



Mendip Hills AONB Management Plan 2009 –2014

Chairman's Foreword

The Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a naturally beautiful and nationally protected landscape.

The role of the AONB Partnership is to ensure that the Mendip Hills retain their unique character and special qualities whilst recognising that it is a place for people to live in, work in and visit

This Plan is a revision of the 2004–9 Plan. It sets out what those special qualities are. It has considered current issues and future trends, pressures and challenges and suggests what needs to happen in the future to conserve and enhance this striking landscape.

Climate change is already having an impact – we can see the impact of intense rainfall on Black Down exacerbated by increased use of the area for recreation creating water filled gullies. Changes in farming practice are occurring; as food and fuel prices increase bio fuel crops being planted on the plateau and there are challenges for those working to retain land in environmental stewardship where landowners are attracted by higher grain prices. New development proposed on the fringes of Weston Super Mare and Bristol will bring additional pressures on the Mendip Hills: increased traffic, loss of tranquility and more visitors. It may also bring some additional investment and focus on improvements to access.

Influencing and adapting to these changes or external influences are just some of the issues raised in the Plan. How we are going to respond to these challenges is set out in this Plan but the detail of who, what, when, will be contained in the accompanying Delivery Plan which will be updated each year.

The AONB Service will be taking a lead in coordinating activity but we all have a contribution to make either directly or through influencing others.

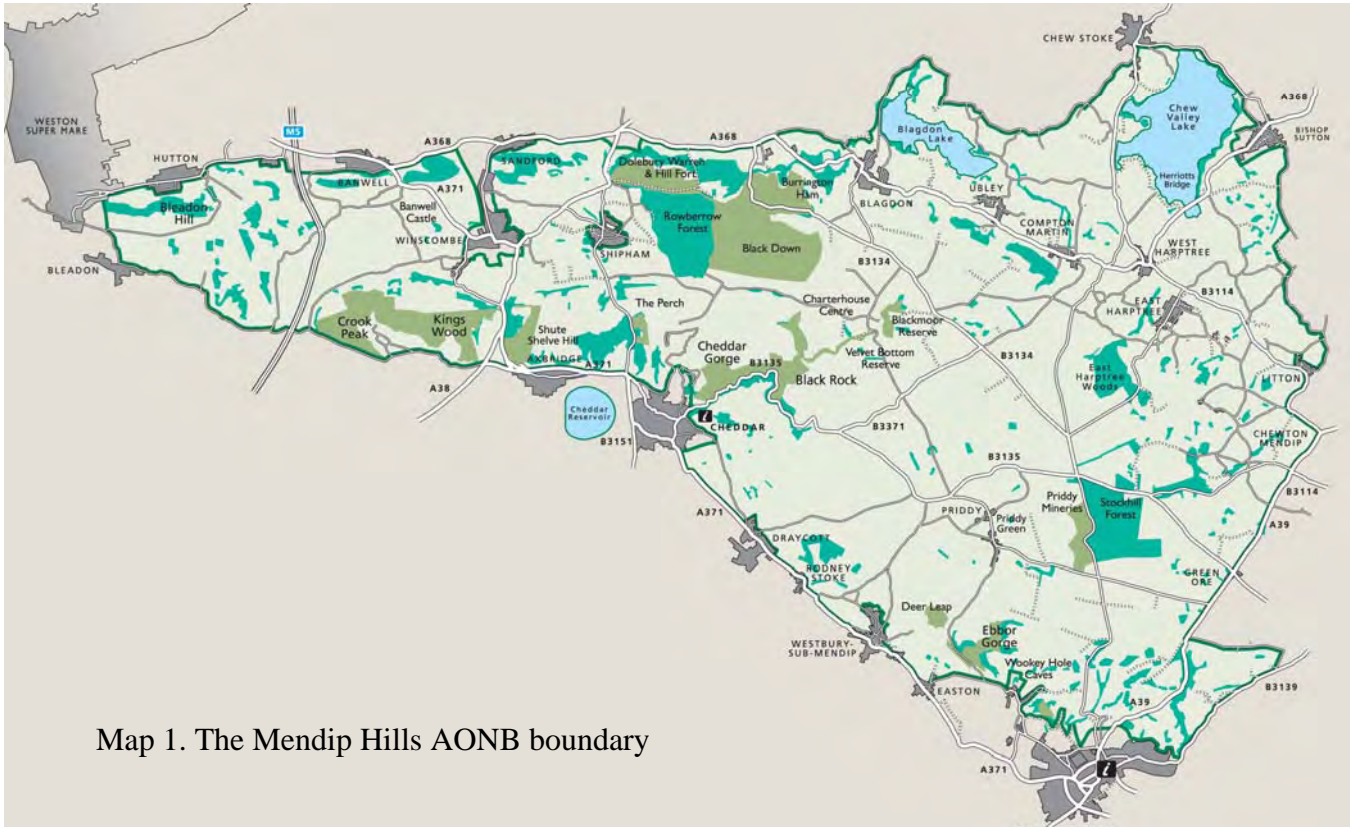
Steve Pilkington CBE, Partnership Chairman

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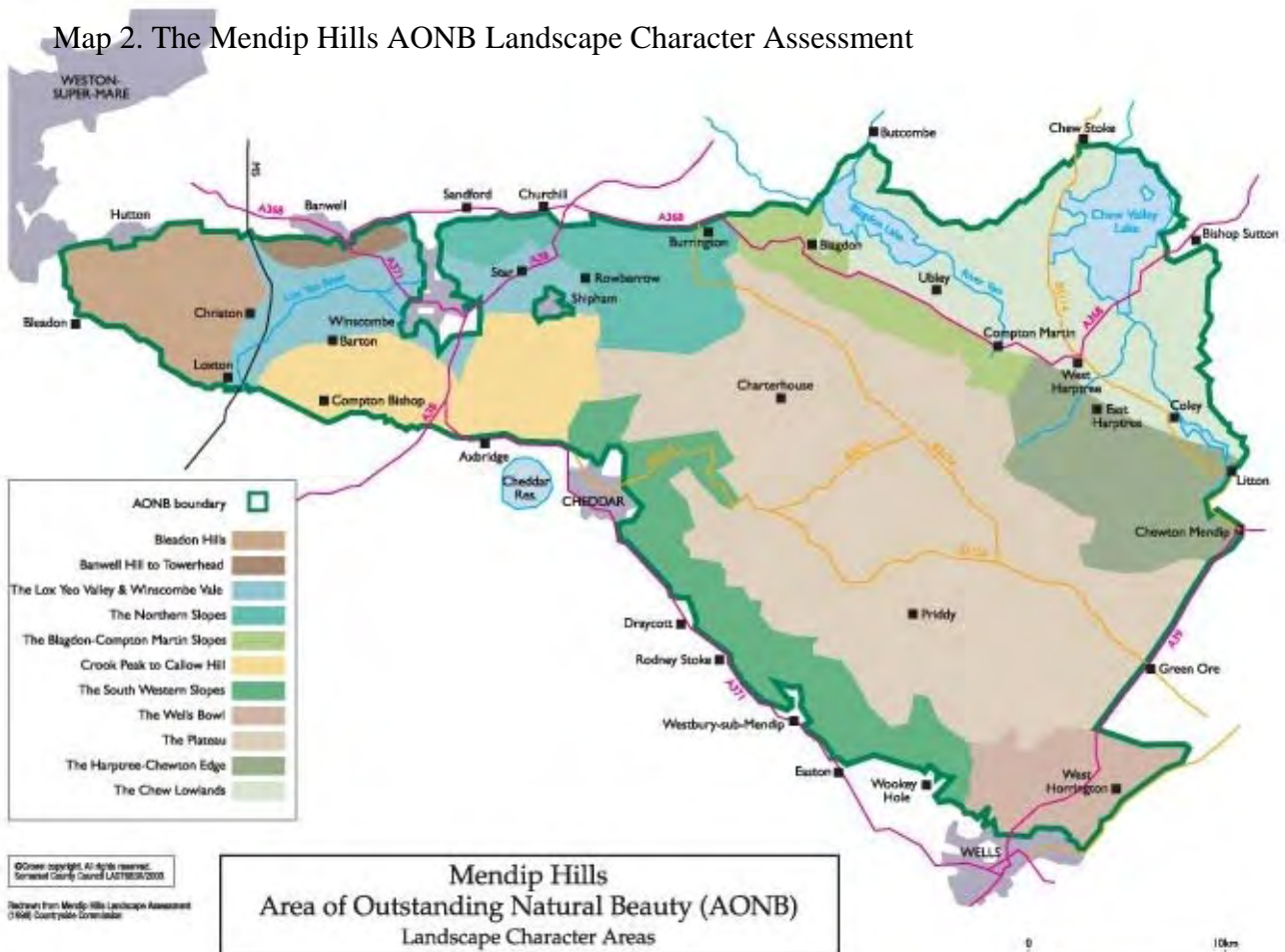
The Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Naturally beautiful and nationally protected, the Mendip Hills AONB was designated in 1972 and covers 198sq kms from Bleadon in the west to Chewton Mendip in the east, taking in the reservoirs of Blagdon and Chew Valley.

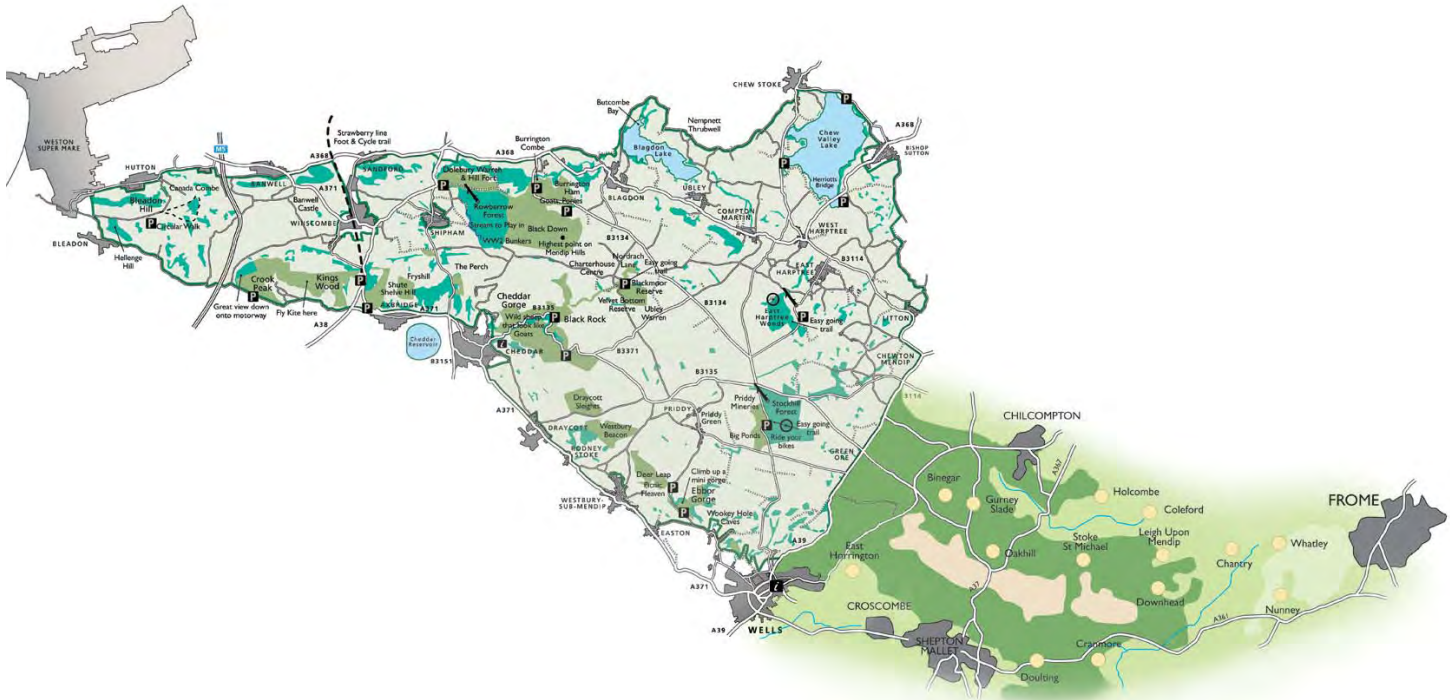


Map 1. The Mendip Hills AONB boundary

Map 2. The Mendip Hills AONB Landscape Character Assessment



Map 3. The Mendip Hills AONB and East Mendip.



Why is a Management Plan Needed?

The Plan sets out what the special qualities of the Mendip Hills AONB are in the Statement of Significance. It has considered current issues and future trends to devise objectives and actions to address these in order to retain and enhance the special qualities to achieve the Vision for the Mendip Hills AONB.

The AONB Partnership was established in 1983 to bring together key bodies including statutory bodies, with responsibility and/or a management role. The Partnership is an advisory body but includes partners that have powers for specific areas e.g. local planning authorities. Unlike National Parks, AONBs do not have an 'authority' with overall responsibility. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW) requires relevant local authorities to produce and adopt a plan which 'formulates policy for the management of the area and for carrying out their functions in relation to it.'

There are 5 local authorities that have area within the AONB. Somerset County Council, the unitary authorities of Bath and North East Somerset Council and North Somerset Council, and two districts councils, Mendip District Council and Sedgemoor District Council. The AONB Partnership produces the Management Plan, on behalf of the local authorities. The local authorities, the AONB Service, the wider Partnership, other stakeholders and the community implement the plan.

The Plan for this nationally designated protected landscape is overarching and whilst set in context of other plans and strategies seeks to influence these in terms of their policies and delivery regarding the AONB. The Plan also has an important role in securing commitment from public bodies, including action to comply with the CRoW Act Section 85 Duty of Regard.

Objectives

Focusing on the primary purpose of the designation, to conserve and enhance natural beauty, this management plan sets out the objectives and actions that will deliver change. Objectives for the rural economy and communities are included where they help in delivering the primary purpose.

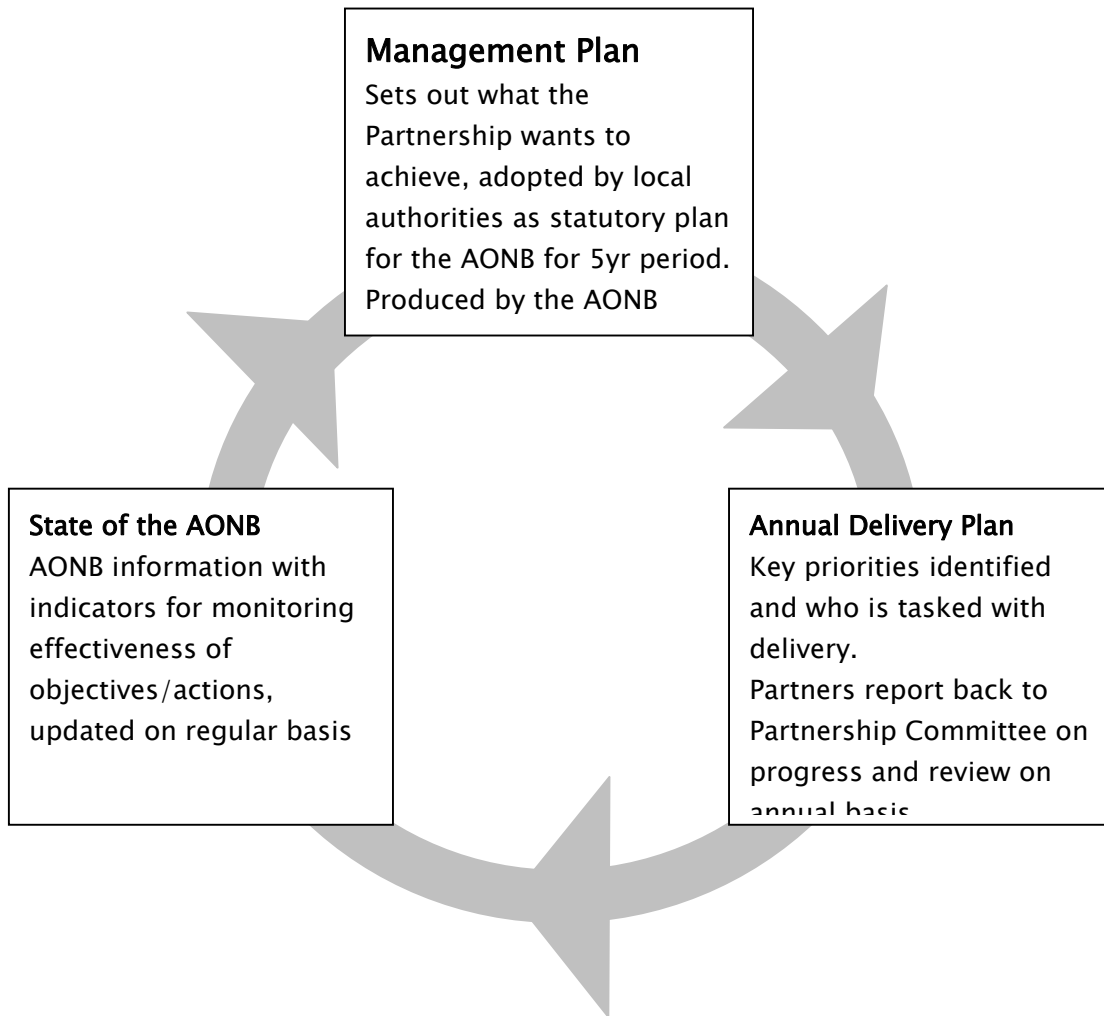
The focus is with the designated area but what happens in the countryside adjacent to the boundary or within view of the AONB is also of significance. Many of the objectives and actions proposed here are relevant for these areas. Further to this the European Landscape Convention (ratified by the UK Government in 2006) states 'as a reflection of European identity and diversity, the landscape *is* our living natural and cultural heritage, be it ordinary or outstanding, urban or rural, on land or in water.'

Natural England, the Government's independent advisor on the natural environment who provide core AONB funding, have set out their direction to achieve four strategic outcomes; a healthy natural environment; people are inspired to value and conserve the natural environment; sustainable use of the natural environment and, secure the natural environment for the future – responding to climate change. The review of the 2004–9 Management Plan has been undertaken in accordance with the Guidance on the review of AONB Management Plans, Countryside Agency (2006).

Actions

The Partnership will be consulting on the Annual Delivery Plan to agree priorities and identify which organisations lead or assist with specific actions. The actions in the Delivery Plan will be SMART; specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time limited.

The management planning process for the Mendip Hills AONB.



The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Designation

Designated under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, the 41 AONBs in England and Wales include some of our finest landscapes. They are ‘working landscapes’ inhabited by thousands of people, many of whom derive their livelihoods from the land. The CRoW Act 2000 has provided for better management of AONBs making it a statutory duty for local authorities to prepare and deliver Management Plans amongst other measures.

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

In pursuing the primary purpose, 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.

Reference: Countryside Commission CCP356 (1991)

AONBs share equal status with National Parks in terms of scenic beauty and landscape protection.

‘Natural beauty’ includes flora, fauna, geological and physiographic features. These aspects of natural beauty are key components of the landscape. However, landscape is also about tranquility, the dark skies, the relationship between people and place, the interaction between nature and culture. It is therefore very important that the cultural dimension of the landscape, including the historical, intellectual and spiritual elements as well as the physical human shaping of the land is fully recognised.

Statement of Significance

This is a statement of what is special and significant about the AONB. It is based on designation evidence, the landscape character assessment and views of the AONB Partnership.

i) High above the flat wetlands of the Somerset Levels rise a range of hills– the Mendip Hills– with steep craggy slopes, a distinctive south–facing escarpment and a gently undulating plateau. The limestone ridge is one of England’s most attractive landscapes– the windswept plateau punctuated by spectacular dry valleys and gorges, ancient sinkholes and depressions, and impressive rocky outcrops. On the hilltops there are hundreds of ancient monuments yielding evocative tales of ancient peoples, while on the steeper slopes flower rich grasslands and wooded combs offer varied habitats for a wide diversity of wildlife.

li) Providing an impressive setting for the hills, the Chew Valley is attractive in its own right. Chew and Blagdon lakes set within a rich farmed landscape with fields divided by hedges dramatically contrasts with the open farm and heath land on the hill top criss–crossed with dry stone walls.

iii) Hidden beneath the hills the underground world of the karst landscape, includes many of the famous Mendip caves, adds to the unique character of the area.

iv) It is as much for the views offered within the AONB as the views out from the Mendip Hills that the area is valued. Far-reaching, changing seasonal views across the Severn Estuary to Wales and views out across the misty Somerset Levels from which the mysterious Glastonbury Tor and eerie Hinkley Point appear. It is from many such viewpoints and other sites that the experience of tranquility and dark skies remain significant and valued features of the area.

v) The principle elements identified in the Mendip Hills AONB Landscape Assessment (1998) justifying its designation are:

- Plateau, slopes and hills
- Swallets, combes and the 'Netherworld'
- Risings, ponds and lakes
- Mendip Stone and Mendip Buildings
- Walls and hedges
- Downland and heathland
- Woodland and Parkland
- Historic Landscapes
- Roads, lanes and trackways

Although the AONB is unified by its landform of plateau and slopes and by the features listed above, 11 distinctive landscape areas have been identified see map page 4.

Vision for the AONB

The vision sets out the ideal state of the AONB in 20 years time. It is hoped this will be achieved through the delivery of this Plan and its successors.

In 20 years time there will be:

Wide understanding and appreciation of the Mendip Hills as an area of outstanding natural beauty for its distinctive geology, biodiversity, historic, cultural and natural features, all of which are conserved and enhanced. The impact of climate changes in relation to these is understood.

In 20 years time there will be:

Significant numbers of the local community directly engaged in the conservation and enhancement of the Mendip Hills AONB, either through direct employment in the rural economy, or as custodians of the landscape influencing decision makers or volunteering.

In 20 years time there will be:

A stop in the decline of certain habitats and species. Numbers for certain species including farmland birds will increase.

In 20 years time the area will:

Provide enjoyment for a diverse population, from both within and beyond the AONB boundary, through a wide range of activities. The area will be accessible, regardless of individual mobility, wealth or background, and by means other than the private car.

In 20 years time there will be:

Development in and near the Mendip Hills AONB that is sustainable, enhances and respects the special qualities of the area, including tranquility, contributes to the social and economic needs of the area. Development on the fringes of Bristol and Weston Super Mare and any expansion of Bristol Airport will not have had a significant impact on the Mendip Hills AONB.

In 20 years time there will be:

Management of natural resources including use of minerals, energy, waste products, soil and water that is sustainable. The restoration and after use of working quarries is planned and carried out to minimize their impact on the landscape.

Drivers for change – external influences

Any plan for the future must consider what is happening in the wider world. The AONB cannot be immune to their effects. Moreover these issues will affect the special qualities of the AONB. The main ones are:

Social: *Government's drive for a more diverse range of people visiting the countryside
Greater access and opportunities for younger children
Increasing impact of traffic
Combating obesity and health problems through visiting and volunteering in the countryside*

Technological: *Increasing demand for communication masts
Increasing home working
Increasing use of sustainable buildings and techniques*

Environment: *Natural England's strategic direction
Increased legislation for protection of biodiversity and natural resources
Achieving and maintaining 95% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Favourable condition
Managing the effects of climate change
Increasing number of small farms and horse related development*

Economic: *Change in farm payments away from production
Changing sources of funding
Development and implementation of Local Area Agreements
Increasing role of sustainable tourism*

Political: *Increasing role of Parish Council's
Implementation of Local Development Frameworks*

Themes

To achieve the Vision for the Mendip Hills AONB, the Partnership and stakeholders have set out objectives and actions under 9 themes. The AONB Partnership, AONB Service and stakeholders will deliver the actions. Not all will be undertaken in the next five years. The objectives and actions are not in any order of priority. The detailed delivery of actions will be set out in the Annual Delivery Plan.

Climate Change

The likely changes in climate for the Mendip Hills are broadly as follows:

- The Mendip Hills will continue to get warmer.
- Summers will continue to get hotter and drier (with exceptions).
- Winters will continue to get milder and wetter (with exceptions).
- Some weather extremes will become more common, others less common:
 - The number of very hot summer days is expected to increase.
 - The number of very cold winter days is expected to decrease.
 - Winter storms and mild, wet and windy winter weather are expected to become more frequent

¹ *Warming to the Idea: meeting the challenge of Climate Change in the South West, South West Region Climate Change Impacts Scoping Study, South West Climate Change Impacts Partnership, 2003; also, the UK Climate Impacts Partnership (UKCIP) website*

There may be some benefits of climate change on certain habitats. For example Calcareous Grasslands and Ash Lime woodlands reflect a previous warmer climate some 5000 years ago and these may well adapt to the change expected.

Climate change will potentially impact on all aspects of the Mendip Hills AONB. Monitoring and analysis of research data on rainfall, temperatures and wind speeds will provide an indication of the implications of the actions needed to be taken to mitigate the causes of climate change, and adapt to the changes that occur.

Objectives	Actions
CC1 Encourage appropriate adaptation to take place in response to current and short-term issues and information.	CCA1.1 Respond to the impacts of climate change.
CC2 The likely impacts of climate change on the character of the Mendip Hills are understood.	CCA 2.1. Be actively involved in regional fora and other groups researching the impact of climate change. CCA2.2 Monitor and analyse climate change research findings and their implications for the

	special qualities of the Mendip Hills AONB.
CC3 Measures are taken to mitigate the causes of climate change.	<p>CCA3.1 Reduce greenhouse emissions by encouraging energy conservation measures in order to help meet national and regional targets for energy consumption.</p> <p>CCA3.2 Provide and promote advice on energy conservation measures to reduce the “carbon footprint” of the Mendip Hills AONB.</p> <p>CCA3.3 To develop and implement a carbon footprint reduction action plan in relation to partner’s own activities.</p> <p>CCA3.4 To encourage and support appropriate scale renewable energy generation, where it is compatible with Development Objective D1 – ensuring that proposed renewable energy developments do not conflict with the requirements of European Protected and other important species and habitats.</p> <p>CCA3.5 Advise renewable energy developers on locations unlikely to cause adverse effects on wildlife interests of European and national importance.</p> <p>CCA3.6: Be involved in appropriate regional and local fora promoting renewable energy.</p> <p>CCA3.7 Encourage sustainable modes of travel to, from and within the AONB to reduce the impacts of traffic emissions on climate change.</p>

Landscape Quality

The Carboniferous Limestone that underlies much of the Mendip ridge has given the area its distinctive landscape of rolling hills, lines of dry stone walls and attractive stone, settlements on the spring line. The area has a tangible sense of tranquility and remoteness that are highly valued by those who choose to live here and the many visitors. At the highest points such as Black Down areas of sandstone, covered by heathland contrast with the limestone grassland and give variety to the landscape. Views out from the edge of the plateau and slopes are widely appreciated.

The Chew Valley adds a further dimension. The two large expanses of water of Blagdon Lake and Chew Valley Lake reservoirs built in the 1950s set within a rich farmland landscape present a gentler landscape.

The landscape has been strongly influenced by the activities of man from prehistoric times to the present. The plateau is rich in the remains of Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman activity including lead mining and dry stone walls mostly dating from the 18th and 19th century. Both farming and quarrying continue to change the landscape.

The Mendip Hills AONB Landscape Assessment (Countryside Commission 1998) identified eleven distinctive character areas (see map P4). Consideration of the landscape needs to take account of the varied elements that make each of these areas.

There are many factors changing and bringing pressure on the Mendip Hills AONB. Development pressures, changes in agriculture, increase in road traffic and recreation, loss of dark sky and the loss of landscape detail such as gruffy ground (remnants of shallow lead mining), rock outcrops and field boundaries. These need to be managed to ensure that the essential character is conserved and enhanced. The AONB Lifelines project surveyed the dry stone walls providing a database of information to prioritise future restoration work

These same pressures also have impact on the land outside the AONB. There are those including the Mendip Society whose view is that there are areas of landscape quality that equal that to that inside the AONB boundary and who argue for them to be designated AONB. Natural England will be consulting on landscape policy and designations including consideration of AONB boundary reviews.

Objectives	Actions
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<p>L1 Monitor landscape change and make information available to aid decision-making.</p>	<p>LA1.1. Continue to support the collection of data from various agencies through SW Regional Observatory.</p> <p>LA1.2 Collate local data as identified in the Management Plan.</p> <p>LA1.3. Continue to record landscape change through photography including fixed-point photography.</p>
<p>L2 Promote appropriate management to ensure that the distinctive Mendip Hills AONB landscape is maintained and enhanced.</p>	<p>LA2.1 Publish landscape and land management guidance that interprets and applies landscape character assessments.</p> <p>LA2.2. Support conservation organisations and individuals to acquire land where there would otherwise be a loss of quality in terms of landscape, biodiversity or historical interest.</p> <p>LA2.3 Remove significant eyesores and undertake appropriate restoration work.</p> <p>LA2.4 Lead by example in the management of local amenity sites</p> <p>LA2.5 Promote the restoration of dry stone walls using the information obtained from the Lifelines survey.</p>
<p>L3 Provide and encourage training provision on land management to care for and promote the landscape and its special qualities.</p>	<p>LA3.1 Develop a self sustaining Mendip Hills AONB Partnership programme for people within and around the AONB to obtain rural skills.</p> <p>LA3.2 Maintain and extend links with colleges and land managers to ensure training is appropriate.</p>

<p>L4 Increase awareness and appreciation of the purposes of designation and the special qualities of the AONB to residents and visitors.</p>	<p>LA4.1 Produce on and off site interpretative material. Hold events aimed at a wide range of different audiences to raise awareness of the Mendip Hills AONB.</p> <p>LA4.2 Produce parish maps showing where the AONB boundary is.</p> <p>LA4.3 Consider feasibility and support for AONB to be on village signs.</p> <p>LA4.4 Encourage Parish Plans to include references to how the village relates to the AONB.</p>
<p>L5 Increase awareness of supporting local products and services that help to conserve and enhance the landscape.</p>	<p>LA5.1 Promote local products that have a clear link to conserving and enhancing the landscape.</p> <p>LA5.2 Provide advice and publish guidance on local distinctiveness. Including advice on design in towns and villages, the design of agricultural building conversions, the retention and restoration of locally distinctive features and the promotion of best practice.</p> <p>LA5.3 Encourage and support public involvement and commitment to the future planning of communities and the countryside.</p> <p>LA5.4 Provide guidance and support for the preparation of Parish Plans.</p> <p>LA5.5 Work with local media to increase awareness. Monitor and report on the extent of coverage.</p>
<p>L6 Designate land of high landscape importance as an AONB as appropriate.</p>	<p>LA6.1 Consider the Natural England AONB designation policy and criteria when available.</p>

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth. ‘Conserving and enhancing the natural environment and the biodiversity it supports is vital because of its inherent value and our moral obligation to preserve other species’ Wild Somerset – The Somerset Biodiversity Strategy 2008–2018 (May 2008).

The Mendip Hills have a diverse range of habitats with local, national and international importance for wildlife. There are 27 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the Mendip Hills AONB. These sites are subject to regular monitoring to record their condition. This ranges from *unfavourable declining* through to *favourable*. Natural England’s national target is for 95% of all SSSIs to be in *favourable* condition by 2010 and is targeting resources accordingly. Natural England’s July 2008 figures show that in the Mendip Hills this figure is 96% but some that are *unfavourable recovering* require significant work to reach *favourable* condition.

European designations are the Special Protection Area of Chew Valley Lake, Special Areas of Conservation for the North Somerset and Mendip Bats, Mendip Limestone Grasslands that takes in Crook Peak to Shute Shelve and Mendip Woodlands that includes the two National Nature Reserves (NNRs) of Rodney Stoke and Ebbor Gorge and also includes Cheddar Wood.

Listed below are the priority species and habitats identified in the 2004–9 Management Plan from the local authority Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPS) – see below. Recognizing that this list is changing and in order to have an understanding of what is happening within the Mendip Hills AONB, the need to produce a Mendip Hills AONB Biodiversity Action Plan has been identified. This Mendip Hills AONB BAP will agree AONB key species, habitats and local targets across the local authority boundaries.

Priority species and habitats in the Mendip Hills are:

Species:

Dormouse

Song thrush

Bats (specifically Greater Horseshoe bat and Pipistrelle bat)

Greater crested newt

Southern damselfly

Lesser silver water beetle

Brown Hare

Water vole

Long eared owl

White-clawed crayfish

Barn owl

Cowslip

Marsh fritillary

Mountain bulin snail

Habitats:

Hedgerows
 Reed / sedge beds
 Orchards (traditional)
 Dry stone walls
 Flower rich meadows and grassland

Ponds and open water
 Wetlands
 Watercourses
 Woodlands (Ancient Semi- Natural Broadleaved and Ash Maple)

The threats to biodiversity include climate change. It is expected that southern species and habitats on the edge of their range may decline, degrade or disappear as a result of climate change

Other threats to biodiversity include new development, visitor impact, pollution (from noise and lighting), intensification of agriculture, loss of grazing and demands for energy crops. Land being bought as smallholdings by people with little land management experience has isolated nature reserves and other wildlife rich areas.

Geodiversity, the geological version of biodiversity, is a key feature of the Mendip Hills. Limestone has created the Mendip ‘karst’ landscape, a terrain formed as percolating rainwater dissolves the rock, forming depressions, underground drainage and caves. Streams emerge at the foot of the hills where the limestone meets less permeable rock. Many of these features are designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest and or Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites.

Geoparc status– equivalent of World Heritage Status for geological areas seems an obvious status to gain for the Mendip Hills AONB. Geoparcs hold events and organize research bringing potential economic and recreation benefits. How beneficial this status would be to the Mendip Hills AONB needs to be assessed.

Objectives	Actions
B1 UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats and species in the Mendip Hills AONB are maintained or enhanced.	BA1.1 Produce a strategy and BAP for the Mendip Hills AONB. BA1.2 Extend and enhance ecological connections between habitats at an appropriate landscape scale. BA1.3 Encourage and support measures under agri-environment schemes targeted towards the protection and enhancement of the Mendip Hills AONB priority habitats and species.
B2 All Mendip Hills AONB SSSIs are in	BA2.1 Agree target sites for improvement

<p>'favourable' or 'unfavourable improving condition' and sites of local importance (defined by NI197) are in positive management.</p>	<p>and identify work to be undertaken in partnership with Natural England, local authorities and landowners.</p>
<p>B3 Recognize, conserve and enhance significant geological sites and features.</p>	<p>BA3.1. Support designation of Regionally Important Geological Sites.</p> <p>BA3.2 Assess feasibility of additional designations e.g. Geoparc status.</p> <p>BA3.3 Advise landowners and users e.g. climbers, cavers etc on management issues</p> <p>BA3.4 Promote accessible sites and provide and appropriate information.</p>

Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage

AONB designation recognises the importance of heritage and reinforces the need to protect and manage characteristic features. The Mendip Hills have evidence of human settlement dating back to Palaeolithic times, 500,000 years ago. Henge monuments, barrows and hill forts on the plateau are some of the most prominent features of the area. The historical value of the area is incredibly rich and important. Interest and participation in this subject is also high leading to many sites and features being recorded, but many are not.

Further to the Mendip Hills AONB Historic Environment Strategy (2001) identifying key research needed for the area English Heritage embarked upon a four-year research project. This research will conclude with a publication supported by detailed site surveys on the English Heritage website in 2010. The research will describe the change over time of settlement patterns and other human impacts on the landscape.

The Mendip Hills AONB Service Lifelines project 2006–8 gathered baseline information to conserve and enhance the heritage and landscape value of the dry stone walls. The walls not only reveal the underlying geology but also reflect changes in settlement and agriculture and provide wildlife corridors, yet they are unprotected, depending on individual landowners to maintain and restore them. Ploughing and other agricultural practices continue to damage and threaten sites including gruffy ground, a remnant of mining activity. Lack of grazing has resulted in increase in scrub and some sites being obscured from view and suffering damage from tree roots. Burrowing animals, recreational use of sites, and new development also threaten the historic environment and individual sites.

Climate change poses particular threats to the historic environment. Intense rainfall causes erosion of archaeological sites and increased extremes of soaking and drying heighten risk of ground subsidence and accelerate the decay of stone work. Changes in vegetation patterns may cover and damage archaeological remains.

Village Design Statements and Parish Plans are important tools for identifying and raising awareness of characteristic features. Together with Historic Landscape Character Assessments they contribute to the planning decision-making process. Promotion of agri-environment schemes to landowners that include historic features has benefited many sites.

Customs and traditions that have historic and cultural associations with the land and activities of local people are important too. This includes Mendip cave exploration begun in the late nineteenth century, the Rock of Ages service to mark the origin of the famous hymn, Priddy Sheep Fair dating back 650 years, the hedging and ploughing matches promoting rural skills, village strawberry fairs and a more recent tradition Blagdon Pumping station Sunday open days. There are very few weekends when there is not an event happening in the Mendip Hills that is not custom or tradition related and demonstrates community engagement with their heritage.

Objectives	Actions
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<p>H1 Identify, record, protect and conserve the historic environment and cultural heritage.</p>	<p>HA1.1 Provide support and assistance for the conservation, and interpretation of significant local features within the Mendip Hills AONB.</p> <p>HA1.2 Support the provision of training to build up skills in the local community that care for the local heritage.</p> <p>HA1.3 Encourage and support the production of Village Design Statements.</p> <p>HA1.3 Encourage the inclusion of historic environment gains as part of agri environment schemes.</p>
<p>H2 The historic resources in the Mendip Hills are better understood.</p>	<p>HA2.1 Review Mendip Hills AONB Strategy for the Historic Environment (2001) to provide a framework for research.</p> <p>HA2.2 Encourage research by academic institutions, statutory bodies, local history groups and individuals.</p> <p>HA2.3 Ensure that research work is made available, interpreted and made accessible e.g. publications, web sites, AONB heritage days.</p>
<p>H3 Identify heritage assets at risk and reduce the number of buildings on the 'at risk' register and monuments on the 'high risk' list of Scheduled Monuments.</p>	<p>HA3.1 Increase awareness of the list and means by which the buildings or monuments can be improved to take them off the registers.</p> <p>HA3.2 Identify sites/buildings where a new approach will address the issue.</p>

Farming and Land Uses

The Mendip Hills landscape is largely a result of the way the land has been shaped and maintained by farmers, landowners and estate managers over the centuries. As such, those with a stewardship role in the Mendip Hills are an integral part of conserving and enhancing the landscape.

Those involved in agriculture have faced enormous pressures from subsidy changes and health scares in recent years. The area has been a target for agri environment grant schemes for over a decade. Increasing consumer awareness and demand for high quality products from sustainable farm management has contributed to an increase in the number of farmers selling direct from the farm and supplying to local businesses. As farm business changes and properties are sold on or existing owners diversify there are potential threats to the environment but also opportunities through influencing new managers to deliver environmental gain. Whilst there are planning controls for agricultural and equestrian developments, some of these activities are permitted development (i.e. do not need planning permission) and in some cases have a detrimental impact on the character of the landscape.

Although only 10% of the AONB is under woodland it significantly contributes to the landscape character and biodiversity. Half of the woodland is semi natural broadleaved woodland situated mainly on the north and south facing slopes of the hills. Forestry Commission manages the conifer plantations at Rowberrow, Stockhill and East Harptree with multipurpose objectives, including landscape, wildlife and heritage conservation, public access and timber production. Guided by Forest Design Plans they are gradually being transformed into more diverse woodlands. There are other woodland areas that would benefit from management for wildlife, economic or recreational benefit or a combination of these.

Quarrying is an important part of the Mendip economy. Callow Rock and Battscombe are the two major quarries in the AONB both extracting Carboniferous Limestone. To lessen their major impacts quarries are required to meet acceptable levels of noise, dust, vibration and visual intrusion. The requirements for quarry operators to limit the impact of such activities are set out in their planning conditions. Although these quarries will not cease operation for another 40 years recreational use of redundant quarries should be considered alongside other potential provision to ensure that their after use is planned in advance.

Water management is crucial for the Mendip's. The three reservoirs of Chew, Blagdon and Cheddar supply water to 1.1 million people and businesses in the Bristol Water area. Contamination of streams that disappear into the extensive cave systems could not only end up in the reservoirs but also potentially damage the geology and biodiversity value of the caves.

Climate change presents challenges for Bristol Water in continuing to provide customers with safe, secure and affordable water supply. Increasing public awareness about conserving water is part of their current strategy. New development puts significant pressure on existing supplies and as certain areas do not have links to main sewage risk of contamination is increased. The

Environment Agency produces catchment management plans and has authority on developments that will potentially impact on water resources including farm waste management systems.

Objectives	Actions
<p>F1 Recognize the importance of farming and support land management that conserves and enhances biodiversity and other natural resources, that contributes to landscape character and aids public awareness and enjoyment of the Mendip Hills AONB.</p>	<p>FA1.1 Encourage and support take up of agri environment schemes and other appropriate support schemes.</p> <p>FA1.2 Identify and support opportunities for land managers to diversify their business in ways that are compatible with AONB objectives.</p> <p>FA1.3 Pursue the adoption of land management policies and funding regimes at the national and regional level that reflect AONB priorities.</p>
<p>F2 Promote a sustainable woodland economy that enhances the Mendip Hills AONB woodlands and wider landscape provides wood fuel and local community opportunities.</p>	<p>FA2.1 Encourage management of existing woodland including the provision of buffering and extension of existing ancient wood.</p> <p>FA2.2 Encourage markets for timber, wood fuel and other woodland products and services and other income generating uses for woodland, including access that are compatible with AONB objectives.</p> <p>FA2.3 Encourage and support tree and woodland planting which is in accordance with landscape character assessments and Biodiversity Action Plans.</p>

<p>F3 The restoration and after use of all quarries is planned and carried out to minimize the impact on the landscape, and to be compatible with the purposes of the AONB designation.</p>	<p>FA3.1 Work with quarry owners to seek appropriate outcome for the Mendip Hills AONB.</p>
<p>F4 The use of natural resources is managed to minimise harm to the distinctive characteristics of the AONB.</p>	<p>FA4.1 To support measures to conserve soil quality as set out in Soil Strategy and Action Plan for England</p> <p>FA4.2 Support appropriate measures to protect water resources and maintain water quality and minimise flood risk as set out in Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies and River Basin Management Plans and other measures.</p>

Access, Recreation and Tourism

The AONB is a resource to be enjoyed by all sectors of our diverse society. Natural England is encouraging improved access and is looking to AONBs to do more, particularly those who are on the fringes of urban areas, to make more direct efforts to attract under-represented groups. Outdoor recreation is proved to benefit people's health and well being through exercise and opportunities to escape the pressure of everyday life.

'Recreation is not an objective of designation but the demand for recreation should be met as far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.' Countryside Commission (1991).

Walking and cycling are other popular activities undertaken informally and as part of major organized events. As the number and size of such events is increasing, guidance to organizers and landowners is necessary and the need for reviewing activities should take place. The need to improve the existing Public Rights of Way network to provide off road routes for horse riders, cyclists and walkers is recognized. The local authorities Rights of Way Improvement Plans seek to address this and work with groups who are undertaking work to improve access.

The Mendip Hills are also visited for their wild and tranquil areas that provide opportunity for quiet enjoyment. Areas of conflict have arisen between different user groups where activities (legal and illegal) have impacted on the tranquility. Increased numbers of cyclists and horse riders has reduced enjoyment for others using the same routes. There has also been an increase in the number of incidents concerning inappropriate use of Public Rights Of Way (PROW) or aggressive behavior by motorcyclists and quad bike users.

The intensity of rainfall has seen a number of well used rights of way heavily eroded by surface material being washed away compounded by on-going heavy usage. Site management measures will need to be introduced to tackle some of these issues that may require seasonal restrictions on use of certain routes or areas. This will also include measures for when long dry periods increase risk of fire. Recognising the need to provide specialist emergency support for the area, the Mendip Hills Emergency Plan has been produced. This Plan is for the emergency services and it identifies local trained volunteer support.

Most visitors to the Mendip Hills AONB are day visitors but tourism is an important part of the local economy. Cheddar Caves and Gorge, Wookey Hole Caves and Bristol Water's Chew Valley and Blagdon Lake are major tourist attractions making significant contributions to the rural economy. There are further opportunities within the Mendip Hills to encourage higher spending visitors and develop products and packages to do this with a high quality and distinctive resource base.

Objectives	Actions
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<p>A1 Ensure that recreational activity and use of the Mendip Hills is compatible with its conservation purpose.</p>	<p>AA1.1 Liaise with businesses through Active Mendip to raise any concerns that cannot be addressed through PROW or planning controls.</p> <p>AA1.2 Local authorities to apply Objective D1 (see later) to new businesses that require planning permission.</p> <p>AA1.3 Monitor visitor numbers and impact on PROW and at key sites including Natura 2000 sites and areas close to new housing development. Seek restorative maintenance or alternative routing where damage has been caused.</p>
<p>A2 Maintain, improve and promote public access and quiet recreational activities with measures to ensure access for all in accordance with the purposes of AONB designation.</p>	<p>AA2.1 Assist the development, promotion and maintenance of the recreational network through the Local Access Forums and Rights of Way Improvement Plans, to meet modern recreational needs that do not conflict with ecological requirements of European protected species and habitats.</p> <p>AA2.2 Where necessary put in force visitor management measures for Natura 2000 sites.</p> <p>AA2.3 Seek active protection of sensitive bat roost sites from access and disturbance where necessary.</p> <p>AA2.4 Promote activities and informal access in the AONB to increase diversity of users.</p> <p>AA2.5 Support strategies that provide high quality sustainable tourism and visitor opportunities.</p>
<p>A3 Opportunities will be sought to meet the needs of all sectors of the community, paying particular regard to under-represented groups in accessing the Mendip Hills AONB.</p>	<p>AA3.1 Identify target audiences and promotes existing codes of conduct and devise codes where a need is identified to.</p>

<p>A4 Support the development of day visits and tourism that conserves and enhances the landscape and improves understanding of the Mendip Hills and benefits the local economy.</p>	<p>AA4.1 Support Active Mendip to ensure that its members have regard for the interests of the Mendip Hills AONB</p> <p>AA4.2 Investigate the feasibility of a visitor payback scheme for the Mendip Hills AONB.</p> <p>AA4.3 Promote Green Business Audits to local businesses.</p> <p>AA4.4 Provide village maps with B&Bs, hotels and other tourism facilities.</p>
<p>A5 Encourage safe use of the Mendip Hills AONB.</p>	<p>AA5.1 Support the Emergency Plan for the Mendip Hills AONB.</p> <p>AA5.2 Support projects and initiatives that aid people's safety.</p> <p>AA 5.3 Advise people using the Mendip Hills for recreation including on and off site information.</p>

Development and Transport

Responsibility for planning applications lies with the local planning authorities. The AONB Partnership has no planning powers. The Partnership has agreed guidelines for the referral of planning applications for the AONB Service Planning Liaison Officer to comment on applications that are considered likely to have an impact on the AONB.

Although the AONB embraces 28 parishes lying wholly or partly within its boundary there are few major settlements in the AONB, most are spring-line villages with only Priddy on the plateau itself. The villages and buildings are vital elements of the character of the AONB. Planning of development is crucial in retaining the character and appearance of the villages particularly the open spaces within them and dispersed nature. Several Parishes have produced Parish Plans and Village Design Statements identifying characteristic features that planning authorities should have regard for as part of the planning process. A number of villages have identified a need for affordable housing and have provided such housing that reflects local character.

Development proposed on the edge of Bristol and Weston Super Mare in the South West Regional Spatial Strategy includes significant housing growth that will bring them closer to the edge of the AONB. There will be impacts on views and pressures from road traffic and recreational use. However there will be opportunities through effective green infrastructure planning required by the Regional Spatial Strategy to mitigate these impacts and pressures.

Development pressure comes from many sources. Bristol International Airport expansion plans, if taken forward, will have an impact on views from the AONB, with increases of light pollution and diminishing tranquility. Development pressure continues within the AONB for horse related and agricultural buildings. Light pollution caused by inappropriate lighting has been identified as an increasing problem. Mapping of light pollution has shown that the area of dark skies in the Mendip's is shrinking. The AONB Partnership now has a Dark Skies Statement to address the problem. Government guidance advises that particular care should be taken in assessing proposals for renewable energy projects in designated landscapes but also has set national targets for generating renewable energy. The National Association of AONBs is currently agreeing a policy on renewable energy in AONBs.

Increasing traffic levels detract from people's enjoyment of the environment and raises safety issues for vulnerable road users. Public transport needs to be improved to enable greater access for people with mobility problems and those without access to private cars. A multi user path proposal linking Wells to Cheddar will provide a safe alternative route for non-vehicular traffic. If successful this will link to the North Somerset Strawberry Line recreational route from Yatton to Axbridge.

Local authority led Freight Quality Partnerships through direct contact with freight companies promote use of Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) routes according to the Regional Freight Map with local authorities providing appropriate supporting signage and weight restrictions. North Somerset Freight Partnership is proposing a pilot weight restriction on the A368 that seeks to reduce HGV traffic through Churchill, Langford, Blagdon and Burrington Combe.

Design of roads, signage and lighting can have a significant impact on the visual appearance of the landscape. Recognising that highway authorities are required to follow national regulations for road signage there is a need for authorities to use discretion and demonstrate duty of regard for the AONB. Publications, produced by Natural England and highway authorities with AONB areas, on rural road design demonstrate good practice. Removing unnecessary visual clutter and consideration of boundary signage is essential for an area in which five local authorities boundaries meet.

Objectives	Actions
<p>D1 All Local Development Framework (LDF) documents and planning decision-making processes will use the following criteria to determine the acceptability of a proposed development in the Mendip Hills AONB. Development will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the distinctive character of the location as described by the relevant landscape character assessment, strategy and guidelines. • Avoid damaging visual intrusions in to the landscape (such as radio masts, overhead power lines and wind turbines in unsympathetic locations). • Incorporate designs and landscaping consistent with the above, respecting the local settlement pattern and building styles and materials. • Incorporate appropriate sustainability elements and designs. • Ensure quarrying takes place in the least environmentally damaging manner until the consent expires. • Maintain or improve the existing level of tranquility and dark skies. • Not have an adverse impact on the local community amenities and services and access to these. • Protect and where possible enhance, biodiversity. • Be in accordance with a more sustainable pattern of development reducing dependence on travel by motorized transport. 	<p>DA1.1 Respond to LDF consultations and encourage inclusion of Objective D1.</p> <p>DA1.2 Monitor the effectiveness of LDF policies.</p> <p>DA1.3 Promote the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership Dark Skies statement and develop a tranquillity map.</p> <p>DA1.4 Support and facilitate Local Planning Authorities working together to achieve consistency and good practice in the consideration of planning applications in the AONB.</p> <p>DA1.5 Monitor development in the Mendip Hills AONB identifying any trends that require addressing.</p> <p>DA1.6 Promote Equestrian and Agricultural Guideline publications and other means of encouraging good design.</p> <p>DA1.7 Provide advice for planners to encourage opportunities to be taken to enhance the distinctive landscape and other qualities of the Mendip Hills AONB.</p> <p>DA1.8 Identify opportunities through Green Infrastructure planning.</p> <p>DA1.9 Promote exemplar sustainable designs that are consistent with AONB landscape character and identify</p>

	opportunities for such development
D2 All other regional and local strategies take account of the Mendip Hills AONB Management Plan and recognize the importance and fragility of the Mendip Hills AONB.	DA2.1 Actively influence early stage of emerging strategies and consultation and respond to formal consultation where appropriate.
D3 As part of transport planning, ensure that the special qualities of the AONB are fully respected in the design, provision and management of all types of transport.	<p>DA3.1 Encourage and promote the increased provision and use of public transport, cycling and walking through Local Transport Plans, Rights of Way Improvement Plans and other measures with stakeholders including car share.</p> <p>DA3.2 Liaise with Freight Quality Partnership groups.</p> <p>DA3.3 Respond to Local Transport Plan consultation.</p> <p>DA3.4 Encourage highways authorities to minimise the impact of road schemes including signage, junction design, traffic calming measures and lighting.</p> <p>DA3.5 Encourage and promote protection of Mendip Hills AONB to be addressed in Transport Assessments accompanying development proposals.</p>

Participation

Understanding the purpose of designation, what makes this AONB special, with the need for sensitive management is crucial to the delivery of this Management Plan. People must have the opportunity to experience, enjoy and learn about the AONB and why it is special.

The AONB Partnership plays a key role in raising awareness of the AONB, largely through the AONB Service. The AONB Service provides information on request, a web site, newsletter and various other publications. In addition to these there are Tourist Information Centres, commercial publications including those promoting the area i.e. Mendip Times and Mendip TV, other organisation's web sites, organized walks and talks that all assist in raising awareness and encourage participation.

The local communities demonstrate a strong appreciation for the area. Most villages have a local history group and or run a traditional annual event, or have undertaken a conservation project. However there is potential to do more and use peoples interest and skills to manage the AONB.

Assisting communities to influence decisions and contribute to the protection and enhancement of the AONB through better understanding of the designation, its boundary and special qualities is recognised.

Increasing people’s knowledge and involvement amongst under-represented groups, particularly young people, the elderly and those with disabilities will require new approaches. The Mendip Hills AONB Alternative Guide (2008) was produced following focus work with Bristol inner city groups who had no experience of the AONB. Making people feel welcome and providing a high quality experience is central to encouraging people to appreciate, realize opportunities it offers and be involved in the care of the AONB.

The Mendip Hills Young Rangers scheme provides a structured programme of training and countryside experience for young people from surrounding schools. With a number of outdoor centres in and around the AONB there is potential to develop this scheme sharing resources and increasing opportunities both in terms of who can participate and what they achieve.

The People and Places Project was set up April 2008 as a two-year pilot project. The project recognises the demand and opportunities for volunteering, as well as the need to reach out to under-represented groups. The National Trust, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Natural England and AONB Service who all have experience of volunteers are jointly promoting volunteering tasks and training opportunities across the AONB. The project has targets for involving under-represented groups and is monitoring volunteer’s satisfaction.

Objectives	Actions
P1 Increase the opportunities for volunteering and the range of people participating, to benefit the environment, peoples well being and the local community.	PA1.1 Develop partnership projects and joint working including the Mendip Hills AONB People and Places Project and build on their successes.
P2 Link local people with their immediate area through community projects that have mutual environment and community benefit.	PA2.1 Identify local projects through Parish Plans and other parish council led consultation.
P3 Promote the Mendip Hills as an educational resource for all ages.	PA3.1 Support development of facilities and projects that provide educational resources e.g. reserves and historic sites, the Mendip Hills Young Ranger scheme, Farm Link, National Trust Community Heritage Interpretation Project and Charterhouse Centre.

Making it Happen

The objectives and actions of this plan are for the whole Partnership, not just for the AONB Service, together with others who have an interest in the area. The Plan cannot be implemented solely by the AONB Service. It depends on the support of many stakeholders, including farmers, landowners, parish councils, trusts, volunteers, public agencies and Government organisations. The implementation of the Plan will also depend on attracting funding from other non-partnership sources.

The Mendip Hills lies within the local authority boundaries of Somerset County Council, North Somerset Council, Bath and North East Somerset Council, and the districts of Sedgemoor and Mendip. These councils, along with a number of other agencies and organizations, belong to the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership that aims to coordinate management activity and guide the plan implementation process. The AONB Partnership has no statutory function but raises a budget from some of its partners that funds the AONB staff unit – the AONB Service – and allows it to develop projects and activities. Current funding partners of the core unit are Natural England, Somerset County Council, North Somerset Council, Bath and North East Somerset Council, Mendip District Council and Sedgemoor District Council.

The AONB Service is small and works by influencing and facilitating others and managing by agreement. The Management Plan forms the basis of bids to partners for funding and provides a framework for monitoring achievement.

The AONB Service works with partners to access funding either providing information and or coordinating grant applications on behalf of others. The South West Protected Landscapes Forum brings the protected landscapes together to identify joint projects and access regional and European funding. As with the other AONBs in the region the Mendip Hills AONB Service plays a key role in this work.

The final Plan will be accompanied by an Annual Delivery Plan that will provide targets for the AONB Service and other stakeholders, those with an interest in or responsibility for the AONB. Success will be measured by how far these targets are met.

Objective	Actions
M1 Through the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership ensure that the partners comply with statutory requirements of the CRoW Act.	<p>MA1.1 Promote the purpose of AONB designation and statutory duties within partner and external organisations.</p> <p>MA1.2 Bring to the attention of the Partnership, incidences of failure to comply for reporting to DEFRA.</p>
M2 The Mendip Hills AONB Partnership coordinates the implementation of the Management Plan and monitors progress.	MA2.1 Hold two Partnership Committee meetings each year to report progress on the Management Plan and hold an annual forum event encouraging wider interest and participation.

	<p>MA2.2 Produce an Annual Delivery Plan.</p> <p>MA2.3 Produce updates on delivery on web site and report on end of year delivery.</p>
<p>M3 The Mendip Hills AONB Partnership secures the funding for the AONB Service to develop projects and carry out activities in accordance with the Management Plan.</p>	<p>MA3.1 Ensure that a funding agreement is in place between key partners.</p> <p>MA3.2 Review the Business Plan on a regular basis.</p>

How this Plan has been Prepared

In January 2007 The Mendip Hills AONB Partnership consulted all its members on the 2004–9 Plan to assess the extent of the review required. This survey concluded that the themes and content of the Plan were still relevant but identified a number of emerging issues that were not in the plan or required greater attention. These were climate change, increasing access to under-represented groups, an increase in development pressure due to housing pressure on the fringes of Bristol and Weston Super Mare, expansion of Bristol airport and the possibility of change to the AONB boundary.

It was agreed that the Plan review was to be a minor review and would be undertaken together with the required Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and screening for Appropriate Assessment of European designated sites. These documents have been undertaken according to national guidance and are available on the AONB web site.

Monitoring progress

The SEA Scoping Report identified statistical information to monitor how the Management Plan is influencing the environment. This information is contained within the State of the AONB report on the Mendip Hills AONB web site.

The South West Protected Landscapes Forum has been working with the South West Observatory to provide national and regional data, collected by various agencies and organisations, cut to each AONB boundary. This information includes condition of Sites of Scientific Interest and Scheduled Monuments, population, farm types, land managed under agri-environment schemes and is available in the State of the AONB Report on the Mendip Hills AONB web site.

The AONB Service collects local data including visitor numbers on Public Rights of Way, Fixed Point photography recording landscape change at five key sites, and has recently completed a dry stone wall survey under the Lifelines project. Emerging trends and issues can be identified on the AONB Planning geographical information system that records development in the AONB.

Mendip Hills AONB Partnership Committee

Chairman	Steve Pilkington	
	Elected Member	Officer
Somerset County Council	Cllr Harvey Siggs (Cllr Alvin Horsfall)	Barry James
Bath and North East Somerset Council	Cllr Shirley Steel	Sue Murtagh
North Somerset Council	Cllr Anne Harley	Gareth Withers
Sedgemoor District Council	Cllr David Joslin	Julie Cooper
Mendip District Council	Cllr Roy Wills	Stuart Cave
Mendip Hills AONB Service		Sarah Jackson
Natural England		Steve Marston
National Trust		Andy Mayled
Somerset Wildlife Trust		Cath Shellswell
Forestry Commission		Dick Gossling
Country Land and Business Association		Sir David Wills
National Farmers Union		James Small
Mendip Society		Paul Harley
Council to Protect Rural England		Mary de Viggiani
Charterhouse Centre		Jo Taylor
Axbridge Town Council	St Cuthbert Out Parish Council	
Banwell Parish Council	Stowey Sutton Parish Council	
Blagdon Parish Council	Ubley Parish Council	
Bleadon Parish Council	Wells City Council	
Burrington Parish Council	West Harptree Parish Council	
Butcombe Parish Council	Westbury sub Mendip Parish Council	
Cheddar Parish Council	Winscombe and Sandford Parish Council	
Chew Stoke Parish Council		
Chewton Mendip Parish Council		
Churchill Parish Council	Associate Members	
Compton Bishop Parish Council	Aardvark Adventures	
Compton Martin Parish Council	Active Mendip	
East Harptree Parish Council	Aggregate Industries UK Ltd	
Hinton Blewett Parish Council	Association of Local Councils	
Hutton Parish Council	Avon Association of Local Councils	
Litton Parish Council	Bristol & Avon Archaeological Society	
Loxton and Christon Parish Council	Bristol Activities Centre	
Nempnett Thrubwell Parish Council	Broadway House Caravan Park	
Priddy Parish Council	Cheddar Caves and Gorge	
Rodney Stoke Parish Council	Cheddar Valley Access Group	
Shipham Parish Council	Chewton Estate	

City of Bristol College
Cluttons
Community Action
Community Council for Somerset
Council Southern Caving Clubs
Countryside Weekends

Cyclists Touring Club
Dry Stone Walling Association
English Heritage
Environment Agency
Forest Enterprise
Forestry and Timber Association
Foster Yeomans
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
(Somerset)
Goblin Coombe Environment Centre
Gorge Outdoors
Hanson Aggregates
Hawk & Owl Trust
International Mountain Biking Association
John Clegg & Co
Mendip Byways and Bridleways Association
Mendip Outdoor Pursuits

Mendip Ramblers Group
Mendip Rescue Organisation
Mendip Woodshavings
North Somerset Museums Service
Ramblers Association
RSPB
Somerset Archaeological and Natural History
Society
Sedgemoor Bridleways Association
Somerset Geology Group
Sport England South West
Swallet Farm
Take Art
Undercover Rock
Waldegrave Estate
Wessex Water
Will Woodlands
Woodland Trust
Woodspring Bridleways Association
Woodspring Ramblers
Wookey Hole Caves
Wrington and Burrington Hedge Group
Yeo Valley Farms Ltd
Youth Hostel Association

Glossary

Appropriate Assessment– The process is set out in the Department for Communities and Local Government’s (DCLG) consultation document ‘Planning for the Protection of European Sites: Appropriate Assessment’ (August 2006). The screening assesses the likely effects of potential policies on Natura 2000 sites.

Catchment Management Plans – plans to benefit whole water catchment areas by working in partnership with individuals and organizations. Records state of water quality, habitats and species, impacts and issues to be addressed.

CRoW Act – Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000– www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/cl/index.htm

European Landscape Convention – also known as the Florence Convention, after the city where the convention was adopted – promotes the protection, management and planning of European landscapes and organises European co-operation on landscape issues. It is the first international treaty to be exclusively concerned with all dimensions of European landscape. www.coe.int

Geoparc – there are currently 25 European areas recognized for conserving and valuing their geological heritage through integrated sustainable development.

Gruffy ground – remains of post medieval surface mining.

Karst – Landscape characterized by remarkable surface and underground forms, created as a result of the action of water on permeable limestone.

Landscape Character Assessment – a tool to identify what makes an area unique to aid planning and management of landscapes.

Living Landscapes– In response to climate change, The Wildlife Trusts produced a report recognising that nature conservation efforts will be required to operate at the landscape scale. Avon and Somerset Wildlife Trusts have set up projects based on the principles in the report seeking to improve habitats and provide links between them to better accommodate movement of species. www.wildlifetrusts.org

Local Area Agreement – set out priorities for a local area agreed between central government and local area (local authority and Local Strategic Partnerships).

Miscanthus – a perennial grass considered an ideal energy crop that has the appearance of elephant grass.

Natura 2000 sites – see SACs and SPAs

National Nature Reserve (NNR) – areas where wildlife comes first – established to protect most important sites of wildlife habitat and geological formations in Britain. The majority have some form of public access.

National Indicator 197 (NI197) – Improved local biodiversity – has been incorporated into some Local Area Agreements to improve biodiversity on local sites that are identified as important.

Parish Plan – evolving documents outlining how a community would like to develop over the next 10 years.

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) – regional framework for the SW for ‘where things go’, what scale of development and links between broad issues such as education, health, crime and transport.

Special Area of Conservation (SAC) – Protected sites under the European Community Habitats Directive –forming a network of high quality conservation sites.

Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) – these are sites of regional nature conservation importance.

Special Protection Area (SPA) – Designated under the European Birds Directive because of their importance to birds.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – The countries best wildlife and geological sites. Many SSSIs are also NNRs.

South West Observatory – A regional information gateway to demographic, environmental and economic information. Produces annual State of the South West. www.swo.org.uk

South West Protected Landscapes Forum (SWPLF) – Umbrella body of protected landscapes, National Parks and AONBs, in the South West. www.southwestlandscapes.org.uk

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) The purpose of an SEA is to ensure that land–use plans and programmes, that are likely to have significant effects on the environment are subjected to a strategic level (high and over arching) assessment of options and alternative courses of action during plan preparation in order to avoid or mitigate any adverse effects.

Village Design Statement – produced by communities to identify local character and set out design guidance for new development.

