryside, much of it undesignated, forms an important backdrop to the coast and is a defining element to the visual quality of the AONB providing a variety of open views.

The coast path provides long views along the coast across the estuary and inland to undeveloped skyline and downland.

A Significant Wildlife Resource:

The rarest AONB habitat is rush pasture, or Culm Grassland, small fragments of which are found on the wet inland moors of the Hartland area such as Bursdon and Brownsham Moors. Elsewhere, there are mosaics of maritime grassland, heathland and scrub along with sea cliffs, rocky shores, estuarine salt marsh, especially around Morte Point and Hartland Quay and internationally important sand dunes; hundreds of miles of hedgerows provide extensive havens throughout the inland area. Western oak woodland is found along the Clovelly coast and within the combes, whilst excellent air quality, constantly freshened by Atlantic westerlies, is a particular asset and supports a proliferation and variety of lichens, contributing to the local landscape character.



Neville Stanikk Photography

1. North Devon Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

A Varied Geology:

Much of the coastline is covered by SSSI for its geological importance. Coastal landforms provide classic examples of coastal erosion and deposition as well as rare and unique landscape features. Some features are particularly special and include the pebble ridge at Northam Burrows and the dramatic waterfalls cascading onto the rocky shores from truncated combs.

The variety of coastal landforms from wave-cut platforms to wide sandy beaches offer an immense resource for marine wildlife that inhabit the foreshore.

A Remarkable Heritage:

The legacy of a long history of human habitation in the area is woven into the landscape, with some threads tracing back to pre-historic times.

The most extensive historic landscape features are the enclosed fields defined by ancient hedge-banks, from the narrow enclosed strip fields of Combe Martin to the 19th century regular enclosures of the downland above Ilfracombe, their patterns reflecting centuries of agricultural change. This is made more appealing by historic farmsteads, hamlets and villages and the winding lanes which connect them.

Inland the ridgelines are marked by ancient burial mounds, whilst along the coast promontory sites, such as the ancient earthworks at Hillsborough and Embury Beacon, have been home to strategic defences from the Iron Age to the 20th Century. Devon's seagoing heritage is represented by, for example, historic quays and fishing villages like Clovelly with lime kilns in almost every inlet.

Unique Setting:

What makes the North Devon AONB unique in Devon is that it is a long and narrow sliver of largely coastal land. Unlike other AONB's the designation line was based on the catchments of the coastal streams of Hartland and North Devon, rather than the wider catchments of the Taw and Torridge rivers.

To many people who live and work within the area, most of North Devon is an area of natural beauty, and though special, in fact only a small proportion is designated. However, these non-designated areas, be they the vast expanse of ocean in the Bristol Channel; the solitary island of Lundy; or the settlements of Ilfracombe and Westward Ho!; or the beautiful inland scenery that lies adjacent to the designated area, all combine to provide an important setting or backdrop to the AONB.

This means that development or management outside of the designated area, be it on land or at sea, can have a profound effect across the entire AONB and extreme care must be taken when making management decisions within these special areas.





Neville Stanikk Photography

1.2 Special Qualities and Features of the North Devon Coast AONB

Stunning pictures of the AONB's 14 Special Qualities

The North Devon Coast AONB has now been extensively assessed by the Landscape Characterisation Process and, for the next 5-year Management Plan cycle, has a full and comprehensive set of assessments to assist in managing this nationally important landscape.

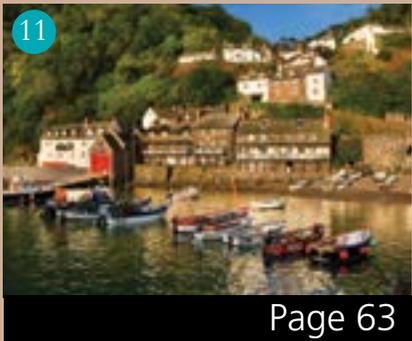
At the time of designation in 1960, little had been written about the special qualities that contributed to its designation as an AONB. The originally proposed Bideford Bay Conservation Area mentioned *"the extensive sand dune systems of Bideford Bay"* and the *"spectacular coastal cliffs."*

At designation, it was cited that the North Devon AONB had been designated because it *"possessed some of the finest coastal scenery in the country."*

The first comprehensive study of AONB Character produced by Nicholas Pearson in 1999², and latterly, the Devon Landscape Character Area Assessment³, commissioned by the County Council, has enabled the AONB to draw up a list of Special Qualities. These are defined as follows:

- 1 Diversity of scenery contained within a small area, including some of the finest cliff scenery in the country (as mentioned at designation)
- 2 Panoramic seascape, with seaward views to Lundy within the Atlantic Ocean, across the Bristol Channel to Wales and along the coastline. These views are of a landscape and seascape devoid of human influence.
- 3 Narrow framed views of the sea from coastal mouths of steep-sided combes.
- 4 Panoramic views across a rolling landscape of pastoral farmland and wooded combes and valleys towards the sea from elevated inland areas.
- 5 Wild coastal scenery. In the north, hogsback cliffs of varying heights; in the south high, rugged cliffs, dramatic rock formations, exposed headlands, wave-cut platforms and rocky coves.
- 6 A vast sand dune system at Braunton Burrows of exposed wild character, with high nature-conservation interest of international importance, and the pebble ridge at Westward Ho!
- 7 Long, broad sandy beaches backed by extensive dune systems.
- 8 A strong sense of tranquillity and remoteness where the coast road is located away from the coastline.
- 9 Rare and fragile quality of wilderness in Braunton Burrows and on the Hartland coast.
- 10 Historic landscape pattern of hedge-banks, farmsteads, hamlets, villages and lanes.
- 11 Historic coastal quays and fishing villages, coastal promontory sites for strategic defences and lighthouses.
- 12 Deep combes and cliffs cloaked in ancient woodland along the Bideford Bay coast
- 13 Small pockets of remnant lowland coastal heathlands around Morte Point and Hartland Quay
- 14 Tourist-orientated settlements in sheltered seaside locations.

Your page by page guide to the AONBs most beautiful and distinctive landscape features



2.1 The Purpose of AONB Designation

The North Devon Coast AONB was designated under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. It is part of a family of 34 AONBs in England including 2 conservation boards, plus 10 National Parks. The primary purpose of AONB designations is:

“To conserve and enhance natural beauty”

In pursuing the primary purpose, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry and rural industries as well as the economic and social needs of local communities. Regard should be paid to social and economic development that conserves and enhances the environment. Whilst recreation is not an objective of the designation, the demand for recreation should be met insofar as it is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty⁴.

With the introduction of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, Section 85 placed a duty on all public bodies to have due regard to the purposes of the AONB designation and to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB.

Section 89 places a statutory duty on local authorities with an AONB in their area to produce a Management Plan. This plan is the third since this duty was imposed and has been produced by the AONB team at the request of the local authorities we serve, namely North Devon District Council, Torridge District Council and Devon County Council.

In fulfilment of the requirements of the CROW Act, local authorities must produce a Management Plan for the AONB at intervals of not less than five years. The purpose of the Management Plan is:

- To provide a statutory plan that sets out the policies and objectives for the AONB
- To inform public bodies how they can demonstrate compliance with their statutory duty to “have regard to” the AONB designation
- To facilitate engagement with people and organisations with a stake in the AONB and to encourage involvement in working in partnership to deliver the objectives laid out in the Management Plan.

This is not a Management Plan to be delivered by the AONB team alone it is a Management Plan for the area and requires all to work in partnership to deliver the objectives.

Cliffs at Hartland Quay



2.2 Managing the North Devon Coast AONB

The AONB is the major environmental asset for North Devon and its natural beauty contributes directly to the economy of the area. The Management Plan demonstrates this mutual dependency, and aims to:

- Highlight the special qualities and the value of the features using an ecosystem services approach where practicable
- Present an integrated vision for a sustainable AONB that takes account of local and national priorities
- Set out policies and objectives that have been agreed by the Partnership and been subject to consultation with local government, statutory bodies, NGOs, people and communities
- Provide the framework for an annual Action Plan, highlighting the role of the AONB team within the delivery
- Articulate outcome measures that can contribute to the 20-year vision for the AONB
- Will be delivered through the planning system and by direct management

With the five-year Management Plan in place, there is then a requirement to produce an annual business plan in accordance with the requirements of the funding bodies.

The funding from the authorities provides a basic level of core funding but, in order to deliver the Plan, funds are sought from a wide range of bodies for project based work. By their nature these projects require a Partnership approach.

Since the last Management Plan was produced there have been changes: the global economic downturn has had an impact on all public sector expenditure. In common with all public bodies, AONBs must seek funds from alternative sources in order to be able to deliver the actions articulated in the Delivery Plan; as resources continue to reduce this will be very challenging. This has reduced the size of many AONB units and further pushed the focus onto partnership delivery.

Morte Point



2. Context

The Partnership

The North Devon Coast AONB is run by its Partnership of organisations. The Partnership is a non-executive body which meets three times a year, develops policy, champions, provides advice, and guides work within the area. The AONB Partnership is comprised of representatives from:

- Coastwise North Devon
- Country, Land and Business Association
- Devon Wildlife Trust
- English Heritage
- Environment Agency
- Exmoor National Park
- Forestry Commission
- National Farmers Union
- National Trust
- Natural England
- North Devon Biosphere Reserve Partnership
- North Devon Plus
- Tarka Country Trust
- Taw Torridge Estuary Forum
- Devon County Council
- North Devon Council
- Torridge District Council
- 6 Community representatives

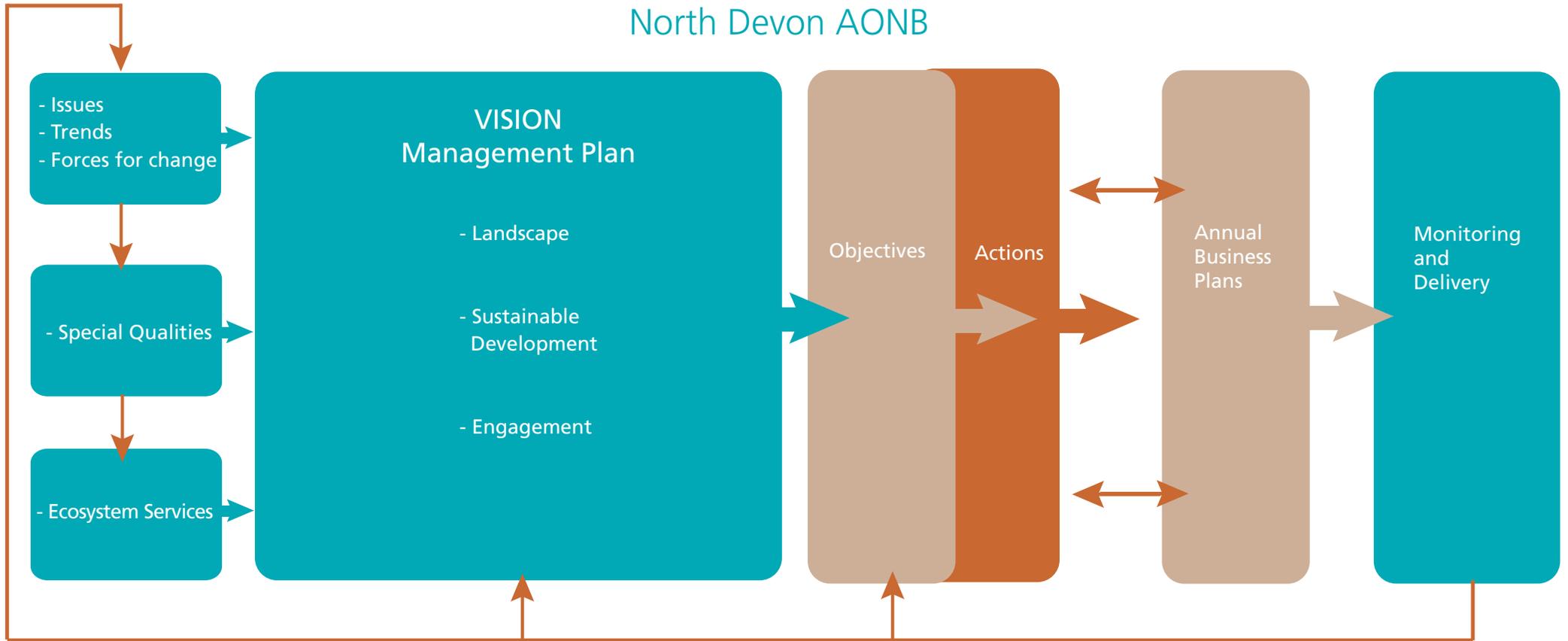
The Executive Group, comprising the Chairman, Vice Chairman, representatives of the funding partners and Natural England meets with the AONB officers three times a year in order to deal with day-to-day management issue and agree and monitor the business plan.

The Governance arrangements for the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty were established under the guidance of the former Countryside Agency and subsequently Natural England⁵. Since 2011, Defra has provided direct funding to the host authority to support delivery of the Management Strategy and running of the Partnership and staff unit. This funding covers 75% of the running costs, the remaining 25% coming from the local authorities within the AONB.

Governance arrangements are specified in a Memorandum of Agreement with Defra and the three Local Authorities⁶.



North Devon AONB



What is special about the AONB and the issues affecting it?

What we want to achieve by 2019

How we will get there

Costed annual plan showing how we are delivering the Management

How we will measure progress and what has been achieved

2. Context

2.3 Strategic Context

At an international level, the AONB is classified as a Category V landscape by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)⁷. The AONB sits at the heart of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. This promotes the visibility of the area as a whole but also has the potential to cause confusion to people, particularly tourists.

The governance and management of the AONB is influenced by a wide range of conventions and directives. Central to the AONB however is the European Landscape Convention⁸. The European Landscape Convention (ELC) is the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape. Created by the Council of Europe, the convention promotes landscape protection, management and planning, and European co-operation on landscape issues. ELC highlights the importance of developing landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and creation of landscapes and establishes procedures for the general public and other stakeholders to participate in policy creation and implementation.

The UK is recognised as already putting many of the principles of the ELC into practice. For example, the National Character Area map of England has been in use for nearly 10 years. Another example is the well-established practice of using Landscape Character Assessment to inform local policymaking. All landscapes are important and for this reason the whole of England and Scotland is being classified in this way to assist in robust decision-making. The North Devon Coast AONB is one of five within Devon. It also belongs to the National Association of AONBs which acts on behalf of all AONBs and supports them through working on projects and issues in common to all AONBs.



Neville Stanikk Photography

Clovelly Coast



2.4 Ecosystem Services

In recent years, the concept of ecosystem services has developed and it is appropriate that our new Management Plan should cover this.

Ecosystem services are the benefits that people accrue from ecosystems, i.e. nature. The development of this approach has enabled a new suite of tools to be produced that, as never before, enable us to place a value on the services provided by the natural environment.

The Millenium Ecosystem Assessment (2005)⁹ distinguishes four categories of ecosystem services provided by nature and these are: provisioning services, regulating services, culture services and supporting services. This chapter looks at each of these services in turn, and considers the ecosystem services provided by the AONB and how the Management Plan supports those services.

For clarity, a definition for each category of services, drawn from the Millenium Ecosystem Assessment, has been provided.

Service	Definition
Provisioning services	Products obtained from ecosystems including food, water, minerals, pharmaceuticals and energy
Regulating services	Benefits obtained from the regulation of ecosystem processes, these include climate regulation, waste decomposition, water and air purification, pollination and disease control
Cultural services	These are the non-material benefits that people get from ecosystems through recreation, reflection, spiritual enrichment and discovery
Supporting services	The services that are necessary for the production of all other ecosystem services including nutrient cycling, primary production and seed dispersal.

Many of the policies and actions set out in the Management Plan are designed to influence the management of natural systems. In order to establish a clear line of sight between ecosystem services and Management Plan delivery, a table has been developed that demonstrates how they are linked and where delivery of the Management Plan directly benefits ecosystem services.

Ecosystem Services provided in North Devon Coast AONB	Link to Management Plan Policies
Provisioning services	
Food – arable, dairy , beef and lamb.	F1
Water quality and quantity	B1,B3, F6
Timber provision	B1,F1,F4
Biomass energy	B1,F1,F4
Regulating services	
Local climate and air quality	A5,I7
C sequestration and storage	B4,F1,F2,F3,F4
Soil quality and erosion	B1,B3,F6
Pollination	B1,B2,F1
Biological control	B1,B2,B3,B6
Cultural services	
Aesthetic appreciation and inspiration of culture	A1,E3,I3,I4,J1
Sense of place, tranquillity; history and historic buildings	A2,A3,D2,E1,E2,E3
Health and recreation	B6,H2,H4-H7
Tourism	G3-G5
Supporting services	
Wildlife/biodiversity/genetic diversity	B1-B7F1-F5
Nutrient cycling	B1,F1,F2,F3,F4
Primary production (sunlight)	B1,F1,F2
Climate regulation	A5,B3,D1,F5,I5,J3



Dave Edgcombe

3. Management Plan

3.1. Management Plan Themes

3.1.1 Landscape

Since the late 1990s much work has been undertaken to characterise the landscapes of the AONB; this work is vital if we are to conserve and enhance our special landscapes. These assessments are designed to provide an objective assessment of landscape quality, providing an insight into how landscapes are changing and what 'forces for change' might be influencing that landscape change.

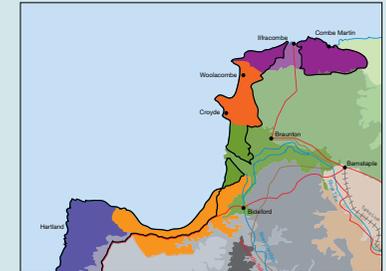
In addition, and in line with the European Landscape Convention (2007), a new breed of Landscape Character Assessment has been developed in last few years. These assessments have been drawn up with valuable input from the local community as well as from professionals. They provide guidance on how we should protect, manage and plan our special landscapes and, therefore, they form the basis of our work in conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB and are to be seen as a valuable supporting document to the AONB Management Plan.

Landscape Character Assessments can be undertaken at a variety of scales and levels and within the North Devon AONB they have been undertaken at 4 different levels.

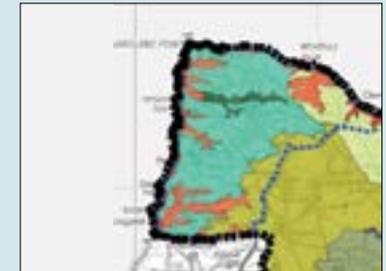
National Character Areas
eg. 145 The Culm



Devon Character Areas
eg. Hartland Peninsula



Landscape Character Types
eg. Cliffs, open Coastal Plateau



Landscape Description Units



Farmland near Combe Martin



3. Management Plan

3.1. Management Plan Themes

National Character Areas

At a national level, the whole of England has been divided into 159 unique National Character Areas¹⁰. These National Character Areas are defined by a combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, and cultural and economic activity. Their boundaries follow natural lines in the landscape, rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision-making framework for the natural environment.

The area of the North Devon AONB is divided into two National Character Areas. These are Exmoor (145), which covers the AONB to the north of the Taw-Torridge Estuary and the Culm (149) which covers the Bideford Bay and the Hartland Coasts.

As part of its responsibilities in delivering the Natural Environment White Paper¹¹, Biodiversity 2020¹² and the European Landscape Convention, Natural England has recently revised its National Character Area profiles to make environmental evidence and information easily available to a wider audience.

Natural Character Area (NCA) profiles are guidance documents which will help to achieve a more sustainable future for individuals and communities. The profiles include a description of the key ecosystem services provided in each character area and how these benefit people, wildlife and the economy. They identify potential opportunities for positive environmental change and provide the best available information and evidence as a context for local decision-making and action.

The NCA recognises the importance of the Heritage Coast as part of the system service approach. This is important as identifying, protecting and reinforcing the distinctive elements and features of the landscape are essential to maintaining the distinctive and inspirational character of the area.

The National Character Areas (NCAs) are quite strategic and the North Devon AONB only covers a small part of each of the two NCAs. Whilst some of the identified Statements of Environmental Opportunity are applicable to parts of the AONB, there is a need to have a more local and relevant set of landscape character assessments

The North Devon AONB Landscape Character Appraisal

In 1999, the Countryside Agency commissioned a Landscape Character Appraisal Study of the North Devon Coast AONB by Nicholas Pearson Associates.

It was the first comprehensive landscape study of the North Devon AONB and identified key landscapes and features and described five Landscape Character Areas within the AONB. Despite its age, this study is still relevant in providing significant background information to the important landscape character areas to be found within the AONB.

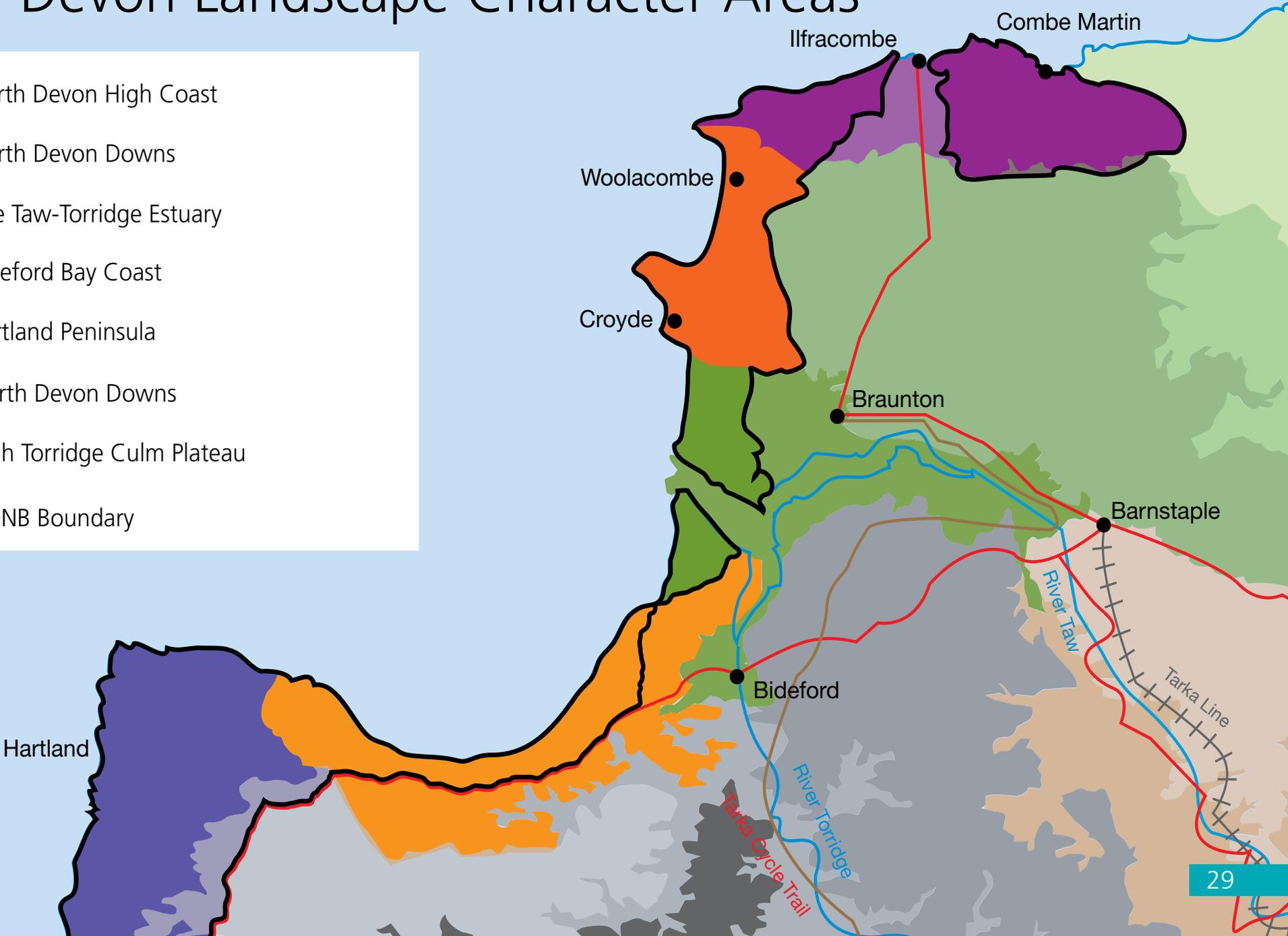
In 2011, Devon County Council, in partnership with other Devon local authorities, AONBs and Dartmoor National Park produced a new and unique set of 68 Landscape Character Areas for Devon¹³.

Devon's Landscape Character Assessment describes the variations in character between different and unique areas of landscape within the county. It provides a valuable evidence base for local planning by articulating what people believe is distinctive and special about the landscapes in Devon. The document helps to define distinct characteristics, special qualities and features for each of the identified landscape character areas. It goes on to identify the key "forces for change" affecting those landscapes and sets out a strategy, through a list of management guidelines, to enable land managers to protect, manage and plan the future management of these Landscape Character Areas.

This landscape character area assessment is extremely valuable describing areas that are unique and therefore they provide a great "sense of place" with regard to the North Devon Coast AONB.

North Devon Landscape Character Areas

- North Devon High Coast
- North Devon Downs
- The Taw-Torridge Estuary
- Bideford Bay Coast
- Hartland Peninsula
- North Devon Downs
- High Torridge Culm Plateau
- AONB Boundary



3. Management Plan

3.1. Management Plan Themes

Devon Landscape Character Areas

Within the North Devon Coast AONB, 7 Landscape Character Areas have been identified these are:

North Devon High Coast

This is an area in the far north of the AONB stretching from Combe Martin to Morte Point and covers the important seaside resort of Ilfracombe. It is a landscape of spectacular seascapes, with a rugged, jagged coastline containing a series of rocky headlands and small coves with grey shingle beaches. The western part of the area has a remote and ancient feel, with extensive areas of colourful coastal heath and grassland containing prehistoric standing stones. The area around Ilfracombe is more developed, its imposing Victorian architecture telling the story of its rise as a holiday destination. The enclosed, wooded coastal combes (each with its own unique character) cut through rolling, agricultural downland to the sea. Trees are prominent features which soften the windswept landscape of the open downland below the ridge tops.

North Devon Coastal Downs

From the headland at Morte Point to the ridgeline at Saunton Down, and covering the resorts of Woolacombe and Croyde, this is a landscape of contrasts, dominated by its seascape. There are wide westerly views to the sea, with the long, low outline of Lundy visible on the horizon, and views across Bideford Bay as far as Hartland Point. A series of rolling downland ridges run on to long headlands interspersed with wide sandy beaches. The smooth downland has an elevated, open, character, whilst the rough headlands feel wild, remote and windswept. The beaches are crowded with holidaymakers in summer, but in winter they feel empty and desolate. This is a colourful landscape – green fields; golden sands; vivid purple and yellow heath; brown and grey rocks; and glorious sunsets – but its mood is always set by the ever-changing sea.

North Devon Downs

Inland, the North Devon Downs is a simple, agricultural landscape dominated by the sky within an open, westerly aspect. The smooth hills have rounded profiles, and are covered by a patchwork of large, regular fields. Views are long and wide, sometimes with glimpses of the sea or estuary as a backdrop. The steep valleys which punctuate the downland run like wooded ribbons across the landscape, contrasting with the farmland in their rich colours and textures. These valleys have a secluded and secretive character. They are very tranquil, the only sounds often being birds and running water; and their sunken lanes have a timeless quality. Small sections of this Landscape Character type occur within the AONB occupying the high ground behind the coast and, whilst largely undesignated, it forms an important visual backdrop to the AONB, helping to define its setting.



Taw-Torridge Estuary

This Landscape Character Area sits astride the Taw-Torridge Estuary and covers the internationally important sand dune system at Braunton Burrows, which is the core of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. It is a flat, sky-dominated landscape with strong sensory characteristics. The habitats within the mosaic (dunes, beach, saltmarsh, mudflats and farmland) each have unique qualities of pattern, colour and texture which are juxtaposed in different combinations. The salty smell of mudflats and the sea are ever-present, as are the calls of birds. Within the dunes, the landscape feels disorientating, and has a strong sense of enclosure, isolation and wilderness. This contrasts with the open views towards the surrounding settlements, and the history associated with the strip fields at Braunton. The estuary settlements have a strong maritime character, with historic quays and impressive bridges.



Bideford Bay Coast

Running from the seaside resort at Westward Ho! to the west of Clovelly, the Bideford Bay Coast begins with rolling farmland that runs right up to the coastline. It is largely defined by its deep combes cloaked in oak woodland winding inland from the wooded cliffs, with carpets of bluebells in spring. Streams rush down the valleys, and ferns thrive in the dark, damp conditions. The woodland paths, with their glimpsed views of the sea, have a sense of intimacy, secrecy and peace. Narrow lanes with high, fern-covered banks provide access to the sheltered combe villages of Bucks Mills and Clovelly, the latter with its picturesque harbour and whitewashed houses. On higher land behind and between the combes is a lush landscape with a rolling patchwork of fields, a peaceful settled feel, and views of the woodlands and the sea. There are open sea views across Bideford Bay towards the Taw Torridge estuary, with Lundy a distinctive feature on the horizon.



Hartland Peninsula

The Hartland Peninsula forms the most southern part of the AONB and includes the settlement of Hartland. In the Hartland Peninsula, complex geology, combined with centuries of pounding by the full force of the Atlantic waves, has produced some of the most dramatic seascapes and coastal scenery in Devon. The cliffs are high and rugged, with zig-zag faults and folds. Wave-cut platforms and spectacular coastal waterfalls are also distinctive features of this jagged, exposed and windswept coastline, with the profile of Lundy visible in the open seascape. Coastal heathland on the cliff tops produces vivid and changing colours for much of the year. Inland, the area contains an open, flat, elevated plateau of agricultural land, which contrasts with the twisting, wooded and secretive combes that are cut into the plateau at its coastal edge. Dramatic sunsets over the sea add to the drama of the area.



3. Management Plan

3.1. Management Plan Themes

High Torridge Culm Plateau

Inland sections to the south and east of Hartland are categorised by the High Torridge Culm Plateau. The important culm grassland at Bursdon Moor lies within this landscape character area, although much of this LCA lies outside of the boundary of the AONB, it nonetheless helps to define the inland setting of the AONB.

This open landscape of pastoral farmland, rough ground and forests has an elemental, empty character, dominated by wet, unenclosed moorland, including Dartmoor and Bodmin Moor in the distance. The colours of the moorland – yellow gorse, purple heather and golden grasses – contrast with the dark green of coniferous plantations and the patchwork of brighter green pastoral fields. Occasional clustered villages are linked by straight lanes flanked by rush-filled ditches.



Lundy Island

Whilst Lundy Island lies outside of the designated AONB, like other adjacent landscapes, it forms an important backdrop to the AONB and helps to define the setting. Many of the AONB's special qualities include seaward views to Lundy.

Lundy is an isolated and unique place, surrounded by and dominated by the ever-changing sea. Remote and undeveloped, it is a 'sanctuary' away from the mainland. Its seascapes are dramatic, with sheer cliffs rising out of the water, battered into dramatic shapes by the force of the Atlantic breakers. The desolate, windswept moorland is alive with the sounds of crashing waves and the cries of the sea birds. The island's remoteness from 21st Century life, and its sense of changelessness, is enhanced by the extraordinary richness of its history. This historic site provides a tangible link with the island's past, stretching as far back as prehistoric times.

The Devon Landscape Character Assessment¹⁴ is an important document which will assist in helping to conserve, manage and plan for landscape change within the AONB. The document helps to define the Distinct Characteristics, Special Qualities and Features of each Landscape Character Area. It goes on to identify the key "forces for change" affecting the landscape and sets out a strategy, through a list of guidelines to enable land managers to protect, manage and plan the future management of these Landscape Character Areas.

The Devon LCA is therefore considered an important document, helping us to manage the AONB and it is considered as an integral part of the AONB Management Plan acting as a supporting document with regard to management. It provides a basis upon which to direct and manage landscape change within the AONB, seeking to find a balance between the protection and management of its special qualities alongside the need to plan for sustainable development. The Devon LCA was devised through public participation and is therefore compliant with the 2007 European Landscape Convention.

The Hartland Coast



3. Management Plan

3.1. Management Plan Themes

Landscape Character Features

There are some common landscape features that define the many and varied landscapes of the North Devon AONB. They were originally highlighted in the first Landscape Character Assessment for the AONB and are still relevant fifteen years later¹⁵. They are:

Coastal features

Dramatic cliffs, treacherous headlands, wide sandy bays, rocky shore platforms and coastal waterfalls are perhaps some of the most striking and memorable features of the North Devon AONB. The diversity of coastal scenery adds to the area's distinctiveness, and includes many unique features such as the vast dune system of Braunton Burrows, and the pebble ridge at Northam Burrows.

Devon Hedgebanks

The tall Devon hedge bank is a fundamental feature of the AONB landscape and is still valued greatly by farmers for the provision of shelter and stock control. The hedgebank defines the historic field patterns which stretch across the countryside, and provide valuable wildlife habitats and refuges within an otherwise farmed landscape. Local variations in hedgebank construction are sometimes apparent, adding to the distinctiveness of specific areas. For example, stone-faced banks are a feature around Hartland Quay and St. Catherine's Tor, where the cliffs and beach provided a plentiful supply of stone. Around Morteheo, the nature of the rock has meant that hedgebanks are faced with small flat stones in pronounced 'herring-bone' patterns.

Trees and Woodland

Significant belts are found within the AONB, ancient slow growing oak woodland, can be found notably along the Clovelly coast and running into the adjacent combes. Other woodland can be found in the sheltered middle and upper reaches of the combes along the Hartland Peninsula and North Devon High Coast Landscape Character Areas. These woodlands are important

landscape features, providing enclosure and contrast with the adjacent open cliff tops and farmland. They comprise a significant proportion of ancient woodland, providing an irreplaceable wildlife resource of historical significance. In post-war years, some woodland has been cleared and replanted with conifer and this occurs mainly in the valleys of the North Devon High Coast near Ilfracombe and the woods to the west of Clovelly.

Single trees and tree groups are important landscape features and appear in hedgerows, in clusters around farmsteads and hamlets, or in the more sheltered crevices of the upper combes. Proximity to the coast creates the characteristic wind-pruned hedgerow tree, and species tolerant of salt spray and strong winds, e.g. Monterey cypress, have been favoured, and are now characteristic of exposed houses and farms. In some landscape types within the AONB, in particular the Open Coastal Plateau and Downland Landscape Character Types, it is the lack of trees and woodland, and the consequent openness and smooth skylines, which make them distinctive, especially close to the west-facing coast. The high ground and impeded drainage of Hartland's inland moors provides a natural check to woodland with grey willow being the predominant broadleaf.

Traditional buildings and settlements

Scattered historic villages, hamlets and farms of stone, cob, thatch and slate are characteristic of the AONB landscape, with settlements spreading along the base or sides of sheltered combes with their high church tower prominent in local views. Coastal headlands have provided historic sites for landmarks such as lighthouses and defence sites, while sheltered coastal locations have been favoured for country houses and religious establishments such as Hartland Abbey. Sheltered accessible seaside positions around Saunton Sands, Croyde Bay, Woolacombe Bay and Combe Martin have seen a growth in tourist hotels, villas and retirement homes and more recently, static and touring caravan parks.

These key features also help us to describe key Landscape Character Types within the AONB. Landscape Character Types are generic and they describe key landscape types within the area, such as Cliffs, Estuaries and River Valleys.



Neville Stanikk Photography

3. Management Plan

3.1. Management Plan Themes

Landscape Character Types

In 2010, a comprehensive Landscape Character Assessment was undertaken on behalf of Torridge and North Devon District Councils¹⁶, which uses the definition of Landscape Character Type as its base. This document was adopted by the respective Local Authorities and assists with both spatial planning through the Local Plan and development control decisions.

It has also been used to help develop district council strategies for the deployment of renewable energy schemes within the North Devon and Torridge areas, including the AONB.

The document is also compliant with the European Landscape Convention and is frequently used by the AONB to assist in carrying out its responsibilities with regard to the designated area and helping other organisations in the targeting of land management schemes.

There are 37 Landscape Character Types identified within Devon and, of these, 14 distinct Landscape Character Types have been defined within the North Devon AONB. It is important to note that unlike the Landscape Character Areas, these landscape character types are generic, which means they may occur in more than one place. These are shown in the chart opposite.

Each Landscape Character Type has been described and the key characteristics and identified forces for change affecting the landscape have been identified. A suite of management prescriptions are presented which will help land managers to Protect, Manage and Plan to conserve the identified type.

This document is also compliant with the European Landscape Convention and is frequently used by the AONB team to assist in carrying out its responsibilities with regard to the designated area.

Type	Landscape Character Type
1B	Coastal Open Plateau (Hartland Peninsula)
1F	Farmed Lowland Moorland and Culm Grassland (High Torridge Culm)
2C	Steep Open Slopes (North Devon Coastal Downs and High Coast)
2D	Moorland Edge Slopes (North Devon High Coast)
3H	Secluded Valleys (Hartland Peninsula)
4A	Estuaries (Taw-Torridge Estuary)
4B	Marine Levels and Coastal Plains (Taw-Torridge Estuary)
4C	Coastal Slopes and Combes with settlement (North Devon High Coast)
4D	Coastal Slopes and Combes (Bideford Bay and Hartland Peninsula)
4E	Extensive Intertidal Sands (Taw-Torridge Estuary and Coastal Downs)
4F	Dunes (Taw Torridge Estuary and Coastal Downs)
4H	Cliffs (AONB coast)
5B	Coastal Undulating Farmland (Bideford Bay Coast)
5C	Downland (North Devon High Coast and Coastal Downs)

Landscape Description Units

In 2010, as a part of the Landscape Character Type assessment, the AONB Partnership commissioned Land Use Consultants to undertake a second baseline Landscape Character Assessment within the AONB, which was based on Landscape Description Units¹⁵. This work refined an earlier survey undertaken by Diacono Associates in 2006 and was based on Landscape Description Units. This, involves smaller areas of land and is a much finer grain analysis of landscape character and has defined some 43 unique Landscape Description Units, which are frequently referred to as the “building blocks” of the other Landscape Character Assessments. Whilst no land management prescriptions, with regard to protect, manage and plan, appear in this

document, it is nonetheless an important baseline document when describing the landscapes, geology, land use and build environment of the AONB area.

Each Landscape Description Unit (LDU) is divided into the following

- A Summary of Landscape Character
- Landscape Description
 - *Landform Topography*
 - *Land Use Pattern*
 - *Woodland and natural Habitats*
 - *Settlement and Development*
 - *Historic Environment*
 - *Key Views and Perceptual Qualities*
- Landscape and Nature Conservation Designations (e.g. SSSI)
- Extent of UK BAP Priority habitats within the LDU (Area and %)
- Key Factors influencing Landscape Condition (Forces for Change)

Whilst it is clear that the landscape is well described through the processes articulated, central to the work of the AONB is to ensure that this guidance is used appropriately and in particular for planning and development. The overarching objective for the AONB is “To conserve and enhance the natural beauty and special landscapes of the AONB”

The area of the AONB is a rural, farmed landscape interspersed with small settlements and coastal towns. Key influences on the landscape are the changing nature of crops, driven in part by climate change but also changes in food production technology. Changes to land management grants can have a profound effect on the landscape; the increasing use of renewable energy and, in particular, wind turbines, often in remote locations, can have an impact on the landscape for many miles. The challenge of delivering even modest housing allocations is accentuated in small discrete towns and villages. There is also a need to protect the skyline of the AONB from inappropriate development.

Policies

To conserve and enhance the natural beauty and special landscapes of the AONB

A1	Landscape character and natural beauty are conserved and enhanced
A2	Dark skies, peace and tranquillity within the AONB are preserved
A3	Planning of future developments, both onshore and offshore, to take full account of open views, wilderness and maritime connections
A4	No development is permitted outside the AONB that would harm the natural beauty, character and special qualities of the AONB
A5	AONB is responsive to climate change impacts on landscape, wildlife and special qualities of the AONB
A6	Raising public awareness of the importance of landscape and its contribution to the natural beauty of the AONB

Issues, trends and forces for change

- Number and scale of renewable energy projects within, and in the setting of, the designated landscape
- Changes to planning mean significant infrastructure projects are handled differently
- Changes to CAP will impact on farmers’ priorities and hence the landscape
- Farm diversification changes the landscape through change of use
- Increased development and on-going car dependency impacts on the tranquillity of the AONB.
- Climate change alters crop selection choice impacting on the landscape

Measures of progress

- Fixed post photography
- Percentage of North Devon AONB assessed as tranquil

3. Management Plan

3.1. Management Plan Themes

3.1.2 Biodiversity

Introduction

The North Devon Coast AONB is enhanced by its rich and varied wildlife and is an essential element of its natural beauty. In spring, woods full of bluebells and hedgerow primroses are spectacular but, for those who care to explore further, there are numerous rare and protected species and sites.

The Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)¹⁷ identifies five common themes, twenty key habitats and twenty key species. Species of particular note in North Devon include lichens, pearl border fritillary butterflies, a number of bat species but notably Greater Horseshoe Bats and in estuarine and coastal waters pink seafans. Since the Devon BAP was written a number of other species are in decline including hedgehogs, water voles and the European eel.

Background

The AONB has a plethora of designation, the most important of which are the two Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). Braunton Burrows has a spectacular dune system with over 400 plant species and is the heart of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The Tintagel-Marsland-Clovelly Coast SAC is home to western oak woodlands, vegetated sea cliffs and coastal heath. Small fragments of Culm grassland survive in the Hartland Peninsula.

Numerous other Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), in particular the coastal heathlands at Morte Point, and County Wildlife sites provide the AONB with a rich wildlife resource. In total there are thirteen SSSIs of which part or all is in the AONB. Of these 88% of the biological SSSIs and 93% of the geological SSSIs are in favourable condition¹⁸.

AONB role in delivering a better ecological network

In 2010, Professor Sir John Lawton published a review entitled “Making Space For Nature”¹⁹. In it he proposed that England’s biodiversity could be better protected and more resilient if habitats were better connected.

In 2011 the Natural Environment White paper was published and included a commitment to establish ecologically coherent networks and sought to advance the role of the ecosystem services based approach to valuing the environment. In addition a further commitment was to support the development of a network of Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) to facilitate work at a larger, landscape scale.

Also in 2011, “Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England’s wildlife and ecosystem services” was launched. This outlines the government’s strategic direction for biodiversity policy for the next decade on land (including rivers and lakes) and at sea, building upon the Natural Environment White Paper published in June 2011. This is of particular relevance to the AONB. It is intended that outcomes for Biodiversity 2020 will be delivered through actions in four main areas:

- a more integrated large-scale approach to conservation on land and at sea;
- putting people at the heart of biodiversity policy;
- reducing environmental pressures;
- improvement of knowledge.

Braunton Burrows



3. Management Plan

3.1. Management Plan Themes

There are many key objectives that come out of this and within the AONB we aim to:

- *Manage existing wildlife sites to the highest standards*
- *Properly plan ecological networks, including large restoration areas, linking surviving patches of wildlife habitat which need to be protected and managed effectively as they have the potential to make an important contribution to an enhanced ecological network.*
- *Engage people in the delivery of biodiversity action*

National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty share the ambition of “Making Space for Nature”. We understand that we must be the core of ecological networks across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The majority of the land involved in realising this ambition will currently be under some form of agricultural, forestry or game management. It is therefore critical that habitat improvement and creation becomes part of sustainable land management systems, and provides adequate reward for land managers.

It is appropriate that the AONB is considered as an ecosystem and it is considered as such and using the Lawton framework an ecosystems approach can be taken. This should deliver a robust and resilient AONB and ensure that due account is taken of wildlife-rich sites such as County Wildlife Sites and not just those that are designated.

As this Plan is being written, proposals to develop the concept of biodiversity offsetting are being discussed and consulted upon²⁰. Offsetting is the last option in the planning hierarchy once avoidance and mitigation has been considered and there is no alternative. There are a number of pilot schemes currently in operation but these are yet to report.

Policies

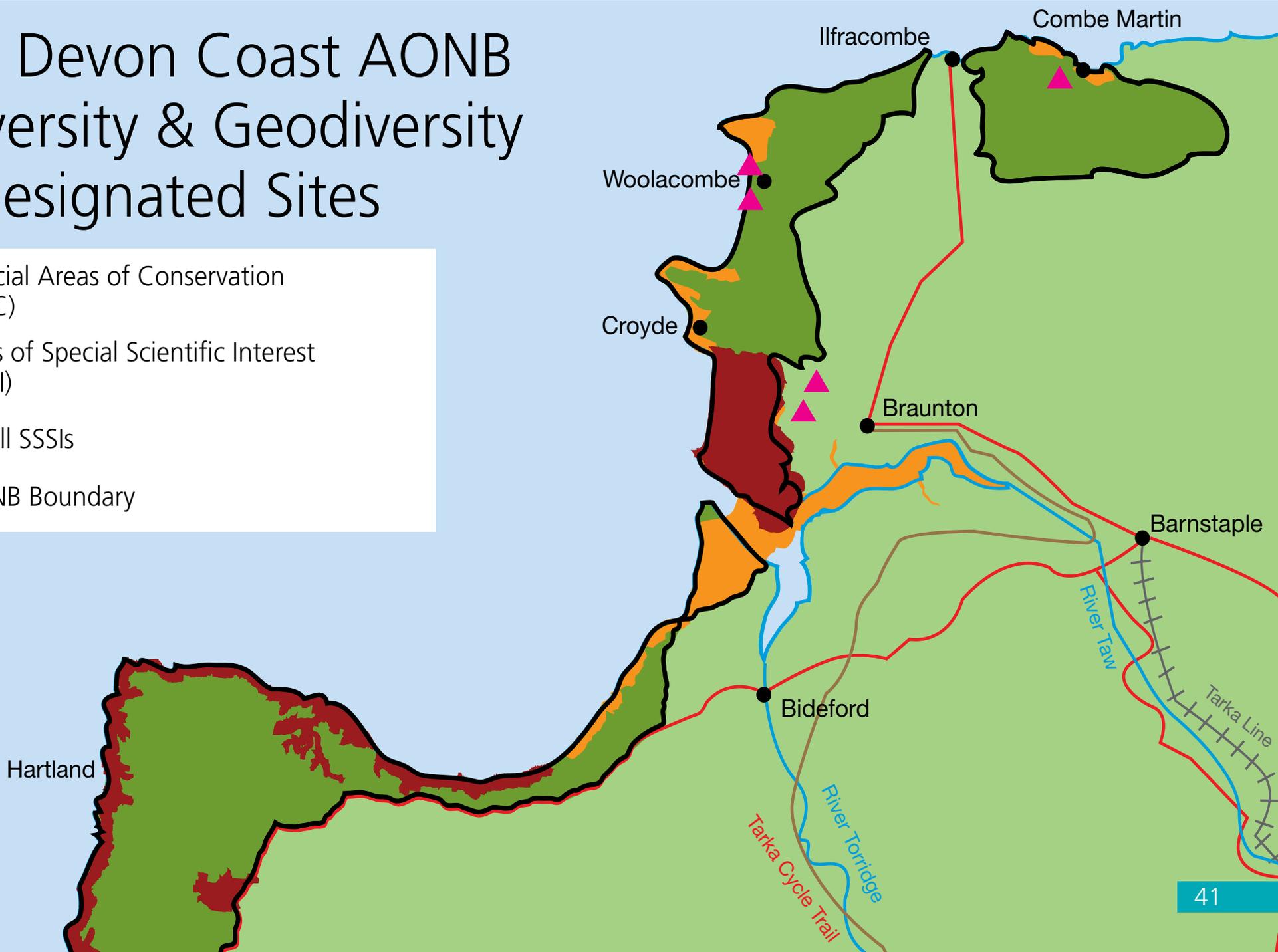
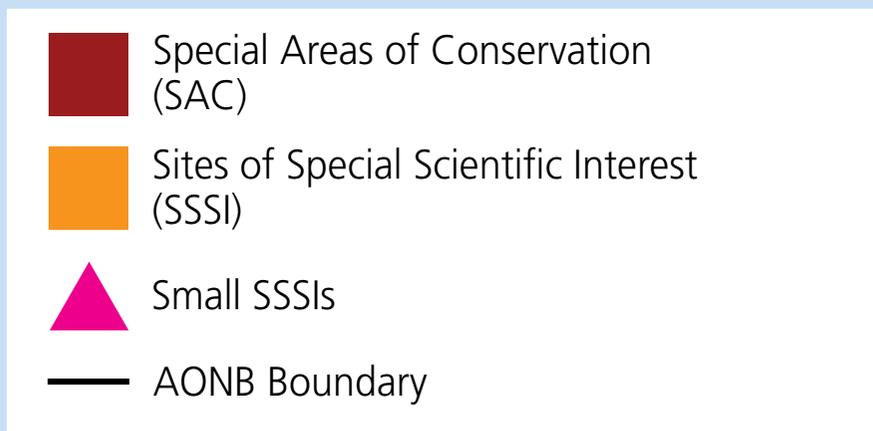
To conserve and enhance the wildlife habitats and species of the North Devon Coast AONB

B1	Identify and address actual and potential impacts on biodiversity
B2	Support approaches to habitat management that encourage the development of ecologically coherent networks and to provide buffering to designated sites
B3	Seek opportunities to restore, expand and improve the links between important rare habitats achieving a strong and resilient ecological network within the AONB
B4	Facilitate climate change adaptation measures which will allow wildlife to “move” within the landscape in response to changes in local climate
B5	Support and extend the range of internationally, nationally and locally important species
B6	Support the long-term survival of vulnerable species within the AONB
B7	Ensure that the marine environment adjacent to the AONB is valued locally and to ensure that local, coastal and marine species and habitats are conserved and enhanced
B8	Raise awareness of the value and importance of biodiversity and the steps necessary to conserve and enhance it

Issues, trends and forces for change

- Biodiversity is under threat from numerous forces for change, within the North Devon AONB the most notable of these are land management practices, in particular agricultural management, and the changes brought about by climate change.
- Developing Biodiversity 2020 approach in tandem with ecosystem services and not losing engagement along the way
- Align the ecological benefits with the needs of the economy
- Climate change and the introduction of increasing numbers of non-native invasive species

North Devon Coast AONB Biodiversity & Geodiversity Key Designated Sites



3. Management Plan

3.1. Management Plan Themes

Issues, trends and forces for change (continued)

- Changes to CAP challenging progress in improving farmland biodiversity
- Environment still perceived as a relatively low priority by the government and people
- Development of the Devon Local Nature Partnership
- Development of a North Devon marine conservation zone as part of tranche 2
- Development of biodiversity offsetting

Measures of progress

- Number of biodiversity projects in AONB
- Use of the sustainable development fund operated by the AONB for biodiversity
- Growth in marine and coastal projects in particular
- Engagement with LNPs
- Development of Devon Nature Map



Dave Edgcombe



Jon Hooper

3. Management Plan

3.1. Management Plan Themes

3.1.3 Historic environment and culture

Introduction

North Devon has a long cultural history that is reflected in the landscape. The character of the area has been shaped by centuries of farming practices and the remnants of these are spread across the AONB. There are remains of strip-field systems, high hedges with distinctive facings of slate and stone, remnants of orchards and soft fruit production.

Ancient hillforts stand watch along the coastline as a reminder of the more turbulent past, whilst harbours stand testament to the fishing history of the region, an industry that survives to this day.

Background and evidence

The AONB has a long history of human habitation that is woven into the landscape, with some threads tracing back to pre-historic times. The most extensive historic landscape features are the enclosed fields defined by ancient hedgebanks, their patterns reflecting centuries of agricultural management and change. Historic farmsteads, hamlets and villages are connected by winding lanes.

Inland, the skyline is marked by ancient burial mounds whilst along the coast, promontory sites have been home to strategic defences from the Iron Age to the twentieth century. Devon's maritime heritage is reflected in the historic harbours, quays and villages that pepper the coast such as Hartland Quay and Clovelly.

North Devon is largely an agricultural and maritime heritage that is reflected in local culture and traditions. Village events and festivals are focused around the agricultural year and celebrate good harvests. Many villages are isolated so a strong sense of community prevails.

North Devon has 21 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, four are considered at risk. Three require more active management and the fourth, Embury Beacon is at risk due to coastal erosion²¹.

There are 406 listed buildings in the North Devon AONB: 6 grade I, 32 grade II* and 378 grade II. One site is on the EH Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

Policies

To conserve and enhance and raise appreciation of the historic features of the North Devon Coast AONB

E1	Identify, protect and conserve the historic environment of the AONB, its setting and the historic character of the landscape
E2	Encourage access to, interpretation and understanding of heritage assets by all sections of the community to enable better current and future management.
E3	Support cultural traditions and diversity throughout the AONB.

Issues, trends and forces for change

- Development impacting on traditional character of settlements
- Reducing money available to manage archaeological sites appropriately
- On-going need to monitor and manage Scheduled Monuments
- Scrub encroachment on hillforts
- Changes in age and population structure
- Coastal erosion affecting World War 2 sites of Northam Burrows and Braunton Burrows as well as inter-tidal features in the Taw-Torridge estuary

Measures of progress

- Reductions in SMs at risk
- Number and % of locally listed heritage assets at risk
- Minimum of 2 Sustainable Development Fund projects each year linked to historic environment and culture

Westward Ho! beach



3. Management Plan

3.1. Management Plan Themes

3.1.4 Environmental quality and climate change

Introduction

Clean air, land and waters, combined with tranquillity and fine landscapes, are vital for the quality of life, health and mental well-being enjoyed by those living in and around the AONB. This high environmental quality helps to attract over two million visitors, who gain enjoyment and health benefits from their visit, whilst contributing to the local economy.

For this Management Plan, the issues around environmental quality and climate change have been developed as a cross-cutting theme. If we are to ensure that we address the challenges faced by climate change it must not be seen as an “add on” to a process. The policies set out in this section are derived from all the other sections in the Management Plan.

Background and Evidence

Government air quality statistics show that air quality in the South West is generally good in comparison to the rest of England. Water quality in rivers and coastal waters has improved significantly in recent years. The AONB is one of the most tranquil areas in the country, with the Hartland Peninsula having the greatest proportion of remaining dark skies. However tranquillity levels have been eroded in the last decade.

Temperature shows a seasonal variation, but due to the modifying effect of the sea, the range is less than in most other parts of the UK. July and August are the warmest months in the region, with mean daily temperature ranges from 19°C in coastal areas to 21°C in inland areas. The average monthly rainfall for the AONB ranges from 68mm -196mm and the average monthly duration of sunshine ranges from 50-250 hours²⁴.

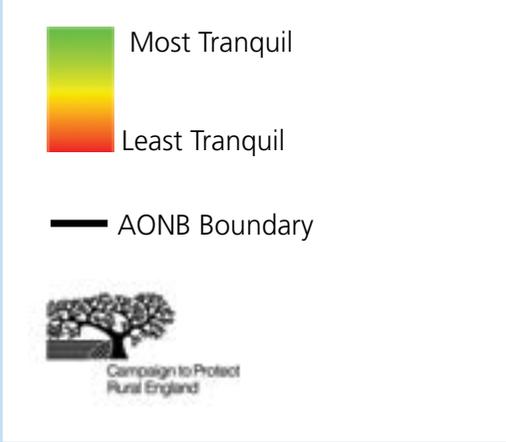
Since the last Management Plan was produced, the UK has experienced some of the wettest years ever recorded – flooding in the South West has become an increasing issue – both coastal, fluvial, and increasingly from surface water run-off. Since the last plan, Braunton has flooded on three occasions and last year a reservoir failure caused an extreme flooding event in Clovelly.

One of the challenges of climate change is to reduce their carbon emissions. There is a great deal of emphasis on the development of renewable energy options to reduce carbon emissions. As a result there has been a proliferation of wind turbines both within the North Devon AONB and its setting. These have a significant visual impact on the landscape. In addition the development of solar farms has the potential to impact on the landscape. This is a challenge for all AONB's: renewable energy is a vital component of the energy mix for the country, but not at the expense of designated landscapes.

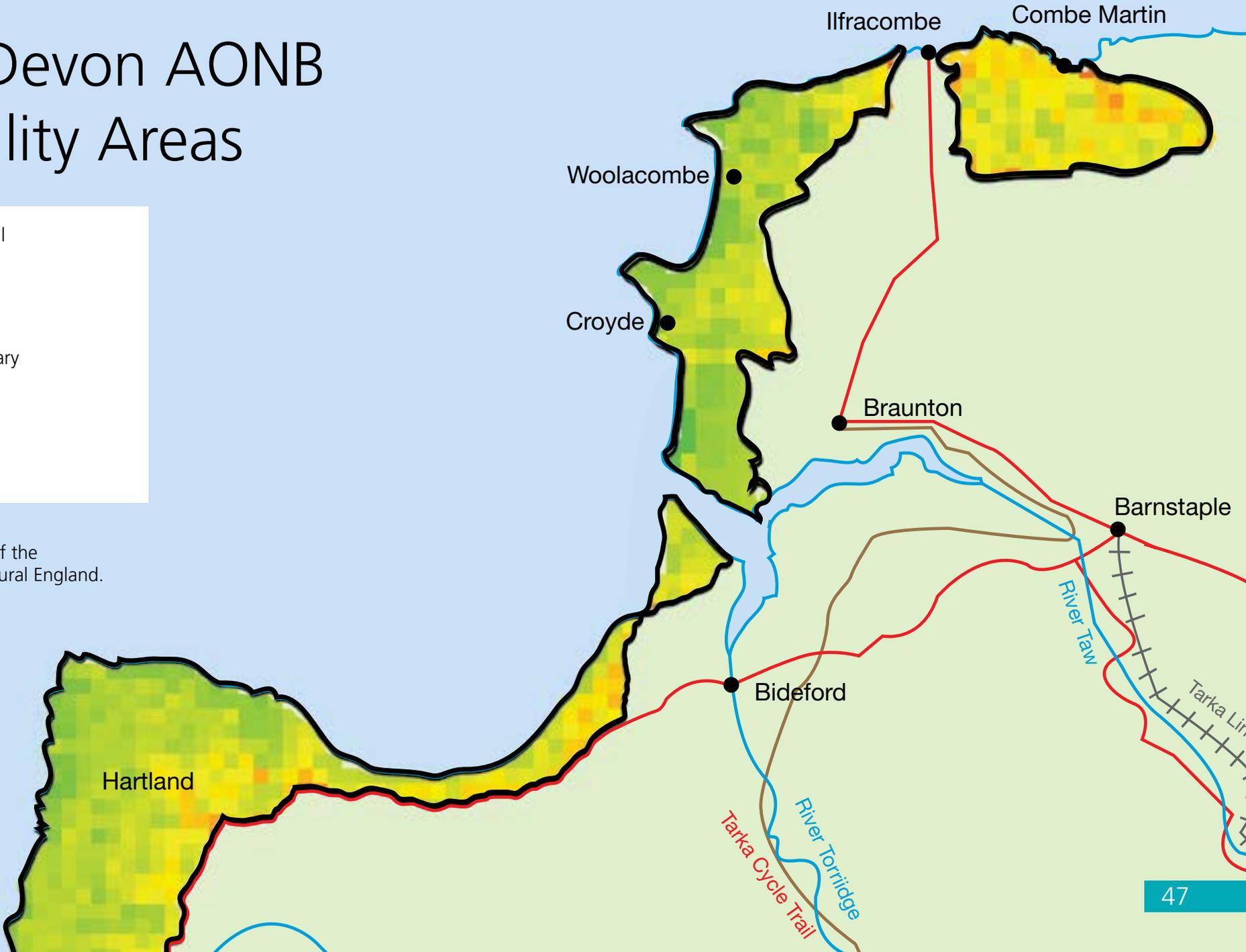
Policies

A5	Respond to the impacts of climate change, which may affect landscape, wildlife and the special qualities of the AONB.
B3	Seek opportunities to restore, expand and improve the links between important, rare habitats achieving a strong and resilient ecologically network within the North Devon AONB.
D1	Conserve and enhance the North Devon coast whilst mitigating the impacts of climate change
F5	Support the production of renewable energy and ensure that offshore and onshore technologies are developed which are consistent with AONB designation and the achievement of favourable status on European sites
I5	Promote the use of sustainable vernacular building design and construction, using traditional materials and styles wherever possible and incorporating renewable energy and water recycling technologies where these do not detract from the historic character and fabric of buildings
J3	Inform and encourage sustainable living and working within the AONB in mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change

North Devon AONB Tranquility Areas



Reproduced courtesy of the Campaign to Protect Rural England. Revised edition 2007.



3. Management Plan

3.1. Management Plan Themes

Issues, trends and forces for change

- Climate change is the most important pressure on the environment of South West; hotter and drier summers, warmer and wetter winters with more extreme weather, increased flood risk compounded by sea-level rise
- The ability of the AONB to contribute to the mitigation of the effects of climate change is minimal in global terms. However, the Partnership can, and should, support local adaptation and mitigation initiatives which will have a positive impact.
- CPRE “Tranquility” research (noise and light pollution) demonstrates that the AONB remains a stronghold of tranquillity and remoteness, but that there has been some decline
- The Environment Agency has produced the first iteration of River Basin Plans as a requirement of the Water Framework Directive which imposes high standards of water quality
- DCC initiative to reduce street lighting times
- The North Devon Biosphere Reserve Strategy will support efforts to improve environmental quality.

Measures of progress

- Improved understanding of climate change impacts
- SDF projects that help reduce climate change impacts
- Improved bathing water quality
- Increase in renewable energy production consistent with AONB designation





Matt Fryer Photography

3. Management Plan

3.1. Management Plan Themes

3.1.5 Geodiversity

Introduction

The term 'geodiversity' encompasses the variety of rocks, minerals, fossils, landforms, sediments and soils in an area, together with natural processes, such as erosion and landslips that may still be active. The geodiversity – the rocks, fossils and minerals it contains, have been formed over millions of years. They shape the landforms of the area and provide much of the spectacular scenery along the coastline. Geodiversity provides us with fuels, raw materials and spectacular scenery, amongst other benefits. It inspires awe and wonder in people of all generations and offers opportunities for learning, recreation and tourism.

Background and evidence

The route to secure long-term protection of geological sites is to produce a Local Geodiversity Action Plan (LGAP). Similar to biodiversity action plans they aim to conserve and enhance the geodiversity of a particular area. The process involves identifying, conserving and enhancing the most important sites, promoting sites to people, communities and others, assessing condition of sites and influencing local planning policy.

Currently there are more than 40 LGAPs in progress, focusing on county or other administrative areas.

The North Devon Coast AONB underlying geology is a mixture of carboniferous sandstones and shales, Devonian slates, sandstones and volcanics with an area of transition sandwiched in between.

Spectacular zig-zag patterns in the Carboniferous rocks can be seen along the Atlantic coast - at Hartland Quay, and at places inland. This illustrates how the rocks were crumpled and contorted by the collision of crustal plates, and thrust up into mountains. Whilst heading northward brings in the slates and sandstones that form the character of the local villages, most apparent in Mortehoe.

Limestone intrusions around Ilfracombe and Combe Martin are unusual for North Devon and have left a legacy of history in the form of lime kilns and burners as a key part of the industrial heritage of the area.

Within the North Devon Coast AONB there are a number of geological SSSIs of which 93% are in a favourable condition. Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) or County Geological Sites are promoted by Natural England, the County Council and the Geological Society. They are locally important geological/geomorphologic sites of value for education, geological research or aesthetic reasons. Whilst they are non-statutory designations, they are recognised as important "material considerations" when local authorities assess planning applications.

Currently, there are 13 designated County Geological Sites within the North Devon AONB boundary.

Policies

To conserve and enhance the geodiversity of the North Devon Coast AONB and recognise the contribution to landscape value

C1	Manage and enhance nationally important and locally characteristic geodiversity, in particular the coastal exposures.
C2	Maintain and enhance the geodiversity of the AONB through the appropriate management of sites, areas and wider landscapes
C3	Increase public understanding of geodiversity and how this contributes to the natural beauty and local distinctiveness of the AONB.

Issues, trends and forces for change

- Inappropriate development may encroach on sensitive sites
- Natural degradation (erosion) of a feature may occur over time – this can be accelerated by climate change processes
- Unsustainable specimen collecting
- Over-intensive site use for recreation

Measures of progress

- Development of an LGAP
- Starting implementation of LGAP priorities
- Condition of geological SSSIs

Mouthmill near Clovelly



3. Management Plan

3.1. Management Plan Themes

3.1.6 The Coast

Introduction

The coast is a vital asset for North Devon's economy and sense of identity and for the welfare of its residents. The sea has major impacts on the beauty and interest of the adjacent landscape and many people are drawn to its edge to experience its dynamism and power, and to enjoy the ephemeral changes of tide, weather and season.

Background and Evidence

Land ownership within the North Devon Coast AONB is complex, with a range of organisations, from private landlords and trusts through to statutory bodies, managing the area. This complexity has led to the loss of opportunities for a holistic approach to issues of concern. Despite this difficult national situation, our AONB coastal assets remain strong. Community interest in the coast is robust with a Voluntary Marine Conservation Area, the Taw Torridge Estuary Forum and North Devon Coastwise group.

Management of the coastline and the marine environment falls to a number of bodies; coastal protection is effected through Shoreline Management Plans²⁵ that details the management options for the coastline. Within the North Devon Coast AONB Northam Burrows is identified as no active intervention which means that the shape and nature of the coastline will change. This needs to be a managed process with appropriate attention to landscape impacts.

Fisheries and conservation out to six nautical miles are regulated by the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority. Their remit is largely regulation for fisheries and conservation; the North Devon AONB's input is largely to advise on marine conservation issues of concern.

In 2011, through the stakeholder driven Finding Sanctuary process, candidate marine conservation zones were identified along the Devon coast. North Devon sites were not included in the first tranche of sites brought forward for designation in 2013.

Policies

To conserve and enhance the coast and marine environment of the North Devon Coast AONB

D1	Conserve and enhance the North Devon Coast AONB whilst mitigating the impacts of climate change
D2	Ensure that offshore and inshore developments are fully evaluated for adverse impacts on the North Devon AONB by use of tools such as Seascape assessment and acted upon
D3	Clearly define the special qualities of the North Devon AONB at the coast and its interrelationships with the neighbouring marine environment; to enable full account to be taken of the AONB in marine and coastal planning and management
D4	Speak up for the North Devon Coast to ensure that AONB purposes and special qualities are fully taken into account in decision-making affecting the coast and are incorporated into any future marine plan for the North Devon coast.
D5	Promote the implementation of MCZ's in North Devon.
D6	Ensure water quality and the state of the environment of our inshore waters and streams supports biodiversity and social well-being

Issues, trends and forces for change

- Climate change will cause a rise in sea level leading to a loss of important and defensive habitats by increased erosion and 'coastal squeeze', and an increase in coastal flooding and may provide opportunities to create new habitats
- Balancing the desire to protect property, historic and geological sites, and livelihoods, whilst maintaining the coastal landscape, will require tough decisions and creative solutions through Shoreline Management Planning
- Northam Burrows, including the former waste disposal site, is especially vulnerable to sea-level rise and National Trust property at Woolacombe has been identified as at risk

- The MCZ process has yet to deliver on any protection for the North Devon coast. The first tranche of sites was designated in Autumn 2013 with a second and third tranche to follow.
- Renewable Energy: the Atlantic Array proposal; proposals for a Tidal Barrage in the Taw Torridge Estuary; and the proposed Severn Estuary Barrage present opportunities not only for the mitigation of climate change, but also potential seascape impacts for the AONB
- A large number of agencies, voluntary organisations and partnerships working to protect the coastal environment, with the consequent potential for confusion and inefficiencies
- Lack of understanding of the individual and cumulative impact of development on our seascape and its consequent effect on the economy

Measures of progress

- Shoreline Management Plan 2 implementation
- Strong active membership of Taw-Torridge Estuary Forum or similar
- Maritime habitat action plans in place
- Marine plan for North Devon coast



Dave Edgcombe

3. Management Plan

3.2 Sustainable Development

3.2.1 Planning and development

Introduction

Due to the legally protected status of AONBs (CRoW Act 2000), land within nationally designated AONBs must be treated differently to land outside the designation, as it has the highest status of landscape protection.

Further to this, the Government has confirmed that in the decision-making process great weight must be placed on the primary purpose of AONBs, being the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty. Accordingly, the Government has also confirmed within the plan-making process there should be a strategic approach to AONBs in order to plan positively for their conservation and enhancement, to consider and reference AONB Management Plans and through directing development (in particular major development) to land of lesser environmental value, outside the AONB.

Background and Evidence

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are designated by the Government for the purpose of ensuring that the special qualities of the finest landscapes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are conserved and enhanced.

- The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area, as confirmed by Section 82 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act). (It is important to note that “Natural Beauty” encompasses, wildlife and heritage, as well as landscape)
- Within Section 85 of the CRoW Act 2000, there is a duty on all relevant authorities to have regard to this purpose in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in AONBs.
- Sections 88 & 89 of the Act state that each local authority and conservation board shall prepare and publish a Management Plan for their AONB which should then be reviewed at intervals of no more than 5 years. Management Plans are adopted statutory policy of the local authority.

- The Government has confirmed that the landscape qualities of National Parks and AONBs are equivalent, so the protection given by the land-use planning system to natural beauty in both types of area should also be equivalent.
- The AONB designation is also of international importance, recognised as a Category V Protected Landscape by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

This legislation places requirements and additional responsibilities on local authorities and the planning system;

- AONBs are defined within the EIA Regulations for specific consideration as a “sensitive area”.
- The CRoW Act Section 85 Duty of Regard requires all public bodies, down to parish council level, to consider the AONB’s nationally protected status in any land-use related decisions. This includes planning applications and the formulation of Local and Neighbourhood Plans.
- AONB Management Plans have been recognised to as constituting a ‘material consideration’ in the planning decision-making process.
- Land within AONBs is recognised differently under the Town and Country Planning Act as Article 1(5) land (which, for example, restricts certain permitted development rights).

It is important to recognise that the primary legislation in relation to AONB designation is from the CRoW Act (2000) and originally from the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. The amount of policy relating to AONBs has reduced greatly since the removal of Structure Plans and the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategies. Policy for AONBs is now solely contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)²⁶ and Local and Neighbourhood Plans²⁷.

Screda Cove near Hartland



3. Management Plan

3.2 Sustainable Development

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides specific guidance for plan-makers and decision-takers in relation to AONBs and confirms that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty and that AONBs have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.

Paragraph 115 states:

“Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks and AONBs which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty”

Paragraph 116 goes on to say:

“Planning permission should be refused for major development in these designated areas except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated in the public interest.”

Therefore the NPPF provides specific planning guidance for plan maker and decision takers in relation to AONBs and confirms that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty and that AONBs have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.

AONBs and their management plans are considered material considerations in planning.

The ‘great weight test’ is significant and one of the most stringent legal tests that can be applied under planning law. In specific relation to major developments, the NPPF states that planning permission should be refused for major developments in AONBs except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest.

It should also be recognised that the “presumption in favour of sustainable development” does not apply within AONBs as confirmed by paragraph 14 footnote 9 of the NPPF, due to the other restrictions placed on AONBs elsewhere within the Framework.

The NPPF confirms that local planning authorities should set out the strategic priorities for their areas within Local Plans and accordingly deliver

the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including landscape. The NPPF also confirms that allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value (counting the AONB as high value), that local planning authorities should set criteria-based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting landscape areas will be judged (development affecting AONBs includes impact on their setting), and that planning should contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

Local and Neighbourhood Plans should set out policy for AONBs locally and define the special qualities of the area. This should include policy reference in Core Strategies and in specific Development Plan Documents (DPD) as relevant, and should specifically cross reference the relevant AONB Management Plan(s). Further to this the existence of an AONB designation should be considered at the very outset in plan preparation and should influence the plan in terms of the strategic location of development, access issues, green infrastructure, Community Infrastructure Levy, use of natural resources, and in terms of landscape and environmental protection.

Maintaining the Undeveloped Coast

As a coastal AONB, additional policy protection can be found within the NPPF and Paragraph 114 states:

“Local Planning Authorities should:

Maintain the character of the undeveloped coast, protecting and enhancing its distinctive landscapes, particularly areas defined as Heritage Coast, and improve public access and enjoyment of the coast”²⁸

The National Planning Policy requirement to maintain the character of the Undeveloped Coast, should be regarded as a strategic policy issue over which there is a statutory duty to cooperate between neighbouring planning authorities on the North Devon Coast and the Marine Management Organisation.

In publishing its Advisory Note 3 “Principles of Defining and Maintaining the Character of Devon’s Undeveloped Coast”, the responsibility that the Local Planning Authority has with regard to Undeveloped Coast is clearly laid down.

Sustainable Development

It is important to note that AONB designation is not about preventing development within the designated area, rather it is about encouraging the right sort of development, which does not harm the purposes of AONB designation. Therefore, we should all be encouraging the development of sustainable buildings that make use of locally distinctive building stone and sustainable use of minerals / small quarries. The Devon Minerals Plan²⁹ will be encouraging greater supply of local stones to address current unavailability of many of Devon’s traditional building stones.

In addition, the AONB has recently developed a new Building Design Guide for the Hartland area of the AONB³⁰. Local authorities should make reference to this when making planning decisions and additional design guides should be considered for other parts of the AONB.

In North Devon the AONB team has a good relationship with the Local Planning Authorities and will continue to work with them and the local community to enable them to fulfil their obligations with regard to Section 85 of the CROW Act and the National Planning Policy Framework.



Neville Stanikk Photography

3. Management Plan

3.2 Sustainable Development

Policies

To ensure the planning process takes into full account the North Devon AONB

I1	Facilitate the development of green infrastructure within the AONB
I2	Support the maintenance and development of sustainable communities providing it is consistent with AONB policies
I3	Ensure planning authorities support the development of ecologically coherent networks through planning gain
I4	No development should be permitted inside or on the edge of the AONB which will have a detrimental impact on the landscape character and setting of the AONB
I5	Promote the use of sustainable vernacular building design and construction, using traditional materials and styles wherever possible and incorporating renewable energy generation and water recycling technologies where these do not detract from the historic character and fabric of buildings

Issues, trends and forces for change

- NPPF still very new and not tested
- Significant pressure for development of onshore, inshore and offshore windfarms
- On-going pressure for development inside and on the edge of the North Devon AONB
- Development of planning policy statements that can form supplementary planning documents in the new Local Plan
- Working to ensure Local Plan is compliant with AONB designation
- The Devon Landscape Policy Group has produced Advice Notes relating to accommodating wind and solar pv development in Devon's landscape and the Undeveloped Coast.

- Torridge District Council and North Devon Council are in the process of completing a Landscape Sensitivity Study related to the deployment of wind and solar developments within the area, in particular within the AONB.

Measures of progress

- Use of LCA in planning decisions
- Adoption of AONB planning policy statements as Supplementary Planning Documents to the new Local Plan
- Development of green infrastructure plans within the AONB, especially around Ilfracombe

Old strip fields at Croyde



3. Management Plan

3.2 Sustainable Development

3.2.2 Farming and land management

Introduction

The North Devon Coast AONB is a farmed landscape. So much of what we have today is as a result of centuries of farming traditions. More recent changes in farming and land management have been heavily influenced by the demands of those providing funds – most arising from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The purpose of the CAP, launched in 1962, is a partnership between agriculture and society, between Europe and its farmers. Its main aims are to improve agricultural productivity, so that consumers have a stable supply of affordable food and to ensure that EU farmers can make a reasonable living.

Farming is not just about food, it is also about the countryside and the landscape. It is about protecting natural resources and working in a way that is sustainable in the short, medium and long term. It is about rural communities and the people who live in them and rely either directly or indirectly on employment from the land.

As this plan is being written, the latest changes to CAP are being agreed at a Member State level. It is therefore difficult to know exactly how these changes will influence farming going forwards. The two pillar system of direct payments to farmers (pillar 1) and rural development (pillar 2) will remain but it will be down to Member States to decide on their own priorities. Moves to “green” CAP have met with significant resistance and have largely been removed. This will impact on both the landscape and biodiversity in an agricultural area such as North Devon.

Background and evidence

Over 80% of the North Devon AONB area is agricultural, most of which is managed by owner occupiers. Significant landowners within the AONB include The National Trust, The Stucley (Hartland), Christie (Braunton) Estate and Clovelly Estate.

A number of organisations contribute to giving advice to farmers and

landowners. Natural England, the Environment Agency and Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT) amongst others working in partnership to give advice. DWT have undertaken advice and visits within the North Devon AONB, covering some 1000 ha since 2008. The RSPB regionally employs staff to encourage and support applications for stewardship schemes from landowners where this can conserve or enhance populations of farmland and coastal birds.

Work on catchment sensitive farming is also carried out by the Biosphere Reserve team. Activity to date undertaken by the Biosphere team includes: 2009/10 – 22 farm visits in the Hartland area and North Devon Streams, 2010/11 – all visits were outside of the AONB and 2011/12 - 25 farm visits. Since 2012 the project has moved inland away from the AONB.

A tenth of the AONB is covered by woodland. Work on woodlands is again supported by a multi-agency approach, led by the Forestry Commission (FC). FC do not own any land within the AONB and therefore their influence is limited to providing grants for the planning, planting, harvesting and sustainable management of woodlands. Thirty-four percent of the woodland in the AONB is under positive management and 98.8 hectares are covered by a Woodland Grant Scheme³¹. FC has a target that 66% of woodland across England should be in positive management by 2018.

Change across the North Devon landscape is also being generated by the proliferation of wind turbines, both individually and in groups. These impact on the landscape through providing intrusion on the skyline as well as generating noise so impacting on tranquillity. Feed-in tariffs encourage these installations and the turbines are being put up in an ad hoc way. Whilst local authorities have produced guidance on such installations there are impacts from turbines in the setting of the AONB, both landward and seaward. Given the impacts of climate change it is hard to challenge the intention behind the introduction of renewable energy installations but there is a greater need to consider setting and impact as these installations will be with us for generations to come.



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3. Management Plan

3.2 Sustainable Development

Policies

To ensure the North Devon Coast AONB continues to support sustainable farming that conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the AONB whilst supporting the local economy

F1	Make the AONB an exemplar for sustainable farming
F2	Maintain the strong pattern of hedgerows for their major contribution to the landscape, biodiversity and soil management
F3	Support local food production that is compatible with the landscape character of the AONB
F4	Encourage the management and extension of existing broadleaved woodland through the use of traditional management techniques
F5	Support the generation of renewable energy that is consistent with the North Devon AONB designation and the achievement of favourable status on European sites
F6	Implement the use of catchment management to ensure good ecological status within catchments such that it supports the biodiversity and economy of the North Devon Coast AONB

Issues, trends and forces for change

- Changes to CAP will influence farming decisions
- Farmers are an ageing population
- Increases in “lifestyle” farming changes landscape
- Climate change impacts on water quantity and availability
- Climate change impacts on crop production
- Risk from pests, diseases (such as ash dieback and Phytophthora) and non-native invasive species

- Changes to soil structure, compaction due to poor farming practices causing surface water flooding problems and soil erosion
- Reduction in forestry grants
- Demise of South West Forests
- Rise in popularity of local food and farmers’ markets
- Wind turbines and wind farms

Measures of progress

- Increase in area of farmland in North Devon AONB covered by environmental stewardship schemes
- Engagement in catchment management for delivery of Water Framework Directive
- Reduced surface water flooding due to robust land management practices
- Increase in area of woodland in North Devon AONB under positive management through a Woodland Grant Scheme or other route

Clovelly



3. Management Plan

3.2 Sustainable Development

3.2.3 Access, recreation and health

Introduction

The primary purpose of the AONB is to conserve and enhance natural beauty; whilst recreation is not an objective of the designation it is nonetheless a vital component of our engagement with local people and visitors alike. By bringing people closer to their environment we are able to engender a desire to protect it and help support the objectives of the AONB. Coupled with this is a need for all of us to develop healthier lifestyles. The environment plays an important role in our mental well-being so access to nature and local greenspace needs to be sustained and improved.

Background and evidence

Access and recreation

There are 288km of Public Rights of Way, including 86km of South West Coast Path which is a National Trail. In addition there are 935 ha of Open Access Land, as defined under the CRoW Act, covering approximately 5% of the total area within the AONB³². In addition, wide sandy beaches popular for beach activities and water sports can be found along the coast from Westward Ho! through to the Exmoor Border.

Along the coast path, there are wide stretches of land where there is open access. More than 90% of the SWCP is classified as easy access and there is a programme of work, supported by the Biosphere team, National Trust and landowners, to remove stiles and replace with gates thus improving accessibility.

The SWCP is part of a strategic long-distance route of considerable economic value to the AONB and to the South West. It is the most popular national trail in the UK and appears in the Lonely Planet guides. This popularity has led to direct and indirect impacts on the local environment arising from transport, visitor activity and tourism-related businesses, all of which present challenges for the AONB. Whilst there is a high usage of the AONB amongst local residents, there is also a need to reach out to vulnerable groups to increase their access to the AONB.

North Devon is known for its watersports and in particular surfing. Surfing is worth more than £52m per annum to North Devon and supports 1500 jobs³³. Increasingly people come to North Devon to get involved in other watersports such as kayaking, coastering and wild swimming. All of these have the potential

to have a detrimental impact on the North Devon Coast AONB unless carefully managed.

Health

The World Health Organisation defines good health as:

“A state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, not merely the absence of disease”

The AONB is clearly able to contribute to this and evidence from the 2011 Census shows that 73% of people mentioned the environment as being important to their wellbeing and in particular access to nature and local greenspace³⁴. Areas of deprivation are often characterised by limited access to a high quality environment and there are links between this and the poorer mental well-being amongst more deprived communities³⁵. The AONB supports improving access to the countryside that is sustained and sustainable.

Policies

To ensure sustainable access to the North Devon Coast AONB for the benefit of the health of local people and visitors, consistent with the designation

H1	Promote access to the natural environment celebrating the natural, historic, inspirational and tranquil places to all
H2	Increase sustainable and sensitive access to the AONB in ways that are compatible with AONB designation and the achievement of favourable status for European sites.
H3	Enhance the environment along the SWCP and increase access and interpretation
H4	Reduce barriers to participation in countryside recreation
H5	Maximise opportunities for countryside recreation in the AONB
H6	Maximise health-linked recreation in the AONB
H7	Develop links with healthy lifestyle initiatives

Issues, trends and forces for change

- The nature of tourism is changing – holidays are shorter and often themed around a particular activity
- Interest in coastal recreation has grown, in particular coasteering and canoeing. This increases the risk of disturbance to wildlife
- The increase and success of local festivals bring economic benefits and raise awareness of environmental concerns but also adversely increases car journeys, pressure for camping, and localised noise
- Increasing emphasis on sustainable tourism
- Significant concentrations of vulnerable and excluded groups within and close to the AONB
- Disabled access to beaches and footpaths is limited.
- 24-30% of adults in North Devon are obese, North Devon has the highest rate of obesity in children in Devon County Council's area
- Mental well-being issues are more prevalent in deprived areas of which there ...are a number in North Devon
- Health is a key theme of the Local Nature Partnership

Measures of progress

- Accessibility of SWCP
- Interpretation available in both regular and digital formats
- Support access through a minimum of 1 SDF project each year about access
- Develop health and the North Devon Coast AONB strategy



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3. Management Plan

3.2 Sustainable Development

3.2.4 Transport and highways

Introduction

In an isolated, rural area, transport and highways are essential to the everyday lives of residents and the large number of visitors to North Devon and the AONB. The transport infrastructure on land and sea constitutes an important element of the cultural history and local distinctiveness of the area.

Background and evidence

Public transport is limited in the AONB³⁶; consequently, there is high dependence on private cars. Numbers of cars increase dramatically during the holiday season, bringing problems of congestion and parking, particularly in coastal areas and increasingly in remote areas. These challenges have been reflected in the Devon and Torbay local transport Plan.

In recent years, there has been a proposal to provide a ferry service from Ilfracombe across to South Wales but this will depend on infrastructure upgrades to Ilfracombe Harbour.

During the 2009-2014 Management Plan, the SDF supported a cycle and surf bus in partnership with North Devon+. This proved not to be economically viable and demonstrates the challenge of providing services in sparsely-populated rural and coastal areas.

There are conflicting demands on the management of highways within the AONB - to encourage access whilst maintaining what are often narrow country lanes, retaining tranquillity and conserving natural beauty. An associated issue is the negative impact of signage, lighting and other safety measures on the landscape and tranquillity of the AONB.

As a result the North Devon Coast AONB has worked with Devon County Council, as the Highways Authority, responsible for road management, and other Protected Landscapes to develop a Highways Protocol and Guide about how highways can be more sympathetically managed within the designated area³⁷. This is not necessarily more expensive and, in these austere times, the opportunity to reduce over-management of our road network could result in

saving much-needed public funding and help to protect the highways from urbanisation.

The AONB team is keen to adopt this protocol and guide as a supplementary document to our new Management Plan.

Although there is growing visitor interest in car-free activities, the limited bus network and problems with buses accommodating bicycles and surf boards does not encourage changes in behaviour.

Policies

To encourage sustainable, integrated transport provision and ensure highways are managed in a way that enhances the landscape and local distinctiveness

16	Encourage the provision of sustainable, integrated public and community transport including initiatives which enable people to explore the AONB
17	Ensure highway improvements and management practices enhance the landscape, tranquillity and local distinctiveness by adherence to local protocols
18	Work towards the removal of infrastructure that creates an eyesore in the AONB where this does not affect sensitive underground structures

Bucks Mills valley



3. Management Plan

3.2 Sustainable Development

Issues, trends and forces for change

- The promotion of sustainable-transport options, including more community transport
- Limited public transport and infrequent services
- Number of cars accessing popular beaches has implications for landscape and for the carbon footprint of the AONB
- Increasing demand for greater access to the countryside
- Impact of road improvements and increased demand for signage
- Increased pressure of car-related tourism at key points e.g. Woolacombe and Braunton, linked to the growth in water sports
- Proposed new ferry links with South Wales and across the Taw Torridge Estuary
- There is potential tension between improvements for road safety and maintaining traditional signage and local distinctiveness
- Changes in nature of road drainage system to mitigate the effects of surface water flooding

Measures of progress

- Bus services in AONB are sustained
- Explore the coast website is used and kept up to date
- Adherence to the Highways Protocol and Guide within the AONB by the Highways Authority



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3. Management Plan

3.2 Sustainable Development

3.2.5 Rural economy and tourism

Introduction

North Devon is a priority area in Devon for economic regeneration which presents challenges and opportunities for the AONB both in realising its economic potential and in delivering key services³⁸. Through the economic downturn, in common with the rest of the country, unemployment has increased and opportunities in this region are more limited. North Devon has a very high proportion of micro-businesses supporting one or two individuals. Incomes here are some of the lowest in the country.

The Heart of the South West (HotSW) Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was formed under the leadership of the private sector supported by the local authorities from Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay and district councils from throughout the area in June 2011. It is one of 39 partnerships created since the Government's Local Growth White Paper was published in October 2010³⁹.

LEPs are unique due to the direct involvement of the business community – HotSW is a partnership managed by a voluntary board consisting of business leaders, alongside representatives from local government and educational institutions. They work together to lead and influence the economy of Devon, Somerset, Plymouth and Torbay by improving economic growth and job creation.

Development of sustainable business opportunities is needed across North Devon. Within the North Devon Coast AONB business developments must take into account the AONB designation and the sensitivity of the location for development.

Background and evidence

Through its rural nature and location, the local economy varies from that of the region, with greater dependence on agriculture, manufacturing and tourism. The area is attracting migrant workers into low-skill, low-wage sectors. Key strategies for economic development encourage diversification and improved competitiveness, developing added-value sectors, and encouraging

environmental sustainability and the environmental economy. This focus offers opportunities to encourage sustainable economic activity within the AONB, including wood fuel, sustainable construction, heritage businesses, energy efficiency and sustainable tourism. Connectivity to broadband is especially important in remote rural areas where home-working is becoming more common.

Tourism is a vital part of the local economy⁴⁰; visitors are drawn here by the stunning beaches, dramatic coastlines, the South West Coast Path and the tranquillity of the Hartland Peninsula. Growth in recreational activity through tourism can impact upon historic assets, particularly Scheduled Ancient Monuments and undesignated field monuments. Care needs to be taken to prevent erosion by off-road use, horse riding or visitor footfall.

Policies

To promote sustainable development within the North Devon AONB that is consistent with the designation

G1	Promote the use of products that are locally sourced and sustainably produced
G2	Encourage appropriate management of existing woodlands for their contribution towards biofuels
G3	Support and develop sustainable tourism opportunities that conserve the special qualities of the AONB
G4	Support businesses in gaining value from the AONB without impacting on the environmental resource
G5	Develop a sustainable economy based on the AONB's natural assets

Issues, trends and forces for change

- In 2008 tourism in North Devon was worth £376m and supported 10,633 jobs⁴¹
- The global economic downturn has caused difficulties for all sectors of the economy
- Successive summers of poor weather have made the challenge even greater
- There is a trend towards shorter breaks and staycations where people choose to travel on day trips from home thus reducing the costs of fuel. The new Local plan includes targets to ensure a sustainable tourism industry in North Devon
- There is a need to diversify the tourism offer to embrace cultural and sports tourism
- Increased recreation in an area may have a negative impact on historic assets
- Growth in local food products offers opportunities to grow the economy

Measures of progress

- Growth in North Devon economy
- Reduction in unemployment
- Use of ecosystem services approach adopted
- Diversification of tourism offer



Neville Stanikk Photography

3. Management Plan

3.2 Sustainable Development

3.2.6 Community

Introduction

The AONB is a living and working coastal landscape with vibrant communities, dependent on local people and visitors alike to sustain it. By nature North Devon is isolated; it is not easily accessed by public transport and communities are spread out within the AONB giving a sense of peace and space. North Devon has a vibrant arts community and is also the home of Damien Hirst, one of the UK's most successful artists. His influence in the region is increasing with the installation of Verity in Ilfracombe which is just outside the AONB – although some of the most interesting views of her are to be obtained by climbing Hillsborough Local Nature Reserve which is in the AONB.

Background and evidence

The resident community is very diverse; from very affluent areas to some of the most deprived in Devon, with great dependency on Barnstaple for employment. The AONB has a high proportion of older residents and lower numbers of young people, with significant populations of other disadvantaged groups, especially those with mental health issues within the wider catchment. This presents both challenges for the AONB in engaging such diverse groups but also opportunities to introduce people to the AONB through alternative routes such as art, music or theatre.

The community has opportunities to participate in the AONB through the AONB Partnership, and through volunteering, consultation processes and benefiting from the Sustainable Development Fund.

The area has a tradition of strong creative industries which, together with a diverse range of festivals and events, play a key role in raising awareness of the AONB, past and present.

Policies

To involve more people in helping to enjoy, understand and take action to conserve the North Devon Coast AONB.

J1	Develop community action and understanding of the special features of the AONB and its setting which includes the Heritage Coast.
J2	Develop and promote opportunities for people to support the AONB
J3	Inform and encourage sustainable living and working within the AONB in mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change.
J4	Support the provision and retention of community facilities in accordance with AONB objectives

Issues, trends and forces for change

- Changing population characteristics and associated access issues – ageing population, decline in young people, increase in obesity leading to poor health, increase in migrant workers.
- Climate change - increasing public awareness, higher fuel costs impacting on tourism/recreation
- Increasing requirements for community engagement at all levels as part of localism agenda.
- Increasing emphasis on sustainable approach to developments and activities.
- Strong tradition of volunteering in North Devon.
- All AONB Parishes have village plans but few have strong landscape actions.

Measures of progress

- More volunteers supporting the work of the AONB
- Number of individuals from under-represented groups involved in AONB activities
- Improved access opportunities for under-represented groups

Blackpool Mill



3.3.1 Education and awareness

Introduction

Education and awareness-raising plays a prominent role in the work of AONBs. For an area to be properly cared for, the people living in, working in and visiting the area need to recognise and understand its relevance and importance. This is a cross-cutting theme within the Management Plan and policies in this area are drawn from all the other themes.

Background and Evidence

A great deal of time and money has been spent on raising the profile of the ND AONB. Projects such as Explore the Coast bring people into contact with the concept of AONBs in a user-friendly way. The very nature of what we do and how we work to protect and enhance the landscape is often difficult to understand. The challenge is in translating complex messages into ones that people can understand and engage with. Cordiale project work through Fixed Post Photography is an excellent example of how we can improve our engagement techniques.

Since the preparation of the last Management Plan the digital age has exploded and the AONB has taken advantage of the relatively low cost of using Facebook and Twitter not only to spread our message but also to access new and younger audiences.

Policies

To encourage local people and visitors to enjoy, understand and take action to protect the North Devon Coast AONB.

A6	Raising public awareness of the importance of landscape and its contribution to the natural beauty of the North Devon AONB
B8	Raise awareness of the value and importance of biodiversity as the steps necessary to conserve and enhance it
C3	Increase public understanding of geodiversity and how this contributes to the natural beauty of the North Devon Coast AONB
D4	To speak up for the North Devon Coast to ensure that AONB purposes and special qualities are fully taken into account in decision-making and are incorporated in the future North Devon marine plan
E2	Encouraging access to, interpretation and understanding of heritage assets by all to enable better decision-making
H2	Promote access to the natural environment celebrating the natural, historic, inspirational and tranquil places to all
J2	Develop and promote opportunities for people to support the North Devon Coast AONB

Issues, trends and forces for change

- Resources for AONB communications: There are limited resources for communications and yet there is a need to ensure that the special qualities of the designation are understood and valued.
- Developing better links to education in particular in light of the advent of Academies and Free schools
- Staying up to date with new technologies and how they can maximise opportunities to engage.

- Promotion of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Designation could lead to confusion and perceived devaluing of the AONB, likewise the plethora of valued organisations working on the coastal area is confusing to the non-expert
- The linear nature of the AONB means that its cultural identity is weak e.g. as compared to the Cotswolds or Cannock Chase.
- There is a drive for a national brand identity for AONBs to give a much needed boost for AONBs nationally. However, a balance needs to be made to ensure that the AONB is seen as integral to more local brands and promotions and still retains its own identity.

Measures of progress

- Number of friends on Facebook/followers on Twitter
- Unique visits to explorethecoast.org
- At least 1 SDF funded local heritage project each year



Alison Heimann

3. Management Plan

3.3 Engagement

3.3.2 Boundary Issues

Introduction

The North Devon Coast and the Taw Torridge Estuary form a dramatic landscape which is a national asset as well as being an essential component of the economy and the quality of life of residents of the two districts within which they fall.

Background and evidence

A number of designations have been applied to the coastal hinterland of North Devon including; Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Area of Greater Landscape Value, Heritage Coast, Coastal Preservation Area, Biosphere Reserve (Core and Buffer Zone), SAC and SSSI. These designations are overlapping, but with common boundaries in some places, and there are separate sets of policies and regulations that apply to them. Of these, the strongest for landscape protection are the AONB and in ecological terms the SACs.

The AONB boundary excludes the majority of the Taw Torridge Estuary, although it is an SSSI. The voluntary group, the Taw Torridge Estuary Forum, continues with support from local, regional and national organisations. There is a Management Strategy in place and projects are carried out where funding permits. There is reciprocal membership between the Taw Torridge Estuary Forum and the AONB Partnership. The AONB Partnership role within the Estuary is primarily concerned with the impacts that Estuary-related activities have on the special qualities of the AONB and other valued coastal landscapes.

Natural England are responsible for designating Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and their policy is laid out in the designation strategy.⁴²

The purpose of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty is the conservation and enhancement of their natural beauty (which includes their flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features). Natural England has discretionary powers to designate AONBs where this is desirable but there is no explicit duty to do so. There is desire locally to look at extending the AONB to include two key areas – Lundy and Braunton Great Field and Marshes. All are significant,

defined as Heritage Coast, and iconic places in North Devon and are worthy of consideration. Nationally, the appetite to amend boundaries is very low, partly due to lack of resources and because gathering sufficient evidence to justify extending the boundary is costly and time-consuming.

Issues, trends and forces for change

- Changes to planning policy disempower local decision-making
- Funding constraints limit ability to gather evidence
- Should a proposed change come forward it would be through the NE Designations Strategy

Measures of progress

- Sustained and growing recognition of the Heritage Coast designation alongside the AONB
- To ensure the setting of the AONB is considered, in particular the marine environment

Ilfracombe



3.3.3 The UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and the North Devon AONB

Introduction

Biosphere Reserves are designated by UNESCO to be sites of excellence for demonstrating sustainable development on a bio-regional scale. The reserves have 3 functions:

- Conservation of ecosystems, habitats, species and genetic diversity
- Development that is environmentally, economically and socially equitable
- Knowledge management to promote learning and understanding to be an example for the local and international community.

They are structured with 3 zones:

- Core area: highly protected ecosystem of bioregional significance,
- Buffer Zone; an area where land/sea management is sympathetic to the conservation of the objectives of the core area
- Transition area that is denoted by the extent of the ecosystems where sustainability will be a key aim of the community.

Background and evidence

The core area Braunton Burrows and part of the estuary and a large part of the buffer zone lies within the AONB and indeed sections of the buffer zone is justified by the AONB as a protective measure. Therefore the UNESCO designation has an important relationship with the AONB.

The interests of the Biosphere Reserve and the AONB have very much in common. This is deeper than the obvious biodiversity. For example, the conservation and development functions include conservation of culture which will include the landscape and traditional practices within the AONB. The Biosphere Reserve also

seeks adaptation to climate change through the optimisation of the range of ecosystems services provided through landscape, this may lead to land-use and landscape change but in ways that enhance the natural beauty of the area. The Biosphere Reserve works to underpin national policy and therefore gives the AONB policies primacy when considering developments in the AONB and may push more on the sustainable construction and operation of buildings for example.

The AONB is at the heart of the Biosphere Reserve. As well as the hinterland behind the coastal strip, this includes the marine areas where it has led on the work for improved marine conservation, the estuary area where it has developed and reviewed the estuary management plan. Whilst, outside of the AONB, the Biosphere Reserve may take a more holistic view of development, its evolving energy and land-use policies will be cognisant of the special qualities of the AONB. Both bodies are required to produce a Management Plan and these two documents will work in tandem.

Issues, trends and forces for change

- Funding for the Biosphere Reserve in the current economic climate is uncertain and diminishing
- Recognition of the Biosphere Reserve as an entity is relatively low
- Agreed and on-going need for AONB and Biosphere Reserve to work in partnership
- People are confused by the two designations and what they mean and how they differ

Measures of progress

- Dovetailing of the two Management Plans to ensure complementarity in approach
- Greater recognition by people of the two designations and how they differ
- Joint projects



Neville Stanikk Photography

4. Implementation, monitoring and reporting

Implementation – delivery of the Management Plan

The AONB Management Plan is a plan for the area and requires the support and involvement of a broad range of groups and organisations if it is to succeed. The role of the AONB unit is to lead in some areas, partner in others and to advocate in others. The Delivery Plan shows clearly the role for the AONB unit for each action.

The implementation of the Management Plan is articulated through the Delivery Plan which is also part of the consultation process. To tie in with the Management Plan, the Delivery Plan is broken down into sections that cover the same headings.

For each heading there is a set of SMART actions showing clearly how these are derived from the policies. For each action the Delivery Plan indicates whether the AONB will lead the work area, act as a partner in delivery or support as an advocate where practicable those who are delivering. Many of the actions included in the plan will be dependent on securing additional funds over and above the existing, diminishing AONB budget.

Prioritisation of the actions will be agreed by the Partnership annually and will form the basis of the business plan for the year. Thus the changing nature of challenges to the AONB can be prioritised and shape the work of the unit. Again priorities will only be delivered where they are supported by appropriate levels of funding.

Monitoring

The impact of the Management Plan delivery will be monitored in two ways:

1. *Through a set of performance indicators.*
2. *Through the progress measures articulated in each chapter.*

The AONB annual report will be structured around the monitoring against baselines. Some datasets are produced annually, most, less frequently. The most recent dataset for any metric will be the one that is used. No assumptions will be made that work undertaken will have shown a positive impact unless supported by information from the relevant dataset. A proposed monitoring framework for the AONB is given in the table. These will form a basis for reporting on progress on delivery of the Management Plan at the half way point and as the plan time period ends. For annual reports the Measures of

Progress will be used. These will be refined during the plan period to reflect the challenges facing the AONB.

As all the datasets are being provided by a third party, the information available for monitoring may vary.

Performance Indicators

Element	Performance Indicator
Landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixed post photography • Percentage of AONB assessed as tranquil
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSSI condition assessment • Total area of woodland • Area of managed woodland • CWS condition
Historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of heritage assets • Heritage assets at risk • Number and % of locally listed heritage assets at risk
Environmental quality & climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat creation • % of AONB classified as tranquil • Carbon dioxide emissions per capita
Geodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condition assessment geological SSSI
The Coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCZ's designated
Planning and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No of times LAs don't follow AONB recommendation
Farming and land management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area under agri-environment schemes • Number of rivers achieving good ecological status
Access, recreation and health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length of Public Rights of Way • Length of national trails • NHS health indicators
Highways and infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No indicator dataset available
Rural economy and tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic growth
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No of people participating in AONB activities

Measures of progress

Element	Indicator
Landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixed post photography
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of biodiversity projects in AONB • Number of SDF grants for biodiversity • Growth in marine and coastal projects in particular • Engagement with LNP and LEP's
Historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reductions in SAMs at risk • Minimum of 2 SDF projects each year linked to historic environment and culture
Environmental quality & climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved understanding of climate change impacts through awareness evaluation • SDF projects that help reduce climate change impacts • Improved bathing water quality • Increase in renewable energy production congruent with AONB
Geodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of an LGAP • Starting implementation of LGAP priorities
The Coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoreline Management Plan 2 implementation. • Strong active membership of Tav Torridge Estuary Forum or similar. • Maritime habitat actions plans in place
Planning and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of LCA in planning decisions • Adoption of AONB planning policy statements as Supplementary Planning Documents to the new Local Plan • Development of green infrastructure plans within AONB, especially around Ilfracombe

Element	Indicator
Farming and land management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in area of farmland in AONB covered by environmental stewardship schemes • Engagement in catchment management for delivery of Water Framework Directive • Reduced surface water flooding due to robust land management practices • Increase in area of woodland in AONB under positive management through a WGS.
Access, recreation and health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility of SWCP • Interpretation available in both regular and digital formats • Support access through a minimum of 1 SDF project each year about access • Develop health and the AONB strategy
Highways and infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus services in AONB are sustained • Explore the coast website is used and kept up to date • Adherence to the Highways Protocol and Guide within the AONB by the Highways Authority
Rural economy and tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth in North Devon economy • Reduction in unemployment • Use of ecosystem services approach adopted
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More volunteers supporting the work of the AONB • Number of individuals from under-represented groups involved in AONB activities • Improved access opportunities for under-represented groups

5. Appendices

Glossary

Affordable housing – Housing provided for those whose incomes do not allow them to compete in the open market for house purchase

AONB – An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is an area of high scenic quality which has statutory protection in order to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of its landscape.

Biodiversity – Degree of variation of life forms within a given species or ecosystem.

Biodiversity 2020 – the biodiversity strategy for England.

Common agricultural policy – the agricultural policy of the EU.

Conservation Area – An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to conserve.

Countryside and Rights of Way Act - the Act provides for public access on foot to certain types of land, amends the law relating to public rights of way, increases measures for the management and protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and strengthens wildlife enforcement legislation, and provides for better management of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

County Wildlife Site (CWS) – sites of significant value from a county perspective.

Culm Grassland – Culm Grassland is the term given to damp unimproved grasslands that are found overlying the Culm Measures of North Devon and North East Cornwall.

Ecosystem services – these are the benefits that mankind accrues from the natural environment.

Environmental stewardship – an agri-environment scheme that provides funding to farmers and other land managers in England to deliver effective environmental management.

European Landscape Convention – the European Landscape Convention (ELC) is the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape. Created by the Council of Europe, the convention promotes landscape protection,

management and planning, and European co-operation on landscape issues. The European Landscape Convention (ELC) is the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape.

Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) – Flag groups are funded from European Fisheries Fund and focus on improving profitability of fish and fish products and improve sustainability of fishing communities

Heritage Coast – stretches of undeveloped coast defined for their outstanding scenic value where resolution of conflicts is needed between recreation, conservation, access and agriculture.

Landscape – comprises the visible features of an area of land, including the physical elements of landforms such as (ice-capped) mountains, hills, water bodies such as rivers, lakes, ponds and the sea, living elements of land cover including indigenous vegetation, human elements including different forms of land use, buildings and structures, and transitory elements such as lighting and weather conditions.

Landscape character assessment (LCA) – the tool that is used to help us to understand, and articulate, the character of the landscape. It helps us identify the features that give a locality its ‘sense of place’ and pinpoints what makes it different from neighbouring areas.

Landscape character type (LCT) – Distinct types of landscape which are generic in character in that they may occur in different parts of the country, but wherever they are they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation and historical land use and settlement pattern.

Landscape description units – LDUs are relatively homogenous units of land, each defined using a series of definitive attributes including landform, structural geology, rock type, soils, land use, tree cover, settlement and farm type.

Listed building – a building of notable architectural or historic interest listed by the Secretary of State for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport under the Planning Act 1990.

Local development framework – a statement of development proposals within a local authority area

Local nature reserve – land owned or controlled by local authorities protected for their nature conservation value.

Making Space for Nature – Lawton-led review that identifies how England can move towards an ecologically coherent network of wildlife sites.

National Character Areas - National Character Areas (NCAs) divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geo-diversity and cultural and economic activity. Their boundaries follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision making framework for the natural environment.

National Nature Reserve (NNR) – sites declared by Natural England as key places for wildlife and natural features in England. They were established to protect the most significant areas of habitat and of geological formations. NNRs are managed on behalf of the nation, many by Natural England themselves, but also by non-governmental organisations, including the members of The Wildlife Trusts partnership, the National Trust, and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

Nature 2000 – An EU-wide network of nature protection areas established under the 1992 Habitats Directive.

Public Rights of Way – public footpaths, bridleways and cycleways along which the public has the right to travel.

Regionally Important Geological Site – locally important geological and geomorphological sites of value.

Seascape - in planning and land use terms this is the complex interrelationship between the landforms, coast and sea in a landscape setting.

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) – areas designated under the EU Habitats Directive.

Special Protection Areas (SPA) – areas classified under EU Habitats Directive to protect wild birds.

Special qualities of the AONB – The ‘special qualities’ of the AONB are those aspects for which it is considered important, and on which the priorities for its management are based.

Strategic Environmental Assessment – SEA is a process to ensure that significant environmental effects arising from policies, plans and programmes are identified, assessed and mitigated for.

Shoreline Management Plan – A document that sets out strategic guidance over the approach to coastal management, providing guidance to local authorities, EA, landowners and communities.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest – areas designated by Natural England as being of special interest by reason of their flora, fauna or geology.

Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) Small grant scheme administered by the AONB

Water Framework Directive – overarching EU directive that sets the framework for the achievement of good ecological status in rivers and coastal waters by 2027.

Woodland Grant Scheme – funding available for forest owners.

5. Appendices

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Neville Stanikk Photography

5. Appendices (2)

Consultation Plan for the New Management Plan

The new Management and Delivery Plan form the backbone of the work to be delivered by the AONB and its partners over the next five years. There had already been some consultation work carried out with the Partnership and beyond to begin to shape the new plan.

Once the plan is complete it is vital that it is shared as widely as possible and that we maximise opportunities to engage with our politicians, statutory agencies, people and communities within the AONB and its setting and non-governmental organisations and community groups. In order to achieve this an outline consultation plan was produced for comment.

Key audiences (in no particular order)

- People who live in the AONB and its setting
- People who work in the AONB and its setting
- People who earn a living from the AONB through the quality of landscape and biodiversity
- Community groups
- Elected members
- Parish and District Councils
- Statutory bodies
- NGOs
- The Partnership

Methodologies for engagement to be deployed (in no particular order)

- Website and survey
- Printed media
- Social media
- Informal Partnership networks

Feedback from the consultation

The draft Management Plan was promoted through the North Devon District Council consultation portal. As a result this increased the number of people who were made aware of the Management Plan and the work of the North Devon Coast AONB.

As a result of the portal consultation, the draft plan had 843 views; the survey 101 views but only 5 surveys were completed.

In addition to the portal the Plan was emailed to relevant groups and organisations, we also carried out an exhibition and open day at Woolacombe for Mortehoe Parish Council.

The Plan was promoted through our Facebook page and Twitter feed.

A further 10 responses were received directly to the AONB team bringing the total to 15 responses. Of the responses, 14 were in favour of the Plan, 1 was against but gave no details of how they would like the Plan to be changed.

Picture Credits:

The North Devon Coast AONB Partnership thanks the following photographers who have helped with supplying images for the AONB Management Plan:

Neville Stanikk - *Neville Stanikk Photography*

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