

theme 2

Rural Land Management

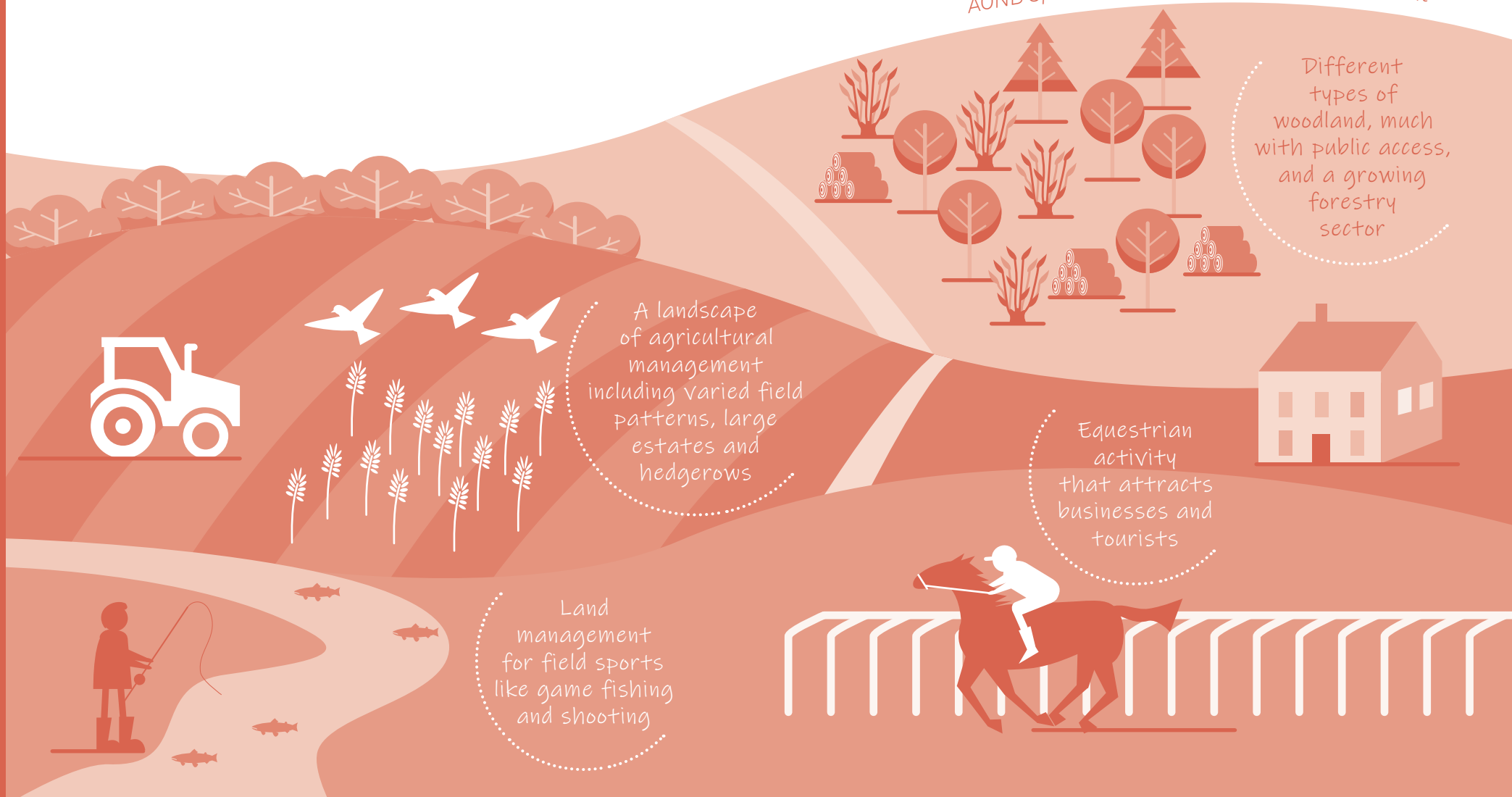
AONB Special Qualities: Rural Land Management

Different types of woodland, much with public access, and a growing forestry sector

Equestrian activity that attracts businesses and tourists

A landscape of agricultural management including varied field patterns, large estates and hedgerows

Land management for field sports like game fishing and shooting





“I like to look at the winding side of a great down, with two or three numerous flocks of sheep on it, belonging to different farms; and to see, lower down, the folds, in the fields, ready to receive them for the night.”

William Cobbett (1763-1835)

84% of the Downs is classified as farmland; about 48% of this was under arable cultivation in 2017

12.4% of the total AONB area is woodland, just over a third of which is Ancient Woodland

Page 27 Poppy fields and downs, NWD AONB
Page 28 Woodland management, NWD AONB



A Working Landscape

Land-based enterprises play a significant role in acting as stewards of the landscape and contributing to economic balance

Agriculture

3.1 Farmland and woodland dominate the landscape of the North Wessex Downs. Changes in these land uses have a major influence on the natural beauty of the area. Land-based enterprises play a significant role in acting as stewards of the landscape and contributing to an economic balance for communities. Additionally, equine activities and field sports are significant in terms of land use and management.

3.2 With 84% of the North Wessex Downs classified as farmland (of which in 2017 about 48% was under arable cultivation), agriculture is the dominant land use and the major influence on landscape character and quality. The agricultural workforce totalled 2,426 which amounted to 4.9% of the actively employed people in the AONB (2011 Census). This appears to be a decline from 5.9%, reported in 2005, but remains a relatively high proportion compared with the average of 1.3% for South East England.

3.3 Annual farm census statistics since 1990 indicate the proportion of land in the AONB under agricultural management appears to be fairly stable, with a slight net loss over time. This could be due to development, but also changes in holding distributions may represent a move to other land uses not classified as agricultural. The total number of farms is also falling. The highest proportion of farms are over 100 ha, a number that has steadily increased over the last decade. Defra defines farm types for a holding as the crop or livestock enterprise (or group of enterprises) that contributes more than two thirds of the total standard gross margin for the holding. The North Wessex Downs AONB has quite large areas of Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land, a high proportion of

which is put down to potatoes and field scale vegetables around the Pewsey Vale. Data from Natural England's 2018 'Provisional Agricultural Land Classification' indicate that most farms fall into the 'cereals' and 'lowland grazing livestock' categories.

3.4 Profitable agriculture can sustain the natural resources that have created rich diversity and natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs. Support for a sustainable farming sector is an important means of securing landscape management, as demonstrated through the North Wessex Downs Partnership support for initiatives such as the EU-supported rural development programme 'LEADER' (*Liaison entre actions de développement rural*).

3.5 Previous analysis of trends indicated a decline in livestock farming and greater sensitivity of arable production to prices of inputs. As with other sectors, consolidation will lead to larger farms and larger herd sizes to seek increases in efficiency. There have also been positive changes driven by the implementation of targeted agri-environment schemes.

3.6 A series of reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy has introduced an increasing emphasis on wildlife conservation through 'agri-environment' schemes, and there is a strong commitment by farmers in the North Wessex Downs AONB to use these schemes to support farmland bird populations, to protect and enhance habitats, and to safeguard soil and water resources. The de-coupling of support payments from production has required farmers to respond more readily to world market conditions. Fluctuations in commodity prices and input costs are making future arable profitability hard to predict. There is a risk that such market influences could thwart initiatives designed to improve natural resource protection and environmental enhancement. An example in the North Wessex Downs has been the difficulty in promoting arable reversion to chalk grassland under higher-level stewardship schemes in the light of fluctuating, and occasionally very high, cereal prices. Issues concerning animal movement and the loss of skilled graziers compound this.

Farmland and woodland dominate the landscape of the North Wessex Downs

3.7 Added to the drive for sustainability, food security and low-carbon energy is the uncertainty introduced by the UK’s decision to withdraw from the European Union. The Government’s stated ambition, once outside the Common Agricultural Policy, is to promote “a more dynamic, more self-reliant agricultural industry” and “a reformed agricultural and land management policy” which will remain “internationally competitive” and supply “products of the highest standards to the domestic market” while “increasing exports”. The impact that measures outlined in the ‘Health and Harmony’ consultation, or the introduction of a proposed new environmental land management system, might have on the farming community in the North Wessex Downs cannot be predicted. A new farming support system based on “public money for public goods” supported by a ministerial view that “the most important public good we should pay for is environmental protection and enhancement” could benefit the AONB, particularly when farmers work collaboratively to provide benefits for wildlife, access to the countryside and resource protection at a landscape scale. Alongside the policy and market incentives, climate change is likely to be a key consideration in terms of the types and varieties of viable crops that are grown in the North Wessex Downs. There are implications for sowing dates, irrigation, pests, diseases, water availability and soil erosion. Increased productivity needs careful management to maintain landscape character and the opportunity to expand wildlife habitats. There may also be diversification into novel crops and farming systems, or change of use from agriculture to other land uses such as equestrian businesses and leisure.

Forestry

3.8 The Forestry Commission’s National Forest Inventory data show that the area of woodland within the North Wessex Downs has increased by 656 ha over seven years and stands at 21,475 ha (12.4% of the total AONB area). Just under a half of this woodland has some form of wildlife designation and a little over a third is Ancient Woodland. Broadleaf trees dominate, at just under 70% of all woodland. Despite an increasingly healthy market for timber and woodfuel, many woodlands in the AONB still suffer from a lack of management, often due to difficulties accessing the woodlands. The ageing beech woodlands no longer produce

significant volumes of timber and are more valuable as places for recreation than as a productive part of the rural economy. The continued promotion of wood as a renewable fuel may stimulate improved management of some woodlands.

3.9 The National Forest Inventory shows that woodland within the AONB recorded as being managed has increased from 50% in 2013 to 62% in 2017. This is a positive change which probably reflects the increasing demand for woodfuel in particular. The timber quality of much of the woodland area within the AONB is not high – many of the woodlands are extremely small and a number of the woodlands comprise crops for which there is no longer a viable market. Consequently, the economics of forestry operations are problematic. There is a role for energy production in helping to manage small woodlands, and AONB partners have made progress in supporting the forestry sector through initiatives such as the EU-supported LEADER programme, ahead of an anticipated rise in demand for woodfuel and associated products.

Table 1. Data from 2016 for farm types (number of farms) in the North Wessex Downs AONB

Total Holdings	Farm Types (Number of Farms)						
	Cereals	General Cropping	Horticulture	Specialist Poultry	Dairy	Grazing Livestock (lowland)	Mixed
783	286	96	18	19	31	255	66

Table 2. Data from 2016 for farm size in hectares (number of farms) in the North Wessex Downs AONB

Total Holdings	Farm Size in Hectares (Number of Farms)				
	<5	>=5 and <20	>=20 and <50	>=50 and <100	>=100
783	69	168	105	99	342



3.10 The priority is to maintain and improve management of existing woodlands. Any new woodland should meet the objectives of the North Wessex Downs AONB Woodland Strategy. This values woodland designated for its nature conservation interest, and all ancient and semi-natural woodland. New woodlands can act as a buffer to protect this resource and create wildlife corridors between woodlands, which may, in turn, benefit natural flood management and water quality. The AONB Partnership encourages woodland owners to produce management plans in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard and will promote the accreditation of woodlands under the United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Scheme.

3.11 The dangers to woodland from pests and diseases are growing, with ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, also known as 'Chalara') and oak processionary moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) being two recent examples. Ash dieback is likely to have a major impact in woodlands across England, including in the North Wessex Downs, and it will be prudent to consider promoting measures to mitigate the consequences of the loss of this important tree species for wildlife and the landscape. Damage to woodlands from increasing deer populations or from squirrels is an ever-increasing problem, especially since it makes growing native broadleaved trees for timber difficult in spite of strong market demand. This highlights the need for the collaborative landscape-scale protection of our woodlands. The North Wessex Downs Partnership is working with the Forestry Commission and woodland owners and operators to raise awareness and, where appropriate, prevent or mitigate the effects of activity.

3.12 Climate change may lead to drought and lower summer rainfall. This is likely to affect the North Wessex Downs woodlands. For example, the shallow rooting beech does not thrive on dry soils and is likely to decline, but small-leaved lime needs warmth to set seed and will probably increase. Veteran trees of all species are more likely to be felled by storm force winds. However, in woods the impact of these storms can be positive, creating glades that species that thrive in sunlight can occupy. The recreational value may increase as people seek shade in the hottest months.

Horse Industry

3.13 Horse owning and riding is a popular activity across the South of England and the North Wessex Downs AONB is recognised as a nationally important horse racing centre, second only to Newmarket. The equestrian sector is estimated to have contributed £4.3 billion of consumer spending to the national economy in 2015 (an increase from £3.8 billion in 2011)ⁱ. Owners of horses have an important role to play in maintaining the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs. How horses are cared for and the developments associated with keeping and training horses can have a significant impact on the character and quality of the AONB landscape.

3.14 The North Wessex Downs is home to a range of important non-racing equestrian events, such as the annual Barbury Horse Trials. While there are no statistics to quantify horse ownership and riding in the AONB it is evident that the network of bridleways and routes linked to The Ridgeway National Trail is popular and well-used. A recent survey valued the non-racing horse industry in Hampshire at £313 million per annum to the Hampshire economy. A guide has been published in collaboration with Protected Landscapes in the South Westⁱⁱ to provide advice aimed at ensuring equine care and management makes a positive contribution to the landscape.

3.15 The Lambourn area and other racing yards in the AONB make a significant contribution to the local economy. Core horse racing businesses employ an equivalent of 1,370 full-time staff (just over 20% of employment in the agriculture and entertainment sectors in the AONB). A survey has identified 103 businesses within the area directly involved and a further 49 businesses associated with the racing industry in 2007. The horse racing industry contributes £16-38 million per annum of direct gross value added (GVA) to the local economy.

Field Sports

3.16 The rise of large-scale commercial shooting in recent years has had a significant influence on the landscape, especially in the downland. Much of the management of some small-scale woodland has been motivated by shooting, while the downs and valleys, notably the steep scarps, provide an ideal landscape for

partridge shooting. This has led to the planting of large blocks of maize cover crop, complementing grant-aided conservation plots such as wild birdseed mix. Shooting brings in substantial income, employment and revenue to local businesses within the rural economy, and is thus beneficial to the area. However, changes to the landscape may be viewed with mixed opinions, although the management of land for shooting brings significant wider benefits to wildlife in general.

3.17 Fly fishing is also an important feature of the AONB, especially in the world famous chalk streams such as the Kennet and Lambourn. The income from let fishing helps to support the conservation and restoration of these rivers.

- i British Equestrian Trade Association. National Equestrian Survey 2015. <http://www.beta-uk.org/pages/industry-information/market-information.php>.
- ii South West Protected Landscapes Forum 'Horses, the landscape and you: Equestrian guide to keeping horses in protected landscapes.'



£16-38 million per annum is contributed to the AONB's local economy by the horse racing industry

Shooting has become popular in recent years, bringing in substantial revenue for the rural economy

Page 30 Overtown Racing, Dawn Hamblin, North Wessex Downs LEADER

Page 31 Fly fishing on the River Dun, Rob Starr, Town and Manor of Hungerford; Red-legged partridge, Natural England/ Allan Drewitt





Page 32 Grayling in the River Dun at Hungerford, Rob Starr, Town and Manor of Hungerford

Page 33 Wood anemones at Scratchface Copse, Becca Flintham

AONB Special Qualities: Rural Land Management

- 3.18 A landscape under the influence of **agricultural management** with typically large farmed estates, a high proportion of which are engaged in agri-environment agreements.
- 3.19 **Varied field patterns**; the open downlands are characterised by large regular fields, largely the product of 18th century Parliamentary enclosure, with more recent boundary removals creating vast fields, as on the Marlborough Downs. By contrast, the Vale of Pewsey in the south west of the AONB is the product of medieval clearance which created numerous, small, irregularly-shaped fields or assarts.
- 3.20 Stock fencing and extant **hedgerows** in the vales and river valleys containing some mature trees.
- 3.21 A growing forestry sector and different **types of woodland**, many with public access. Although oak and ash are the main forest canopy species there is a wide range of stand types including hornbeam coppice, oak/ash stands, hazel/oak stands, and birch and ash/wych elm coppice.
- 3.22 **Equestrian activity**, including the 'Valley of the Racehorse' in the Lambourn area that attracts visitors and businesses.
- 3.23 Significant land management for **field sports**, including highly valued game fishing which supports the native brown trout.

Rural Land Management: Key Issues, AONB Strategic Objectives and Policies

Rural land management in the North Wessex Downs AONB faces a range of challenges which this Plan will address through the implementation of key objectives and policies

3.24 Key Issues

Key issues with the potential to have significant influence on the AONB's Rural Land Management Special Qualities:

- a) The need to manage resources to achieve sustainable consumption and production.
- b) Potential for significant investment of public funding to promote diversification and micro-enterprise in the land management sector which align with AONB objectives.
- c) Potential for farmers to work collaboratively to enhance the delivery of public goods and services.

3.25 Agriculture

- d) Effects of the UK's expected withdrawal from the EU, in particular opportunities that could arise to invest in the conservation and enhancement of the AONB, for example through alternative environmental land management measures to deliver public goods with public funds.
- e) Market forces and major policy changes, such as demand for increased food security or biofuels, resulting in uncertainty regarding land management, influencing the mix of farming types and farm sizes.
- f) Impacts of changes in farming technology and energy prices.
- g) Shortage of livestock needed to graze downland pasture.
- h) Harnessing demand for locally produced food and drink in line

with AONB objectives, with increasing interest in producing and marketing local food in the North Wessex Downs.

- i) Climate change risk (increasingly identified by farmers in the North Wessex Downs AONB as a key threat and opportunity for the future) and the opportunities for land managers to invest in climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- j) Potential for improved co-ordination and consistency in the provision of agricultural land management advice to achieve AONB objectives.
- k) Poor agricultural land management practices, including livestock grazing and arable production, resulting in detrimental impacts on watercourses from nutrient run-off and silt pollution as a result of livestock damage to river banks.

3.26 Forestry

- l) Scope for more and better management of woodland in the AONB, especially of smaller woods, to improve habitat for wildlife and provide an economic return.
- m) Risk of harmful impacts on wildlife, archaeology and recreation from increasing exploitation of woodland to meet demand for timber, if not done in an environmentally sensitive way.
- n) Opportunities for better co-ordination of forestry with agricultural land management under new environmental management schemes.
- o) Widespread threats from pests and disease (e.g. *Phytophthora* and Chalara).
- p) Rising deer numbers inhibiting the natural regeneration of some woodland. Deer Management Groups are helpful but are insufficient on their own to control deer numbers.

3.27 Horse Industry

- q) Small-scale changes to the smooth, rolling landform around new buildings, which cumulatively have an adverse effect on the character of the AONB.

- r) Opportunities to support the racing industry, ancillary businesses and local communities through diversification, e.g. responsible tourism.
- s) Need to avoid the loss of biodiversity arising from the creation of new fields and paddocks on open chalk downland by promoting opportunities for landscape enhancement through equine habitat management, such as creation of wildflower-rich grassland.
- t) Change in landscape character by the replacement of hedgerows with fencing, leading to the 'suburbanisation' of landscape.
- u) Pressure to widen and straighten minor roads to improve vehicle access leading to 'suburbanisation' and loss of sense of place.
- v) Loss of integrity of historic settlements/hamlets/farmsteads.

3.28 AONB Strategic Objectives for 2019-2024: Rural Land Management

- S.03 Focus, facilitate and support landscape-scale conservation and land management initiatives that support the purposes of AONB designation.
- S.04 Promote AONB priorities for targeting and investment in rural land management and development to take advantage of changes anticipated to follow the expected withdrawal of the UK from the EU.
- S.05 Support the restoration of ancient woodland and wood pasture, and improved management of unmanaged and under-managed woodland across the North Wessex Downs AONB, promoting multiple benefits, including landscape character, wildlife, local economy and skills, recreation, and climate change mitigation.
- S.06 Support traditional and emerging land-based enterprises and their markets that respect and promote the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs AONB.

Food security

changes due to market forces may influence the mix of farming types and farm sizes

Demand for timber

may drive woodland exploitation and threaten wildlife, archaeology and recreation





Page 34 Conservation headland, Tony Matthews; Traditional sheep breed, David Hall; Roaming dairy farming, Dawn Hamblin, North Wessex Downs LEADER
Page 35 Arable landscape in the North Wessex Downs, Peter Orr

3.29 AONB Policies: Rural Land Management

RLM 01	Encourage national, regional and local land management policies to be consistent with the purpose of AONB designation.
RLM 02	Encourage and support joint working and expansion/replication of existing landscape-scale conservation and land management projects, both within and beyond the AONB, to assist in the delivery of AONB objectives.
RLM 03	Support sustainable farm diversification and multi-purpose woodland management where it achieves AONB objectives and accords with planning policy.
RLM 04	Support efforts to identify future land use options that are best able to assist farm viability and reflect the environmental objectives of the AONB.
RLM 05	Support local markets for local produce and the development of local supply networks.
RLM 06	Encourage management of sites in public and tenanted ownership within the North Wessex Downs AONB to be examples of best practice in the delivery of AONB objectives.
RLM 07	Support and promote efforts across the North Wessex Downs AONB to reduce invasive, non-native species or unsustainable populations of species where these threaten the biodiversity and sustainable management of woodland, watercourses and other habitats.
RLM 08	Encourage the active and environmentally sensitive use of woodland resources for viable products, helping to enhance biodiversity.
RLM 09	Support and help guide publicly funded investment in rural development.
RLM 10	Support investment in new agricultural infrastructure and redevelopment of farm buildings where it increases the sustainability of local businesses and aligns with AONB purposes.
RLM 11	Encourage awareness of the special qualities of the AONB among local businesses to help them understand and embrace their responsibilities alongside running a profitable enterprise.
RLM 12	Support improved co-ordination and consistency in provision of land management advice across the AONB.
RLM 13	Support efforts to identify and develop the skills required to care for the landscape and its special qualities, with opportunities for all to acquire such skills.
RLM 14	Encourage and support the local provision of practical training in traditional land management and the skills necessary to deliver enhanced rural land management and business diversification with clear landscape benefits.
RLM 15	Encourage good agricultural land management practices and adherence to good practice to contribute to resource protection, such as safeguarding watercourses from nutrient run-off and silt pollution.
RLM 16	Support the provision of advice on integrated management of grassland to enhance biodiversity as part of equine land management practices.
RLM 17	Support initiatives to achieve sustainable deer populations across the AONB through collaborative measures and partnerships among landowners and other stakeholders.

Future Land Management Support: Priorities for Funding and Advice by Landscape Character Type

3.30 The national family of AONBs has proposed that AONB Management Plans should serve as the framework within which future publicly and privately funded support mechanisms and other land management initiatives can be focussed and adapted to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the designated landscapes and their settings.

3.31 The priorities set out in the following tables (pages 35-39) identify broad priorities for environmental land management in the North Wessex Downs AONB and its setting. More detailed guidance, covering for example desired outputs and prescriptions where necessary, based on reliable evidence and applicable to

individual Landscape Character Areas, will be required once land management support arrangements to succeed the EU's Common Agricultural Policy have been defined.

3.32 Table 3 sets out a series of generic measures that could apply to more than one Landscape Character Type; subsequent Tables (4-11) set out measures that are aimed specifically at each of the eight Landscape Character Types described in Chapter 2.

Priorities for future rural land management support to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB by Landscape Character Type

Table 3. Generic aims applicable to more than one Landscape Character Type in the AONB
Support a landscape-scale approach to restoring, managing, buffering, extending and connecting currently fragmented, locally characteristic habitats. These include species-rich chalk grassland, arable field margins, wet pasture and native riparian woodland in river valleys, remnant heathland and common land, chalk rivers and streams, ancient woodland (especially Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites [PAWS]) and wood pasture.
Protect archaeological sites and features, including through removal from cultivation, reducing cultivation depth, scrub management, sympathetic woodland management and protection from livestock damage as necessary.
Adopt catchment-sensitive farming techniques across chalk river and stream catchments to reduce both diffuse and point-source pollution, minimise sediment run-off into watercourses and improve water quality.
Restore and maintain a coherent network of habitat corridors through sympathetic management of, in particular, the huge ecological resource represented by road verges and banks, public rights of way and national trails across the AONB, harnessing their potential to form links between wildlife sites and other important habitat patches.
Facilitate responsible public access to the landscape in places and in ways that are compatible with maintaining the special qualities of the AONB.
Encourage and support more wildlife-friendly management of public and private open spaces, including recreation, sports and school grounds, parks, playgrounds, greens, allotments and commons.



Table 4. Priorities for Open Downland

Restore unmanaged relict grassland and encourage greater diversity through sympathetic management.

Maintain existing chalk grassland habitats.

Maintain and enhance the value of arable land and chalk grassland for priority farmland bird and arable plant species (e.g. through spring sowing and winter stubbles, nesting plots, uncropped headlands, unsprayed field margins, and pollen, nectar and seed mixes). Create and maintain wildlife corridors (e.g. buffer strips, beetle banks, track and byway verges), wherever possible linking a range of different habitats.

Increase the diversity of semi-improved permanent grassland, especially where adjacent or close to unimproved grassland.

Extend, link and buffer chalk grassland habitats e.g. through targeted arable reversion (linking existing grassland areas along ridgelines in particular), wildflower restoration of semi-improved grassland, scrub management and removal of inappropriate woodland planting.

Maintain the expansive, open landscape character by avoiding new tree and hedge planting, including small areas which can cumulatively erode the special qualities of openness and sweeping views.

Protect archaeological sites and features, including through removal from cultivation, reducing cultivation depth, scrub management and protection from livestock damage as necessary.

Wherever possible create and maintain wildlife corridors (e.g. buffer strips, track and byway verges) across intensively managed arable and grassland, linking a range of different habitats including unimproved grassland and woodland.

Support specific advice and options for sympathetic management of land used to keep and train racehorses to enhance its value for wildlife.



Table 5. Priorities for Downland with Woodland

Maintain the traditional pattern of field boundaries through sympathetic hedge management, restoration of historic hedge boundaries, creation of buffer strips and promotion and management of hedgerow trees.

Restore unmanaged relict grassland and encourage greater diversity through sympathetic management such as controlled grazing.

Maintain existing chalk grassland habitats.

Increase the diversity of semi-improved permanent grassland, especially where adjacent or close to unimproved grassland.

Maintain and enhance the value of arable land and chalk grassland for priority farmland bird and arable plant species (e.g. through spring sowing and winter stubbles, nesting plots, uncropped headlands, unsprayed field margins, and pollen, nectar and seed mixes). Create and maintain wildlife corridors (e.g. buffer strips, beetle banks, track and byway verges), wherever possible linking a range of different habitats.

Extend, link and buffer chalk grassland habitats e.g. through targeted arable reversion, scrub management and removal of inappropriate woodland planting.

Manage existing ancient woodland sympathetically to increase structural diversity (e.g. by restoring coppice, controlling deer numbers and promoting natural regeneration).

Restore Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) to conserve and enhance local landscape character and biodiversity.

Conserve existing veteran and ancient trees with careful management, and support succession of veteran tree habitat (e.g. by pollarding [including the creation of maiden pollards], and identification and management of future veterans).

Restore, conserve and enhance designed landscapes, other historic parkland and wood pasture.

Conserve and enhance the intricate network of sunken and other country lanes and tracks through sympathetic management of banks and verges.



Table 6. Priorities for Wooded Plateau

Conserve and enhance the intricate mosaic of woodland, farmland and hedges that surrounds Savernake Forest and West Woods.

Manage existing ancient woodland sympathetically to increase structural diversity e.g. by restoring coppice, controlling deer numbers and promoting natural regeneration.

Restore Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) to conserve and enhance local landscape character and biodiversity.

Conserve existing veteran and ancient trees with careful management, and support the succession of veteran trees as habitat for lichens and invertebrates in particular (e.g. by pollarding, including creation of maiden pollards, and identification and management of future veterans).

Restore, conserve and enhance designed landscapes, other historic parkland and wood pasture.

Restore, extend/link and sympathetically manage relict areas of heathland.



Table 7. Priorities for High Chalk Plain

Maintain existing chalk grassland habitats.

Restore unmanaged relict grassland and encourage greater diversity through sympathetic management.

Increase the diversity of semi-improved permanent grassland, especially where adjacent or close to unimproved grassland.

Extend, link and buffer chalk grassland habitats (e.g. through targeted arable reversion, scrub management and removal of inappropriate woodland planting).

Maintain and enhance the value of the mosaic of arable land and chalk grassland for priority farmland bird and arable plant species (e.g. through spring sowing and winter stubbles, nesting plots, uncropped headlands, unsprayed field margins, and pollen, nectar and seed mixes). Create and maintain wildlife corridors (e.g. buffer strips, beetle banks, track and byway verges), wherever possible linking a range of different habitats.



Page 36 Open Downland at Hackpen Hill, David Hall; Downland with Woodland at Combe Gibbet, NWD AONB

Page 37 Wooded Plateau at West Woods, David Hall; High Chalk Plain, CA

Table 8. Priorities for Downs Plain and Scarp

On the Plain, encourage restoration of historic hedge boundaries and improve existing boundaries through sympathetic hedge management, creation of buffer strips and promotion and management of hedgerow trees.

On the Plain, consider opportunities for sympathetic, small-scale tree-planting integrated within a network of well-managed hedges.

On the Plain, improve the value of the arable landscape for priority farmland birds, pollinators, arable plants and other wildlife (e.g. through spring sowing and winter stubbles, nesting plots, uncropped headlands, unsprayed field margins, and pollen, nectar and seed mixes). Create and maintain wildlife corridors (e.g. buffer strips, beetle banks, track and byway verges) wherever possible linking a range of different habitats.

Along the Scarp, maintain and enhance the diversity and wildlife value of the farmland/woodland/chalk grassland/historic parkland mosaic.

Along the western Scarp, promote sympathetic management of the varied and distinctive linear wooded hangers and wooded combs.

Support realisation of the potential for The Ridgeway National Trail to serve as a conservation corridor through the landscape, encouraging ecological enhancement of land adjacent and close to The Ridgeway.

Conserve and enhance the monumental landscape of the Avebury World Heritage Site and its setting, including through targeted arable reversion, increasing the diversity of semi-improved permanent grassland, scrub management and removal of inappropriate woodland planting.



Table 9. Priorities for Vales

Extend existing and create new waterside pastures and wet meadows.

Maintain the traditional pattern of field boundaries through sympathetic hedge management, restoration of historic hedge boundaries, creation of buffer strips and promotion and management of hedgerow trees.

Consider opportunities for sympathetic, small-scale, riparian native woodland creation along watercourses. This will both restore a feature of the historic landscape and help mitigate the warming effects of climate change on chalk stream ecology by providing shade.

Restore, conserve and enhance parkland, estate landscapes and other historic features, such as watercress beds.

In Pewsey Vale especially, promote new hedgerow trees as part of a landscape recovery strategy to counter the effects of Dutch elm disease and now ash dieback.



Table 10. Priorities for River Valleys

Encourage the restoration of historic hedge boundaries and improve existing boundaries through sympathetic hedge management, creation of buffer strips, and promotion and management of hedgerow trees.

Improve water quality and protect the ecology of chalk rivers and streams through sympathetic management of riparian land (e.g. by creating watercourse buffer strips, minimising sediment run-off, removing point sources of pollution and controlling poaching by livestock).

Maintain the landscape and ecological value of existing Valley habitats (including seasonal flood meadows, grazed pasture, fen, marsh, riparian woodland and pollards) through sympathetic management.

Conserve and enhance key wildlife sites (e.g. Kennet Valley Alderwoods SAC) by establishing buffers, and creating and linking areas of complementary habitat along River Valleys.

Restore, extend and link unmanaged or neglected flood meadows, valley pastures, fen and marsh, and encourage greater diversity through sympathetic management such as grazing where appropriate.

Consider opportunities for sympathetic, small-scale, riparian native woodland creation along watercourses to provide shade, thus helping to mitigate the warming effects of climate change on chalk stream ecology.

Restore, conserve and enhance ornamental and other historic parkland and River Valley features.



Table 11. Priorities for Lowland Mosaic

Maintain the remaining fragments of lowland heath through sympathetic management.

Improve the value and resilience of isolated patches of heathland by restoring abandoned or under-managed areas, and linking to other remaining heathlands.

Maintain the traditional pattern of field boundaries, particularly the ancient hedges that are a feature of the Lowland Mosaic, through sympathetic hedge management, restoration of historic hedge boundaries, creation of buffer strips on arable land, and promotion and management of hedgerow trees.

Restore, conserve and enhance designed landscapes, historic parkland, wooded commons and wood pasture.

Manage existing ancient woodland sympathetically to increase structural diversity (e.g. by restoring coppice, controlling deer numbers and promoting natural regeneration).

Conserve existing veteran and ancient trees with careful management, and support succession of veteran tree habitat (e.g. by pollarding [including the creation of maiden pollards], and identification and management of future veterans).

Conserve and enhance the intricate network of sunken and other country lanes and tracks through sympathetic management of banks and verges.



Page 39 Chalk stream in the River Valleys, Ann Seth/CA; Lowland Mosaic at Hungerford Common, Henry Oliver