

2018 - 2023

Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan



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Heaths



Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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Lord Gardiner of Kimble

Under Secretary of State
for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

I am fortunate that England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are part of my Ministerial responsibilities. Whether it be rolling hills, sweeping coastline or a tranquil village, spending time in an AONB can stir the heart and lift the spirit.

This is a pivotal moment for all AONBs. The Government has set out its ambition in the 25

Year Environment Plan which states clearly the importance of natural beauty as part of our green future, while AONBs retain the highest status of protection for landscape through national planning policy. Leaving the EU brings with it an opportunity to develop a better system for supporting our farmers and land managers, who play such a vital role as stewards of the landscape. The Review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty led by Julian Glover - the first of its kind for generations - will make recommendations to make sure our designated landscapes can flourish in the years ahead.

In my visits to AONBs around the country, I have been struck by the passion of many people - farmers, volunteers, and hard-working staff - for the beautiful places they live and work. In this spirit I am delighted to welcome publication of this Statutory Management Plan for Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB. It is significant that this plan will be delivered in partnership by those who value Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB. I would like to thank all those involved in preparation of this document and wish you the best of success in bringing it to fruition.



Cllr David Wood

Chair, Suffolk Coast & Heaths
AONB Advisory Committee
and Partnership



Welcome to the 2018-2023 Management Plan for the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

This Management Plan meets the requirement of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 that places a duty on local authorities to prepare and publish a plan at least every five years.

The aspiration for this Management Plan goes way beyond the legal requirements. It is a place-based Plan developed through local consensus and seeks to define the approach to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. The Plan sets out an approach that partners and others have developed, to deliver local solutions to ensure that the nationally important AONB remains one of England's finest landscapes. This is a Plan for the AONB, not just the Partnership.

During the lifetime of the previous Plan a great deal was achieved to conserve and enhance the AONB's natural beauty and improve its special qualities. This Plan seeks to build on that work and we have

sought to simplify the structure of the Plan to make it more useable to deliver our primary objective to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

The Plan is arranged in four themes: Coast and Estuaries; Land Use and Wildlife; Enjoying the Area; and Working Together. There is a lot to do to deliver our aspiration and it will require a lot of work. This will be undertaken during changing times that will be both challenging and exciting.

The AONB Partnership is a force for good and can achieve so much working in partnership. We - local communities, farmers, businesses, non-government organisations, local authorities, statutory agencies and individuals - are well placed to meet the challenges in front of us to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB and improve its special qualities. Together we can continue to make the Suffolk Coast & Heaths the best place in England to live, work and visit.



Philip Hygate

Chair, National Association
for AONBs



On behalf of the AONB Family, the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) welcomes the new Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan (2018-23) and congratulates the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) on its production. Clearly the Plan has undergone extensive peer review and local consultation to help review the issues facing the area and develop the forthcoming collaborative policies and actions to help safeguard and enhance east Suffolk's special qualities.

Suffolk Coast & Heaths is one of 38 AONBs nationally protected in England and Wales - and as evidenced within this Plan, AONB Partnerships continue to provide very important and democratic

mechanisms for developing and encouraging collaborative action that can both protect and enhance the area's natural beauty. We recognise that maintaining vibrant, healthy and diverse local communities is essential to the future of all AONBs and we will continue to work with the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Partnership and the wider family of protected landscapes to improve the connection between people, nature and place.

As highlighted within this Plan, part of the NAAONBs work is recognising that as dynamic, living landscapes, AONBs form an important component of the UK's economy - especially in the context of farming, forestry, tourism and recreation. We will work collectively to help strengthen relationships with landowners, farmers and other businesses to help ensure a robust and sustainable economy post-Brexit.

We are confident that the revised Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan and other forthcoming AONB Management Plans will provide the necessary tools and opportunities to help aid the future delivery of relevant Government Plans. This includes Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan which recognises and pledges its commitment to nationally protected landscapes and the opportunities they provide for securing environmental gains (natural capital) whilst supporting and advancing sustainable farming appropriate to the local and often unique natural beauty.

Suffolk Coast & Heaths

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Highlights



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Vegetated Shingle is an important and rare habitat. The AONB has c. 20% of Britain's resource



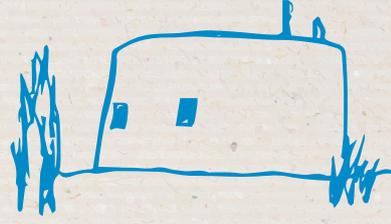
The AONB team has worked with UK Power Networks and local landowners to underground 19km of cable in six schemes totalling **£2.24m** since 2008



The AONB has responded to **5** Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, several Local Plans and in detail to **35** planning applications (2017-18)



Volunteers worked **2,169** days doing practical conservation work and beach litter picks, valued at **£108,450** (2017)



There are **676** listed buildings and **40** scheduled monuments

There are **664km** of Public Rights of Way, including three Long Distance Paths totalling **256km**

Introduction and Document Purpose





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1.1 Introduction

This section introduces the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and this Management Plan includes a brief review of the previous Plan.

1.2 The Purpose of this Document

The purpose of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan 2018-2023 is to fulfil the statutory duty placed on local authorities to adopt and publish a Plan for the nationally designated area, as outlined in Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000). This Management Plan forms the policy for local authorities for the AONB.

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) states:

In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving

and enhancing the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan 2018-2023 outlines how relevant authorities will pay regard to the purposes of the AONB.

Beyond the legal requirements, this Plan provides the framework for the co-ordination of action from partnership organisations and others whose activities impact upon the AONB.

The Plan reflects the need for co-ordinated activity to ensure that the purposes of the AONB are met and that communities, businesses, individuals and organisations work together in a coherent manner.

The Plan identifies the need to monitor changes within the AONB, be they from the delivery of the Plan itself or actions outside the influence of the Partnership such as climate change or the actions of others.

Map showing the AONB's in Britain

They cover 18% of our countryside



1.3 What is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is an area that is recognised by the United Kingdom government as having national importance. This importance is reflected in its designation under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949).

The primary purpose of the designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. In pursuing the primary purpose of the designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.

Recreation is not an objective of the designation, but the demand for recreation should be met insofar as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.

The purposes of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are defined as:

- Conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 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 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and encourage people to take action for their conservation;
- Value, sustain and promote the benefits that the UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty provide for society, including clean air and water, food, carbon storage and other services vital to the nation's health and wellbeing.

1.4 The Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB covers an area of around 155 square miles (403 square kilometres) stretching from Kessingland, near Lowestoft, in the north, to the River Stour in the south. The eastern boundary is formed by the North Sea and the western boundary encompasses Suffolk's estuaries.

The character of the AONB is a product of the underlying geology and its associated natural habitats. It is shaped by the effects of the sea and the interaction with people on the landscape. It is a gently rolling landscape, with the estuaries a common and dominant feature. Where the land does rise, commanding views across the landscape are rewarding.

Detailed assessment of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB landscape can be seen on the Suffolk Landscape website at www.suffolklandscape.org.uk and Natural England's National Character Area number 82 see www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles.

Farmland dominates much of the AONB, interspersed with picturesque villages and the occasional small seaside town. There are forestry plantations, low lying fresh water marshes and extensive tracts of heathland. The coastal fringe is dominated by estuaries, grazing marshes and lowland heath.

This part of Suffolk is promoted as the 'Energy Coast' by the local authorities, reflecting the nuclear power complex at Sizewell and offshore wind farms and the associated infrastructure.

Where the AONB joins the sea, shingle beaches often stretch for many miles. Orford Ness, the great shingle spit between Southwold and Shingle Street, is the largest of its kind in Europe. In some places, soft cliffs rise behind the beach, demonstrating the changing and dynamic nature of the coast in this part of England.

A dominant feature of the coast is the five river estuaries. The Blyth, Alde and Ore, Deben, Orwell and Stour estuaries are the locations of some of England's finest wildlife habitats, intertidal areas of mudflats and saltmarsh.

In some places the mouths of rivers have been blocked creating large areas of brackish or freshwater marshland. Along many of the estuaries there are centuries-old river walls to claim or protect farmland from the sea.

There are areas of extensive reedbeds such as at Westwood, the UK's largest reedbed, this is a significant landscape feature and wildlife habitat.

Much of the area was once heathland, known as the Sandlings. Although significant tracts remain, much of the heathland has been fragmented, converted to farmland, planted for coniferous woodland, or developed for housing or military use.

In 2018 the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB remains a lightly populated area that is dominated by agriculture. In undeveloped areas on the coastal fringe, conservation organisations have significant land assets that are nationally and internationally important. The quality of the environment is a major pull for visitors and residents.

There is considerable cultural interest, with many parts of the AONB famed for its association with artists and musicians.

The human influence over millennia provides a rich heritage. From internationally important archaeological sites, such as Sutton Hoo to military structures such as the Napoleonic Martello towers and World War structures to defend the nation from possible invasion. In the twentieth century developments at Orford Ness and Bawdsey played a significant part in the defence of the nation.



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1.5 The Natural Beauty and Special Qualities of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB

AONBs are defined by their natural beauty. The term 'natural beauty' was enshrined in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949) when a romantic idea of scenic value still prevailed and before the systematic study of landscape history and ecology.

Most of the vegetation covering AONBs is not 'natural' as it has been modified by humans. Most "wild" vegetation in the AONB is semi-natural, i.e. not planted by humans but influenced by human activity or cultivation (vegetation of anthropogenic origin). When AONB legislation was enacted these terms had yet to be debated in the context of protected landscapes. That these landscapes were beautiful was seen as self-evident, as was the unstated assumption that this beauty represented 'nature' in contrast to the artificial landscapes of the cities.

Over the years qualification and amendment to the legislation has made it clear that natural beauty is not just scenery but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, the historic environment and cultural heritage.

Natural England consider the following when assessing if a landscape has the appropriate natural beauty suitable for designation:

Landscape quality

Condition, that is the intactness of the landscape as a coherent whole, the condition of its features, its state of repair, and the absence of incongruous elements.

Scenic quality

Appeal to the visual senses, for example important views, visual interest and variety, contrasting landscape patterns, and dramatic topography or scale.

Relative wildness

The presence of wild (or relatively wild) character in the landscape due to remoteness, and appearance of returning to nature.

Intrusiveness

Freedom from undue disturbance. Presence in the landscape of factors such as openness, and perceived naturalness.

Natural heritage features

Habitats, wildlife and features of geological or geomorphological interest that may contribute strongly to the naturalness of a landscape.

Cultural heritage features

Archaeological, historical and architectural characteristics or features that may contribute to the perceived beauty of the landscape.

Associations

Connections with particular people, artists, writers, or events in history that may contribute to perceptions of beauty in a landscape or facilitate understanding and enjoyment.

The Natural Beauty and Special Qualities of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB have been defined and the report is available on the website www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org.



Map showing the extent of Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)





© Tony Pick

1.6 The Area Covered by the Management Plan

The Management Plan covers the nationally designated Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB as shown in a designation map produced in 1970 (available on request).

Areas in the setting of the AONB share many of the same landscape features and character of the designated landscape. Land management and development decisions within the setting can impact upon the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB. Decision makers should therefore consider the purposes of the AONB when making land management and development decisions in the setting of the AONB and note the AONB Partnership's position statement on development within the setting of the AONB.

1.7 Additional Project Areas

The AONB team work in two areas outside the nationally designated AONB. This work is to provide an AONB type service to the two areas outlined below, the geographical extent of these areas can be seen in the map on p11.

a) The southern shore of the Stour estuary. The AONB team work in an area that is subject to an AONB boundary review on the southern shore of the Stour Estuary. This process is outlined in section 1.11.

b) The Shotley peninsula. A small area of the peninsula is included in the boundary review noted above but the AONB team provides a countryside management service to a larger part of the peninsula, which is shown in the map (p11).

It is considered by the AONB Partnership that these two areas are valued landscapes as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework, as revised in July 2018. In the case of the southern shore of the

Stour estuary this is justified as it is deemed to be of AONB quality during the AONB boundary review process. In the case of the Shotley peninsula this area has been subject to a Landscape Character Assessment that identifies the links to the current AONB and the importance of co-ordinated land management.

The Shotley Peninsula Landscape Character Assessment may inform planning decisions in a number of ways:

- Informing policy within emerging planning documents.
- In development control where it can be used to understand the key characteristics of the landscape and its special qualities and therefore provide an evidence base from which the impacts of individual applications can be assessed, and potential mitigation considered.
- To engage the local community to support them to articulate what is special about their area and make choices about future change.

1.8 The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership

In 1993 the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership was formed. This is made up of organisations with an interest in the AONB. Membership of the Partnership evolves over time but includes representatives from local authorities; businesses; environmental organisations; farming bodies; government agencies; community bodies and tourism industries. A full list of Partnership members is in Appendix D.

The AONB Partnership work together to secure the purposes of the AONB designation which in turn reflects individual organisational objectives. The AONB staff team, funded by Defra and local authorities, and hosted by Suffolk County Council, provides the secretariat for the Partnership.

1.9 Relationship with the Suffolk Heritage Coast

Heritage Coasts were established to conserve the best stretches of undeveloped coast in England. A Heritage Coast is defined by agreement between the relevant maritime local authorities and Natural England.

Heritage Coasts were established to:

- conserve, protect and enhance the natural beauty of the coastline, their terrestrial, coastal and marine flora and fauna and their heritage features;

- encourage and help the public to enjoy, understand and appreciate these areas;
- maintain and improve the health of inshore waters affecting Heritage Coasts and their beaches through appropriate environmental management measures;
- take account of the needs of agriculture, forestry and fishing, and the economic and social needs of the small communities on these coasts.

There are no statutory requirements or powers associated with the Heritage Coast definition. However, the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 173), as revised in 2018 states:

Within areas defined as Heritage Coast planning policies and decisions should be consistent with the special character of the area and the importance of its conservation. Major development within a Heritage Coast is unlikely to be appropriate, unless it is compatible with its special character.

The Heritage Coast purpose includes objectives for conserving the environmental health and biodiversity of inshore waters and beaches, and to extend opportunities for recreational education, sporting and tourist activities that draw on, and are consistent with, the conservation of their heritage features.

The Suffolk Heritage Coast was defined in 1973 and is largely contained within the AONB. It runs from Kessingland to Felixstowe and incorporates the Blyth, Alde and Ore and lower Deben estuaries.



© Malcolm Farrow



© Bawdsey Radar



© Suffolk Wildlife Trust

1.10 Review of 2013-2018 Management Plan

The 2013-2018 Management Plan was the second version of the document since the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 placed a duty on local authorities to produce and review such documents.

The plan contained some 155 actions of which 121 were assessed as completed, a fulfilment rate of 78%. Many of the incomplete actions were down to changing priorities, insufficient resources or the inability to complete due to perceived disproportionate use of resources for the anticipated outcome.

Notable successes from the last plan include:

- An assessment of the landscape and visual impacts of different coastal defences;
- Active engagement with the Suffolk Coast Forum;
- Delivery of small scale saltmarsh restoration and creation projects;
- Increasing awareness of problems associated with marine litter;
- Successful delivery of £1M Heritage Lottery Funded Landscape Partnership Scheme, Touching the Tide;
- Support for Suffolk Coast and Heaths National Character Area assessment;
- Developed and tested a survey on relative tranquillity;
- Facilitated low voltage undergrounding schemes at Sutton Hoo, Butley, and Shotley that invested over £1m in the AONB landscape;
- Ensuring the candidate area on the southern shore of the Stour estuary is in formal process for AONB boundary review;
- Delivered AONB awareness events to Local Planning Authority councillors and planning staff;
- Secured resource to run Defra Pioneer Project on the value of natural capital in the marine environment;
- Facilitated working conservation holidays and a Suffolk Coast Greeters scheme;
- Delivered a €500,000 European funded project on tourism;
- Promoted and updated waymarking on three Long Distance Routes and supported publication of Cicerone guide;
- Supported foot ferry services across Suffolk's estuaries;
- Produced AONB Partnership Position Statements on responsible access, obtrusive lighting, development in setting of AONB and balloon releases;
- Produced and distributed bi-annual newspaper;
- Produced and distributed walking and cycling guides, most sponsored by businesses and organisations;
- Secured and distributed grant funds for projects that meet the aspirations of the AONB Management Plan worth an average of £75,000 per year.

1.11 Boundary Review

It has been an aspiration held by the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership for many years to have a review of its boundary and in particular a request to include the southern shore of the Stour estuary within the designated landscape. The review also includes areas known locally as Additional Project Area and Dodnash Special Landscape Area.

Natural England has powers to designate or vary the boundary of AONBs, as set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000. It has the authority to make an order to vary an AONB boundary, but this can only be confirmed by the Secretary of State. In September 2017 the national Natural England Board agreed the relevant technical assessments of natural beauty

and the desirability of designation, and a proposed extension to the boundary subject to statutory consultation review, which took place in early 2018.

All the local authorities in the existing Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB and in the area proposed as an extension to the AONB by Natural England are statutory consultees.

The statutory consultation was widened by Natural England to include the public, parish councils

and other stakeholders as a public consultation. The process is one that is undertaken by Natural England. All consultation responses are considered based on the merits and strength of evidence supplied.

For up to date information on any boundary variation for the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB contact the AONB team who can advise on the latest position or refer queries on to relevant Natural England staff.





AONB Objectives





2.1 Natural Beauty

The primary purpose of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. AONBs are designated by government under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership, Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council and EDF Energy worked together in 2016 with the purpose of establishing what constitutes the natural beauty (and special qualities, see 2.2) of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB. The report into what constitutes the natural beauty and special qualities of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB can be found on its website.

Section 82(1) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 which defines an AONB in England as:

An area that is not in a National Park but which appears to Natural England to be of such outstanding natural beauty that it is desirable that the protective provisions of Part IV of Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 should apply to it

for the purpose of conserving and enhancing the area's natural beauty.

Designation demands that the policies and decisions of public bodies should focus on the conservation and enhancement of the landscape.

The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. Subsidiary purposes, in effect, qualifications of the primary purpose, are those defined in a Countryside Commission statement 1991, restated in 2006:

- In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment;
- Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.

Natural England, the Government advisor on the natural environment, has the authority to designate an AONB, although any order must be confirmed by the Secretary of State. An AONB must meet the 'natural beauty criterion'. This could be a combination of factors, such as:

- landscape quality, where natural or man-made landscape is good quality;
- scenic quality, such as striking coastal landforms;
- relative wildness, such as distance from housing or having few roads;
- relative tranquillity, where natural sounds, such as streams or birdsong are predominant;
- natural heritage features, such as distinctive geology or species and habitat;
- cultural heritage, which can include the built environment that makes the area unique, such as archaeological remains or historic parkland;

In addition to the statutory objectives of the AONB, the local Partnership see the following objectives (2.2-2.6) as of importance to the AONB.

2.2 Special Qualities

The special qualities of an AONB landscape are often those attributes of an area that may contribute to an appreciation of natural beauty. These are listed in the Natural Beauty and Special Qualities document on the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB website. They include the following topics:

- **Health and Wellbeing**, that may include public access and opportunities for passive and active recreation;
- **Community**, where there is a link between people and place through land management, artistic connections, heritage assets or food;
- **Economy**, a demonstrable link between economic wellbeing and the landscape, for example a flourishing tourism industry drawing from natural beauty, tranquillity or historic assets;
- **Eco-system Goods and Services**, that provide multiple environmental and economic benefits for people, such as saltmarsh providing visual amenity, wildlife habitat and flood defence functions.

There is a need to improve the business case for investment of such topics if society wants to see more robust enhancement of the natural world. Greater acknowledgement of the value of ecosystem services and natural capital, including through AONB Management Plans, is essential if we are to move forward and improve natural capital markets for the benefit of those providing the services, the environment, and wider society.

Just two fifths of Country Land and Business Association members say that under the current framework they will look to invest in the environment in the future. There is an opportunity to increase the number of diverse, resilient rural businesses which are investing in improving natural capital.

Landowners' commitment to stewardship alone cannot deliver the scale of investment that is needed to meet society's greater demand for environment benefits and public good.



2.3 Conservation and Enhancement of Natural and Cultural Heritage

As noted in 2.1 the AONB's natural beauty is to be conserved and enhanced as a matter of statute, but over the years qualification and amendment to the legislation has made it clear that natural beauty is not just scenery but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, the historic environment, artistic and cultural heritage.

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB has a rich natural and cultural heritage that is cherished by local residents, a pull for visitors and important for specialist interest groups such as those with interest in wildlife, art, culture and history.

The AONB serves the needs and interests of residents and visitors alike by conserving and enhancing the natural and cultural heritage of the area.

2.4 Support for Economic Wellbeing

AONBs should be an exemplar of land management and there are well documented benefits to economic and social wellbeing associated with outstanding landscapes. The AONB regularly commissions studies of the value of tourism in the AONB which indicate the important contribution that the visitor and tourism economies make to the area. A study from 2017 identified the value of the tourism economy was £210M and supported over 4,600 jobs within the AONB.

While not a primary purpose of the AONB the

promotion of sustainable tourism, farming and other businesses to support economic wellbeing is seen as a desirable objective by the AONB Partnership.

2.5 Health and Social Wellbeing

The AONB offers the opportunity to support healthy lifestyles.

With over 650km of Rights of Way and 4,311 ha of Open Access land, plus numerous permissive routes and the opening of the England Coast Path during the lifetime of this plan, the opportunities for recreation are huge. In addition to over 24% of the AONB being in public or voluntary sector ownership, a high proportion of which has public access, there are excellent opportunities for recreation which can support healthier lifestyles.

The AONB can also support social wellbeing. Opportunities to volunteer for environmental and societal projects can support good mental health and engender community spirit. In addition, cherished landscapes have a demonstrable positive impact upon mental health. Natural and heritage assets can support communities of interest around specific topics that support social cohesion. They offer opportunities for those from different backgrounds to work together to achieve shared aims that are often compatible with AONB purposes.

The importance of agriculture and forestry to the landscape is sometimes overlooked. Agriculture and forestry provide much of the canvas for other economic activity and should be encouraged to operate in such a way as to maintain the environmental services that the countryside can offer, with associated public good.





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2.6 Promote Understanding and Enjoyment

Many of the assets that contribute to the natural beauty of an outstanding landscape can trigger curious minds and prompt work to further understand those assets. This increasing of understanding on the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB can inform the management of individual assets and conservation at a landscape scale.

The enjoyment of those assets, be they natural or built, can support the visitor and tourism economy, as well as helping individuals to lead fulfilling lives and support active lifestyles with associated physical and mental health benefits.

2.7 Benefits of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Covering around 15% of England, AONBs are among our finest landscapes, with iconic archaeological, geological and historical sites, and valuable wildlife habitats. They are visited by millions of people every year and are home to thriving communities who live and work in these beautiful areas. People are passionate about AONBs and care deeply about their future. Those who visit, live or work within these special landscapes, enjoy the wide range of benefits that they provide for people and wildlife. They may not realise, however, that these dynamic, living landscapes underpin the economy and the health and wellbeing of society, and that all these benefits come at less than 20 pence per person per year from the public purse.



Vision Statement





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3.1 A 20-year vision of the AONB in 2038

This 20-year vision builds on those published as part of previous Management Plans and has simply been updated to reflect the current environmental, economic and social context. It has been divided into two sections; those aspirations that relate to the AONB and those that relate to landscape areas.

The vision stems from the primary aim of AONB designation to conserve and enhance natural beauty. It also takes account of the needs of people who live, work in and visit the area. The objectives contained in this section of the Management Plan are intended to work towards achieving the vision presented here.

The vision can be summarised as:

An area of special wildlife, landscape, seascape and heritage qualities that are conserved and enhanced with the needs of people living, working and visiting the AONB.

The Management Plan aspires for the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB to have the following indicators in 2038:

i) A high-quality landscape and seascape, where its natural beauty and special qualities are conserved and enhanced

As a result of strong leadership and effective Partnership action, the area's natural beauty has been successfully maintained and, wherever possible, enhanced. The landscape and seascape, while dynamic and changing, maintain the character recognised in the original designation.

Wildlife sites are in favourable condition. Changes generated by climate change and sea level rise, such as coastal defences, have been embraced through adaptation and, where necessary, any adverse impacts have been mitigated.

New development has been sympathetic to the area's landscape, seascape and scenic beauty and complements the existing built and natural environment. Residual impacts are appropriately offset.

Where nationally significant infrastructure projects have been developed in the AONB, or its setting, the unavoidable negative impacts have been minimised, mitigated and compensated for.

The AONB designation has been extended to include the southern shore of the Stour estuary and parts of Shotley peninsula.

ii) Local communities are passionately and actively engaged with their environment

Local people understand the AONB designation and have a deep appreciation and understanding of the area's natural beauty and special qualities. Local communities are at the heart of decision-making, and by developing community-led plans and activities, are fully engaged and



supported in the management of their environment. There are a range of opportunities for people to get actively involved in caring for their landscape. The challenge of sustainable living and carbon emission reduction has been embraced by communities and local businesses. There is support for people affected by the impacts of climate change.

iii) A thriving economy: a landscape of opportunity

New and established enterprises use the area in an informed, sensitive and sustainable way, flourishing in an outstanding environment. Within a broad-based local economy, sustainable tourism is widespread, and tourism businesses are increasingly involved in careful stewardship of the area. Local food and drink is a key attraction of the area and good sales outlets are commonplace. Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects such as energy production and its associated infrastructure should seek to avoid damage to the natural beauty of the AONB and where this cannot be achieved it should seek to minimise, mitigate and compensate for any residual damage.

Farming operations contribute to the natural beauty of the area and the impact of industrialised farming is minimised. Farming should be the cornerstone of economic activity in the area, and opportunities for agricultural operations to contribute to ecosystem services and public good are taken.

iv) High quality landscapes and associated natural and heritage features encourage a wide cross section of society to enjoy the AONB

Excellent visitor facilities, information and infrastructure enable the public to appreciate the area and enjoy the many opportunities for outdoor recreation, without damaging the area's natural beauty and special qualities. Flexible and integrated transport options are readily available and meet the needs of both residents and visitors. Walking and riding across the area are key, practical choices within a sustainable transport network. Residents, visitors and tourism businesses are aware of their responsibilities, actively helping to retain the area's special qualities.

The England Coast Path has brought new access and business opportunities while not increasing disturbance to the most sensitive parts of the area's internationally important wildlife sites.

With increased access comes increased responsibility for those using Public Rights of Way, permissive routes and other access opportunities. There is an understanding of the legal rights related to access and those operating rural businesses, and farmers in particular, are not adversely impacted by those enjoying the area for recreational purposes.

v) Tranquillity is retained and undesirable intrusion prevented

The importance of tranquillity to the character of the AONB is fully recognised and sources of noise and visual intrusion have been resisted or mitigated. The area's dark night skies are valued and protected. Low and medium voltage power lines continue to be buried underground.



© Suffolk Punch Trust

3.2 Our Vision for the Key Landscape Areas

i) An outstanding lowland coast managed for people and wildlife

An integrated approach to managing the coastal zone has enhanced its value for people and wildlife. A careful balance has been struck between the need to protect people and property, while ensuring that the character and special qualities of the dynamic coastline are retained. An acknowledgement of the concept of a changing coastline is widely accepted.

Decisions on coastal management are integrated across sectors and policy areas as well as encompassing the views of local communities. Coastal management decisions take full account of the landscape and the environmental and visual impacts as part of an integrated approach. All relevant authorities deliver their statutory duty to have regard to the landscape of the AONB.

Improved public awareness and active management has conserved and enhanced coastal habitats and provided better protection for coastal wildlife. Increased pressures from

larger populations close to internationally important wildlife habitats are understood and measures are in place to protect them from recreational disturbance.

The loss of freshwater wetlands to coastal erosion or flooding has been prevented where it is sustainable to do so, are managed and planned for, and alternative sites sought, where protection is not possible. The erosion of maritime cliffs and slopes continues to replenish sand and shingle beaches along the coastline.

Coastal farmland is managed with environmental sensitivity. New schemes to support landowners to receive financial subsidy for doing so are widely understood and accepted.

Water bodies, such as coastal, estuarine and inland, are in good to high status.





© Emily Fae

ii) The estuaries retain their character and special qualities for both people and wildlife

The estuaries are proactively managed to balance the many demands placed on them, whether from recreation, commerce, agriculture, wildlife or the aspirations of local communities.

Rich inter-tidal feeding grounds have been retained while existing areas of eroding saltmarsh are restored and protected to provide natural defences to river walls. The loss of intertidal habitats to

flooding has been prevented where sustainable to do so, are managed and planned for, and alternative sites sought, where protection is not possible. New intertidal areas are welcomed where landowners are in favour of managed realignment of river walls provided there are negligible impacts in the context of the wider estuary and where multiple benefits to people and wildlife can be delivered.

Heritage features are protected in context or, where this is not possible, rescued and recorded.

iii) The Sandlings heaths have increased in size and forest areas have diversified

Active management has expanded the area of Sandlings heath, reducing fragmentation and safeguarding biodiversity. Grazing has increased and spread into adjoining forest and grassland, creating open vistas with scattered trees and varied textures. The Sandlings forests are managed for the benefit of wildlife and people as well as for their timber, creating a richer, more diverse landscape with high levels of public access. Local communities are fully consulted on projects to restore heathland.

iv) Farming remains economically viable while enhancing biodiversity and landscape character

Farmers and land managers are supported to make extensive use of new agri-environment schemes to help wildlife, improve access, restore landscapes

and retain heritage features. Grazing continues to maintain the open fields and produce diverse habitats. Unsustainable farming practices have ceased and diffuse pollution from agricultural operations is no longer a problem.

Farming activities which have a particular impact on the special qualities of the area meet the highest standards of best practice and are appropriately located so as not to have a cumulative impact on the landscape. Farmers are recognised as vital contributors to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the landscape and have adapted to climate change and new agri environment support mechanisms.

The loss of farmland to coastal erosion and flooding has been prevented where sustainable to do so and managed and planned for where protection is not feasible.



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Management Plan Themes and Objectives



© The Suffolk Coast



4.1 Introduction

This section sets out the themes and objectives of the plan. It does this in the policy context that AONBs operate in and then sets out cross cutting themes of climate change and sustainable development.

Policy Context

Designated landscapes such as the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) remain a fundamental concept of national and international conservation strategies supported by Governments. AONBs are recognised as Category V Protected Landscapes under the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) global framework.

AONBs make up around 15% of the land mass of England and Wales. AONB Partnerships work collaboratively through the National Association for AONBs to further the socio-economic and environmental wellbeing of outstanding landscapes.

The AONB designation is made by the UK Government under UK Law and as such is not impacted by the UK's decision to withdraw from the European Union made in June 2016.

UK law and Government policy promotes the importance of the AONB designation. This includes:

- National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, which provides the necessary legal tools to designate AONBs;
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Section 85 of the act places a duty on all public bodies and statutory undertakers to 'have regard' to the purposes of conserving and enhancing natural beauty of AONBs;
-

- The National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 172) first published in 2012, revised in 2018, states:

Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.

The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

- a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;*
- b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way;*
- c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.*

Climate Change

Scientific consensus supports the view that global climate change, caused by the human use of fossil fuels, raw materials and intensive agriculture, is occurring. Any significant change is likely to present challenges to the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB in a variety of ways. Critical issues in the short to medium term are likely to relate to:

- a) Coastal flooding: Predicted rises in sea level, more extreme weather events, and changes to weather patterns are likely to lead to increased pressure on coastal defences;
- b) Surface water flooding: Changes to weather patterns are likely to lead to more frequent, and more intense, flood events impacting people and property, and disrupting economic activity;
- c) Farming: Changes to weather patterns will put strain on agricultural practices, affecting viability of farming particular crops through changes to temperature, water availability, and the spread of new diseases. It may also create the potential for new crops to be grown in the area;



Coastline at Benacre showing change over 30 years
© Water Management Alliance (East)

- d) Biodiversity: An increased need for native wildlife to adapt and move across landscapes or risk extinction and creating conditions for non-native wildlife to thrive;
- e) Tourism: Potential for positive or negative weather-related impacts on the industry such as extending shoulder seasons but risk of increased concern about domestic holidays due to weather;
- f) Fire risk: An increased likelihood of significant heath or forest fires;
- g) Damage and disruption to transport, utility and communications infrastructure caused by increased extreme weather events (flooding, heat, high winds etc);
- h) There are likely to be other as yet unpredicted impacts.

On the Suffolk coast, there is a widespread acceptance of the need to adapt to inevitable coastal change over the medium to long term.

The legislative framework already exists for the adaptation of environmentally important sites, within a European context. It is understood that the relevant environmental legislation will be repatriated into UK law, after Brexit 2019, to ensure that no net loss of internationally important habitat occurs. There is a need to better understand the adaptation techniques for other climate change risks.

A further consequence of the growing impact of climate change is recognition of the need to reduce our 'carbon footprint' and to mitigate these problems through positive action for the environment. This can be started through initiatives such as:

- More sustainable transport initiatives;
- Improved design in development;
- New and developing technologies to reduce carbon use.

Climate change is a cross-cutting issue and will appear across all themes within the Plan: Coast and Estuaries; Land Use and Wildlife; Enjoying the Area and Working Together.

Sustainable Development

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB is an outstanding landscape. Landscapes have always changed over time, but the fundamental quality of AONB landscapes should retain their natural beauty. It is the aspiration and legal duty placed on statutory undertakers to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area, and this is in part delivered by the desire to see only sustainable development within the AONB.

A widely accepted definition of sustainable development, taken from the Brundtland Report, is:

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

An AONB is not about preserving the landscape or having no development, but as an area that is designated for its outstanding landscape development should contribute to its natural beauty. Part of this involves adhering to the concept of sustainable development.

In the case of Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB the requirement to conserve and enhance the area's natural beauty is supplemented by a desire to ensure that the area's natural capital is not compromised.

4.2 Landscape

AONBs are landscapes designated for their natural beauty. The concept of natural beauty is one that is sometimes difficult to understand. There has been an attempt to define the factors contributing to the natural beauty of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB that includes commentary on landscape and scenic qualities, tranquillity and cultural heritage.

Landscape is an interconnection of human activity and the underlying natural resource over time.

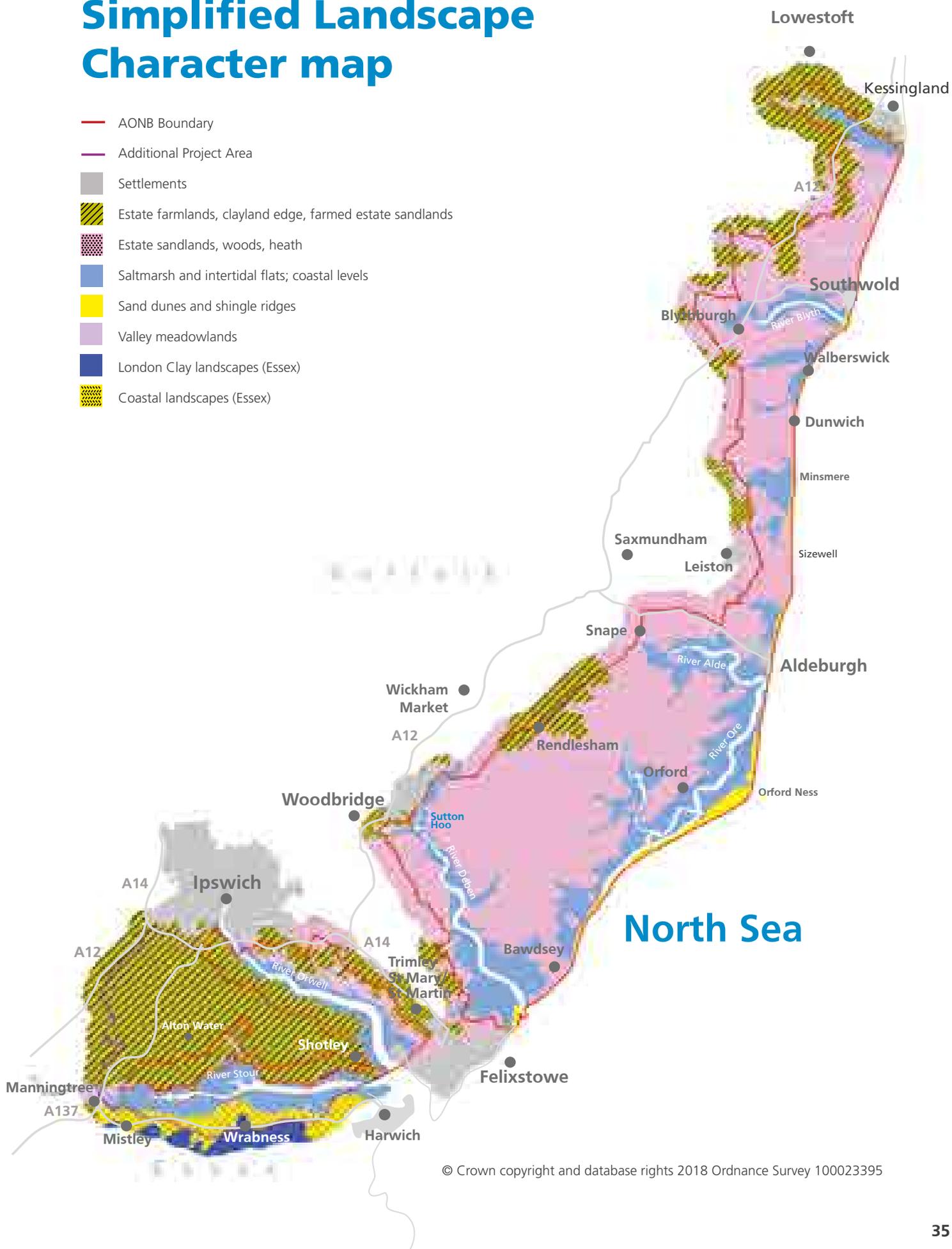
The human concept of a sense of place is a powerful driver and although much of the AONB is in private ownership there is undoubtedly a public influence in landscape through the development of public policy around environmental controls, agri-environment support mechanisms and development control. This concept is widely accepted and the public good from outstanding landscapes includes significant physical and mental health benefits.

The benefits of all landscapes are recognised within the European Landscape Convention. The European Landscape Convention requires 'landscape to be integrated into regional and town planning policies and in cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as any other policies with possible direct or indirect impacts on landscape'. The convention came into force in the UK in 2007.



Simplified Landscape Character map

- AONB Boundary
- Additional Project Area
- Settlements
- Estate farmlands, clayland edge, farmed estate sandlands
- Estate sandlands, woods, heath
- Saltmarsh and intertidal flats; coastal levels
- Sand dunes and shingle ridges
- Valley meadowlands
- London Clay landscapes (Essex)
- Coastal landscapes (Essex)



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The landscape of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB has been assessed and the results of that assessment can be viewed on the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment website. In addition to describing the landscape character types, the study includes guidelines on how the landscape character can be enhanced.

Natural England have produced a series of National Character Area studies. These include descriptions to help round up landscape-scale work. These National Character Area studies are intended to articulate Natural England's objectives for these areas. There is much that is synonymous with a range of other plans and documents within the National Character Assessment for the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, known as NCA 82, including this Management Plan. NCA 82 encompasses the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB and much of its setting.

This Management Plan seeks to balance a variety of competing needs to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB. Land use changes both within and outside the nationally designated area can have an impact upon its qualities. Those with an interest in the purposes of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB must therefore sometimes look at changes outside the current boundary, particularly within the setting of the AONB, to ensure the natural beauty of the AONB is conserved and enhanced.

4.3 Coast and Estuaries

Understanding, enhancing and conserving the interface between Suffolk's land and sea is crucial to the purposes of the AONB. There are enormous forces for change, both natural and man-made at play on the coast and estuaries. The requirement to consider the purposes of the nationally designated landscape are paramount to maintain the area's social, economic and environmental well-being.

There are many factors influencing the coast and estuaries which in turn have provoked a plethora of different policy, initiatives, organisations and stakeholder interests. Many of these interests and organisations are represented on the AONB Partnership, demonstrating one of the Partnerships

important roles in bringing differing interests together.

As part of this work, the AONB is hosting a Marine Pioneer, with the intention to support the delivery of Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan. It will consider the value of natural capital at play on the coast and advise on how decision making can be improved to reflect all interests.

The coast and estuaries are subject to government marine plans. There are two plans, inshore and offshore. The inshore marine plan area includes the coastline and extends from mean high water out to 12 nautical miles, including inland area subject to tidal influence. The offshore marine plan area covers the marine area from 12 nautical miles out to the maritime borders with the Netherlands, Belgium and France.

The AONB is covered by two marine plan areas, the East Marine Plan and South East Marine Plan with the border being at Felixstowe. The vision for the East Marine Plan states:

By 2034 sustainable, effective and efficient use of the East Inshore and East Offshore Marine Plan Areas has been achieved, leading to economic development while protecting and enhancing the marine and coastal environment, offering local communities new jobs, improved health and well-being. As a result of an integrated approach that respects other sectors and interests, the East marine plan areas are providing a significant contribution, particularly through offshore wind, to the energy generated in the United Kingdom and to targets on climate change.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) is a process for the management of the coast using an integrated approach, including all aspects of the coastal zone, such as geographical and political boundaries, to achieve sustainability.

This concept was born in 1992 during the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. The policy regarding ICZM is set out in the proceedings of the summit within Agenda 21, Chapter 17.

The European Commission defines ICZM as:



A dynamic, multidisciplinary and iterative process to promote sustainable management of coastal zones. It covers the full cycle of information collection, planning (in its broadest sense), decision making, management and monitoring of implementation. ICZM uses the informed participation and cooperation of all stakeholders to assess the societal goals in each coastal area, and to take actions towards meeting these objectives. ICZM seeks, over the long-term, to balance environmental, economic, social, cultural and recreational objectives, all within the limits set by natural dynamics. 'Integrated' in ICZM refers to the integration of objectives and to the integration of the many instruments needed to meet these objectives. It means integration of all relevant policy areas, sectors, and levels of administration. It means integration of the terrestrial and marine components of the target territory, in both time and space.

The Suffolk Coast Forum brings together a partnership of statutory agencies, local authorities, community groups and other key players, involved in the management of the coast, estuaries and hinterland.

As well as the existing internationally designated marine wildlife areas of our estuaries, such as Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites, there are designated offshore Special Protection Areas such as Outer Thames aimed at protecting the red-throated diver.

In the summer of 2017 there was a public consultation on Recommended Marine Conservation Zones in Suffolk, the Alde Ore Estuary and Orford Inshore.

Marine Conservation Zones can be a positive step forward, conserving a vital resource for the long term. Management of Marine Conservation Zones is still being defined and it will be important to ensure that the socio-economic interests of local communities and the environment are considered when making decisions.

The England Coast Path will bring both opportunities and challenges. The England Coast Path will be a long-distance National Trail, a network of nationally important long distance paths designated under the same 1949 Act that created AONBs. They will follow the coastline of England. When complete, it will be about 2,800 miles (4,500 kilometres) in length. The England Coast Path has been possible because of a new law in the UK, the Right of Coastal Access, for the first time giving people the right of access around all England's open coast, both along the England Coast Path and, usually, over the associated 'coastal margin'.

Natural England's Coastal Access Scheme, which sets out how the scheme will be delivered, was approved by the Secretary of State on 9 July 2013. It is the intention of Government that the path will be operational by 2020. In Suffolk, consultation on

the various sections that cover the AONB started in 2017, at a similar time to the consultation on the AONB boundary review.

Each of the estuaries has an Estuary Partnership. For the Alde and Ore, Blythe and Deben estuaries these are very much community-led. In the Stour and Orwell, the partnership is more focused on the statutory authorities, businesses and interested stakeholders. The coastal area between Bawdsey and the mouth of the Ore is covered by the Bawdsey Coastal Partnership.

These partnerships have formulated plans that set out the aspirations for estuary or coastal management over a set period and seek to reconcile and balance the sometimes-competing interests placed upon them.

The coast and estuaries remain vitally important places for rare wildlife and the habitats that support them. They also offer authentic and revitalising experiences for people, whether this is a family day on the beach, or a bracing winter walk beside one of our estuaries. However, recreational disturbance of wildlife can be a problem, manifesting itself through issues including: disturbance by dogs to feeding and roosting birds (particularly on mud flats); people and their dogs inadvertently disturbing or even trampling nests on beaches; commercial bait-digging; litter on our beaches; or speeding recreational craft.

The AONB Partnership has been, and will continue, working with beach users, local communities, environmental organisations, tourism businesses, marinas, harbour authorities and anglers to manage this problem with a view to decreasing advertent or inadvertent negative impacts. There is a developing view that a strategic approach is required to avoid and mitigate harmful disturbance resulting from increased recreational pressures on the estuary linked to housing development. A strategy, known as Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy, or RAMS, may be deployed to minimise negative impact upon wildlife while ensuring that residents and visitors alike can continue to enjoy all the benefits of this high quality recreational resource. Similar schemes have worked well in other sensitive sites such as the Solent on the south coast. RAMS would be funded by developers, as a cost-effective way to deliver the required mitigation of adverse impacts on designated sites.

A large section of the AONB is Heritage Coast. Heritage Coasts are 'defined' rather than designated, so there isn't a statutory designation process like that associated with the AONB. They were established to conserve the best stretches of undeveloped coast in England. A Heritage Coast is defined by agreement between the relevant maritime local authorities and Natural England, and are recognised in Local Development Plans.





4.4 Land Use and Wildlife

The national policy documents relating to biodiversity such as the Lawton Report, *Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network* (2010) and the subsequent 2011 White Paper *The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature* provide the strategic steer for this Plan's approach to biodiversity conservation. Lawton sets out the actions needed to enhance the resilience and coherence of England's ecological network in four words: more, bigger, better and joined-up. Defra's *Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services*, also published in 2011, aims to halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people. The need for urgent biodiversity action is only part of the picture as other ecosystem services such as water quality and availability are issues that have both medium and long-term implications for local communities.

The State of Nature 2016 report pools data and expertise from more than 50 nature conservation and research organisations to give a cutting-edge overview of the state of nature in the UK. The key findings have been summarised as:

- *Between 1970 and 2013, 56% of species declined, with 40% showing strong or moderate declines. 44% of species increased, with 29% showing strong or moderate increases. Between 2002 and 2013, 53% of species declined and 47% increased. These measures were based on quantitative trends for almost 4,000 terrestrial and freshwater species in the UK.*
- *Of the nearly 8,000 species assessed using modern Red List criteria, 15% are extinct or threatened with extinction from Great Britain.*
- *An index of species' status, based on abundance and occupancy data, has fallen by 16% since 1970. Between 2002 and 2013, the index fell by 3%. This is based on data for 2,501 terrestrial and freshwater species in the UK.*
- *An index describing the population trends of species of special conservation concern in the UK has fallen by 67% since 1970, and by 12% between 2002 and 2013. This is based on trend information for 213 priority species.*
- *A new measure that assesses how intact a country's biodiversity is, suggests that the UK has lost significantly more nature over the long term than the global average. The index suggests that we are among the most nature-depleted countries in the world.*
- *The loss of nature in the UK continues. Although many short-term trends suggest*

improvement, there was no statistical difference between our long and short-term measures of species' change, and no change in the proportion of species threatened with extinction.

Nationally designated sites of wildlife and geological importance (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) enjoy significant legislative protection. More locally, non-statutory County Wildlife Sites and Geodiversity Sites offer recognition for the county's most important sites, not covered by national or European designations.

The network of important European wildlife sites (Special Protection Areas or SPAs, and Special Areas for Conservation or SACs, collectively called Natura 2000 sites), is underpinned by strong EU legislation, requiring mitigation or compensation for any plans or projects that have significant adverse effects. The government has committed to retaining these protections post-Brexit.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 created a statutory duty for local authorities and similar public bodies to further biodiversity and geodiversity and this has been an important part of the AONB Partnership's work.

However, we all have a moral duty to protect wildlife and this applies to visitors and all members of the public. Wildlife designations should not be blockages to local aspirations, but instead seen as assets that can provide leverage for funding, and mechanisms by which the local area is protected. This is of course one of the key reasons the AONB is such an outstanding place to live and work in and for visitors to enjoy. It is the quality of the natural environment, protected in part through designation, that helps protect this special place and supports significant parts of its economy, particularly tourism.

AONBs feature high up in the hierarchy of protection, seeking to prevent inappropriate development within them. Inappropriate development may be considered as large scale developments, significant minerals extraction or those that do not pay regard to the purposes of the AONB.

The Water Framework Directive seeks to improve the condition of our water courses and is also now influencing planning policy. It may have significant impacts on the future management of water resources and pollution on land and at sea.



Farming

The dynamic nature of agriculture, uncertain market forces, and increasing regulation has a huge influence on farming industry and can result in changes to farming methods and practices.

Support for agri-environment schemes that have been funded as part of the Common Agricultural Policy, delivering environmental and societal benefits, is crucial to the purposes of the AONB. As the United Kingdom is scheduled to leave the European Union during the lifetime of this Management Plan there are now opportunities to refocus agri-environment support.

The former president of the Country Land and Business Association, Tim Breitmeyer, is quoted as saying:

Our vision is for fundamental reform, but not for ending payments to farmers. Payments are necessary because there is vital work to be done across our countryside to manage soils and preserve the productive capacity of the land, to plant the trees we need, to clean and store water, to support the farming practices that make up our iconic landscapes or to make it possible for people to enjoy our beautiful natural spaces. These responsibilities bring costs and burdens that other businesses do not have to bear.

Land managers provide a wide range of public benefit, and new schemes will have the opportunity to reward the delivery of environmental services and projects that deliver public good, such as protection of water supplies, flood defence, improved access etc.

The AONB Partnership concurs with the view that agri-environment support can and should deliver multiple benefits to farming and society. It is also of the view that the any agri-environment support invested in designated landscapes should be compliant with the aspirations of these outstanding landscape Management Plans.

Catchment Sensitive Farming plays an important part in meeting the Water Framework Directive,



© Tony Pick

and work, particularly by Natural England and the Environment Agency, should continue to offer advice to farmers especially in areas where diffuse pollution has an impact on designated wildlife sites within the AONB.

Arable farming within the AONB remains a dynamic activity, influenced by market forces and by the support provided by agri-environment schemes. Crop preferences and farming methods may be subject to rapid changes as farmers adapt to the opportunities provided by the evolving economic climate. Climate change too is likely to have an increasing influence on farming, and the AONB Partnership will have an important role to play supporting the adaptation of farm businesses to climate change, whilst also ensuring that the special qualities of the AONB are conserved and enhanced.

Where irrigation is possible on the light lands within the AONB, production can be intensive. This is because the land can be worked virtually all year, and with the addition of water and fertilisers, precise cropping regimes can be created that suit large scale vegetable production.

The use of plastic covers and aerial irrigation rigs early or late in the season helps to extend the growing season. While this is a useful tool for food production there are negative visual and environmental impacts.

Stones are often removed to prevent damage to vegetable crops and harvesting equipment. This can increase the financial value of the crops, as more class 1 crops can be produced, but the process has a significant adverse impact on local soil structure and can impair drainage and exacerbate 'capping'. There is potential for damage to archaeological features too.

Maximising the returns from the land can impinge on the conservation value of the headlands and reduce over-wintering stubbles, vital for farmland birds. Agri-environment schemes that support multiple beneficial outcomes for both food production and societal benefit can lead to a win-win situation.

With water abstraction often at the environmental limits, the creation of winter-filled reservoirs can be seen to be a solution. Such developments need careful siting and design to avoid adverse landscape impacts.

Innovative projects to 're-use' freshwater that is currently pumped into our estuaries to drain freshwater marshes in the winter should be encouraged to ensure that the precious resource of water is used to its maximum potential. This approach is supported by many in the agricultural community and could be encouraged through new schemes and grant initiatives.

Turf production is now commonplace in the AONB. Turf helps to retain the open vistas of the AONB, but its vibrant green colour and uniform texture can impact on the landscape. The continual loss of soil can damage the archaeological resource and reduce biodiversity.

Outdoor pigs are certainly favoured by the market and Suffolk has a widespread reputation for its quality pork. Outdoor pig units can adversely impact upon visual experience, but it is worth noting the popularity of outdoor pig production from a farm viability perspective. There can be landscape impacts associated with this success though, as the pens, straw stacks and fencing can become dominant in the landscape. The management practices and feeding regimes attract large numbers of gulls and corvids, so supporting artificially large local populations all year round - with a potential knock-on effect of increasing predation of nesting birds in surrounding areas. Outdoor pig units on valley sides are also vulnerable to run-off, resulting in soil loss and diffuse pollution. There is a need to understand the required balance between maintaining the vibrancy of this part of the farming economy whilst also protecting the special qualities of the landscape within which it operates.



© Jon Evans



Cultivation of bio-fuel crops, such as oil seed rape and flax, is more localised in the western fringes of the AONB where clay is more dominant. This change to land use can influence the visual experience of the AONB.

The increasing size of farm machinery can affect the verges on minor roads, and the additional weight can impact on soil structure, making some areas more vulnerable to run-off under storm conditions. Noise from farm-related traffic is part of the rural scene, but in some cases where farm activities are industrialised, in or adjacent to small communities, it can have an adverse effect on the quality of life of residents.

The benefits of higher returns from intensive farming and of the financial incentives offered by agri-environment schemes has enabled many farmers to invest in conservation measures right across the farm. As the United Kingdom will leave the European Union during the life time of this Management Plan new methods of Agri Support will be put in place. Designated

landscapes such as the Suffolk Coast & Heaths, where its natural beauty and special qualities have been identified, could benefit from a targeted approach to a new scheme of multiple benefit agri-environment support that balances the need for food production, environmental stewardship and societal benefits.

To remain competitive, meet current consumer demand, reduce food miles and to support food security it is important that productive agriculture continues to be part of the AONB's landscape. Indeed, much of the character of the AONB can be attributed to thousands of years of agricultural practices. Farming in the AONB, and in such proximity to designated wildlife sites and scheduled ancient monuments, does bring added responsibility for farmers. Agricultural support should reflect this, and it is important that farming is sustainable and does not detract from the natural beauty and special qualities of the landscape. The AONB Partnership has a key role to engage, advise and influence farming practice.



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Dairy cow numbers are at a historically low level in the AONB. Increased production costs and poor returns have mostly made it unviable here. Flood plain and coastal grazing marshes are now largely converted to arable, and where there are grasses they have limited productivity without improved drainage or the addition of fertilisers.

Grazing of the remaining areas is now largely done by beef cattle or sheep. Most grazed marshes are within agri-environment schemes, and many are managed by conservation organisations.

Sheep farming on heather-dominated heaths is not commercially viable and is only undertaken to support nature conservation. On heath that is dominated by acid grassland sheep farming is more productive but is still usually only economical when supported through environmental schemes. This type of farming makes an important contribution to the natural beauty and character of the AONB. There is slow growth in equestrian grazing leading

to the development of some 'pony paddocks' or 'horsey culture' that can bring intrusive infrastructure and little biodiversity or landscape gain. This is normally associated with settlement edges and is not widespread.

There have been significant landscape and biodiversity gains supported by agri-environment schemes. As the United Kingdom leaves the European Union during the lifespan of this Management Plan there is concern that these gains, made through public investment in schemes such as Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship, could be lost. These changes to agri-environment support offer an opportunity to refocus the public investment for societal benefits. Designated landscapes, with their Partnerships, Management Plan vision, and natural beauty, are well placed to be a focus for any new schemes.

Forestry

Large areas of coniferous forest were planted in the 1920s on former heath. Established trees, particularly birch and pine, act as seed sources which have promoted the spread of trees across the heaths. Dunwich, Tunstall and Rendlesham forests, known collectively as the Sandlings Forests and managed by the Forestry Commission, have provided vertical and textural elements in the landscape and are now recognised as an important part of the local area for both wildlife and people.

The public appetite for forested areas was well demonstrated when a proposed sell-off of the public forest estate in 2011 created an outcry and a local campaign to “Save the Sandlings Forests”. Campaigners were concerned for the interests of both wildlife and recreational interests, well served by the Forestry Commission and potentially much less so by different, private, owners.

The timber returns from the forests have varied, depending on the state of the global market. However, the forests provide many benefits beyond wood products and the landscape; recreational and biodiversity benefits, and potential of the Sandlings Forests, are now probably more important than the timber. This is leading to a change of forest objectives, particularly at Dunwich, where restructuring is underway. This restructure aims to produce more open, grazed, heathland mosaics, as part of a much wider ecological network of sites managed principally for nature conservation, between the Alde and the Blyth estuaries.

The potential for similar projects in the southern

forests continues to be explored, as are the opportunities for increased recreational use of the Sandlings Forests, particularly at Rendlesham, where the potential is high. Such increases could help to relieve the recreational pressure at more sensitive coastal and estuary locations.

Interest in cycling in the AONB continues to grow and the forests provide a range of opportunities in themselves, as well as providing off-road linkages between the network of rural lanes. Mountain biking, as an adrenaline sport in its own right, also continues to grow in popularity and the provision of single track mountain bike trails in the forest areas also has potential for expansion.

In addition to the forests owned by the Forestry Commission, there are a number of smaller, privately owned woods in the AONB, some of which are in active conservation management. While they all offer amenity benefit some also provide locally sourced woodland products, recreational opportunities or community benefit for learning and volunteering.

Forestry may provide the opportunity to fulfil the increasing demand for wood products for wood burning stoves and other similar domestic uses.

Good forestry management includes the need to manage deer for the benefit of habitat management.

There is a need to increase the numbers and extent of native woodland in the AONB in appropriate locations for reasons of landscape enhancement and wildlife benefits.



Planning

The National Planning Policy Framework first published in 2012, revised in 2018, continues to afford landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs the highest level of protection (“great weight”) in planning policy. It also states that wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations.

The framework notes that major development should be refused in designated landscapes such as AONBs except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated to be in the public interest.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has a presumption in favour of sustainable development but notes that development should be restricted in designated landscapes such as AONBs. Above taken from NPPF paragraph 172. It does not mean that development should not take place in AONBs, rather that it should not detract from the purposes of the AONB designation.

The Suffolk Coast is being promoted by the local authorities as an Energy Coast, with proposals for a new nuclear build at Sizewell, offshore wind farms and electricity interconnectors linking the UK with mainland Europe. These developments will bring national benefits but need to be mindful of the nationally designated landscapes, and the concerns of local residents and existing businesses, many of

which rely on the outstanding landscapes in which they operate.

Such major developments will impact upon the AONB and development proposals should be explicit in setting out the impacts of the developments. Once national or local decisions on major development have been made, the AONB Partnership will work constructively with developers to reduce and mitigate adverse impacts, on a range of natural beauty indicators. Major developments that do go ahead within or adjacent to the AONB (i.e. that pass the tests set out in National Policy Statements and National Planning Policy Framework) and that cause a significant impact on landscape and scenic beauty must include an assessment of the detrimental effect on the environment, landscape and/or seascape, biodiversity and recreational opportunities.

Mitigation plans should also be put forward to avoid or, if that is not possible, to minimise adverse impacts and residual effects within the AONB. This should be achieved through appropriate landscape and amenity enhancements that are aligned to this Management Plan. Where the unavoidable adverse impacts are significant this may well require an ambitious off-site mitigation package, in addition to any on-site works. Full landscape and visual impact assessment will be a fundamental requirement of such major developments.



The undergrounding of high voltage power lines, associated with major infrastructure energy developments, should be a prerequisite to developments impacting the AONB as part of mitigation packages.

Work to “underground” (bury) low and medium voltage power lines in the AONB through the Ofgem Electricity Price Control Review allowance should be actively continued. This work is facilitated by the AONB team, in partnership with UK Power Networks, in response to scheme ideas that are put forward by communities in the area. The AONB will continue to take care to ensure that undergrounding work does not have any significant adverse impact on important geodiversity, archaeology, biodiversity or other environmental constraints.

Planning and development proposals determined by Local Planning Authorities may impact upon the nationally designated landscape. Local Plans are required to be compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework and recognise the importance of conserving and enhancing natural beauty within the AONB. The Natural Beauty and Special Qualities of the AONB have been defined during the previous Management Plan cycle and can be used to measure the impacts of development on the designated landscape.

Where existing development, be that housing or business, is expanded the impacts of incremental developments need to be considered against the purposes of the AONB. This could include negative impacts on tranquillity, such as increased traffic movements, lighting etc and need to be judged against the cumulative impacts on the designated landscapes. A similar impact is possible from developments within the setting of the AONB.

There will be differences of opinion from time to time amongst the AONB Partnership, with local planning authorities and with some AONB communities, about the impact on the area, but where there is doubt or concern a precautionary approach should be taken. An environmental impact assessment, including landscape and visual impact assessments, should be used to rationally assess impacts. There is a need to consider proposals on an individual basis to assess their potential impact upon the AONB and its reasons for designation.



Within the AONB, new housing should include affordable housing to meet local needs. This will help to sustain a more diverse demographic within the area. Development should respond to local character and history and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation. Work to develop guidance on the use of colour in design started at the end of the previous Management Plan cycle and will remain a valuable tool for the lifetime of this Plan. There remains a need for AONB specific design guidance to ensure developments fit in with the landscape character and retain local distinctiveness.

The growth in micro-generation, particularly small-scale wind and solar photovoltaic installations, makes good sense from a climate change perspective, but consideration of location and scale is vital to avoid significant impact on the AONB. Consideration of visual impact, both individually and cumulatively is also important. Clearly the larger the installation and the more exposed the location, the higher the landscape and visual impact. As with all such locally determined developments, these schemes require proper assessment through the planning process to ensure landscape and visual



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impact is not significant. Passive energy efficiency measures as part of new developments are vital for all sorts of reasons. From an AONB perspective, such measures will reduce the requirement for micro-generation installations in the future, thereby reducing potential visual impacts.

Piecemeal development can produce cumulative adverse impacts. Examples may include highway developments such as introduction of curb stones, painted markings or a proliferation of road signs that can adversely impact upon the character and natural beauty of the AONB. Similarly, poorly designed extensions, agricultural buildings and utility infrastructure can have a similar effect.

Tranquillity is an important part of Natural Beauty within the AONB. It is a factor recognised as being of importance in the designation process but also by local residents and visitors to the area. It is treasured, allowing people to relax and 'recharge their batteries'. However, even in remote places, light levels are increasing, as are background noises from overflying aircraft, cars and mechanised farming, and we are using mobile technology more.

Inappropriate use of powered water craft, traffic, low flying aircraft, (whether for recreation or military training) and lighting are a problem to maintaining tranquillity. Whilst some activity is vital it is essential to manage traffic and take care to constrain unnecessary noise and disturbance. Adopting best practice in the careful use of lighting must be an increasing priority for local authorities, businesses and residents within the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB.

Future development within the AONB must recognise the essential value of tranquillity and should build in solutions that respect this special quality and allow it to be retained. This may include low level/directional/timed lighting, traffic calming and alternative transport options, and further exploring how tranquil areas can be mapped and retained.

It is also noted that development can bring gains in terms of the needs of local communities and the growth of local businesses. However, the developments need to pay regard to the purposes of the nationally designated landscape as required by statute.

4.5 Enjoying the Area

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths has been a desirable place to live and visit for millennia.

In recent time, as the availability of leisure time and the ability to travel long distances has increased, visitors to the area have discovered the heady mix of outstanding landscapes, accessible wildlife and excellent hospitality.

These factors have contributed to a developing tourism industry that was worth nearly £210M and supported over 4,600 jobs in 2017. The AONB designation relates purely to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty, but the AONB Partnership understands that it is as much about people living, working in, and enjoying the area as it is about special landscapes and wildlife.

There is an established principle in all designated landscapes (i.e. AONBs and National Parks) that where conservation and recreation interests cannot be reconciled by skillful management, conservation should come first. This is known as the Sandford Principle. It was affirmed in law in the 1995 Environment Act, which states that:

If it appears that there is a conflict between [conservation and public enjoyment], [the Authority]

shall attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.

The AONB Partnership have an aspiration to raise awareness and understanding of the natural beauty and special qualities of the area so that everyone can enjoy them fully and contribute to their future conservation and enhancement.

Tourism is vital to the economy of the Suffolk Coast and is clearly a sector that is reliant upon people being able to access and enjoy the area. However, given it is the landscape and special qualities of the AONB that drive this tourism economy, it is important to consider the needs of long-term conservation of the area above any short-term economic or social interests.

The tourism offer in the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB is based on the high-quality landscape. It is important therefore that more tourism businesses continue to be active custodians of the area and supportive of projects developed by the AONB Partnership to care for it into the future. Some businesses have actively engaged with the landscape, most have not. There is certainly scope to develop further projects linking business activity with the conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape.



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A positive and balanced approach to developing access to the AONB is essential if people are to have an enjoyable experience. It will be important to ensure that visitors recognise the responsibilities that come with improved access to the area. This is particularly true for the England Coast Path that will be opened during the lifetime of this Management Plan.

The importance and popularity of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB for water-borne recreation is reflected in the high demand for landing, mooring and marina facilities, and the strength of the local boatbuilding and servicing industry. While sailing is relatively benign in terms of its impact on the landscape, its supporting infrastructure can have a significant impact on natural beauty. The continuing popularity of water-based recreation means that the demand for further growth in this area is likely. Future proposals of any kind will need to be planned with the utmost respect for both the character and quality of the area, the requirements of wildlife designations, and the need to retain tranquillity.

The enjoyment of the AONB can be enhanced by increased knowledge and understanding. There is a continuing need for up to date, inclusive and contemporary visitor information, in a variety of media, to achieve this.

It is important that the AONB is not seen as an exclusive destination, rather that everyone is made to feel welcome. Encouraging a more diverse audience continues to be important, be that more young people, those from minority ethnic groups, or

people from less affluent socio-economic groups.

The AONB Partnership has produced a wide range of self-guided walking and riding guides, often in partnership with local businesses. These guides, and those produced by many other organisations, encourage low impact enjoyment of the area and should be encouraged. The AONB's three long-distance walking routes largely make use of Public Rights of Way and are actively promoted by the AONB. It is important that these significant routes are maintained to a high standard. A Cicerone guide to the three routes provides a professional interpretation of the routes. The guide includes a description of the Suffolk Coast Path and during the lifetime of this Management Plan a decision on whether to continue to promote this route or defer to the relevant section of the England Coast Path will need to be made.

Open Access now ensures the right to roam across designated areas such as the Sandlings Heaths and registered commons. The Forestry Commission has also dedicated their entire estate to Open Access, so there is now a vast area in the AONB that is accessible to people. This can cause problems particularly during the bird breeding season when ground nesting birds are very vulnerable to disturbance from dogs that are not under close control. A successful 'Responsible Dog Owner' campaign led by the AONB team has included free training to dog owners and way-marker discs installed by many land managers, clarifying where dogs can go off the lead, on the lead, or not at all. This sort of engagement work is never complete,



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however, and will require a continued commitment of resources.

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB is home to some of the country's finest nature reserves. This includes RSPB Minsmere, The National Trust's Dunwich Heath, the Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Trimley Marshes, and East Suffolk Council's Landguard Point, as well as forests, coastline and Kenton Hills (Sizewell Belts). The quantity and quality of publicly accessible land means the area is a visitor hotspot. Increasing levels of public access to the AONB can result in increased disturbance and damage to wildlife, pressure on popular locations ('honey pots'), adverse impacts on residents, and significant pressure on resource as surfaces and access 'furniture' is worn.

The sheer number of people visiting the area, particularly in the summer months and in some locations, can impact on tranquillity. Future tourism projects supported by the AONB Partnership should focus on the shoulder seasons and winter months when there is spare capacity and those that do not impact upon the natural beauty of the area.

Shingle beaches are an understandable draw to those wishing to enjoy the AONB landscapes but are particularly vulnerable to visitor pressure. The highly specialised vegetation is easily destroyed by trampling and the numbers of ground nesting birds such as little terns have plummeted.

Litter and waste is most obvious on beaches and, although some is sea borne, much is left by visitors. This can detract from the enjoyment of the area as well as presenting serious problems to wildlife.

The use of sea and estuarine walls for walking and cycling can place people above the skyline and can have an adverse impact, particularly in the winter, on wading birds and wildfowl.

As part of increasing people's opportunities to enjoy the area it will be important to further develop the sustainable transport opportunities. The East Suffolk Rail Partnership is keen to work with others to increase promotion of public transport. Cycling and walking as sustainable modes of transport for increasing numbers of people will continue to be promoted. Cars will continue to be the first choice for most but improving the linkages and ease by which people can get around the area by other means can only bring benefit to a wider audience of visitors as well as residents.

The history associated with the area that forms the AONB is fascinating and contains important cultural artefacts and historic buildings in the area. Sutton Hoo is the most high-profile area but there are numerous other important sites and buildings that give a glimpse into past lives. The archaeology, both above and below ground, remains a largely untold story and projects to realise the potential of this part of the area's landscape history should be sought.

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4.6 Working Together

The high-quality landscape that is the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB is recognised in its designated status. This does not necessarily ensure its natural beauty will be safeguarded. For its natural beauty and special qualities to be conserved and enhanced it will require all those with an interest in the area to work together for the benefit of the area's environmental, economic and social well-being.

As an AONB that covers over 155 square miles, and with so many differing interests, it is beyond the scope of any one organisation to ensure its wellbeing. It is vital, a simple necessity, that organisations work in partnership and with the communities of the area to keep it special. This Management Plan is a blueprint for action to ensure the area is conserved and enhanced for future generations and to enjoy the benefits that the landscape can deliver.

The AONB team are well placed to co-ordinate the AONB Partnership. The AONB Partnership organisations and local communities have a vital part to play, both in their own activities in the area, but also in how they approach the need for collaborative working. Working together to achieve a common aim can ensure that all interests are taken into account, although the overriding statutory requirement to conserve and enhance natural beauty is paramount.

Strong community engagement is vital to meeting the purposes of the AONB. This may include estuary partnerships; volunteer activity; engagement with AONB projects; commenting on development proposals and attending events. Hundreds of people across the AONB are stepping forward to carry out practical work with a range of organisations. The AONB Partnership and the AONB team will continue to support these communities and individuals as they seek to get more involved in shaping the future of their AONB.

The AONB team administers several small grant funds, supporting communities, businesses and societies to undertake projects that are beneficial to the environmental, social and economic wellbeing of the area.

The AONB team is the only organisation specifically set up to be an advocate of the designated landscape and encourage the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty. The role of raising awareness of its importance and vulnerability is continuous. The strength of the AONB is in its partnerships, and where those partners have competing needs the AONB team has an important role acting as an 'honest broker' in the interests of the AONB.

Objectives



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The purpose of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan 2018-2013 is to fulfil the statutory duty placed on local authorities to adopt and publish a plan for the nationally designated area as outlined in Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000). This Management Plan forms the policy for local authorities for the AONB.

AONB partner organisations will ensure their work conforms to the objectives set out over the five themes of the Management Plan: Landscape; Coast and Estuaries; Land Use and Wildlife; Enjoying the Area; and Working Together.

5.1 Landscape

Landscape Objectives:

- L1: The landscape of the AONB is conserved and enhanced;

- L2: National and local plan policies recognise the need to conserve and enhance the designated landscape;

- L3: Features that contribute to the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB are conserved and enhanced;

- L4: Statutory bodies, AONB partnership organisations, stakeholders and other organisations pay regard to the purposes of the AONB.

5.2 Coast and Estuaries

Coast and Estuary Objectives:

- CE1: Decision making takes regard of the statutory purposes of the AONB;

 - CE2: Coast and estuarine habitats are conserved and enhanced;

 - CE3: Communities are supported to deliver projects that contribute to AONB purposes.
-

5.3 Land Use and Wildlife

Land Use and Wildlife Objectives:

LUW1:	The AONB landscape and the factors contributing to its natural beauty and special qualities are conserved and better understood;
LUW2:	Features that detract from the AONB's natural beauty are, where possible, removed;
LUW3:	The AONB's cultural, wildlife, archaeological, historical, and geological, heritage is better understood and more widely known about;
LUW4:	Development decisions have regard to the purposes of the AONB and scenic beauty is given great weight in the determination process;
LUW5:	Major infrastructure projects avoid, mitigate and offset negative impacts on the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB;
LUW6:	Small scale developments, including those for micro energy generation, are supported where they do not adversely impact the purposes of the AONB;
LUW7:	The views of local communities are taken into account during the determination of development applications, particularly when Neighbourhood Plans are in place;
LUW8:	Habitats are managed to ensure wildlife thrives, and measures to increase area, connectivity and ability to adapt to climate change are made;
LUW9:	Wildlife management supports the conservation and enhancement of characteristic landscapes, and protected sites are managed effectively;
LUW10:	Farming in the AONB is productive and sustainable;
LUW11:	Farming and agri environment schemes in the AONB contribute towards its natural beauty, special qualities and support AONB purposes;
LUW12:	Farming and forestry operations contribute to the natural beauty and special qualities of the area and provide multiple benefits;
LUW13:	Natural capital value and the contribution of ecosystem services to the natural environment is taken into account in land use decisions.

5.4 Enjoying the Area

Enjoying the Area Objectives:

EtA1: Tourism in the AONB is inclusive, sustainable and supports the purposes of the designated landscape;

EtA2: Tourism planning on the Suffolk Coast is strategic and future developments are planned and recognise the purposes of the AONB;

EtA3: Marketing of the AONB is consistent with the aims of the designated landscape and the sustainable capacity of the area;

EtA4: Public Rights of Way and promoted routes are key to the enjoyment of the area and are well maintained;

EtA5: The development of the England Coast Path is aligned to the purposes of the AONB and does not detract from its natural beauty or special qualities;

EtA6: Responsible access is encouraged and managed to ensure it does not detract from the areas special qualities;

EtA7: Residents and visitors are increasingly aware of the AONB, as a national designation and issues relating to its management;

EtA8: Residents and visitors are aware of and informed about the AONB's natural beauty and special qualities, including its wildlife; landscapes; geodiversity; archaeology; heritage and cultural associations.





5.5 Working Together

Working Together Objectives:

WT1: The AONB Partnership represents all the appropriate interests across the area and issues relevant to the designated landscape;

WT2: The AONB Partnership supplements the aspirations and stance of the Management Plan with Position Statements as necessary;

WT3: The AONB Partnership acts as a focal point and advocate for the AONB;

WT4: Residents have the opportunity to influence decision making that impacts upon issues relating to the AONB and its population;

WT5: Grant aid is available for residents, businesses and organisations to undertake project activity that is consistent with AONB purposes.





Section 6

Appendices

Special Areas of Conservation

An area protecting one or more special habitats and/or species – terrestrial or marine – listed in the Habitats Directive (1992).

- AONB Boundary
- ⋯ Additional project area

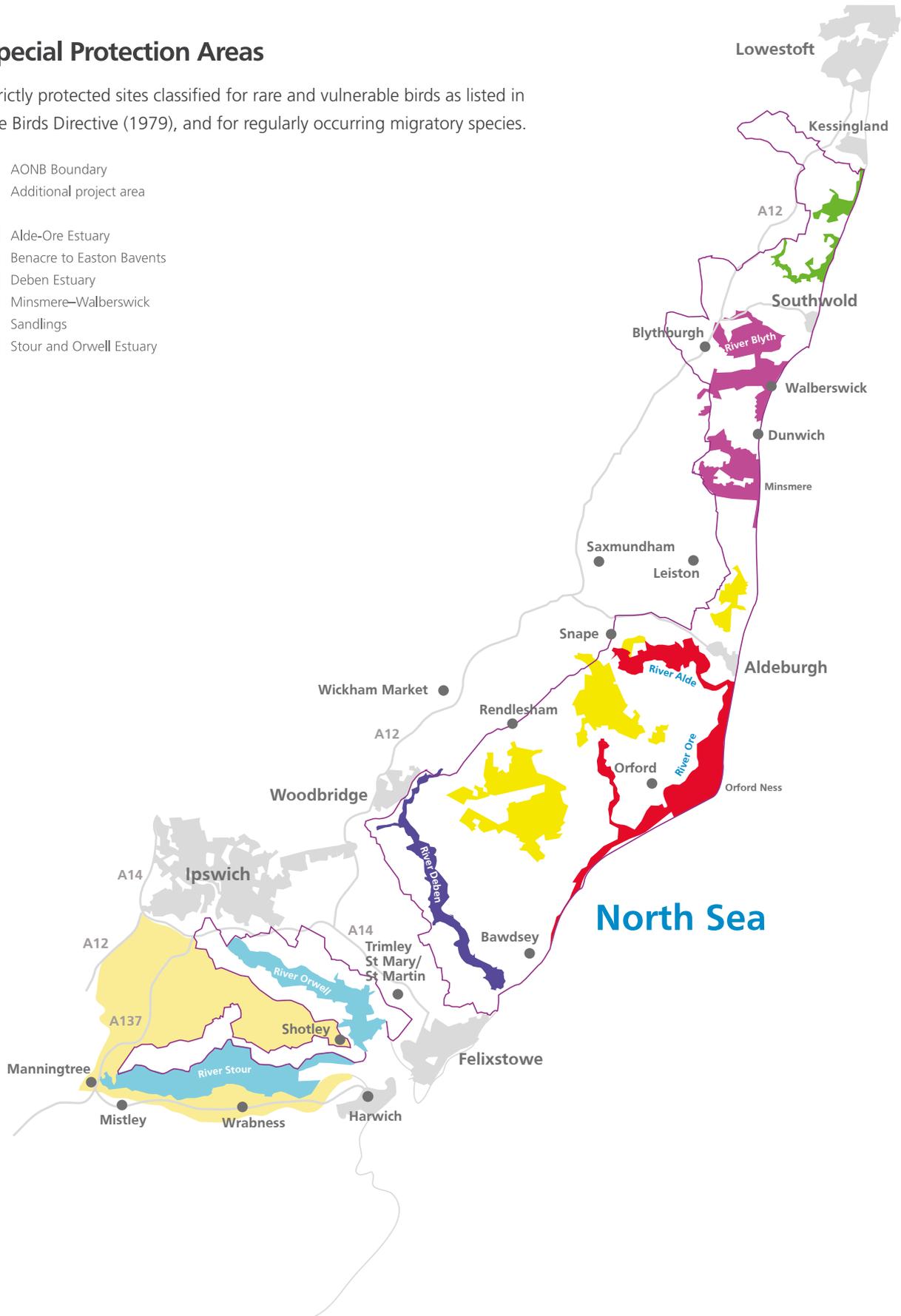
- Alde-Ore and Butley Estuaries
- Benacre to Easton Lagoons
- Minsmere to Walberswick Heaths & Marshes
- Staverton Park and The Thicks, Wantisden
- Orford Ness–Shingle Street
- Stour and Orwell Estuary



Special Protection Areas

Strictly protected sites classified for rare and vulnerable birds as listed in the Birds Directive (1979), and for regularly occurring migratory species.

-  AONB Boundary
-  Additional project area
-  Alde-Ore Estuary
-  Benacre to Easton Bavents
-  Deben Estuary
-  Minsmere-Walberswick
-  Sandlings
-  Stour and Orwell Estuary

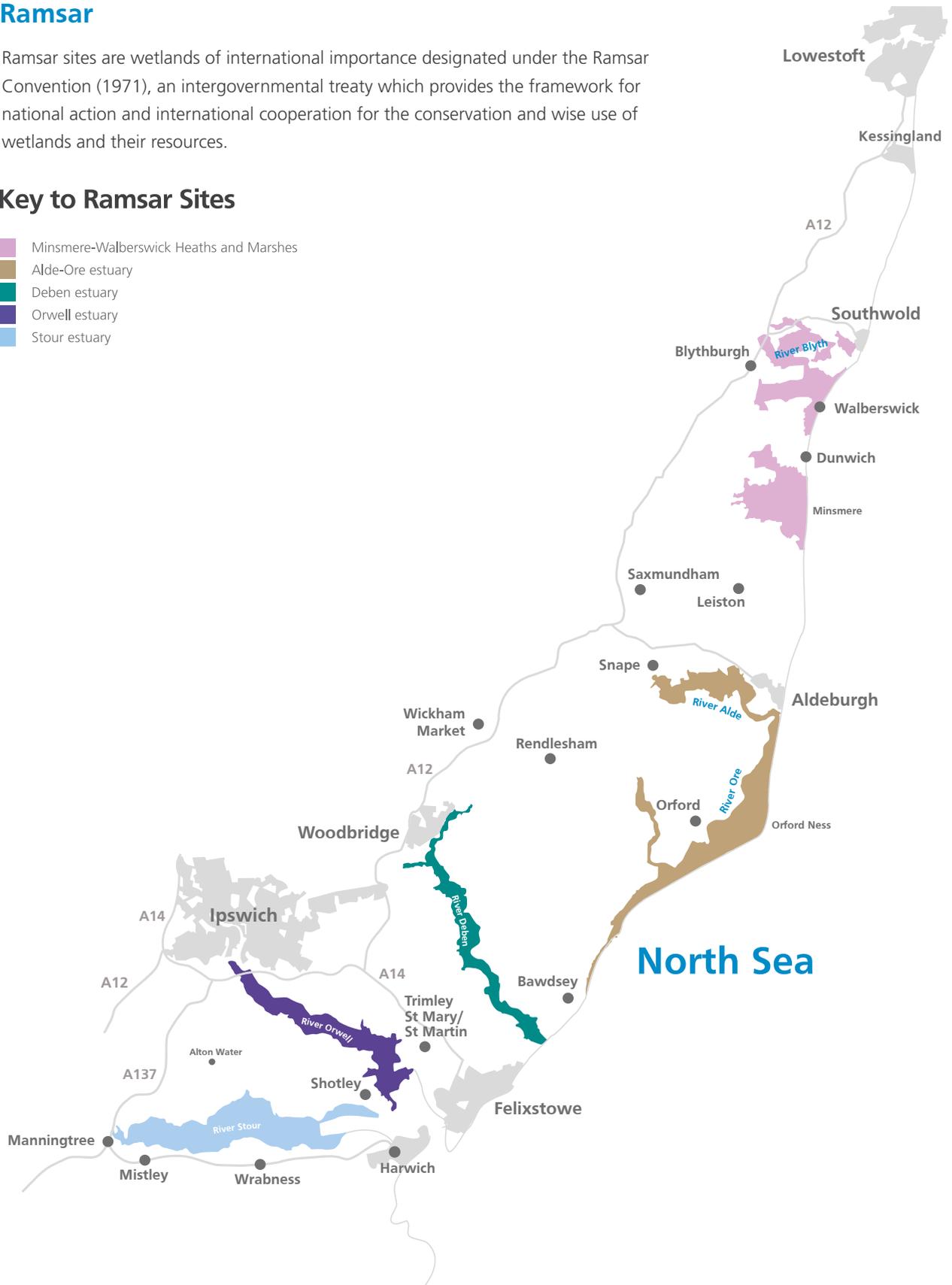


Ramsar

Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention (1971), an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

Key to Ramsar Sites

- Minsmere-Walberswick Heaths and Marshes
- Alde-Ore estuary
- Deben estuary
- Orwell estuary
- Stour estuary



Appendix B: Supporting Data

1. Landscape Character type (Source: SBIS)

Landscape character type	Area (ha)	% of AONB
Ancient estate claylands	685	1.69
Ancient estate farmlands	1,422	3.52
Coastal dunes	680	1.68
Coastal levels	6,348	15.74
Estate farmlands	7,457	18.49
Estate sandlands	15,423	38.25
Open coastal fens	488	1.2
Plateau claylands	1	0.002
Plateau estate farmlands	838	2.07
Plateau estate sandlands	392	0.97
Plateau farmlands	31	0.07
Rolling valley farmlands	673	1.66
Saltmarsh and intertidal flats	2,140	5.3
Urban	286	0.7
Valley meadowlands	353	0.87
Valley meadowlands and fens	432	1.07
Wooded fens	1,037	2.57
Wooded valley meadowlands	110	0.27
Estuaries	1,565	3.88



2. Main habitats (Source: SBIS)

N.B. Not comparable with data collated 2012 as Priority Habitats Inventory has replaced BAP habitat inventories.

Priority Habitats Inventory for England Version 2.1

Dataset Reference Date 24/10/2014 11/12/2015

This inventory replaces Natural England's previous separate BAP habitat inventories. This is a spatial dataset that describes the geographic extent and location of Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) Section 41 habitats of principal importance.

Main habitat	Area (ha) 2018	% of AONB
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	3256.40	8.03
Coastal saltmarsh	1045.98	2.58
Coastal sand dunes	35.60	0.09
Coastal vegetated shingle	568.40	1.40
Deciduous woodland	2555.98	6.31
Good quality semi-improved grassland	211.13	0.52
Lowland dry acid grassland	400.57	0.99
Lowland fens	159.37	0.39
Lowland heathland	1295.27	3.20
Lowland meadows	14.11	0.03
Maritime cliff and slope	49.72	0.12
Mudflats	1595.85	3.94
No main habitat but additional habitats present	2630.50	6.49
Purple moor grass and rush pastures	2.91	0.01
Reedbeds	354.54	0.87
Saline lagoons	73.54	0.18
Traditional orchard	3.61	0.01
TOTAL	14253.48	35.16
Total AONB area (ha)	40,537	

	Area (ha) 2018	Area (ha) of AONB	% of AONB 2018	Area (ha) 2012	% of AONB 2012	% increase since 2012	% decrease since 2012	% change since 2012
Lowland Heathland	2,819.23	40,537.34	6.95	2,626	6.48	7.36		7.36%

3. Wildlife designation (Source: SBIS)

N.B. There is considerable overlap between these designated areas. Totals were calculated by combining all datasets into one area of Wildlife Designations. Not comparable with previous Areas as it is not known if this was done at that time.

Wildlife Designation	Area (ha) 2018	% of AONB
County Wildlife Site	4,800	11.84
SAC	4,087	10.08
SPA	10,467	25.82
Ramsar	6,748	16.65
SSSI	11,487	28.34
Total	13,814	34.08
Total AONB area (ha)	40,537	

4. Condition of SSSIs (Source: SBIS)

CONDITION	SSSI area in AONB (ha) 2018	% of AONB 2018	% of SSSI 2018	SSSI area (ha) 2012	% of AONB 2012	% increase since 2012	% decrease since 2012	% change since 2012
Favourable	4,682	11.55	40.76	4,669	11.58	0.28		0.28%
Unfavourable Recovering	5,241	12.93	45.63	5,454	13.53		3.90	-3.90%
Unfavourable No Change	603	1.49	5.25	195	0.48	209.23		209.23%
Unfavourable Declining	952	2.35	8.29	1,104	2.74		13.78	-13.78%
Part Destroyed	5	0.01	0.05	3	0.01	77.93		77.93%
Destroyed	3	0.01	0.03					
Total	11,487	28.34	100	11,425	28.34			
Total AONB Area (Ha)	40,537							

5. Public and voluntary sector ownership of nature reserves and forests (Source: SBIS)

N.B. There is considerable overlap between these areas. Totals were calculated by combining all datasets into one area of Ownership.

Reserves/Forest	Area (ha) 2018	% of AONB	Number	Area (ha) in 2013 – 2018 Plan	% change
Local Nature Reserves	49	0.12	2	47	5.12%
National Nature Reserves	2,284	5.63	4	2,269	0.64%
Suffolk Wildlife Trust	1,471	3.63	21	1,449	1.52%
RSPB	2,106	5.19	6	2,042	3.11%
National Trust	895	2.21	4	915	-2.18%
Forestry Commission woodland	2,948	7.27	15	3,082	-4.34%
Natural England				1,053	
Total	8,120	20.03			
Total AONB area (ha)	40,537				

6. Land in agri-environment schemes (Source: Defra 2018)

Environmental Stewardship is an agri-environment scheme which provides funding to farmers and other land managers in England who deliver effective environmental management on their land. The scheme is now closed to new applications and has been replaced with the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Information on the Countryside Stewardship Scheme can be found at www.gov.uk.

Environmental Stewardship Options (2018)	Area (ha) within AONB	Number of agreements	% of AONB land area
Entry Level	1,534	14	3.78
Organic Entry Level + Higher Level	664	2	1.64
Higher Level	1,097	17	2.71
Entry Level + Higher Level	12,223	65	30.15
Total	15,518	98	38.28
Countryside Stewardship (2017)	288	6	0.71
Countryside Stewardship (2018)	352	8	0.87

7. Water abstraction (Source: EA)

Water abstraction licences, summary (as at September 2018)

Table 1:

Source type	Number of licences	Maximum annual authorised quantity (Megalitres)
Groundwater	71	4812.16
Surface water	87	7282.95
Total	158	12,095.11

Maximum annual authorised quantity reflects the quantity that can be abstracted under a licence within the authorised period of abstraction. The authorised quantity volume given does not take into account conditions which may restrict abstraction and/or any 'licence to licence' aggregate quantity conditions

Table 2:

Primary purpose of abstracted water: groundwater	Number of licences
Agriculture	61
Amenity	1
Industrial, Commercial and Public Services	9
Water supply	5
Primary purpose of abstracted water: surface water	Number of licences
Agriculture	83
Environmental	2
Industrial, Commercial and Public Services	2
Water supply	2

If a licence authorises abstraction for more than one purpose category it has been included in the count for each category. This is why the total number of licences in table 2 is greater than table 1.

Please refer to **Open Government Licence** which explains the permitted use of this information.

8. Estuarine and River Water Framework Directive Overall Status (Source: EA)

2016 Classification

Estuary	Total Area (km ²)	Classification Item		
		Overall Water Body Status	Ecological Status	Chemical Status
Blyth	3	Moderate	Moderate	Good
Alde-Ore	11	Moderate	Moderate	Good
Deben	8	Moderate	Moderate	Good
Orwell	13	Moderate	Moderate	Good
Stour	26	Moderate	Moderate	Good

River	Total River Length	River Length in AONB (km)	WFD Overall Status	Ecological Status	Chemical Status
Lothingland Hundred	12	11	Moderate	Moderate	Good
Easton Broad	8	4	Moderate	Moderate	Good
Wang	13	3	Moderate	Moderate	Good
Blyth	6	2	Moderate	Moderate	Good
Wenhaston Watercourse	7	1	Moderate	Moderate	Good
Minsmere Old River	21	4	Moderate	Moderate	Good
Leiston Beck	5	5	Moderate	Moderate	Good
Hundred River	11	4	Moderate	Moderate	Good
Butley	6	6	Good	Good	Good
Tang	4	4	Poor	Poor	Good
Shottisham Mill River	5	5	Moderate	Moderate	Good
Black Ditch Hollesley	4	4	Moderate	Moderate	Good

The above refers to the Water Framework Directive classification of the rivers and estuaries in the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB. The Water Framework Directive requires the Environment Agency to consider a broad range of environmental quality elements in each water body and to assign these with a status. The classification categories are high, good, moderate, poor and bad with overall ecological status being determined by the worst scoring element.

Full details of the classifications and the environmental factors monitored by the Environment Agency can be found at environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/

9. Public rights of way, open access (Source: SCC)

	2018		2012	
	km	% of total	km	% of total
Footpaths	496.45	74.73	471	71.6
Bridleways	106.69	16.06	117	17.8
Restricted Byways	28.80	4.34	30	4.6
Byways	32.36	4.87	40	6.1
Total	664.30	100	658	100
Open Access Land			4,311 (ha)	10.68

10. Economic impact of tourism (Source: Destination Research)

	2015	2017	Annual variation
Day trips volume	3,788,126	3,860,768	1.9%
Day trips value	£82,931,224	£84,496,075	1.9%
Overnight trips – number	302,000	306,600	1.5%
Number of nights	1,222,000	1,267,000	3.7%
Trip value	£70,302,000	£78,933,000	12.3%
Actual jobs	4,375	4,655	6.4%
Total value	£197,759,126	£210,068,409	6.2%

11. Heritage assets (Source: Defra)

Number of heritage assets within Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB

Historic England Statutory figures 2018

Listed Buildings Grade 1, 2 & 2*	676
Scheduled Monuments	40
Registered parks & gardens	2

Heritage at risk 2017

Listed Buildings at risk	2
Places of worship at risk	1
Scheduled monuments at risk	7
Registered Parks & Gardens at risk	1

County GeoSites (Source: SBIS 2017)

Area (ha)	% of AONB	Number	Area (ha) in 2012	% of AONB in 2012	Number in 2012	% change area (ha)
21	0.05	17	13	0.03	9	58%

Key

Defra	Department of environment, food and rural affairs
EA	Environment Agency
NE	Natural England
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SBIS	Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
Ramsar	Sites designated under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance

Appendix C: Monitoring Plan

It is important that we know how the key landscape habitats in AONBs are changing, for example, is heathland increasing or decreasing? The AONB is unlikely to have sufficient resources to regularly collect data itself and will primarily have to rely on data collection by individual partner organisations. However, there may be cases where a vital set of data is required as a clear indicator of success and progress. This will need to be part of a wider debate about creating the evidence base to ensure energy and resources are being directed effectively.

Currently, the range of data available is not ideal. There are differences in how it is collected, how easily it can be related to the AONB and the wider sample area, and how to measure some of the aspects of natural beauty that the AONB is seeking to influence.

There is likely to be a need for a regular picture of the 'health' of the AONB. This will create a better understanding of issues such as changes to habitats and landscape features, housing levels and visitor numbers. These are likely to be long-term trends and it may take longer than the current Plan period of five years before trends can be recognised.

Appendix D: Partnership operation and commitment

The AONB Management Plan is supported by a wide range of organisations that are committed to finding ways of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty and special qualities of the nationally designated landscape. By endorsing this Plan they are committing themselves to supporting the aims and objectives within it.

The AONB Partnership is the mechanism to enable the AONB Management Plan to be taken forward. The Partnership meets at least twice a year to take a strategic look at the management of the AONB – setting objectives as well as championing its conservation (even if at times a partner organisation may have conflicting needs to meet its own work aims and priorities). See p71 for a full list of Partnership organisations.

All public bodies and statutory undertakers have a duty to have regard to AONB objectives conferred by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, and should therefore seek to minimise, mitigate or compensate

where there is an overriding need to follow a different policy.

When endorsing the AONB Management Plan, the organisation is committing itself to providing annual information to the AONB team about progress in implementing the Plan.

The Partnership will provide advice to help the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) fulfil its role of conserving the AONB and oversee the activities of the AONB team. The JAC was formed by a Memorandum of Agreement between the funding local authorities and Defra to oversee the work of the AONB team and to meet the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requirements of the local authorities.

There is a growing need to make management decisions based on robust data. Detailed data is sometimes limited but the data that is available can indicate the worth or otherwise of delivering the Plan.

Members of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership:

Babergh District Council
Country Land and Business Association
The Crown Estate
Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs)
East Suffolk Council – as Suffolk Coastal District Council and Waveney District Council until 31 March 2019
Environment Agency
Essex County Council
Forestry Commission
Historic England
Ipswich Borough Council
National Farmers Union
National Trust
RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds)
Suffolk ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England)
SALC (Suffolk Association of Local Councils)
The Suffolk Coast Ltd
Suffolk Coast Against Retreat
Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB
Suffolk County Council
Suffolk Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
Suffolk Preservation Society
Suffolk Wildlife Trust
Tendring District Council







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