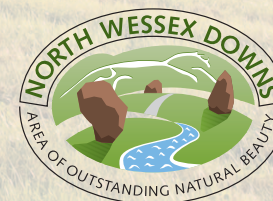


Management Plan 2019-2024

North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



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**NORTH WESSEX
DOWNS**
One of the
AONB Family

Produced on behalf of the Council of Partners

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to all those who have assisted in the preparation of this Management Plan. In particular, we would like to thank the following:

Ian Hepburn, who guided the Plan review to its conclusion with energy and conscientious attention to detail.

Members of the Management Plan Review Group and volunteer chapter editors, who gave advice and steered the Plan review on behalf of the Council of Partners: Richard Broadhead, Robin Edwards, Gerry Hamersley, Ted Hiscocks, Jane Howes, Garry King, Peter Lemon, Paul Miller, Fleur de Rhe Philippe, Lois Philipps, Paul Rogers, Christopher Slack, Nigel Titchen, Kate Tobin and Rowan Whimster.

Members of the Management Working Group who gave guidance.

Dr Caroline Chapman of DTA Ecology Ltd, who carried out the shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment.

Helen Walsh of Lonely Cottage Productions, who designed the published Plan.

David Bibby, Richard Broadhead, Sally Harries, Paul Hendry, Garry King, Dominic Lamb, Nick Mottram, Christopher Slack, Caroline Svendsen and Jonathan Wilshaw for their assistance in gaining adoption by our partners.

All those who submitted comments on the consultation draft Plan, thereby helping to improve the final version.

We would also like to thank Ted Hiscocks, Chairman of the Council of Partners, for his leadership and support.

This document is the statutory Management Plan for the nationally designated protected landscape of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as required under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. It is a plan for all those that have a responsibility to look after this precious and treasured landscape.

Following informal consultation in 2017, an initial draft was approved by the Partnership in July 2018 and published for public consultation between August and November 2018. All comments received were reviewed and recommendations approved by the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Working Group and a Management Plan Review Group, created to oversee the process on behalf of the Council of Partners. The North Wessex Downs Council of Partners and relevant local authorities have approved this Plan for publication.

Assessment, associated documents and further map data can all be found on the North Wessex Downs website:

www.northwessexdowns.org.uk. For Historic Environment mapping data visit: www.historicnorthwessexdowns.org.uk

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Foreword



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

I am delighted to welcome publication of this Statutory Management Plan
for the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

I am fortunate that England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are part of my Ministerial responsibilities. Whether it be rolling hills, sweeping coastline or a tranquil village, spending time in an AONB can stir the heart and lift the spirit.

This is a pivotal moment for all AONBs. The Government has set its ambition in the 25 Year Environment Plan which states clearly the importance of natural beauty as part of our green future, while AONBs retain the highest status of protection for landscape through national planning policy. Leaving the EU brings with it an opportunity to develop a better system for supporting our farmers and land managers, who play such a vital role as stewards of the landscape. And the Review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty led by Julian Glover – the first of its kind for generations – has made recommendations to make sure our designated landscapes can flourish in the years ahead.

In my visits to AONBs around the country, I have been struck by the passion of many people – farmers, volunteers, and hard-working staff – for the beautiful places they live and work in. In this spirit I am delighted to welcome publication of this Statutory Management Plan for the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is significant that this plan will be delivered in partnership by those who value the North Wessex Downs. I would like to thank all those involved in preparation of this document, and wish you the best of success in bringing it to fruition.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gardiner of Kimble". The script is fluid and cursive.

*Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Under Secretary of State (Minister for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity),
Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs*



Figure 1. Regional context of the North Wessex Downs AONB with other protected landscapes. Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database rights 2019. Ordnance Survey 100051200.

Page 5 Looking across the Downs towards Newbury, Peter Orr



Introduction



It is vital that we do our utmost to protect and increase the huge benefits that our outstandingly beautiful landscape brings

Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 the local authority members of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership have a statutory duty to produce a Management Plan for their designated landscape. This is the fourth North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan since the Partnership was established. The Plan has been drawn up after wide consultation and sets out strategic objectives for the period 2019 to 2024. It belongs to our nine local authority partners and is intended to guide the relevant activities of local authorities as well as Government agencies, businesses, communities and individuals in the North Wessex Downs.

Through the Management Plan, the AONB Partnership and staff team are actively involved in a variety of projects and other activities. Over the past five years, despite some challenging circumstances, much has been achieved and the foundations laid for future progress. A summary of activities under the previous Plan may be found elsewhere in this document, but the breadth of achievement ranges across governance, funding, farming, heritage, community, recreation, nature conservation, planning, natural resource management, communication, tourism, education, and arts projects to engage people with the landscape that surrounds them.

Straitened public finances continue to impose greater demands on the AONB Partnership. These demand imaginative responses. Under the previous Plan, the Partnership began to create a broader-based and more resilient framework for supporting the future of the North Wessex Downs, incorporating elements of the public, charitable and private sectors. This evolution will continue,

guided by the outcomes of the Glover review of designated landscapes and changes to the system of public support for land management.

Today we understand our interdependence and reliance upon the natural world better than ever before. The North Wessex Downs landscape and the AONB Partnership charged with its conservation and enhancement face greater pressures and threats than ever. Designation as an AONB does not guarantee protection for natural beauty, or enhancement; it is vital that we do our utmost to protect and increase the huge benefits that our outstandingly beautiful landscape brings. Our society benefits from its influence on our health and wellbeing and the cultural value that it represents. Our prosperity relies on our fund of natural capital – the essential goods and services that the natural environment provides and performs. Understanding what this means for managing the North Wessex Downs AONB and how we can encourage and reward beneficial management and prevent harmful change will be the core of our mission during the life of this Management Plan.

I would like to thank all the people and organisations who have contributed to the work of the North Wessex Downs Partnership and the development of this Plan, in particular our nine local authority partners. I hope that everyone who reads this Plan will be able to contribute in some way to its success.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'T. J. S. Hiscocks'.

*Ted Hiscocks, Chairman of the Council of Partners,
North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*

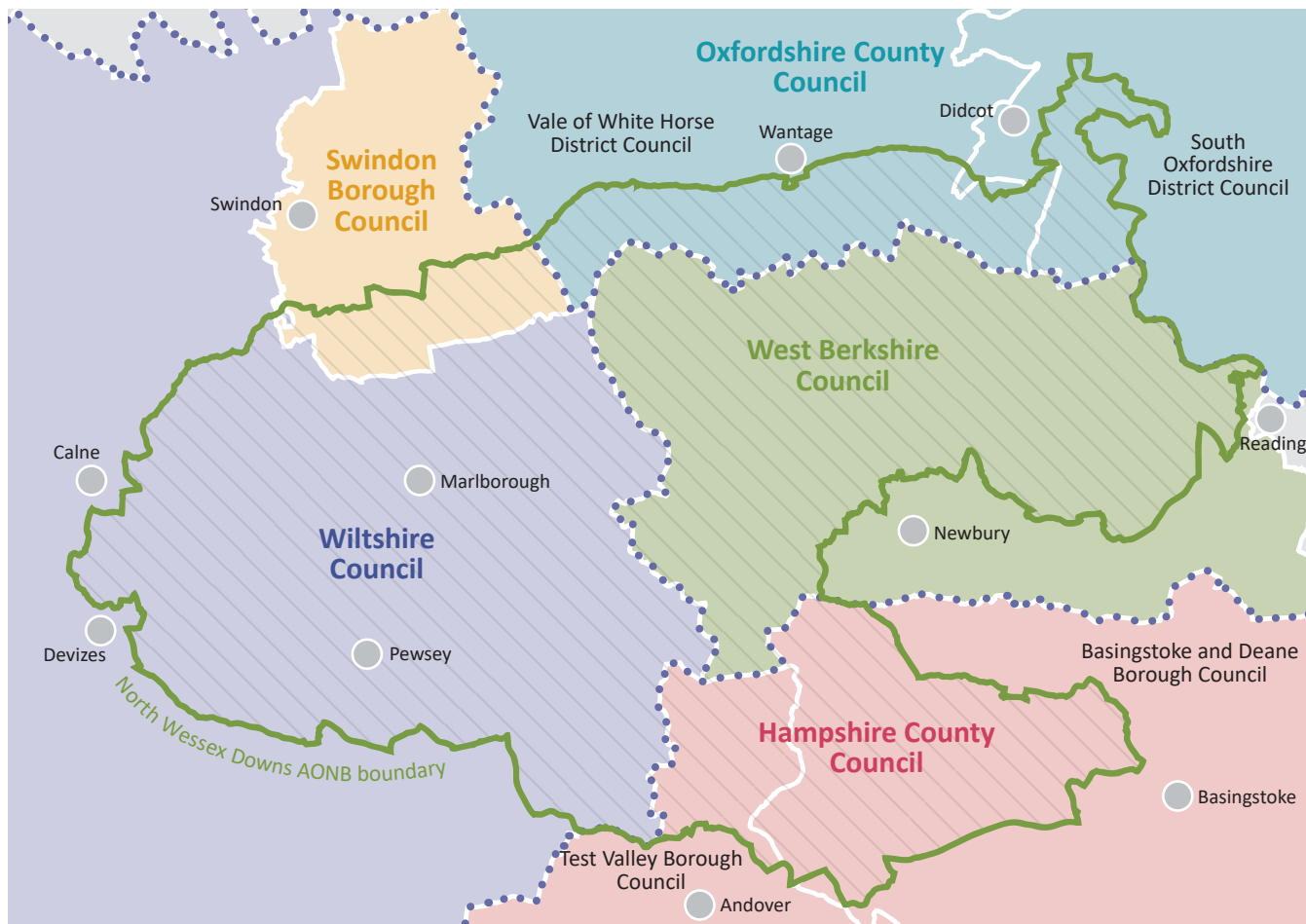


Figure 2. The partners of the North Wessex Downs AONB. Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database rights 2019. Ordnance Survey 100051200.

Page 7 Celebrating the landscape, Nigel Hutchings

