



# Isle of Wight National Landscape

## Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2025 - 2030

**Draft April 2024**

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## Setting the Context

### ***Purpose of AONB Designation***

Consecutive Governments have recognised the value of protected landscapes. However, the pressures faced by AONBs have changed since their conception in the late 1940s. Natural England (formerly the Countryside Agency) is the national body with responsibility for designating AONBs. In 2001, a Countryside Agency publication stated:

*The primary purpose of designation is the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty (which includes wildlife and cultural heritage, as well as scenery).*

*In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and the social and economic needs of local communities.*

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

*The designation helps to protect not just the natural features - the trees, fields and open spaces - but also settlements and working environments that are unique characteristics of the countryside.*

*The designation allows for the development of communities and economic activity including rural businesses, in ways that further enhance the character of the AONB.*

### ***Statutory Duties for Managing an AONB***

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act) strengthened the profile and protection of AONBs. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 amended this legislation to increase protection. In particular, the Act:

In exercising or performing **any functions** in relation to, or **so as to affect, land** in any Protected Landscape in England, a relevant authority other than a devolved Welsh authority **must seek to further the specified purpose[s]**

- Grants a power to the Secretary of State to make regulations to;
- directs a relevant authority in the discharging of the duty,
- requires a protected landscape management plan to contribute to meeting of any target set under Chapter 1 of Part 1 of the Environment Act 2021,
- sets out how a management plan must further the purposes of the designation,
- requires and sets out how a relevant authority must contribute to the preparation, implementation and review of a management plan,
- Provides flexibility to the Secretary of State in the making of these regulations.

***The Isle of Wight AONB***

The Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty was designated in 1963. Consisting of five land parcels across the land mass of the county, the AONB covers 191 sq Km of the Isle of Wight. In November 2023 the AONBs were rebranded as National Landscapes though the designation in legislation remained 'AONB'. For more detail on the special qualities of the designation see our website

[www.wightaonb.org.uk](http://www.wightaonb.org.uk)

***Isle of Wight National Landscapes Partnership***

Core functions of the Isle of Wight AONB Partnership are:

- Produce and review an AONB Management Plan.
- Raise awareness and appreciation of the AONB.
- Encourage people to take account of the AONB when carrying out any actions that might impact upon it.
- Monitor and report on the management of the AONB.
- Promote sustainable forms of social and economic development that conserves and enhances the AONB. This includes commenting on development control and planning policy issues

***Heritage Coast***

The Tennyson Heritage Coast runs for 34Km, along the south, south-west and part of the north-west coast, from Steephill Cove in Ventnor to Widdick Chine in Totland and is completely within the National Landscape. The Hamstead Heritage Coast runs from Bouldnor near Yarmouth to Thorness Bay near Gurnard along the northwest coast and, apart from a small area near Gurnard, is completely within the National Landscape.

***Management Plan***

One of the core functions of the National Landscape 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 of the Isle of Wight National Landscape 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 designated landscape. The special qualities of the Isle of Wight National Landscape are many, contrasting, varied and inspiring. They contribute greatly to the quality of life and well-being of local communities and visitors.

***Management Plan Review***

The Management Plan review is required to take place within five years of the previous Management Plan, which comes to its conclusion in 2025. With this in mind, this SEA Scoping document is the first part of the fourth statutory review of the Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan.

**Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA)**

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA regulations) which in turn, is derived from the European Directive 2001/42/EC (known as the SEA Directive). The SEA Regulations require the assessment of plans and programmes which are likely to have significant environmental effects.

SEAs are an effective way to ensure that potential environmental impacts of the policies, objectives and actions are assessed during the plan making process. Appraisal of these along with consideration of options and alternative courses of action during the plan's development should ensure avoidance or mitigation of any adverse effects.

There are five main stages of SEA process:

- STAGE A Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope.
- STAGE B developing and refining alternatives and assessing effects.
- STAGE C preparing an environmental report.
- STAGE D Consulting on draft plan and environmental report.
- STAGE E Monitoring significant effects of implementing the plan on the environment.

This environmental report has been compiled in parallel with the production of the 2025 – 2030 Management Plan. The thrust of this document is Stage A the setting of context, objectives, baseline and deciding on the scope.

The purpose of a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is to accommodate the wide variety of environmental, social and economic sustainability issues which are considered within the Management Plan but would not otherwise be considered as part of a SEA. The two processes have been combined within this Report.

**Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**

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**The SEA methodology**

The methodology used in this document and subsequent SEA documents have been adapted from the 2018 Scoping Report for the last Management Plan 2019 – 2024. Consideration has also been given by the Isle of Wight Council Planning Policy Department, Natural England and other statutory agencies. The implementation of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive requirements for the Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan Review will conform to the guidance provided by Natural England (July 2007). It will also be guided by reference to good practice examples (e.g. Suffolk Coast and Heaths, 2007) and by the "Practical Guide to Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive" ODPM 2005.

The SEA will be developed in a parallel and iterative manner alongside the review of the AONB Management Plan. The process will be led by the National Landscape team, steered and reviewed by the National Landscapes Steering Group including representatives of Local Authority, Statutory Bodies and the portfolioholders. The various stages of the document will also be made available alongside the consultation versions of the reviewed AONB Management Plan, for review and comment from stakeholders.

The SEA is an iterative process and will be revised to reflect changes recommended through the internal Partnership and the public consultation process.

### ***Taking Natural Capital into account – Landscape Resources***

The 2025 – 2030 Management Plan will continue to adopt an Ecosystems Approach taking into account the adopted Targets and Outcomes produced from the UK Government’s ‘Environmental Improvement Plan. For the 2025 – 2030 Plan these concepts have been developed further to encompass Natural Capital.

Natural Capital are the elements of nature that directly or indirectly produce value to people, including ecosystems, species, freshwater, land, minerals, the air and oceans, as well as natural processes and functions. Natural capital is a broad term that includes many different components of the living and non-living natural environment, as well as the processes and functions that link these components and sustain life.

Natural Capital is discussed in terms of assets. Any capital asset has the capacity to produce goods and services. Natural capital is simply those assets provided by nature with the capacity to generate ecosystem goods and ecosystem services. Natural Capital can be regarded as the source of all other types of capital: whether manufactured, financial, human or social.

Natural Capital comprises individual assets, such as ecological communities, species, soils, land, freshwaters, minerals, sub-soil resources, oceans, the atmosphere, and the natural processes that underpin their functioning. Often the pathways linking these assets to goods and services that benefit humans is complex.

### ***Ecosystem Services***

An ecosystem is a dynamic mix of plant, animal, and microorganism communities and the non-living environment interacting as a functional unit. Humans are an integral part of ecosystems. The Ecosystem Approach looks to place a value of the services or benefits provided by the natural environment (the ecosystems) on a level footing with classic market goods like cars, housing *etc.* In combination with the overall ecosystem, the Isle of Wight National Landscape is a working landscape and a part of a vibrant myriad of ecosystems, which provide the essentials for life on the Island, both for wildlife and for humans. The natural environment gives those who live on the Island clean air, water; enables the production of food, fuel and raw materials; on a wider scale it plays a part in Britain’s role in regulating climate, pollution and waste. It also gives us benefits on an individual level from increasing our health and happiness, through outdoor adventure, play and innovation. These benefits to the Isle of Wight community, each derived from the attributes and processes within the Isle of Wight National Landscape, are known collectively as ‘ecosystem services’.

An Ecosystem Approach looks to advance a better understanding of the value ecosystem services provide. Many Ecosystem Services are overlooked from local decision making, by taking an Ecosystems Approach all benefits derived from the landscape should be taken into account. Wherever possible this document and the Management Plan have referred to ‘Embedding the Ecosystem Approach into existing landscape scale or area-based partnership delivery Natural England’s Ecosystems Guidance’ Natural England’s internal guidance for ecosystem services. While an Ecosystem Approach has been reflected for the SEA Scoping Report and for the SEA, neither document represents a comprehensive ecosystem assessment. The documents provide a considered inventory of ecosystem and non-ecosystem services and an overview of their environmental considerations.

The main themes of an SEA are: Biodiversity, Population, Human Health, Water, Soil, Air, Climatic Factors, Cultural Heritage and Landscape and Material Assets. The overarching Ecosystem Approach will influence the objectives and priorities of the Management Plan and help identify any shortcomings in the knowledge baseline.

### ***Other Capital Inputs***

Other Capital inputs such as; the local population and its demographic as well as the local built infrastructure for access, transport, recreation, electricity and information, have an impact on how people use the landscape, but are not derived from the local ecosystems.

### **Ecosystem accounts**

As with Natural Capital each habitat can be thought of as an asset supplying a number of ecosystem services which the economy and society benefit from. The ecosystem accounts monitor the size and condition of these assets and also the quantity and value of the services supplied.

The Ecosystem Account outlines the size of the area covered by each habitat (extent account), indicators of the quality of the ecosystem and ability to continue supplying services (condition account), quantity and value of services supplied by the ecosystem (physical and monetary ecosystem service flow accounts) and value of the asset, which represents the stream of services expected to be provided over the lifetime of the asset (monetary asset account). While within this report it is prudent to highlight the different accounts, this is not an exhaustive assessment of the value of the accounts.

### ***STAGE A Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope.***

The SEA Scoping document outlined the environmental matters relevant to the AONB and its primary purpose, and identified the baseline data with which to assess the likely impacts of AONB Management Plan objectives and policies. The development of the Scoping report was an iterative process starting in February 2022.

### ***STAGE B developing and refining alternatives and assessing effects.***

The environmental concerns within the Scoping Report reflect the breadth of environment, social and economic issues pertinent to Isle of Wight AONB and the Management Plans policies and objectives. Throughout the development of the Management Plan consultation phases the objectives and policies have been placed under scrutiny by both the partnership and Government Agencies with consideration given to potential adversely impacts on the landscape and the ongoing sustainability of the communities living and working within the designated area.

Following a review of the draft policies, it was considered by the National Landscape team that no negative effects on the environmental or sustainability objectives could be substantiated, so no alternative policies have been developed or assessed. The policies were opened to public comment in June 2024.

### ***STAGE C preparing the environmental report.***

#### ***Identifying other relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives.***

This section sets out to establish how the Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan is affected by outside factors, to suggest ideas for how any constraints can be addressed, and to help to identify SEA objectives. The review of relevant plans and policies has been undertaken with the help of the main partner organisations. The scope for this work has considered which directives, plans and strategies influence aspects of the AONB and may result in a need to revise the Management Plans policies and objectives. Often the documents are further refined by interpretation at a 'lower level' (e.g. national strategies translated into regional or local strategies). The Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan seeks to be a summary and reflection of local policies and actions the scoping

review has often been directed at the most pertinent local level documents (e.g. local plans reflecting national Planning guidance).

A high level review of documents has helped identify the SEA objectives and a more detailed review of the relevant documents will inform any revisions to the AONB Management Plan policies and policy objectives.

The list of documents reviewed can be found in Appendix 1.

### ***Collecting Baseline Information***

The environmental baseline presents an overview of known data about the AONB which is relevant to the AONB management. Where knowledge gaps exist, it is hoped ongoing consultation and partnership working will provide suitable data. However, if there is no known baseline data, it will become an objective of this SEA to develop a methodology of assessing the service as part of the 2025 – 2030 Management Plan delivery. Where data is at an Island-wide scale, which cannot be broken down to Isle of Wight AONB, level, this will be identified, but wherever possible the data is designation specific. The SEA and Management Plan process will concentrate on relevant and robust data with the hope that over time that we can continue to improve our baseline data. A full outline of the scoped baseline is available in Appendix 2.

The IW National Landscape team has excellent in-house GIS capabilities and has over the course of the last Management Plan invested in further developing this data manipulation method. GIS work will be one tool used to interrogate data and create visualisations, which will serve to focus work over the coming Management Plan period and deliver the conservation and enhancement of the designated area.

Further detail of the services will be highlighted throughout the Management Plan and priorities marked against all other objectives, which will focus work over the next 5 years. This SEA report should influence the policies created to ensure the continuation of or improvement to the Isle of Wight AONB's ecosystem services.

Wherever possible, existing data and indicators have been suggested where monitoring is routinely carried out and data available cut to the AONB boundary. However, the SEA scoping report highlights data gaps and where limited data is available it has been highlighted in the table. Much of the data not derived from GIS is limited in value as it is an Island wide value. However, through using the ecosystems approach to the scoping process it has become evident that AONB cannot be taken out of context from the rest of the Island for many of the services. Almost all water bodies across the Island are influence by the AONB. With this in mind during the delivery phase it may be prudent to look beyond the AONB boundary and consider using the impact on whole Water Bodies as part of the decision making process.

**SEA Environmental Objectives**

The following list of objectives has been developed to reflect environmental matters relevant to the AONB and its primary purpose, and will be used to assess the likely impacts of current and revised AONB Management Plan objectives.

They have been chosen to represent environmental concerns and are written to reflect that in an environment assessment there is a need to explore whether the AONB Plan objectives create adverse impacts on the fundamental elements of the topic. The AONB Plan will however consider wider sustainability issues and will normally seek to take a more active approach in conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the designated area whilst also considering the needs of its community and economic sectors.

This AONB Management Plan has been structured under a number of topics exploring the Ecosystem Services that the protected landscape provides.

These are:

**Section A: Place**

- Protected landscapes and coastal areas of Isle of Wight AONB
- Geodiversity (Geology and Geomorphology)
- Historic Environment
- Tranquillity and Dark Skies

**Section B: Climate**

- Geodiversity (Minerals and Soils)
- Air and Water
- Energy

**Section C: Nature and Land Use**

- Wildlife
- Farming
- Forestry

**Section D: People**

- Arts and Culture
- Sustainable Communities
- Tourism
- Access and Recreation

The table below gives guidance on the language in the objectives and policies in the whole Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan 2025-30. This aims to give greater understanding of the role of the IW National Landscape team, the IW National Landscape Partnership and the individual Partners



**Key Words in IWAONB Objectives and Policies**

<b>Key Word</b>	<b>Intervention proposed</b>
Ensure	The objective or policy is fundamental (due to legislation or best practice) to the continued conservation and enhancement of the IWAONB and every effort will be made by the Unit and Partnership to deliver the appropriate outcome
Encourage	The objective or policy requires the co-operation of a number of parties to deliver the appropriate outcome including, but not exclusively, the IW National Landscape team, Partnership or Partners
Support	The IW National Landscape Partnership will consider the use of its own time and resources to achieve the appropriate outcome with the help of other organisations
Promote	The IW National Landscape Partnership will use its influence and profile to help deliver the appropriate outcome
Monitor	The IW National Landscape Partnership will encourage organisations to collect data across the designation with a view to reporting conclusions relating to IWAONB condition to inform the conservation or enhancement of the IWAONB

The environmental objectives are:

<b>SEA Objective Number</b>	<b>Objective</b>
<b>S1 – Landscape</b>	Ensure the Conservation and enhancement of the Isle of Wight AONB landscape
<b>S2 – Air</b>	Encourage the safeguarding of the high air quality of Isle of Wight AONB
<b>S3 – Climate</b>	Monitor current trends and risks to Isle of Wight AONB from the impacts of climate change.
<b>S4 – Historic Environment</b>	Support measures for the on-going conservation and recording of the historic environment
<b>S5 – Infrastructure</b>	Encourage sustainable, responsible and appropriate management of infrastructure.
<b>S6 – Geodiversity</b>	Encourage sustainable appropriate management of rocks, minerals and soils within Isle of Wight AONB.
<b>S7 – Population and health</b>	Monitor Population health and wellbeing to establish trends within Isle of Wight AONB.

<b>S8 – Water</b>	Encourage sustainable responsible use and conservation of water.
<b>S9 – Wildlife</b>	Support and encourage appropriate management of wildlife within Isle of Wight AONB.

The sustainability objectives are:

<b>SUS 1 – Fossil</b>	Encourage opportunities for the recording of paleontological finds and their identification by appropriate organisations.
<b>SUS 2 – Farming</b>	Support and encourage sustainable farming practices that conserve and enhance Isle of Wight AONB.
<b>SUS 3 – Land management</b>	Support and encourage appropriate sustainable land management practices for their landscape benefits.
<b>SUS 4 – Tranquillity</b>	Ensure all development proposals do not reduce the tranquillity of Isle of Wight AONB.
<b>SUS 5 – Recreation</b>	Support and encourage opportunities for appropriate sustainable recreational usage of Isle of Wight AONB.
<b>SUS 6 – Energy</b>	Support and encourage appropriate sustainable energy production.
<b>SUS 7 - Forestry</b>	Support and encourage appropriate sustainable forestry and woodland management practices for their landscape benefits.
<b>SUS 8 - Communities</b>	Support and encourage opportunities for sustainable community and cultural development within the Isle of Wight AONB.

For every Objective and policy outlined in the Management Plan, the likely effect (positive or negative) on each of the environmental and sustainability objectives has been assessed. The results are presented in a table of outcomes in Appendix 3; the possible outcomes used are:

<b>Significant positive effect</b>	<b>++</b>
<b>Partial positive effect</b>	<b>+</b>
<b>Neutral effect</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Partial negative effect</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Significant negative effect</b>	<b>--</b>
<b>Effects uncertain</b>	<b>X</b>

**Analysis and Conclusions**

The Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan Objectives and Policies have been developed over a period of time and in parallel with the SEA Objectives. Through discussions with the Isle of Wight National Landscape Partnership these have been refined to fully reflect the Partnership commitment to the conservation and enhancement of the AONB designation. The SEA objectives have influenced the development of Isle of Wight National Landscape policies and objectives.

The Assessment has revealed there are no indications of negative environmental effects on the Isle of Wight National Landscape as a result of the proposed objectives and policies within the Draft Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan 2025 - 2030.

The majority of the assessment indicates either a Neutral or partial positive effect of the IW AONB policies and objectives, with many Significant Positive effects on the SEA objectives.

Through a further process of assigning a nominal value to every objective and policy outlined in the Management Plan, assessed against the likely effect on each of the environmental and sustainability objectives has revealed a number of policies which score less than 50% of the total possible score.

The results are presented in a table of outcomes in Appendix 6; the possible outcomes used are:

<b>Significant positive effect</b>	3 points
<b>Partial positive effect</b>	2 points
<b>Neutral effect</b>	0 points
<b>Partial negative effect</b>	-2 points
<b>Significant negative effect</b>	-3 points
<b>Effects uncertain</b>	X

Policies with below 50% of total possible score:

**P1** Ensure the continuation of natural processes and encourage strategic approaches to deal with areas where this may create potential conflict with socio-economic considerations (particularly on currently undefended Isle of Wight AONB coastlines).

**P4** Ensure that where, in exceptional circumstances, development that is considered harmful to the Isle of Wight AONB is permitted, contributions are made which deliver conservation and the enhancement of the features contributing to the special character of the Isle of Wight AONB

**P5** Support and encourage initiatives that contribute to national landscape targets included 30 by 30, climate change mitigation and adaptation and nature recovery.

**P6** Ensure that AONB objectives are given full regard in the development and review of strategic plans and policies relating to geology and geomorphology

**P8** Promote the importance of recording all paleontological finds and deposits and support initiatives that assist their identification by appropriate organisations

**P19** Ensure that Isle of Wight AONB objectives are included in strategic plans and policies relating to mineral extraction both onshore and offshore (where it may impact upon a Heritage Coast).

**P36** Support initiatives that celebrate the relationship between landscape, its use and people (including place names, stories, folklore, customs)

**P37** Support initiatives that promote education and health and well-being in the Isle of Wight AONB.

Further consideration of these policies has revealed no additional concerns with their environmental or sustainability impacts. Many of these policies are specific to a particular facet of the landscape and do not have a wider impact other than on their niche.

In conclusion it is considered this report provides support for the current draft objectives and policies for the management of the Isle of Wight AONB designation. The SEA process has not generated any changes to the plan contents or the proposed objectives or policies. This will be reviewed again following public consultation as well as scrutiny of changes made to the document as a result of comments received.

Undertaking this SEA has acted as a valuable cross-checking process to ensure the objectives and policies considered are appropriate and do not compromise the purpose of the designation.

***STAGE D Consulting on draft plan and environmental report.***

This document has been developed in conjunction with the Management Plan at all consultation phases. The policies considered have been through public consultation in April – June 2024. Following the consultation further consultation has been ongoing with Isle of Wight National Landscape partners, final amendments to SEA have been undertaken and the final Environmental Report will be produced as an appendix of the Isle of Wight Management Plan 2025 - 2030.

***STAGE E Monitoring significant effects of implementing the plan on the environment.***

Wherever possible, existing data and indicators have been suggested where monitoring is routinely carried out and data available cut to the AONB boundary. However, the SEA scoping report highlighted data gaps and where limited data was available; efforts have been made to identify methods of improving the availability of data. Much of the data has been derived from GIS interrogation this give greater scope for ongoing monitoring and where limited GIS information is available efforts have been made and will continue to be made to develop appropriate methods of data collection and collation. Through using an ecosystems approach it has become evident that Isle of Wight AONB cannot be taken out of context from the rest of the Island for many of the ecosystem services identified within the Management Plan and the SEA Scoping report. Almost all water bodies across the Island are influence by the AONB and with this in mind, during the delivery phase it would be prudent to examine data sets beyond the Isle of Wight AONB boundary and consider using the impact on whole water bodies as part of decision making processes.