



Natural Beauty and Heritage
Historic Environment

5. Policy Framework - Historic Environment

5.5 Historic Environment

Background

5.5.1 The Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has an extraordinarily rich historic environment and archaeological resource. Some parts of this environment are designated for protection, such as our wealth of Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings. A greater understanding of the built environment is covered in chapter 5.6. But the historic environment also includes undesignated sites and historic landscapes that, as a whole, reflect the time depth of human settlement. Our cultural heritage runs through this rich physical historic environment and is central to our identity as individuals and as a community. This strong history is key in the evolution of landscape character.



Hambleton Hill - Iron Age Hillfort.

5.5.2 Heritage is important for many reasons, including tourism, regeneration, our perceptions of personal identity and quality of life. The historic environment is irreplaceable. A sound understanding of this heritage should be used to guide change and inform appropriate conservation and management. We must also recognise our role in creating the heritage of the future. For this process to be effective, it is essential that the significant social, economic, physical and cultural barriers that discourage involvement, understanding and enjoyment of the historic environment are recognised and challenged.

5.5.3 In the AONB there are approximately 10,000 entries within the Sites and Monuments Record, 500 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, 3,000 Listed Buildings, 100 Conservation Areas and around 20 Listed Parks and Gardens. Though mostly not protected, silvan landscapes and features such as veteran trees, wood pasture, parkland and ancient

woods add significantly to the cultural value and character of the historic AONB landscape.

Historical development of the Dorset AONB Landscape

5.5.4 The Dorset AONB has been influenced by human activity for thousands of years:

- **Neolithic BC 4000 – BC 2400**

During this period, temporary forest clearance made way for farming - cereal cultivation and stock rearing - leaving areas of fairly open country. Pollen analysis has indicated that forests were cleared over much of the chalk areas of southern Britain, however extensive areas of ancient woodland remain such as in the western part of the AONB.

Significant features include, long barrows e.g. Hell Stone and stone circles e.g. Nine Stones at Winterbourne Abbas.

- **Bronze Age BC 2399 – BC 701**

This period saw the introduction of metal use in Britain. Woodland clearance for cultivation increased and with the over exploitation of marginal soils and a wetter climate, fertility and soil structure declined leading to erosion on farmed areas. The climate change began to produce the heathland soils of Purbeck with their associated flora and fauna.

Significant features include the many different types of round barrow which can be seen at Poor Lot, Winterbourne Abbas

- **Iron Age BC 700 – AD42**

Evidence of unrest comes from the development of hillforts, ranging from single banks and ditches e.g. Chilcombe to multiple layers of defence like Maiden Castle. During this period the use of iron was introduced and archaeological evidence indicates large scale, permanent woodland clearance to fuel the iron making. Landscape change was more apparent during this time when Bronze Age field systems expanded into more rectangular fields. Soil erosion continued and became more widespread with hill wash depositing material on valley floors. Heathland landscapes continued to develop. Many of the trackways from this, and earlier periods are still evident in the AONB today.

Significant features include hillforts such as Hambleton Hill and Eggardon and field systems, e.g. Valley of Stones.

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• Roman AD 43 – AD409

With the Roman invasion forts were constructed to administer the native Celtic population, towns developed linked by an expanding road network giving Dorset its arrow straight main routes still used today by modern traffic. Large farming estates based around villas continued the expansion of farming and large rectangular fields were laid out. Heavier soils were ploughed and farm produce was supplied to local towns. The import of goods from the rest of the empire increased and wheat and metals together with other goods were exported across the channel from ports on Dorset's coast.

Significant features include towns like Dorchester, roads, villas e.g. Dewlish Roman Villa and the aqueduct which supplied water to Dorchester, which is one of the finest examples of its kind in the country.

• Saxon AD 410 – AD1065

There is much less evidence for this period but it is likely that the expansion of farming decreased and some areas may have been abandoned altogether. Later evidence indicates the development of villages, the division of the countryside into parishes (or "hundreds" as they were known in Dorset) and the building of defended towns such as Wareham. Some estate and local boundaries formed the paths and rural lanes which, together with the ancient trackways, are still in use today. Churches of stone replaced earlier wood structures during the later part of the period and some of these are still unaltered.

Significant features include boundary features and ditches seen in the Marshwood Vale along with some significant churches.

• Medieval AD 1066 – AD1499

With the Norman invasion came castles, for defence and to administer local and larger areas. Farming resumed expansion into the more fertile heavier clay soils and classic "open field" landscapes developed in some areas but others retained their small, irregular fields. There was more woodland clearance as population expanded and over-farming became an issue in more marginal areas. Large areas of the countryside were owned and farmed by abbeys and monasteries which became rich and powerful, such as Abbotsbury. The wool industry became more profitable which suited areas like the Dorset Downs. Economic change together with the plague produced the deserted villages that are

evident in the AONB today. During the middle to later part of the period some of the open fields were enclosed with hedges. Many Marshwood Vale boundary hedges are medieval in origin.

Significant features include castles, e.g. Corfe, Abbeys like Abbotsbury, Cerne and Forde; deserted medieval villages and relict farming terraces such as those at Portesham and Worth Matravers.

• Post Medieval AD 1500 – AD1799

This period saw the dissolution of monasteries e.g. Cerne Abbas. Parliamentary enclosure began during this period with the compulsory marking out of rectangular fields on common land with straight hedges which changed the landscape greatly, although many areas of the AONB still retain irregularly shaped fields due to the topography. This period also saw the beginnings of industrialisation using waterpower and many of the AONB rivers such as the Stour supported watermills. Country houses also developed with defence a lesser issue and the growth of wealth leading to increasing size. They were very often associated with historic parks and gardens, which still contribute to the designed landscape today.

Significant features include country houses, their associated designed landscapes and also early industrial sites.

• Industrial AD 1800 – AD1913

Parliamentary enclosure continued until approximately 1850. This period marks the massive expansion in towns and industry and the move away from rural to urban life, however in Dorset this happened on a much smaller scale. The steam engine impacted on farming with the mechanisation of many processes and resulted in a reduction in numbers of farm workers, this decline continues today but for different reasons. Development of the railways not only encouraged leisure visitors on a large scale to seaside resorts such as Weymouth and Swanage, but also made the transport of people and goods for longer distances quicker and easier, bringing an increase in economic activity and prosperity. Towns expanded with terraced housing, many poorly built and, in contrast, fine Victorian villas. This period also saw public parks, libraries and grand public buildings but life in rural areas, for the most part, remained the hard, isolated existence described in Thomas Hardy's novels.

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Significant features include Victorian terraced housing and villas such as can be seen in parts of Dorchester, railways and Victorian public buildings such as Dorchester's Corn Exchange.

• **Post 1914 AD 1914 – AD1945**

The period after the Great War saw the development of housing and the expansion of the suburbs. Residential development became more organised with avenues, cul-de-sacs and semi-detached properties. Horse drawn vehicles were largely replaced with cars, lorries and motor cycles and "main" roads began to be improved to accommodate them. Much of Dorset's road network though remained very rural, much as we see it today. Much change occurred during the Second World War with many areas of farmland turned over to military use such as airfields at Crossways and Warmwell and army use at Lulworth. The Fleet was also used for testing military equipment such as Barnes Wallis' "bouncing bomb". Many pillboxes, air raid shelters and military buildings still can be seen.

Significant features include all those from the Second World War, examples can be seen around the Fleet at Abbotsbury.

• **Post War AD 1945 – Present**

This period has seen the largest expansion of towns and villages. In agriculture, hedges have been removed producing larger rectangular fields which have moved from pasture to arable production. The countryside has increasingly been influenced by subsidies from Europe. Much employment in Dorset has moved from small scale manufacturing to service industries like tourism. Some areas of Victorian housing have been demolished and replaced by modern estates. Large supermarkets on the edge of towns are increasingly taking over from individual shops located in town centres and rural services have declined dramatically. Increased dependence on the car has seen road developments and the abandonment of much of the rail network. However this change of the landscape has not yet impacted so dramatically on Dorset as it has elsewhere. Demand for character properties and a rural way of life is high from people coming into the area, however this, coupled with low wages, results in local people being unable to afford to buy property. Visitors to the area for holidays and leisure activities have increased, and it is considered to be a highly desirable area to settle.

Current Trends

- 5.5.5 Many historic sites and features have limited and inadequate protection, while others have no protection at all. Many features are still being lost to ploughing and lack of management including sites designated as Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Modern tractors are up to ten times more powerful and 8 times heavier than the average tractor in the 1940's.
- 5.5.6 Awareness and understanding of heritage has been increased by popular television programmes. This could be further developed locally.
- 5.5.7 Heritage Lottery Fund is funding restoration schemes and raising awareness of heritage.

Key Issues

- 5.5.8 The key issues affecting the historic environment in the AONB include:
 - Limited amount of accessible information on heritage resources.
 - Limited coverage of survey and management planning processes to facilitate appropriate conservation and management.
 - Many important sites are not designated or registered and consequently overlooked in development plans.
 - Heritage sites are too often looked at in isolation rather than as part of wider historic landscapes.
 - Effective partnerships and resources for management of key heritage sites not fully explored.
 - Limited understanding, knowledge and involvement of the wider community in heritage conservation and poor understanding of the barriers creating this situation.
 - Poor restoration of historic buildings due to inappropriate conversion; lack of restoration in some areas.
 - Some traditional agricultural features are vulnerable to changes in land management.
 - Decline in local craftsmanship and supply of suitable local materials resulting in loss of traditional character.
 - High rate of loss and damage to heritage sites from land use change and increasing visitor pressure.
 - Heritage is vulnerable to the cumulative effect of relatively small changes.
 - Lack of grants and resources to help land owners conserve and enhance sites and features.

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- We have a rich multicultural heritage but this is not adequately reflected in mainstream interpretation and education.
- Recognition of the positive role the historic environment has to play in quality of life and economic regeneration is low.
- Limited contact with landowners and land managers over historic environment issues.
- Loss of historic landscape features such as hedgerows, pollards and parkland trees.
- Continued damage to, and loss of archaeological sites due to agricultural practices. Ploughing continues on scheduled sites where the current designation system allows existing cultivation methods to continue.



Osmington White Horse.

Key Opportunities

5.5.9 Key opportunities for the historic environment in the AONB include:

- The new agri-environment schemes to be launched in 2005 will provide greater opportunities and incentives for management of the historic environment. The targeting phase of the Entry Level Scheme will be crucial, as the scheme will be run with minimal advisory input from DEFRA and partner organisations.
- Whole farm approach to agri-environment schemes and landowner support could help emphasise the opportunities and benefits of heritage management at an effective scale.
- Development of landscape - scale heritage projects (e.g. South Dorset Ridgeway) could provide a means of attracting resources for management and interpretation. Perhaps in the long-term, opportunities need to be embraced by all to create our own heritage with innovative projects that build on our rich historic environment.
- The Department of Culture Media and Sport is currently reviewing the system of designation of historic sites and features.

This may have a positive impact on the management and conservation of the historic resource.

- Restoration of historic, rural and urban parks, cemeteries and gardens as well as urban historic characterisation work, although not unique to the AONB, could stimulate regeneration of urban areas. Focusing on market towns would be a good starting point.
- The potential development of a North Dorset Countryside Centre offers opportunities for the interpretation and celebration of the historic environment.

Current Activity

5.5.10 There are many organisations involved in managing our many protected historic features. Key areas of current activity include:

- **Heritage Lottery Fund.** A current HLF bid for the Isle of Purbeck could potentially attract significant funding for conservation and enhancement of Purbeck's rich cultural heritage and associated landscape.
- **Historic Landscape Characterisation.** Currently being undertaken throughout Dorset, this will provide vital information on the wider historic landscape. It is being funded through English Heritage and the AONB.
- **Records and Information.** The National Monuments Record is held by English Heritage. The County Sites and Monuments Record is held by the County Council Archaeology Team. This is currently being developed into an improved information system.
- **Advice.** Dorset County Council employs a Historic Environment Countryside Advisor who provides advice to landowners on management of historic features and provides information relating to agri-environment scheme applications. Advice is also to local planning authorities, public utilities and others on the archaeological impact of development.
- **Management.** The County Archaeology Team is running an ongoing Dorset Monument Management Programme. This includes a number of restoration schemes. The Purbeck Heritage Committee is developing a Heritage Lottery Fund bid which could potentially enhance many of the historic features and landscapes in this area.
- **Funding.** DEFRA currently administers the delivery of the agri-environment schemes which protect and enhance the historic environment.

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- **Liaison.** A number of voluntary Parish Liaison Officers have been recruited to provide input and liaison at the local level. About 60% of the county is covered by this scheme.

Related Policies and Strategies

5.5.11 The key policies and strategies relating the historic environment in the AONB include:

- *Planning Policy Guidance 15 - 'Planning and the Historic Environment'*
- *Planning Policy Guidance 16 - 'Archaeology and Planning'*
- *'Heritage Counts 2003 - State of England's Historic Environment 2003'*, (English Heritage, 2003)
- *'Power of Place: The future of the Historic Environment'* (English Heritage, 2000)
- *'The Historic Environment: A Force for our Future'* (DCMS, 2001)
- *'State of the Historic Environment Report'* (English Heritage, 2002)
- *'A strategy for the Historic Environment in the South West'* (English Heritage, 2003)
- *'State of the Historic Environment Report - South West'* (English Heritage, 2002)
- *'Historic Environment Review of Dorset (draft)'* (Dorset County Council, 2003)
- *'Historic Gardens of Dorset'* (Mowl, 2003)
- *'Dorset Heritage Strategy'* (Dorset County Council, 2003)



Corfe Castle

5.5.12 Dorset AONB Policy Framework - Historic Environment

Policy Aims

- Promote the conservation and sustainable management of the historic environment and heritage of the AONB.
- Increase availability and provision of information relating to the historic environment.
- Increase understanding and enjoyment of cultural heritage and its relationship to everyday lives.
- Ensure the historic environment makes a positive contribution to economic and social change within the AONB.

Policy Objectives

- H1. Protect the historic environment from damaging development and land use by ensuring that the development planning and control system reflects the importance of local character, heritage and distinctiveness.
- H2. Improve the accessibility and coverage of information on the historic environment in the AONB.
- H3. Secure resources for sustainable management of the historic environment.
- H4. Promote and support the use of traditional conservation and management skills such as thatching, hedge laying, dry stone walling, orchard & water meadow management.
- H5. Utilise agri-environment schemes to secure management of historic landscapes by promoting locally and supporting uptake where appropriate.
- H6. Support restoration of historic parks, gardens and buildings which stimulate regeneration in a sustainable way.
- H7. Promote and interpret the historic environment of the AONB and increase accessibility where appropriate.
- H8. Encourage and enable communities to manage and celebrate the heritage in their local landscape.
- H9. Identify and promote the effective management of non-designated landscapes and features that contribute to the character of the AONB.