



7. Monitoring and Evaluation

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Both action undertaken and the condition of the AONB will be monitored.

Types of Monitoring

7.1 Monitoring in relation to the Dorset AONB can be divided into two areas:

- Monitoring action and effort made
- Monitoring the condition of the AONB and how it is changing.

Both are essential in meeting the statutory requirements of the AONB designation and in guiding management and future action.

Monitoring and Evaluating Action

7.2 The AONB Action Plan sets out the priority actions that will be taken forward. Each has an expected output and time-scale. The Action Plan will be reviewed annually to note progress made in achieving the targets set and to set new targets for the year ahead. An annual report will be produced to make this information widely available each year.

7.3 This evaluation process is essential to ensure that the Action Plan has the flexibility to accommodate new opportunities, and to ensure that we learn from experience in order to make best use of future resources. This is particularly crucial as we complete surveys and gain a better understanding of the condition of the AONB, since this will help to target future action and may identify the need for new initiatives.

Monitoring Condition and Change

7.4 At present, there is a lack of detailed, consistent AONB-wide information on the character and condition of the landscape. A **Landscape Character Assessment** is currently being undertaken by the AONB staff unit, building on previous work but bringing it up to date according to the latest guidance. This should be completed

in 2004 and will identify those features that underpin the character and distinctiveness of the landscape at a local level.



A 'State of the AONB' report will be produced.

7.5 A further area of work will be a **condition survey** of the AONB, looking at the state of the features identified in the character assessment. This will identify those areas that are in favourable condition and in need of maintenance, and those areas in poor condition where action is required to restore and enhance the landscape. This will provide a spatial assessment of the AONB and will enable more detailed targeting of future work. It is anticipated that this work will start in 2004.

7.6 The condition survey will be an important component of AONB monitoring. However, a range of condition indicators are being developed that will give a broad assessment of the health of the AONB environment. In 2004/5, the first '**State of the Dorset AONB**' report will be produced. This will bring together all existing data in order to set a baseline and identify data gaps that need to be filled. It will set the framework for the monitoring of the AONB.

7.7 The South West Protected Landscapes Forum has commissioned a report on AONB monitoring by Baker Associates, which was completed in 2003. This investigated the creation of a **core set of condition indicators** which could be applied to any AONB in the region, to ensure a consistent approach. The Dorset AONB will adopt this core set of indicators, but may include additional local indicators where data is available that is relevant to particular qualities of this AONB.

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- 7.8 The Countryside Agency guidance on the selection of indicators has been used in developing the regional core set, and is as follows:

Indicators which measure the quality aspects of the AONB should be:

- Expressed in terms that the interested public can understand and relate to.
- Relevant to issues and policies highlighted within the management plan.
- Capable of replication to show trends and change over time and permit the identification of baselines or bench-marks.
- Applicable at a range of scales in order that data can be split down to ward or parish level, and also understood at a county, regional or national level.
- Based on standard procedures wherever possible in order to contribute to national or regional data sets and to enable comparisons, for example with adjacent areas or with other AONBs.
- Complementary to, or integrated with, other indicators, including the Government's published 'Quality of Life Counts' and the Countryside Agency 'State of the Countryside' reports.



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- 7.9 Baker Associates considered a number of factors in developing the core set of indicators. These included:

- **Simplicity**

Most AONB units are limited in both time and resources and for many this will be the first Management Plan. A simple approach to

monitoring is therefore most suitable initially, whilst allowing for expansion at a later date if required.

- **Understanding of the baseline position**

Many AONBs do not currently have access to good baseline data on condition, making preparation of Management Plans and State of reports difficult. Much survey work will be required in the first few years to establish the baseline condition of the AONB.

- **Implications of SEA Directive**

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) will be required for all relevant plans and programmes adopted after 21st July 2004, the date by which the EU Directive must be ratified into individual member states legislation. It is likely that the Directive will apply to AONB plans and it requires the collection of baseline data and monitoring of significant environmental effects.

- **Purposes of AONB designation**

Through their primary purpose, AONBs have an almost unique area of responsibility for landscape and natural beauty across often extensive areas. As such, the indicators must reflect this purpose and will have a strong landscape emphasis.

- **Local distinctiveness**

One of the main reasons for the designation of AONBs is their distinctive and unique character. Additional indicators may be required to reflect characteristics particular to each AONB.

- **Data availability**

With limited resources, it is unlikely that most AONB units will be able to undertake extensive surveys to collect new data. In order to be sustainable in the long-term, monitoring should make the best use of data that is already routinely gathered by partner organisations and that is readily available.



Where possible, AONB monitoring will utilise existing information.

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7.10 The result of the Baker Associates study is the creation of a short and focused set of core indicators, which emphasise the monitoring of the environmental resource. They are listed in the tables below. Below the tables are potential further indicators that may be developed for the Dorset AONB. These will be the topic of further consultation in the first year of implementation.



Landscape monitoring will include the condition of historic monuments.

Landscape

Topic	Condition Indicator	Comment
Landscape Character Historic Landscape	%SAMs in favourable condition Listed and unlisted buildings at risk	Data from English Heritage Some data available from local authorities, some additional data required
Landscape Character Boundaries	% change in locally distinctive field boundaries	Survey will be required – component of AONB Condition Survey
Landscape Character Ridges and Views	Changes in key ridges and views	Small number of key sites to be selected for fixed point photography with local consultation regarding assessment of quality and change
Land Management	% of land managed under higher tier agri-environment schemes	Data from DEFRA

Potential additional landscape condition indicators for Dorset to be investigated:

- Length of undeveloped coastline (development within 300m of mean high water mark).
- Condition of historic designed landscapes – through liaison with English Heritage, Dorset Historic Gardens Trust and DCC Historic Environment Team.
- Data on noise pollution levels may be available from local authorities.
- Light pollution data – CPRE collated some information but future surveys are uncertain.
- Traffic counts may also provide information relating to tranquillity.

Biodiversity

Topic	Condition Indicator	Comment
Habitats	% change in BAP habitats	Baseline work nearing completion by EN and will be available for AONB

Potential additional biodiversity indicators for Dorset to be investigated:

- % SSSIs in favourable condition – English Nature monitoring for PSA target.
- A number of wildlife species are monitored in Dorset and some are good indicators of environmental health. Where data is already available and surveys are repeated regularly, these might provide useful additional data. Potential species indicators include invertebrates and fish, both monitored regularly by the Environment Agency. Species like mayfly, bullhead and brown trout can be good indicators of the quality of the aquatic environment. Otters and water voles are also monitored through Dorset Wildlife Trust projects. Farmland birds and arable flora are good indicators of the farmland environment and the recent brown hare survey may also prove valuable. Butterfly surveys may provide valuable information relating to grassland habitats, as would certain plant species some of which are monitored under the Biodiversity Action Plan.

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Water Quality

Topic	Condition Indicator	Comment
Rivers	% change in pollution incidents	Type of incidents to be used in monitoring requires local determination. Data from Environment Agency
Sea Water	% of designated bathing beaches meeting Bathing Water Directive	Data from Environment Agency

Potential additional water quality indicators for Dorset to be investigated:

- River water quality by GQA combined chemical and biological data from the Environment Agency (or biological data from BMWP scores).

Access

Topic	Condition Indicator	Comment
Rights of Way	% of rights of way in favourable condition	Data from DCC ROW Team

Potential additional access indicators for Dorset to be investigated:

- Surveys could relate to condition of particular promoted trails, such as the South West Coast Path, Wessex Ridgeway etc.
- Monitoring of specific types of access may be useful in Dorset, e.g. provision of routes suitable for disabled access, improvements to the cycle network, etc.

Social

Topic	Condition Indicator	Comment
Affordable Housing	Number of new homes built annually in the AONB which are affordable housing	Data can be collated from the local planning authorities and should include net new affordable dwellings completed per year, including new build and conversions. This may require analysis of housing data.
Access to Services	% of AONB population within x km of a convenience food shop	Data is available from the Countryside Agency as part of their monitoring for State of the Countryside reporting. The data has been cut to an AONB level but may contain inaccuracies as it is based on ward boundaries.

Potential additional social indicators for Dorset to be investigated:

- Dorset County Council gathers a considerable amount of social data for the County which could be used.

Economic

Topic	Condition Indicator	Comment
Employment	% change in key employment sectors	Categories to be locally selected. Data available from NOMIS data base and DEFRA. Smallest unit of disaggregation is ward, and sometimes larger to protect confidentiality. Will require data manipulation.
Farming	% change in relevant farming types and geographically specific data if required	Categories to be locally selected. Data available from DEFRA

Potential additional economic indicators for Dorset to be investigated:

- Farming data could focus on livestock sector in Dorset which has considerable landscape implications.

These condition indicators will be further investigated in the first year of implementation of this plan, resulting in a State of the Dorset AONB report in 2005. Regionally, discussions are underway with data providers and the Regional Observatory regarding protocols for data provision. This will also be required for local data gathering.