

JOINT STATEMENT ON THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT IN AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

This Statement is a declaration of ambition and intent made between the **34 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England, Historic England** and the **National Association for AONBs (NAAONB)**. All parties have an interest in, or responsibility for, the historic environment within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

Shared principles

1. AONBs are national assets.
2. The landscapes of AONBs have been created by centuries of interaction between people and the environment.
3. The historic environment is fundamental to the distinctive character, sense of place and natural beauty of each AONB.
4. The principle that landscapes are an essential component of people's surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity underpins our actions, as set out in the European Landscape Convention (ELC) and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Protected Landscapes.
5. By working together the parties can further the understanding, conservation, enhancement and public enjoyment and appreciation of the historic environment in AONBs.

Purpose of the statement

The historic environment is an intrinsic component of the character of today's world and a physical record of the past. It represents the investment of centuries of skills, resources and cultural influences that can never be replaced. It explains the development of the landscape and gives each locality its distinctive character and sense of place. Culture, customs and rural traditions are essential elements of cultural and historic landscapes that form tangible links to the past.

The historic and cultural environment is valuable for its own sake, but also generates jobs and attracts people to live and work in an area. It encourages businesses to invest and tourists to visit. It is a resource that needs to

be used carefully and sustainably: a non-renewable resource, we lose or degrade it at our peril.

The parties to this statement recognise that the landscapes of AONBs have been created by centuries of interaction between people and place, and the historic environment is fundamental to the character we see today. The parties recognise the key role AONB Partnerships play in the sustainable management of the historic environment, and the contribution that well-managed heritage can make to local economies, generating inward investment, employment, facilitating local branding and attracting visitors from home and abroad. The parties also recognise that historic environment and cultural heritage contribute to health and wellbeing and can be a positive education resource as greater understanding of the past enables us to plan better for the future.

It is therefore the stated intention of the parties to this statement to work together to conserve and enhance the historic and cultural environment. The parties will collaborate to further the understanding, conservation, public enjoyment and appreciation of the historic environment in AONBs. This collaborative work is needed not only in relation to scheduled monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas and registered parks, gardens, sites and landscapes but with regard to the whole of the historic environment, the historic character of the wider landscape and cultural heritage.

Areas of collaboration

The 34 English AONBs agree to:

1. Incorporate objectives into AONB Management Plans relating to the understanding, conservation, enhancement, management and public enjoyment of the historic environment of AONBs.
2. Secure better understanding, conservation, management and interpretation of the historic environment of AONBs.
3. Seek appropriate advice from relevant agencies and local authority historic environment professionals on proposals or work that has relevance to the historic environment.
4. Ensure Historic England is updated on who the key AONB contacts are

on an annual basis and ensure that Historic England is kept engaged in the direction and delivery of AONBs work.

5. Undertake collaborative work and actively pursue opportunities to improve the condition of Heritage at Risk and other heritage assets. AONBs will work with partners to monitor the historic environment and assist in the provision of data as to condition and trends together with evidence of positive intervention undertaken or instigated by AONBs.

Historic England agrees to:

1. Assist in developing AONB Management Plan historic environment objectives and any associated strategies and programmes through:
 - the provision of strategic advice, and
 - the periodic provision and review of statutory heritage data specific to AONBs.
2. Ensure that AONBs are fully reflected in the Historic England programmes of research and characterisation in order to enhance the opportunities for Historic England and AONB Partnerships to secure better understanding, conservation, management and interpretation of the historic environment of AONBs.
3. Ensure each AONB is updated on who their key Historic England contacts are and ensure that AONBs are kept engaged in the priorities and delivery of Historic England's work.

The NAAONB agrees to:

To provide key contact details for AONB units to Historic England on an annual basis through the collaborative National Landscapes Platform.

The NAAONB will encourage its members and others to:

1. Incorporate objectives into AONB Management Plans relating to the understanding, conservation, and public enjoyment of the historic environment of AONBs.
2. Secure better understanding, conservation, management, and



interpretation of the historic environment of AONBs.

3. Seek appropriate advice from relevant agencies and local authority historic environment professionals on proposals or work that has relevance to the historic environment.
4. Work to integrate their activities with those relevant activities of Historic England.

National Action Plan

It is the ambition of the parties to produce a National Action Plan that can be reviewed by the partners to deliver shared objectives. The drafting of the new Action Plan and sharing of best practice, case studies and research will be facilitated through the new digital platform hosted by NAAONB.

It is an ambition to review the Action Plan every five years to provide an opportunity to assess the state of the historic environment of AONBs (including use of Heritage at Risk data) and direct reporting from AONBs on AONB Management Plan delivery to identify future priorities for action.

The parties will collaborate and encourage others to promote the sustainable management of the historic environment in AONBs by:

1. Showcasing exemplary projects and schemes.
2. Disseminating of appropriate guidance and codes of best practice.
3. Establishing a historic environment working group of interested AONBs.

Application of the statement

This statement applies to the 34 AONBs in England. It has effect from 16th November 2022 and will be monitored annually and reviewed (along with the Action Plan) every 5 years by the parties. The statement does not affect the statutory duties of the respective organisations.

Parties to the statement

Historic England

Historic England is the Government's statutory adviser on all matters relating to the historic environment in England. They are a non-departmental public body established under the National Heritage Act 1983 and sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). They champion and protect England's historic places, providing expert advice to local planning authorities, developers, owners and communities to help ensure our historic environment is properly understood, enjoyed and cared for.

They do this by:

- Championing historic places
- Identifying and protecting our heritage
- Supporting change
- Understanding historic places and
- Providing expertise at a local level

Under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 Historic England is required to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of AONBs.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, abbreviated to AONB, are outstanding landscapes whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so precious that it is safeguarded in the national interest.

There are 34 AONBs in England, created by the legislation of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949. Protection of AONBs was further enhanced by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000 (CROW Act).

AONB landscapes range from rugged coastline, dunes, salt marshes, peatlands, woodlands and estuaries to water meadows, gentle downland and upland moors.

The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. Social and economic development which

contributes to the natural beauty of the AONB is encouraged so that communities are strengthened, and the experiences for locals and visitors alike are improved.

AONBs are designated because of their special qualities. AONBs special qualities comprise the following 6 elements: scenic quality, landscape quality, natural heritage, cultural heritage, relative wildness and tranquillity. They are living and working landscapes that have been, and continue to be, shaped by nature and human activity.

The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) was formed in 1998 as an independent organisation to act on behalf of all Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the UK.

The NAAONB became a Charitable Company limited by guarantee on 14th October 2014 having previously operated as an incorporated controlled company limited by guarantee.

The NAAONB has established itself as the voice of the AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards by working closely with them, and with Local Authorities, statutory agencies, central governments, and other interested bodies. By doing so it furthers the work of AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards and helps them deliver their statutory responsibilities.

The NAAONB

- Is an influential, trusted organisation that is accepted as the voice of the AONB network
- Encourages and harnesses the collective experience, enthusiasm and goodwill of the AONB network
- Brings the AONB network together as a cohesive and coherent entity
- Develops and supports collaboration across all designated landscapes
- Celebrates the unique identity of its individual members
- Collaborates with others to achieve shared objectives, and
- Is the single point of contact with the AONB network for governments

