



Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Farming in Protected Landscapes - our Priorities

The Isle of Wight AONB is a landscape protected by law under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and reaffirmed in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The designation seeks to conserve and enhance the natural beauty (including wildlife and cultural heritage as well as scenery) of the designated area. As part of our statutory duties a Management Plan is produced every five years which states how the designation can be conserved and enhanced and informs the annual budget and business plans.

DEFRA, as part of their role in supporting farmers through financial support and grants, and as a response to the Glover Review of landscape designations, has launched a grant programme targeted at protected landscapes in England – National Parks and AONBs. The grants will be used by applicants to further the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty through four themes :

- Climate
- Nature
- People
- Place

Applications will be expected to help achieve AONB priorities in these themes and the priorities below.

Advice and guidance

AONB staff will be on hand to provide advice and guidance to applicants and AONB priorities are listed below, following the AONB Management Plan 2019 – 2024 AONB management plan web.pdf (peppercreative.net).

Nature

- Support proposals that will improve the management of wildlife habitats e.g. reinstate traditional management of neglected flower-rich grasslands or reduce management intensity where heavily grazed and fertilised.
- Create habitats that will extend and buffer wildlife sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC).
- Link habitats or create 'stepping-stones' where wildlife sites are isolated and surrounded by unfavourable land management.
- Reinststate the management of ancient woodlands including coppicing, small scale selective harvesting and the restoration of extraction rides.
- Upgrade the network of hedgerows by coppicing, laying and new planting with light touch bi-annual trimming.
- Encourage agri-environment practices that will help the re-introduction of species that enhance Island biodiversity.

(See. AONB plan Chapter 8, P.42-47)

Farming

- Support sustainable farm practices that protect soil, keep water clean and minimise air pollution.
- Encourage the production of healthy foods that can be processed and marketed locally with minimal 'food miles'.
- Address climate change by adjusting land management to optimise carbon sequestration and reduce dependency upon energy intensive inputs such as diesel and inorganic fertiliser.
- Help to change land management practices (cultivated soils and grazed pastures) to reduce erosion and flooding.
- Support farmer networks to enable information exchange, the sharing of machinery/labour and where the exchange of surplus forage and organic manures etc. can bring benefits such as improving soil health and reducing grazing intensity.

(See. AONB plan Chapter 9, P.48-52)

Forestry

- Encourage the harvesting and processing of timber products for local marketing.
- Reinstate woodland management that sustains long-term productivity, conserves wildlife interest and maintains landscape value.
- Support tree planting/restocking that makes best use of natural regeneration and nursery grown trees sourced as close to the Island where possible.
- Encourage the establishment of an Island tree nursery to supply trees adapted to the Island soils and climate.

(See. AONB plan Chapter 10, P.53-55)

Historic Environment

- Take action to protect above and below ground archaeological features to ensure their long-term preservation.
- Restore and repair historic features that contribute to the understanding of Island culture.
- Provide interpretive material to improve the enjoyment and understanding of archaeological/ historical features and buildings.
- Encourage historical research leading to the production of information accessible via electronic means and publications.

(See. AONB plan Chapter11 , P.56-60)

Tourism

- Help businesses and organisations to fully realise the potential of the IWAONB as part of their sustainable tourism offer (16 Tourism p78)
- Support tourism that treads lightly upon the Island's natural environment, produces minimal waste and promotes activities that have a minimal requirement for the consumption of fossil fuels.

(See. AONB plan Chapter 16, P.78-80)

Access and recreation

- Enable permissive access routes to provide connections that can enhance the rights of way network.
- Make surfaced highways more safe, pleasant, and inviting to users on foot, cycle or horse.

(See. AONB plan Chapter 17, 81-85)

What opportunities might be available for a theoretical 'ideal' AONB farm when applying for the grant?

The farm has an old meadow full of wildflowers, but it is getting scrubbed over and the fences have fallen down. Help is available to pay for new fences, a field gate and water supply with trough along with an annual payment to get it grazed or cut for hay. Alongside is another field which could receive a payment where less intensive grazing and no fertiliser applications would make it more attractive to wildlife. These fields lie along side an SSSI which would be in a better condition by being buffered from any fertiliser run-off or spray drift.

The farm has a wetland and some ponds, but these are separated by arable fields. By establishing a wide grass margin these habitats can be connected to produce a corridor for wildlife.

The farm's woodland is small and heavily shaded so the spring flowers no longer show. The grant could help open up some paths and rides or coppicing patches of overgrown hazel. Oaks could be thinned and harvested for fence posts or firewood.

Although the farm has plenty of hedgerows, they have become weak and provide little shelter or shade for livestock. A schedule of coppicing, planting-up gaps or laying would strength the pattern of field boundaries within the AONB landscape. New hedges could re-connect missing sections.

A steep sandy field beside the farm's river is often sown with maize and soil erosion is a regular problem. To prevent soil loss a wide grass buffer will be sown against the river to prevent any erosion or the leaching of nitrate.

With the demand for local food, the farmer will be reducing the area of arable crops and investing in a rare breed beef herd to be sold on the Island in a farm shop. Increasing his area of permanent grassland will help store more carbon on the farm and reduce the likelihood of flooding where water off his fields can drain towards neighbouring properties.

He has invited a group of his nearby farmers to work together sharing min-till kit, exchanging information about production techniques and contributing to the supply of finished beef animals. He is to provide straw to a nearby livestock farmer and, in return, receive farmyard manure to improve soil health.

The grant could help the farm make much more economic use of its larger woodland. By making a management plan the stock of trees could be assessed so that a viable quantity of timber could be thinned, and the area re-stocked by planting or natural regeneration. As the farmer can see there is a demand for locally grown trees, he uses the grant to establish a nursery.

The farm has a field with a bronze-age barrow but it is being damaged by rabbits and scrub. A local historian could be paid with the grant to survey the barrow and help the farmer with background information. The grant would help get the barrow properly preserved along with a discreet interpretive sign so that walkers can learn about the feature. Another underground feature is being eroded by ploughing so the farm is paid to keep it under grass cover. Within the farmyard is an old sheep-wash where the stonework needs some re-building. It could be restored with the grant to pay a local builder to make the necessary repairs.

To diversify the farm income the use of a redundant stone barn might attract a grant. Finance could help make good any structural repairs and then use the building as a classroom, bunkhouse or tearoom. The historic building is then preserved and has a new use to keep it in good condition.

In conjunction with a camp site the farmer receives a payment to install solar panels to heat water in his shower block and a compost toilet to minimise the environmental impact of visitors. The campers and walkers using the public bridleways have to negotiate a busy road so the farm provides a permissive route away from road traffic, all funded by the grant.

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