



## **Executive Committee**

**10.30 a.m. 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013  
The Lodge, Chinnor**

### **Agenda**

1. Apologies
2. Declaration of Interest
3. Minutes
4. Matters Arising
5. Public Question Time
6. Finance Report (2012-13)
7. Internal Auditor's Report
8. Review of the AONB Management Plan
9. Report on HS2
10. Cycle to Work Scheme
11. Report on IUCN qualification
12. A.O.B.
13. Dates of meetings

## **Item 6      Finance Report – Provisional outturn 2012-13**

**Author:**                      Chris Smith                      Finance Officer

**Summary**                      Subject to any final adjustments core expenditure totalled £546,389, £11,876 or 2% below the original estimate for the year. Core income was £25,164 or 4.4% above the original estimate at £596,274. Some changes will be made to restricted and earmarked reserves.

**Purpose of Report:**              To advise members of the Board's likely financial position at the end of the financial year 2012-13.

### **Background**

#### ***Core Activity***

1.      The likely financial position shows a small reduction in expenditure and an increase in income compared to the original budget. Expenditure was under spent by 2%. Income increased by 4.4% compared to the budget.
2.      Income was higher than forecast partly due to local authority contributions not being cut as expected. There was also a higher than forecast increase in earned income achieved, including net receipts from the Countryside Festival, investment interest and other income earning initiatives.
3.      Detailed figures are attached.

#### ***Non-core Projects***

4.      "Non-core projects" are those funded by Defra (SDF and Chalk Streams), and others funded by other external sources and from Earmarked and General Reserves. These are also detailed in the attached document.
5.      The Development Reserve has supported the Chilterns Tourism Project, the Land Management Survey and the People and Places booklet.
6.      The remaining cost of the Ancient Woodland Survey will again be taken from the earmarked reserve.
7.      Expenditure on HS2 activity will be met by from the HS2 Reserve.

8. Chalk Streams expenditure exceeded income by £8,564, partly due to a deferment of expenditure from the previous year. This will be met from the existing Chalk Streams Reserve.
9. Commons Project income exceeded expenditure by £25,948 due mainly to funding being received ahead of expenditure. This will be treated as income in advance and carried forward.
10. Tourism Project expenditure exceeded income by £1,027 and will be met from the Budget Equalisation Reserve.
11. Box Wood Project income exceeded expenditure by £35,825 due to funding being received ahead of expenditure. This will be treated as income in advance and carried forward.
12. Sustainable Development Fund expenditure exceeded the allocation from the DEFRA grant by £4,922. As agreed this will be met from the Budget Equalisation Reserve.

### ***Earned Income***

13. A detailed sheet of “other income” is attached.
14. The amount achieved for the year exceeded the budget by £18,636 at £46,626, due largely to the Countryside Festival and a number of new income sources.

### ***Overall Position***

15. The net result of all these transactions will be to add a net £13,649 to reserves.
16. However, it is proposed to change the treatment of project income received in advance of expenditure in earlier years. It was the practice to place this in an earmarked reserve pending expenditure, and resulted in significant reserve movements year on year.
17. It is now thought better to treat this as income received in advance in the accounts and a total of £67,273 from Chalk Streams and Commons Reserves will be transferred to income received in advance. This has no impact other than to show a different presentation on the balance sheet.
18. The final net effect will therefore be to reduce reserves by £54,089.

### ***Next steps***

19. Formal accounts will be prepared and presented to the Board in June, and will be subject to audit by the Audit Commission.

20. The Government will present a new spending review in June. In the light of this the Medium Term Financial Plan will be updated and presented to a future meeting.
21. At the same time a review will be presented of reserve holdings and in preparation for that it is recommended that the number of earmarked reserves be rationalised. Those relating to Getting Close to Nature, Countryside Festival, Woodland, HS2, Commons, Chilterns Cycleway and Access Issues will be transferred to the Development Reserve. This will leave a General Reserve, Budget Equalisation Reserve, Development Reserve and the Red Kites restricted Reserve.
22. These changes will result in reserve levels as follows:

General Reserve	£135,000
Budget Equalisation Reserve	£137,320
Development Reserve	£245,027
Chalk Streams Reserve	£ 19,697
Red Kites Reserve	£ 6,629
Total	£543,673

**Recommendation:**

1. **To note the likely financial outcome and that the formal accounts will be presented to the Board in June.**
2. **To approve in principle the merging of reserves**
3. **To note that an updated Medium Term Financial Plan will be presented to a future meeting.**

BUDGET CONTROL 2012-13				
MONTH 12: MARCH 2013				
Description	Annual Budget	Actual to date	Variance	Notes
	£	£	£	
<b>Expenditure</b>				
<b>Department 100:</b>				
<b>Promotion and Awareness</b>				
<b>Core expenditure:</b>				
Information Officer & E&A Officer	(90,385)	(90,561)	(176)	
Travel and subsistence	(1,700)	(1,266)	434	
Subscriptions magazines / newspapers	(525)	(491)	34	
Web site	(1,750)	(400)	1,350	
Printing & distribution costs	(1,900)	(1,160)	741	
Events and exhibitions	(1,500)	(1,317)	183	
Miscellaneous	(200)	(144)	56	
<b>Core projects:</b>				
103 Countryside Festival	(5,185)	(5,534)	(349)	
105 Annual Report	(1,180)	(1,048)	132	
106 Annual Forum	(1,500)	(772)	728	
107 Chalk and Trees	(12,365)	(11,820)	545	
108 Environmental education	(1,000)	(833)	167	
109 Getting Close to Nature	(1,000)	(3,345)	(2,345)	
110 Enjoying Woodlands	(3,500)	(4,000)	(500)	
111 Environmental Tourism	(1,000)	(237)	763	
113 Historic Environment	(2,000)	(1,011)	989	
114 People & Places Booklet	-	(5,005)	(5,005)	From Development Reserve
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>(126,690)</b>	<b>(128,944)</b>	<b>(2,254)</b>	

BUDGET CONTROL 2012-13				
MONTH 12: MARCH 2013				
Description	Annual Budget	Actual to date	Variance	Notes
	£	£	£	
<b>Department 200:</b>				
<b>Countryside Management</b>				
<b>Core expenditure:</b>				
Countryside & FLU Officer	(74,570)	(74,719)	(149)	
Travel and subsistence	(1,200)	(926)	274	
Publications	(100)	(24)	76	
Events / exhibitions	(300)	(238)	62	
Subscriptions: organisations	-	(50)	(50)	
Miscellaneous	(200)	(174)	26	
<b>Core projects:</b>				
203 Commons	(5,000)	(4,928)	73	Including £4,000 applied to Commons Project
204 Chalk grassland group	(1,000)	(995)	5	
205 Land management survey	(5,000)	(3,578)	1,422	From Development Reserve
206 State of Environment Report	(1,600)	(1,300)	300	
207 Support for Trees & Woods Mgt	(3,500)	(3,000)	500	
210 Small Works	(4,000)	(4,352)	(352)	
211 Training course (hedge laying)	-	(995)	(995)	Income earning
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>(96,470)</b>	<b>(94,283)</b>	<b>2,187</b>	

BUDGET CONTROL 2012-13				
MONTH 12: MARCH 2013				
Description	Annual Budget	Actual to date	Variance	Notes
	£	£	£	
<b>Department 300:</b>				
<b>Planning and development</b>				
<b>300 Core expenditure:</b>				
Planning Officer	(61,085)	(61,210)	(125)	
Travel & subsistence	(1,180)	(1,368)	(188)	
Miscellaneous	(150)	(32)	118	
<b>Core projects:</b>				
301 Planning Committee	(520)	(502)	18	
302 Planning conference	(1,200)	(722)	478	
303 Design Guidance	(25)	(1)	24	
304 Building design awards	(1,500)	(1,259)	241	
305 Technical assistance / training	(1,700)	(1,144)	556	
310 Planning Policies	(1,500)	-	1,500	
311 High Speed Two	(5,000)	(1,356)	3,644	All expenditure to be met from earmarked reserve
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>(73,860)</b>	<b>(67,594)</b>	<b>6,266</b>	

BUDGET CONTROL 2012-13				
MONTH 12: MARCH 2013				
Description	Annual Budget	Actual to date	Variance	Notes
	£	£	£	
<b>Department 400:</b>				
<b>Recreation and Access</b>				
<i>Core expenditure:</i>				
Access Officer	(26,555)	(26,595)	(40)	
Travel and subsistence	(500)	(421)	79	
Miscellaneous	(150)	(48)	102	
<i>Core projects:</i>				
401 Access public'ns incl. Country Walks	(2,000)	(2,627)	(627)	
402 Access conference	(1,000)	(530)	470	
404 Access for all Improvements	(1,100)	(760)	340	
405 Cycling in the Chilterns	(3,000)	(3,332)	(332)	
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>(34,305)</b>	<b>(34,313)</b>	<b>(8)</b>	
<b>Department 500:</b>				
<b>Corporate Services</b>				
<i>Core expenditure:</i>				
Chief Officer / Admin Officer	(104,435)	(105,048)	(613)	
Travel and subsistence	(1,750)	(2,157)	(407)	
Staff training	(2,000)	(4,535)	(2,535)	
Premises	(26,805)	(25,998)	807	
Office costs	(12,705)	(12,594)	111	
Office furniture & equipment	(750)	(244)	506	
IT (incl OS licences)	(8,275)	(5,798)	2,477	
Photography	-	-	-	
Meetings & events	(435)	(856)	(421)	
Finance	(18,865)	(20,602)	(1,737)	
Personnel	(1,580)	(1,200)	380	
Legal services	(3,000)	(1,066)	1,934	
Insurance	(8,550)	(4,290)	4,260	
Miscellaneous	(565)	-	565	
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>(189,715)</b>	<b>(184,387)</b>	<b>5,328</b>	

BUDGET CONTROL 2012-13				
MONTH 12: MARCH 2013				
Description	Annual Budget	Actual to date	Variance	Notes
	£	£	£	
<b>Department 600</b>				
<b>Member Services</b>				
<i>Core expenditure:</i>				
Members' allowances	(32,025)	(33,311)	(1,286)	Excludes SDF Panel allowances
Board member training	(1,500)	(1,576)	(76)	
Board meetings	(1,000)	(1,596)	(596)	
Review of allowances scheme	-	(288)	(288)	
Miscellaneous	(50)	-	50	
<i>Core projects:</i>				
601 Executive Committee	(150)	(98)	52	
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>(34,725)</b>	<b>(36,868)</b>	<b>(2,143)</b>	
<b>Central Budgets</b>				
Inflation on non staff costs	-			Absorbed in cash limited budgets
502 Project support budget	(2,500)	-	2,500	
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>(2,500)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,500</b>	
<b>TOTAL CORE EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>(558,265)</b>	<b>(546,389)</b>	<b>11,876</b>	
<b>Other expenditure</b>				
Contribution to SE Protected Landscapes Co-ordinator	(3,000)	(2,439)	561	
Merchandise purchases	-	-	-	
<i>Project expenditure:</i>				
- Chilterns Chalk Streams (Core)	(37,095)	(37,196)	(101)	
- Chilterns Chalk Streams (Projects)	(37,630)	(16,010)	21,620	
- Sustainable Development Fund	(40,000)	(25,201)	14,799	Including SDF Panel allowances
- Ancient Woodland Survey	(15,620)	(19,281)	(3,661)	
- Chilterns Commons Project	(122,725)	(77,446)	45,279	
- Tourism Network	-	(22,341)	(22,341)	
- Box Woods Project	-	(3,874)	(3,874)	
<b>GRAND TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>(814,335)</b>	<b>(750,177)</b>	<b>64,158</b>	

BUDGET CONTROL 2012-13				
MONTH 12: MARCH 2013				
Description	Annual Budget	Actual to date	Variance	Notes
	£	£	£	
<b>Income</b>				
Defra: Core	439,490	437,111	(2,379)	To meet 80% of core expenditure
Local Authorities	96,630	105,291	8,661	
Town and Parish Councils	3,000	3,493	493	
Merchandise sales	4,000	3,753	(247)	
Other earned income	27,990	46,626	18,636	
Red Kite donations	-	-	-	Moved to general income
<b>Sub total</b>	571,110	596,274	25,164	
Defra: SDF	17,900	20,279	2,379	
Defra: Chalk Streams	17,800	17,800	-	
Chalk Streams external income (core)	17,795	17,850	55	
Chalk Streams external income (projects)	46,200	8,990	(37,210)	
Ancient Woodland Survey external income	-	-	-	
Chilterns Commons Project: HLF	106,500	61,166	(45,334)	<b>Net of income received in advance</b>
Chilterns Commons Project: other	16,225	16,280	55	
Tourism Network: Grant	-	20,488	20,488	
Tourism Network: Other	-	825	825	
Box Woods Project: HLF	-	3,874	3,874	<b>Net of income received in advance</b>
Box Woods Project: Other	-	-	-	
<b>GRAND TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>793,530</b>	<b>763,827</b>	<b>(29,703)</b>	
<b>NET INCOME / (EXPENDITURE)</b>	<b>(20,805)</b>	<b>13,649</b>	<b>34,454</b>	

BUDGET CONTROL 2012-13				
MONTH 12: MARCH 2013				
Description	Annual Budget	Actual to date	Variance	Notes
	£	£	£	
<b>RESERVE MOVEMENTS:</b>				
<b>Restricted Reserves:</b>				
- Chalk Streams Reserve	(1,500)	(1,546)	-	
- Chalk Streams Reserve (m'ment fees)	8,570		-	
- Chalk Streams Reserve (projects)	-	(7,020)	-	
- Red Kites Reserve		(450)		For tree climbing
<b>Earmarked Reserves:</b>				
- Budget Equalisation Reserve applied	(2,255)	(5,949)	-	To meet core deficit & SDF shortfall
- Development Reserve applied	(5,000)		-	For Land Management Survey / IT replacement / People & Places
- land management survey		(3,578)		
- IT replacement		-		
- box woodland project		-		
- tourism project		(3,000)		
- people & places booklet		(5,005)		
- Development Reserve increased	-	60,836	-	Core surplus on year
- Woodland Research applied	(15,620)	(19,282)	-	For Ancient Woodland Survey
- HS2 Reserve applied	(5,000)	(1,357)	-	
- Commons Reserve increased	-		-	
<b>TOTAL TRANSFERS TO / (FROM) RESERVES</b>	<b>(20,805)</b>	<b>13,649</b>	<b>34,454</b>	

		Other Income	Budget	Actual	Variance
			for year	to date	
			£	£	£
12					
100.4900	Promotion & Awareness	Earned income	260	728	468
103	Countryside Festival	Income	7,185	11,482	4,297
106.4900	Annual Forum	Income	500	554	54
107.4004	Chalk & Trees/What's on	Advertising income	4,150	4,385	235
107.4901	Chalk & Trees	Electronic subscriptions	400	285	(115)
109.4900	Getting Close to Nature		2,200	4,575	2,375
108.4900	Environmental Education		250	762	512
113.4900	Historic Environment		25	20	(5)
200.4900	Countryside Management	Farmers' Forum	-	167	167
203.4900	Commons		800	1,216	416
204.4001	Chalk Grassland		265	810	545
206.4900	State of the Environment Report		270	50	(220)
211.4900	Hedge laying course		-	1,741	1,741
300.4900	Planning	Earned income	670	122	(548)
305.4900	Technical Assistance		-	920	920
302.4900	Planning Conference		1,200	1,831	631
304.4003	Building Design Awards		500	740	240
311.4900	High Speed 2	Consultancy	-	1,000	1,000
400.4400	Recreation & Access	Advertising income	490	444	(46)
401.4002	Access Publications	Chiltern Society	-	500	500
401.4900	Access Publications		300	378	78
402.4900	Access Conference		1,000	840	(160)
405.4002	Chilterns Cycleway	Chiltern Society	-	1,000	1,000
405.4400	Chilterns Cycleway	Advertising income	200	(50)	(250)
405.4100	Chilterns Cycleway	Consultancy	-	1,375	1,375
500.4008	Corporate	Interest received	7,225	9,616	2,391
500.5900	Unidentified income	incl. Red Kite donations	100	1,135	1,035
			27,990	46,626	18,636
	Merchandise sales				
	Promotion & Awareness			1,505	
	Planning			155	
	Cycleway guidebooks			2,093	
			4,000	3,753	(247)

## **Item 7      Report of Internal Auditors**

**Author:** Chris Smith Finance Officer

**Summary:** The Board's internal auditor, the Hertfordshire Shared Internal Audit Service, have completed their annual review and submitted their report.

**Purpose of Report:** To present the findings from the internal audit annual review.

### **Background :**

1. The Board has appointed Hertfordshire County Council Audit Department to provide its internal audit service. This entails a one day visit to The Lodge, resulting in a written report with recommendations.

### **Conclusions**

2. The auditor conducted a high level review of important and current risks and concluded that **Substantial Assurance** on effective management can be provided.
3. Two recommendations have been made, both of which have been accepted.
4. A copy of the report is attached.

### **Recommendation**

1. **Note and agree the report of the internal auditors.**



## **Final Internal Audit Report**

# **Chilterns Conservation Board**

**April 2013**

**Issued to:** The Chilterns Conservation Board

**Copied to:** Steve Rodrick – Chief Officer  
Chris Smith – Financial Officer

**Report Status:** Final

**Reference:** Z8050/12/002

**Overall Assurance:** **Substantial**

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

- 1.1 Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) has provided the Internal Audit function to the CAONB since 2005 and report on the robustness of the financial control environment annually at the request of the CAONB Board.
- 1.2 This audit focused on high areas of risk shown in the Chiltern Conservation Board's risk register.

### Overall Audit Opinion

- 1.3 Based on the work performed during this audit, we can provide overall **Substantial Assurance** that there are effective controls in operation for those elements of the risk management processes covered by this review. These are detailed in the Assurance by Risk Area Table in section 2 below.
- 1.4 For definitions of our assurance levels, please see Appendix B.

### Summary of Recommendations

- 1.5 2 recommendations were made following the audit, 1 with Medium Priority and 1 with Merits Attention.
- 1.6 Please see Management Action Plan at Appendix A for further detail.

### Annual Governance Statement

- 1.7 This report provides good levels of assurance to support the Annual Governance Statement.

## 2. ASSURANCE BY RISK AREA

2.1 Our specific objectives in undertaking this work, as per the Terms of Reference, were to provide the Council with assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls, processes and records in place to mitigate risks in the following areas:

<b>Risk Area</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Limited</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Substantial</b>	<b>Full</b>
Financial Resources					
Governance – Public and Staff Safety					
Business Continuity					
Bank Reconciliations					
Salaries to Employees					
<b>Overall</b>					

2.2 See definitions for the above assurance levels at Appendix B.

No.	Finding / Associated Risk	Priority	Recommendation	Management Response	Target Date
1.	<p><b>Business Continuity</b></p> <p>Whilst some elements of the Business Continuity Plan have been subject to testing a full test has yet to be carried out.</p> <p><b>Associated Risk:</b> In the event of a major incident the CCB may not be able to continue operational duties.</p>	Medium	Conduct a desktop BCP check whereby an imaginary scenario is used and Officers establish that the arrangements in place would, in theory support their response to the scenario e.g. contact details known, cascading of communications etc.	<p>The Business Continuity Plan desktop test will be carried out.</p> <p><b>Responsible Officer:</b> Steve Rodrick</p>	End of April 2013
2.	<p><b>Old Outstanding Cheques</b></p> <p>Two old outstanding cheques appear in the bank reconciliation. A £500 cheque dated 21/04/09 (almost 4 years old) and £30 dated 11/06/10 (almost 3 years old).</p> <p><b>Associated Risk:</b> Money unlikely to be claimed left tied up as payments when able to use elsewhere.</p>	Merits Attention	These two cheques should be written back as they are unlikely to be presented at the bank.	<p>The two outstanding cheques will be written back</p> <p><b>Responsible Officer:</b> Chris Smith</p>	03/04/13

<b>Levels of assurance</b>	
<b>Full Assurance</b>	There is a sound system of control designed to achieve the system objectives and manage the risks to achieving those objectives. No weaknesses have been identified.
<b>Substantial Assurance</b>	Whilst there is a largely sound system of control, there are some minor weaknesses, which may put a limited number of the system objectives at risk.
<b>Moderate Assurance</b>	Whilst there is basically a sound system of control, there are some areas of weakness, which may put some of the system objectives at risk.
<b>Limited Assurance</b>	There are significant weaknesses in key control areas, which put the system objectives at risk.
<b>No Assurance</b>	Control is weak, leaving the system open to material error or abuse.

<b>Priority of recommendations</b>	
<b>High</b>	There is a fundamental weakness, which presents material risk to the objectives and requires urgent attention by management.
<b>Medium</b>	There is a significant weakness, whose impact or frequency presents a risk which needs to be addressed by management.
<b>Merits Attention</b>	There is no significant weakness, but the finding merits attention by management.

## Item 8

### Review of the AONB Management Plan

**Authors:** Steve Rodrick Chief Officer  
Kath Daly Countryside officer  
Colin White Planning Officer

**Summary:** The formal process of consulting on the review has begun. The scoping report for the Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) has been published and an on-line issues consultation has gone live.

**Purpose of Report:** To inform the committee about the current consultation, progress on the review, and future planned work.

#### Background

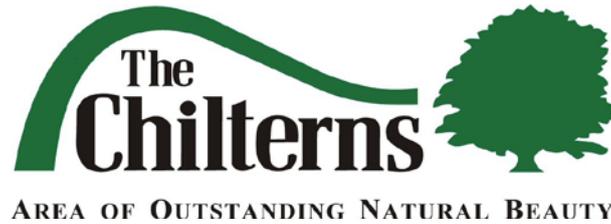
1. The review of the Management Plan is firmly underway with the aim of publishing the reviewed plan in April 2014. Initially the Board has to issue the scoping report for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for consultation. This took place on 8<sup>th</sup> May and electronic versions of the documents were circulated widely. The consultation period closes on 19<sup>th</sup> June. Comments received will be fed back to the Board and will influence the content of the draft plan and SEA.
2. At a later stage, (between September and December) there will be a public consultation exercise on the draft plan and the draft SEA. The SEA will identify the environmental impacts of implementing the plan and how any adverse impacts will be avoided, and if they cannot be, any mitigation.
3. The draft SEA scoping report and its appendices are relatively bulky technical documents which have been sent in electronic form to members of the committee. They can be accessed via this link - <http://www.chilternsaonb.org/management-plan> - future public consultation exercises will also be promoted here.
4. The draft scoping report was reviewed by the Board working group on April 24<sup>th</sup>, and the group is scheduled to meet again in July to consider the first draft of the reviewed management plan, and the draft screening report for effects of the plan on Natura 2000 sites (HRA screening report).
5. There has already been consultation with a wide range of partners on technical issues, which is ongoing. This consultation has taken the form of discussion by the Board's various task groups and committees,

supplemented as required by specific workshops e.g. on biodiversity and woodland management.

6. This informal consultation is now supplemented by a public questionnaire on general issues. The questionnaire is to be undertaken electronically (see Appendix 1) and can be completed via the link above.

### **Recommendation**

1. **To note that the review of the Management Plan is progressing and the first consultation phase is underway.**



**Why do you think the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is important?**

- **What do you love most about the Chilterns?**
- **What issues do you think most affect its countryside and villages?**

The Chilterns Conservation Board needs to know what you think is important about the Chilterns and how it should be looked after. You can help us by completing this simple survey - you might win a prize too!

**1. We need to know a little about you**

Are you (tick all that apply):

- a local resident (either in or near the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)
- a visitor to the AONB
- a farmer or landowner (more than 2 hectares or 5 acres)
- a Parish, District or County councillor
- an owner or manager of a local business
- a representative of a landscape, wildlife or heritage interest group
- under 25
- over 65
- a member of the Chiltern Society

**2. Did you know that the Chilterns is officially designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty?**

- Yes, it is great that the importance of the landscape is being recognised
- Yes, but I don't really understand what it means
- No I didn't, but I think it is a good thing
- No I didn't, and I don't really understand what benefits the designation brings
- Didn't know and don't care

**3. We would like to know why you think the Chilterns is important.**

**What three words best sum up what you like about the Chilterns?**

**4. So we know what needs to be done, please rate each of the following areas of activity between 1 (very important) and 5 (unimportant)**

- Support environmentally sensitive farming
- Encourage positive management of woodland
- Protect and enhance wildlife
- Look after culturally, historically or archaeologically important places
- Maintain the tranquillity of the countryside
- Make sure new building is in the right place and well designed
- Help everyone, local people and visitors, better understand, appreciate and enjoy what is special about the Chilterns
- Provide more access to the countryside
- Improve the quality of access to the countryside
- Provide more facilities for visitors
- Support tourism so that it contributes to the local economy
- Conserve and promote local distinctiveness and local character
- Support the local economy and encourage local businesses
- Help promote local communities, events and activities
- Promote locally produced food and other rural products

**If you would like to be entered into the prize draw please give us the following information.**

Name:

Email Address:

Postcode:

**Would you like to receive a regular Chilterns e-newsletter?**

- Yes    Email address.....
- No

**Thank you for completing this survey.**

The results will be published later this summer on [www.chilternsaonb.org](http://www.chilternsaonb.org)

**3. We would like to know why you think the Chilterns is important.**

**What three words best sum up what you like about the Chilterns?**

**4. So we know what needs to be done, please rate each of the following areas of activity between 1 (very important) and 5 (unimportant)**

- Support environmentally sensitive farming
- Encourage positive management of woodland
- Protect and enhance wildlife
- Look after culturally, historically or archaeologically important places
- Maintain the tranquillity of the countryside
- Make sure new building is in the right place and well designed
- Help everyone, local people and visitors, better understand, appreciate and enjoy what is special about the Chilterns
- Provide more access to the countryside
- Improve the quality of access to the countryside
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Chilterns Conservation Board



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(deadline 26<sup>th</sup> June) or 8 weeks (10<sup>th</sup> July). It is believed there will be a number of one day road shows organised by HS2 Ltd (probably Wendover and Gt.Missenden).

4. It has been trailed that this draft ES is likely to be a “light” version probably missing much of the detail many would expect or hope to see. HS2 Ltd has been at pains to emphasise that it is not a requirement to consult on a draft ES or for it to provide avoidance or mitigation solutions to all identified environmental impacts. The final ES will be subject to a short period of consultation shortly before it is presented as a supporting document to the Hybrid Bill which HS2 Ltd/DfT still intend to lay before Parliament before the end of 2013.
5. The ES is likely to be a large document which staff and a Board member sub group will scrutinise on 20<sup>th</sup> May. As far as is possible the Board will collaborate with other bodies to prepare a response and will concentrate on those issues which require an AONB/Chilterns specific perspective.
6. Given the size and technical nature of the document it will be difficult for many voluntary and community groups to cope with. As far as is practicable we have promised to prepare an early draft of our response so that they may use it too. To make this a useful commitment we need to prepare our full draft response within 4-5 weeks, perhaps up to 6 weeks if the consultation period is 8 rather than 6 weeks.
7. Depending upon what it is needed the Board may need to increase the extent of its collaboration with others, i.e. the 51M group, or appoint consultants to help prepare its response. A budget (up to £5,000) has already been approved for this purpose.

### **Judicial Reviews**

8. The Judicial Review challenging the legality of the compensation arrangements was successful and the Government has stated it will not appeal. Most of the consultation on compensation will now need to re-run, complicated by the recent announcement on the route of phase 2.
9. The judge gave leave to appeal the ruling on the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment. HS2AA is preparing the appeal which will be heard on 10<sup>th</sup> June.

### **External Benefits of a Tunnel**

10. In January 2012 the Secretary of State announced the current route proclaiming that the Chilterns would be protected by having a longer tunnel leaving only 1.4 miles of the route visible in the Chilterns. That longer tunnel now emerges at Mantles Wood near Hyde Heath at an elevation of 500 feet in the centre of the AONB and middle of an ancient woodland, leaving claims of protecting the AONB looking

unconvincing. According to the Board's own calculations the length of visible route remains nearly 4 miles (i.e. that on embankment, viaduct surface and cuttings less than 8 metres deep)

11. A request to HS2 Ltd for confirmation of the length of visible route under the Freedom of Information Act was refused as was the appeal. Plainly HS2 Ltd must have the data as it has prepared briefing notes for ministers. It is recommended that a formal complaint be made to the Information Commissioner.
12. It is the view of the Board and others that, far from protecting the Chilterns AONB, the environmental and social impacts of the length of railway not in tunnel is considerable, including the effects of constructing a so called green tunnel. Therefore, a full length bored tunnel is the best solution.
13. To support this case campaign groups paid for consultants to prepare a technical feasibility report and cost estimate of a longer tunnel (with a 500 metre intervention gap) which demonstrated that the construction cost of such a tunnel would not be significantly more than the current proposal. HS2 Ltd analysed the case but rejected it claiming that it would cost approximately £400 million more. This is strongly disputed but HS2 Ltd refuse to disclose their calculations and attempts to discuss the details have proved fruitless thus far.
14. Another sub group, led by Ray Payne, is now preparing the case for a full length bored tunnel based on calculating the cost to society, and not just the construction cost to the Department for Transport. Such a costing exercise will take into account; the value of compensation saved; uncompensated blight; cost of health impacts; and the possible value of landscape impact, but that may prove too difficult or contentious. An initial and very rough estimate is that the benefits might be in the order of £400 million, sufficient to make the full length bored tunnel the best option for minimising the cost to society.
15. To develop this approach it will be necessary to engage independent consultants. The task of securing support for this brief has begun which may cost in the order £40,000. To be useful it has to be ready before the Hybrid Bill is laid. It is suggested that the Board be prepared to contribute up to £5,000 from the Development Reserve. It may be that if there is no, or less, need to engage technical assistance to assess the Environment Statement, the bulk of the £5,000 allocated for that exercise can be transferred to this work.
16. The Board wrote to the Secretary of State in February urging him to reconsider the case for full length bored tunnel. Simon Burns, the Minister of State, replied refusing the request. A reply has been sent re-stating the Board's view and, additionally, expressing disquiet over the ineffective attempts made by HS2 Ltd to work with local groups and communities.

17. The Queen's speech to parliament included provision for a High Speed Rail (Preparation) Bill. Essentially this will enable the treasury to release the funds that the Dept. for Transport needs to develop the railway. It is believed this is being done for two main reasons. Firstly, expenditure is already over budget and is now likely to be close to £1.1 billion by May 2015. Secondly, it will require Parliament to vote for this Bill, thus securing a form of endorsement for HS2 earlier than the Hybrid Bill, which may well not, now, secure Royal Assent during this Parliament as originally intended. Some might interpret this as a sign of unease that political support is not as strong as once thought. The Board needs to bear in mind that HS2 still has cross party support, even if that is expressed rather more softly than it once was.

### **Recommendations**

1. **To make a formal complaint to the Information Commissioner over HS2 Ltd's refusal to provide confirmation of the length of visible route in the Chilterns AONB.**
2. **To allocate £5,000 to the cost of commissioning consultants to prepare a report on the external benefits of a tunnel.**

## Item 10

### Proposed Cycle to Work Scheme

**Authors:** Steve Rodrick Chief Officer  
Colin White Planning Officer

**Summary:** In order to help employers and employees promote cycling to work the Government introduced a tax efficient scheme to help buy bikes and safety equipment. It is proposed the Board registers for this scheme. It will need to develop a personnel policy to cover the terms on which it is available to staff. It is cost neutral for the employer and beneficial to the employee.

**Purpose of Report:** To advise the committee that the Board should register a cycle to work scheme and to develop an appropriate personnel policy.

#### Background

1. To promote healthier lifestyles and reduce environmental pollution, the Government offers a scheme which allows employers to acquire and loan bicycles and safety equipment to employees as a tax-free benefit.
2. To take part the Board will need to formally register with one of a number of online providers (e.g. [www.cyclescheme.co.uk](http://www.cyclescheme.co.uk) or [www.taxfreecycle.com](http://www.taxfreecycle.com)). Participation is then based on the employee identifying the required equipment and seeking approval of the Board (this does involve making sure the bike is value for money). The Board then buys the equipment and charges the total cost to the employee who pays for it over the next year in 12 monthly payments via the payroll. Their contribution comes out of their gross salary thus saving the National Insurance and tax. The Board doesn't have to pay national insurance on the salary used to make the payments
3. Over the 12 months the Board recoups the full cost and saves the employer's NI. At the end of the year the Board will still own the bike and has the option of selling it to the employee. The HMRC sets down what the depreciation rate is. i.e. after 12 months the bike will still be worth 25% of the purchase price and after 4 years only 7%.
4. The advantage to the employee is that they don't have to find the full cost from the outset and can pay off the monthly instalments at a lower cost (tax free). They get sole use of the bike and can eventually expect to acquire it at a fraction of the purchase cost

5. The cost to the Board of administering the scheme is modest and once set up is minimal. The bike has to be insured by the employee.
6. It is possible to purchase a cycle at higher cost but the total cost which attracts the tax deduction is capped at £1,000. If a more expensive bike is bought, e.g. an electric bike typically costs £1,400, then the option exists for the employee to contribute to the cost or for the Board to top it up. This would then be taken into account when a sale is agreed.
7. Any commitment by the Board to this scheme would have to be on the basis that there would be no net cost.
8. In view of the value of encouraging green travel and the cost savings to the Board and employee, this scheme has a number of attractions.
9. The Board would need to develop a personnel policy to clarify employee eligibility and the terms of the agreement. It is suggested the scheme is only open to staff or permanent or temporary contracts of two years or more. It would also be the normal policy to sell the bike after 2 years.

### **Recommendations**

1. **That the Committee approves the Board's registration for a Cycle to Work Scheme.**
2. **An appropriate policy is prepared and included in the employee handbook.**

## **Item 11**                      **Report on IUCN Qualification**

**Author:**                      Steve Rodrick              Chief Officer

**Summary:**                      The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN - <http://www.iucn.org/>) provides international recognition for the AONB designation, which it places in its Category V - Protected Landscapes and Seascapes. The IUCN is seeking renewed to commitment to nature conservation in these areas and is requesting evidence of that commitment. The National Association for AONS has prepared and had accepted, a Statement of Compliance for all AONBs but this needs to be supported by an individual statement from each AONB.

**Purpose of Paper:**              To advise the Board that it should seek to retain the status of an IUCN Category V designated area for the Chilterns AONB and send the necessary statement of commitment.

### **Background**

1.     The International Union for Conservation of Nature is the oldest international conservation body. Its recognition of the AONB designation confers on it an international status to complement its national standing. AONBs are placed in Category V- Protected Landscapes and Seascapes. This is also the category in which the UK's National Parks and French Regional Nature Parks are placed.

The IUCN has agreed a new definition of protected area.

'A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values'

And has redefined Category V

'A protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values'

2.     One of the roles of the IUCN is to ensure that all member countries demonstrate that their protected area designations have the legal and policy protection necessary to fulfil their aims. Whilst many may think this is only relevant to developing countries there is often wavering commitment in so called developed countries. Recently the IUCN has turned its attention to the UK and sought new affirmation that National Parks and AONBs are fully committed to conserving nature.

3. Concern had arisen because Category V designations have multiple objectives combining social and economic aims as well as those for the environment. Of course such multiple aims are built into the statutory purposes for AONBs and the Conservation Board itself.
4. On behalf of the National Association for AONBs, Paul Tiplady of Cragattack Consulting Ltd prepared a Statement of Compliance (Appendix 1- circulated in electronic form only) to demonstrate that the AONB designation does meet IUCN's requirements. That Statement has recently been accepted. However the IUCN has asked that, in addition, each AONB requests that it be considered a Category V area and is able to demonstrate the necessary commitment to nature conservation in order for that to be accepted.
5. The advice from IUCN to the National Association is that a statement would be acceptable which does the following
  - confirmation that the AONB manager has read the IUCN 2008 Guidelines and the UK Handbook, and so fully understands what a 'protected area' is in IUCN terms
  - an endorsement of the approved Statement of Compliance for AONBs, demonstrating "political" buy-in
  - a commitment that the next Management Plan will give a high priority to nature conservation.
6. The draft statement is attached as Appendix 2. It needs to be submitted by 3<sup>rd</sup> June. It assumes that continued recognition as a Category V protected area is desirable. It is inconceivable that the Board would not take this view especially if all National Parks and other AONBs are similarly seeking to retain their status. A two tier AONB family, those in or out, would be wholly undesirable.

### **Recommendations**

1. **That the Board seeks continued recognition of the Chilterns AONB as an IUCN Category V protected area.**
2. **The Board endorses the Statement of Compliance for AONBs approved by the IUCN.**
3. **The draft statement for the Chilterns AONB is approved and submitted on behalf of the Board.**

## IUCN Protected Area Management Categories

### Statement of Compliance for the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England and Wales

#### Introduction to Statements of Compliance

Statements of Compliance are an innovation of the IUCN National Committee for the United Kingdom's *Putting Nature on the Map* project. The project has developed guidance, within a UK context, on the use of the IUCN definition of a 'protected area' and the assignment of the associated management categories and governance types<sup>1</sup>. The guidance suggests that short but authoritative Statements of Compliance are produced for a conservation site or group of sites.

For groups of sites designated for conservation under one overriding piece of legislation or public policy, the statements should concentrate on whether the sites meet the IUCN definition of a protected area. For statutory designations, the Statements of Compliance should review all relevant legislation, focussing on the priority given to nature conservation in the long-term. For sites not covered by legislation, the statements should review the significance for nature conservation of all relevant public policy positions that specifically affect the area or areas.

Statements should also provide a brief overview of current management objectives, in particular in relation to prioritising nature conservation, summarize examples of current

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<sup>1</sup> Dudley, N (Editor) (2008) Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. X + 86pp. <http://data.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/PAPS-016.pdf>  
AND

IUCN NCUK (2012); Putting nature on the map - identifying protected areas in the UK: A handbook to help identify protected areas in the UK and assign the IUCN management categories and governance types to them, IUCN National Committee for the United Kingdom, UK <http://www.iucn-uk.org/Portals/0/PNOTM%20Final%20January.pdf>

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management practice that demonstrate the priority given to nature conservation, and the ambition and vision for nature conservation in the future.

In addition to reviewing legislation or policy in relation to the IUCN definition of a protected area, Statements of Compliance can also assign sites to IUCN management categories and governance type. Where this is done, supporting evidence should be provided.

**Note:** Statements of Compliance should be prepared with full reference to the 2008 Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories as well as the Handbook (see footnote for details).

The Statement of Compliance below has been prepared for a group of sites in England and Wales that are defined in legislation as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It does not address the AONBs in Northern Ireland, which are established under separate and different legislation.

## **A critical review of the legislation affecting Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England and Wales.**

The founding legislation for AONBs is the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (Section 87 (1)). The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 replaces the 1949 Act. AONB designation under Section 82 of the CRoW Act 2000 is made for the sole purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area. Section 92(2) of that Act states that “Any reference in this Part to the conservation of the natural beauty of an area includes a reference to the conservation of its flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features”.

Section 85 of the CRoW Act 2000 requires any Minister of the Crown, any public body, any statutory undertaker and any person holding public office to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of an AONB when exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in that AONB.

Section 89 of the CRoW Act 2000 requires each local authority in whose area an AONB lies to prepare and publish a plan that secures the purposes of designation and formulates their policy for the management of the area; and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it. The local authorities must review that plan every five years. AONB management plans are statutory documents that require EU Habitats Regulation Assessments and Strategic Environmental Assessments.

The CRoW Act 2000 allows for the creation of independent conservation boards to manage an AONB (Section 86 of that Act)<sup>2</sup>. Section 87 sets out the duties of such boards, which are wider than those imposed upon other public bodies. A board must have regard to:

- a) “the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty, and
- b) the purpose of increasing the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the area of outstanding natural beauty, but if it appears to the board that there is a conflict between those purposes, they are to attach greater weight to the purpose mentioned in paragraph (a)”.

This ensures the primacy of the conservation of natural beauty over a recreational or educational activity. In pursuing the statutory purposes, the conservation boards have a duty to seek to foster the social and economic well being of their local communities. This duty is subordinate to the purposes and so its fulfilment cannot undermine the priority given to nature conservation.

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<sup>2</sup> To date, only the Chilterns AONB and the Cotswolds AONB have conservation boards.

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on AONB partnerships<sup>3</sup> (as on other public bodies) to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. This strengthens the nature elements within the definition of natural beauty.

How does this account of the legislation relate to the definition of a protected area as set out by IUCN? There are two central issues: the relationship between natural beauty and nature; and the priority given to conservation.

- i. As noted above, the statutory definition of 'natural beauty' includes a reference to the conservation of the area's flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features; so it *includes* elements of nature. But at the same time the concept of natural beauty is more than biodiversity and geodiversity as it also includes important cultural and historic elements, and has a subjective dimension. On the other, hand 'nature', as defined by the 2008 IUCN Guidelines, refers not only to all levels of biodiversity but also to "geodiversity, landforms and broader natural values". Such a broad view of nature would seem to include all the natural aspects of natural beauty. A common sense conclusion therefore is that, while nature conservation is not exactly the same as the protection of natural beauty, the protection of natural beauty will normally benefit nature conservation. The exception is where there is a very specific conflict with some other aspect of the protection of natural beauty (for example, the safeguarding of some heritage features in the landscape); in practice, such conflicts are unusual and usually localised.
- ii. AONBs are established with a clear conservation purpose that will normally take priority over development considerations. However AONBs are lived-in, working landscapes, and the law does not provide for every decision to be taken with conservation considerations trumping all others, although it does require that such considerations should always be taken into account and given much more weight than they would elsewhere. So AONBs are places where special measures are taken to safeguard natural beauty but not places where there is an absolute bar on any development that might conflict with nature. On the other hand, in many AONBs there are extensive areas where nature protection is assured through a range of landownership and land management measures, and where at least 75% is managed for the prime purpose of conservation as required by IUCN.

Clearly, AONBs stand near the "outer limit" of what IUCN considers a protected area. However, the examination of policy and practice that follows demonstrates that many AONBs, if not all, function as protected areas; and that their importance for nature conservation is increasing over time.

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<sup>3</sup> The term 'AONB partnerships' includes Conservation Boards, Joint Committees and Joint Advisory Committees established to prepare and implement the statutory AONB management plans.

## **Identification of the significance for nature conservation of any relevant public policy positions that affect the areas.**

Though there is a common legislative basis for AONBs in England and Wales, there are separate administrations and responsibilities in the two countries. This does lead to different, albeit only subtly different, approaches.

### **England**

In 2010, an independent review<sup>4</sup> commissioned by the Government recognised that AONBs provide an excellent base for delivering a more effective ecological network, not least because their legal standing, governance and management plans provide a basis for coordinated action to integrate effective ecological networks with landscape and other uses.

In the 2011 Natural Environment White Paper<sup>5</sup>, the UK Government broadly endorsed the findings of this review and announced various initiatives to join up fragmented habitats; including the establishment of 12 Nature Improvement Areas, two of which are associated with AONBs.

The Defra Biodiversity 2020 Delivery Plan also encourages large-scale initiatives in AONBs and has the milestone: *AONB partnerships to integrate Biodiversity 2020 and ecosystem targets into all AONB Management Plan Reviews by March 2014.*

The National Planning Policy Framework requires that when making planning decisions and policies, the conservation of wildlife is an important consideration in AONBs<sup>6</sup>.

### **Wales**

It is the Welsh Government's objective<sup>7</sup> to promote the conservation of biodiversity, in particular the conservation of native wildlife and habitats. Planning Policy Wales states that development plan policies and development control decisions affecting AONBs should favour conservation of natural beauty, although it will also be appropriate to have regard to the economic and social well-being of the areas. Development plan policies and development control decisions in AONBs should give great weight to conserving and enhancing wildlife.

The distinctive biodiversity of the Welsh AONBs is referred to in the Welsh Government's Environment Strategy for Wales<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Lawton, J.H., et al. *Making Space for Nature: a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network*. Report to Defra. (2010)

<sup>5</sup> Natural Environment White Paper – the natural choice: securing the value of nature (Defra, 2011)

<sup>6</sup> National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 115 (CLG, 2012)

<sup>7</sup> Planning Policy Wales, Edition 5 paragraphs 4.5.3, 5.1.2, 5.3.5 and 5.3.6 (Welsh Government, November 2012)

<sup>8</sup> Environment Strategy for Wales (Welsh Government, 2006)

The Countryside Council for Wales report<sup>9</sup> that Wales' protected landscapes (AONBs and National Parks) include a wide variety of species, habitat and landscape types and many of the country's most sensitive sites. Analysis from their Special Sites Dataset indicates that protected landscapes include proportionally more European designated sites by area than the rest of Wales. Initial analysis of this dataset indicates that these sites are generally in slightly more favourable condition in protected landscapes, compared to the rest of Wales.

The Welsh Government National Parks Policy Statement is being revised during 2012 and is expected to include references to the AONBs.

**An overview of current management objectives affecting the areas, including those in management plans and what they have to say about prioritising nature conservation.**

Local authorities and conservation boards are required to produce a management plan for their areas (CRoW Act 2000 S89). Guidance in England<sup>10</sup> and Wales<sup>11</sup> provides advice on how to prepare and monitor progress on management plans, which should include policies and approaches for conserving and enhancing biodiversity.

There are 38 members of the English and Welsh AONB Family and their management plans are available from their websites<sup>12</sup>. An assessment of the 38 management plans written between 2009 and 2011 shows that over 75% refers to the importance of nature conservation in the headline Vision for the AONB.

Typical AONB Vision Statements
<b>By 2029</b> , Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be an enhanced area of national and international importance in terms of landscape beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, centred on its heaths and woods. Improved management of both habitat and public access will bring conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and geodiversity and contribute towards a better quality of life both for local communities and visitors.
<b>In 20 years time there will be:</b> 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.
<b>In 20 years time there will be:</b> A stop in the decline of certain habitats and species.

<sup>9</sup> CCW evidence to the WAG's Biodiversity Inquiry 2010

<sup>10</sup> Guidance on the review of AONB management plan (Countryside Agency, 2006)

<sup>11</sup> Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Guidance on the review of management plan (Countryside Council for Wales, 2008)

<sup>12</sup> Hyperlinks to each AONB website are at <http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/>

Numbers for certain species including farmland birds will increase.

(There are 4 other paragraphs)

Indeed, 92% of the plans have a specific chapter on the conservation of nature. 100% of the plans have a cascade of aims, objectives, policies and actions setting out the requirements to conserve and enhance nature. Some are extensive, others are to the point. None of these objectives and policies is subservient to any other part of the plans.

Dedham Vale AONB

**Landscape Farming and Biodiversity Aim** In 2025 the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley is a predominately rural, farmed landscape with a rich diversity of wildlife, habitats, geology and landforms. Its natural, cultural and heritage assets and historic features, particularly in the AONB, are retained and apparent.

**OB1** Land use management decisions will demonstrate consideration of landscape, cultural associations, tranquillity, biodiversity and geodiversity to conserve and enhance the area.

**OB2** Protected habitats and species will be conserved and enhanced.

**OB3** The area retains its assemblage of landscape features which contribute to the character of the AONB and Stour Valley.

Around 50% of the plans make a specific policy reference to implementing Biodiversity Action Plans. The majority of plans present their role as creating and maintaining viable habitat areas and corridors. A number aim to support characteristic species and habitats.

All AONB management plans are now due for their quinquennial review. This gives an opportunity to refresh the vision statements, policy cascades and action plans in the light of national nature conservation imperatives. The IUCN can expect those AONB partnerships who are a party to this Statement of Compliance to adopt management plans that give a high priority to the conservation of nature<sup>13</sup>. This priority will be explicit in the aims and objectives of the new plans.

## **A summary account of examples of current management practice that demonstrate the priority given to nature conservation**

### **Introduction**

Some 12% of the area covered by the AONB designation is also covered by other protected landscape designation (SSSI, SAC, SPA). The actions taken by those bodies responsible for the conservation of these other sites are not a part of this compliance

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<sup>13</sup> In this context, nature will refer to biodiversity, geodiversity, landform and broader natural values (See page 9: Dudley, N. (Editor) (2008). *Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. x + 86pp. ISBN: 978-2-8317-1086-0).

statement. Nor are any actions arising out of legal obligations such as planning permissions or the wildlife statutes. The AONB partnerships take care not to duplicate the actions of others or break the 'State Aids' rules relating to grant aid. This section outlines examples of how the AONB partnerships give additional and discretionary benefit to the conservation of nature. Many of these initiatives draw in significant funds from the Heritage lottery Fund and similar funding bodies.

The AONB partnerships are particularly skilled at project development and management. Traditionally they have deployed adaptive management techniques to experiment with solutions to nature conservation issues. Though area based, these projects were often subject specific. The trend now is to develop an ecosystem management approach, partly because data is more readily available across the designated areas.

### **Habitat restoration**

A common approach throughout the AONB Family is the large-scale restoration of habitats. This is often a priority in an AONB because the habitat is a special feature that supports its designation. There are many examples.

They include heathland and upland hay-meadow restoration projects in the North Pennines and Clwydian Range AONBs. The Forest of Bowland AONB Partnership takes action to re-vegetate areas of bare and eroded peat. The Wye Valley AONB Partnership supports small/amateur landowners with species rich grassland providing advice, networking and training (including surveying flora, meadow management & animal husbandry).

Woodland management projects occur throughout the areas, such as in the Blackdown Hills AONB where the management of the small woods is encouraged through local co-operatives. In the High Weald AONB, ancient woodland restoration is the priority.

In the chalk and limestone regions, grassland projects abound. The Chilterns Conservation Board purchased 7.5 hectares of land in the Chilterns AONB to buffer a chalk-grassland SSSI. In the Cotswolds AONB, the Cotswolds Conservation Board has restored over 1,000ha of unimproved limestone grassland. The Kent Downs AONB Partnership is using INTERREG IVA to improve the biodiversity of 400ha of chalk grassland. The Dorset AONB Partnership developed the Pastures New (Chalk Grassland) fund (£60,000) to support capital works projects to restore nearly 300ha of grassland in the area.

In the South Devon AONB, estuary management is important. There are five estuaries within the AONB boundary, making up 5.5% of the area. The South Devon AONB Partnership employs an estuaries officer and prepares management plans specifically to support nature conservation.

And there are a variety of arable farmland schemes such as the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership's 'High Nature Value' farmland project run in partnership with the European forum 'Nature Conservation and Pastoralism'. In the Isle of Wight AONB, the Newchurch Field of Hope is used to demonstrate how an ex-arable field (under Woodland Grant Scheme) can provide an opportunity to combine managed public access for recreational

and educational purposes with conservation benefit for nature conservation. The Quantock Hills AONB Partnership played a pivotal role in the development and successful delivery of one of the largest lowland heath Countryside Stewardship Schemes in the country. During the first 5-years of the scheme the AONB Partnership invested considerable resource in assisting the Commoners Association, who held the scheme, with contract management, reporting, monitoring and delivery of activities such as bracken control, swaling, invasive species removal.

### **Habitat connections**

A particular benefit that the AONBs bring to the conservation of nature is the creation and management of connections and corridors. AONB Partnerships are not usually site managers. They work at the landscape and natural character area scale. Their skill is the ability to bring parties together using their countryside management roots.

The Howardian Hills AONB Partnership has a project to plant in-field and boundary trees to provide the links between habitats. The Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Partnership has over ten years of success in supporting landowners and community groups with hedge planting, hedge plashing, grassland restoration, woodland enhancements, wetland and pond restoration. Well over 100 biodiversity and landscape projects successfully delivered across the AONB since 2000. All intended to maintain nature corridors.

Roadside verges are an important habitat, often providing linear links between wildlife rich areas that might otherwise become isolated. Following a botanical survey of 36 verges within the Malvern Hills AONB, there are now management plans for each of the verges surveyed. There is a similar story in most AONBs. The Isle of Anglesey AONB Partnership maintains a number (16) of special interest road verges each year, to enhance their nature value.

There is a range of river projects ranging from channel restoration to whole catchment management plans. In the Chilterns AONB, the Meades Water Gardens Regeneration Project on the River Chess was a £62,000 project to reinstate the chalk stream channel. There are similar projects in the Dorset AONB with over 5km of river enhancement works.

There are chalk river catchment projects throughout the Norfolk Coast AONB. The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership's rivers project works at a landscape scale on River Clun catchment, in support of River Clun SAC (sole qualifying feature is Freshwater Pearl Mussel). In the South Devon AONB, the Partnership is developing an approach to whole-catchment river management in association with West County Rivers Trust, Defra and the Catchment Restoration Fund and a range of other partners. The aim over the next year is to seek funding for a significant programme of land management interventions linking catchments with habitat connectivity.

## **Species**

There are many species initiatives throughout the AONBs. Some focus on BAP priority species, others support wildlife important only to local groups. Sometimes particular species are important to the well-being of an AONB's special qualities.

Examples include bees in those AONBs where the pollination of fruit is the foundation of the local economy, as in the Isles of Scilly AONB Partnership's Bee Health and Bio-security Project, and a similar project in the Malvern Hills AONB. Significant action is taken to support Black and Red Grouse in the Clwydian Range AONB and Raptors in the Forest of Bowland AONB. The Dedham Vale and Howardian Hills AONB Partnerships work hard to secure the expansion of the native Black Poplar.

The High Brown Fritillary in Britain's rarest butterfly and Arnside and Silverdale AONB Partnership works hard to preserve its habitat. The Kent Downs AONB Partnership is reintroducing the Adonis Blue butterfly. Other insects are also of interest. For example, the Dedham Vale AONB Partnership is working hard to encourage its population of Stag Beetles.

Sea-life matters to the Chichester Harbour AONB Partnership, with particularly effective initiatives to support its seal populations. The AONB Partnership also took the lead in a project to restore an area of habitat for Desmoulin's Whorl Snail and commissioned a rare mollusc survey that identified a population of Lagoon Spire Snail, a species believed to be extinct in the UK. The site is within the management of the AONB Partnership and amendments to the management plan accommodate the requirements of this species.

Most AONB partnerships support bird projects, in particular farmland birds and owls. In the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB, there is a particular effort to maintain and improve a 5-acre skylark area.

In the Chilterns AONB, the Dormouse project involves local people in restoring hedgerows and dormouse survey and boxes. East Devon AONB Partnership is developing a countywide greater horseshoe bat initiative with radio tracking discovering roosts and foraging areas. Within the AONB, there is habitat enhancement within the roost sustenance zones and maternity roosts.

Dorset AONB Partnership uses the Purbeck Ponds project to support the Great Crested Newt. The Malvern Hills AONB Partnership protects its Adders.

## **Pests and diseases**

Like many organisations, the AONB partnerships work hard to control alien invasions, pests and diseases. The Chilterns Conservation Board undertook one of the first UK river corridor surveys for Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam. These are common throughout the AONBs with many comprehensive control programmes. This extends to Rhododendron and Western Hemlock control in areas like the Howardian Hills AONB. The AONB partnerships are working closely with the Forestry Commission to maintain the health of our woodland species. They are able to complete surveys and

deploy volunteers. Cannock Chase AONB Partnership is even monitoring White Clawed Crayfish affected by fungal blight and managing their relocation.

### **Data collection**

The AONB partnerships give significant help with data collection and the mapping of priorities habitats and species, often in association with the Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, Butterfly Conservation, etc. They regularly complete Phase 1 habitat surveys but they also undertake surveys that are more general.

Chichester Harbour AONB Partnership acts as the local repository for biological records, maintaining datasets on a wide variety of taxa and where appropriate sharing records with the relevant bodies. The Partnership also does bird ringing and surveys and a biannual juvenile fish survey. The Partnership has a long involvement in the survey, monitoring and management of sites for rare arable flora including the endangered species; Shepherds Needle, Grass Poly and Spreading Hedge Parsley.

In the High Weald AONB, the Partnership maintains the Ancient Woodland Inventory and now includes woodlands less than 2ha in size. The Partnership maps, surveys and documents all ancient woodland in the High Weald AONB to provide robust evidence to inform woodland management advice and assign ancient woodland status. The Malvern Hills AONB Partnership similarly has veteran trees surveys. The Dorset AONB Partnership uses 'Wet Wood-link' to gather desktop data and partnership information regarding the location of wet woodland habitat and associated species. The Isle of Wight AONB Partnership keeps a record of healthy elms. In the Chilterns AONB there is a hedgerow condition survey and a 'Special Trees and Woods Project' (£268,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund) involving a team of committed volunteers who research and record the history of special trees and woods in the area.

There are many grassland condition surveys completed throughout the AONBs. In East Devon AONB, a botanical survey of the Umborne Valley recorded unimproved grassland habitats and encouraged owners to enter into a collective Higher Level Stewardship Agreement. The Dorset AONB Partnership's 'Pastures New project' recorded the condition of 1200ha of Chalk grassland.

The Malvern Hills AONB Partnership monitors water quality.

The Blackdown Hills AONB Partnerships runs a Hairstreaks audit. They survey suitable hedgerow and scrub habitats to establish current distribution of the Brown Hairstreak butterfly. The Dedham Vale AONB Partnership monitors their Stag Beetle population annually.

Each of the Devon AONB Partnership conducts an annual swift survey. Nidderdale AONB Partnerships surveys breeding curlew, redshank, lapwing and snipe over 150ha and the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Partnership surveys its skylarks. The North Pennines AONB Partnership's 'WildWatch North Pennines' encourages wildlife recording amongst residents and visitors to the North Pennines AONB. The Forest of Bowland AONB Partnerships completes an annual Hen Harrier survey and most AONB partnerships monitor their owl populations.

Most AONB partnerships complete annual bat surveys. The Dedham Vale AONB Partnership has an annual Otter survey; the Chilterns Conservation Board completes a biannual Water Vole survey. In the Quantock Hills, the AONB Partnership completes an annual Deer count. The Wye Valleys AONB Partnership's 'What's that snake project' provides species and habitat surveys that lead to reptile habitat conservation work and awareness raising events.

Norfolk Coast AONB Partnership developed integrated landscape character guidance to incorporate ecological character as well as landscape character. This reflects the approach developed by the Countryside Council for Wales and their LANDMAP data set.

### **Generating support for nature conservation**

AONB partnerships are well connected to the communities they serve. They are in a strong position to inform and excite people about nature; they are very successful at empowering volunteers and delivering environmental education programmes. At the most basic level, each AONB partnership organises open door wildlife walks and watches.

Many AONB partnerships have nature projects in school grounds, such as in the Isle of Wight AONB. The Chilterns Conservation Board's 'Trout in the Classroom' project teaches the life cycle of Brown Trout and the chalk stream environment. The Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Partnership has a project exploring above and below the sea linked to printmaking processes. A local business works with six schools and develops nature exhibitions in each school.

A number have programmes aimed at developing an interest in nature by young people. The Howardian Hills AONB Partnership runs a Junior Ranger Club that has nature based craft activities for 6-10 year olds. In the Blackdown Hills AONB, there is the 'Force for Nature', a volunteering hub, and a Young Environmentalists project. In the Wye Valley AONB, there are LEMUR (Learning Environments in Marine, Urban & Rural) bursaries. They are annual student bursary placements with the AONB Partnership to offer training in practical conservation management and survey skills.

Many AONB schemes train volunteers to complete nature conservation surveys and a number offer training days for education staff, such as in Arnside and Silverdale and Chichester Harbour AONBs. And there is specialist training related to the nature conservation needs of the AONB. Arnside and Silverdale AONB Partnership provides training workshops on grassland management to support the High Brown Fritillary butterfly. The Isles of Scilly AONB Partnership runs beekeeper training and gives general advice to retain the varroo-free status of the Scilly Isles's honeybees. The Malvern Hills AONB Partnership has training for local volunteers on reptile identification.

Most AONB partnerships publish leaflets giving nature conservation advice. For example, in the Chilterns AONB, there is a landowner advice scheme and farmers training events aimed at increasing species diversity, complete with fact sheets and leaflets. The High Weald AONB Partnership has the Rother Woods Project giving advice and training (plus a significant volunteer input). The Norfolk Coast AONB is developing

wildlife sensitivity messages with local tourism and related businesses. Its 'Share with Care' project is a study on managing recreational disturbance to coastal birds.

### **Further information**

Each AONB partnership publishes an annual report on the achievement of the statutory Management Plan. Generally, these reports list the projects completed during the year. The reports are available on each AONB's website<sup>14</sup>.

## **A look forward with a summary of the ambition and vision for nature conservation in the areas**

### **Summary of ambition**

While the legislative and policy framework for AONBs allows for a high priority to be given to nature conservation, there are a number of external factors that could undermine conservation efforts, including climate change, development pressure and competing land uses. In order to address this, the AONB partnerships have committed to four high-level objectives agreed across the AONB Family<sup>15</sup>, namely:

- Conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the UK's AONBs, ensuring they can meet the challenges of the future
- Support the economic and social well-being of local communities in ways which contribute to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty
- Promote public understanding and enjoyment of the nature and culture of AONBs and encourage people to take action for their conservation
- Value, sustain, and promote the benefits that the UK's AONBs provide for society, including clean air and water, food, carbon storage and other services vital to the nation's health and well-being

The AONB partnerships have specifically committed to conserve and enhance the natural heritage, promote public understanding and enjoyment of nature, and value, sustain, and promote the benefits that the UK's AONBs provide for society in relation to their ecological functioning. AONBs are gaining recognition as places to focus nature conservation. Although AONBs were not established specifically to protect ecosystem services, in practice their size, long history and legal protection provides a robust context in which to adopt such approaches, based on partnership with others and adaptive management.

Each AONB partnership is reviewing its management plan. The intent is to embed ecosystem targets within those plans by 2014. This ecosystem approach provides a way to manage nature that combines three core themes. It considers the ecology of the natural environment, including its functions and processes; it considers the benefits that people get from the natural environment (ecosystem services); and it considers the value of nature to people.

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<sup>14</sup> Hyperlinks to each AONB website are at <http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/>

<sup>15</sup> The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Strategic Plan 2012 – 2015

## Vision for Nature Conservation:

“England’s National Parks and AONBs (the protected landscapes) are valued for their spectacular landscapes and the wildlife and cultural heritage that they contain. Our ambition is to establish National Parks and AONBs as core components of coherent and resilient ecological networks across England. These networks will increase the chances for wildlife to successfully adapt to climate change. At the same time, they will continue to provide people with vital ‘ecosystem services’ like clean water, climate regulation and beautiful places for recreation. This ambition expands the scale and scope of the many exciting partnership projects which are already achieving wins for wildlife in our most spectacular landscapes.”<sup>16</sup>

## Conclusion

Although the legislation affecting AONBs in England and Wales is about protecting natural beauty rather than nature conservation, in effect it affords a strong statutory basis from which to deliver feature-based nature conservation goals. Nature conservation is usually given priority where it is in conflict with economic or social development, recreation and educational activity. While there is no legislative basis for affording priority to nature conservation as such, should there be a conflict with conserving natural beauty or cultural heritage, the integrated management planning advice of the AONB partnerships is considered sufficient to ensure that most conflicts are avoided through forward planning and stakeholder engagement.

Policy drivers from the UK and Welsh Assembly Governments send very clear signals about the important role that AONBs in the UK must play in halting biodiversity decline.

AONB Management Plans identify the priority outcomes and pathways for nature conservation, and the partners to achieve them. In every AONB, there are examples of projects that give primacy to nature conservation. All AONB Management Plans are now due for their statutory quinquennial review. The move to embed ecosystem targets into the plans will focus and strengthen actions for nature conservation. The IUCN can expect those AONB partnerships who are a party to this Statement of Compliance to adopt management plans that give a high priority to the conservation of nature.

Large areas of the AONBs (12% of area) envelop Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation or Special Protection Areas. This reflects their nature conservation importance nationally and internationally. However, it is important to remember that the legislative and policy priority given to protecting natural beauty extends across the whole of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

On the basis of the above, we believe that the case can be made to continue the recognition of AONBs, as an AONB Family, as protected areas. If there is any doubt about any individual areas, the assessment panel should invite the AONB manager concerned to draw up their own Statement of Compliance.

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<sup>16</sup> Think big: ecological recovery in protected landscapes. A joint ambition from key stakeholders in England’s National Parks and Areas of Natural Beauty (CNP, NT, RSPB, WTs, Woodland Trust, English National Park Authorities Association, NAAONB 2011)

## Statement of Compliance Validation

### IUCN categorisation of UK protected areas – Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England and Wales

#### Background

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a statutory designation used throughout England and Wales. AONBs are designated by the designating agencies under Section 82 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 for the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area. Section 92(2) of that Act states that “Any reference in this Part to the conservation of the natural beauty of an area includes a reference to the conservation of its flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features”.

The designating agencies are Natural England and Natural Resources Wales (referred to as the Agencies in this statement).

There are currently 38 AONBs as follow:

<b>Country</b>	<b>AONB</b>	<b>Totals</b>
England	33	15% of area 19,500 km <sup>2</sup>
England/Wales	1	(shown in national totals)
Wales	4	5% of area 986 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>14%</b>

**Assessment of AONB against protected area criteria (Key A<sup>17</sup>)**

1	Is the site a clearly defined geographical area?	Yes	CRoW Act Section 82: Each AONB has a legally notified boundary made by formal Order. It is a duty of the Agencies to secure that copies of any order are available for inspection by the public at all reasonable times: at the office of the Agencies; at the offices of each local authority whose area includes any part of the area to which the order relates; and at such other place or places in or near that area as the Agencies may determine. Go to 2
2	Is it recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature? NB 'nature' includes all levels of biodiversity as well as geodiversity, landforms and broader natural values (see Appendix 4 for detailed definition)	Yes	Crow Act Section 89: Each relevant authority must prepare and publish a management plan and review that plan every five years. This is a landscape-scale plan taking a holistic view of nature. It ensures focused management over a long period. To date the plans assumed an adaptive management model but those now in draft are required to develop an ecosystems approach. Go to 3
3	Is the main management objective nature conservation? Other objectives of equal standing may be present but they do not cause conflict, i.e. nature conservation is the priority	Yes	CRoW Act Section 82: The priority objective of AONB designation and management is the conservation of natural beauty that (by Section 92) embraces nature conservation. The definition embraces more than nature conservation but there is no conflict because the 'Sandford Principle' gives primacy to the conservation objective <sup>18</sup> . Go to 4

<sup>17</sup> Keys A - E taken from IUCN NCUK (2012); Putting nature on the map – identifying protected areas in the UK: A handbook to help identify protected areas in the UK and assign the IUCN management categories and governance types to them, IUCN National Committee for the United Kingdom

<sup>18</sup> The National Parks Policy Review Committee made a recommendation in 1974, which is now known as the 'Sandford Principle', that "Where irreconcilable conflicts exist between conservation and public enjoyment, then conservation interest should take priority". This principle applies to AONBs, (CRoW 2000 S87)

4	Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to the objectives of designation?	Partially	<p>Crow Act Section 85: In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB.</p> <p>AONB Management Plans are statutory documents that require EU Habitats Regulation Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisals</p> <p>The National Planning Policy Framework in England and Planning Policy Wales both require nature conservation to be taken into account when considering development in an AONB.</p> <p>However, on occasion harmful actions are allowed. AONBs are living landscapes and the socio-economic needs of the host population may require development that harms the immediate environment, for example, the building of low cost housing or the infrastructure for communication. Impacts are localised and do not affect the integrity of the site. Legislation does allow for a harmful action to be taken but only if there is an imperative reason of overriding public interest on the grounds of human health, public safety or primary beneficial consequences for the environment.</p> <p>Go to 5</p>
5	Does the designation of the site aim to maintain, or ideally, increase the degree of naturalness of the ecosystem being protected?	Yes	<p>CRoW Act Section 82: The purpose is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. Improvement targets and indicators are set in the statutory management plan. Regular reporting by State of the AONB reports measures progress. The Agencies are now producing statements of environmental opportunities for the natural character areas (NCA) to embed the delivery of ecosystem services into management planning. The AONB boundaries are a close match to the NCA and their plans must seek to achieve these objectives.</p> <p>Go to 6</p>

6	Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means? E.g. national or international statutory law/ agreement/convention, traditional rules or NGO policy.	Yes	AONBs are designated under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 which defines the purpose of designation as conserving and enhancing natural beauty. The AONB Management Plans are required to detail biodiversity actions by the Government Departments as a part of the grant settlement. Go to Key B
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#### Assessment of AONB against protected area criteria (Key B)

	Common Objectives	Yes/No
1	Does the site conserve the composition, structure, function and evolutionary potential of biodiversity?	No
2	Does the site contribute to regional strategies (as core reserves, buffer zones, corridors, stepping stones for migratory species etc)?	Yes
3	Does the site maintain diversity of landscape or habitat and of associated species and ecosystems?	Yes it <i>aims</i> to
4	Is the site of sufficient size to ensure the integrity and long-term maintenance of the specified conservation targets?	Yes
5	Is the site capable of being increased to achieve the integrity and long-term maintenance of the specified conservation targets?	Yes but many administrative barriers
6	Does the site maintain the values for which it was assigned in perpetuity?	Yes
7	Does the site operate under the guidance of a management plan, and a monitoring and evaluation programme that supports adaptive management?	Yes
8	Does the site possess a clear and equitable governance system?	Yes
Number of common objectives met (must be 5+)		7

#### Assessment of AONB against protected area criteria (Key C)

	Optional Additional Criteria	Yes/NO
9	Does the site conserve significant landscape features, geomorphology and geology?	Yes
10	Does the site provide regulatory ecosystem services, including buffering against the impacts of climate change?	Yes
11	Does the site conserve nature and scenic areas of national and international significance for cultural, spiritual and scientific purposes?	Yes
12	Does the site deliver benefits to residents and local communities consistent with the other objectives of management?	Yes
13	Does the site deliver recreational benefits consistent with the other objectives of	Yes

	management?	
14	Does the site facilitate low-impact scientific research activities and ecological monitoring related to and consistent with the values of the site?	Yes [varies]
15	Does the site use adaptive management strategies to improve management effectiveness and governance quality over time?	Yes [varies]
16	Does the site help to provide educational opportunities (inc. About management approaches)?	Yes
17	Does the site help to develop public support for protection?	Yes
Number of additional optional criteria met (OK as long as 6+)		9

**Outcome** - All AONBs fulfil the criteria to be defined by IUCN as 'protected areas'.

Assessment of AONB against categorisation criteria (Key D)

Category		Question	Y/N	Action
Ia	1	Is the site strictly protected and set aside to protect biodiversity and also possibly geological/ geomorphological features?	No	Various non-conservation purposes continue. Not Ia - go to 7
Ib	7	Is the site unmodified or slightly modified, and does it retain its natural character and influence?	No	All AONBs are modified to a greater or lesser degree by past/ ongoing human activity. Not Ib - go to 15
II	15	Is the site large, natural or near natural and set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes, along with the complement of species and ecosystems characteristic of the area?	No	Wide variety of sizes reflecting extent of special characteristics and features. Not set-aside. Not II - go to 19
III	19	Does the site protect a specific natural monument? E.g. a landform, sea mount, submarine cavern, geological feature such as a cave or even a living feature such as an ancient grove.	No	AONBs conserve and enhance a wider landscape. Not III - go to 21
IV	21	Does the site protect particular species or habitats?	No	Only by default, the aim is broader. Not IV - go to 24
V	24	Has the interaction of people and nature over time produced a site of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value?	Yes	AONBs are assessed through landscape characterization and evaluation using a range of ecological, biological, cultural and scenic layers. Go to 25

Category		Question	Y/N	Action
	25	Is safeguarding the integrity of the interaction in 24 vital to the protection and sustainability of the site and its associated nature conservation and other values?	Yes	A statutory requirement Go to 26
	26	Does the site protect and sustain important landscape/seascapes and the associated nature conservation values?	Yes	It is a statutory landscape designation to conserve and enhance natural beauty. Go to 27
	27	Are other values, created by interactions with humans through traditional management practices, also protected/sustained?	Yes	AONB Management Plans direct funds and advice for traditional management that sustains the area's special characteristics. Category V may be met. Go to 28 to check suitability of other categories
VI	28	Does the site conserve ecosystems and habitats, together with associated cultural values and traditional natural resource management systems?	No	Not VI
				Go to Key E to validate

Validating the category assignment (Key E)

Category	Other Objectives	Yes/No
Ia	Does the site preserve ecosystems, species and geodiversity features in a state as undisturbed by recent human activity as possible?	No
	Does the site secure examples of the natural environment for scientific studies, environmental monitoring and education, including baseline areas from which all avoidable access is excluded?	No
	Does the site minimize disturbance through careful planning and implementation of research and other approved activities?	No
	Does the site conserve cultural and spiritual values associated with nature?	Yes
Percentage of Other Objectives for Category Ia met		25%
Ib	Does the site provide for public access at levels and a type which will maintain the wilderness qualities of the area for present and future generations?	No
	Does the site protect relevant cultural and spiritual values and non-material benefits to human populations, such as solitude, respect for sacred sites, respect for ancestors etc?	No
	Does the site allow for low-impact minimally invasive	No

	educational and scientific research activities, when such activities cannot be conducted outside the wilderness area?	
Percentage of Other Objectives for Category 1b met		0%
II	Is the site managed in order to perpetuate, in as natural state as possible, representative examples of physiographic regions, biotic communities, genetic resources and unimpaired natural processes?	No
	Does the site maintain viable and ecologically functional populations and assemblages of native species at densities sufficient to conserve ecosystem integrity and resilience in the long term?	No
	Does the site contribute in particular to conservation of wide-ranging species, regional ecological processes and migration routes?	Yes
	Is visitor use managed for inspirational, educational, cultural and recreational purposes at a level which will not cause significant biological or ecological degradation to the natural resources?	No
	Does the site take into account the needs of local communities, including subsistence resource use, in so far as these will not adversely affect the primary management objective?	Yes
	Does the site contribute to local economies through tourism?	Yes
Percentage of Other Objectives for Category 2 met		50%
III	Does the site provide biodiversity protection in landscapes or seascapes that have otherwise undergone major changes?	No
	Does the site protect specific natural sites with spiritual and/or cultural values where these also have biodiversity values?	No
	Does the site conserve traditional spiritual and cultural values of the site?	Yes
Percentage of Other Objectives for Category III met		33%
IV	Does the site protect vegetation patterns or other biological features through traditional management approaches?	No
	Does the site protect fragments of habitats as components of landscape or seascape scale conservation strategies?	No
	Does the site develop public education and appreciation of the species and/or habitats concerned?	Yes
	Does the site provide a means by which the urban residents may obtain regular contact with nature?	Yes
Percentage of Other Objectives for Category IV met		50%
V	Does the site maintain a balanced interaction of nature and culture through the protection of landscape and/or seascape and associated traditional management approaches?	Yes
	Does the site contribute to broad-scale conservation by maintaining species associated with cultural landscapes	Yes

	and/or by providing conservation opportunities in heavily used landscapes?	
	Does the site provide opportunities for enjoyment, well-being and socio-economic activity through recreation and tourism?	Yes
	Does the site provide natural products and environmental services?	Yes
	Does the site provide a framework to underpin active involvement by the community in the management of valued landscapes or seascapes and the natural and cultural heritage that they contain?	Yes
	Does the site encourage the conservation of agrobiodiversity and aquatic biodiversity?	Yes
	Does the site act as a model of sustainability so that lessons can be learnt for wider application?	Yes Through the Sustainable Development Fund
Percentage of Other Objectives for Category V met		100%
VI	Does the site promote sustainable use of natural resources, considering ecological, economic and social dimensions?	No
	Does the site promote social and economic benefits to local communities where relevant?	Yes
	Does the site facilitate inter-generational security for local communities' livelihoods – therefore ensuring that such livelihoods are sustainable?	No
	Does the site integrate other cultural approaches, belief systems and world-views within a range of social and economic approaches to nature conservation?	No
	Does the site contribute to developing and/or maintaining a more balanced relationship between humans and the rest of nature?	No
	Does the site contribute to sustainable development at national, regional and local level (in the last case mainly to local communities depending on the protected natural resources)?	Yes
	Does the site facilitate scientific research and environmental monitoring, mainly related to the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources?	No
	Does the site collaborate in the delivery of benefits to people, mostly local communities, living in or near to the designated Protected Area?	Yes
	Does the site facilitate recreation and appropriate small-scale tourism?	Yes
Percentage of Other Objectives for Category VI met		45%

## Assigning a category

AONBs will be considered to be **Category V** protected areas.

### *Exceptions*

The above categorisation is without prejudice to the case to assign individual AONBs to other IUCN protected area categories. Any such site will need to be separately justified by the relevant designating authority.

## Governance Type

The AONBs are governed by **Government**.

Governance is by local authority or conservation board. A local authority is an organization that is officially responsible for all the public services and facilities in a particular area. The structure of local government in the UK has undergone a number of changes in recent times. Following the last major reorganization in the 1990s, the position in respect of each country is as follows. In England, there are a mixture of single tier (unitary) and two tier authorities. In areas covered by two tiers, the upper tier is the county or shire council and the lower tier is the district, borough or city council. Unitary authorities adopt any of these names. In Wales, there is a single tier system of unitary authorities.

Local authorities are required to secure the purposes of designation by developing a management plan for the designated area. This plan determines the conservation objectives (such as the ones that distinguish the IUCN categories).

In some cases, the local authority delegates the planning and daily management tasks to a conservation board. This is subject to agreement with the central government.

Under the legislation, there is a legal obligation to inform or consult stakeholders prior to setting up protected areas. The management plans are all the subject of a Strategic Environmental Assessment under European Union Directive. Local authorities and conservation boards seek advice from relevant experts and bodies before making decisions. They establish advisory groups to allow stakeholders to express a view on management proposals.

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This statement was produced and agreed by the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and submitted to the IUCN-UK committee on ##



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Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013  
Ref: NAAONB/IUCN

Howard Davies  
Chief Executive  
National Association for AONBs  
The Old Prison  
Fosse Way  
Northleach  
Gloucestershire  
GL54 3JH

Dear Howard,

### **IUCN Category V Protected Area Status**

On 24<sup>th</sup> May 2013 the Chilterns Conservation Board confirmed its wish that the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty retains its status as an IUCN Category V protected area.

It is able to confirm, as requested by Professor Adrian Phillips on behalf of the IUCN, that:

1. The Chief Officer of the board and other senior staff have read the IUCN 2008 guidelines and the UK handbook, and so fully understand what a protected area is in IUCN terms.
2. The Board endorses the approved Statement of Compliance for AONBs which was specifically considered at a meeting of its Executive Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2013.
3. The Board is committed to ensuring that the AONB Management Plan, current and future editions, will give high priority to nature conservation.

It wishes by way of evidence to its commitment to nature conservation the following:

1. It will employ senior staff whose primary responsibilities will be concerned with the conservation of nature.
2. It will ensure nature conservation activities are prominent in its work programme.
3. It will publish, on a regular basis, a State of the Environment report including wildlife indicators.

4. The current Management Plan for the Chilterns AONB includes the following broad aims which will also be included in the plan to be published in 2014:
- Enhance the wildlife value of all habitats
  - Enhance and link the area of characteristic habitats of the Chilterns AONB.
  - Integrate nature conservation with social and economic activity (through an ecosystems services approach)
  - Increase public awareness and understanding of the wildlife of the Chilterns AONB

Please let me know if you require further support for our request that the Chilterns AONB continues to be recognised as an IUCN Category V protected area.

Yours sincerely

**Mike Fox**  
**Chariman**