



Living & Working
Transport

5. Policy Framework - Transport

5.11 Transport

Background

5.11.1 Transport is an area of both national and local concern. In common with many rural areas, transport is a major issue in the Dorset AONB, both in terms of impact on the landscape and disadvantaging rural communities. Dorset is fortunate to retain a large network of rural roads, which reflects the diverse character of the surrounding landscape and contributes to its special qualities. Absence of motorway and limited dual carriageway have, so far, ensured that large scale environmental and landscape impact have been minimised. However, increasing traffic volumes are putting pressure on the rural road network and impacting negatively on the environment and communities. Whilst transport provision is essential to our communities and prosperity, it also has huge implications for the quality and character of the AONB environment. Current approaches generally start from the premise that most rural movement is by private car, exacerbating issues such as speed, pollution and the need to share roads with non-motorised users.



Increasing traffic volumes are putting pressure on our rural roads.

5.11.2 The 2001 Census results show that the percentage of car owning households in Dorset is 83%, 10% higher than the national average. The proportion of households that have more than one car also exceeds both the regional and national averages (2001 Census). This trend is typical of the South West, reflecting its rural nature and lack of sufficient public transport.

5.11.3 The following statistics give some indication of the transport situation in Dorset:

- 52% of parishes still do not have a daily bus service, although it is improving.
- 17% of Dorset households have no car, compared to 27% nationally.
- Traffic in Dorset has grown by 53% since 1983 and is currently growing at about 2.5% per year.
- Over 80% of visitors to Dorset come by car.
- Dorset has no motorways - existing or planned - fortunate in major landscape terms but placing more pressure on its rural road network.
- The only Primary Routes through the AONB are the A35 and A37. The A35 through Chideock registers one of the highest counts for Dorset for heavy vehicles passing through the village - 570 per day.

5.11.4 With such limited public transport provision, those living in rural areas but unable to drive can find themselves at a disadvantage when seeking employment and struggle to gain access to essential services, recreational or social opportunities. Dorset has a very high proportion of elderly people, reliant on public transport who can be left isolated in rural areas. The decline in village



Major Transport Routes in and around the Dorset AONB

5. Policy Framework - Transport

shops, pubs and post offices exacerbates this



Traffic congestion is a major issue at Studland.

problem. A lack of good connections between rural areas and towns can be detrimental to both. Rail services in the county are primarily scheduled for commuting and links with buses are often poor. Transport costs and limited public transport services are far bigger issues for rural residents than urban people.

5.11.5 Road management in the AONB is a further concern. Larger roads can be intrusive in the landscape, but even small lanes can impact on the landscape due to their management. Increases in signs, kerbing, lighting and traffic calming measures are all changing the character of rural roads. Many such measures are designed for urban situations and do not translate well into a rural setting.

Current Trends

5.11.6 Traffic volumes are increasing at a rate of 2.5% per year and speed is a major issue. With safety concerns high in this rural area, road signs, kerbing and traffic calming measures are becoming more numerous, impacting on the visual quality of the landscape.

5.11.7 Tourism places significant pressure on the road network, particularly near the coast. Measures to increase the length of the tourist season and the likely increase in visitors linked to the World Heritage Site may increase this pressure.

5.11.8 With the majority of people, whether residents or visitors, enjoying the coast and countryside arriving by car, parking provision impacts heavily upon the landscape. Official car parks may not always complement the surrounding landscape. Indiscriminate parking can damage verges, block gateways and restrict access on rural roads.

Vehicle security in rural locations is a growing concern for Dorset Police and car owners.

5.11.9 Dorset has an ageing population, census data identifies that only one other county has a higher proportion of retired people. There will be an increasing demand for rural transport suitable for the elderly.

5.11.10 Increasing centralisation of services will increase the need to travel.

5.11.11 Poor transport is recognised as a contributory factor to social exclusion, poor health and the decline of rural communities.

Key Issues

5.11.12 The key issues for transport in the AONB identified from the consultation process include:

- Poor and inflexible public transport services in rural areas.
- Poor public awareness of existing public transport opportunities and services.
- Lack of integration between travel modes.
- Lack of commitment to non-car alternatives.
- Increasing traffic volumes in the AONB with associated speed, noise, visual impact, safety implications and congestion.
- Negative impacts of road development and management to the AONB environment.
- Use of technology in reducing the need to travel.
- Lack of recognition of the interdependence of town and country.
- Limited use of public transport as a tool for visitor management.
- Negative impacts of inappropriate car parking.



Heavy traffic in towns and villages affects our safety and quality of life.

5. Policy Framework - Transport

Key Opportunities

5.11.13 The key opportunities for transport in the AONB include:

- Increasing communications technology may reduce the need for travel.
- Cycle use for commuting is growing in popularity and, with greater encouragement and support (high quality cycling routes and priorities, infrastructure like secure racks at appropriate locations, modern technology e.g. power assisted bikes etc.) could provide an important element in a fully integrated and sustainable transport system, alongside walking and public transport.
- Transport Action Groups (TAGs), Community Planning and Parish Plan programmes can provide useful information to transport planners and providers regarding service needs.
- Development of new software (Rural Accessibility System) by Dorset County Council, will assist development and review of bus service network.
- Appointment of Workplace Travel Plan Co-ordinator by DCC to encourage & promote Green Travel plans within the County Council and other major employers.
- Community transport initiatives currently offer opportunities to a limited section of the rural population, but could be expanded.



There is a lack of designated cycleways.

Current Activity

5.11.14 There is a great deal of activity relating to transport in the AONB, including:

- **Grants.** Government funding is available via the Rural Bus Subsidy and Rural Bus Challenge Grant. The Countryside Agency supports local transport schemes through Rural Transport Partnerships, Parish Transport Grants and its Vital Villages Programme.
- **Community Transport Initiatives.** Dorset Action for Rural Transport (DART) is Dorset's Rural Transport Partnership. It has developed scooter schemes and the Purbeck Leisure Bus. Around 26 schools in the AONB take part in the Safe Routes to Schools Programme. In North Dorset there is a flexible rural transport scheme called North Dorset Community Accessible Transport or 'NORDCAT'. Dorset County Council's Country Car Scheme provides transport for necessary journeys for elderly and less able people in rural communities. Transport Action Groups ('TAGs') are operating in Bridport, Dorchester and Wareham, working on local transport issues. Heart of Wessex Rail Partnership develops and promotes the Weymouth to Bristol line, working with trackside communities. Sturminster Newton Countryside Centre Cycle Hire Project is promoting sustainable transport into the countryside.
- **Safe Routes.** Use of trailways and some paths (e.g. North Dorset Trailway) as safe routes for walkers and cyclists for commuting and school journeys as well as recreational use.



Public transport is limited in many rural areas.

- **Projects and Promoted Routes.** The X53 World Heritage Coast branded bus links key sites along the Jurassic Coast, funded by the

5. Policy Framework - Transport

Department of Transport through Rural Bus Challenge. Service 31 (Weymouth – Taunton) successfully links with London train services at Dorchester and Axminster stations. Real time information system to be launched on a main bus route in Purbeck shortly. The Dorchester – Yeovil section of the National Cycleway Route is being developed in phases. The Studland Transport Project is working to address the traffic impacts of visitors in parts of Purbeck. About 100 ecologically important roadside verges in Dorset are sensitively managed through a partnership between Dorset Wildlife Trust and Dorset County Council.

- **Road Development.** The most significant road development under discussion within the timescale of this plan is the proposed Weymouth Relief Road. Dorset County Council has proposed the road in response to public demand as a solution to high traffic flows which can cause congestion at peak times on the A354 approach to Weymouth. This scheme, together with the Portland Relief Road, form a major part of the implementation of an integrated transportation strategy detailed in Dorset's Local Transport Plan (July 2000). The application will be taken via the Weymouth Local Plan Process, by Public Enquiry, in early 2004. The proposed route will have major landscape implications and will impact on the South Dorset Ridgeway. These implications will be explored at planning application stage.



Communication masts, signs and other infrastructure along roads impact on the AONB landscape.

Related Policies and Strategies

5.11.15 Policies and strategies linked to transport include:

- *'Transport 2010: The Ten Year Transport Plan'* (DTLR, 2002) - Government Transport White Paper, which includes target for 33% of rural households to be within a 10-minute walk of an hourly service by 2010.
- *'A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone'* (DfT, 1998) - integrated transport white paper.
- Planning Policy Guidance 13 (March 2001) - emphasises sustainable transport modes.
- Road Traffic Reduction Act 1997 - measures to reduce traffic levels or rate of growth.
- *'Rural Routes and Networks'* (Countryside Agency and Institute of Civil Engineers, 2002) - report on protecting and maintaining the character of rural roads.
- *'Roads in the Countryside'* (Countryside Commission, 1995) - guidance on the design and management of rural roads.
- *'Rural Traffic - Getting it Right'* (Countryside Commission, 1997) - report on pilot traffic management schemes in rural locations.
- *'Dorset County Structure Plan'* (Dorset County Council, 2001)
- Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000.
- *'Making Purbeck More Special'* (Purbeck Heritage Committee, 2002).
- *'Making the Connections: Transport and Social Exclusion'* (Social Exclusion Unit 2000).
- *'Tourism without Traffic – a Good Practice Guide'* (DTLR, Transport 2000 and English Tourism, 2001).
- *'Issues affecting education & training in sparsely populated areas'* (Learning & Skills Council, 2002)
- *'Dorset's Local Transport Plan (2001-2006)'* - Dorset County Council's strategy for traffic management and public transport.

5. Policy Framework - Transport

5.11.16 Dorset AONB Policy Framework - Transport

Policy Aims

- The provision of sustainable travel options for residents and visitors.
- Support and promote initiatives to reduce car dependency.
- Reduce the impact of traffic within the AONB and promote a better balance of road use.
- Ensure that the location and management of route and road corridors has regard to the AONB primary purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty.
- Ensure a strategic integration of transport within wider policy to support AONB objectives.
- Support and promote local services and infrastructure.

Policy Objectives

- TR1. Support the development of options for greater transport choice.
- TR2. Develop and promote a fully integrated transport system that fulfils the needs of residents and visitors to the AONB.
- TR3. Support and develop initiatives that change priorities for road use on rural roads, making them safer for non-car users.
- TR4. Ensure that road design, delivery, signage and maintenance are sympathetic to the special character of rural roads and the AONB.
- TR5. Promote local services and choices that reduce the need to travel.
- TR6. Ensure that the environmental and visual impact of car parking is minimised in the AONB.