



Isle of Wight
area of outstanding
natural beauty

An Introduction

to the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding
Natural Beauty Management Plan 2009-2014

Coastal erosion at Compton Bay
© Natural England - Photographer: Joe Low



Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. They are treasured places in England and Wales, where the landscape is considered worthy of protection by law for future generations.

The primary purpose of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation is the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty (which includes wildlife and cultural heritage as well as scenery). However, the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and the social and economic needs of the local communities are also important considerations.

The Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty was designated in 1963. It covers about half the Island and is made up of five distinct land parcels. Following the increased profile and protection afforded to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000, the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) and the Isle of Wight Council signed a Memorandum of Agreement setting out a new partnership approach to managing this valued designation. The Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership was formed in April 2002, and is jointly funded by the Isle of Wight Council and Natural England. The Partnership has representatives from many local, regional and national organisations and individuals with a direct interest in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Our Vision

“In 2025, the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has become nationally renowned as an important and treasured landscape. People, who live, work and visit the area value, appreciate and understand its special qualities and support its continued conservation and enhancement. People are able to experience ‘Dark Skies’ and peace and tranquillity as part of the experience of living and working in, or visiting the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Seascapes remain an important part of the character of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its Heritage Coasts.

Information on the natural and historic environment and landscape has enabled us to ensure that decisions and policies taken have conserved and enhanced the special characteristics of the Island’s finest landscapes, giving the AONB a strong identity and ‘sense of place’.

Farming and woodland management remain central to the beauty of the landscape. Local processing facilities and markets provide essential incomes, and allow sustainable approaches to farming and land management that conserve and enhance the AONB.

The continuation of customs, traditions and the use of dialect and local place names has added to the quality of life of local communities, and to the quality of experience for visitors.

New technologies have been accommodated through careful consideration and mitigation for their impact upon the AONB, bringing economic and social benefits and retaining the intrinsic special qualities of the environment.

Public transport, the use of non-motorised routes and the availability of goods and services in local communities, has created less dependence on the private car for transport within the AONB.

Economic benefit has been brought directly to local communities through sustainable tourism and business activities.”

The Management Plan

One of the core functions of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership is to produce and review a Management Plan. As well as being a legal requirement it is also an opportunity to draw together all interested parties to generate long-term visions for the area. The overall aim is to ensure continuity and consistency of management over time, to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape for the use and enjoyment of future generations.

The Management Plan outlines the policies, actions and objectives for the management of the Island's Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The special qualities of the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are many, contrasting, varied and inspiring. They contribute greatly to the quality of life and well-being of local communities and visitors. To enable a more structured approach to facilitate the long-term management of the designation, we have separated the different components that form and shape the landscape.

These fall into nine broad themes:

- 01 Landscape Character
- 02 Earth Heritage
- 03 Wildlife
- 04 Historic Environment
- 05 Climate Change
- 06 Living and Working - Communities and Development
- 07 Living and Working - Rural Economy
- 08 Traffic and Transport
- 09 Visiting and Enjoying

01 Landscape and Character

The Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has a complex and diverse landscape. Landscape Character is 'a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another.'

OUR POLICIES FOR LANDSCAPE AND CHARACTER:

LC-P1 Promote the outstanding natural beauty and special character of the AONB landscape to all audiences.

LC-P2 Ensure changes to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty landscape are researched, recorded and monitored.

LC-P3 Ensure the outstanding natural beauty and special characteristics of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty landscape are given due consideration in all policies, strategies, regulatory processes and other activities.

KEY ACTIONS FOR LANDSCAPE AND CHARACTER:

The development of Management Zones and review of Landscape Character Assessments.

Support the West Wight Landscape Partnership in delivery of their Heritage Lottery Funding Programme.

Dissemination of 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Discovery' or similar educational programmes to schools.

Photographic monitoring programme.

Joint initiative on 'Dark Skies'.



02 Earth Heritage

Earth Heritage is a term given to the physical resources of the environment and natural processes, including: rocks, soils and minerals, erosion, weathering, fossils, water and air.

OUR POLICIES FOR EARTH HERITAGE:

EH-P1 Promote the outstanding earth heritage resource of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to all audiences.

EH-P2 Ensure changes to the earth heritage resource of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are researched, recorded and monitored.

EH-P3 Ensure the earth heritage resource is given due consideration in all policies, strategies, regulatory processes and other activities.

KEY ACTIONS FOR EARTH HERITAGE:

Support the further development of the Local Geodiversity Action Plan.

Input into key documents - Shoreline Management Plan, Water Catchment Management Plans, Waste and Minerals Development Plan Document.

Support continued investigations into Geopark aspirations for the Isle of Wight coastline.

Support initiatives to increase understanding of the value of the earth heritage resource.

Undertake an audit of quarry sites within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to identify their extent, condition, current and potential use and impact.

03 Wildlife

The value of the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for wildlife is reflected in the number of statutory and non-statutory designations of regional, national and international importance for nature conservation. The rich biodiversity is due to the varied geology, landform and ongoing natural processes.

OUR POLICIES FOR WILDLIFE:

W-P1 Promote the outstanding wildlife resource of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to all audiences.

W-P2 Ensure changes to the wildlife of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are researched, recorded and monitored.

W-P3 Ensure wildlife is given due consideration in all policies, strategies, regulatory processes and other activities.

KEY ACTIONS FOR WILDLIFE:

Contribute to the promotion and delivery of Biodiversity Action Plan.

Contribute towards the attainment of 'favourable condition' status of Sites of Special Scientific Interest within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Develop opportunities to incorporate Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty messages in wildlife partner activities.

Support initiatives to increase awareness and understanding of wildlife and engender responsible behaviour to protect it.

Initiate a data research audit and facilitate projects to overcome gaps in knowledge.

Six-spot burnet moth
© IW AONB Unit - Photographer Carrie McDowell



Cottages at Shorwell
© Natural England - Photographer Joe Low



04 The Historic Environment

The complexity of the landscape within the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a legacy of the intricate relationship between people and place throughout time. The historic environment comprises archaeology, the built environment and the historic landscape.

OUR POLICIES FOR THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT:

HE-P1 Promote the outstanding historic environment resource of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to all audiences.

HE-P2 Ensure changes to the historic environment of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are researched, recorded and monitored.

HE-P3 Ensure the historic environment is given due consideration in all policies, strategies, regulatory processes and other activities.

KEY ACTIONS FOR THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT:

Contribute to the promotion and delivery of the Historic Environment Action Plan.

Use the Historic Landscape Characterisation as a key component in the establishment of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Zones.

Identify joint initiatives to increase evidence base and understanding of the Historic Environment.

Investigate opportunities for Study Project(s) combining Landscape and Historic Environment - i.e. traditional skills programme highlighting traditional ploughing, woodland practices, etc.

Advocate proposals for the sensitive management of the Historic Environment.

05 Climate Change

Over the last few years the issue of climate change has become of increasing importance, and is now considered one of the most pressing threats to the natural environment and the economy.

Climate change will have influence on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty landscapes over the long term. There are likely to be changes to the landscape character, earth heritage, wildlife and the rural economy.

OUR POLICIES FOR CLIMATE CHANGE:

CC-P1 Promote how the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty can potentially contribute to mitigation and adaptation to climate change to all audiences.

CC-P2 Ensure changes to adaptation and mitigation to climate change are researched, recorded and monitored.

CC-P3 Ensure climate change and its influence on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are given due consideration in all policies, strategies, regulatory processes and other activities.

KEY ACTIONS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE:

Investigate ways to model potential climate change in land management within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Support initiatives that encourage changes in behaviour to take greater account of human impacts on climate.

Support the inclusion of appropriate renewable approaches within all new built development.

Investigate practical programmes that assist in understanding the management required for sensitive adaptation as species and habitats change, and highlight best practice.

Identify Ecosystem services provided by the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty that can contribute to mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change.



06 Communities and Development

Over the centuries the landscape of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has been shaped by the activities of local people, who in turn were dependent on the land for their livelihoods.

Sympathetic development within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, reflecting appropriate vernacular style and materials, will ensure the conservation and enhancement of its unique sense of place. There is a need to take into account the high sensitivity of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty landscape when considering development, yet also maintain healthy and vibrant local communities and enable access to goods and services. Working with communities can lead to new and innovative approaches in resolving local problems.

OUR POLICIES FOR COMMUNITIES AND DEVELOPMENT:

CD-01 Promote the importance of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation and its relationship with people to all audiences.

CD-02 Ensure changes impacting on Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty communities are researched, recorded and monitored.

CD-03 Support sustainable approaches to development and ensure the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation is given due consideration in all policies, strategies, regulatory processes and other activities.

CD-04 Encourage greater involvement by local communities in the conservation and enhancement and decision making processes of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

KEY ACTIONS FOR COMMUNITIES AND DEVELOPMENT:

Ensure Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty considerations are in all relevant Island Plan documents.

Use the Sustainable Development Fund, Rural Development Programme for England and the LEADER method of delivery and other funding streams, to encourage innovative projects for sustainable living in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Work with Town and Parish Councils to ensure appropriate inclusion and consideration of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty landscape, within Parish Plans and Village Design Statements.

Endorse programmes that highlight best practice in living and working in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Carry out an assessment of renewable resources within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Tractor, Arretton Down
© Natural England - Photographer: Joe Law



07 Rural Economy - Farming, Woodland Management and other Rural Business

Farmers and land managers play a major role in the conservation and enhancement of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. More than 80% of the land area of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is farmed. The future of the Island's finest landscapes is linked to the economic well-being of the farming community and viability of woodland management.

Island status and the cost of transport to access processing and markets on the mainland have a major economic impact on the viability of farming and forestry within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Opportunities to create local processing and outlets for produce and products will reduce costs and potentially increase incomes.

It will be very important for the economic health of our rural economy to ensure the continuation of a wide range of economic activity.

OUR POLICIES FOR THE RURAL ECONOMY:

RE-P1 Promote the importance of farming and woodland management to the landscape of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to all audiences.

RE-P2 Ensure that changes impacting upon the rural economy are researched, recorded and monitored.

RE-P3 Ensure that farming, woodland management practice and rural enterprise within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which conserve and enhance, are encouraged, supported, researched, recorded and monitored.

RE-P4 Ensure the development of local skills, markets and processing facilities to safeguard the economic viability of farming and forestry within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

KEY ACTIONS FOR THE RURAL ECONOMY:

Support and promotion of the Rural Development Programme for England and the LEADER method of delivery, to add value to agricultural and forestry products and encourage micro-business development.

Advocacy of Environmental Stewardship programmes and Woodland Grant and Joining and Increasing Grant Scheme for Ancient Woodland Schemes.

Support programmes that seek to increase processing facilities for farmers, landowners and woodland managers.

Support programmes that seek to remedy issues relating to fallen stock.

Encourage businesses to locate in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and encourage rural manufacturing to move into higher value, knowledge based activities.

Encourage working patterns and practices allowing individuals to work from home in rural areas. Support the development of flexible working practices to meet the needs of the employer and the employee, keeping the early retired in employment where desired and appreciating / understanding the value they can offer businesses.

08 Traffic and Transport

The highways network provides access to the diverse landscapes across the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It provides the means for transporting goods and access to many services for people who live and work in, or visit the area.

The rights of way network, and to some extent the minor and unclassified road network, are often key features in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty landscape. The Isle of Wight's Rights Of Way Network offers opportunities for access on foot, horse and cycle to a good proportion of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

OUR POLICIES FOR TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT:

TT-01 Promote the contribution Transport, Highways and Rights of Way networks make to local distinctiveness and as a means of access to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

TT-02 Ensure that impact from and changes to: Transport, Highways and Rights of Way Networks, affecting the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are researched, recorded and monitored.

TT-03 Ensure the importance of the special character and local distinctiveness of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is given due consideration in all policies, strategies and highways maintenance and improvement programmes.

TT-04 Support sustainable transport initiatives affecting the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

KEY ACTIONS FOR TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT:

Development of protocol with highways.

Research traffic management initiatives, including verge parking, car park provision and the availability of public transport as an alternative.

Identify opportunities to enhance current transport networks, enabling greater access to the countryside and between settlements within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Promote the value of accessing the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for health and well-being.

Alverstone Mead
© IW AONB Unit - Photographer Carrie McDowell



09 Visiting & Enjoying

The Isle of Wight is well known as a destination for tourists, and is most often associated with more traditional seaside holidays and the international Cowes Week sailing regatta.

The Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty can offer a distinct marketable resource, encompassing all the natural, historic and cultural elements that make visiting and enjoying the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty a memorable experience. Tourism contributes 28% of the Gross Domestic Product of the Island, and in the high season provides approximately 25% of the total employment opportunities. The importance of tourism to the economic and social well-being of the local community needs to be balanced with conservation and enhancement of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

OUR POLICIES FOR VISITING AND ENJOYING:

VE-01 Promote responsible enjoyment of the landscape of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty through an increased understanding of its complexity, value and management.

VE-02 Ensure that changes in leisure, sports and recreational activities affecting the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and any impacts from these are researched, recorded and monitored.

VE-03 Support sustainable initiatives to visiting and enjoying the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and ensure the purpose of the designation is given due consideration in all tourism and recreational policies, strategies and approaches.

VE-04 Encourage people visiting and enjoying the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to act responsibly in order to conserve and enhance its special qualities.

KEY ACTIONS FOR VISITING AND ENJOYING:

Contribute to schemes that promote sustainable practice in business and recreation.

South East Protected Landscapes Regional Tourism Project.

Work with Isle of Wight Tourism, Chamber of Commerce and other partners, to promote the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as part of the marketing of the Isle of Wight as a destination.

Work with accommodation providers - provide simple information introducing land management to facilitate greater understanding of the countryside.

Work to identify how tourism and leisure activities are changing and what this means to Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Cycle Stand, Island Chines Project
© Natural England - Photographer Joe Low



Isle of Wight AONB Unit

Seaclose Offices, Fairlee Road, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 2QS

Telephone: 01983 823855 Fax: 01983 823850

E-mail: unit@wightaonb.org.uk Web: www.wightaonb.org.uk

© The Isle of Wight AONB Partnership Designed by Pepper Creative Tel 01983 529039 www.peppercreative.co.uk

