

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

**A GUIDE FOR MEMBERS OF  
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEES**



CYNGOR  
CEFN GWLAD  
CYMRU  
COUNTRYSIDE  
COUNCIL  
FOR WALES

**COUNTRYSIDE  
COMMISSION**



The Countryside Commission works to conserve and enhance the beauty of the English countryside and to help people to enjoy it.

The Countryside Council for Wales is the statutory advisor to government on sustaining natural beauty, wildlife and the opportunity for outdoor enjoyment in rural Wales and its inshore waters and is the national wildlife conservation authority.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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## A GUIDE FOR MEMBERS OF JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEES

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## FOREWORD

In his statement on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in January 1991, the then Secretary of State for the Environment, the Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP, noted that they contain many of our finest landscapes. He acknowledged that much has been achieved in AONBs by local authorities and through the commitment of local people. He also said that the "...Government will continue to meet its responsibility to provide an up-to-date and effective framework for their protection". He then went on to make the point that "...final responsibility rests in local hands".

Responsibility for protecting the quality of our finest landscapes for future generations is particularly demanding. It requires a feel for the legitimate needs and aspirations of local communities who live and work in them, and the wisdom to reconcile the problems that inevitably arise in a way that furthers the objectives of designation.

The purpose of this publication is to help members of AONB Joint Advisory Committees or their equivalents in the challenge that they face.

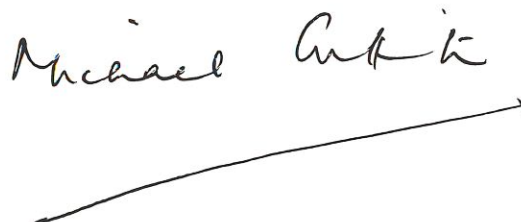


SIR JOHN JOHNSON  
Chairman Countryside Commission

Some Joint Advisory Committees have been strikingly innovative in the way that they have pursued the objectives of designation. Examples of their work are given in the text, and there are many more that could have been quoted. They demonstrate the power of working in partnership with others in a shared desire to protect these valuable landscapes.

This publication is not directed solely at local authority members of Joint Advisory Committees. Representatives of land management and recreational interests can also make a constructive contribution both by bringing their own expertise to bear and by raising the awareness of the implications of designation within their own organisations.

We hope that all members of Joint Advisory Committees will find this publication helpful in providing guidance, in sharing experience and in generating new ideas that will enable AONBs to take their proper place in the world of protected landscapes.



MICHAEL GRIFFITH  
Chairman Countryside Council for Wales

## PREFACE

In this publication, the term 'Joint Advisory Committee' (JAC) is used to describe the body that has a specific responsibility for coordinating and guiding the conservation and management of an AONB. In some AONBs, different terms are used and there are many variations in the way that these bodies are constituted. For these reasons, the term is used generically to embrace all of these variations.

Please note that various extracts from the policies of the Countryside Commission and the Countryside Council for Wales relating to AONBs are shown in boxed bold type at the beginning of each section, under the main heading. The full policies are set out in Appendix 1 on page 17.

Countryside Commission  
September 1994



## I. AONB DESIGNATION

"The Commission may, by order made as respects any area in England and Wales not being in a National Park, which appears to them to be of such outstanding natural beauty that it is desirable that the provisions of this Act relating to such areas should apply thereto, designate the area for the purposes of this Act as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty..."

National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, Section 87 (1).

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, like the National Parks, are of national importance because of their high landscape quality. AONBs also celebrate the remarkable diversity of the landscape of England and Wales. They embrace classic English and Welsh landscapes; the beech woods of the Chilterns, the sweeping uplands of the North Pennines, the soft hills and estuaries of South Devon, the intimate complexity of Chichester Harbour, the dramatic charm and the woodlands of the Wye Valley. They "...contain some of the finest landscapes outside the National Parks". *Countryside Council for Wales: An introduction*.

The AONB designation has been applied to well over 20,000 sq km, 13.5 per cent of the area of England and Wales. Nearly 50 per cent more landscape is protected in this way than by the National Park designation.

As nations, our appreciation of, and regard for, the landscape is reflected in our literature, music and painting. What we mean by 'landscape' is not just fields and trees, valleys and seashores; but people and their work, houses and churches, farm buildings and stone walls, the marks that our ancestors have left, the changing moods of season and weather, the richness of accent and dialect and, especially in Wales, the language.

"...What I do think is significant is the Forest's clear historical identity as a separate and special place. It figures as such in local tradition and literature and I, myself, knew it as such long before the establishment of the AONB."

R E H Atkinson, Craven District Councillor, Vice-chairman of the Forest of Bowland AONB JAC.

The impetus to explore the idea of designating landscape increased with the recognition that the period of reconstruction after the war, and the

attendant social changes, would lead to an urgent need to set aside landscapes both for protection against development and for the recreation of the general public.

In his report to the Ministry of Town and Country Planning in 1945, *National Parks in England and Wales*, John Dower identified, not only areas with the potential for National Park status, but also other areas "...deserving and requiring the special concern of local and central planning authorities".

The difference between these areas and those he identified as potential National Parks lay in the character, not in the quality, of the landscapes.

The concept of areas of equal quality but different character to National Parks was developed two years later in a report by Sir Arthur Hobhouse. He proposed 52 'Conservation Areas', recognizing that "...their contribution to the wider enjoyment of the countryside is so important that special measures should be taken to preserve their natural beauty and interest. Indeed, we regard our proposals as an essential corollary to our National Park scheme".

His report recommended "...that each of the Conservation Areas (since they are for the most part geographically homogenous), should be comprehensively treated as a single unit. We think that these objects can be most effectively achieved by the use of Advisory Committees", providing an unified system of management.

The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 provided for the designation of both National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty by the National Parks Commission. The key difference between the designations was that provision for recreation did not become a specific purpose of AONBs.

The provisions of the Act did not, in the event, include a statutory requirement for AONBs to have an advisory or joint advisory committee. Nonetheless, this omission meant that the local authorities with responsibilities for AONBs could adapt administrative arrangements to local circumstances, guided by the advice and the policies of the Countryside Commission (the Commission) and, later, the Countryside Council for Wales (the Council).

The first AONB, Gower, was designated in 1956. Thirty-nine others have followed. At the time of publication, the Tamar Valley is in the process of designation. The full list is shown in Appendix 3, which is contained in the pocket in the back cover of this publication.



## Heritage Coasts

Most AONBs with coastlines include lengths of Heritage Coast. Heritage Coasts were originally defined in a joint initiative between the Countryside Commission and local authorities to focus attention on the management needs of our finest undeveloped coasts and adjacent inland areas. This definition, which is non-statutory, arose from studies of our coastline in the late sixties, leading to recognition by government of the need for special measures to conserve undeveloped coastline and enhance its enjoyment by the public. Forty-five separate Heritage Coasts account for just over one-third of the total coastline of England and Wales.

A great deal has been achieved by the management services set up by the local authorities for many Heritage Coasts. Joint advisory or management committees may have an important role in coordinating policies, plans and practice to ensure that the skills, experience and enthusiasm that has been invested is effectively applied to both the Heritage Coast and the wider AONB.

## Policy

Landscape conservation does not imply fixing a landscape in time. The countryside has always evolved in response to social and economic changes. Over the last few decades, the rate of change and its capacity to affect the countryside has accelerated. Many factors have contributed to this. Population growth, increased affluence and leisure time, agricultural change, the availability of personal transport, and the need to provide for it, are some obvious examples.

Landscape conservation is about influencing change to the benefit of the countryside; accommodating change while securing for the future a vibrant and beautiful countryside that retains those characteristics that give it a special sense of place.

The uniquely demanding challenge of managing protected areas is to understand these changes in order to reconcile the aspirations of people, the demand for development and employment, for social and recreational facilities and opportunities with a long-term commitment to the landscape.

The function of policy is to provide a coherent framework within which these difficult issues can be tackled effectively.

Because our protected landscapes must be viewed in the context of the wider countryside, the policy framework must also embrace the whole countryside. *Caring for the countryside* (CCP 351) sets out a number of guiding principles for the conservation of the wider countryside from which other, more detailed policies and principles, specific to protected areas, can be developed. As the countryside evolves, so these

policies will evolve and be subject to monitoring and review.

The current policies of the Commission and the Council in respect of AONBs, set out in Appendix 2 on page 19, seek to strengthen their management by clarifying the purposes of designation, promoting their treatment, as far as possible, as a single management unit supported by a statement of intent or commitment, a landscape assessment, a management plan, the appointment of an AONB Officer and, where appropriate, by the creation of special AONB units.

## The purposes of designation

**The primary purpose of designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.**

**In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.**

**Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.**

AONBs are designated because they are landscapes of special quality and character. Many areas, like the Chilterns, the Sussex Downs, the Malvern Hills or the Gower have qualities that have long been appreciated internationally. Designation gives formal, statutory recognition to their national importance, encouraging strategies to be devised to retain the qualities that made them special, notwithstanding an accelerating rate of social and economic change, and increasing recreational and development pressures.

The purposes of designation reflect the need for an integrated approach to the management of AONBs. In particular, the reference to "...promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment" expresses the concept of achieving the aims of conservation through appropriate social and economic development.

The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act did not give to AONBs, as it did to National Parks, a statutory objective to promote public enjoyment. However, millions of people live in or close to AONBs and resort to them for relaxation, enjoyment and recreation. The policy for AONB designation points to the need to manage that pressure.



## 2. THE JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**JACs or equivalent should be established in all AONBs, composed of representatives of the constituent local authorities, amenity groups and land user interests.**

The role of the JAC is to advise the constituent authorities and other agencies about the achievement of AONB objectives. This is not a passive role. It is for the JAC to provide the impetus, the motive force, and the leadership in coordinating the effective management of a nationally designated area.

JACs have a powerful resource in the range and depth of political and professional expertise and experience that their membership represents. The question is how that resource can be brought to bear most effectively upon the long term and more immediate issues affecting the AONB.

Nearly two-thirds of AONBs in England and Wales now have JACs or their equivalent. They vary considerably in their constitution. Some are large; others more compact. There is no perfect model, nor does the current policy promote one. The best solution has to be determined locally. However, a number of factors may influence the effectiveness of a JAC. These include the size, diversity and continuity of membership, the frequency of meetings, good communications with the constituent authorities, organisations and groups, and with the officers responsible for implementing the decisions of the JAC, and the extent to which the JAC can act on its own authority and initiative.

The optimum size for a JAC is a question of judgement. The larger and the more diverse its membership, the more difficult it becomes to act efficiently. On the other hand, a JAC consisting of a core of key members, made up largely, or wholly, of local authority representatives, may risk losing the active interest of other key partners.

Local circumstances will determine which organisations have a sufficient interest in the AONB to warrant representation on the JAC, or to have the opportunity to contribute to its work. Recreational and land management interests, government agencies and voluntary organisations are obvious examples. Academic institutions may have a valuable contribution to make, particularly in terms of monitoring and research. Also, having in mind the social and economic aspects of AONB management, the commercial sector should not be overlooked.

A number of techniques can be used to tap into the expertise available without permanently increasing the size of the JAC. For example, working groups involving the relevant interests can be convened to consider and report upon specific questions or policy

issues; on an ad hoc basis, if necessary, disbanding on completion of their work. Co-option can offer the opportunity of securing particular expertise when it is required.

A JAC needs to operate with sufficient flexibility to be able to react to issues that require a response within a short time-scale, as well as to those for which a longer period of consideration is necessary. Meeting, even on a quarterly basis, will make it difficult, for example, to advise on planning applications dealt with by the local planning authority on a monthly cycle. The use of sub-committees and working groups can provide a solution.

### JAC key tasks

- Coordinate the preparation of and review every five years a statement of commitment and a management plan.
- Advise local authorities and other agencies on the preparation of development and other plans covering all or part of the AONB to ensure that policies and practices are consistent with the AONB management plan and the objectives of the designated area.
- Agree an annual work programme for the AONB Officer where applicable, the countryside management service and other AONB project staff.  
Monitor progress and achievements in the implementation of the management plan.
- Carry out special studies of key issues and conduct monitoring and research.
- Advise the appropriate local planning authority about development proposals, within or adjacent to the AONB, likely to affect significantly the landscape character of the area.
- Act as a forum for discussion of major issues affecting the character of the AONB.
- Coordinate, where appropriate, the management of Heritage Coasts.
- Promote other action necessary to further the objectives of AONB designation.

NB: The above tasks have been adapted from the Commission publication CCP 356.

Clearly understood lines of communication between the partners in the conservation of the AONB are imperative. This is as much a function of the individual JAC member as it is of the JAC collectively. The success of the JAC will often depend upon its



members ensuring that its advice and views are put forward and taken into account by the authority, organisation or group that they represent. The role of the individual member is not only to bring to the JAC the experience and expertise of those organisations, but also to take back to them and support the collective view of the JAC.

Given the complex range of issues that a JAC has to tackle, representation upon it should be at an appropriately senior level. Continuity of representation will also be advantageous.

"When the JAC for the Malvern Hills AONB was being re-established in 1991, local people expressed a strong wish to have parish council representation. They were able to agree upon an independent representative who had been closely involved in the original designation of the AONB. This member makes it his business to stay in contact with the 23 parishes and report their concerns to the JAC."

*P B Russell, Principal Planner, Hereford and Worcester County Council.*

## JAC powers, responsibilities and activities

### Development control

Planning policies for AONBs should be set out in regional and strategic guidance, structure plans and local plans.

Development control policies for AONBs should promote the conservation of those features that contribute to their special character.

Major development should be regarded as inconsistent with the aims of designation except where it is proven that the development is in the national interest and no alternative site is available.

Schemes for major roads and motorways should avoid AONBs whenever possible. Where a new road or motorway is unavoidable, the route and its design should be chosen to minimize the damage to the environment.

Applications for substantial mineral workings, or extensions to existing workings, should be subject to the most rigorous examination to assess the need for the minerals and the environmental effects of the proposal.

An environmental assessment should accompany all proposals for major development in AONBs.

Small-scale developments, where essential to meet local community needs and provided for in approved development plans, are normally acceptable in AONBs. Such developments should be within, or immediately adjacent to, existing towns and villages, and should be in sympathy with the architecture and landscape character of the area.

Farm buildings should be sited, designed and landscaped with particular care.

The relationship between the control of development and the protection of a designated area is not always an easy one.

It is not the objective of designation to stop further development; but, development in a landscape designated for its high quality has to be approached with special care. On the one hand, an inappropriate, badly sited or poorly designed building can have a disproportionately adverse impact on the quality of the landscape. On the other, an avoidable refusal of permission may deprive the area of social and economic benefits.

Developments that, in themselves, are relatively small, development outside villages, proposals for farm workers' dwellings and the conversion of barns, can touch local communities profoundly, on both sides of an issue.

Moreover, there are increasing pressures for development on a larger scale, such as the exploitation of mineral reserves and road schemes. The consideration of these proposals will bring into play regional and local planning policies that relate specifically to the AONB.

So, the JAC will have a profound interest in the way that development is controlled within the area.

Essentially, there are three kinds of activity relating to the control of development with which the JAC can and should be involved; influencing local and regional plans and policies, the development of clear procedures in relation to the determination of applications for planning permission, and monitoring development within the AONB.



JACs should be consulted as a matter of routine by planning authorities on the development of new policies and the review of existing ones. They should also ensure that consultation exercises relating to proposed planning guidance by government departments, and to the preparation or revision of plans and policies by other agencies, are submitted to the JAC for its consideration and advice.

The JAC should be consulted, if not heard, by the appropriate planning committee before applications (inside and outside the AONB boundary) that would materially affect the AONB are determined. The scheme operated by the Sussex Downs Conservation Board is worthy of careful consideration.

"The local planning authorities have agreed that, in the event that they are inclined to make a decision at variance to the Board's advice, they will provide the opportunity for representatives of the Board to discuss the case with members of the local planning committee..."

*Taken from the Annual Report of the Sussex Downs Conservation Board 1992 – 1993.*

Monitoring development within the AONB is a very important source of information. JACs should seek the assistance of local planning authorities in obtaining relevant statistics on development within the AONB boundary. An annual tour of the AONB to review the effect, good and bad, that development has had in the area may be a valuable initiative.

## The budget

**JACs should advise local authorities and other agencies on the level of resources required for effective AONB management and, where possible, should manage their own budget for management action.**

Although the JAC is, in essence, an advisory body, it is a sound general principle that it should exercise a level of management consistent with the efficient use of resources and the effective delivery of services. Unnecessary reference to constituent authorities leads to unwieldy procedures and avoidable delay.

A JAC that has prepared a sound management plan and has an AONB Officer responsible to it will have established clear priorities, a costed programme of action and the means to implement and monitor it. It is logical that it should also have the responsibility for managing its own budget.

## Finance

**JACs should advise local authorities and other agencies on the level of resources required for effective AONB management and, where possible, should manage their own budget for management action.**

The management of protected landscapes is an investment in the future. This implies medium- and long-term planning which, in turn, relies on stable core funding. Project funding does not meet this need. It is, by definition, a short-term measure. Attempting to provide for the medium and long term by project funding may lead to priorities being determined by the availability of such funding.

A commitment to stable funding has to come from the constituent authorities. To secure this, the needs of the AONB must compete with the many other demands that local authorities face.

Plainly, it is the JAC that must take the lead in persuading authorities of the importance for the well-being of future generations of investing in our protected landscapes, in putting forward well-researched arguments for more resources, and in demonstrating that its spending represents good value.

Other sources of finance can be sought. The Arnside and Silverdale AONB, for example, receives a very useful financial contribution from the parish councils within its boundary. On a larger scale, the designation of the Blackdown Hills as an AONB has been instrumental in securing a substantial amount from the European Union's 'LIFE' programme in connection with the management of tourism and agricultural change.

The role of the Commission and the Council in terms of finance is twofold. Firstly, given well-founded arguments, they can seek to persuade government to provide more resources. Secondly, both agencies offer a level of financial support to set up or extend countryside management services, to buy in professional assistance to produce management plans, for landscape assessments, the appointment of an AONB Officer and for experimental approaches to achieving an enhanced level of management, including those which involve the voluntary sector, charitable trusts and local communities. In addition, enhanced financial support may be sought for AONB units, subject to the conditions described earlier.



"The Conservancy has produced a Statement of Planning Guidelines in consultation with the local planning authorities. This document sets out our policies and guides the Conservancy in its response to planning applications. It is also helpful to the planning authorities in highlighting the issues that are specific to the AONB.

Plans are considered by a sub-committee; minor matters being delegated to the Conservancy's officers. Any member of the Conservancy or its Advisory Committee can request that an application is considered by the sub-committee which meets every month. Important development proposals are referred to the full committee.

This process has led to a better understanding of planning issues in the AONB and to a beneficial partnership between ourselves and the local planning authorities."

*Lt Col David Jones, Chairman, Chichester Harbour Conservancy.*

### 3. AONB MANAGEMENT

#### Statements of intent and commitment

**Statements of intent will be required for new AONBs.**

A statement of intent is a preliminary statement explaining the reasons for an area having been designated. It should also indicate the broad management objectives that the local authorities intend to pursue. Such statements need not be complex documents: guidance on their content is contained in the current policy, *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A policy statement, 1991* (CCP 356).

Where a statement of intent has not already been formulated, an appropriate statement of commitment by the local authorities, and others with an interest in the management of an AONB, should be made. The production of a management plan does not supersede the need for a statement of commitment. In fact, these statements may be particularly useful following any local government reorganisation and, indeed, the privatisation and reorganisation of a number of bodies that may have occurred since a statement of intent was produced.

The constituent organisations of a JAC may be invited to express their commitment to the objectives of the AONB by, literally, signing up to such a document.

#### The management plan

**The underpinning of existing statements of intent by management plans will be encouraged.**

Conservation is a process of managing change. Managing a landscape means intervening in, or directing, the process of change to secure the objectives of designation: to influence changes that may otherwise be detrimental.

A landscape assessment will have defined the forces for change that may warrant intervention. The management plan develops and refines those issues and shows what needs to be done, by whom, in which order of priority and with what resources.

A management plan is imperative to the efficient translation of resources into well-targeted action on the ground.

The plan, and the process of its production and of its review, must reflect the fact that the management of an AONB is an activity of partnership. It is essential to promote a sense of ownership of the plan

and, indeed, of the area; a sense that it applies to all of those individuals, groups, organisations and sections of the community that may affect the future of the AONB.

Just as the AONB needs to be considered in the context of the landscape around it, so the management plan needs to be meshed together with the plans of other authorities and agencies affecting the AONB. This forms a coherent and complementary strategy for the management of the AONB in the context of the surrounding countryside.

Consultation in the preparation and review of the plan has to give the consultees confidence that their views and opinions are genuinely influencing its shape and content. It must be perceived as a strategy born of a common desire to protect the AONB.

To be effective, the plan must be used by all of the partners in the conservation of the landscape; the government agencies, the voluntary organisations, and the land users, as well as the local authorities. Achieving this depends upon the efforts of JAC members working to ensure that the plan is taken into account by the organisations that they represent, referring to the plan when their own policies are being developed or reviewed, when work programmes are being established or when development proposals are being considered.

In this way, the management plan will help to generate an appreciation of the practical implications of AONB designation.

The Commission and the Council have issued detailed advice on the form and content of management plans in *AONB management plans: Advice on their format and content* (CCP 352).

#### Landscape assessment

**The Commission and the Council will publish landscape assessments for AONBs.**

A landscape assessment describes the essential character of a landscape; the complex interplay of history, culture, landform and landcover, of social and economic activity that gives the landscape a special sense of place. It also identifies the forces for change, establishes the priorities for its management and is the precursor of the management plan.

AONBs are leading the way in the use of landscape assessments to inform management of protected areas. The experience of many AONBs in the use of landscape assessment as a tool of management has much to offer those responsible for the wider countryside. Indeed, there may be few examples in

Europe of so coordinated an approach to the assessment of designated areas.

The landscape assessment can also help to raise the profile of the AONB in the eyes of the constituent authorities and their partners, in the management of the area, in promoting public awareness of the area and as an educational resource.

"The landscape assessment for the Chichester Harbour AONB, circulated to all of the landowners, was an introduction to a dialogue with us. We need their approval and permission to undertake much of our work. It helped landowners to see their holding in the context of the overall pattern and to identify areas where useful contributions could be made towards achieving the aims of the AONB."

*Philip Couchman, Chichester Harbour Conservancy Officer.*



## 4. PARTNERSHIPS

A variety of approaches to achieving an enhanced level of management on the ground, including approaches involving the voluntary sector, charitable trusts and local communities will be encouraged.

The inextricable link between conservation, tourism, recreation, agriculture, development and the social and economic well-being of an area underpins the need to work in partnership towards the objectives of designation. That is the only way to proceed but, in any event, AONBs have no special powers to assist in the protection of the area.

The JAC is itself a partnership between the local authorities and the various groups and interests represented upon it.

"The Farmers and Landowning Advisory Group would hope that their input, by virtue of several generations of experience, would endeavour to maintain, enhance and retain their livelihoods within Bowland, through the JAC's initiative together with ADAS advice for proposed modulation payments to farmers to enhance incomes and hopefully stop depopulation in this beautiful area."

*R C Banks, Chairman, Farmers and Landowning Advisory Group, Forest of Bowland AONB JAC.*

The most important, and the most elusive, partnership is with people; the local communities of the AONB and the visitors to the area whose support is a precondition of the effective management of protected areas.

Not far behind in importance is the need to harness the support of the government departments and organisations of every kind, commercial and voluntary, whose activities have the potential to influence the landscape.

"The report lists an impressive array of varied tasks undertaken during the year. These could never have been completed without the dedicated support of a growing number of volunteers."

*June Greenwell, Chairman, Steering Committee, Arnsdale and Silverdale AONB writing in the 1992 – 1993 AONB Annual Report.*

"The Forest has always taken a partnership approach and this means that its projects have been tailored to local needs and are capable of engendering a feeling of 'ownership' by their local sponsors."

*Cllr R E H Atkinson, Craven District Councillor and Vice-chairman, Forest of Bowland AONB JAC.*

## Awareness

The policy on awareness is to increase understanding among local authorities, government agencies and departments, and key decision makers, in order to encourage a greater commitment to the purpose of AONBs. To this end, the Commission and the Council will:

- encourage local authorities to organise joint meetings, also involving other key organisations, to foster better understanding and practice;
- continue to publish a promotional leaflet about the designation;
- maintain a comprehensive directory on AONBs;
- publish landscape assessments for AONBs;
- encourage local authorities to devise a distinctive logo for each area;
- publish a new information booklet on AONBs.

Just as partnership depends upon support, so support is dependent upon awareness: awareness of the designation of an AONB, its objectives and implications.

Increasing awareness requires a strategy that should feature prominently in management plans. Such a strategy might be based upon the following elements:

- **communication:** maintaining clear lines of communication between the AONB and its partners, regular meetings with local communities to explain the objectives of designation, supplying information and clarifying arrangements for responding to the media;
- **information for the public:** to explain the special qualities of the landscape and to assist them in enjoying it responsibly and with respect;
- **establishing an identity for the AONB:** to reinforce a sense of place — indeed, the sense of a special place — by the use of logos and house styles;
- **consultation:** as part of the ethos of the AONB, to demonstrate that the views and experience of the consultees is actively sought and valued in the effort to improve the quality of plan making, policy formulation and in practical projects, and;
- **working together:** taking opportunities to work with community groups and other organisations, allowing them to take the lead where this would be more appropriate.

The promotional strategy produced by the Cotswolds AONB is a good example.

**Summarised objectives:**

- "To raise the profile of the AONB locally and nationally in the long term.  
To communicate to partner local authorities and public bodies, other practitioner organisations and the public that the Cotswolds
- AONB is of national importance as a protected landscape and needs sensitive, coordinated and integrated management to conserve its characteristic features. To communicate that this approach to the management of the AONB is good value for money.
- To encourage landowners, voluntary groups and the community (either in groups, associations, families or individuals) that they can become involved in the operation of the AONB through planning and management of their own 'village' areas.
- ...to engender a sense of common ownership and collective responsibility for the conservation and management of the Cotswolds; that the AONB's conservation is in the hands of all who live and work here...
- To encourage and enable wider voluntary involvement.
- To help facilitate a link between the conservation management of the AONB and its image as a tourist destination.
- To provide a focus... for the encouragement of private sector involvement in the management of the area."

Partnerships between AONBs to share experience or to join together for specific projects could usefully be strengthened. Valuable work might be undertaken very effectively by a number of AONBs joining together, for example, with a university to undertake monitoring and research.



## 5. THE AONB OFFICER

In each AONB the local authority should nominate an officer, at senior level, to have a general oversight of the AONB, coordinate strategic development and management plans and service the JAC.

The JAC should consider whether the appointment of a specialist AONB Officer, solely responsible for AONB work, is needed.

The minimum acceptable level of support for a JAC is a senior officer in the lead authority, with responsibility to oversee the management of the AONB. The officer may be supported by a TOWP (Technical Officers' Working Party) consisting of representatives of the constituent local authorities and, in some cases, of other organisations which will endeavour to coordinate its activities within the AONB.

A great deal of useful work has been done in this way, but it may not always be a sufficient mechanism to provide the level of management necessary to achieve the objectives of designation.

The management of a protected landscape is a discipline requiring the dedicated skills of a professional manager. About a quarter of the AONBs have appointed specialist AONB Officers, that is officers whose duties are dedicated to the AONB. The result is the more effective use of resources and improved delivery of services.

An AONB Officer is the manager of a landscape, not the manager of a project. The essence of the role is management, coordination and direction. To be effective, appointments need to be made at a senior level and regarded as long term in order to secure an appropriate degree of continuity.

The current AONB policy statement (CCP 356) gives detailed advice on the appointment and job description of an AONB Officer.

"The appointment of the AONB Officer has been of tremendous advantage to the organisation. It has brought untold benefits in liaison with landowners and users of the valley; with the parish and community councils, which have dominion in the valley. It has brought the AONB nearer to the people."

*Cllr T E Wilcox, Chairman, Wye Valley AONB JAC.*

## The AONB Unit

For those AONBs where a coordinated programme of action and a special concentration of resources is needed, AONB units should be established under the direction of an AONB Officer, supported by professional staff and with administrative back up for the JAC.

A few AONBs may, because of their location, vulnerability or the pressures upon them, justify a special concentration of attention and resources. If a sufficiently convincing argument is made to the Commission and the Council, additional resources to support an AONB unit may be secured, provided that certain conditions are met. These are set out fully in CCP 356, but include; good survey information on the landscape resource and visitor patterns, an up-to-date management plan, the quantification of expenditure needs, effective cooperation with local authorities, land use and amenity groups, strong local authority commitment to AONB purposes, and particularly, a willingness to commit local authority resources in the long term.

A unit should normally be directed by a specialist AONB Officer.

An innovative example of the application of these policies was the formation in 1992 of the Sussex Downs Conservation Board.

The 13 local authorities and the Commission entered into an agreement committing resources to the better management of the Sussex Downs AONB, the Commission contributing 50 per cent of the expenditure of the Board (£1 million in 1992 – 1993) for the six year period of the agreement. This substantial increase in funding and the cooperation of the local authorities has allowed for the development of an efficient management unit, a more coordinated approach to countryside management, and for the completion of a number of important partnership projects.



## 6. TRAINING

Staff, volunteers and members of JACs or their equivalent should have access to structured training programmes and work to the Commission's code of training practice or the Council's equivalent.

The development of such programmes using a variety of methods and support materials will be encouraged.

The management of a protected area is a professional discipline that requires a professional approach to training.

Training has to be a core activity that takes a proper and realistic share of the resources available. Resources devoted to training have to be allocated with care. A systematic approach is required to establish the training needs of staff and to seek the appropriate source to satisfy them. Staff exchanges, secondments, study visits and seminars can all contribute very positively to the training programme.

Regular members' tours to view action that has been taken on the ground, and visits to other areas to exchange experience, can provide a valuable training experience. Induction packs and seminars can also be very valuable.

"On committee meeting days, members have the opportunity during the morning to visit project sites, the business meeting following in the afternoon. This gives a valuable opportunity for members to see for themselves what is being done on their behalf and to meet some of those involved in schemes."

*George W Slyn, Chairman, Forest of Bowland AONB JAC.*

## 7. THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

There are protected areas of many different kinds in virtually every country in the world. AONBs and National Parks in the UK fall into the same category of protected area defined by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Category V. This embraces outstanding semi-natural, inhabited landscapes in productive use, which are mainly the responsibility of local government and in which the land is largely privately owned. They share this category with regional and nature parks in France, Spain, Germany and many other countries.

The focus of landscape protection was originally upon the wilderness areas, untouched by human activity. Today, the emphasis has shifted to the protection of 'living' or 'cultural' landscapes, those within Category V where people live, work and relax and where competing pressures have to be reconciled. There is, in the UK, relatively long experience of managing these landscapes and an approach to landscape conservation of notable flexibility. This experience is valued internationally. There is also a great deal to be learnt from our colleagues in other countries. Membership of the Federation of Nature and National Parks of Europe, to which all of the National Parks in England and Wales belong, offers many useful opportunities for the exchange of staff and information.

AONBs with effective management structures can develop vibrant international links; to share their experience of reconciling the issues and pressures that they face with colleagues from Europe and further afield. Joint initiatives with other designated areas in Europe can be instrumental in attracting European funding.

Both individually and collectively, AONBs have a substantial contribution to offer at the international level.

## 8. FROM NOW ON

Appendix 3 indicates the progress that has been made by local authorities, the Commission, the Council and other key partners in the management of AONBs. If current expectations are fulfilled, virtually all AONBs will have landscape assessments by 1998, the great majority will have management plans, and a third of AONBs will have specialist officers in post by the end of the current financial year, 1994 – 1995.

These represent considerable achievements, and such measures are the means by which we may discharge our responsibility to future generations, to ensure that residents and visitors alike will continue to appreciate these special, national landscapes of outstanding natural beauty.

“What is important is improving communication and developing cooperation between all the different interests, to share ideas, experience and local knowledge which achieves coordinated action for the future benefit of the AONB and its people”.

*A visitor management strategy for the Norfolk Coast, Consultation Draft.*



# **APPENDIX I. THE POLICIES OF THE COUNTRYSIDE COMMISSION AND THE COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES RELATING TO AONBs.**

## **Designation**

The primary purpose of designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.

Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.

## **Awareness**

The policy on awareness is to increase understanding among local authorities, government agencies and departments, and key decision makers, in order to encourage a greater commitment to the purpose of AONBs. To this end, the Commission and the Council will:

- encourage local authorities to organise joint meetings, also involving other key organisations, to foster better understanding and practice;
- continue to publish a promotional leaflet about the designation;
- maintain a comprehensive directory on AONBs;
- publish landscape assessments for AONBs;
- encourage local authorities to devise a distinctive logo for each area;
- publish a new information booklet on AONBs.

## **Further designations**

All existing AONBs will be retained.

The Commission will complete its current designation programme for further AONBs as soon as possible.

The question of the Berwyn Mountains will be considered by the Countryside Council for Wales.

The two agencies have no plans for further comprehensive boundary reviews, although local changes may be considered where there is a consensus or when they are persuaded of the need.

## **Administration**

JACs or their equivalent should be established in all AONBs, composed of representatives of the constituent local authorities, amenity groups and land user interests.

In each AONB the local authorities should nominate an officer, at senior level, to have a general oversight of the AONB, coordinate strategic development and management plans and service the JAC.

The JAC should consider whether the appointment of a specialist AONB Officer, solely responsible for AONB work, is needed.

For those AONBs where a coordinated programme of action and a special concentration of resources is needed, AONB units should be established under the direction of an AONB Officer, supported by professional staff and with administrative back up for the JAC.

JACs should advise local authorities and other agencies on the level of resources required for effective AONB management and, where possible, should manage their own budget for management action.

## **Statements of intent or commitment**

Statements of intent will be required for new AONBs.

The underpinning of existing statements of intent by management plans will be encouraged.

## **Development plans and development control**

Planning policies for AONBs should be set out in regional and strategic guidance, structure plans and local plans.

Development control policies for AONBs should promote the conservation of those features that contribute to their special character.

Major development should be regarded as inconsistent with the aims of designation except where it is proven that the development is in the national interest and no alternative site is available.

Schemes for major roads and motorways should avoid AONBs whenever possible. Where a new road or motorway is unavoidable, the route and its design should be chosen to minimize the damage to the environment.

Applications for substantial mineral workings, or extensions to existing workings, should be subject to

the most rigorous examination to assess the need for the minerals and the environmental effects of the proposal.

An environmental assessment should accompany all proposals for major development in AONBs.

Small-scale developments, where essential to meet local community needs and provided for in approved development plans, are normally acceptable in AONBs. Such developments should be within, or immediately adjacent to, existing towns and villages, and should be in sympathy with the architecture and landscape character of the area.

Farm buildings should be sited, designed and landscaped with particular care.

## **Management plans**

The preparation of management plans for all AONBs, which are then used to guide and generate appropriate positive action, will be encouraged.

## **Management action**

The adoption, throughout the countryside, of farming and forestry policies and practices that also serve environmental and access needs will be encouraged.

Such policies will be complemented by management action promoted by local authorities, including countryside management services, provision for recreation, and schemes to improve the AONB environment.

A variety of approaches to achieving an enhanced level of management on the ground, including approaches involving the voluntary sector, charitable trusts and local communities will be encouraged.

## **Training**

Staff, volunteers and members of JACs or their equivalent should have access to structured training programmes and work to the Commission's code of training practice or the Council's equivalent.

The development of such programmes using a variety of methods and support materials will be encouraged.



## APPENDIX 2. PUBLICATIONS

The following publications are available from Countryside Commission Postal Sales, PO Box 124, Walgrave, Northampton NN6 9TL (Tel: 0604 781848).

*Directory of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty*, (CCP 379), 1992. A directory of information on each of the AONBs in England and Wales, including maps, landscape descriptions and management details, £17.50.

*Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A policy statement* (CCP 356), 1991. The policies of the Commission and the Council for improving the administration and management of AONBs, (ISBN 0 86170 317 0), £2.00.

*AONB management plans: Advice on their format and content*, (CCP 352), 1992. A user's guide specifically targeted at the needs of local authority officers, (ISBN 0 86170 313 8), £4.00.

*Protected landscapes in the United Kingdom*, (CCP 362), 1992. An updated account of the way in which the United Kingdom protects its finest landscapes, prepared as a contribution to the IVth World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas, Venezuela, (ISBN 0 86170 324 3), £12.50.

*Heritage Coasts in England: Policies and priorities*, (CCP 397), 1992. A revised policy statement including statements of commitment to Heritage Coast objectives by interested organisations, (ISBN 0 86170 353 7), £2.00.

*Caring for the countryside: A policy agenda for England in the Nineties*, (CCP 351), 1991. Sets out realistic and attainable propositions, highlighting measures to ensure a beautiful countryside that is accessible to all, (ISBN 0 86170 312 X), £2.00.

*Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England and Wales*, (CCP 276), Revised 1994. A revised version of an illustrated leaflet describing the AONBs and how they are looked after. Also available from the Countryside Council for Wales. Free in small quantities.

*Heritage Coasts in England and Wales*, (CCP 252), Revised 1993. An introductory leaflet to all the Heritage Coasts and their management. Also available from the Countryside Council for Wales. Free in small quantities.

The following publications are available only from the Countryside Council for Wales, Plas Penrhos, Ffordd Penrhos, Bangor LL57 2LQ (Tel: 0248 370444).

*Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty*, A policy document based on the Countryside Commission's 1991 policy statement, bilingual (1993). Free.

*Cynlluniau Rheoli ANHE*, A Welsh version of the AONB management plans advice (1993). Free.

*Threshold 21*, A draft commitment to provide the base from which policy development and strategic effort until 2000 AD will flow (1993). Free.

## APPENDIX 3. AONB FACTS AND FIGURES

AONB	Confirmed	Area (sq km)	Landscape Assessment	Management Plan	AONB Officer	JAC or equiv.
Gower	1956	188	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Quantock Hills	1957	99	No	(in progress)	No	Yes
Lley	1957	161	P	(in progress)	No	No
Northumberland Coast	1958	135	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Surrey Hills	1958	419	P	No	No	No
Cannock Chase	1958	68	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Shropshire Hills	1959	804	Yes	(in progress)	No	Yes
Dorset	1959	1,129	Yes	No	No	No
Malvern Hills	1959	105	Yes	(in progress)	No	Yes
Cornwall	1959	933	(in progress)	No	No	No
Camel Estuary extension	1983	25				
North Devon	1960	171	P	No	No	No
South Devon	1960	337	Yes	(in progress)	No	Yes
East Hampshire	1962	383	Yes	(in progress)	P	Yes
East Devon	1963	268	Yes	Yes	No	No
Isle of Wight	1963	89	Yes	(in progress)	Yes	Yes
Chichester Harbour	1964	74	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Forest of Bowland	1964	802	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Solway Coast	1964	115	Yes	(in progress)	Yes	Yes
Chilterns	1965	800	Yes	Yes	P	Yes
Chilterns variation	1990	33				
Sussex Downs	1966	983	P	(in progress)	Yes	Yes
Cotswolds	1966	1,555	Yes	(in progress)	Yes	Yes
Cotswolds variation	1990	483				
Anglesey	1967	221	P	(in progress)	No	No
South Hampshire Coast	1967	77	No	No	No	No
Norfolk Coast	1968	451	P	(in progress)	Yes	Yes
Kent Downs	1968	878	P	No	No	No
Suffolk Coast & Heaths	1970	403	Yes	(in progress)	Yes	Yes
Dedham Vale	1970	58	P	Yes	No	Yes
Dedham Vale extension	1978	159				
Dedham Vale extension	1991	17				
Wye Valley	1971	326	P	Yes	Yes	Yes
North Wessex Downs	1972	1,730	P	No	No	No
Mendip Hills	1972	194	P	Yes	No	Yes
Mendip Hills variation	1989	4				
Arnsdale & Silverdale	1972	75	No	Yes	No	Yes
Lincolnshire Wolds	1973	558	Yes	(in progress)	No	Yes
Isles of Scilly	1976	16	Yes	Yes	No	No
High Weald	1983	1,460	(in progress)	(in progress)	Yes	Yes
Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs	1983	983	Yes	No	No	No
Clwydian Range	1985	157	P	Yes	No	Yes
Howardian Hills	1987	204	P	P	No	Yes
North Pennines	1988	1,983	Yes	(in progress)	No	Yes
Blackdown Hills	1991	370	Yes	No	P	No
Nidderdale	1994	603	Yes	P	No	No
Tamar Valley	(proposed)	N/A	Yes	(in progress)	No	No

P = Planned

'AONB Officer' refers to staff dedicated full-time to the AONB



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