

Summary of Activity 2014-19



Page 102 Guided walk in Pewsey, Mark Somerville; Cattle farming in Oxfordshire, Peter Orr

Page 103 Community engagement in planning, NWD AONB



Summary of activity for the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2014-2019

Local Partnership

- ▶ Secured £3,790,942-worth of benefits for the AONB area. £11.59 for every £1 invested by local authority partners.
- ▶ Established the North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust, a new Charitable Incorporated Organisation with a mission to support the purposes of the AONB designation.
- ▶ Undertook a detailed review of strategic aims and needs, resulting in adoption of the AONB Partnership's first Corporate Strategy.

National and Regional Collaboration

- ▶ Contributed to collective discussion and action through the National Association for AONBs.
- ▶ Submitted responses to national policy consultations on food, farming, transport and planning.
- ▶ Contributed to local, regional and national submissions to the Glover review of designated landscapes.
- ▶ Hosted a visit by a member of the designated landscapes review panel.
- ▶ Hosted and led a field visit as part of the national Landscapes for Life AONBs conference.
- ▶ With AECOM and South East and East Protected Landscapes partners, developed and published a Protected Landscapes Vision for the London City Region.

Note: most statistics include activity up to March 2019 only, and do not comprehensively cover the full five-year Plan period.

Landscape Enhancement

- ▶ Worked with National Grid to explore options to bury underground high-tension power lines under the Visual Impact Project.
- ▶ Submitted proposals to SSE for undergrounding of telegraph wires and poles at six prominent sites – one now completed, one approved and awaiting works, one rejected, three still under consideration.

Communities and Planning

- ▶ Engaged with Local Plans, Core Strategies, Minerals and Waste Plans and other policy documents for Basingstoke and Deane, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire, Test Valley, Vale of White Horse, West Berkshire and Wiltshire Councils.
- ▶ Prevented major harm to the AONB landscape from proposals for large-scale housebuilding at Harwell in Oxfordshire.
- ▶ Supported communities preparing Neighbourhood Plans in Wantage, Overton, Whitchurch, Goring, Burghclere, Kingsclere, Burbage, Woodborough, Marlborough, Calne, St Mary Bourne and North Newnton.
- ▶ Screened approx. 3,500 planning applications and commented on approx. 500.
- ▶ Gave evidence in seven appeals.
- ▶ Secured £3.75 million in compensation funding from Network Rail in relation to the Great Western Electrification Programme for a joint mitigation and landscape enhancement project in the Thames Valley with the Chilterns Conservation Board.

Farming and Forestry

- ▶ Ran an event to highlight opportunities offered by Defra's Facilitation Fund.
- ▶ Worked with local land managers to develop proposals for two new farmer clusters in the AONB.



- ▶ Supported the launch of the Southern Streams Farmer Group, focused principally on reducing soil erosion and improving water quality.
- ▶ Led efforts to form a farmer-led group on the Ridgeway in Oxfordshire.
- ▶ Held an Annual Forum on the benefits of collaborative farming for conservation on a landscape scale.
- ▶ Ran a highly successful Make Your Woodland Work for You conference in collaboration with the Forestry Commission, Cranborne Chase AONB, the Woodland Trust and LEADER, designed to encourage landowners and managers to undertake more and better management of woodland.

Wildlife

- ▶ Jointly led the landscape-scale Stepping Stones project with Cranborne Chase AONB and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. This aimed to enable chalk grassland wildlife to increase and colonise new areas by improving the habitat adjoining high quality sites and creating 'stepping stones' connecting areas of high-quality habitat around Salisbury Plain, and to involve volunteers in growing and planting wildflowers to



improve the quality of species-poor chalk grassland. Est. cash value to the North Wessex Downs AONB £63,000.

- Created, improved or worked on 344 ha of chalk grassland.
- Grew over 23,000 wildflower plug plants and planted them on strategically important sites.
- Engaged 28 farmers in landscape-scale conservation work across the North Wessex and West Wiltshire Downs.
- Delivered many hundreds of hours of volunteer time (650 hours on one sub-project alone).
- ▶ With the Sylva Foundation, delivered Good Woods, a programme of visits to provide woodland management advice aimed at encouraging economically viable woodland management, with benefits for landscape, ecology and public enjoyment. Funded by B&Q.
 - Advised 21 farms and estates in and around the North Wessex Downs.
- ▶ Collaborated with the Town and Manor of Hungerford to bring a range of wildflower species back to Hungerford Common Portdown, a landscape much used by local residents.
 - Area sown with wildflower seed: 5.59 ha.
- ▶ Supported, promoted and helped fund the landscape-scale Winning Ways for Wildlife project led by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust in partnership with the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust and Butterfly Conservation. Aimed at targeted conservation of Duke of Burgundy butterfly and willow tit in north-west Hampshire straddling the AONB boundary.

Heritage

- ▶ Developed and delivered Written in the Land, a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) project that published interactive web mapping of historic landscape characterisation for the North Wessex Downs with descriptions, statements of significance, time-slice mapping and links, to help anyone

who wants it to find information about, and read, the history of the present-day landscape and why it matters.

- A new interactive historic landscape character website: www.historicnorthwessexdowns.org.uk
- 98 volunteer days
- 4 workshops
- Inaugural North Wessex Downs Heritage Forum
- New leaflet: 'Written in the land: archaeology and history in the North Wessex Downs'
- ▶ With Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site partners, secured £55,000 in HLF funding to scope and appraise options for a resilient model for future funding, governance and operation of the World Heritage Site Partnership and Co-ordination Unit.

The Arts

- ▶ Collaborated with Activate, And Now, Corn Exchange Newbury, 101 Outdoor Arts Creation Space and the National Trust to hold Wayfaring at Basildon Park, part of the Lifecycles and Landscapes project.
 - School children participating in art in the landscape days: almost 400
 - Factsheets produced for schools: 3
 - Presentations to primary schools: 13
 - Members of public attending the Wayfaring resolution event: 800
 - Views of NWD AONB Wayfaring film: 20,000+

Recreation and Tourism

- ▶ Fostered the development and establishment of new partnerships for the Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails.
- ▶ Held a joint Forum with the Ridgeway Partnership on The Great Outdoors, highlighting the benefits of the AONB landscape for health and wellbeing, volunteering, tourism and artistic inspiration.

- ▶ Supported the Ridgeway Strategic Links project to encourage greater economic benefit to local communities from use of the National Trail.
- ▶ Developed a Tourism Toolkit for local tourism businesses to use in marketing the AONB landscape.
- ▶ Supported Visit Wiltshire's Great West Way initiative as a Destination Ambassador.
- ▶ With Visit Wiltshire, produced three North Wessex Downs AONB visitor itineraries for the Great West Way.
- ▶ Ran the inaugural North Wessex Downs Walking Festival in June 2019 comprising 14 walks over 16 days across the AONB.

Research

- ▶ Worked with Oxford University students on a series of research projects supporting AONB objectives.
- ▶ Supported events to highlight the results of research on cover crops and soil management.

Communications

- ▶ Developed the 'Story of the North Wessex Downs' presentation, trained 25 'Storytellers' in delivering it and gave 39 presentations to 1,140 people.
- ▶ Produced a revised 'Discover North Wessex Downs' leaflet and distributed 230,000 copies across the North Wessex Downs.
- ▶ Moved the AONB website to a responsive format suitable for all devices.
- ▶ Ran a photography competition focussed on people in the landscape.
- ▶ Produced two short films: 'An introduction to the North Wessex Downs' and 'Avebury to Basildon Park Along the Icknield Way'.
- ▶ Ran a travelling exhibition of Icons of the North Wessex Downs paintings to 12 venues in and around the AONB.
- ▶ Published quarterly eBulletins of AONB news.
- ▶ Aided the publication of 'Ash', a record of the contribution of ash trees to the English landscape, written and illustrated by Archie Miles, the Woodland Trust and the Ash Project.



Glossary of Terms

<i>Term used</i>	<i>Definition/explanation</i>
Agri-environment Schemes (AES)	A range of schemes operated by Defra designed to encourage environmentally friendly farming and public enjoyment of the countryside. Currently includes Countryside Stewardship.
Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW)	An ancient woodland site, believed to have had continuous woodland cover since 1600 AD, composed principally of native tree species that have not obviously been planted.
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	Area designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, with the primary purpose of designation being to conserve natural beauty.
Biodiversity Net Gain	A principle by which development operations leave biodiversity in a better state than before. Consulted on by Government as a possible principle for national planning policy in 2018/19. Criticised by the Natural Capital Committee for failing to account for the complexities of environmental goods and services provided by natural capital (q.v.) assets.
Byway	A Byway open to all traffic (BOAT) is a Public Right of Way open to all users, including vehicular and all other kinds of traffic. Defined in 66(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. (See also Restricted Byway q.v.)
Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (CAMS)	CAMS is a process used by the Environment Agency (EA) to provide both a consistent approach to local water resource management and greater public involvement in water management. The EA uses CAMS to determine its approach to catchment abstraction licensing within a given catchment. This is set out in a Catchment Abstraction Licensing Strategy for the catchment.
Catchment Partnership	A Catchment Partnership brings together a wide range of interests with local expertise to undertake integrated management of land and water, addressing each Water Framework Directive river catchment as a whole and delivering cross-cutting practical interventions on the ground. These aim to provide multiple benefits to water quality, wildlife, flood risk, resilience to climate change and more resource efficiency. Catchment Partnerships are active across England.
Catchment-Sensitive Farming (CSF)	A partnership between Defra, the Environment Agency and Natural England. It works with farmers and a range of other partners to improve water and air quality in high priority areas. CSF offers farmers free training, advice and support for grant applications. Also used to refer to the general approach advocated by CSF.
Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)	European Union-wide policy that supports agriculture through price support, market management and measures to improve the agriculture industry. Undergoing a Mid term review, introducing decoupling and more modulation and cross compliance.
Common land	Defined in section 22 of the Commons Registration Act 1965 as land subject to rights of common (as defined in this Act) whether those rights are exercisable at all times or only during limited periods.

Glossary continued...

<i>Term used</i>	<i>Definition/explanation</i>
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	A planning charge, introduced by the Planning Act 2008 as a tool for local authorities to pay for infrastructure to support development in their area. Introduced by the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010. Development may be liable for CIL if the local planning authority has chosen to set a charge in its area.
Conservation Area	Defined by section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance.
Coppice	Woodland which has normally been regenerated from shoots formed at the cut stumps of the previous crop trees, root suckers, or both i.e. by vegetative means. Coppice is normally grown on a short rotation, e.g. 5-25 years, to yield small diameter material.
Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act (2000)	Contains measures to improve public access to the open countryside and registered common land while recognising the legitimate interests of those who own and manage the land concerned; it amends the law relating to rights of way; it amends the law relating to nature conservation by strengthening protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest including tougher penalties and by providing extra powers for the prosecution of wildlife crime; it provides a basis for the conservation of biological diversity; and it provides for better management of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, including the requirement for local authorities to produce AONB management plans every five years and places a duty on public bodies to have regard to the purposes of AONB designation.
Countryside Stewardship (CS)	The current Common Agricultural Policy environmental land management support scheme introduced by Defra in 2014.
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)	The central government department with responsibility for protected landscapes, wildlife, food and farming, natural resources, etc.
Ecosystem goods and services	The assets and services, especially those of benefit to humans, provided by the functioning of an ecosystem or environment. Often categorised as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ supporting e.g. soil formation, nutrient cycling, pollination ▶ provisioning e.g. food, timber, water ▶ regulating e.g. carbon sequestration, floodwater storage, air and water purification, climate regulation ▶ cultural e.g. landscapes, wildlife, etc. of aesthetic, cultural, historical, recreational or spiritual value to people.
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	A process under which developers are required to provide, in addition to a planning application, an environmental statement evaluating the likely environmental impact of the development, together with an assessment of how this may be mitigated. EIA is intended to ensure that, when deciding whether to grant planning permission for a project which is likely to have significant effects on the environment, a local planning authority does so in full knowledge of the likely effects, and takes these into account in the decision making process. Governed by the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 in compliance with EU Directive 2011/92/EU.
Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)	The Higher Level Scheme was a Stewardship (i.e. agri-environment) scheme introduced in 2005 to concentrate on the more complex types of management needed to achieve the objectives of the Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) where land managers need advice and support, where agreements need to be tailored to local circumstances and where management needs to be carefully targeted.

Glossary continued...

<i>Term used</i>	<i>Definition/explanation</i>
Highways Authority	The Highways Act 1980 defines a Highway Authority as the body responsible for maintaining all highways maintainable at public expense and keeping them free of obstruction, including responsibility for public rights of way.
Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)	A method used to define and map the historic and archaeological dimensions of the present-day landscape. HLC is an extremely useful tool for enabling better decision making about future land use management and change. By properly understanding the historic landscape context we can assess the likely effects of changes and make better informed decisions.
Historic Parks and Gardens	Parks and Gardens containing historic features dating from 1939 or earlier and registered by Historic England in three grades as with historic buildings.
Landscape	An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)	A process for identifying the effects of proposed changes (e.g. new development) on views and on the landscape itself. A depth of analysis and understanding of these two interrelated aspects is required to produce a successful LVIA. The Landscape Institute publishes guidelines for carrying out LVIA. LVIA may be required for significant planning applications within the AONB or its setting (q.v).
Landscape Character Area	Unique individual geographical areas in which Landscape Character Types occur, which share generic characteristics with other areas of the same type but have their own particular identity.
Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)	A method for identifying, understanding and expressing the different patterns and features i.e. woodlands, hedgerows, building styles and historic artefacts which give a place a distinctive character.
Landscape Character Type	A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from one another, rather than better or worse.
LEADER	European Union rural development initiative for assisting rural communities in improving the quality of life and economic prosperity of their area through the distribution of grant funding.
Local Access Forum (LAF)	Set up under CRow Act to represent a balance of local interests and views, providing independent guidance to the relevant local authorities and the Countryside Agency on how to make the countryside more accessible and enjoyable for open air recreation in ways that address social, economic and environmental interests. Each county has one covering its respective area of the North Wessex Downs.
Local Planning Authority (LPA)	The local authority, normally a unitary or local borough or district council, which is empowered by law to exercise planning functions.
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	Designated by the Government under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to protect and conserve nationally important areas of wildlife habitat and geological formations and to promote scientific research.
National Trail	Routes based on public rights of way through the nation's finest and most characteristic countryside, allowing an extensive journey on foot, horseback or by bicycle and capable of attracting tourist use from home and abroad.
Natural beauty	Legislation and associated guidance defines natural beauty as including the physical elements of flora, fauna, geology and physiographic or geomorphological, the cultural and heritage elements, together with less tangible values such as intactness, rarity, wildness, remoteness, tranquillity and the appeal to the physical senses.

Glossary continued...

<i>Term used</i>	<i>Definition/explanation</i>
Natural capital	The elements of nature that directly or indirectly produce value to people, including ecosystems, species, freshwater, land, minerals, the air and oceans, as well as natural processes and functions. Natural capital is described in terms of assets. Natural capital is simply those assets provided by nature which have the capacity to generate goods and services. Natural capital can be regarded as the source of all other types of capital: whether manufactured, financial, human or social, underlining the importance of a healthy environment for human prosperity.
Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006	Legislation that extended the biodiversity duty in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to public bodies and statutory undertakers to ensure due regard to the conservation of biodiversity. The Act also refined the definition of 'natural beauty'.
Neighbourhood Plan	A document that a community may choose to prepare to set out a vision for how it wants an area to develop over the next 10-20 years. Once approved by an inspector and endorsed in a local referendum the plan becomes part of the statutory development plan for the area. Established by the Localism Act 2011.
Parkland	A large piece of ground usually comprising woodland, scattered mature trees, pasture and/or semi-formal gardens, often created to a specific landscape design and currently or once attached to a country house or mansion.
Pasture	An area of land dominated by grass, which is used only or principally for grazing, as distinct from a meadow that is mown. Pasture may be enclosed fields or unenclosed common land.
Permanent grassland	Any grassland, whether pasture or meadow, composed of perennial or self-seeding annual plants kept indefinitely and not sown or ploughed.
Permissive access	Public access to a route or area granted by the landowner, usually for foot access but occasionally for [horse] riders, which is not dedicated as a public right of way.
Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)	Ancient Woodland Sites in which the former tree cover has been replaced, often with non-native trees. PAWS often retain important ancient woodland features including characteristic flora, fauna and archaeology.
Pollard	A tree which has had its top and/or upper branches cut some height above the ground to promote new and multiple growth, to avoid the reach of browsing animals or to create aesthetically pleasing forms, extend the life of the tree and/or maintain wildlife habitat.
Quiet Lane	Section 208 of the Transport Act 2000 makes provision for local traffic authorities to designate roads for which they are responsible as Quiet Lanes, enjoying voluntary speed restrictions and promotion for non-motorised traffic.
Regional Walking Routes	Longer named paths, promoted on the initiative of local authorities, signed and fully waymarked, and based on public rights of way, offering more than a day's travelling, perhaps following a theme or feature that offer tourism potential, such as the Wayfarer's Walk and the White Horse Trail.
Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)	Sections 60 to 62 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 require local highway authorities to prepare and publish Rights of Way Improvement Plans for improving rights of way in their areas, taking into account the needs of the public including people with disabilities.
River Basin Management Plan (RMBP)	A River Basin Management Plan, produced in compliance with the Water Framework Directive (q.v.), provides a framework for protecting and enhancing the benefits provided by the water environment. It also informs decisions on land-use planning. It consists of a number of different documents, maps and datasets. Overseen by the Environment Agency, there is one for each of the seven River Basin Districts in England.

Glossary continued...

<i>Term used</i>	<i>Definition/explanation</i>
Scheduled Monument	A structure identified by Historic England for protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.
Section 106 agreement	A binding agreement between a local planning authority and a developer associated with a grant of planning permission and regarding matters linked to the proposed development.
Setting (of the AONB)	The area within which development and land management proposals, by virtue of their nature, size, scale, siting, materials and design can be considered to have an impact, positive or negative, on the landscape, scenic beauty and special qualities of the AONB.
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Area identified by Natural England under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for protection by reason of the rarity of its nature conservation, wildlife features or geological interest.
Sites and Monument Record (SMR)	A database of sites of archaeological interest and potential within a particular area, usually a county.
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Site designated according to the Habitats Directive 93/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora.
Special Qualities	The special qualities of the AONB are those aspects of the landscape for which it is considered important, and on which the priorities for its management are based. The interaction between natural and cultural factors can create a significance which is not recognised by looking at one aspect in isolation.
Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)	Documents prepared to support and amplify policies in the Local Development Plan. Such guidance must be consistent with national and local planning policy.
Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)	SuDS are intended to reduce flooding downstream of development by enabling surface water run-off to be controlled as near to the source as possible. National planning policy encourages use of SuDS and seeks to ensure that flood risk is considered on a catchment scale.
Tranquillity	Composite feature which seeks to characterise elements of wildness, solitude, peace and quiet, relating for example to low levels of built development, traffic, noise and artificial lighting.
Unimproved grassland	Grassland consisting of native grasses and herbs which have not been significantly affected by treatment with mineral fertilisers, pesticides, intensive grazing or drainage.
Veteran tree	Tree which by virtue of its great age, size and/or condition, is of exceptional value whether in cultural terms, for its landscape contribution or for the benefit of wildlife.
Water Framework Directive (WFD)	EU Directive 2000/60/EC aims to achieve good qualitative and quantitative status of all surface and groundwater bodies.
Wetland	Transitional areas between wet and dry environments; wetlands range from permanently or intermittently wet land to shallow water and water margins.
Whole Farm (Conservation) Plan	A plan that considers an individual farm as a whole, producing a bespoke conservation plan considering farm type, location and any particular landscape or wildlife value, identifying adjustments to management practices that can significantly benefit the landscape and wildlife.
World Heritage Site (WHS)	A cultural or natural heritage site inscribed under the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Convention on the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage for its Outstanding Universal Value.

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The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Funded by:



In partnership with:





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