

Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan Consultation

Report on Results of Public Consultation Exercise on Broad Aims for AONB Management

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty covers approximately 42% of the county of Dorset. It includes some of the most dramatic and varied scenery in the country, from the World Heritage Coast to the hills and vales inland. The Dorset AONB Partnership is currently developing the first statutory Management Plan for the AONB, as required by the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000.

In March and April 2003, the Dorset AONB Team undertook a scoping exercise to identify issues affecting the AONB. From these, broad aims and objectives for management were developed by the team. These are detailed in the separate document 'A Framework for the Future of the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – Issues, Aims and Objectives' which has been circulated to partner and strategic organisations for comments.

A priority for the Dorset AONB Partnership is to ensure the involvement of local people in the development and delivery of the AONB Management Plan. With this in mind, four public consultation events were held in June 2003, focusing on the broad aims.

The events included drop-in sessions open to the public with an exhibition of the issues and broad aims. Attendees were asked to use coloured stickers to indicate whether they thought the broad aims were very important, fairly important or not very important. This was intended to help gauge local priorities. All sessions were well attended, with between 60-100 people attending each.

The events also included a more formal workshop session for an invited audience of parish councillors and representatives from local groups and societies. The sticker exercise was run for this group too, while the workshop element focused on actions and priorities – i.e. how people felt the aims could be achieved. Between 12-30 people attended each workshop.

A questionnaire based on the broad aims was also produced and distributed at the events for those who were unable to stay or for people to pass on to other interested individuals unable to attend the events. *The results of the questionnaires are not included in this report.*

This report presents the results of the consultation events and discusses how these should feed into the Management Plan.

Results

Sticker Exercise

Appendix 1 includes tables and charts of the results from the sticker exercises at each event, plus the combined results from all four events. These are ranked according to the number of red stickers, i.e. the number of people who felt that the aim was very important.

In addition, each broad aim was assigned a score as follows:

Score 3 for each red sticker (very important)

Score 2 for each yellow sticker (fairly important)

Score 1 for each green sticker (not very important)

Appendix 2 shows the broad aims ranked according to score.

Comments

Appendix 3 lists the additional comments expressed at the drop-in sessions.

Workshops

Appendix 4 includes the notes and outcomes of the four workshop sessions.

Summary of Findings

Sticker Exercise

The sticker exercise generally worked well with many people spending a considerable amount of time thinking about their responses. Many people made the comment that all of the proposed aims were important and they found it hard to pull out priorities. The intention was that each aim would be given a sticker by each person, but in reality it was found that many people did not score all the aims, picking out those they felt were either particularly important or those they disagreed with. This made analysis slightly more difficult and the results are therefore presented as actual scores to show both number of responses as well as importance levels.

From the combined scores, the aims relating to the built environment, farming and biodiversity came out as most important, with affordable housing also scoring very highly. In fact all three built environment and farming aims appear in the top ten. The top ten aims were as follows:

Topic	Broad Aim	Score
Built environment	Ensure that developers have regard for the landscape character and quality of the AONB and that guidance is made available	449
Built environment	Promote high standards and best practice in siting, design and construction of buildings	399
Farming & Agriculture	Ensure that food production is valued for quality and contribution to healthy lifestyles, local distinctiveness and the economy	392
Farming & Agriculture	Ensure that farming can continue to contribute to rural viability and way of life	370
Biodiversity	Conserve and enhance the wildlife habitats of the AONB	354
Built environment	Conserve and enhance the character of the built environment of the AONB	352
Farming & Agriculture	Ensure that farming can continue to provide a beautiful and healthy landscape and environment	349

People, Jobs & Services	Support the provision of affordable housing for local people in appropriate areas	346
Earth Heritage	Protect, interpret and promote the World Heritage Coast and its geological story	340
Historic environment	Promote good practice and sustainable management of the historic environment	321

Many of the people, jobs and services aims and those relating to woodland, earth heritage and transport came out slightly further down the list, along with aims broadly relating to education and awareness.

Those with lower scores included aims relating to tourism, minerals and access. Some of the more strategic aims, such as integration of policies, generated less interest. This may be because people want the focus to be on more action-orientated aims. In the workshops, strategic integration was considered an important role for the AONB Team.

Variations in scores between events

North Dorset Event (Sturminster Newton)

The highest scoring aims related to the built environment, farming, the World Heritage Coast, landscape, waste and renewable energy. Biodiversity came slightly lower down the list, with waste, traffic, soil and water resources. The lowest scores were given to aims relating to tourism and access, along with some of the strategic integration aims. Tourism may have scored poorly because it is not perceived to be so relevant in North Dorset, or it may be that local residents do not wish to see an increase in tourism to the area. Some of the comments received at the event indicate that there are concerns about the potential impacts of increased tourism in the area.

West Dorset Event (Bridport)

The highest scoring aims related to the built environment, biodiversity, farming, waste and affordable housing. Landscape, resource and traffic management and woodland generated medium scores, while lowest scores were generally given to aims relating to access, minerals, tourism and transport.

West Dorset Event (Dorchester)

The highest scoring aims related to biodiversity, the built environment, farming, management of traffic and the historic environment and affordable housing. Landscape, managing natural resources, woodlands, local services and facilities and some of the transport aims generated medium scores. Lowest scores related to promotion and provision of tourism, access and information plus minerals. Tourism aims that focused on maximising benefits for local people and reducing the impacts of tourism activity scored higher, implying that there is a perceived issue with tourism and access in this area.

Purbeck Event (Wareham)

The highest scoring aims related to the built environment, farming, biodiversity, soil and waste. Both the soil aims appeared in the top ten. Affordable housing, transport, landscape, local services and managing natural resources generated medium scores. The lowest scores were assigned to aims for tourism, access and the historic environment.

Workshops

The aim of the workshops was to encourage local community representatives to identify some potential objectives and actions that would achieve the aims. Feedback from the four workshops is summarised below:

Topic	Summary of comments and ideas
Wildlife / Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Farming was seen as crucial to wildlife management so need to focus on measures to improve viability and support sensitive farming practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide advice on wildlife management • Promote agri-environment schemes • Link to local produce etc ➤ Need better information to guide work – biodiversity mapping project to help with linking habitats etc. ➤ Integrate biodiversity with landscape and other strategies / actions ➤ Understanding often poor – need to develop better communication on biodiversity issues ➤ Find ways of getting resources from tourism back into wildlife and landscape management ➤ Hedges, grasslands and gardens were mentioned as possible focal points
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stop or mitigate telecommunication masts and seek undergrounding of electricity supply ➤ Priorities identified for action were farmland, urban fringe, rivers and hedgerows ➤ Seek funding via voluntary visitor payback and by charging full council tax on second homes and ring-fencing money ➤ Need to improve understanding of landscape and bring it alive ➤ Develop method of 'proofing' local plans and strategies to ensure they apply consistent, effective policies and actions for the AONB ➤ Need a defined, integrated policy on coastal erosion
Farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Promote agri-environment schemes to farmers and ensure that advisors work together to make best use of resources ➤ Lobby for better resources for countryside management aspects of farming and move away from production subsidies ➤ Support local produce initiatives and local processing, plus support Farmers Markets ➤ Develop education / awareness programme on farming and local food production ➤ Undertake research into land ownership trends ➤ Develop training schemes and demonstration farms to promote best practice management and support for appropriate diversification ➤ Support farming co-operatives and land ownership fund ➤ Develop an award scheme for local farm produce ➤ Lobby against inappropriate use of farmland, e.g. for waste, scrap etc. ➤ Develop AONB policy on GM crops
Woodland & Forestry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop integrated woodland strategy for AONB to include identification of areas for new planting, e.g. to link fragmented sites ➤ Encourage use of local timber / wood products ➤ Recognise importance of individual trees within the landscape ➤ Promote the use of local stock ➤ Ensure the right trees are in the right place ➤ Explore opportunities for sustainable wood fuel production ➤ Lobby for a green tax on imported non-sustainable timber ➤ Investigate potential for restoration / creation of hunting forests, e.g. in North Dorset ➤ Education and awareness programme for woodland and forestry ➤ Develop Best Parish Woodland Scheme
Earth Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop more information on the internet ➤ Simplify the subject and make it more exciting and easy to understand ➤ Link geology to local materials

Historic Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase understanding and profile through education packs, subtle interpretation and via web sites ➤ Increase awareness and study of industrial archaeology, particularly heritage related to stone / quarrying industry ➤ Develop an 'asset list' of heritage in the AONB, prioritise action needed to protect it and lobby for funding ➤ Develop voluntary warden schemes for key sites ➤ Produce education resources on key sites ➤ Improve liaison with national heritage organisations ➤ Develop and impose limits on recreational use of sites vulnerable to erosion ➤ Provide more organised trips with experts ➤ Improve access – off site car parks etc ➤ Create our own heritage for future generations
Built Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Produce design guidance on local materials, siting, context in landscape, design etc ➤ Maximise use of brownfield sites for development ➤ Improve liaison with town and parish councils ➤ Support parish plans and village design statements ➤ Link AONB Plan with local plans etc ➤ Develop list of important buildings in AONB
People, Jobs and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Dedicated affordable housing for local people / key workers in villages as well as market towns – link with housing associations ➤ Research into design and materials for affordable housing so they maintain character, use local materials but remain inexpensive ➤ Better utilization of brownfield sites ➤ Retirement tax ➤ Charge full council tax for second homes (or double) ➤ Shop delivery services / shared delivery schemes / mobile services ➤ Use village halls and pubs as post offices, shops etc. ➤ Use supermarkets to supply local shops ➤ Promote local services and producers ➤ Encourage small local businesses ➤ Provide leisure facilities for young people
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Encourage more rail use e.g. Swanage Railway ➤ Integrated transport – joined up approach between different modes, integrated time-tabling and links etc. ➤ Use key villages as small scale 'transport hubs' with cycle lockers / car parks etc near bus stops / stations to allow different modes to be utilised ➤ Develop rural park and ride, e.g. Morecomblake and Charmouth ➤ Develop taxi voucher schemes and extend scooter schemes ➤ Better security at car parks ➤ Better transport information in different places – make it simpler, with maps etc. ➤ Reduce speed limits – like New Forest. Develop Quiet Lanes suitable for non-car users ➤ Weight limits / size restrictions / time restrictions– reduce use of small roads by HGVs – provide info so drivers know what to expect ➤ Reduce roadside signage and clutter – make more appropriate to rural character, local materials, subtle – no blue cycle signs! ➤ Take landscape character into account in road schemes and management ➤ Develop code of practice to include local consultation ➤ Consider and reduce light pollution ➤ No motorways! ➤ Make coast a 'scenic route', reduce commercial traffic ➤ Increase cycle provision on trains
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Need to provide affordable housing so tourism sector workers can afford to live here ➤ Make public transport part of the experience, e.g. X53 bus ➤ Develop visitor payback schemes and explain them better – e.g. voluntary bed tax ➤ Better car routing to alleviate congestion, better but sympathetic car parking, more public transport links, park and ride, small railway and better signing at 'honey pots'

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Eco-tourism and day tripping all year round ➤ Need cycle hire and safe routes to reduce car use ➤ Better variety of accommodation ➤ Use funds from bed tax and extra council tax from 2nd homes to support countryside – e.g. plugging the leaks scheme ➤ Encourage tourists to make better use of local services and facilities
Access & Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reduce signage and interpretation – use at key sites and gateway sites and make appropriate to location ➤ Make ROW network link better – utility links as well as recreational – variety of provision – less themed long distance routes! Improve existing provision. ➤ Provide better information on routes so people know what to expect ➤ More leaflets on shorter circular routes suitable for families ➤ Link better with public transport ➤ Better facilities for users – gates, seating, WCs – suitable for less mobile ➤ Education to explain ‘working countryside’ plus better understanding between users and landowners ➤ Better maintenance of ROW plus use web site to enable people to report problems ➤ Better liaison with landowners for promoted routes
Renewable Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Small scale wind turbines in suitable places but not wind farms except offshore ➤ Better use of technology – can turbines double as telecom masts? Explore new technology – use of ethanol, hemp etc ➤ Bio-mass etc good opportunity but landscape impact needs to be evaluated ➤ Landscape assessments needed on all energy schemes ➤ Anomalies in planning system should be sorted out – e.g. solar panels
Waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Much greater effort needed on recycling – should be compulsory, better kerbside collection and segregation of waste ➤ Support schemes to reduce packaging and educate people ➤ Stronger licensing of waste disposal ➤ Composting schemes ➤ Target supermarkets – major waste producers!
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Charge according to use – more meters! ➤ Promote catchment planning
Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Manage water and soil together ➤ Promote low input farming and best practice for soil conservation
Minerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Restoration key part of license ➤ Small scale, demand-led extraction for local use, but not major sites ➤ Develop catchment plans for use of local stone ➤ Promote use of flint

Cross-Cutting Issues and Themes

The comments raised and actions suggested can be broadly related to several cross-cutting themes, which could become key areas of work for the AONB Team:

- Integration** Developing a joined up approach, linking initiatives together, generating consistency across the area
- Scale** Ensuring that the scale of design, structures, developments and operations is appropriate to the AONB
- Influence** Using landscape character-based approach, developing a common methodology for assessments, influencing policy and activity to ensure that the qualities of the AONB are conserved and enhanced

- Information** Ensuring that information is available to guide decision-making. Creating 'asset lists' so we know what we've got, where it is and its condition
- Awareness** Generating a better understanding of the 'working countryside' and the importance of the AONB
- Resourcing** Showing the hidden costs, payback schemes, generating and finding resources and making better use of those already available
- Local Voice** Liaison with local people, supporting Parish Plans, Village Design Statements and linking these with wider AONB Management
- Monitoring** Establishing baselines from which we can monitor future change.