

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

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

Shared Principles:

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

Purpose of the statement

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

The historic and cultural environment is valuable for its own sake, but also generates jobs and attracts people to live and work in an area. It encourages businesses to invest and tourists to visit. It is a resource that needs to be used carefully and sustainably: a non-renewable resource, we lose or degrade it at our peril.

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

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

Areas of Collaboration

The 34 English AONBs agree to:

1. Incorporate objectives into AONB Management Plans relating to the understanding, conservation, enhancement, management and public engagement and enjoyment of the historic environment of AONBs.
2. Secure better understanding, conservation, management and interpretation of the historic environment of AONBs.
3. Seek appropriate advice from relevant agencies and local authority historic environment professionals on proposals or work that has relevance to the historic environment.
4. Ensure Historic England is updated on who the key AONB contacts are on an annual basis and ensure that Historic England is kept engaged in the direction and delivery of AONBs work.
5. Undertake collaborative working and actively pursue opportunities to improve the condition of heritage@risk and other heritage assets. AONBs will work with partners to monitor the historic environment and assist in the provision of data as to condition and trends together with evidence of positive intervention undertaken or instigated by AONBs.

Historic England agrees to:

1. Assist in developing AONB Management Plan historic environment objectives and any associated strategies and programmes through:
 - the provision of strategic advice, and
 - the periodic provision and review of statutory heritage data specific to AONBs.
2. Ensure that AONBs are fully reflected in the Historic England programmes of research and characterisation in order to enhance the opportunities for Historic England and AONB partnerships and secure better understanding, conservation, management and interpretation of the historic environment of AONBs.

3. Ensure each AONB is updated on who their key Historic England contacts are and ensure that AONBs are kept engaged in the priorities and delivery of Historic England's work.

The NAAONB agrees to:

1. Provide key contact details for AONB units to Historic England on an annual basis through the collaborative platform – the National Landscapes Forum.

2. Encourage NAAONB members and others to incorporate objectives into AONB Management Plans relating to the understanding, conservation, and public engagement and enjoyment of the historic environment of AONBs.

3. Encourage NAAONB members and others to secure better understanding, conservation, management, and interpretation of the historic environment of AONBs.

4. Encourage NAAONB members and others to Seek appropriate advice from relevant agencies and local authority historic environment professionals on proposals or work that has relevance to the historic environment.

5. Encourage NAAONB members and others to Work to integrate their activities with those relevant activities of Historic England.

National Action Plan

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

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

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

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

Application of the statement

This statement applies to the 34 AONBs in England. It has effect from [\[replace with revised date\]](#) will be monitored annually and reviewed (along with the Action Plan)

every 5 years by the parties. The Statement does not affect the statutory duties of the respective organisations.

Parties to the statement

Historic England

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

They do this by:

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

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

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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

There are 34 AONBs in England, created by the legislation of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949. Protection of AONBs was further enhanced by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000 (CRoW2000).

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

The primary purpose of AONB designation is to **conserve** and **enhance** the natural beauty of the area. Social and economic development which contributes to the natural beauty of the AONB is encouraged so that communities are strengthened, and the experiences for locals and visitors alike are improved.

AONBs are designated because of their individual qualities. These include their flora, fauna, historical and cultural associations as well as scenic views. They are living and working landscapes that have been, and continue to be, shaped by nature and human activity.

Arnside & Silverdale
Blackdown Hills
Cannock Chase
Chichester Harbour
Chilterns
Cornwall
Cotswolds
Cranborne Chase
Dedham Vale
Dorset
East Devon
Forest of Bowland
High Weald
Howardian Hills
Isle of Wight
Isles of Scilly
Kent Downs
Lincolnshire Wolds
Malvern Hills
Mendip Hills
Nidderdale
Norfolk Coast
North Devon
North Pennines
North Wessex Downs
Northumberland Coast
Quantock Hills
Shropshire Hills
Solway Coast
South Devon
Suffolk Coast and Heaths
Surrey Hills
Tamar Valley
Wye Valley

The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) was formed in 1998 as an independent organisation to act on behalf of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England and Wales

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

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

The NAAONB

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