

# Strategy 2021-2023



## The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Strategy 2021 – 2023

### Chairman's Foreword

The period covered by our last strategy saw a renewal of ambition in a number of areas by the UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Under the leadership of their National Association, AONB teams have committed to delivering significant and stretching targets around nature recovery, climate change, and engagement and diversity in AONBs. Additionally, the Charity and its members are working to support the establishment of more nature-friendly farming payment systems in AONBs as we move away from support mechanisms driven by the EU's Common Agricultural Policy. These subject areas remain the clear focus of this strategy.

The ongoing nature of the Coronavirus pandemic has altered how we all work, and has created significant opportunities and challenges for AONB teams. Raised awareness of the great wellbeing benefits of landscape and nature also means a higher number of visitors to AONBs, often by many that are experiencing these landscapes for the first time. This is wholeheartedly welcomed, but requires investment to ensure that the effective management of visitors is successful. The commitment by UK Government to create a National Landscape Service is also of significant interest to the National Association and we will continue to work closely with all stakeholders to help create the best outcomes for AONBs.

Our clear vision and mission, dedicated staff and trustees, and an active and engaged membership, are a recipe for real delivery. This strategy sets out how the Charity will continue to help people collaborate in order to conserve and enhance natural beauty. It is a pleasure to help lead the Charity through this important period of development.

Philip Hygate FRSA  
Chairman

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## Contents

Chairman’s Foreword .....	2
Charitable Status .....	4
Membership .....	5
Responding to the External Environment .....	5
Vision .....	6
Mission .....	7
The NAAONB Strategic Objectives .....	7
Implementing the Strategy.....	7
Key actions.....	7
In Conclusion .....	8

## Introduction

The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) has achieved a great deal since it was established in 1998. This 2021– 2023 strategy builds on the success of the last 23 years and sets out an ambitious direction for the Charity’s work over the next three years and provides a framework within which the Charity can continue to modernise, diversify its income streams, and position itself effectively in the rapidly evolving political environment.

The Charity helps people to collaborate in order to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

## Charitable Status

The Association is a Charitable Company limited by guarantee. This gives it a structure that allows it to respond better and more quickly to the needs of the membership. The Charity has three objects:

- a. to promote the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty including the physical, natural, cultural and built environment in and around Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, other Protected Areas, and those areas for which such designation might be pursued,
- b. to advance the education, understanding and appreciation of the public in relation to the conservation and enhancement natural beauty including the physical, natural, cultural and built environment of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), other Protected Areas and those areas for which such designation might be pursued, and
- c. to promote the efficiency and effectiveness of those organisations promoting or representing Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, other Protected Areas and those areas for which such designation might be pursued.

## Membership

Charity members are involved in the planning and management of 8,000 square miles of outstanding and cherished landscapes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Membership includes most of the AONB partnerships<sup>1</sup>, as well as some of those Local Authorities with statutory responsibility for AONBs, together with a number of voluntary bodies, businesses, and individuals with an interest in the future of these iconic landscapes.

The membership, in particular the dedicated AONB units, have proved to be an effective means of achieving the purpose of the AONB designation and contributing to broader policy priorities. The units, whether hosted by local authority structures or based within Conservation Boards, have given AONB Partnerships long term credibility and local expertise. AONB units are, even in times of financial constraint, renowned for ‘punching well above their weight’.

The Charity works on behalf of its membership, fostering collaboration and collective action between the 300 staff of the AONB Family, the 700 elected members that support the AONB partnerships<sup>1</sup> and the many partners with whom we do business at the local and national levels. This strategy sets out, at a high level, how we intend to do this.

## Responding to the External Environment

Effective delivery of the Charity’s objects requires engagement with the broader external environment of governments, other national and international agencies, and with the wider environmental, social, and economic agendas. The three-year period to 2023 therefore offers continuing challenges and opportunities for the Charity and our membership.

- **Nature Recovery and Climate Change**

- Optimising opportunities for AONB partnerships<sup>1</sup> to help support nature recovery, mitigate climate change impact, and support effective adaptation.

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<sup>1</sup> AONB partnership in this instance includes any management Partnership, Conservation Board, Joint Advisory Committee or Joint Committee.

- **Agriculture**  
Working with governments, representative bodies, and partners to support the establishment of more nature-friendly and climate-aware farming payment systems, whilst recognising the need to ensure that farming businesses are profitable and inherently regenerative.
- **Engagement**  
Exploring new ways of sharing natural beauty with a wider and more diverse audience to improve equity of opportunity, both in terms of access to the goods and services provided by AONBs and engagement in their management. Specifically the NAAONB will support AONB partnerships<sup>1</sup> in their work with artists as a means of engaging and inspiring people.
- **Public Sector Reform**  
Positioning the organisation to support AONB teams and partnerships<sup>1</sup> in the context of implementing the recommendations of the reviews of National Parks and AONBs, including the relationship with a National Landscape Service in England. In Wales, continuing support for the AONBs as part of the new National Designated Landscapes Partnership.

## Structure of this Strategy

The vision, mission, strategic objectives, and key action areas provide a coherent and consistent framework from within which the Charity operates. The vision sets out the high-level purpose, the mission sets out how the vision will be achieved and the high-level strategic objectives and key actions underneath them set out how the mission will be delivered.

## Vision

The vision of the Charity is that *the natural beauty of AONBs is valued and secure*.

## Mission

*The Charity's mission is support and develop a network of ambitious AONB partnerships<sup>1</sup> that have a strong collective voice and a positive impact on the places for which they care.*

## The NAAONB Strategic Objectives

- Support policies for conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of AONBs,
- Maintain an understanding of AONBs and the issues they face,
- Advocate for AONB partnerships<sup>1</sup> and their teams,
- Sustain a collaborative culture across the AONB Family.

## Implementing the Strategy

### Key actions

#### **1. Work with partners to support thinking on protected landscape management,**

The Charity will actively seek partners with which it can collaborate to achieve its vision. It will promote a forward-thinking mindset and embody transparency, integrity, and trust in its relationship building. It will place great weight on evidence and systems thinking. It will deploy the collective knowledge and understanding of the AONB Family to help achieve shared goals.

#### **2. Take action to achieve nature recovery and minimise climate change,**

The Charity will lead on the delivery of the full suite of pledges set out in the Colchester Declaration, inspiring teamwork and commitment to delivery across the AONB Family. It will champion the important role AONBs can play in helping nature recover and reducing the negative impacts of climate change.

### **3. Create opportunities for people to connect with landscape,**

The Charity will promote inclusivity and seek to better understand and address the challenges around diversity and inclusion for AONBs. It will actively promote the relationship between landscape and art and optimise our engagement with artists and producers in order to ensure AONBs are more accessible and more widely understood and appreciated by everyone.

### **4. Support AONB teams to promote sustainable agriculture,**

The Charity will support the AONB Family and partners in the design and delivery of agricultural support mechanisms in AONBs. It will facilitate the high-level collaboration required to ensure support for farmers and landowners in AONBs and actively promote the potential for agricultural practices to improve the environment.

### **5. Build tools and opportunities to support collaboration.**

The Charity will further develop its programme of collaboration, improving opportunities and skills that capture the knowledge, energy, and skillset of the AONB Family and drive collective performance. It will continue to support collective action, co-operation, and reflection within our membership and work to ensure that innovative solutions are shared for maximum positive effect.

### **6. Develop the organisation.**

The Charity will further develop its digital platform to improve collaborative opportunities, diversify its funding base and revenue streams, improve its online events, training, and development offer, and review the way it curates shared learning and understanding around protected landscape management. It will optimise its role as charity in supporting the funding of AONB partnerships.

## **In Conclusion**

The potential for partnership working between non-governmental organisations, business, and government, both local and national has arguably never been greater. The challenges faced by all sectors can only be tackled effectively in collaboration with



others; we need integrated solutions to deal with complex problems. The AONB designation helps facilitate this at the local level.

The Charity, in its position of oversight, provides strategic leadership, encourages collaboration, shares learning, and supports a progressive approach to delivery such that the natural beauty of AONBs is better valued and more secure at the UK level. It does this by supporting and developing a network of ambitious and impactful AONB partnerships and Conservation Boards and acting as a strong collective voice for the AONB Family.