



2. Dorset's Special Landscape

2. Dorset's Special Landscape

A Special Place

2.1 Of the 41 AONBs in England and Wales, Dorset is the fifth largest, covering 1,129 square kilometres. In this chapter, we will explore the outstanding qualities of the AONB which underpin its designation.

2.2 The AONB's outstanding qualities are:

- **Contrast and diversity**

The AONB is much more than just one fine landscape – it is a collection of fine landscapes, each with its own scenic qualities and sense of place. Few areas have such landscape diversity within such a relatively small area. The Dorset AONB marks the south western edge of the chalk backbone that stretches across England. Here it meets greensand ridges, clay vales and the Jurassic country more often associated with the Cotswolds. The dramatic contrasts of form and relief emphasise the diversity. This intimate juxtaposition of landscapes is strikingly beautiful and unique in Britain.

- **A living textbook**

The AONB has an unrivalled expression of the interaction of geology, human influence and natural processes in the landscape. This includes the spectacular features of the World Heritage Site, such as Durdle Door, Lulworth Cove, Chesil Beach and Old Harry rocks. The unique fossil exposures along the coast, spanning 185 million years of earth history in 95 miles, provide a valuable educational resource and are protected through the World Heritage Site designation. The landscape generally retains a strong sense of continuity with the past, expressed in its multitude of archaeological sites, historic field patterns, designed landscapes and distinctive settlements.



Dancing Ledge on the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

- **A source of inspiration**

Dorset's dramatic landscape has been an inspiration to artists, writers and musicians for centuries. The most famous is Thomas Hardy, whose novels and poems are inextricably linked to the landscape. However, many others have found inspiration here, including Daniel Defoe, John Fowles, Paul Nash, Gustav Holst, William Turner, John Constable and Sir Christopher Wren, who used Portland stone in the rebuilding of St Paul's Cathedral following the fire of London. The poet William Barnes wrote many poems in the Dorset dialect, often describing the landscape in his works.



The River Cerne - a chalk stream

- **Nationally and internationally important wildlife**

The overall diversity of the Dorset AONB is reflected in its variety of wildlife habitats. These include chalk streams, wetlands, chalk, limestone and acidic grasslands, lowland heaths, ancient woodlands and a range of coastal habitats. Disused quarries are important both for their geological importance and their value for wildlife. The first voluntary marine nature reserve was created off the Purbeck coast at Kimmeridge. Many sites are of both national and international importance, with seven Special Areas for Conservation (SAC), three Special Protection Areas (SPA) and 70 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

2.3 The AONB's special landscape and rural charm attract thousands of visitors every year. Tourism is a major industry within the AONB, with the majority of visitors heading for the coast. Dorset is still very much a working rural area. Farming and forestry are suffering similar declines here as in other areas, yet agriculture remains a major influence on the area.

2.4 Farming and other human activities have been influencing the landscape for thousands of years,

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and Dorset is extraordinarily rich in heritage. Early agriculture was responsible for creating some of the area's richest wildlife habitats, such as chalk downland and the heaths. Dorset has a wealth of historic features, from the numerous barrows and hillforts to the unique Cerne Giant.



The unique figure of the Cerne Giant

- 2.5 The built environment of the AONB is also a significant part of the landscape. Here again, Dorset's varied geology becomes hugely significant, giving rise to distinctive local building stone and materials. Each area has its own style, from the grey Purbeck stone at Corfe Castle to the golden Corallian limestone of Abbotsbury and the brick and flint of North Dorset.

Describing the Qualities of the Landscape

- 2.6 It is the relationship of the many different qualities of the AONB that gives rise to the distinctive character of the landscapes. Within the outstanding qualities described above are a number of features that make the AONB special. These are described below, introducing their significance and some of the challenges affecting their futures.
- 2.7 The policy objectives from the framework in chapter 5 that relate to each feature are provided to demonstrate how they will be safeguarded.

Downland and Meadows

- 2.8 Flower-filled meadows and downland, teeming with butterflies and other insects, were once a common sight in Dorset. The chalk and limestone grasslands of the Dorset Downs and Purbeck Ridge represent one of the world's richest habitats, supporting rare plants such as the early spider orchid and early gentian, and butterflies like the Adonis blue and Lulworth skipper. On neutral soils, traditional management for hay cutting provided ideal conditions for a rich variety of plants and insects. Such meadows can still be found at Lower Kingcombe and Povington.



Coastal grassland with vipers bugloss

- 2.9 These rich grassland habitats were created thousands of years ago as early farmers cleared the 'wild wood'. Woodland on the chalk soils was amongst the first to be cleared - the soils were lighter and easier to cultivate. Areas affording good views and a strategic defensive position were developed as hillforts, spectacular examples of which can be seen at Hod Hill, Hambledon Hill and Flowers Barrow. These forts contain some of the best chalk grassland sites in the AONB.



A rare early spider orchid

- 2.10 Only a fraction of the wildlife-rich grasslands that once covered much of the AONB now survives. Huge losses have occurred over the last fifty years as agriculture has become more intensive. Much of the chalk downland has been ploughed for arable crops as livestock farming has become less viable. Hay meadows have largely been replaced with more productive grassland management for silage. Of the remaining traditional grasslands, many are fragmented and in need of active management to make the best of their potential for wildlife.
- 2.11 Our challenge is to halt the loss of what we have left and make sure that these sites are in good management, to recreate traditional grasslands particularly where this would link up the existing sites and to increase people's understanding and enjoyment of them.

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The following policies relate to downland and meadows, see section five for details:

Downland and Meadows Policy Objectives

L1,L2,L3,L5,L7,L8,L9,	F1,F2,F3,F4,F5,F7,F8,F11
L10,L11,L12,L13,L14	AR1,AR2,AR3,AR4,AR6,
B1,B2,B4,B5,B6,B8,B9,	AR7,AR8,AR9
B12, EH6, TR4	T3,T4,T5,T6,T8,T10,T13
BE1,BE2,BE3, BE4, BE6	PJS6,PJS9
H1,H4,H5,H8,H9.	NR1, NR2,NR3,NR7

The Coast

- 2.12 Some of England's most spectacular coastal features occur within the Dorset AONB - the world famous Lulworth Cove and Stair Hole, the extensive shingle bank of Chesil Beach, the chalk stacks of Old Harry Rocks and the golden sandy beaches of Studland. These have given inspiration to writers and film makers, leading to the unforgettable images of the wind swept cobb at Lyme Regis in "The French Lieutenant's Woman", or Gabriel Oak's sheep plummeting to their deaths off the cliffs in "Far from the Madding Crowd".
- 2.13 The key to this stunning landscape is its underlying geology - it is internationally famous for sedimentary rocks of Jurassic and Cretaceous age. The outcropping of the unbroken sequence of rocks along the coast, together with its importance for dinosaur and mammal fossils, has led to the Dorset and East Devon coast being designated as England's first natural World Heritage Site.



Durdle Door.

- 2.14 Dorset's coastal habitats are of national and international importance for wildlife. They support a variety of species, including cliff-nesting birds such as peregrines, guillemots, razorbills, kittiwakes and 80% of the south coast's puffins. Poole Harbour supports one of the largest populations of breeding redshank in the region and is internationally important for wintering wildfowl and waders. Important plant species include samphire and wild cabbage on cliff faces, sea pink and wild carrot on clifftop grassland, sea lavender and sea aster on saltmarshes, and



The Dorset Coast supports 80% of the South Coasts puffin population.

- 2.15 The coast is a major attraction for thousands of visitors each year and thus contributes considerably to the local economy of the AONB. The South West Coast Path National Trail provides excellent access for walkers, while the beaches and coastal towns provide for a variety of leisure activities. However, the large numbers of visitors attracted to the coast result in considerable pressures, both on the sites themselves and the transport network in the area. The challenge is to manage these pressures, to ensure that the Dorset coast remains an outstanding place for people to enjoy in the future.

The following policies relate to the coast, see section five for details:

Coast Policies

L1,L2,L5,L7,L10,L11,L13	BE1,BE2, BE3,BE4
B1,B3,B5,B6,B7,B8,B9,	W2 AR2,AR7,AR8,AR9
B10,B12,	T1,T2,T3,T4,T5,T9,T10,
EH1,EH2,EH5,EH6,EH7,	T11,T12,T13,TR1,TR2,TR6
EH8,EH9,EH10, F7	PJS1,PJS6,PJS8,PJS9
H1,H7,H8,H9	NR1, NR2, NR3/ F1, F7

Heathland

- 2.16 Dorset's heathlands have been immortalised by the books of Thomas Hardy. They are sweeping open areas dominated by heather and gorse and extremely rich in wildlife. However, less than a sixth of the extensive area of heath that Thomas Hardy described now remains.
- 2.17 Dorset's heathlands, together with their associated habitats such as acid grassland, scrub, scattered trees and heathland ponds are of national and international conservation importance. They include the National Nature Reserves at Hartland Moor, Studland and Godlingston, the army ranges at Povington and the nature reserve at Arne. They support threatened and declining species, such as the Dartford warbler, nightjar, silver-studded blue butterfly and marsh gentian. The heaths within

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Purbeck form the national stronghold of the Dorset heath, sand lizard and smooth snake. In fact, Dorset's heaths support all six British reptile species.



Dorset's rich heathland habitat.

2.18 Like the grasslands described earlier, the heaths were created by the activities of early farmers. Their poor sandy soils have limited value for agriculture and centuries of limited grazing allowed the development of the rich ecosystem we associate with heaths today. Until fairly recently however, they were regarded as a wasteland and many have been lost to development and forestry. Only a fraction of this once extensive habitat now remains, often in isolated fragments. Uncontrolled fires and lack of grazing mean that these last surviving areas are also under threat.

2.19 Great efforts are now underway to restore Dorset's heaths, with areas that have been planted with conifers providing the best opportunities. These efforts must continue, along with work to develop a greater understanding and enjoyment of this important wildlife habitat.



Sand lizard

The following policies relate to the heathlands, see section five for details:

Heathland Policies

L1,L2,L3,L5,L7,L8,L9,L10, L11,L13,L14	F1,F2,F3,F4,F7 W1,W2,W3,W5,
B1,B4,B5,B6,B7,B8,B9, B12	AR1,AR2,AR3,AR4,AR6, AR7,AR8AR9.
EH1,EH6,EH7	T1,T2,T3,T4,T5,T8,T9,
H1,H2,H3,H7,H8,H9	PJS6,PJS9
BE1,BE2,BE3,BE4	NR1,NR2,NR6/ TR4

Rivers and Wetlands

2.20 Dorset's rivers and wetlands are among its most attractive features, adding tremendously to the landscape and supporting an impressive array of rare wildlife. Rivers and streams within the AONB include crystal clear chalk streams like the Frome, Cerne, Piddle and Winterborne. These represent a globally rare habitat, of which Southern England



Dorset remains a stronghold for the water vole.

has the majority. Other rivers like the Stour, Wey, Axe, Bride, Brit and Char flow over clay and other substrates, giving them a very different character. The associated wetland habitats, such as wet grassland, fens and reedbeds, are just as important for wildlife. The AONB includes 5% of England's reedbeds and sites such as the Frome Meadows, the Fleet and Poole Harbour support internationally important numbers of breeding and wintering birds.

2.21 Rivers and wetlands support some of our most popular and elusive wildlife. Otters are making a comeback in Dorset, and the AONB remains a stronghold for the water vole, which is rapidly declining nationally. Salmon, brown trout, lamprey and the rare white-clawed crayfish can still be found, along with a huge variety of wildfowl and waders, plants and dragonflies.

2.22 Wetlands also provide wonderful areas for recreation. River valley walks are always popular, and many of the rivers are used for angling, which contributes significantly to their management. Poole Harbour is used by many for sailing, windsurfing and canoeing.



The River Cerne

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- 2.23 Many of our settlements have developed in valley bottoms, where water is easily available. As these settlements have grown, so the need to protect them from flooding has increased. Away from the settlements, agriculture has intensified and many wetlands have been lost through drainage. These changes have led to a loss of the link between the rivers and their floodplains. Loss of suitable habitat, poor water quality and low river flows are a major threat to some of our most important wildlife.

The following policies relate to rivers and wetlands, see section five for details:

Rivers & Wetlands Policies

L1,L2,L3,L4,L5,L7,L8,L9, L10,L11	F1,F2,F3,F4,F5 W1,W2,W3,W5,W7
B1,B2,B4,B5,B6,B7,B8,B9, B12	AR1,AR2,AR3, AR6 T4,T5,T6,T8,T9,T10,T11, T12 /TR4
H1,H2,H4,H5,H6,H7,H8,H9 BE1,BE2,BE4	PJS6,PJS9 NR1,NR2,NR6,NR7

Trees and Woodlands

- 2.24 There is perhaps no finer place to be on a spring day than in one of the Dorset AONB's ancient woodlands, surrounded by drifts of bluebells and wild garlic. These ancient woods date back centuries and have supported local communities through management for fuel wood, hurdles, thatching spars and timber for building. They include Creech Great Wood, the West Dorset alder woods and Bracketts Coppice.



Woodland with wild garlic.

- 2.25 The AONB is not heavily wooded, but the hedgerow trees, ribbons and occasional patches of woodland lend much to the character of the landscape. Parkland and garden trees are an important feature of the designed landscapes in the AONB, and sometimes remain in the wider countryside as relict elements of previous estates and ownership. Orchards are also important, though rare now and often unmanaged.



Red squirrels survive on the wooded islands in Poole Harbour.

- 2.26 There are a number of plantations in the AONB, some of which occur on heathland sites and are now being cleared to restore the original habitat. Many of the small woodlands are used for shooting, and in larger forests other forms of recreation such as walking, mountain biking and orienteering are popular.
- 2.27 With falling timber prices, many woods and plantations are no longer economically viable and are in need of management. Traditional practices such as coppicing and pollarding have declined, though recently there has been a resurgence of interest through the Dorset Coppice Group and others.
- 2.28 Encouraging markets for local wood products and promoting the multiple benefits of woodlands for wildlife and recreation as well as timber may provide a way forward, ensuring that our distinctive trees and woods survive into the future.

The following policies relate to trees and woodlands, see section five for details:

Trees and Woodlands Policies

L1,L4,L5,L6,L7,L8,L9,L12	W1 –W8
B1,B2,B4,B7,B9,B12	AR1,AR2,AR3,AR6
EH6,	T5,T8,T10
H1,H4,H5,H6,H7,H8,H9	PJS6,PJS9
BE6,BE9	NR1,NR2,NR6,NR7,NR8
F1,F2,F10	L2,L3,L10,L11,L14

Rolling Farmland

- 2.29 The majority of what is termed 'countryside' is in fact farmland. When asked to picture the rural landscape, most people see the patchwork of rolling fields, a mix of crops and pasture interspersed with hedgerows and shelter belts, that is so typical of Dorset.

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The patchwork of Dorset's farmland.

- 2.30 This landscape has been evolving over thousands of years, since the first farmers cleared the woodland that once covered most of England. This patchwork habitat has become home to a surprising variety of wildlife. Some plants thrive on disturbed soil and the regular tilling of agricultural land suits them well. These include poppies, a popular rural sight, and rarities such as pheasant's eye, cornflower, corn marigold and shepherd's needle. Birds particularly associated with farmland include skylarks, tree sparrows, yellowhammers, grey partridges and corn buntings. Mammals such as the enigmatic brown hare and the tiny harvest mouse have also historically thrived on farmland.



Brown hare

- 2.31 Despite the current agricultural climate, farming still provides a cornerstone for rural life. Farmers manage the majority of the AONB landscape, including much of the public rights of way network that gives us access to the countryside.
- 2.32 Since the AONB was designated in 1959, the rural landscape has changed considerably. Driven by national and European policies, agricultural management has become much more intensive, with increased use of pesticides and land almost constantly in production. Many of the species mentioned above have undergone massive declines and some are now extinct in Dorset. Many farmland birds have declined so much that the Government has set specific targets for their recovery. They are an important indicator of the health of the countryside.

- 2.33 Developing a better future for farming is essential to the AONB. The emphasis must be on sustainability, recognising the role farmers play in managing the countryside and ensuring that agriculture is sympathetic to wildlife and heritage.

The following policies relate to rolling farmland, see section five for details:

Rolling Farmland Policies	
L1,L2,L3,L4,L5,L6,L7,L9,	W1,W2,W3,W4,W5,W6
L10,L11,L12,L13,L14	AR1,AR2,AR3,AR4,AR5,
B1,B2,B4,B5,B6,B7,B8,B10	AR6,AR7,AR8,AR9
H1,H2,H3,H4,H5,H7,H8,H9	T1,T3,T4,T6,T8,T9,T10,
EH3,EH4,EH5,EH6,EH8,EH9	T11,T12,T13
BE1,BE2,BE3,BE6	TR1,TR2,TR3,TR4,TR6
F1,F2,F3,F4,F5,F6,F7,F8,	PJS1,PJS7,PJS8,PJS9,PJS10
F9,F10	NR1,NR2,NR3,NR4,NR6,NR7,NR8

Historic Landscapes and Features

- 2.34 The Dorset AONB is extraordinarily rich in history. From the massive hillforts of Maiden Castle, Pilsdon Pen, Eggardon and Hambledon Hills to the unique figure of the Cerne Giant, few areas can boast the number and scale of features found here. These features are parts of a wider historic landscape, shaped over time by layer upon layer of activity.



Eggardon Hill Iron Age hillfort.

- 2.35 The array of historic features and landscapes provide a valuable insight into how people once lived. The hillforts and defensive buildings such as Corfe Castle reflect dangerous times, the henge monuments and stone circles like Maumbury Rings tell of pagan ceremonies while the parklands and formal landscapes of later times reveal the grandeur of the great estates.
- 2.36 Some historic features form our most popular visitor attractions while others are largely unknown. Many are irreplaceable and receive protection due to their national or local significance. But these features are still being lost. Historic parklands and gardens are often in decay from lack of recognition and management, while barrows and strip lynchetts are still vulnerable to ploughing.

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- 2.37 The biggest threat comes from a lack of understanding of the context of historical features, their place in the landscape and the role that they have played in our past. The challenge is to raise understanding of the importance and irreplaceable nature of our historic environment, to bring it to life, celebrate it and enhance it for the future.



Cerne Giant

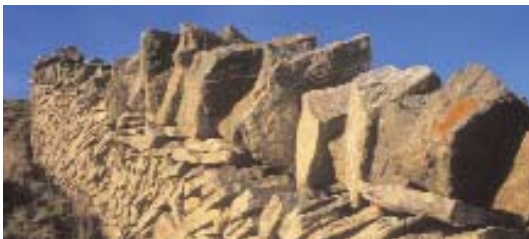
The following policies relate to historic landscapes and features, see section five for details:

Historic Landscapes and Features Policies

L1,L3,L4,L5,L7,L8,L9,L10,L12	W1,W2,W3,W7
B2,EH3,EH4,EH6,EH9	AR7
H1 – H9	T1,T5,T7,T8,T10,T13
BE1,BE2,BE3,BE4,BE7,BE8,	TR4,TR6
BE9	PJS6,PJS8
F1,F2	NR1,NR2,NR3

Traditional Boundaries and Features

- 2.38 The traditional field boundaries of the Dorset AONB are as diverse as the landscapes themselves. From the drystone walls of the Isle of Purbeck to the dense hedgerows and hedgerow oaks of the Marshwood Vale, they form an integral component of the Dorset landscape. The differing combinations of hedgerows, walls, parkland railings, hedgerow trees, Dorset gates, hedgerow banks, ditches and field margins create locally distinctive boundaries that enhance the character of an area.



Dry stone walls contribute to the character of parts of the AONB.

- 2.39 The diversity of scale, materials and species provide visual unity, pattern and structure to the landscape. Well-managed hedgerows offer valuable habitats and corridors for wildlife, often sustaining plants characteristic of ancient woodland, meadow, pasture and even aquatic habitats.

- 2.40 They have great historical interest and reflect the development and changes in agriculture. Some hedgerows have evolved from relict ancient woodland, whilst some have been planted throughout various parliamentary enclosures. This has resulted in a great variety of field size and shape, ranging from the intimate enclosures of West Dorset to the broad landscapes of the Dorset Downs. Traditional management of hedgerows through coppicing, laying and trimming help sustain the wide range of benefits our boundary features provide.

- 2.41 Over the last 50 years, many of our boundary features have been neglected, reducing their historical and ecological interest. Due to changes in agricultural practice, many hedgerows are no longer managed. Some have been lost completely or have been replaced by post and wire fence. Others have lost their floristic diversity through changes in soil fertility. Other hedgerows are over-managed, causing a reduction in cover and food supplies for wildlife through the winter. Similarly, stone walls and other features have fallen into disrepair due to a lack of funding to manage them effectively.

The following policies relate to traditional boundaries and features, see section five for details:

Traditional Boundaries and Features Policies

L1,L3,L4,L5,L6,L8,L9,L10	BE8,BE9
L12	F1,F2,F3,F5
B1,B2,B5,B7,B8,B9,B12,	W1,W2,W3,W4,W8
B13	T1,T3,T5,T6,T12
EH3,EH6	PJS6
H1,H3,H4,H5,H6,H8,H9	NR1

Traditional Buildings

- 2.42 The Dorset AONB has an outstanding variety of traditional buildings, giving character and distinctiveness to our settlements. They are often a direct reflection of Dorset's complex and varied geology, from which the building materials are derived.



Milton Abbas - a planned village

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- 2.43 The limestones of Purbeck and Portland are high quality materials, often used for churches and large houses. Lower Purbeck stone gives a very distinct feel to villages such as Corfe, while Abbotsbury is different again with buildings of golden Corallian limestone. Inland, on the chalk of the Dorset Downs, the lack of hard stone has led to a charming landscape with cottages constructed of cob - a mixture of mud, dung and chopped straw - or brick and flint. Long straw and water reed were originally used, with a soft, simple design, avoiding the fussy ridge decoration seen elsewhere.



Dorset thatching has a soft simple design.

- 2.44 Dorset is rich in monastic buildings such as Milton Abbey, Forde Abbey, Cerne and Abbotsbury. There are numerous churches of different designs reflecting different periods in history, along with some beautiful manor houses, tithe barns, chapels and follies.
- 2.45 Many of these buildings are listed and there are numerous conservation areas, reflecting the quality of the towns and villages. Many remain unspoilt, adding considerably to the overall landscape.
- 2.46 Funds to protect traditional buildings are often in short supply and inappropriate development can detract from the beauty of our traditional settlements. Respecting this built heritage is a high priority for local communities, and village appraisals and design statements provide good ways for local people to influence their future.

The following policies relate to traditional buildings, see section five for details:

Traditional Buildings Policies

L1,L3,L4,L5,L7,L8	W4
EH3,EH6,EH9,	AR7
H1,H3,H4,H5,H7,H8,H9	T5,T6,T7,T8,T12,T13
BE1,BE2,BE4,BE7,BE8,B9	TR4
E9/B2	PJS6
F1	NR1,NR6

Market and Coastal Towns

- 2.47 The Dorset AONB is unique in its wealth of real market and coastal towns. These towns have underpinned the local culture and economy for centuries. However, what makes them real is that they have retained this important role today, evolving and adapting to meet modern day needs.
- 2.48 The market towns of Beaminster and Bridport lie within the AONB boundary, while Dorchester, Wareham, Blandford Forum and Sturminster Newton lie just outside but play a vital support role to the rural communities within the AONB. These are towns with active markets and a wide range of services to support both the immediate urban and rural population as well as visitors. The coastal towns of Lyme Regis and Swanage within the AONB, and Weymouth close by, all have traditional seaside town character and support a buoyant tourism industry as well as an expanding population.



Bridport market is popular with locals and visitors.

- 2.49 Both the coastal and market towns have great value other than their practical functionality. All boast a remarkable variety of historic buildings and retain a rich cultural heritage. Bridport, for example, has a particularly strong arts scene and has an active and thriving arts centre.
- 2.50 Many of these towns have undertaken 'health checks' as promoted by the Market & Coastal Towns Initiative. Issues such as car related pollution, congestion and parking problems, lack of affordable housing and lack of secure, well-paid employment are all threats to their future viability.
- 2.51 Some of these towns are developing strategies to adapt and evolve and address these issues in a

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structured and sustainable way. Swanage, Weymouth and Lyme Regis will no doubt make the most of the recent World Heritage Site designation to attract visitors and resources. Others have developed local area partnerships to harness local support. The Bridport Community Initiative for example has recently been awarded 'Beacon Town' status for its local food initiative, which will benefit the health of the local community, economy and environment. Lyme Regis, Wareham and Sturminster Newton all have Development Trusts or Community Companies which address sustainability issues and social and economic issues.

The following policies relate to market and coastal towns, see section five for details:

Market and Coastal Towns Policies

L1,L3,L4,L5,L7	AR6,AR7,AR10
B2,B3,B6,B10,B12	T1,T2,T3,T5,T7,T8,T10,
EH2,EH3,EH6,EH7,EH9	T11,T12,T13
H1,H2,H3,H4,H6,H7,H8,H9	TR1,TR2,TR3,TR4,TR5,TR6
BE1,BE2,BE3,BE4,BE5,	PJS1,PJS2,PJS3,PJS4,
BE6,BE7,BE8,BE9,	PJS5,PJS6,PJS7,PJS8,
F4,F5,F7,F8,F9	PJS9,
W2,W4,W5	NR1,NR2,NR3,NR4,NR5,
AR1,AR2,AR3,AR4,AR5,	NR6,NR7,NR8

Villages and Hamlets

2.52 Dorset is a landscape of small, scattered settlements, dependent on market towns for major services and facilities. Many villages are very ancient, already well established by the time of the Domesday Book in 1086. Some grew up around monasteries, such as Abbotsbury, or large estates such as Little Bredy and Milton Abbas. 'Springline' villages lie along the edge of the chalk, taking advantage of the ready supply of clean water, often having a 'Winterborne' prefix.



Symondsburys village

2.53 In the west of the AONB, there are few large settlements but a dispersed pattern of hamlets and scattered farmsteads with isolated churches. These date from the Middle Ages when new land was brought into cultivation. Whitechurch Canonorum, Wootton Fitzpaine and Marshwood are village names that reflect their old woodland origins.

2.54 Many small villages and hamlets in the AONB have an air of timelessness, which belies their fluctuating fortunes. Dorset has a surprising number of deserted villages and settlements, evidence of which can be seen on aerial photos. Changes in rural activities and industries sometimes resulted in the decline of the communities that had depended on them. The settlements in the AONB face new challenges today. Increasing house prices and the trend for second homes are changing the make-up of rural communities, while diminishing services and facilities can make life very hard for our most vulnerable people. Enlargement of villages and standardisation of design can lead to a loss of the distinctive character that has developed over the years.

2.55 While the pressures on our rural villages are great, there is an even greater determination among local people to keep communities alive.

The following policies relate to villages and hamlets, see section five for details:

Villages and Hamlets Policies

L1,L3,L4,L5,L7,L9,L10,L12	AR6,AR7,AR10
B2,B3,B6,B12	T1,T2,T3,T5,T8,T10,T11,
EH2,EH3,EH6,EH7,EH9	T12,T13
H1,H2,H3,H4,H6,H7,H8,H9	TR1,TR2,TR3,TR4,TR5,
BE1 – BE9	TR6
F4,F5,F7,F8,F9	PJS1 – PJS9
W2,W4,W5	NR1 - NR8
AR1,AR2,AR3,AR4,AR5,	

Country Lanes

2.56 The lanes and roads of the AONB are rich in history, reflecting centuries of human use. Many road bridges still have early 19th Century notices which threaten anyone damaging the bridge with transportation for life. Signposts on country lanes are mainly still the traditional finger posts, some topped by metal circles displaying the grid reference. A few of these are still painted red and local legend has it that they directed the way to the gangs of prisoners being marched to Portsmouth for transportation.

2. Dorset's Special Landscape



Old lanes and tracks sit well in the landscape.

- 2.57 Ancient, wind swept ridgeway tracks, flanked by Bronze Age barrows and linking prehistoric settlements and hillforts, are still used today as roads, footpaths and bridleways. Many of the arrow straight Roman roads, leading to and from Dorchester, are still used by modern traffic. In contrast, the Marshwood Vale's quiet, winding sunken lanes mirror parish boundaries. They are deeply cut and have their own microclimate, supporting a wealth of wildflowers along their verges. Many lanes are in the valley bottoms, running next to clear streams and winding through water meadows. For views, the undulating coast road is hard to beat, with stunning vistas of Chesil Beach and other parts of the World Heritage Site.



Many road signs are the traditional fingerposts.

- 2.58 Most of the roads in the AONB are narrow country lanes with no footways. They are used by walkers, cyclists, horse-riders, farm traffic and animals as well as cars. As such, they are not appropriate for modern traffic size, volume or speed, and the effects of these on people's safety and quality of life is a major issue. The character of the countryside is also being affected by the creeping "urbanisation" of signs, kerbs and calming measures, none of which are designed with rural roads in mind.

- 2.59 Their diversity of character, history and human use, set so comfortably in their landscapes, is what makes country lanes a special quality of the AONB. These qualities of "rightness" and timelessness need to be respected and maintained.

The following policies relate to country lanes, see section five for details:

Country Lanes Policies

L1,L3,L5,L7,L12,L14	F11
B2,B6,B7	W1
EH6	AR1,AR2,AR3,AR5
H1,H4,H7,H8,H9	T1,T2,TR3,TR4,TR5
BE3,BE4,BE6	PJS2,PJS4,PJS9

Inspirational Views

- 2.60 Wherever you are in the Dorset AONB, you are never far away from a panoramic view of the stunning coastline or varied patchwork of rolling countryside. These impressive views allow us to appreciate and understand the entire landscape and our place within it. They have provided inspiration to poets, artists, musicians and authors, including Thomas Hardy and William Barnes, who wrote in the Dorset dialect.
- 2.61 Viewpoints in the AONB provide tremendous enjoyment of the countryside, but in the past they had a more strategic role. In the Iron Age, numerous hillforts were constructed to provide safe locations where enemies could be detected in advance of attack. Some of these forts were massive structures and they include Pilsdon Pen, one of the highest points in the AONB. At 276 metres, it commands spectacular views of the Marshwood Vale.
- 2.62 The high cliffs and hills near the coast give dramatic views over the sea and along the World Heritage Site. Features like Chesil Beach and the Fleet can be seen in all their glory from the nearby hills. These dramatic views attract many visitors and help to underpin the tourism industry that is so important to the local economy.



Dorset's dramatic views provide inspiration and attract thousands of visitors.

2. Dorset's Special Landscape

2.63 Active management of both the viewpoints and the views themselves are essential to the personal experience of the Dorset AONB. However, the quality of views, particularly over the last 50 years, has become an important issue. For example, increases in road and house building, a growth in telecommunications infrastructure and forestry plantations fragment and reduce the quality of our treasured views.

The following policies relate to inspirational views, see section five for details:

Inspirational Views Policies

L1,L2,L5,L7,L13,L14	W1,W2,W5
B12	AR1,AR2
EH6,	T5,T8
H1,H5,H6	TR4,TR6
BE3,	PJS8,PJS9
F7,F11	NR1,NR2,NR3,NR6

2.67 Perhaps tranquillity should be treated in the same way as many of the other special qualities of the AONB, with 'tranquil areas' recognised and protected. One thing is for sure, once lost it is very hard to restore.



Should 'tranquil areas' be recognised and protected?

Unspoilt Tranquillity

2.64 Tranquillity is becoming an increasingly rare commodity in our hectic world. With more traffic, more aircraft and more people, it can be hard to find places that are truly peaceful. The Dorset AONB has some of the few remaining quiet corners of the country, where the only sounds are the leaves rustling in the breeze, birdsong and the lapping of the sea.

2.65 Tranquillity is one of the most important qualities of the AONB, treasured by those lucky enough to live in or visit its quieter areas. It is what many people come here for - an essential component of "getting away from it all".

2.66 Many of us take peace and quiet for granted - until it is lost. Over the last few decades, Dorset's tranquillity has been steadily eroding. Even though there is no motorway, increases in car use and road building in particular have significantly fragmented our tranquil areas. Even the night sky is at risk from increasing light pollution from larger towns.



Tranquillity - an essential component of getting away from it all.

The following policies relate to unspoilt tranquillity, see section five for details:

Unspoilt Tranquillity Policies

L1,L2,L5,L7,L13,L14	AR2,AR5
B1	T1,T2,T4,T5,T8
H1	TR3,TR4,TR5,TR6
BE1,BE2,BE3,BE4	PJS9
F1,F7	NR1,NR2,NR3,NR4,NR6,
W1,W2,W5,	NR7