

I Executive Summary

This is the first Management Plan for the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the production of which is a statutory duty of local authorities following the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The AONB was designated in 1959 (the Camel Esturary area in 1981). The management plan has been prepared on behalf of the Cornwall local authorities by the Cornwall AONB Partnership. The diverse nature of the AONB, it is made up of 12 separate distinct areas covering 958 sq km, makes the task of developing a detailed management plan a complex one. This plan is a strategic overview of the management needs of the Cornwall AONB as a whole. Analysis of the individual areas of the AONB will be an ongoing task for the AONB Partnership.

The Plan's vision is that the Cornwall AONB should be :

"An internationally important landscape valued for embodying the special character of Cornwall underpinning the local economy and everyone's quality of life. It is nurtured, by effective partnership, sufficient resources and only sustainable development."

This will be achieved by ensuring the AONB remains:

- a **working** landscape - with a diverse, competitive, sustainable economy
- a **vibrant** landscape with thriving local communities
- a **biodiverse** landscape where the diversity of wildlife is conserved and enhanced
- a **cultural** landscape where the built and historic heritage is readily accessible
- a **valued** landscape with the better understanding of its qualities and the active involvement of local people in its conservation

Cornish Landscapes

The Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is more than just scenery. It has a special topography; spectacular coast, rugged moors, tranquil valleys, complex geology. It possesses an elemental quality, places where the natural forces that shape the landscape can be experienced. It is made up of areas where the interaction of people and nature has created landscapes in many cases of ancient origin which support an outstanding diversity of habitats and wildlife. The cultural associations which create a sense of place - traditions, festivals, foods - make the AONB truly distinctive and uniquely Cornish.

The landscapes of the AONB are an inspiration to artists and craftspeople, a reason why people live here and come here on holiday. They are a key contributor to the economy of Cornwall and to the well being of the population.

Protected Landscapes

The importance of the designated areas to Cornwall merits the protection offered by legislation and land use planning measures. Created under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, the status of AONB's was reinforced under the CROW Act and led to the creation of the Cornwall AONB Partnership in 2002.

Vision

Background

Features of the AONB

Legislation & management

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

National planning policy guidance confirms that policies and development control decisions should favour conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape. Agri-environment schemes such as Countryside Stewardship and the West Penwith ESA have encouraged farmers to manage their land in ways that will enhance the environment and cover a large area of the AONB. Benign ownership and the work of bodies such as The National Trust, local authorities and Cornwall Wildlife Trust have helped conserve key parts of the AONB.

Changing Landscapes

The visual and environmental qualities of the AONB are sensitive to a range of factors which generate change. Pressures on the landscape are likely to come from a number of areas as the economy and social structure of Cornwall evolves. Key forces for change in the Cornwall AONB are identified in the management plan and include:

Forces for change

- Agriculture
- Tourism
- Rural development
- Social changes
- Climate Change
- Land use planning and the control of development
- Governance and policy delivery

All can impact on the landscape in ways that can lead to the erosion of the character of the AONB resulting in: a change to historic land use patterns, loss of traditional skills to maintain countryside features such as Cornish hedges, conversion of buildings that leads to a "suburbanisation" of the countryside, a loss of habitats and species diversity, visual intrusion of inappropriate development and the decline of rural communities.

Ensuring that change is appropriate to the AONB is the main purpose of the management plan.

The Future of the AONB

Agriculture will continue to be the dominant land use but with the future uncertain for many farms agri-environment payments, diversification and the sale and marketing of produce locally will be crucial to ensuring a farm can be profitably maintained.

Working landscapes

Tourism is the main driver of the local economy and its long term future will depend on the appropriate management of the landscape and a sustainable approach to the management of the tourism industry itself. **Fishing and the marine industries** contribute greatly to the character of the AONB and the landscape is the inspiration

for many creative industries. Diverse, mainly small, **rural business** enterprises also thrive and all these businesses require support and the presence of local services.

The most immediate effects of **climate change** may be seen in the development of renewable energy schemes such as wind turbines or the growing of energy crops. Proposals for any such schemes in the AONB will require careful consideration.

With changes taking place in the planning system and the need to meet economic and housing needs consistent **land use planning** policies for the AONB will be essential.

The AONB is a multi purpose area, designated for natural beauty but a place where people live, work and visit. Meeting the immediate needs of local communities - **housing, health and deprivation, fuel poverty, access and transport** - is a priority. Care needs to be taken not to do so in ways which erode the quality of the landscape to the long term disadvantage of the community.

Vibrant landscapes

The diversity of plants and animals are intrinsic components of the landscape. The network of **designated sites** forms the critical natural capital which cannot be replaced and requires appropriate management. Beyond these core assets a **landscape scale approach** to the wider countryside is essential to maintain networks of habitats. The sustainable management of **marine sites** is also critical to the maintenance of key landscape features of the AONB.

Biodiverse landscapes

The cultural landscape can be regarded as the human habitat, adapted over time by successive generations. The AONB has amongst the highest densities of archaeological monuments in Europe and the visual interest of the AONB owes much to the varied settlements and farm buildings. **Improving the recording, interpretation and understanding of the historic environment** is an important area of AONB management. Key sites must be brought under appropriate management and **Historic Landscape Characterisation** should be a key tool in the management process.

Cultural landscapes

The landscapes of the AONB are a prized asset - for the community, the economy and as part of the environmental capital of Cornwall. **Local people** should be encouraged to have a more **active involvement** in the management of the AONB. **Conservation and enhancement of the AONB** should be a priority for all those organisations whose work impacts upon it. The **Cornwall AONB Partnership should be maintained** to ensure the management plan is successfully implemented.

Valued landscapes

Delivery and Action

Delivering the action that will address the priority issues facing the AONB is beyond one organisation. There has to be a partnership approach, delivering integrated action by a number of different organisations: national and regional bodies, local authorities, landowners, land managers and communities. Actions needed to implement the policies are set out in tables, identifying the role of key partners and the Cornwall AONB Partnership.

Monitoring

The effects of the management plan must be monitored to ensure that the Cornwall AONB remains an exceptional landscape of national importance.