



**Isle of Wight**  
National  
Landscape

**ISLE OF WIGHT**  
**AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY**  
**MANAGEMENT PLAN**  
**2025 - 2030**

# Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2025-2030

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## **1. THE ISLE OF WIGHT AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY: Introduction**

### **1.1 Ministerial foreword to IWAONB Management Plan 2025-2030**

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## **2. The Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

### **2.1 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The special qualities of the Isle of Wight AONB are many, contrasting, varied and inspiring. They contribute greatly to the quality of life and well-being of local communities and visitors.

From majestic sea cliffs and sweeping beaches to the quiet solitude of ancient woodland; the ever changing patchwork of worked fields to the timeless and enduring presence of the downs; the intricate inlets of tranquil creeks to the long distance views from coastal heath and downland; the planned and manicured gardens of former Royal Estates and Victorian villas to the irregular undulating hedged fields of pasture; the dark starlit skies to the bustle and colour of festivals and events; the winding paths, shutes and hollow ways in the countryside to chimes and steps down cliffs to the beach; place names and dialect to poetry, literature and art; isolated houses, hamlets and rural villages to harbour towns, castles and tumuli; plants and animals to fossilised trees and dinosaur footprints. <sup>1</sup>

### **2.2 VISION**

**'The Isle of Wight AONB will remain a beautiful, thriving landscape cared for and appreciated by all.'**

The Isle of Wight AONB remains nationally recognised as an important and biodiverse landscape. People, who live, work and visit the area value, appreciate and understand its special qualities and support its continued conservation and enhancement. People can experience 'Dark Skies' and peace and tranquillity as part of the experience of living and working in or visiting the AONB. Seascapes remain an important part of the character of the AONB and its Heritage Coasts.

Policies and the decisions taken, based on sound evidence around the natural and historic environment and landscape, have conserved and enhanced the special characteristics of the Island's finest landscapes, giving the AONB a strong identity and 'sense of place'.

Anthropogenic climate change has, and continues, to take place in a way which threatens the conservation and enhancement the natural beauty of the area as well as the needs of local communities, rural businesses and the land use sector. Mitigation of these influences are an important part of this Plan.

Farming and woodland management remain central to the continued conservation and enhancement of 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.

New technologies have been appropriately 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.

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

### 3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT (ABOUT THE PLAN)

#### 3.1 INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The international significance of the AONB is recognised through its classification as a Category V Protected Landscape by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). In 2013, the IUCN UK Committee reaffirmed the Category V status for AONBs, confirming the significant part they play in conserving the UK's biodiversity and cultural heritage.

The European Landscape Convention (ELC) is a treaty for the protection, conservation, management and planning of all the landscapes in Europe. It also encourages the integration of landscape into all relevant areas of policy including cultural, economic and social policies.

In the ELC, landscape is defined as 'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.' The Convention also places particular emphasis on the need for co-operation for landscape management across administrative boundaries making the role of AONBs particularly relevant.

#### 3.2 WHAT IS AN AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY?

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are nationally important protected landscapes designated under the National Parks and Access to Countryside Act 1949<sup>2</sup>. The Isle of Wight AONB is 1 of 46 AONBs in Britain (33 wholly in England, 4 wholly in Wales, 1 which straddles the English/Welsh border and 8 in Northern Ireland) covering 18% of the countryside. Together with the National Parks they are designated in the national interest both for today and for future generations as examples of our finest countryside.

Map of AONB Protected Landscapes in UK



In planning terms AONBs are equivalent to National Parks and must be afforded the same level of consideration and protection.

### **3.3 Purpose of the 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<sup>3</sup> 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 recognise 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 enhances the character of the AONB.

### **3.4 STATUTORY DUTIES FOR MANAGING AN AONB**

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act)<sup>4</sup> strengthened the profile and protection of AONBs. This protection was enhanced by changes to the CROW Act with the Levelling Up and Regeneration (LUR) Act 2023<sup>5</sup>. In particular, the amended CROW Act now:

- Places a duty on all public bodies and statutory undertakers to further the purposes of AONBs.
- Establishes a process for creating AONB conservation boards, where this is supported locally.
- Creates a statutory responsibility for local authorities and conservation boards to produce and regularly review AONB Management Plans.

### **3.5 ISLE OF WIGHT AONB**

The Isle of Wight AONB was designated in 1963, the fourteenth of the 46 areas to be confirmed. The total area designated is 191 square kilometres, which is approximately half the land surface of the Island. Unusually, the AONB area is not continuous and is made up of five distinct land parcels across the Island.

A detailed record of the original designation process was published in 2003<sup>6</sup>. This sets out the reasons why areas that were put forward during the extensive consultation were either included or excluded. The special qualities that led to designation are set out more fully in later chapters.



### **3.6 ISLE OF WIGHT NATIONAL LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP**

Following the increased profile and recognition afforded to AONBs by the CRoW Act 2000, a new partnership approach to managing the Isle of Wight AONB between the Isle of Wight Council and the UK Government through a Memorandum of Agreement.

The Isle of Wight AONB Partnership was formed in April 2002 and is a broad-based independent body comprised of representatives of many national and local organisations with a direct interest in the AONB. The AONB Partnership is funded by annual grants from DEFRA to the local authority. In November 2023 the AONB Partnerships and teams were rebranded as National Landscapes.<sup>7</sup>

The purpose of the Partnership is to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the conservation and enhancement of the AONB, in light of the AONB Management Plan and its policies.

#### ***Core functions of the Isle of Wight National Landscape Partnership are:***

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

### **3.7 ISLE OF WIGHT NATIONAL LANDSCAPE TEAM**

The staff of the Isle of Wight National Landscape Partnership are referred to as the IW National Landscape team, which consists of a National Landscape Manager, a National Landscape Planning Officer, a National Landscape Communications and Projects Officer and a National Landscape Assistant. The NL Team also manages the Isle of Wight Environmental Records Centre and a Project Officer currently managing the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. This programme is funded by DEFRA as an additional grant to the core AONB grant to the local authority. The Team is hosted by the Isle of Wight Council and is housed within the Communities Directorate.

Further details of the current Isle of Wight National Landscape Partnership are given in Appendix B.

### **3.8 THIS AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Local authorities with an AONB in their administrative area must produce and subsequently review an AONB Management Plan. The plan should “formulate their policy for the management of their Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it.”<sup>8</sup> For the Isle of Wight AONB, this is undertaken by the National Landscape Partnership with a formal adoption of the plan by the Isle of Wight Council. The National Landscape Partnership also oversees the delivery of the Plan over its five-year cycle.

As well as being a legal requirement, the initial preparation and subsequent reviews of the AONB Management Plans represent an opportunity to draw together all interested parties to generate long-term visions for the area, set an agenda for change and manage such change effectively. It is also a useful educational tool, helping to change attitudes and behaviours.

The first statutory AONB Management Plan was produced in 2004 and this will be the fifth iteration of that statutory plan.

### **3.8.1 PURPOSE OF THE AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The overall aim of AONB Management Plans is to ensure continuity and consistency of management over time. It places a focus on the primary purpose of the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty with social and economic issues covered in terms of how they relate to the primary purpose.

#### ***The Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan:***

- Highlights the distinctive qualities of the designated landscape.
- Identifies the changes and issues affecting the designated landscape.
- Presents a vision for the future of the designated landscape as a whole, in light of other national, regional and local priorities.
- Sets priorities incorporating specific objectives that will help to secure that vision.
- Clarifies the role of partners and other stakeholders, identifying what needs to be done, by whom, and when, in order to achieve the Plan's objectives.
- Identifies how the objectives and actions will be measured and reviewed.
- Raises the profile of the designated landscape and its purpose.

#### ***In terms of its legal status the Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan:***

- Is statutory, in that the Isle of Wight Council is required by law to produce and review an AONB Management Plan.
- Formulates the policy of the Isle of Wight Council for the designated landscape and for Council functions that have an impact on it.
- Demonstrates the commitment of public bodies, statutory undertakers and other stakeholders to the management of the designated landscape.
- Does not override other statutory plans, strategies and land management schemes within the designated landscape, but seeks to support and influence them.

### **3.8.2 HOW THE AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN LINKS WITH PLANS AND STRATEGIES**

National and local policies already provide a considerable level of protection for the natural beauty of the Isle of Wight AONB. In addition many of the organisations in the National Landscape Partnership prepare strategies and plans that deal with other or specific issues that affect the area (such as land use planning, tourism, transport, biodiversity, geodiversity, estuary management etc).

This plan should be used to guide and inform the proposal, plans and activities of public bodies and those organisations, such as statutory undertakers (e.g. utility companies), that have a duty to further the purposes of the AONB. It can also be used for information and as a guide for other individuals or organisations with an interest in the area.

#### **National Planning Policy Framework 2023**

It is important to recognise that the primary legislation in relation to AONB designation is from the CRoW Act as amended (2000) and originally from the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Policies for AONBs outside this Plan are now solely contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023,<sup>9</sup>

Local Development Scheme (Island Planning Strategy [in prep 2024] see section 3.8.5) and Neighbourhood Plans.

The National Planning Policy Framework confirms the requirement in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 that applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The NPPF provides specific planning guidance for plan makers and decision takers in relation to AONBs and confirms that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty. Furthermore, AONBs have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. Additionally it is confirmed that the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in these areas. AONBs and their Management Plans are material considerations in planning. The 'great weight test' is significant and one of the most stringent legal tests that can be applied under planning law. In specific relation to major development, the NPPF states that planning permission should be refused for major developments in AONBs except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that they are in the public interest and sets a series of 3 tests they are assessed against. Major development within a heritage coast is unlikely to be appropriate, unless it is compatible with its special character.

Whether a proposal is a major development is a matter for the decision-maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact of the purposes for which the area has been designated. (NPPF 2023)

It should however be recognised that the "presumption in favour of sustainable development" does not apply within AONBs as confirmed by (para 11 footnote 6) of the NPPF, due to the other policies relating to AONBs elsewhere within the Framework. Additionally AONBs are defined within the EIA Regulations for specific consideration as a "sensitive area" and land within AONBs is recognised differently under the Town and Country Planning Act (2015) as Article 2(3) land (which for example restricts certain permitted development rights).

The NPPF also calls on local authorities to recognise that undeveloped land can perform a variety of functions and that consideration of the role it plays for wildlife, flood risk mitigation, cooling / shading, carbon storage and food production should all be taken into account in the planning process.

### **UK Government's 25 Year Environment Plan<sup>10</sup>**

Published in 2018, this Plan gives a wide-ranging view of the commitments of the Government over the next 25 years including planning, environmental protection and the role of AONBs and National Parks. It aims to deliver cleaner air and water in our cities and rural landscapes, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats. It calls for an approach to agriculture, land use and fishing that puts the environment first.

The Plan seeks to embed an environmental net-gain principle for development, including housing and infrastructure; improve the way we manage and incentivise land management including designing and delivering a new environmental land management system and make greater use of natural flood management solutions to reduce the risk of harm from flooding.

The Government will be working with National Landscape Partnerships to deliver environmental enhancement, including demonstrator projects, and engaging with communities through their statutory management plans.

## **UK Government Environmental Improvement Plan<sup>11</sup>**

Published in 2023, this represents the first revision of the original Environment Plan described above. The Plan describes ten goals including an ‘apex’ goal of ‘Thriving Nature’ and a specific goal of ‘Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment’. Further aims include:

- Improving environmental quality
- Improving our use of resources
- Improving our mitigation of climate change
- Improving our biosecurity

The targets and outcomes from this document will be detailed in the relevant chapters of the Management Plan.

## **The Glover Review<sup>12</sup>**

In May 2018 the UK Government launched its Review of Designated Landscapes (National Parks and AONBs) in England: ‘The Review aims not to diminish the character or independence of our designated landscapes, or to impose new burdens on them and the people who live and work in the areas they cover. Instead, its purpose is to ask what might be done better, what changes could assist them, and whether definitions and systems which, in many cases date back to their original creation, are still sufficient.’

The Review was published in 2019 and produced twenty-seven proposals including ‘AONBs strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, renamed as National Landscapes’. As a result of the Review an uplift in funding was implemented and a rebranding exercise undertaken.

## **Environment Act 2021<sup>13</sup>**

The Environment Act allows for the provision of legally-binding long-term (>15yrs) targets on air quality, water, biodiversity and resource efficiency. To regulate and monitor these aims the Act proposes the development of the Office for Environmental Protection and gives further detail on the mechanisms for nature recovery in England. These mechanisms include:

- Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain in the UK Planning system
- Production of statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategies by responsible authorities
- Implementation of conservation covenants

Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain became a legal requirement in February 2024. The Isle of Wight Council was confirmed as a responsible authority for the production of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the Isle of Wight in June 2023.

## **Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023<sup>5</sup>**

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act included provisions to change the obligations of public bodies towards the designated landscape through powers to produce regulations. These regulations and other guidance are being produced during the writing of this Plan. Specifically the LUR Act and subsequent regulations:

- 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;
- require and sets out how a relevant authority must contribute to the preparation, implementation and review of a management plan,.

In terms of substantive changes to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 public bodies (relevant authorities) must:

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]**

#### **Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework 2024<sup>14</sup>**

DEFRA has produced Targets and Outcomes Framework for Protected Landscapes (National Parks and National Landscapes) to require designated landscapes in England to meet their potential for nature, climate, people and place. These build on the provisions of the LUR Act and the Environmental Improvement Plan (see above) particularly:

Goal 3: Thriving plants and wildlife

Goal 7: Mitigating and adapting to climate change

Goal 10: Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

National targets include restoration and creation of habitats; improving SSSI condition; improving condition of priority habitats; restoration of peat and creation of woodland to reduce carbon emissions and increase accessibility; and reduce heritage at risk. National Landscapes are due to be separated into individual allocations for each Protected Landscape (in prep).

### 3.9 ISLE OF WIGHT AONB - THE ISLAND CONTEXT

Isle of Wight AONB cannot be considered in isolation from the rest of the Isle of Wight. The very fact that the AONB consists of five distinct parcels of designated landscape spread out across the whole of the Island means that there is a strong interrelationship between the designated and the non-designated areas. This interrelationship is: visual, in respect of views to and from the AONB (its setting) often including non-designated countryside or settlements; economic, in terms of the draw of the designated landscape for tourism and as a setting for other rural and land-based industries; and social, in that it provides recreational space for many larger communities immediately adjacent to the area.

This proximity to the most populated areas of the Island means that the AONB is easily accessed, having the ability to play a positive part in the health and wellbeing of the whole local community and contribute to the wider Isle of Wight economy.

#### 3.9.1 ISLE OF WIGHT BIOSPHERE

The Isle of Wight AONB, in recognition of the intimate relationship between those areas both inside and outside the designation, promoted a nomination to UNESCO for World Biosphere Reserve status for the Isle of Wight. The submission was accepted, and the designation awarded on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2019. This international designation acts as an accolade for the Island's community as a whole and recognises their commitment to sustainable development into the future.

The Isle of Wight Council has adopted the governance of the IW Biosphere Reserve and attends the UK Man and Biosphere Committee. A Biosphere Steering Committee has been established, independent of the local authority, to garner wide support for the designation and its development. [www.iwbiosphere.org.uk](http://www.iwbiosphere.org.uk)

An important aspect of the Biosphere designation is the adoption and monitoring of the Island's progress against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. (UNSDGs). Many of the 17 goals reflect the aims and objectives in this Plan such as :

- 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
- 7. Affordable and clean energy
- 11: Sustainable Communities
- 13: Climate Action
- 15: Life on Land

These actions have led many to look at the principle of 'Doughnut Economics'. In this theory, devised by the economist Kate Raworth in 2012 , reflecting the UN SDGs, suggests that we can no longer ignore the capacity of earth's limited resources to allow continued economic growth measured by GDP (Gross Domestic Product). A new sustainable model is suggested whereby economic growth is checked by the damage that is being done to natural resources by the economic activity<sup>15</sup>.

### **3.9.2 'HEALTHY PLACES FOR HEALTHY PEOPLE TO LEAD HEALTHY LIVES'**

The Isle of Wight Health and Well Being Strategy 2022 – 2027<sup>16</sup> sets out the strategy for improving the health of the Island population, based on the need identified in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. Many things influence health and wellbeing such as the lives we lead, our social contacts, the environment around us, our jobs and homes and the health and care services that support us.

The ambition is to create healthy places for healthy people to lead healthy lives across the Island focussing on three priorities:

- Healthy Places – healthy homes
- Healthy People – mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Healthy Lives – physical health

Together, the Health and Well-Being Strategy and the Health and Care Plan (2022-25), which sets out the strategy to achieve clinical and financial sustainability, have a joint aim to ensure that people on the Island live healthy and independent lives.

Recent research<sup>17,18</sup> has shown that access to landscape and nature can improve both mental and physical health and Isle of Wight AONB, amongst other places of natural beauty, can provide the opportunity for residents and visitors to experience real health benefits.

### **3.9.3 ECONOMIC STRATEGY**

#### **Solent 2050: An Economic Strategy for the Solent - The Solent Local Enterprise Partnership (Solent LEP)<sup>19</sup>**

This is a partnership organisation between the business community, the further and higher education sector, three unitary authorities, eight district councils and one county council, all of whom are actively working together to secure a more prosperous and sustainable future for the Solent area.

The Solent LEP's vision is (in the period to 2050) to be the globally leading maritime cluster and at the forefront of innovations to adapt to climate change, with towns and cities that are a fantastic place to live, trade and with opportunities for all our communities to flourish. There are currently seven Strategic Priorities for the Solent LEP:

1. A world-leading marine and maritime economy
2. Pioneering approaches to climate change adaptation and decarbonisation
3. The UK's capital of coastal renaissance
4. A thriving visitor, creative and cultural economy
5. Developing a world-class talent base
6. An outstanding business environment
7. Health and wellbeing at the heart of economic success

An important element of this strategy is the establishment of a Solent Freeport described as an opportunity to bring 32,000 jobs and £1.35 billion investment into the Solent area.

## Isle of Wight Regeneration Strategy<sup>20</sup>

The Draft 2018-2030 Regeneration Strategy for the Isle of Wight aims to set out how the Isle of Wight Council aims to ensure the economic future of the Island and create an island that is a great place to grow up, live, work and visit.

Seven major elements of the Strategy have been identified:

- Physical Regeneration.
- Housing.
- Infrastructure.
- Using public assets as pump primers.
- Skills and business development.
- Area regeneration.
- Communications, engagement and partnership working.

There will also be initiatives required to undertake monitoring, evaluation and resourcing this regeneration. Whilst many of the projects outlined in the Strategy do not directly impact on the landscape designation, the outcomes include the revised Local Development Framework (see below) and will seek to provide opportunities for sustainable economic growth in a climate of public service sector reductions in capacity, skills and knowledge. When consultation has been completed and the Strategy adopted, it will replace the IW Economic Development Plan (detailed above).

### **3.9.4 ISLAND PLANNING STRATEGY – THE ISLAND’S LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK<sup>21</sup>**

The impact of development on the character of the landscape and settlements within the AONB is one of the most significant issues for AONB management. The planning process is the main regulator of development pressure within the AONB.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004<sup>22</sup> (as amended), introduced a system of plan-making – the Local Development Framework (LDF). It is not a single plan, but an overall term for a number of separate documents known as Development Plan Documents (DPD), which may be prepared at different times. The Island Plan (the Isle of Wight's LDF) provides the basis on which planning decisions are made. The Isle of Wight Council Core Strategy (including Minerals & Waste) and Development Management DPD, set out how, in spatial planning terms, the Island will develop up to 2027. The Island Plan Core Strategy<sup>68</sup> was adopted by the Isle of Wight Council on 21 March 2012 and includes policy DM12 that references the IWAONB Management Plan. A new and updated Island Plan – the draft Island Planning Strategy (IPS) - is now being taken forward and will align with the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (from 2023) and revision of the NPPF (December 2023). The Draft IPS includes a dedicated AONB planning policy (EV11)

The AONB Management Plan forms one of the key supporting documents referenced within the new Island Planning Strategy. This Management Plan seeks to add value to that process through its policies.

### **3.9.5 Isle of Wight AONB (PROPOSED PLANNING POLICY : EV11) (for inclusion in the Island Planning Strategy 2024)**

The impact of individual proposals and their cumulative effect on Isle of Wight AONB will be carefully assessed. Development proposals should demonstrate how they:

- a. conserve and enhance the natural beauty and locally distinctive features of the AONB; and



- b. reinforce and respond to, rather than detracts from, the distinctive character and special qualities of the AONB; and
- c. would not, either individually or cumulatively, undermine the integrity or the predominantly open and undeveloped, special scenic and rural character of the AONB; and
- d. would be appropriate to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area or is desirable for the understanding and enjoyment of the area (where this is consistent with the primary purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty); and
- e. contribute to the achieving the aims and delivery of the Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan;
- f. consider the conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage.

Where in exceptional circumstances and for wider planning reasons, planning permission is approved without the above criteria being met, then compensation for remediation and improvement of damaged designated landscapes will be sought to the features that form the special character of the Isle of Wight AONB.

### **3.9.6 MISSION ZERO – CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY 2021 – 2040<sup>23</sup>**

In September 2021 the Isle of Wight Council published their Climate and Environment Strategy setting out the local authority's aspirations and targets to achieve net-carbon zero in its own operations and as an island. The Strategy includes strategic outcomes for the Strategy; a review of the carbon footprint of the Isle of Wight; recommendations and an Action Plan with a target for the Island to be net-carbon zero by 2040. The Strategy details objectives and outputs for a variety of sectors including education and training, health, tourism, business, transport, renewable energy, housing and the environment including waste management.

Although all the Strategy is cross-cutting, Objective 5A seeks to 'offset a minimum of 10% (55,820 tCO<sub>2</sub>) of baseline carbon emissions from the Isle of Wight baseline through planting, rewilding, and habitat restoration schemes'. These targets are supported by the local and national targets apportioned to this Plan and future work of the Isle of Wight National Landscape Partnership.

### **3.10 ADAPTING TO THE INFLUENCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

Research into the implications of the predicted climate change scenarios on the environment, community and economy of the Isle of Wight was undertaken in 2011<sup>24</sup>. It specifically discusses the recommended role of the Isle of Wight Council as a lead strategic body but also sets out the key issues and suggested adaptations that may be needed:

The **principal risks** to the Island from climate change have been identified as:

- Impact of fluvial flooding and extreme weather events on communities.
- Impact of sea level rise, flooding and coastal erosion on the built environment and land use.
- Impact on communities and businesses of water shortages caused by drought conditions.
- Threats to human health due to new environmental conditions.
- Limited capability of Island species and habitats to adapt to a changing climate and extreme events.
- Economic instability caused by lack of sufficient adaptation particularly within the agricultural sector.
- Impact on infrastructure and transport threatening business continuity.
- Impact of extreme events on continuity of the Island's energy supply.
- Impacts of extreme weather on cross Solent supply chain: food, fuel, medicine.

Other considerations could include:

- Limited capability of Island species and habitats to adapt to competition with 'new' species
- Impact on freshwater habitats of water shortages caused low flows and resultant water shortages during drought conditions.

The **adaptation actions** deemed as most critical to the safety of Island residents and continuity of public services are:

- Conduct climate vulnerability mapping to identify priority at-risk sites, settlements, developments and properties across the Island.
- Continue to monitor the state of the Island's coastline, coastal infrastructure and community.
- Introduce appropriate climate change adaptation fully in all new and reviewed Isle of Wight Council strategic policies and programmes, and minimise future risk through effective implementation.
- Increase awareness amongst communities of how a changing climate will affect daily life and how they might adapt and prepare for sustained disturbance to routines and the acute impacts of extreme weather events.
- Develop a freely accessible Island-wide resource of comprehensive information and expertise on climate adaptation.

Anthropogenic climate change is a key influencing factor in the longer-term and can be taken as being relevant to all the topics in this plan. Many of the risks and adaptation actions listed in the Isle of Wight Climate Adaptation Report and other similar reports are mentioned in the later topic chapters of this Management Plan.

### **3.11 WHAT THE ISLE OF WIGHT AONB GIVES US (TAKING AN ECOSYSTEM APPROACH)**

The Isle of Wight's natural environment includes a wide range of landscapes and seascapes made up of many factors, including the geology, climate, habitats and human influence, both past and present.

For ease of reference, from this point forward where we use the term landscape this equally incorporates seascape, other than where seascape is specifically mentioned. Moreover, reference to Isle of Wight AONB also encompasses the Hamstead and Tennyson Heritage Coasts, other than when specifically mentioned.

Landscape is more than just 'the view' from a single point. It is the result of complex interactions between natural and cultural systems, reflecting the relationship between people, place and nature. The landscape is an ever-changing backdrop to our daily lives.

The Isle of Wight's landscapes are valued by people for a variety of reasons, each is characterised by its own pattern of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement, which create areas of local distinctiveness. This is described as Natural Capital.

There are three core principles to the Ecosystem Approach:

- The natural systems that operate within the Isle of Wight AONB are complex and dynamic and their healthy functioning should not be taken for granted.
- Those that live, work and visit the Isle of Wight AONB directly benefit from the services provided by the natural environment. These services underpin the social and economic wellbeing of not just the Isle of Wight AONB but the wider Island and have a direct economic value. These services are derived from the Island's Natural Capital.
- Those who benefit from the services provided by the Isle of Wight AONB and those who have an active role in the management of them, should play a central role in making decisions about them.

In the development of this Plan and its accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment, we have taken an ecosystem services approach. This has helped to ensure the identification of the contribution of the Island's Natural Capital, alongside the social, cultural, and economic benefits these afford the Isle of Wight AONB and to the Island as whole. This increased understanding has informed our approach to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area.

### 3.12 STRUCTURE OF THE AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN

This AONB Management Plan has been structured into four sub-sections exploring the Ecosystem Services that the designated landscape provides. These are Place, Climate, Nature and People. The Plan is organised into chapters under these sections:

#### **A. Place**

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

#### **B. Climate**

- Climate Change and Mitigation
- Minerals and Soils
- Air and Water
- Energy

#### **C. Nature (and Land Use)**

- Wildlife
- Farming
- Forestry and Woodland Management

#### **D. People**

- Arts and Culture
- Sustainable Communities
- Visitor Economy
- Access and Recreation

Each topic chapter contains:

- A description of the significance of the topic to the Isle of Wight AONB protected landscape.
- Updated key facts and figures providing the general context and evidence base.
- The key management influences and forces for change.
- AONB Management Plan policies for the topic.
- Priorities for delivery which will be outlined in further detail in the accompanying Delivery Plan.

You may also wish to refer to the accompanying Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment of this AONB Management Plan<sup>25</sup>, which has influenced its formulation and policies.

It is also important to remember that although we have split the Management Plan into a number of topic chapters many of the issues, influences and policy objectives have a degree of overlap and combined influence and effect across a number of topics.

### 3.13 OVERARCHING OBJECTIVES FOR ISLE OF WIGHT AONB

The overarching objectives for the Isle of Wight AONB apply to all aspects of the conservation and enhancement of the areas primary purpose and link to the more detailed policies in each of the topic sections of this plan.

- O1** Ensure the conservation and enhancement of the Isle of Wight AONB according to its statutory purpose in line with the aims, objectives and policies, as detailed in this Plan.
- O2** Encourage and support opportunities to enhance the landscape and seascape of Isle of Wight AONB.
- O3** Promote and raise awareness of the Isle of Wight AONB, its coastline, facets of its character, the services provided by the landscape and the benefits that these give to people.
- O4** Promote the understanding of the key considerations in relation to Isle of Wight AONB, through the development of guidance documents and other publications.
- O5** Monitor forces for change likely to have impact on Isle of Wight AONB and its management.
- O6** Encourage and support rural economic development that conserves and enhances the Isle of Wight AONB.

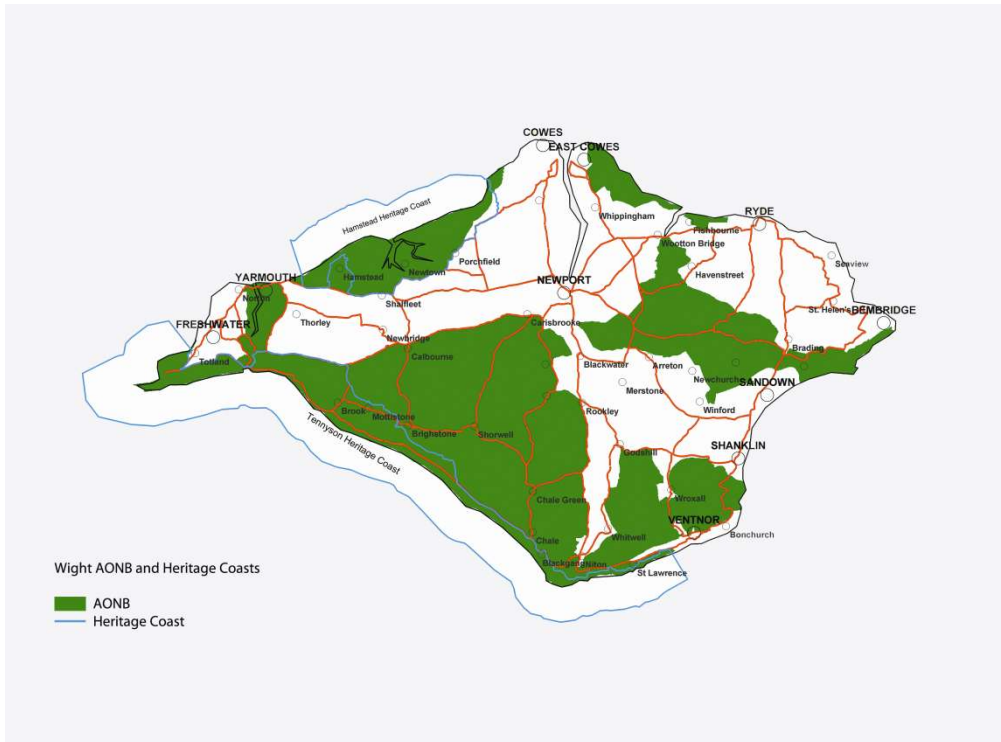
#### Key Words in the Isle of Wight AONB Objectives and Policies

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 Isle of Wight National Landscape team, the Isle of Wight National Landscape Partnership and the individual Partners.

Key Word	Intervention proposed
Ensure	The objective or policy is fundamental (due to legislation or best practice) to the continued conservation and enhancement of the Isle of Wight AONB 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 Isle of Wight AONB Unit, Partnership or Partners.
Support	The Isle of Wight 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 Isle of Wight National Landscape Partnership will use its influence and profile to help deliver the appropriate outcome.
Monitor	The Isle of Wight National Landscape Partnership will encourage organisations to collect data across the designation with a view to reporting conclusions relating to Isle

of Wight AONB condition to inform the conservation or enhancement of the Isle of Wight AONB.

## 4. THE PROTECTED LANDSCAPES AND COASTAL AREAS OF THE ISLE OF WIGHT AONB



### 4.1 ISLE OF WIGHT AONB LANDSCAPE

The Isle of Wight AONB has a complex and diverse landscape. The underlying geology; habitats and species of plants and animals; historic and current land use and settlement pattern; boundary features such as hedgerows, stone walls, hedge banks, streams and ditches; traditions, customs and cultures; peace, tranquillity and 'Dark Skies' all add to its special qualities and 'sense of place'.

Landscape elements and features of all lowland England can be found in one small geographical area on the Isle of Wight. Being an island, the sea and its influence are a major part of the special character of the AONB.

Changing seasons and weather patterns contribute to this variety, as do differences between the aspects of the south-west coastline, which is subject to storms and waves, and the northern low, slumped coasts and estuaries, which experience the more gentle influence of the Solent.

Quiet enjoyment of the AONB has provided, and continues to provide, a source of inspiration and relaxation to people who visit or live in the area.

However, increasing pressure for new, or expansion of existing, activities within the countryside, built development and traffic can all have an impact on the peace, tranquillity and character of the Isle of Wight AONB.

## 4.2 MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS AND FORCES FOR CHANGE

### 4.2.1 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

As defined by European Landscape Convention<sup>26</sup>, landscape is defined as ‘an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and /or human factors’

The Isle of Wight Landscape Character Assessment<sup>27</sup> provides a useful insight into the key components and make-up of the special qualities and characteristics of an area. This is a useful tool in assisting the on-going management of the area to ensure that whilst progress is enabled the key important qualities are retained.

### 4.2.2 NATIONAL CHARACTER AREAS

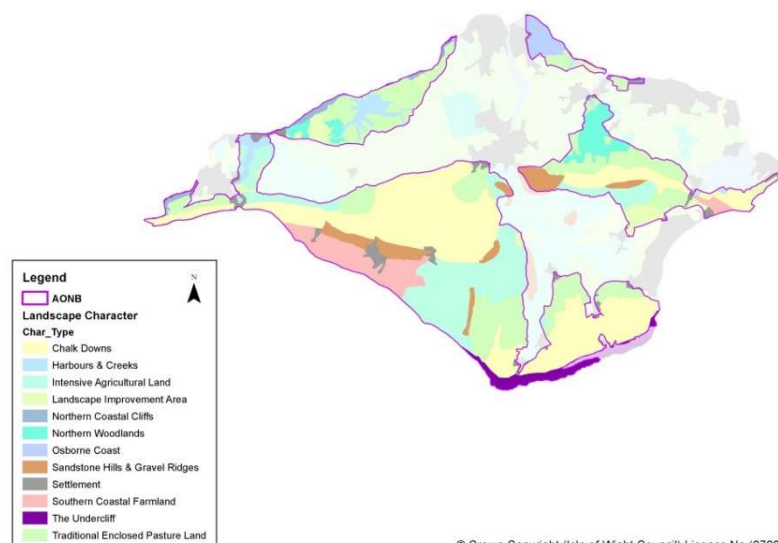
National Character Areas (NCAs) divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geo-diversity and cultural and economic activity. Their boundaries follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision making framework for the natural environment.

NCA profiles are guidance documents produced by Natural England which will help to achieve a more sustainable future for individuals and communities. The profiles include a description of the key ecosystem services provided in each character area and how these benefit people, wildlife and the economy. They identify potential opportunities for positive environmental change and provide the best available information and evidence as a context for local decision making and action.

The Isle of Wight is one distinct National Character Area (NCA127).<sup>28</sup> There is a synergy between the Isle of Wight NCA and this AONB Management Plan. There will be scope to explore joint actions on the opportunities identified in both documents.

### 4.2.3 ISLE OF WIGHT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

In 1994, the then Countryside Commission published a landscape assessment of the Isle of Wight, with a specific focus on the AONB<sup>29</sup>. This identified 11 broad landscape character types across the AONB that contribute to its overall character. In general, the descriptions given in this document remain relevant today. A summary of the key characteristics of these landscape character types is given in the following table and their extent across the AONB is shown in the Map. Further detailed information can be found in Appendix B.



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Chalk downs (LCT1)	Traditional enclosed pasture (LCT2)	Intensive agricultural lands (LCT3)	Southern coastal farmland (LCT4)	Sandstone hills and gravel ridges (LCT5)	Northern woodlands (LCT6)
Key characteristics	Key characteristics	Key characteristics	Key characteristics	Key characteristics	Key characteristics
<p>Open and exposed with sparse hedgerows and no mature hedgerow trees.</p> <p>Limited, windswept, scrubby vegetation on the higher downs.</p> <p>Traditional grazing with extensive arable cultivation.</p> <p>Broadleaved woodlands, predominantly beech, on the lower downs.</p> <p>Dominant high chalk cliffs.</p>	<p>Land use predominantly pasture.</p> <p>Well preserved dense hedgerows with mature hedgerow oak trees.</p> <p>Irregular small fields.</p> <p>Narrow enclosed winding lanes.</p> <p>Well wooded, with numerous small copses.</p> <p>Small scattered farmsteads.</p> <p>Settlement patterns predominantly linear.</p>	<p>Large open fields.</p> <p>Large-scale hedge removal with relict hedges degraded.</p> <p>No hedgerow trees.</p> <p>Land use predominantly rural.</p> <p>Large farms and farm buildings.</p> <p>Trees restricted to shelter belts.</p>	<p>Large, regular gently undulating fields.</p> <p>Low hedgerows with few hedgerow trees.</p> <p>Predominantly arable.</p> <p>Valleys, old drainage channels and chines cross the arable landscape associated with willow scrub and unimproved pasture.</p> <p>Eroding coastline of key geological interest.</p>	<p>Some traditional pasture, but steep slopes mostly planted to mixed forestry.</p> <p>Lower gravel ridges support gorse and bracken.</p> <p>Sunken lanes, or 'shutes' often with ancient woodland flora.</p> <p>Traditional sheltered settlement in the valleys.</p>	<p>Large woodland blocks, conifer and broadleaved, form the dominant feature in the landscape.</p> <p>Small enclosed fields.</p>



Landscape improvement zone (LCT7)	Harbours and creeks (LCT8)	The Undercliff (LCT9)	Osborne Coast (LCT10)	Northern coastal cliffs (LCT11)	
Key characteristics	Key characteristics	Key characteristics	Key characteristics	Key characteristics	
<p>Traditional agricultural landscape changed by the addition of horse paddocks and stables; intensive horticulture; poultry and pig farms; waste disposal sites; extensive residential, industrial or retail developments; holiday camps, mobile homes and caravan sites.</p> <p>Overall visual chaos with neglect of the agricultural landscape in a town edge setting.</p> <p>Degraded hedgerows and unmanaged woods.</p> <p>Conveys a general feeling of neglect and blurs the setting and edges of settlements.</p>	<p>Flat exposed tidal mudflats with saltmarsh, shingle banks and grazed marshes.</p> <p>Open aspect.</p> <p>Peripheral; enclosure created by the fringing oak woodlands.</p>	<p>Dramatic inland vertical craggy cliffs.</p> <p>Slumped grasslands.</p> <p>Coastal pasture.</p> <p>Exotic ornamental, 'gardenesque' planting.</p> <p>Victorian villa and modern suburban housing in highly manicured gardens.</p> <p>Unmanaged natural woodland regeneration, particularly Holm Oak.</p>	<p>Exotic ornamental planting.</p> <p>Victorian villa architecture.</p> <p>Very limited informal public access, with the exception of seasonal opening of Osborne House and occasionally Barton Manor.</p> <p>Ancient semi-natural woodland.</p> <p>Wooded coastline.</p>	<p>Characteristically low sloping broken and unstable cliffs.</p> <p>Limited permanent development and public access.</p>	

The Historic Landscape Characterisation of the Isle of Wight<sup>26</sup> adds a further depth of information and understanding (see Chapter 6: Historic Environment).

The scenic quality of key views within the AONB, often result from interaction between landscape character types and the visual contrast of differing key characteristics. The Isle of Wight AONB is unusual in that it comprises five separate land parcels, rather than the more usual one or two continuous areas found in other AONBs. There is no characteristic that is common to the whole AONB other than perhaps its very diversity and variety. This diversity is largely due to its underlying geology, and the way that people have used the land over time.

#### **4.2.4 AONB LOCAL AREAS**

Whilst information in the 1994 county level assessment regarding broad landscape types is relevant, through historic land use and cultural influences there are significant differences between areas of the AONB within the same broad type. To assist in better understanding of these differences there is a need for Landscape Character Assessments at a more localised level. These offer a better understanding of the distinctiveness of the AONB and provide evidence for the consistency of advice.

Such plans have already been undertaken in parts of the AONB (West Wight Landscape Partnership area and Shorwell Parish<sup>31</sup>) and East Wight Landscape Partnership<sup>32</sup> These plans cover all but the area of Isle of Wight AONB around Osborne near East Cowes

It is our intention that throughout the life of this Plan, to work with the communities and partners to explore these special qualities, help with their local planning documents and develop supplementary documents to accompany this broader AONB Management Plan.

#### **4.3 CONNECTING LAND AND SEA**

The coastline of the Isle of Wight AONB is an important part of its natural beauty and character often featuring in many of the views to and from the designated area. The exposed geology on cliffs is visually dramatic and helps to illustrate the bedrock the rest of the landform and landscape of the Isle of Wight AONB. Most of the coastline is subject to natural erosion processes, being unprotected from the action of the sea and prevailing winter storms. Much of the AONB coastline is also defined as Heritage Coast (see below); however, there are some equally significant stretches of coastline which are in the AONB but not Heritage Coast (Gurnard to Thorness Bay, Yarmouth to Norton, Norris to Wootton, Fishbourne to Binstead, Whitecliff Bay to Yaverland, Luccombe and part of Castle Cove in Ventnor).

##### **4.3.1 HERITAGE COASTS**

The Isle of Wight AONB also incorporates two areas of Heritage Coast and cover roughly half of the Island's coastline. The Heritage Coast areas within the AONB are arguably those areas most readily associated with the scenic beauty of the Isle of Wight. Their natural beauty and their enjoyment by the public give them a special claim for both protection and sensitive management.

Hamstead Heritage Coast runs for 11km and is situated on the north west of the Isle of Wight running from Bouldnor, near Yarmouth through to Thorness Bay, near Cowes. A tranquil and secretive coastline with inlets, estuaries and creeks; wooded hinterland and gently sloping soft cliffs this beautiful area offers a haven for wildlife including red squirrels and migratory birds. The ancient town of Newtown and its National Nature Reserve also fall within the area.

Tennyson Heritage Coast runs for 34km, from Steephill Cove in Ventnor to Widdick Chine at Totland. This coastline is breath-taking, with an open aspect; long distance views to the English Channel; a special quality of light; the iconic Needles chalk stacks and other multi-coloured cliffs; a fossil-rich coastline including the well-known dinosaur footprints at Brook Bay; miles of undeveloped coastline and unspoilt beaches; important wildlife habitats; memories of past islanders including smugglers; Chines and lighthouses.

Although sharing many of the aims of AONB designation, Heritage Coasts are also defined for public enjoyment and appreciation, 'improving and extending appropriate recreational, educational, tourism and sporting opportunities where they do not conflict with the conservation of the resource'<sup>33</sup>.

Since 1973, 45 stretches have been defined, covering more than one third of the coastline of England and Wales (1,525 km in total, with 1,027 km in England). The Countryside Commission set the following framework for these areas in Heritage Coasts in England: Policies and Priorities (1992)<sup>33</sup>

The finest stretches of coast justify national recognition as Heritage Coast. They should be given effective protection and management: stronger measures should apply there than elsewhere.

The main objectives for Heritage Coasts are:

- To conserve, protect and enhance the natural beauty of the coasts, including their terrestrial, littoral and marine flora and fauna, and their heritage features of architectural, historical and archaeological interest;
- To facilitate and enhance their enjoyment, understanding and appreciation by the public by improving and extending opportunities for recreational, educational, sporting and tourist activities that draw on, and are consistent with, the conservation of their natural beauty and the protection of their heritage features;
- To maintain, and improve (where necessary) the environmental health of inshore waters affecting Heritage Coasts and their beaches through appropriate works and management measures;
- To take account of the needs of agriculture, forestry and fishing, and of the economic and social needs of the small communities on these coasts, by promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development, which in themselves conserve and enhance natural beauty and heritage features.

There has been no change to this guidance since 1992 and a review of Heritage Coasts in 2022<sup>34</sup> concluded that their significance and resources have declined markedly.

Both Heritage Coasts include large areas inland of the coastline and extend approximately 2km out to sea, so extending the interests of this management plan to the marine environment.

The National Planning Policy Framework<sup>9</sup> states that major development within a Heritage Coast is unlikely to be appropriate unless it is compatible with its special character.

The sea and land have separate and very different legal and institutional arrangements, different challenges and additional stakeholders. There is a need for us to ensure that the special qualities of the inshore waters of the Heritage Coast areas are adequately conserved and enhanced.

## **4.4 MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS/FORCES FOR CHANGE**

### **4.4.1 MARINE AND COASTAL ACCESS ACT 2009<sup>35</sup>**

This Act sets out the Government's policy for delivering sustainable management of marine and coastal environments. Aspects of the Act that have a direct impact on the Isle of Wight AONB include developing a marine planning system, the introduction of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) and other conservation tools, strengthening arrangements for fisheries, establishing a coastal path and researching the effects of climate change.

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) was established in 2010 to perform many of the tasks coming from the Act.

Marine Planning - The South Inshore and South Offshore areas are the third and fourth areas in England to be selected for marine planning. The South Inshore area includes the coastline stretching from Folkestone, Kent to the River Dart, Devon, fully encompassing the coastline of the Isle of Wight. The MMO published these plans in 2018. The Isle of Wight AONB Partnership was fully engaged with this process and good communication with the MMO is essential to ensure that the connections between land and sea are incorporated and to retain the special qualities of the Isle of Wight AONB and its Heritage Coasts.

Coastal access and the establishment of the King Charles III England Coastal Path National Trail is also considered under the Act, following a decision to include the Isle of Wight despite off-shore islands being initially excluded from the provisions of the Act. This process is being taken forward by Natural England (see Chapter 18: Access and Recreation)

#### **4.4.2 MARINE CONSERVATION ZONES<sup>36</sup>**

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 also made it possible to designate protected areas around our shores, Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs). Currently three MCZs has been designated on the Island's coast; The Needles MCZ between the Needles and Fort Albert into the Solent close to Hurst Spit (1101 ha); Bembridge MCZ (7488 ha) between Seaview and Bonchurch; and Yarmouth to Cowes (1629 ha). All of these have Isle of Wight AONB coastline with the Yarmouth to Cowes site incorporating the Hamstead Heritage Coast.

#### **4.4.3 ISLE OF WIGHT SHORELINE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2 (SMP2)<sup>37</sup>**

The Isle of Wight coast will change over the next 100 years due the impacts of marine erosion, ground instability and flooding by the sea. Current levels of risk are likely to increase through greater human activity and development in coastal areas and as a result of the predicted impacts of climate change. Responsibility for management of the Island's coastal defences against erosion and sea flooding is shared between the Isle of Wight Council, private landowners and the Environment Agency. The revision of the Shoreline Management Plan, SMP2 published in 2011, was developed as a means by which these organisations could determine, with stakeholders, the best way to look after the coast in a sustainable way for the next 100 years. It was prepared using guidelines set down by DEFRA, the Government Department with responsibility for setting national policy for defence of the coastline.

For the Isle of Wight AONB areas, the SMP2 strategy has identified various approaches to the appropriate defence of stretches of coastline from some form of protection through to allowing for natural processes to take place. The West Wight Coastal Flood and Erosion Risk Management Strategy<sup>38</sup> gives greater detail on these options for the north-west coast of the Island from Freshwater Bay, around the Needles to East Cowes, incorporating the estuaries at Yarmouth, Newtown and the Medina. In the Isle of Wight AONB, investment would be directed at reducing risks in areas around Yarmouth. A coastal study covering Sandown Bay is currently being developed. The southern and western reaches of this study area includes AONB coastline at Luccombe and Yaverland.

#### **4.4.4 EUROPEAN PROTECTED SITES**

Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations<sup>39</sup> ecological infrastructure for the protection of sites, which are of exceptional importance in respect of rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats was established in the UK.

These sites consist of:

Special Protection Areas (SPAs)  
Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

There are a number of these sites within or adjacent to Isle of Wight AONB. These are:

- Solent & Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC.
- Briddlesford Copses SAC.
- South Wight Maritime SAC.
- Isle of Wight Downs SAC.
- Solent Maritime SAC.
- Solent & Southampton Water SPA.

These sites benefit from Site Improvement Plans which set out the actions required to meet their conservation objectives. They are also listed as water-dependent Protected Areas under the Water Framework Directive.

At the time of writing these sites still enjoy the protection afforded to them under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (incorporating provisions to comply with the EU Birds Directive 1979 and the Habitats Directive 1995) and the non-marine sites remain SSSIs.

The Isle of Wight AONB and Hamstead Heritage Coast also encompasses the Solent & Southampton Water Ramsar site designated as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention 1971. These sites are treated with the same protection and consideration under national policy but are not designated under the same legislation.

#### **4.4.5 SEASCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT**

Seascape, like landscape, reflects the relationship between people and place and the part it plays in forming the setting to our everyday lives. It is a product of the interaction of the natural and cultural components of our environment, and how they are understood and experienced by people.

Seascape is defined by Natural England in its position statement on All Landscapes Matter<sup>40</sup> as:

“An area of sea, coastline and land, as perceived by people, whose character results from the actions and interactions of land with sea, by natural and/or human factors.”

Seascape Character Assessments (SCA) have been drawn up by the Marine Management Organisation for the Solent (MCA 5) and the South Wight (MCA 6) as part of the South Marine Planning Process<sup>41</sup>. These incorporate the Isle of Wight AONB coastline between them and provide useful information and evidence regarding the special qualities and characteristics of both the marine and terrestrial environments. They will inform future management of the Heritage Coasts to integrate their dual interest areas and make the connection between land and sea.

Also, a Solent and Isle of Wight historic seascape characterisation project was undertaken by the Hampshire and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology (HWTMA), Bournemouth University and Southampton University. It includes the coastal area of the Solent, and Isle of Wight, (approximately a 150 mile stretch of coastline). The project is one of four pilot projects designed to apply the principles of HLC (Historic Landscape Characterisation) to the marine environment<sup>42</sup>.

#### 4.4.6

### A DYNAMIC COASTAL ENVIRONMENT

The importance of the unprotected coastline and the continuation of natural coastal processes cannot be underestimated. This dynamic environment is an important habitat for many species which rely on the various stages of succession from newly exposed cliff falls through to mature secondary woodland on land slip areas. The wildlife importance of the coastline of the Isle of Wight AONB is reflected in the extent of international, national and local nature conservation designations for the coastline. Cliff faces are also important for palaeontological and palaeo-environmental exposures and archaeological remains helping us to better understand environments, species, climates and peoples' activities in the past. However, an actively eroding coastline also brings with it challenges relating to land, built property and infrastructure such as the highway network. Whenever there is a social or economic need to consider an engineering intervention, there needs to be a clear cost benefit analysis and an understanding of the impact of the development on the historic and natural environment and landscape character of the Isle of Wight AONB and the relevant Heritage Coast.

#### 4.5

### SUSTAINING THE LANDSCAPE

Landscape is the result of the varying elements of ecosystem and non-ecosystem services – the quality of our landscape is how well balance is maintained. Landscapes are a result of the way that different components of our environment, both natural and non-natural, interact together and are perceived by us. They are not just about visual perception but are also about what we hear, smell and experience through touch and what this evokes through memory, association, and emotion. They are defined by the relationship between people and place.

The impact of the sea and our island status has a major bearing on the culture, administration, economy, and climate of the Isle of Wight. The coastal zone and the continuation of natural coastal processes provide the geological, historic, nature conservation and scenic interest of the coastline of the Isle of Wight AONB. The beaches, sea and countryside are a major draw for visitors and are also enjoyed by the local community for leisure and recreation.

The pace of life, peace and tranquillity of the Island also has great bearing on the quality of life and special character within Isle of Wight AONB. Local place names, dialect, foods, customs and folklore all add to the colour and variety of the experience.

All the special qualities of the AONB blend together to create a perceived resonance, meaning and value by the local community, and those who choose to visit the area. This can be referred to as 'sense of place'.

#### 4.6

### SOLENT SEASCAPE PROJECT

Lead by the Blue Marine Foundation the Solent Seascape Project is a multi-million-pound, five-year (2022 – 2027) initiative which seeks to restore four major habitats in the Solent; seagrass meadows, oyster reefs, saltmarsh and seabird nesting habitats with funding from the Endangered Landscapes Programme. The project is a partnership between Environment Agency, Natural England, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Project Seagrass, Isle of Wight Estuaries Project, CHaPRoN, University of Portsmouth and the Blue Marine Foundation<sup>43</sup>.

On the Isle of Wight coast priorities are seagrass beds and saltmarsh restoration, the latter being concentrated on Thorness Bay in the Isle of Wight AONB.

## **4.7 POLICIES FOR PROTECTED LANDSCAPES AND COASTAL AREAS OF THE ISLE OF WIGHT AONB**

These policies should be read in conjunction with the overarching objectives for the Isle of Wight AONB as detailed in Section 3.13.

**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).

**P2** Encourage the use of Landscape, Seascape and Historic Landscape Character Assessments as tools to consider proposals for change within the Isle of Wight AONB.

**P3** Encourage traditional skills and techniques that contribute to enhancement of landscape and seascape character.

**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.

## **4.8 PRIORITIES FOR DELIVERY**

- Develop a better appreciation of Isle of Wight AONB coastal areas, particularly the two Heritage Coasts, for their landscape and scientific importance.
- Support identification of priority sites for the recording of natural, historic and cultural assets subject to substantial change or loss through dynamic coastal processes.
- Encourage traditional landscape management skills and techniques that contribute to landscape and seascape character.
- Support landowners working towards national targets for nature recovery and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

## 5. GEODIVERSITY

The Isle of Wight AONB has a very diverse geology within a condensed area. The geology of the Isle of Wight AONB is the bedrock upon which all its other special qualities and characteristics are founded. The landform of the AONB is due mainly to the faulting, folding, erosion and ground movement of the underlying geology. The topography of the landscape has influenced where people have decided to settle to access fresh water, take advantage of shelter from prevailing weather and where sites were chosen for ceremonial purposes, such as burial mounds on ridge lines. The geology has provided hard building materials for local vernacular architecture including chalk, limestone and sandstone and the conditions for growing timber and reed/straw materials for thatching. All these contribute to the local distinctiveness and character of traditional buildings.

This geological complexity, in a relatively small area, has created a diverse and varied landscape much of which is important at a local, regional, national and international scale, evidenced by various designations.

Chalk is arguably the most dominant landform of the Isle of Wight AONB, with the central chalk ridge running from the eastern point at Culver to the western point at The Needles. A second area of chalk downland is located in the south above the towns of Shanklin and Ventnor and the villages of Niton, Whitwell and Wroxall. Inland areas of the chalk have an undulating form and often include secluded steep-sided combes contrasting with dramatic white chalk cliffs at the coast. Chalk downland is a key feature in most views in and from the Isle of Wight AONB.

Coastal geology is a major feature of the natural beauty of the Isle of Wight AONB including:

- A nearly complete exposure of the Cretaceous Period (formed between 126 million and 65 million years ago) along the coastline of the Tennyson Heritage Coast.
- The clays, sands and silts of the Palaeocene, Eocene and Oligocene periods (formed between 65 million to 30 million years ago), a feature of the Hamstead Heritage Coast and part of the Tennyson Heritage Coast (Alum Bay to Totland).
- The vertical multi-coloured Bracklesham, and Bournemouth groups clay and sandstone strata at Alum Bay.
- The fossil-rich Wealden Group clays at Brook Bay and Yaverland.
- The impressive ravines or 'Chines' formed by streams incising through the rocks to the seashore.
- The dramatic land-slipped Gault and Upper Greensand picturesque landscape of the Undercliff (with its own south facing micro climate, scenic beauty and the accolade of being the most populated rotational landslide complex in north-western Europe).

North of the central chalk ridge the clays, sands and silts create wetter heavier soils and have led to a more pastoral, gently rolling and wooded landscape in these parts of the Isle of Wight AONB. They are also associated with the low-lying slumped wet cliffs along the Hamstead Heritage Coast and the tidal inlets of the Western Yar, Newtown Creek, Kings Quay, Wootton Creek and the wetlands inland at Thorness Bay.

The coastal zone of this area is rich in archaeological evidence of human activity close to the former Solent River now submerged under the sea. The rocks are also associated with fossilised remains of mammals, alligators, and turtles. Since the early 19th Century rocks and fossils found in the Isle of Wight AONB have been celebrated and the area continues to attract amateur and professional enthusiasts.

A series of lower sandstone hills lies immediately to the south of the central chalk downs running across the AONB from Compton in the west to Yaverland in the east. These rolling hills are often the location of spring lines which along with the shelter they afford led to the establishment of settlements close by. Sandstone is



also the underlying geology of the open, fairly flat plains between Atherfield and Rookley and beyond Arreton to Yaverland. In some parts of this area there are alluvial deposits over the free draining sandstone making them some of the best areas for cultivation. Where the sandstone meets the sea, often tall vertical red cliffs add to the character of the coastline.

Periods of rapid climate change and associated changes to sea levels (including the final inundation of the Solent around 8000 years ago) led to the creation of many of the landform features of the Isle of Wight AONB that we value today.

## **5.1 KEY FACTS & FIGURES**

The Isle of Wight hosts 40 Sites of Geological Conservation Review, 30 of which are in Isle of Wight AONB.<sup>44</sup>

There are 4 Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designated specifically for Geological Interest in Isle of Wight AONB.<sup>45</sup> There are 2 Regionally Important Geological / Geomorphological Sites (RIGS).<sup>46</sup>

## **5.2 SUSTAINING THE LANDSCAPE**

The Isle of Wight geology underpins the Island's water supply, mineral resources and leads to information about understanding the development of life on Earth. Understanding the geology helps determine settlement placement, and identifying where resources such as gravel, sand or mineral and hydro-carbon (oil, shale gas) deposits could be found on land or immediately offshore. It also highlights landslide areas and areas susceptible to erosion.

Mineral extraction poses a specific threat to certain sites across the Isle of Wight AONB. Good management of these sensitive sites is paramount to ensure any finds which would advance the geological understanding of the Island are not lost (see section on Minerals).

Although the Isle of Wight AONB is protected from the direct impacts of exploration and extraction of oil and/or shale gas, indirect impacts may have an influence upon the Isle of Wight AONB and these will need to be fully considered in any development proposals (see section on Energy).

The Island's spectacular and varied geology records over 125 million years of changing climate, geography, and animal and plant life (Paleo-environments). The Isle of Wight is recognised as the best site in Europe for dinosaur remains, with fresh exposures revealed in the ever-eroding cliffs. Large numbers of early Cretaceous dinosaurs have been found. These factors lead to an increasing market and potential for geological and paleontological tourism and educational activities.

The greatest threat to sites is from falls and cliffs with collapsing faces. While this is inevitable, it is important to record information as it becomes available to ensure it is not lost. Climate change is expected to exacerbate the rate of site loss of certain sites, most notably along the Tennyson Heritage Coast. It is important to note that interference with natural erosion and sedimentation through coastal management techniques need to undergo the appropriate scrutiny to ensure their impacts do not extend beyond what is unavoidable to fulfil their function.

## **5.3 MANAGEMENT INFLUENCES AND FORCES FOR CHANGE**

### **5.3.1 UK GEO-DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN**

The UKGAP<sup>46</sup> sets out a framework for geo-diversity action across the UK. It provides a shared context and direction for geo-diversity action through a common aim, themes, objectives and targets which link national, regional and local activities. The UKGAP is a mechanism for encouraging partnership, influencing decision makers, policy makers and funding bodies, and promoting good practice. It also establishes a shared understanding of what is happening and what needs to happen to promote and conserve geo-diversity, a process for measuring and reporting on progress and, importantly, celebrating success.

### **5.3.2 ISLE OF WIGHT LOCAL GEO-DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN (LGAP)<sup>47</sup>**

The primary function of the Isle of Wight LGAP is to formulate a strategy to promote the Isle of Wight through the conservation and sustainable development of its Earth Heritage.

The Plan sets objectives, targets and determines indicators that will focus resources to conserve and enhance the heritage. The secondary function is to produce for the first time an electronic database audit of the Island's geo-diversity.

### **5.3.3 ISLE OF WIGHT SHORELINE MANAGEMENT PLAN (SMP2)<sup>37</sup>**

The Isle of Wight coast will change over the next 100 years due the impacts of marine erosion, ground instability and flooding by the sea. Current levels of risk are likely to increase through greater human activity and development in coastal areas and as a result of the predicted impacts of climate change. Responsibility for management of the Island's coastal defences against erosion and sea flooding is shared between the Isle of Wight Council, private landowners and the Environment Agency. The Shoreline Management Plan, published in 2011, was developed as a means by which these organisations could determine, with stakeholders, the best way to look after the coast in a sustainable way for the next 100 years. It was prepared using guidelines set down by DEFRA, the Government Department with responsibility for setting national policy for defence of the coastline.

For the Isle of Wight AONB areas SMP2 strategy has identified various approaches to the appropriate defence of stretches of coastline from some form of protection through to allowing for natural processes to take place. The West Wight Coastal Flood and Erosion Risk Management Strategy<sup>38</sup> gives greater detail on these options for the north-west coast of the Island from Freshwater Bay, around the Needles to East Cowes incorporating the estuaries at Yarmouth, Newtown and the Medina. In the Isle of Wight AONB, investment would be directed to reducing risks in areas around Yarmouth. A coastal study to identify priority schemes for Sandown Bay and Ventnor is currently underway.

### **5.3.4 FOSSIL FINDS**

Many people enjoy searching for fossils, which have been washed out from the cliffs onto the beaches. Not all finds are reported or taken to local experts for identification. This means the important record of what they are and where they have been found is lost.

Inappropriate and un-authorized excavation of cliff faces or former mineral working sites can be dangerous for those taking part, damaging to the resource and in some cases a criminal offence. Finds from this activity are rarely reported.

## **5.4 POLICIES FOR GEOLOGY AND GEOMORPHOLOGY**

These policies should be read in conjunction with the overarching objectives for Isle of Wight AONB as detailed in Section 3.13.

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

**P7** Support the development of educational activities based on the complex geology of the Isle of Wight AONB, that increases peoples' knowledge and appropriate enjoyment of the resource.

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

## **5.5 PRIORITIES FOR DELIVERY**

- Support the further development of the Local Geo-diversity Action Plan.
- Encourage appropriate promotion of geological and paleontological tourism and educational activities including approaches to encourage appropriate fossil collecting which prevents damage to the resource and provides information on finds and deposits.
- Support continued investigations into international recognition of the quality of the Isle of Wight AONB geology such as UNESCO Geopark status.

## 6. HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

The complexity of the landscape within the Isle of Wight AONB is a legacy of the centuries-old intricate relationship between people and place. Closely linked with geology, the historic environment is defined by Historic England and the NPPF as:

“All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora<sup>48</sup>.”

And so comprises: archaeology, the built environment and the historic landscape.

It is essential that the importance of this resource is understood if we are to conserve and enhance the AONB.

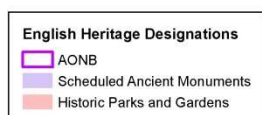
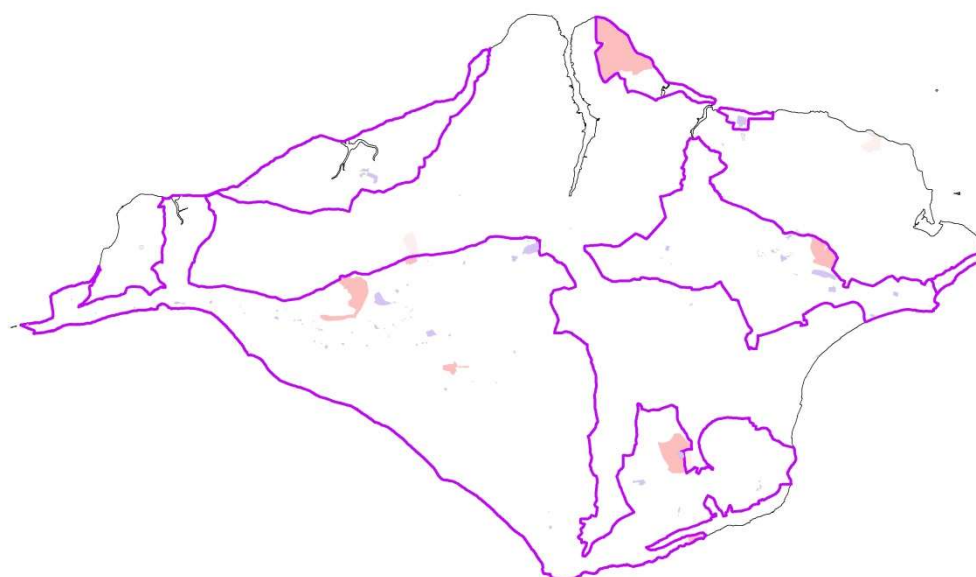
The historic environment is a major contributor to the landscape character of the Isle of Wight AONB. Set out below are some of the most significant features, from a landscape perspective but this is by no means an exhaustive list.

- Open downland and heathland dating back to the woodland clearance of these areas from the Neolithic and in particular the Bronze Age and Iron Age periods
- Human management of semi-natural woodland over several millennia and the creation of plantation woodland in the recent past
- Spring-line settlement and other settlement patterns directly related to landscape and landform, highlighting how people took advantage of sources of fresh water, shelter from prevailing winds and/or were linked with the local church and manor.
- Vernacular architecture embracing various traditional styles and reflecting the Island’s complex geology and locally available materials. Walls may be constructed of various types of greensand, Bembridge limestone, chalk or locally made bricks while roofs are typically slate or thatch.
- Ceremonial sites such as The Longstone at Mottistone, burial mounds on chalk downland and sandstone hills, and structures such as churches and religious houses
- The historic enclosure of downland, heathland, open farmland, common and waste which took place in a piecemeal fashion over a long period of time particularly from the Tudor period into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Closely associated with historic boundary features below.
- Historic boundary features such as hedgerows, ditches, hedge banks, wood banks, and stone walls and associated field patterns. Many earthworks were used to demarcate boundaries relating to medieval parishes, manors and other land holdings and can still be seen in the landscape of the Isle of Wight AONB today.
- Features and sites associated with safety and defence such as beacon sites, lighthouses, castles, forts and World War II and Cold War structures.
- Roman Villa sites, medieval planned towns, Tudor and Jacobean manors and farmsteads.
- Highways, byways, paths and tracks many of which are now part of the road or public rights of way network.
- Industrial archaeology sites from quarries, old salterns, brickworks through to rocket testing.
- Marine sites such as protected wrecks and submerged landscapes.
- Designed parkland landscapes and ornamental gardens associated with grand houses such as Appuldurcombe, Northcourt, Nunwell, Norris Castle and Osborne.
- The identification of the Isle of Wight and parts of what is now AONB as a place to visit as part of the English Grand Tour and the ‘Picturesque’ movement.
- Royal patronage and the Royal Palace at Osborne House
- The increasing popularity of the Isle of Wight AONB as a place to visit or to move to during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries and the associated changes to settlements and facilities at sites which became attractions.

## 6.1 KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- 19 Grade I listed Buildings
- 33 Grade II\* listed Buildings.
- 608 Grade II listed Buildings
- 111 Scheduled Monuments
- 9 registered historic parks and gardens on the National Heritage List for England either partially or wholly within Wight AONB plus 12 historic parks and gardens on the Local List within Wight AONB.
- 23 Conservation areas, partially or wholly in the AONB.
- 6490 sites in the AONB on the Historic Environment Record
- 36 Local List (built structures) in Isle of Wight AONB.

The Heritage at Risk Register 2023<sup>49</sup> has highlighted 10 sites within Isle of Wight AONB at risk and comprises a range of heritage assets *i.e.* 4 Scheduled Monuments; 4 Listed Buildings; 2 Registered Parks & Gardens.



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## 6.2 SUSTAINING THE LANDSCAPE

The Historic Environment provides a finite resource of evidence for past human activity. Through this we can better understand the origins of the Isle of Wight AONB landscape and the relationship between people and places. Additionally, through investigation of palaeo-environmental evidence e.g. pollen record we get a better understanding of how climate and land use has changed over time. This can be used to better inform current choices of land management.

The intricate relationship between people and place throughout time is visible in the historic environment contributing to academic knowledge but also giving people a link to the past, engendering a sense of belonging and providing a practical educational resource.

The Isle of Wight AONB holds some of the finest archaeological sites, historic landscapes, buildings and structures on the Island, many are designated and protected heritage assets. There are also many non-designated heritage assets that positively contribute to the historic environment. Many of these are recorded on the Historic Environment record although new assets / sites may be identified and afforded weight during consideration of a planning application by the local planning authority.

These resources are finite and need careful consideration, management and in some cases protection.

## 6.3 MANAGEMENT INFLUENCES AND FORCES FOR CHANGE

### 6.3.1 NATIONAL GUIDANCE

Historic England is the national body which oversees matters relating to the Historic Environment in England. It provides guidance on the best way to achieve national policy objectives for the Historic Environment to a range of stakeholders. A current list of information is available on the Historic England website and includes:

- Conservation Principles, Policies & Guidance for Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment (English Heritage 2008)
- Understanding Place; Historic Area Assessments. (Historic England April 2017)
- Heritage at Risk in 2023 – current web-based national evidence base.
- Good Practice Advice (GPAs) and Historic England Advice Notes (HEANs) [<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/planning-system/>]

### Policies and legislation affecting the historic environment

The National Planning Policy Framework<sup>9</sup> and the draft Island Planning Strategy<sup>21</sup> contain policies that enable the local planning authority to manage change to all heritage assets, including non-designated heritage assets, in a manner commensurate with their significance and contribution to the historic environment. A heritage asset is defined in the National Planning Policy framework as ‘a building, monument, site, place area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting considerations in planning decisions because of its heritage interest’ (NPPF 2023, Glossary, p.70).

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990<sup>50</sup> (as amended) and Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979<sup>43</sup> (as amended) legislate over works to Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Scheduled Monuments and amongst other things illustrate duties and powers of the Local Planning Authority in this regard.

DEFRA’s Protected Landscape Targets and Outcomes Framework requires Isle of Wight National Landscape Partnership to decrease the number of nationally designated heritage at risk in the designated landscape.

### **6.3.2 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD**

The Isle of Wight Historic Environment Record (HER), maintained by the Isle of Wight Council Archaeology and Historic Environment Service (IWCAHES), comprises a computerised database linked to a Geographic Information System (GIS), complemented by documentary archives, historic maps, aerial photographs and an archaeological library.

The HER is continuously updated as a result of fieldwork including excavations, geo-physical surveys, research and other projects by commercial and voluntary organisations and individuals. It contains detailed information on archaeological monuments; find spots (including those from the Portable Antiquities Scheme); historic buildings and structures; coastal, maritime, military and industrial sites; parks and gardens; and landscape features.

The Isle of Wight National Landscape Partnership utilises the HER to obtain an accurate picture of the historic environment and its needs.

### **6.3.3 HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

The Historic Landscape Character (HLC) programme, promoted by Historic England, is a methodology to describe the cultural, historic and archaeological features contributing to the time-depth and character of the landscape. Time-depth is the visible evidence in the present-day landscape for change and continuity over long periods of time.

The Isle of Wight HLC was prepared by the Isle of Wight Council Archaeology and Historic Environment Service (IWCAHES) between 2002 and 2006 with the support of English Heritage and the Isle of Wight National Landscape Partnership.<sup>52</sup> The HLC forms a record and analysis of the landscape at a specific point in time.

The HLC forms an integral part of the HER as a layer within the HER GIS and a dataset within the HER database alongside monument, event, source and consultation records. It is maintained by IWCAHES. This identifies historic landscape types such as field patterns, woodland and settlement and also divided the Island into HLC Areas. It led to the development of a series of Historic Environment Action Plans (HEAP)<sup>53</sup> between 2008 and 2015. These plans relate to individual HLC Areas (discrete parts of the Island with their own distinctive character) and HLC Types (such as settlement, routeways, field patterns, military sites, parks and gardens etc). The Rural Settlements and Rural Buildings HEAP describes the varied character of settlements and the built character of these settlements which contribute significantly to the landscape of the Isle of Wight AONB.

### **6.3.4 ISLE OF WIGHT CULTURAL STRATEGY**

In June 2023 the Isle of Wight Council adopted 'All the Wonder' the latest Isle of Wight Cultural Strategy<sup>54</sup>. The Strategy, vision is that 'by 2033, the Isle of Wight will be recognised as a place that celebrates its rich cultural heritage and the creativity that shapes everyone's individual and community prosperity'.

### **6.3.5 OTHER FACTORS**

Land use practices have the potential to help to conserve buried archaeological remains or to significantly increase damage to this finite resource through the impact of stock erosion or arable ploughing.

Changes to weather patterns and general climate may result in increased erosion and weathering of sites and historic structures. Fluctuations in the water table and the drying out of peat deposits have implications for the palaeo-environmental record and wetland archaeology. Increased storms, mitigation for flood risk,

conservation projects and rates of coastal erosion may lead to more frequent exposure of buried sites along undefended coastlines and increased risk of damage to historic built structures (even where there may be coastal defence).

Development and other activities have the potential to damage buried archaeology. It is important that archaeology is raised as an issue during the process of assessing development proposals and that mitigation and recording is recommended where appropriate. Making archaeological assessments available to the public can raise awareness of the importance of recording archaeology as a part of the development process.

The Portable Antiquities Scheme has encouraged the recording of finds but there may still be incidences of unreported finds which may prevent us from having a better understanding of past peoples in the landscape.

## **6.4 POLICIES FOR HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**

These policies should be read in conjunction with the overarching objectives for the Isle of Wight AONB as detailed in Section 3.13.

**P9** Support measures for the on-going conservation of this finite resource such as appropriate farming, forestry, other land use (such as building development), and maritime activities, to ensure the Isle of Wight AONB and DEFRA Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes historic environment objectives are met.

**P10** Support the positive management of change to designated and non-designated heritage assets during the consideration of planning applications affecting the Historic Environment

**P11** Encourage opportunities to prevent the decline and improve the management, monitoring and maintenance of heritage assets identified within the Isle of Wight AONB.

**P12** Encourage opportunities for responsible access and enjoyment of the historic environment of the Isle of Wight AONB and promote and celebrate the importance of the historic environment of the AONB.

**P13** Monitor the impact of forces for change (such as recreational activities, development, land use and climate change) on the historic environment of Isle of Wight AONB.

## **6.5 PRIORITIES FOR DELIVERY**

- Promote the recording, understanding, conservation, enhancement and interpretation of the historic environment in the Isle of Wight AONB.
- Encourage educational activities that raise awareness of the historic environment and promote access to heritage sites in the Isle of Wight AONB.
- Support finding viable uses for historic buildings and sites to help secure their future survival.



## 7. TRANQUILLITY AND DARK SKIES

Tranquillity and Dark Skies are key characteristics of the Isle of Wight AONB.

Tranquil places allow people to relax and to escape from the stresses and strains of everyday life. They contribute to people's health and well-being and allow opportunities to experience 'peace and quiet'. Tranquil areas are defined as places unspoilt by urban influences being sufficiently far away from the visual or noise intrusion of artificial light, development or traffic. Tranquillity is a human concept and does not include the impacts of the mentioned influences on the disturbance of wildlife. Some noises which can be experienced in the countryside positively contribute to tranquillity, such as bird song, animal calls and the wind rustling through trees and reeds.

The Isle of Wight AONB has a low population and relatively low levels of development, giving the opportunity to experience tranquillity. This is confirmed through the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) Tranquillity Mapping<sup>55</sup> showing the Isle of Wight AONB more tranquil than other parts of the Isle of Wight and south-east England. Within the Isle of Wight AONB, it is easy to find somewhere tranquil, in secretive woodlands, on top of open down land, in hidden coves or at sea.

Dark Skies are special areas where there is little ambient light pollution and on a clear night many stars can be seen. They are becoming harder to find in the UK due to increased light sources spilling into the night skies. Artificial light has done much to safeguard and enhance our night-time environment but, if not properly controlled or designed, obtrusive light (sometimes referred to as light pollution) can present serious physiological and ecological problems. The recent CPRE Star Count 2023<sup>56</sup> shows that the west Wight suffers far less light pollution than the east.

### 7.1 SUSTAINING THE LANDSCAPE

Several authoritative studies have shown that the benefits of tranquillity include:

- Tranquillity helps the economy - The tranquillity of rural areas attracts visitors to the Isle of Wight AONB.
- Tranquillity is good for our health - Studies have found that experiencing the natural environment reduces blood pressure, reduce heart attacks, increases mental performance and soothes anxiety. In addition, it has been shown that playing in a natural environment has a positive impact on children's development.
- Tranquillity reduces stress – there is convincing evidence of the importance of the natural environment in helping people to recover from stress, and that one of the primary reasons for visiting natural environments is to escape the stress of urban areas and to experience tranquillity and solitude.

As well as contributing to the quality of life for residents, Dark Skies are an economic as well as a cultural and scientific asset, which make a valuable contribution to tourism by attracting people to the Isle of Wight AONB.

### 7.2 MANAGEMENT INFLUENCES

In 2016 National Resources Wales defined tranquillity as:

'An untroubled state, which is peaceful, calm and free from unwanted disturbances. This can refer to a state of mind or a particular environment. Tranquillity can be measured in terms of the absence of unwanted intrusions, or by a balancing of positive and negative factors. These include the presence of nature, feeling safe, visually pleasing surroundings and a relaxing atmosphere<sup>57</sup>.'

The Landscape Institute and IEMA 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment'<sup>58</sup> define it as 'a state of calm and quietude associated with peace, considered to be a significant asset of landscape'.

The National Planning Policy Framework<sup>9</sup> looks to 'identify and protect areas of tranquillity which remain relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason'. It also states that 'by encouraging good design, planning policies and decisions should limit the light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation'.

There is an increasing aspiration to achieve International Dark Sky Association recognition for the Island with Isle of Wight AONB as the core 'Dark Sky' resource. Vectis Astronomical Society, CPRE, IW National Landscape and the local authority, are working towards an adoption of a specific Dark Skies policy. Also an application has been submitted to the International Dark Skies Association (IDA) to designate a Dark Skies area in the south-western area of the Isle of Wight AONB.

### **7.3 POLICIES FOR TRANQUILLITY AND DARK SKIES**

These policies should be read in conjunction with the overarching objectives for the Isle of Wight AONB as detailed in Section 3.13.

**P14** Promote and celebrate the value and contribution of tranquillity and dark skies to the landscape quality of the Isle of Wight AONB as well as to the enjoyment, health and well-being and the rural economy.

**P15** Ensure that appropriate considerations are given to the impact upon the tranquillity and dark skies in all development proposals affecting the Isle of Wight AONB and encourage exterior lighting design that reflects Institute of Lighting Professionals Environmental Zone 1 guidance or any superseding best practice advice.

### **7.4 PRIORITIES FOR DELIVERY**

- Develop initiatives to engage communities, tourists and business to support tranquillity and Dark Skies.
- Ensure a Dark Skies policy is adopted by the local authority as part of its revised Local Development Framework and support formalised IDA recognition of part of the Isle of Wight AONB as a Dark Skies area.

## 8. CLIMATE CHANGE AND MITIGATION

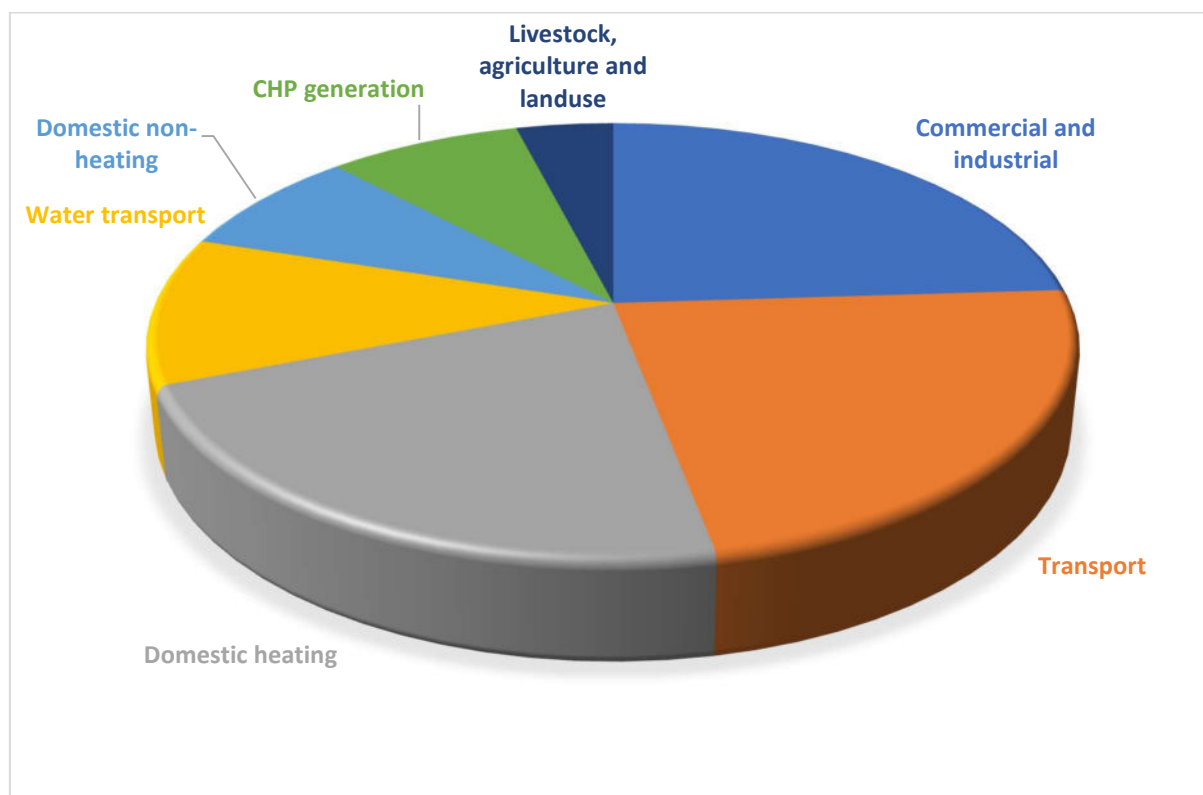
The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C in October 2018<sup>59</sup>. The report sought to encourage the global reduction of damaging emissions by 45% to prevent the global temperature rising on average by 1.5°C since pre-industrial times. This caused a general promotion of a 'climate crisis' further endorsed by the IPCC in 2021 reporting that it was 'unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land'. This is referred to as anthropogenic (human - induced) climate change.

Both national and local government in the UK have declared an ambition of 'net zero' where any harmful emissions are counter-balanced by mechanisms and practices that eliminate or reduce their effects in the atmosphere. These might be natural through photosynthesis or other biological processes or technological such as carbon capture. In April 2022<sup>60</sup> the UK Govt has agreed to follow a legal target of reduction of 78% carbon emissions from a 1990 baseline by 2035, in response to the national commitment at the Paris Conference of Parties (COP15). The UK net zero target will be reached by 2050.

The Isle of Wight Council has agreed to reach net zero by 2040<sup>23</sup> for both their own operations and the rest of the Island. Furthermore, no more than 15% would be offset on privately-owned land and the marine environment.

Sources of the carbon emissions (558,200 CO<sub>2</sub>e) of the Isle of Wight are shown below in percentage terms. Given the small population and predominately rural nature of the designated landscape the AONB contribution to these figures is approximately 6%.

### Contributions of various sectors to Isle of Wight Carbon Emissions : Isle of Wight Council 2021<sup>23</sup>



With a carbon budget target of 100,000 tonnes carbon by 2040 a 15% offset by tree planting alone would require 11961 ha of new woodland equating to 31% of the island’s land surface.

### **Carbon Storage and Sequestration**

The Isle of Wight AONB includes a variety of many habitats found in south-eastern England. These include habitats that have a significant role in the sequestration and storage of carbon including saltmarsh, peatlands and woodland as well as coastal (blue carbon) habitats such as saltmarsh, seagrass beds and seaweed forests.

The UK Government’s Environment Improvement Plan<sup>11</sup> and the Colchester Declaration<sup>61</sup> have provided opportunities for Isle of Wight AONB to contribute to the maintenance and increase in the habitats that contribute to the reduction in carbon emissions.

### **8.1 KEY FACTS AND FIGURES**

#### **Carbon Stored in Different Habitats in IW AONB**

<b>Habitat represented in IWAONB</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>	<b>Carbon stored (tC / ha)</b>
Maritime grassland	34	2040
Lowland calcareous grassland	626	38812
Lowland heath and acid grassland	148	13172
Saltmarsh and coastal habitats	121	18431
Unimproved grassland	223	13826
Broadleaved woodland	871	187701
Conifer woodland	321	55854
Peatlands	137	35894
Agricultural improved grassland	6284	389608
Arable	3921	220282

## Carbon Sequestration in Different Habitats in IWAONB

Habitat represented in IWAONB	Area (ha)	Carbon captured (tC / ha/ yr)
Saltmarsh	121	440
Broadleaved woodland	871	2178
Conifer woodland	321	642
Peatlands	137	82

Note: tC – tonnes of carbon; ha – hectares

From: Anderson and Morris 2021<sup>62</sup>

### 8.2 SUSTAINING THE LANDSCAPE

There are obvious overlaps with the Nature and Land Use targets and objectives in the way forward to adapt to and mitigate the changes brought about by climate change. Habitats will need to be given opportunities to adapt with increased drought, prolonged flooding and coastal squeeze and this will have direct impacts on coastal defences, development of housing and infrastructure and food production. All these challenges are active issues across the country but the situation is exacerbated by the coastal nature of large areas of development in a community that celebrates its relationship with the sea.

Adaptation (changing behaviours acknowledging the impacts of anthropogenic climate change) and mitigation (positive management of habitats to reduce impacts) require access to long-term resources and access to land where land use can change to accommodate the ‘new’ situations. Therefore, managed retreat on the coast; abandonment of some developments and infrastructure; food production practices in floodplains and positive changes in vegetation cover in some habitats may all have to be adopted in order to continue balancing the needs of communities and nature. More detail can be found in Isle of Wight Climate Adaptation Report 2011<sup>24</sup>.

### 8.3 MANAGEMENT INFLUENCES AND FORCES FOR CHANGE

#### 8.3.1 Climate Change on the Isle of Wight is predicted to bring about

Increased rainfall in winter

Increased drought in summer

Increase rise in relative sea level

Increased erosion of (coastal) land through landslip – a result of all three above

#### 8.3.2 Climate Change Adaptation : changing behaviours

The Third National Adaptation Programme and Fourth Strategy for Climate Adaptation Reporting 2023<sup>63</sup>: The UK government’s vision for adaptation is for a country that effectively plans for and is fully adapted to the changing climate, with resilience against each of the identified climate risks. UK Govt Plans include a new

Resilience Framework; accelerated investment in water quality and supply (Plan for Water); incorporates climate change adaptation into Environmental Land Management Schemes; increased investment in flood and coastal erosion schemes and updating the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Mission Zero – Climate and Environment Strategy 2021<sup>23</sup>: the Isle of Wight Council have produced a Strategy to change practices and behaviours in both the Isle of Wight Council and the Isle of Wight community as a whole. Mitigation includes reduction of carbon emissions and water use; increase in land use practices that store and capture carbon and increase awareness of climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Isle of Wight Biosphere designation – following this designation of the Isle of Wight and its surrounding waters the Isle of Wight National Landscape Partnership and Isle of Wight Council have been promoting the positive messages that this designation brings in terms of sustainable development and nature conservation and has led to changes in behaviour within the community and the local authority.

### **8.3.3 Climate Change Mitigation : nature-based solutions**

Climate change mitigation can make an important contribution to net zero and other targets but they cannot be used without the general adaptation practices described above. Nature-based solutions could include strategic tree planting ('right tree in the right place') through natural regeneration or positive management; allowing managed retreat in low-lying coastal areas; adopt regenerative farming practices that conserve soil and water and reduce need for fertilisers; reduce intensity of agricultural practices on marginal land<sup>64</sup>. It requires the strategic spatial planning used in development plans and the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy from local authorities.

As shown above the management and enhancement of habitats in the Isle of Wight AONB can provide a number of these benefits where peatlands, woodland, saltmarsh and hedgerows are all key features of the landscape.

### **8.3.4 Partnership working for Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation**

Many landowners and farmers are looking at new ways to farm and produce food as well as to enhance biodiversity and conserve soils. In the Isle of Wight AONB regenerative farming; soil conservation and biodiversity enhancements are all being carried out and supported through Farmer Clusters and IW Environmental Farmers Group.

The National Trust and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust have actively acquired land in the Isle of Wight AONB to reduce the impact of farming on the environment. These areas demonstrate positive land use for biodiversity and climate change mitigation.

## **8.4 Policies for Climate Change and Mitigation**

**P16** Support farmer clusters and other cooperative land use groups adopting climate adaptation and mitigation techniques in the designated landscape.

**P17** Encourage the local authority and wider National Landscape Partnership to educate and raise awareness of climate change to achieve carbon emissions reduction required by the DEFRA Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework.

**P18** Support land use change and land acquisition that creates opportunities for coastal managed retreat, peatland restoration, tree planting and floodplain restoration.

### **8.5 Priorities for Climate Change and Mitigation**

- Work with the wider IW National Landscape Partnership to produce a Climate Adaption Plan by 2028 (DEFRA target)
- Promote climate change mitigation techniques to contribute to DEFRA Protected Landscape Targets and Outcomes Framework
- Work to promote wider objectives of the Isle of Wight Biosphere initiative.

## 9. MINERALS AND SOILS

### 9.1 MINERALS

Mineral use in the Isle of Wight AONB can be traced back to the use of flint deposits by Palaeolithic people through to recent industrial extraction. Disused quarries, lime kilns, vernacular architecture, standing stones are all testament to the significance of minerals.

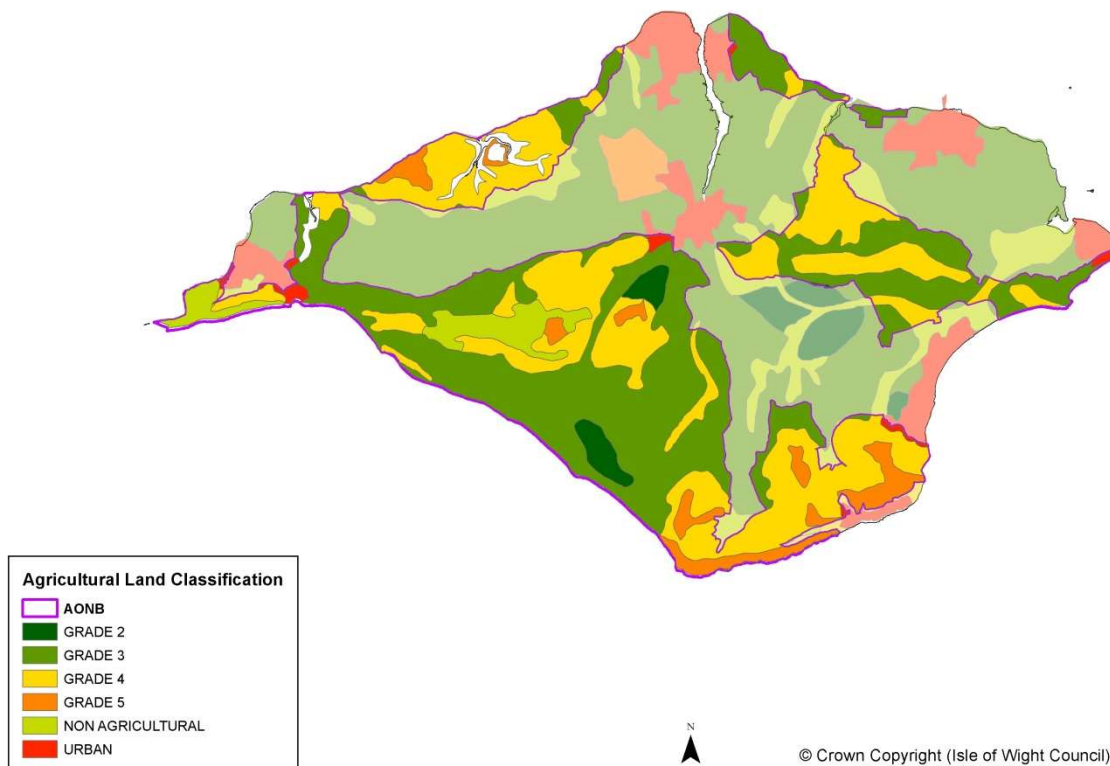
The AONB continues to provide an important finite resource for minerals such as chalk, gravel, clay and sand. The Isle of Wight Council as Mineral Planning Authority details current and expected extraction and sets out policies that seek to safeguard sites of importance for geology, geomorphology, nature conservation, archaeology, historic environment and landscape value.<sup>65</sup>

### 9.2 SOILS

Soil is a basic, limited resource that is essential for many human activities. It includes topsoil and subsoil to the depth of at least one metre. The biological, physical and chemical characteristics of soil need to be protected for it to perform its important functions, including the essential minerals required for the production of food, raw materials and energy. Soils provide a filtering and buffering action to protect water and the food chain from potential pollutants; they help to maintain gene pools and wildlife populations; and often cover historic and archaeological sites containing artefacts and historical indicators such as pollen. All soils need to be sustainably managed for the long term.

Wealden clay produces heavy soils and where it occurs inland, it mostly supports pasture. The light sand soils over the Lower Greensand provide some of the best arable land on the Island. The Chalk gives rise to thin lime-rich soils, which supports distinctive vegetation.

### 9.3 KEY FACTS & FIGURES





## **9.4 SUSTAINING THE LANDSCAPE**

Land-won Aggregates on the Isle of Wight relate to sand, gravel and brick clay with some local level chalk extraction. In 2021, 117,539 tonnes of sand and gravel were land-won from the Island, greater than the long-term (10 yr) average (87,859 tonnes per annum)<sup>66</sup>. Land-won aggregate sand and gravel extraction is undertaken within two sites in the AONB at Shorwell and Knighton. While the impact of this scale of extraction is a concern in the short term, it is hoped in the longer term the landscape will be restored to a suitable quality following the closure of the extraction site. Marine aggregate used on the Island is mainly won from the English Channel. In terms of tonnage the three-year average (2018-21) of marine aggregates is 84,773 tonnes.

Aggregate recycling amounts to 180,000 tonnes per annum, with two sites within the AONB at Duxmore and Knighton.

The Isle of Wight has a duty to provide a proportion of land-won mineral and as a result the AONB plays an important role in helping to deliver against housing demand / supply – the major use of aggregate here. As minerals can only be found at certain locations and these are largely found within the AONB, there is a disproportionate impact on the AONB from mineral extraction. In looking to the future, mineral extraction sites can be a force for good, providing rich bio-diverse sites, therefore the National Landscape Partnership need to be fully engaged in emerging minerals extraction proposals.

## **9.5 SOILS**

Soil is often overlooked as a vital resource. As well as being the largest terrestrial source of carbon, soils can store water to reduce flooding; can filter water to provide a clean potable resource; provide habitats for a wide range of soil organisms that provide aeration and nutrient cycling and can provide a mineral rich medium for crop and tree growth. These functions are dependent on good soil structure which promotes root growth. Soils on calcareous substrates tend to be thinner than those in river valleys where the high component of peat provide an important carbon store. Sites at Alverstone have some of the deepest peat deposits in southern England and are an important reservoir of palaeobotanical evidence of the post-glacial vegetation on the Isle of Wight.<sup>67</sup>

Much of the Isle of Wight has good soils for agriculture, albeit no grade 1 Agricultural land. Good agricultural practices, as promoted through Isle of Wight Catchment Sensitive Farming initiative, will play an increasing role in improving soil management for good soil health.

The heavier soils on the Wealden clay areas are less prone to loss through both wind and water erosion; however, their pastoral nature means that damage from livestock may occur. Soils associated with the Lower Greensands produce some of the best arable land; however, the lighter nature of the soil does make it vulnerable to wind and water erosion.

## **9.6 MANAGEMENT INFLUENCES AND FORCES FOR CHANGE**

### **9.6.1 ISLAND PLAN CORE STRATEGY**

The Island Plan Core Strategy<sup>68</sup> sets out the minerals strategy for the Island until 2027. In a separate guide<sup>69</sup> the Isle of Wight Council sets out Mineral Safeguarding Areas to show protected which land can be protected from development to allow the extraction of minerals in the future. The guide explains which areas may be exempt from consideration in protecting mineral resources.

### **9.6.2 CATCHMENT SENSITIVE FARMING**

Isle of Wight Catchment Sensitive Farming programme provides advice to farmers and land managers on how to reduce diffuse water pollution from agriculture, across priority catchments. This is a partnership project involving, Island Rivers (Catchment Partnership), Natural England, Environment Agency, Wight Rural Hub, Countryside Landowners and Business Association and National Farmers Union.

### **9.6.3 WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE**

Water pollution from erosion and soil run off impacts on Water Framework Directive objectives within the water bodies (see Chapter 10 for information on the WFD).

### **9.6.4 NITRATE VULNERABLE ZONES**

A large percentage of Isle of Wight AONB is designated as a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) under the Nitrates Directive 1991. The Directive aims to reduce nitrate water pollution from agriculture and prevent such pollution occurring in the future. The NVZs cover most of the Chalk and Lower Greensand areas. Once a water body has been identified as nitrate sensitive, farmers must adopt a programme of measures which includes restricting how nutrients are applied to the land<sup>70</sup>.

## **9.7 POLICIES FOR MINERALS AND SOILS**

These policies should be read in conjunction with the overarching objectives for the Isle of Wight AONB as detailed in Section 3.13.

**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).

**P20** Ensure proposals for mineral extraction, in both active extraction and restoration phases, fully consider the impacts on the landscape of the Isle of Wight AONB and Heritage Coast and seek contributions to deliver mitigation and the enhancement to the features that form the special character of the Isle of Wight AONB where development is considered harmful.

**P21** Encourage policies and programmes that encourage sustainable soil management and catchment sensitive farming.

## **9.8 PRIORITIES FOR DELIVERY**

- Encourage partners, industry, regulating bodies and landowners to work to ensure AONB objectives are embedded in minerals extraction proposals and restoration plans.
- Monitor, record and celebrate the industrial archaeology and cultural heritage of mineral workings and develop resources and educational materials relating to vernacular architecture and mineral extraction from local geology.

Encourage sustainable soil management practices, that conserve and enhance carbon and water storage capacity, through advice and guidance to all farmers and landowners in the Isle of Wight AONB with partners and regulators.

## **AIR AND WATER**

### **10.1 AIR**

Good air quality is important for a wide range of health benefits helping the most vulnerable in society such as children, the elderly and those with existing heart and lung conditions. Isle of Wight AONB is well known for its mild climate and clean air. Air is an important resource for the health of people and wildlife and its protection is essential. The good quality of the air means that the Isle of Wight has no Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) however it has adopted a Mission Zero Climate and Environment Strategy (2021-2040)<sup>23</sup> which seeks to address the climate emergency by impacting on levels of nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and particulate matter around vehicle and industrial emissions.

The prevailing south-west winds ensure the high quality of the air on the Isle of Wight. This feature of the landscape has attracted people to the Island for centuries most notably the Royal National Hospital for Diseases of the Chest, Ventnor, which was founded in 1868 and remained open for 80 years. It also allows a vast array of lichen and other species that are particularly sensitive to air quality to thrive on the Island, especially in areas that are sheltered from the prevailing weather.

### **10.2 WATER**

Water is essential for life, from wildlife through to farming, from industry and business to sustainable communities. The chalk geology of the Isle of Wight AONB is an aquifer collecting and storing rainwater. The Island's rivers and streams are small and relatively impoverished in terms of biodiversity in comparison to those on the mainland; however, they are of landscape importance.

The Isle of Wight is an area of water scarcity and water locally is a precious resource. Abstraction rates and land use can have a major impact on the quality and quantity of water available as a physical resource. Some species and habitats are particularly sensitive to water levels and pollutants, with small changes having a marked impact on populations and quality of the ecosystems. This is also true for archaeological sites in wetlands.

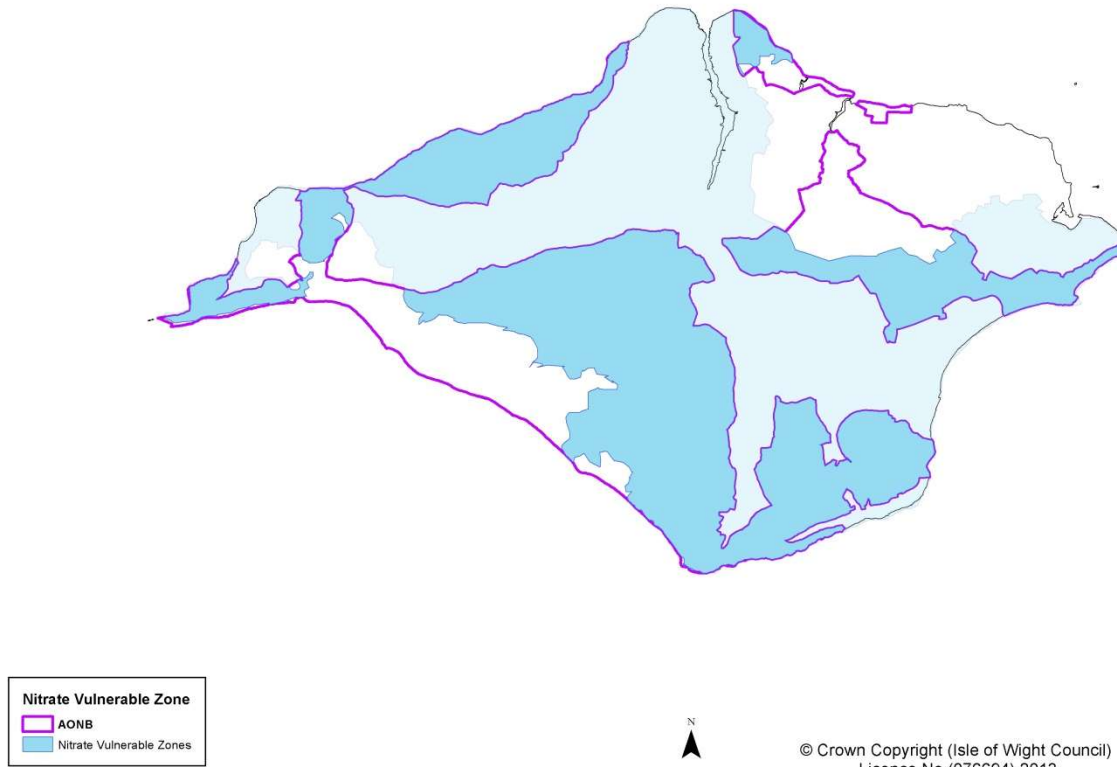
The majority of watercourses on the Isle of Wight do not meet the 'good' criteria for ecological quality as measured under the Water Framework Directive. Of the ten water bodies wholly or partly in the IWAONB, nine are classified as 'moderate' and one poor (Wroxall Stream)<sup>71</sup>. This is due to a combination of historic modifications, leading to poor in-channel morphology and impediments to fish passage as well as nitrate, phosphate and uPBTs (global pollutants such as flame retardants and mercury) pollution due to domestic and agricultural factors.

In Transitional Water Bodies (where fresh and salt water meet) around the coast of the Isle of Wight AONB, there are risks to the water quality from both land and marine-based activities. All major Isle of Wight watercourses enter European Protected Sites and two Heritage Coasts. Therefore, it is important to consider these designations when undertaking activities on land that may have a far-reaching influence on the marine environment. Furthermore methods of coastline management can have impacts some distance away<sup>72</sup>.

In the light of anthropogenic climate change, increased incidents of dry, hot summers and warm, wet winters will require careful water resource management. This will be vital to the Isle of Wight AONB and the Island, as our island status exacerbates the finite nature of this resource. There is a need to make the Island more water self-sufficient and improve water resilience to ensure continuation of services for residents and businesses.

The large proportion of semi-natural habitats across the Isle of Wight AONB help to reduce diffuse pollution and improves surface water and fluvial water quality. Moreover, the semi-natural habitats provide a valuable resource in managing the speed at which water moves through the landscape reducing flooding.

### 10.3 KEY FACTS & FIGURES



- 78% of the Island's water is abstracted for public water supply.
- Nearly 50% of ground water on the Island is over abstracted.
- The water stress classification for the Island is classified as "serious".
- 47% of demand is supplied from groundwater, 23% from rivers and 30% from transfers from the mainland via a cross-Solent pipeline. All major groundwater extraction points are within the Isle of Wight AONB.
- It has been identified that 61% of nitrate pollution comes from agriculture and 32% sewage treatment discharges.
- 22 of the 43 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) on the Island are water dependent.
- There are 149km of river in the Isle of Wight AONB.
- Good bathing water beaches.

Source: Environment Agency and Southern Water

## **10.4 SUSTAINING THE LANDSCAPE**

### **10.4.1 AIR**

Air as a support service is of huge importance. The impact the AONB can have on air is limited as this is a global resource; however, localised impacts can have a local effect on air quality and therefore the species found within close proximity.

Air pollution has detrimental effects on the health of both people and ecosystems. With areas of good air quality there are lower instances of respiratory disease associated with environmental quality as well as an increase in the biodiversity. The Island is rich in species of lichen which are an indicator of clean air. e.g. Goldeneyes -*Teloschistes chrysophthalmus*.

Air provides a medium to disperse airborne pollution derived from the burning of heating or transport fuels or waste products of manufacturing. While the Isle of Wight does not suffer from poor air quality it is near the three major urban settlements of Bournemouth, Southampton and Portsmouth do periodically suffer poor air quality. Given the right environmental conditions it is possible pollution from these settlements could impact upon the Isle of Wight air quality; however, there is currently no available data to support this assertion.

### **10.4.2 WATER**

The water cycle is one of the keystones to the ecosystems on the Island making life possible. However, it is as a provisioning service that water is most associated. The Isle of Wight AONB chalk aquifer is one of the main resources for the Island's water supply. Many of the rivers and streams suffer from low flows, which can be exacerbated by unsustainable levels of abstraction. Poor water quality is often worsened by diffuse pollution from agriculture, road run-off, misconnections and sewage treatment, as water-bodies remove a proportion of the Island's sewage, industrial and farm waste and disperse it out to sea.

The total licensed water abstraction on the Isle of Wight is split between 23 per cent river water, 47 per cent groundwater and 30 per cent transfers from the mainland. The Eastern Yar provides the largest abstractions and the main aquifers on the Isle of Wight are the Chalk, the Upper Greensand and the Lower Greensand all found within Isle of Wight AONB.<sup>73</sup>

Pollution (particularly phosphates), including sediment, and low flows are considered to be the major threats to the ecological quality of the freshwater habitats on the Island.

Sustainable management of this important resource is essential to the health of the Island's environment. Southern Water are exploring new sources of supply because, with increased development in South Hampshire and impacts of climate change, there may be growing pressure on this supply from the river Test. Additionally, there is an energy cost associated with the pumping and balancing the water system network.

Parts of the Isle of Wight are subject to fluvial and tidal flooding. However groundwater flooding is minimal. Flood events are typically localised but are having an increasing negative impact on houses and businesses. Records of historical flood events across the Isle of Wight AONB are limited. Two key rivers with flood risk problems which traverse the Isle of Wight AONB are: The Eastern Yar, suffering from rainfall runoff, blockages at structures, high winter groundwater levels causing high baseflows; and the Western Yar, where tidal locking at flood control structures cause the estuary to flood.

While waterbodies in the AONB are most known for their use as a resource or for their ecological importance, they are used for a number of recreational purposes including angling, sailing and boating.

The Heritage Coasts include coastal waters which are heavily used for recreation and navigation. Some beaches are popular destinations for a range of seaside sport and recreational activities.

Pollution is considered to be a major threat to the ecological quality of inshore waters. With much of the AONB’s coastline being designated as Special Protection Areas or Special Areas for Conservation, it is a requirement to keep these sites protected. Poor water quality in coastal and estuarine sites is as a result of sewage effluent, nitrogen run-off and storm water effluent, exacerbated by predicted climate change scenarios.

## 10.5 MANAGEMENT INFLUENCES AND FORCES FOR CHANGE

### 10.5.1 Water Framework Directive (WFD)

The Water Framework Directive (WFD)<sup>74,75</sup> requires that all inland and coastal waters within defined River Basin Districts reach at least *Good Status* or *Good Potential*. It also defines how this should be achieved through the establishment of environmental objectives and ecological targets for surface waters. The WFD requires no deterioration in the current status of the water body. It also includes an objective to aim to improve any water body that is not presently at *Good Status* or *Good Potential*.

Waterbody	Number	WFD Status 2014	WFD Status 2025	Status
Isle of Wight East TRAC		Good	Good	No change
Newtown TRAC			Moderate	
Western Yar TRAC			Moderate	
Medina TRAC			Moderate	
Caul Bourne	6020	Moderate	Moderate	No change
Brighstone Streams	5940	Moderate	Moderate	No change
Lukely Brook	6250	Moderate	Moderate	No change
Atherfield	5920	Moderate	Moderate	No change
Medina	5990	Moderate	Moderate	No change
Upper Eastern Yar	6220	Moderate	Moderate	No change
Lower Eastern Yar	5971	Moderate	Moderate	No change
Wroxall Stream	6210	Poor	Poor	No change
Blackbridge Brook	6100	Moderate	Moderate	No change
Monktonmead	6120	Poor	Moderate	Improved

Source: [Classification | River Basin Management Plan: maps \(arcgis.com\)](#)

Urban development and engineering modifications may be the cause of these failures as much as factors found in the rural environment. The framework for delivering this directive is through River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs)<sup>76</sup> and then through local Catchment Plans.<sup>73</sup> The Isle of Wight is a catchment with a number of sub-catchments including the two Yar rivers and the Medina. A plan has been prepared and adopted by the Island Rivers Catchment Partnership to take initiatives and projects forward as resources allow.

### 10.5.2 Nitrate Vulnerable Zones

The Nitrate Pollution Prevention Regulations 2008<sup>77</sup> were introduced to implement the European Community’s Nitrates Directive, to reduce nitrogen losses from agriculture to water. They designate areas where nitrate pollution is a problem, known as Nitrate Vulnerable Zones. The Solent is considered to be an area particularly

sensitive to nitrate pollution due to its effect on algal growth and the effect this has on feeding overwintering birds and other marine life. Priority transitional waters, which are failing their Water Framework Directive targets include eastern Yar, Wootton Creek, Medina and western Yar.

A mechanism to allow continued development in the Solent area has been devised by Natural England. Farmland can be taken out of agriculture (and therefore not receive nutrient / nitrate inputs) to offset the nitrate inputs from new development. This nutrient neutrality has led to a cessation in nitrate inputs over 300 ha of land in the Isle of Wight AONB.

### **10.5.3 Catchment Sensitive Farming**

The Isle of Wight Catchment Sensitive Farming (IWCSF) programme provides advice to farmers and land managers on how to reduce diffuse water pollution from agriculture, across priority catchments. This partnership includes representatives from both the farming and water supply industries.

### **10.5.4 Southern Water Resources Management Plan 2024-2075<sup>78</sup>**

This draft document sets out a 5 year plan, and a longer term vision, for the provision of a reliable and healthy supply of drinking water. It will replace the current Plan (2020-70). The plan includes:

- Receiving water from neighbouring suppliers to increase water availability
- Introduce catchment schemes and take action to remove nitrates and protect against nitrates and pesticides
- Planning to prepare for the droughts of the future, which may be more severe than those we have experienced in the past.

Southern Water have developed an advisory service and grant scheme for their target areas on the island including the catchments of the eastern Yar and Medina (potable water sources).

### **10.5.5 Natural Flood Management**

Increasingly nature-based solutions have been promoted for their importance in increasing the level of flood control through natural flood management. Measures include appropriate ditch management, use of woody debris, restoration of meanders and water retention structures such as ponds to slow down or keep back rainwater in the upper and middle catchment of rivers. The use of these methods can help alleviate flooding further downstream where urban settlements tend to have been established. DEFRA are looking to encourage more 'low-tech' solutions to flood management and encourage their adoption.

### **10.5.6 Invasive non-Native Species**

There are a number of species which have been introduced into the Isle of Wight AONB which thrive on the watercourses and waterbodies causing a number of issues including increased bank erosion, shading of riparian habitats and competing with native vegetation. The number of species and abundance has increased rapidly over the past few decades organisations such as Natural Enterprise have sought to reduce the impact on the water environment by these species.

## **10.6 POLICIES FOR AIR AND WATER**

These policies should be read in conjunction with the overarching objectives for Isle of Wight AONB as detailed in Section 3.13

**P22** Encourage catchment-sensitive land-use practices and promote the responsible use and conservation of water and responsible management of wastewater to safeguard the valuable water resource.

**P23** Ensure AONB objectives are included in strategic approaches such as River Basin Management Plans and local Catchment Plans and support initiatives that deliver Water Framework Directive objectives.

## **10.7 PRIORITIES FOR DELVIERY**

- Support initiatives and approaches that improve the quality of our watercourses including advocate greater self-sufficiency for fresh water, reduce abstraction and increased opportunities for rainwater capture in larger developments and agriculture.
- Support initiatives and approaches that encourage greater landowner engagement on river and wetland management.
- Support initiatives and approaches that help to ensure good quality bathing water in AONB.



## 11. ENERGY

The power of the sun or solar energy is a fundamental driver for many natural processes on earth. Due to its geographical location and Island status, the Isle of Wight AONB benefits from long sunshine hours, extended growing seasons and a comparably warm climate. The good sunshine hours, a mix of farmland and woodland for growing bio-fuels, coastal locations offering tidal flows, sea breezes and the underlying geology of the Isle of Wight AONB's landscapes offer an array of resources that can be used to produce energy.

Many of the communities within the Isle of Wight AONB are 'off the grid' for mains gas and are reliant on electricity, solid fuel, LPG or oil for their heating needs, which can be considerably more expensive. In fact many households are considered to be suffering from 'Fuel Poverty' as over 10% of their income is spent on fuel. Additionally, a specific problem in rural areas is that many of the properties are what are classed as 'hard to treat' meaning that they do not lend themselves to simple insulation measures.

National Planning Policy (NPPF 2023)<sup>8</sup> clearly states there should be a presumption against major development within or affecting the AONB. The intimate and fragmented nature of the Isle of Wight AONB, the complexity of its landscapes and diversity of their character, makes the area sensitive to change and reduces its ability to accommodate large scale development.

The Isle of Wight AONB has the capacity to contribute to the Island's targets in a way that does not compromise the designation. Whilst large scale energy development is inappropriate, this does not rule out individual householder, business or community approaches, undertaken at an appropriate scale. This enables the Isle of Wight AONB to contribute to the reduction of the Island's carbon footprint, without compromising the designated landscape. Positive examples of this include The Chale Community Project, Shorwell, St Lawrence village halls, Brading Roman Villa, National Trust Needles Old Battery and a general increase in individual householders utilising a range of renewable technologies from wood boilers through to solar photovoltaic (PV) schemes.

Biomass and anaerobic digestion may also be able to play a part in the capture of renewable energy. It is important to ensure that the growing of biomass crops is appropriate within the landscape. This will be dependent upon the crop type chosen, the extent of the planting and whether it is undertaken as part of crop rotation with more traditional farming practice. Anaerobic digesters need to be of a size and design and in a location which is appropriate within a protected landscape.

Solar photovoltaics can be used as a renewable energy production technology at a range of scales, however, careful consideration is required to mitigate landscape impact.

Wood can be used as a sustainable source of fuel and can contribute to the better management of woodlands for wildlife – see more in section on Forestry.

The Isle of Wight National Landscape has provided some guidance relating to renewable technologies and considerations required in the designated area, but there is a need to update this as technology changes and certainly within the life of this Management Plan.

There have been pressures for exploration of oil resources within or adjacent to the Isle of Wight AONB, this is likely to continue and be joined by exploration for shale gas through hydraulic fracturing (fracking). Whilst these operations are specifically banned from within the designated area, any proposals would require planning consent and the Isle of Wight AONB would wish to comment on secondary effects such as visual impacts to views. Strategically these impacts would be dealt with through the production of guidance of potential energy technologies in combination with the updating of our renewable technologies guidance.

## 11.1 KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- There are currently 10 operational Solar PV sites within the AONB covering 853m<sup>2</sup>.
- Isle of Wight average domestic energy consumption<sup>79</sup> = 3,731,000 Wh per household per year representing 47% of energy consumption.
- Industry and commercial consumption was 862 GWh (36%).
- In 2018 the Island used 2425 GWh of energy, of which; 45% was met by natural gas piped from the mainland, 22% from electricity, 18% from petrol and diesel used for transport.
- In 2022 6% of Isle of Wight households' energy was supplied from renewable sources<sup>80</sup>.

## 11.2 SUSTAINING THE LANDSCAPE

The Isle of Wight AONB provides a range of natural resources that can be captured to produce energy (light, air flow and temperature, crop and plant material and dynamic seas).

There is greater understanding on the finite nature of fossil fuels and for the need for us to balance their use with renewable sources. Individuals, communities and businesses should be supported to better understand their own use of energy, encouraged to be more efficient and to look at alternatives.

There has been a slow reduction of energy usage within the last decade, lower than the south east region average. The majority of renewable energy production on the Isle of Wight takes place outside of the AONB, with those sites inside being small scale and domestic. It is hard to quantify and monitor the extent of domestic installations as there is no central database for this information and not all installations would require planning permission.

It would be useful to develop a way to measure an uptake of domestic renewable energy technologies within the Isle of Wight AONB communities. This may be achieved through local projects such as Neighbourhood Plans.

## 11.3 MANAGEMENT INFLUENCES AND FORCES FOR CHANGE

### 11.3.1 Government Policy and Guidance

Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1)<sup>81</sup> - Sets out national policy for energy infrastructure and guides the work of the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC),<sup>75</sup> as required by the Planning Act 2008.<sup>82</sup>

National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy (EN-3)<sup>83</sup> – taken together with EN-1 this provides the primary basis for decisions on nationally significant renewable energy infrastructure by the IPC. As required by the Planning Act 2008.

### 11.3.2 British Energy Security Strategy 2022

UK Government is seeking to increase the number of homes which have an energy rating of C or above with 46% achieved in 2022. New builds with energy efficiency at A or B rating of 84%.

There is an increased government focus on backing insulation programmes for solid wall properties, largely aimed at external wall insulation. This may have an impact on visual appearance which will need to be considered alongside the fuel poverty issues it addresses. There is a need to work with relevant organisations

on a case-by-case basis to assess the most appropriate approach within the diverse settlements of the Isle of Wight AONB.

The draft Island Planning Strategy (IPS)<sup>21</sup> identifies a renewable energy target of 220-300 MW to meet current demand. On the island this can be met from a range of proven technologies including: wind power; photo-voltaics; energy from waste and energy from biomass. The IPS states that large-scale wind and photovoltaic schemes will be located outside the AONB but schemes will be considered inside the designation where there is no alternative and where considerable community benefit is demonstrated and considered to outweigh the landscape impact

## 11.4 POLICIES FOR ENERGY

These policies should be read in conjunction with the overarching objectives for the Isle of Wight AONB as detailed in Section 3.13.

**P24** Promote the responsible use and conservation of energy and support community approaches to capture energy through appropriate renewable technologies in line with the Isle of Wight AONB objectives.

**P25** Encourage sensitive approaches to the provision of infrastructure related to energy supply through landscape enhancement measures (such as undergrounding of overhead electrical cables).

**P26** Ensure development proposals relating to energy fully consider the impacts on the landscapes and seascapes of the Isle of Wight AONB and take full regard of the purposes of the designation.

**P27** Ensure a better understanding of the potential contribution the AONB could make to energy targets without compromising the purposes of the designation and increase understanding of key considerations in relation to energy affecting the Isle of Wight AONB.

## 11.5 PRIORITIES FOR DELIVERY

- Consider the implications of exploiting fossil fuels resources and the potential impact this may have on Isle of Wight AONB.
- Consider the implications of energy distribution, communications and other utilities connectivity and the potential impact this may have on Isle of Wight AONB.
- Continue to advocate the importance of energy efficiency and the potential for appropriate renewable energy solutions.
- Work with communities involved in Green Towns or Neighbourhood Plans to include measures for recording/identifying energy reduction and renewable energy uptake in their areas.
- Work with statutory undertakers to minimise the impact of energy distribution infrastructure.
- Support and work with relevant organisations seeking to address fuel poverty issues, through the use of domestic scale renewable technologies and measures to insulate properties within Isle of Wight AONB.

## 12 WILDLIFE

The Isle of Wight AONB has a rich biodiversity largely due to the varied geology, landform and ongoing natural processes. The areas of chalk grassland; maritime slopes and cliffs; estuarine habitats; ancient woodlands and notable species are of particular importance regionally, nationally and internationally.<sup>84</sup>

Wildlife and the countryside have evolved with the influence of people throughout history. Since the mid-nineteenth century the pace of change has increased, which has had an impact on habitats and species. Anthropogenic climate change due to carbon and other emissions; intensification of food production in the agricultural sector; pressure from increased built development for transport and housing; commerce and industry and increasing recreational activity have all led to change in the countryside and a decrease in biodiversity as a result of habitat change or loss. For example, chalk grassland on the Isle of Wight has declined by two-thirds since 1850, however, a mosaic of important habitats remain. Areas of land that have poor soil, saline conditions or steep slopes have avoided the intensification associated with more productive land. The result is small areas of semi-natural habitat of high wildlife value being surrounded by a more hostile, less bio-diverse, intensively farmed landscape. However, the Island is more fortunate than many areas in lowland Britain, in still having areas of interconnecting and wildlife-rich habitats. These may act as important sources of diversity, with the potential to re-colonise the wider countryside when farming practice becomes less intensive.

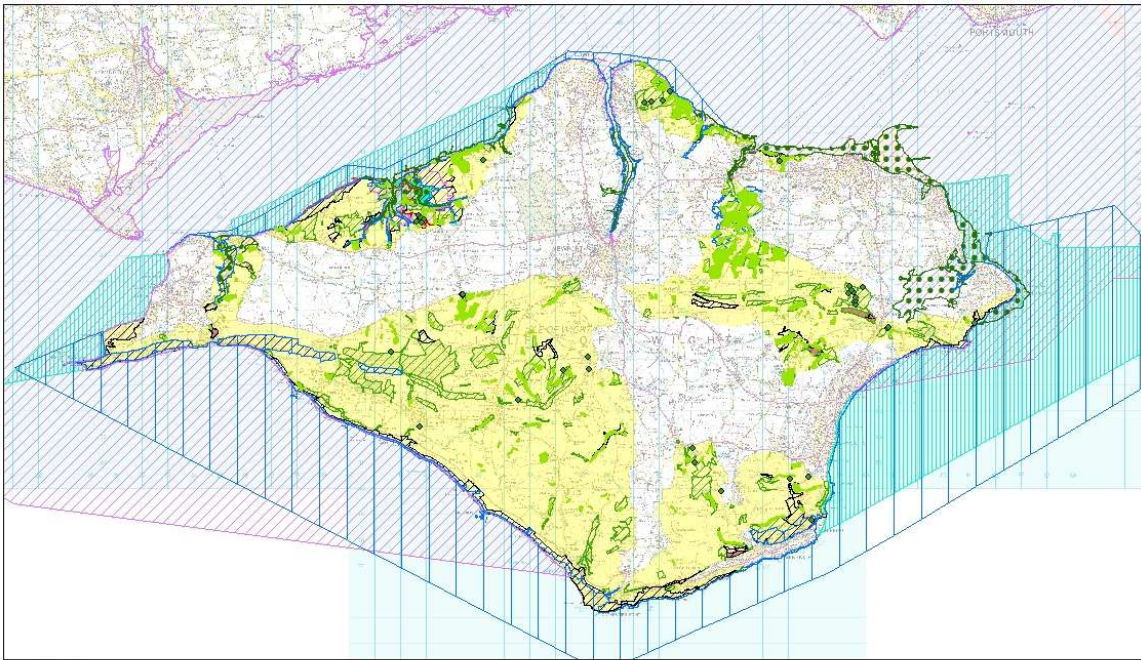
Island status has prevented the introduction of some species such as mink and grey squirrel, and, as a consequence, allowed populations of rare species such as hazel dormouse, red squirrel and water vole to flourish. However it also prevents recolonization following local extinction. Three butterfly species have been lost from the Island in recent years and others are endangered. These species will not return without human intervention.

Changes to local habitats can also arise from the introduction of non-native species that have flourished including Holm oak, buddleia, Himalayan balsam, New Zealand pygmyweed, and Japweed. A number of tree diseases impact the Island's wildlife and landscape. These include Dutch Elm Disease and more recent impacts of Ash Die-back disease. Whilst some have a long history on the Island, the local and global trade in the importing of non-native plants, and their associated fauna, will continue to bring challenges to our Island biodiversity.

A mild climate and coastal conditions also allow species, such as the Glanville fritillary butterfly to live at the northern edge of their European range. The impact of relative sea level rise and the commensurate erosion on coastal habitats is a particular area of concern, due to the limited opportunities for the migration of habitats. However, climate change presents interesting and potentially challenging biodiversity opportunities with new species colonising from the continent.

## 12.1 KEY FACTS & FIGURES

### ISLE OF WIGHT AONB DESIGNATIONS MAP

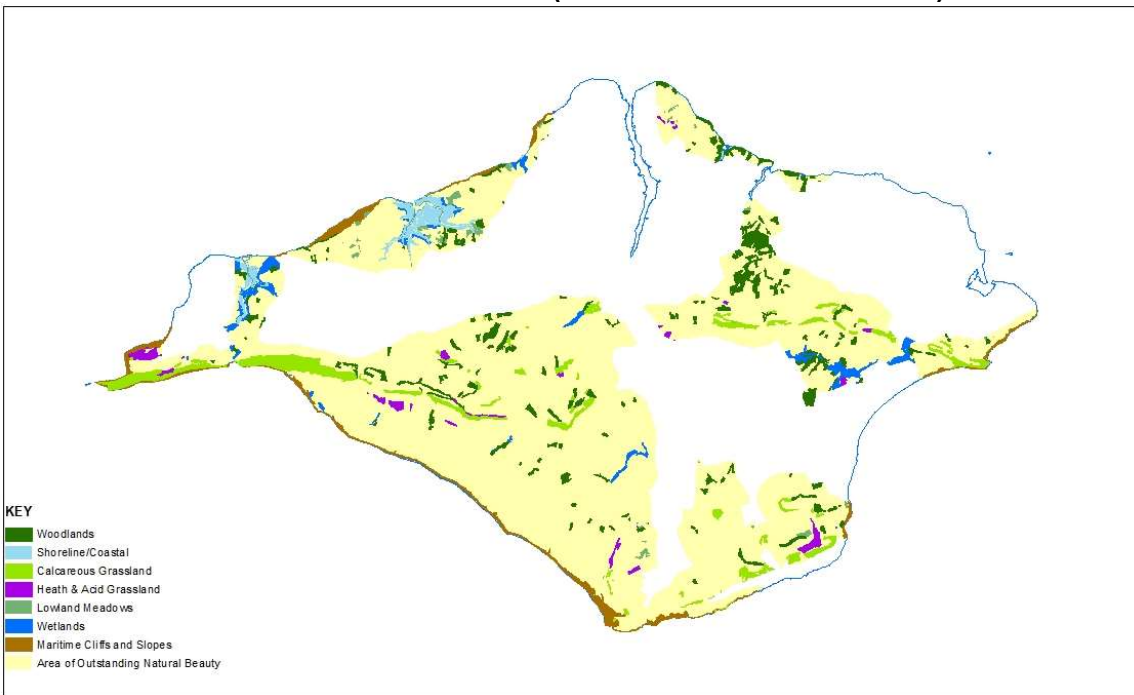


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Isle of Wight National Landscape  
Wildlife Sites Map

KEY	
◆ Ancient Trees	▨ Sites of Special Scientific Interest
■ Irreplaceable Habitat	▨ MCZ
▭ SAC	▨ Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation
◆ RAMSAR	▨ Local Nature Reserve
▭ SPA	■ Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
▭ National Nature Reserves	

### ISLE OF WIGHT AONB HABITATS MAP (IWLNR<sup>85</sup> HABITAT TYPES)



KEY	
■ Woodlands	
■ Shoreline/Coastal	
■ Calcareous Grassland	
■ Heath & Acid Grassland	
■ Lowland Meadows	
■ Wetlands	
■ Maritime Cliffs and Slopes	
■ Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	

Isle of Wight National Landscape  
Habitats Map

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### 12.1.1 Key Habitats:

Habitat represented in IWAONB	Area (ha)	% IW total
Calcareous grassland	626	98%
Maritime cliffs and slopes	383	89%
Heath & acid grassland	148	84%
Lowland meadows	119	58%
Woodland	646*	52%
Coastal habitats	428	46%
Wetlands	288	38%

\*excludes Planting on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)

There are 27 SSSIs within the IWAONB, though only 21 of these are wholly within the designation. 79% of these sites are in favourable condition (by area). Four sites are in unfavourable condition, Thorness Bay, Cridmore Bog, Yar Estuary and Alverstone Marshes.<sup>45</sup> There is one National Nature Reserve at Newtown managed by the National Trust.

Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006<sup>84</sup> requires the UK government to publish a lists habitats and species in the UK of nature conservation concern (List of habitats and species of principal importance in England). Of these species 196 (72 are moths) occur in the Isle of Wight AONB and two of these species occur in the Isle of Wight AONB and nowhere else in the British Isles – reddish buff moth and wood calamint.

## 12.2 SUSTAINING THE LANDSCAPE

Wildlife is rightly valued for its aesthetic qualities and the enjoyment people gain from visiting areas of high wildlife value. However; this view sells short the true importance of wildlife on our continued health and wellbeing.

Wildlife also:

- provides genetic diversity, from which we derive our agricultural foods,
- provides the photosynthesis of plants (producing a proportion of the oxygen we breathe),
- enables carbon sequestration (removal of one of the most influential greenhouse gases from the atmosphere),
- is fundamental to the pollination of flowers and crops,
- regulates the virility and spread of pests and diseases,
- reduces erosion by binding soils together, and
- provides a 'product' for tourism to benefit from.

Without a healthy and diverse wildlife resource the landscape would look very different and many of the benefits we receive would not be possible.

The Isle of Wight AONB contains the majority of the areas designated for their wildlife importance; however, habitats are spread across the Island. To avoid fragmentation and isolation of key habitats and species, the Isle of Wight AONB needs to consider sites in this wider Island context.

## 12.3 MANAGEMENT INFLUENCES AND FORCES FOR CHANGE

### 12.3.1 Environment Act 2021<sup>13</sup>

The Environment Act was given Royal Assent in 2021 and seeks to deliver through policy and secondary legislation / regulations:

- Long-term targets to improve air quality, biodiversity, water, and waste reduction and resource efficiency
- A target on ambient PM2.5 concentrations, the most harmful pollutant to human health
- A target to halt the decline of nature by 2030
- Environmental Improvement Plans, including interim targets
- A cycle of environmental monitoring and reporting
- Environmental Principles embedded in domestic policy making
- Office for Environmental Protection to uphold environmental law
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Biodiversity Net Gain and Conservation Covenants

Legally binding targets for biodiversity are listed below:

- Halt the decline in species abundance by the end of 2030
- Increase species abundance by the end of 2042 so that is greater than in 2022 and at least 10% greater than in 2030
- Reduce the risk of species' extinction by 2042, when compared to the risk of species' extinction in 2022

### 12.3.2 UK Environment Improvement Plan<sup>11</sup>

The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023 for England is the UK Government's first revision of the 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP 2018<sup>10</sup>). It builds on the 25 YEP vision with a new plan setting out how UK Govt will work with landowners, communities and businesses to deliver each of our goals for improving the environment, matched with interim targets to measure progress. [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan-2023)

The Plan lists ten environmental goals:

Goal 1: Thriving plants and wildlife

Goal 2: Clean air

Goal 3: Clean and plentiful water

Goal 4: Managing exposure to chemicals and pesticides

Goal 5: Maximise our resources, minimise our waste

Goal 6: Using resources from nature sustainably

Goal 7: Mitigating and adapting to climate change

Goal 8: Reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards

Goal 9: Enhancing biosecurity

Goal 10: Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment

Improving nature is described as the apex goal and is described as halting the decline in our biodiversity so that thriving plants and wildlife can be achieved.

Furthermore, to reach this apex goal the UK Govt are seeking to:

- Launch the Species Survival Fund to create, enhance and restore habitats,
- Create, restore, and extend around 70 areas for wildlife through projects,
- Promote and fund Landscape Recovery Projects
- Protect 30% of our land and sea for nature through the Nature Recovery Network and enhanced protections for our marine protected areas.
- Promote and fund Local Nature Recovery Strategies to identify areas to create and restore habitat, and Biodiversity Net Gain to enhance the built environment,
- Support a transformation in the management of 70% of our countryside by incentivising farmers to adopt nature friendly farming practices,
- Publish an updated Green Finance Strategy, setting out the steps we are putting in place to leverage in private finance to deliver against these goals.

### **12.3.3 Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)<sup>85,86</sup>**

UK Government has made legally binding commitments to end the declines of biodiversity and for nature to recover. This is important for nature's own sake and for all the things that society relies on nature for, like clean water and food production. For nature to recover, targeted, co-ordinated and collaborative action will be required. Under the Environment Act 2021<sup>13</sup>, the UK Government placed an obligation on 'responsible authorities' to produce LNRS. The Isle of Wight was informed it was a responsible authority in July 2023 and was awarded a grant to undertake the work

Each Local Nature Recovery Strategy will agree priorities for nature recovery and propose actions in the locations where it would make a particular contribution to achieving those priorities. It will be specific and tailored to its area. The responsible authorities and people involved in preparing a strategy can choose how they want it to look, but every strategy must contain:

- A local habitat map.
- A written statement of biodiversity priorities.

The Isle of Wight Local Nature Recovery Strategy<sup>87</sup> is known as 'Island Nature' and is expected to be published in December 2024

### **12.3.4 Isle of Wight AONB Nature Recovery Plan<sup>88</sup> and DEFRA Targets and Outcomes<sup>89</sup>**

In May 2021 the Isle of Wight AONB published its Nature Recovery Plan, one of a series produced by the UK National Landscape Partnerships as part of the Colchester Declaration in 2019. Eight priority habitats were identified, and targets produced for maintenance and restoration. In parallel with this eight flagship species were identified for each habitat including reddish buff moth, wood calamint, Glanville fritillary, barn owl, nightjar and small cordgrass.



Habitat	Maintain (ha)	Fav condition (ha)	Restore / create (ha)
Woodland	871*	352	130
Lowland Meadow	119	101	132
Heath and Acid grass	148	126	15
Calcareous grassland	626	532	190
Maritime cliff and slope	51km		5 km
Wetlands	294	294	
Coastal	426		15

\*Note: This figure includes Planting on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) so includes both maintenance and restoration sites. The LNRS figure for woodland is 626 ha (which excludes PAWS). The Restore figure here therefore includes the aim to restore PAWS to ancient woodland.

These targets are being adopted in this Plan as a contribution to the national Targets and Outcomes Framework for Protected Landscapes<sup>80</sup> announced by DEFRA as part of the Environmental Improvement Plan.

### 12.3.5 Natural England's conservation priorities<sup>90</sup>

Natural England are the government's adviser for the natural environment in England.

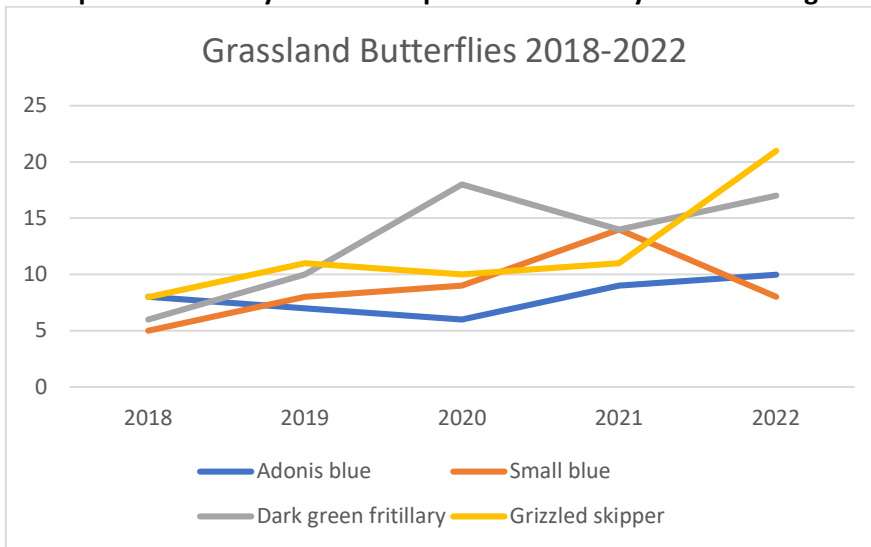
Their priorities for 2020- 25 are outlined below:

- a well-managed Nature Recovery Network across land, water and sea, which creates and protects resilient ecosystems rich in wildlife and natural beauty, enjoyed by people and widely benefiting society.
- people connected to the natural environment for their own and society's wellbeing, enjoyment and prosperity.
- Nature-based solutions contributing fully to tackling the climate change challenge and wider environmental hazards and threats.
- improvements in the natural capital that drives sustainable economic growth, healthy food systems and prospering communities.
- evidence and expertise being used by a broad range of partnerships, organisations and communities to achieve Nature recovery and enable effective regulation and accreditation.
- being a values-led organisation that delivers excellent service standards to all partners, organisations and communities engaged in achieving Nature's recovery.

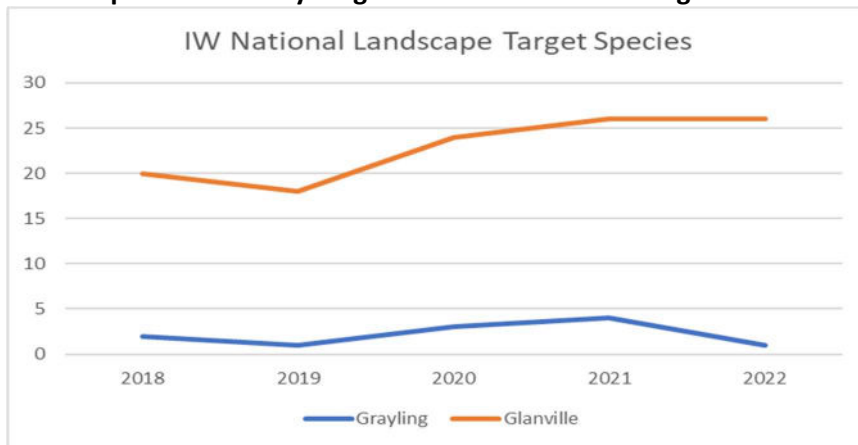
### 12.3.6 Status of Key Species in Isle of Wight AONB

Monitoring the fortunes of wildlife in the designated landscape produces a mixed picture regarding the populations of key species (or groups). Data from the locally produced bird and butterfly reports (IWNHAS / IWOG; HIWBC) since the last management Plan is shown below:

**Populations of Key Grassland Species of Butterfly on Isle of Wight**

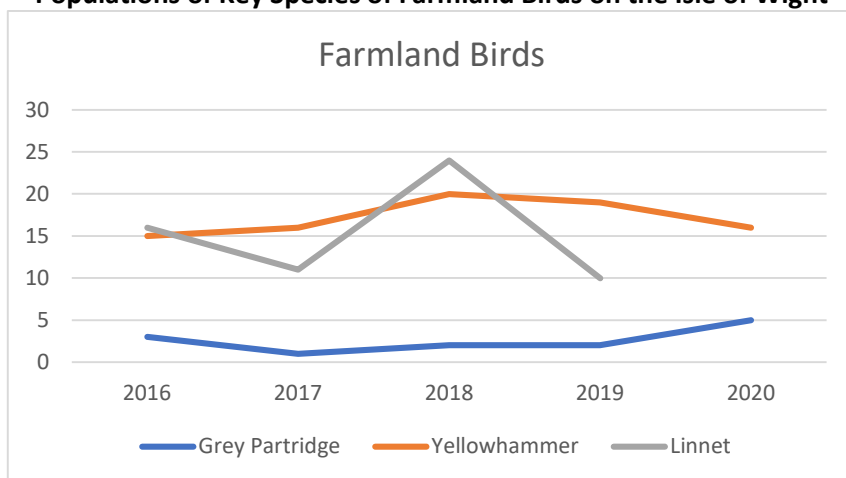


**Populations of Key Target Butterflies in Isle of Wight AONB**

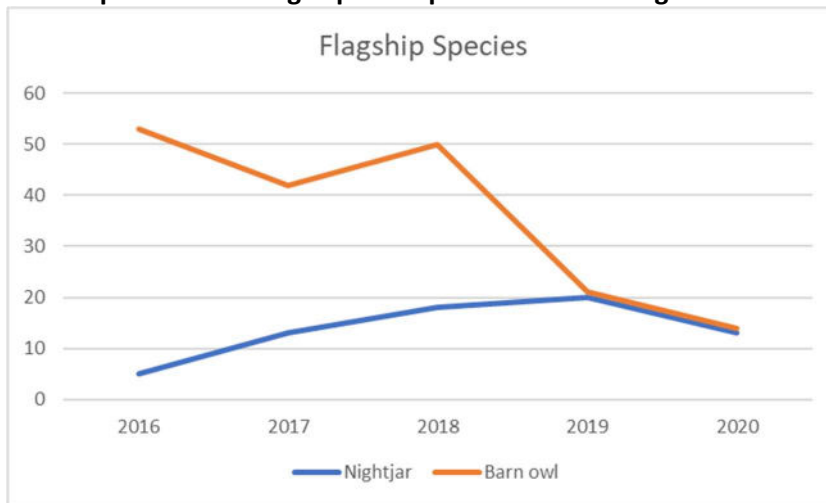


Key butterflies in grassland show relatively stable or growing populations (in terms of number of sites) but there is concern over the long-term future of the Grayling butterfly in the IWAONB

**Populations of Key Species of Farmland Birds on the Isle of Wight**



**Populations of Flagship Bird Species in Isle of Wight AONB**



The future of farmland birds continues to be uncertain due to recent lack of systematic data. However, the long fall of barn owl populations is of concern due to the importance of the Island for this species nationally.

### **12.3.7 Biodiversity Net Gain<sup>91</sup> / National Planning Policy Framework 2023<sup>9</sup>**

The NPPF gives a clear mandate to identify and pursue opportunities for securing net gain for biodiversity through the planning system to ensure that development does not reduce ecological function of the AONB and adversely affect the associated island economy and tourism.

In 2021 Biodiversity Net Gain became mandatory under Schedule 7 of the Town and Country Planning Act (Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021<sup>13</sup>) and was in force from February 2024.

Developers are expected to provide 10% more biodiversity in the development than there was before they started the development. Existing biodiversity will be measured using a standardised metric and developers are able to deliver through on-site, off-site or a mixture of the two. The measures are expected to last for 30 years. This obligation will be regulated by local authorities and guaranteed by legal agreement between the local authority and the developer<sup>82</sup>.

### **12.3.8 PARTNERSHIP WORKING FOR WILDLIFE**

The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Nature Partnership (HW LNP)<sup>92</sup> covers Hampshire, Isle of Wight, the Solent and South-Wight Sea areas and was established to provide a vision, strategic leadership and a strong championing voice for these superb natural environments.

The Isle of Wight Biodiversity Partnership (IWBP)<sup>93</sup> is a collaboration of partners, who are taking forward biodiversity targets on the Isle of Wight. This Partnership has been working to help achieve national and local biodiversity priorities as part of the AONB Management Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategy processes.

### **12.3.9 OTHER FACTORS**

The following list details other factors affecting the conservation and enhancement of wildlife:

- Pests and disease have the potential to have a major impact on the plant and animal species. Climate change may alter the current geographical extent pest species which may also be vectors for disease. Global markets and import of animal and plant materials all have the ability to introduce pests and disease into the local environment.

- Invasive non-native plant species and introduced animal species have the capacity to significantly alter the balance of wildlife ecosystems impacting on our native wildlife.
- Land management practices have the ability to both benefit and cause harm to wildlife and habitats.
- Some recreational activities may be problematic where the impact on wildlife and habitats is significant either due to the individual activity or through cumulative effects. This applies to activities on land and in the marine environment.
- Some forms of development either due to their impact on previously undeveloped land, loss of significant habitat on 'brownfield' previously developed sites or their wider effect on surrounding wildlife and its conservation and enhancement.
- Over managed approaches to areas of green space and wider countryside creating manicured verges, greens etc can have a detrimental impact on potential habitats for wildlife.
- Urban influences through disturbance from light, noise and domestic pets can impact on wildlife.
- Climate change has the potential to cause both problems such as habitat squeeze, increased incidence of forest and heath fires, increased abstraction of water but also potential opportunities for species movement.

## 12.4 POLICIES FOR WILDLIFE

These policies should be read in conjunction with the overarching objectives for Isle of Wight AONB as detailed in Section 3.13.

**P28** Promote and celebrate the importance of the diverse habitats and species of Isle of Wight AONB especially those highlighted by the IW Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

**P29** Support and encourage appropriate farming, forestry, land use and marine maritime activities, which contribute to wildlife and habitat objectives and create bigger, better, more joined up and resilient ecological networks.

**P30** Support projects that conserve and enhance populations of target habitats and species (as described in Isle of Wight AONB Nature Recovery Plan), as a contribution to national Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework, and monitor progress on this work.

## 12.5 PRIORITIES FOR DELIVERY

- Ensure the Isle of Wight Local Records Centre develops regular wildlife and habitat monitoring and recording programmes and establishes ways in which the data obtained from this can be shared more effectively.
- Support the development of targeted programmes for habitat maintenance, restoration and creation, in line with DEFRA's Targets and Outcomes through a landscape-scale approach.
- Support Local Nature Recovery Strategy production and implementation with partners including national and local environmental NGOs, farmers and landowners and the local authority.

- Encourage the Isle of Wight Council, Island Roads, parishes and community groups, to undertake appropriate management of community assets such as parks, village greens and roadside verges for their wildlife value and interest.

## 13 FARMING

The importance of agriculture, both in the past and as a current influence on landscape character, historic and natural environments should not be understated. 12017 ha (63%)<sup>94</sup> of the land area of Isle of Wight AONB is farmed and the future of its landscapes is linked to the sustainability of farming.

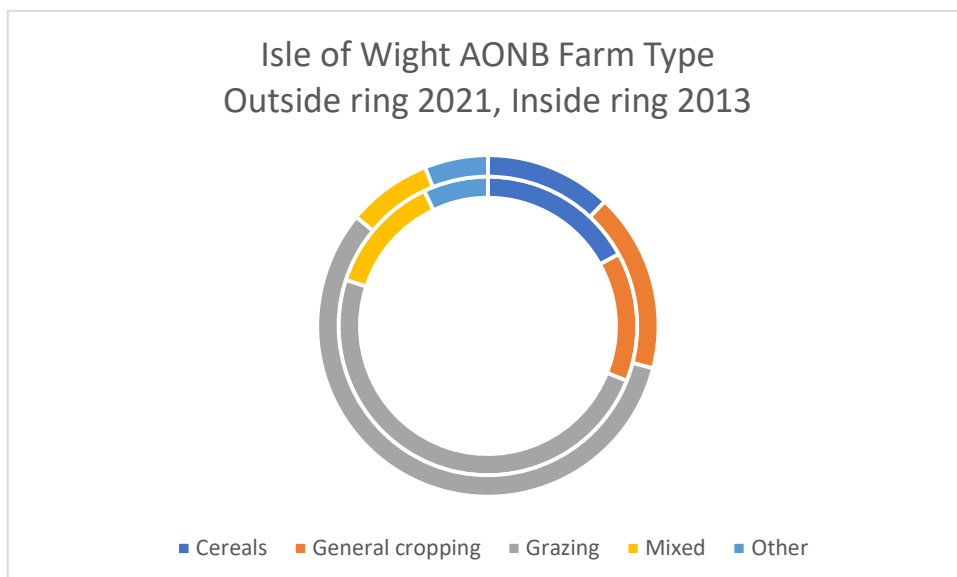
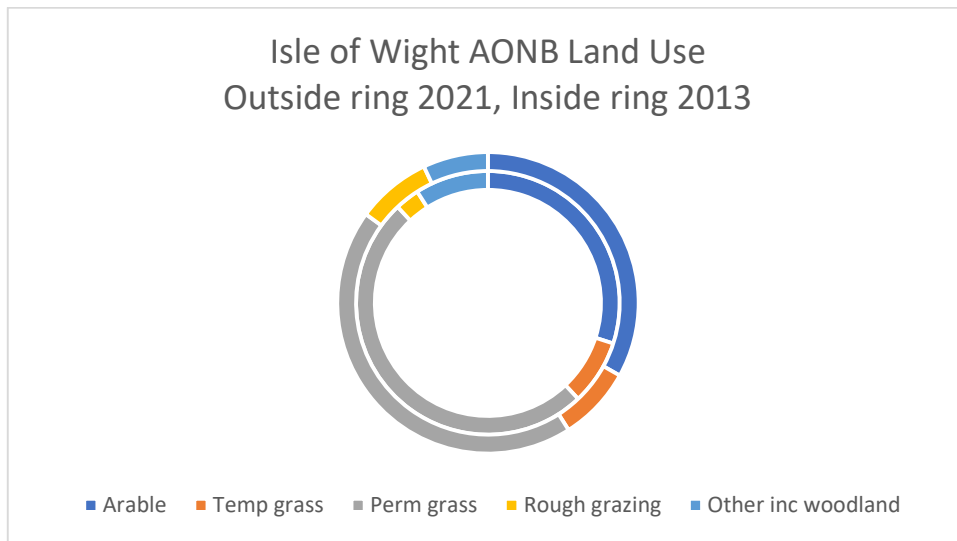
The underlying geology and diversity of landform dictates the suitability for farming practices and has led to a mixed patchwork landscape, traditionally of small-scale farmsteads. This small-scale nature contributes greatly to the character of the Isle of Wight AONB but this makes it more of a challenge to achieve economies of scale. In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century this led to increased leasing of land to larger scale operators, particularly in relation to arable cultivation. Many smaller farms continue to rely on diversification; however this mix now encompasses activities such as tourism (holiday lets), retail (farm shops) and more recently renewable energy production (bio-fuels). The Isle of Wight AONB recognises and supports diversification that enables farmsteads to continue to have farming as their primary activity and where this contributes to the on-going management, conservation and enhancement of the AONB landscape.

Farmers and land managers have a major role to play in continuing to conserve and enhance the AONB. There is a need to support and encourage sympathetic land management practices for their landscape benefits. This has been partly delivered through agri-environment schemes designed to add landscape, ecological and cultural value predominately through EU funding. Local partners work closely with landowners and farmers to facilitate the maximum benefits for the landscape through advice, guidance, practical help and through the gathering and sharing of information.

The pressure for sub-division of land for non-agricultural activities is of on-going concern. Multiple ownerships and the shift away from traditional farming can bring with it additional structures and incongruous features contrary to the character of the landscape. Piecemeal disposal of land results in even smaller land holdings and may also raise questions of long-term economic viability and reduce the capacity for diversification.

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 within the AONB. Island farmers face additional disadvantages through the lack of local supportive infrastructure. Livestock farmers are increasingly under pressure as rising prices and changing legislation make the logistics and expense created through the lack of an abattoir or slaughterhouse and incinerator.

### 13.1 KEY FACTS & FIGURES



Farming statistics show that the area of farmed land and number of farms has declined by 11%. There have been increases in the area of arable and rough grazing over the past decade. There has been a decline in both the cattle herds and sheep flocks but an increase in non-cereal arable production, due in part to increased maize for the anaerobic digesters, producing biogas, at Arreton and Newport.

## 13.2 SUSTAINING THE LANDSCAPE

Agriculture is a major economic contributor to the area as well as the dominant land use contributor. It has a direct relationship with the conservation and enhancement of the Isle of Wight AONB.

Agriculture is important for food production, as well as the production of crops for the emerging biofuel industry. It also provides rural employment. The diverse agricultural industry, managed on small scale farmsteads (when compared to the mainland) results in many being heavily reliant on subsidies in the form of Stewardship (Environmental Stewardship 2005 – 2014 and Countryside Stewardship 2016 – present) or the Basic Payment Scheme.

There are a number of threats to the on-going sustainability of farming on the Isle of Wight. Markets are extremely volatile and the farming infrastructure that supports businesses call into question the viability of farming in the longer term.

The infrastructure of the Biogas market has brought new whole crop markets to Island farmers. This is the only large scale processing of agricultural produce we have on the island and it provides a circular economy with environmental benefits, reducing the need for bagged fertiliser to be transported on the ferries as the associated digestate provides nutrition. The price is partially based on an index linked system offering some core stability for farmer and, unmarketed crop is avoided as the raw material is silage, a preserved product, meaning harvest is not reliant on the marketplace but can be stored until needed. The evolution of the biogas market has addressed some of the challenges to sustainability that farming on an Island presents.

The National DEFRA June Census<sup>94</sup> has shown, that since 2013, the reduction in the total number of farms (by 11%). Whilst the number of livestock farms has increased by 8%, the number of cattle has fallen by 19 % and the number of sheep is down 22%. The number of farms involved in cereals alone is down 29% but general cropping is up 21% possibly reflecting the operation of biomass plants. Unsurprisingly the number of workers on farmland has declined by 19%. The consequences and opportunities of these changes need to be better understood.

## 13.3 MANAGEMENT INFLUENCES AND FORCES FOR CHANGE

### 13.3.1 ENVIRONMENTAL LAND MANAGEMENT SCHEME<sup>95</sup>

Following the withdrawal from the European Union and the Common Agricultural Policy, the UK government sought to produce a new programme of support for farmers and undertook a transition from Basic Payment Scheme subsidies to 'public money for public goods'. This new scheme is still in development, but three elements have been designed by the government to help the transition and beyond. The three elements are:

#### **Sustainable Farming Incentive – SFI**

Introduced in 2021 as a pilot, this element has now been rolled out and pays farmers to adopt and maintain sustainable farming practices that can protect and improve the environment. Available as a three-year management agreement, SFI will pay for a number of options including soil testing and soil management, cover crops and herbal lays, hedgerow management, integrated pest management, nutrient management, wildlife options for arable and grass and buffer strips for water resource protection. SFI continues to evolve, and new options may be added as the transition away from EU subsidies continues.

#### **Countryside Stewardship - CS**

Countryside Stewardship will pay for more targeted actions relating to specific locations, features and habitats. There will be an extra incentives for land managers to join up across local areas to deliver bigger and better results.



## **Landscape Recovery**

Landscape Recovery Scheme has been introduced as competitive rounds of applications for funding landscape scale projects covering 50-500 ha. Initially individuals or organisations can apply for development funding and if this bid is accepted the landscape scale project can be developed over two years (approx.) to produce a fully-fledged project. Projects are expected to attract private sector funding and last 20 years or more. Target priorities have included rivers and water resources, native species recovery, carbon emissions reduction, improving the condition of protected sites and creating new habitats.

### **13.3.2 Farming in Protected Landscapes<sup>96</sup>**

Launched in 2021 the Farming in Protected Landscapes is a grant programme available to farmers and landowners in AONBs and National Parks (collectively Protected Landscapes). Since the launch of the programme the Isle of Wight AONB has engaged with over 40 farmers in 42 projects. These projects have included 4414 m of hedgerow establishment and restoration and 192 ha of improved management on designated sites. The scheme has released over £ 420,000 into the farming economy in the Isle of Wight AONB.

## **13.4 OTHER FACTORS**

The formation and facilitation of Farmer Clusters<sup>97</sup>, groups of farmers working together on a landscape scale, is an important alternative way of working to maximise the benefits these grants will fund. Four Farmer Clusters have been supported by the Isle of Wight AONB covering the catchment of the eastern river Yar, farmland in the south-west, farmland in the south and graziers across the IW.

Agri-environment schemes play a vital role in subsidising farmers for undertaking measures which support the landscape, natural and historic environments and objectives for these on their holdings. Schemes which incentivise the facilitation of 'public goods', such as eco-system services, possibly through payment by results, are being piloted across the country.

Pests and diseases have the potential for severe implications for the farming sector and its viability. These often require a rapid response and knock on implications for wildlife and access. There is currently a voluntary code of practice to prevent the spread of Bovine Tuberculosis onto the Isle of Wight.

Climate change will stimulate the need to adapt farming practices including provision of shelter from heat and sunlight for livestock; water conservation and capture for use in periods of drought, new crops and farming techniques.

The viability of the farming sector is based upon the cost of inputs and the price realised for outputs. Costs are higher on the Isle of Wight due to the lack of local infrastructure meaning that in particular livestock has to be taken to the mainland for slaughter. Provision of local infrastructure for livestock farming and processing of meat products will help the viability of this sector.

Diversification activities such as the conversion of redundant farm buildings for tourism or appropriate rural business activities can help to supplement farm incomes and help contribute to farming practices benefitting the landscape. Additionally, farm-based renewable energy solutions are helping to meet carbon reduction targets and providing valuable farm income. There is a need to ensure diversification activities do not become the primary focus of agricultural businesses or have any urbanising influences, contrary to landscape character.

Similarly local markets and food networks have the potential to add value to farm produce and also decrease transport costs.

Genuine need for farm worker accommodation for those involved in agriculture or related to succession of ownership or farm management within families has the potential to see new but small-scale development.

#### **13.4.1 Nature-Based Solutions (Nbs)<sup>98</sup>**

The introduction of nature-based solutions (NBS) may be increasingly important as private sector funding is added to the alternative income streams. Markets in nutrient neutrality, carbon and biodiversity net gain (BNG) will play a vital role in climate change mitigation, improved water quality and conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. Led by the National Trust and local Wildlife Trust, 580 ha (5%) of farmland in the AONB is currently being managed for reductions in nutrient run-off, regenerative farming and to enhance the landscape and biodiversity.

### **13.5 POLICIES FOR FARMING**

These policies should be read in conjunction with the overarching objectives for Isle of Wight AONB as detailed in Section 3.13.

**P31** Encourage environmentally-friendly farming practices, farm diversification and infrastructure, which contributes to the DEFRA Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes and the sustainability of the farming sector.

**P32** Support programmes, initiatives and collaborative approaches, such as Farmer Clusters, to maximise opportunities for the farming community and delivers AONB objectives.

**P33** Promote the intrinsic relationship between farming activities and the landscape of the Isle of Wight AONB including the development of local markets for farm produce, management for increased biodiversity and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

### **13.6 PRIORITIES FOR DELIVERY**

- Support initiatives which conserve and enhance the designated landscape through targeted action including DEFRA Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes, Access for All, Farming in Protected Landscapes and Farmer Clusters
- Promote initiatives that support farm diversification (including income for land use change) to provide alternatives for the agricultural community
- Support promotion and celebration of good environmental practice

## 14. FORESTRY AND WOODLAND MANAGEMENT

Woodland is an important component of the landscape of the AONB, covering 1537 ha (8%) of the designation, of which 644 ha is managed by the Forestry Commission. Whilst these include some plantation woodland, most are smaller broadleaved woods and copses. The majority of woodlands are located on wetter soils and are a dominant landscape feature north of the central chalk ridge. Where they do occur near the chalk downland or sandstone hills they tend to be on steep slopes that are difficult to farm. Secondary woodland areas are also found in the Isle of Wight AONB where land has been unmanaged for many years and particularly on coastal slopes where many have become important landscape features.

Woodland in the Isle of Wight AONB is generally under-managed and timber production is a marginal activity. Amenity use and the wildlife value of woodland are of increasing importance, with some woodlands being managed by charitable organisations specifically for wildlife.

A significant proportion of the Isle of Wight AONB woodland is classified as Ancient Woodland. This means woodland has been present on that site since at least 1600AD, making them an important historic landscape feature and a reflection of the continuation of the value of woodland for people. They are also considered to be important for biodiversity. A number of these woodlands are referred to as Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) where the woodland has been modified by the removal of native species and planted up with non-natives, usually conifers. The revised Isle of Wight provisional Ancient Woodland Inventory<sup>99</sup>, published in 2014, gives us an up to date understanding of the abundance and distribution of ancient woodland which contributes to the overall landscape character. Ancient woodland is considered an 'irreplaceable' habitat in the NPPF 2023<sup>9</sup> which confers protection in the planning system.

Veteran trees, wood pasture and parklands can be of great landscape, historic environment and biodiversity value, and also require sympathetic and careful management.

The absence of Grey Squirrel and the absence of feral deer, has a direct benefit for the woodland flora and fauna across the Island and in the Isle of Wight AONB.

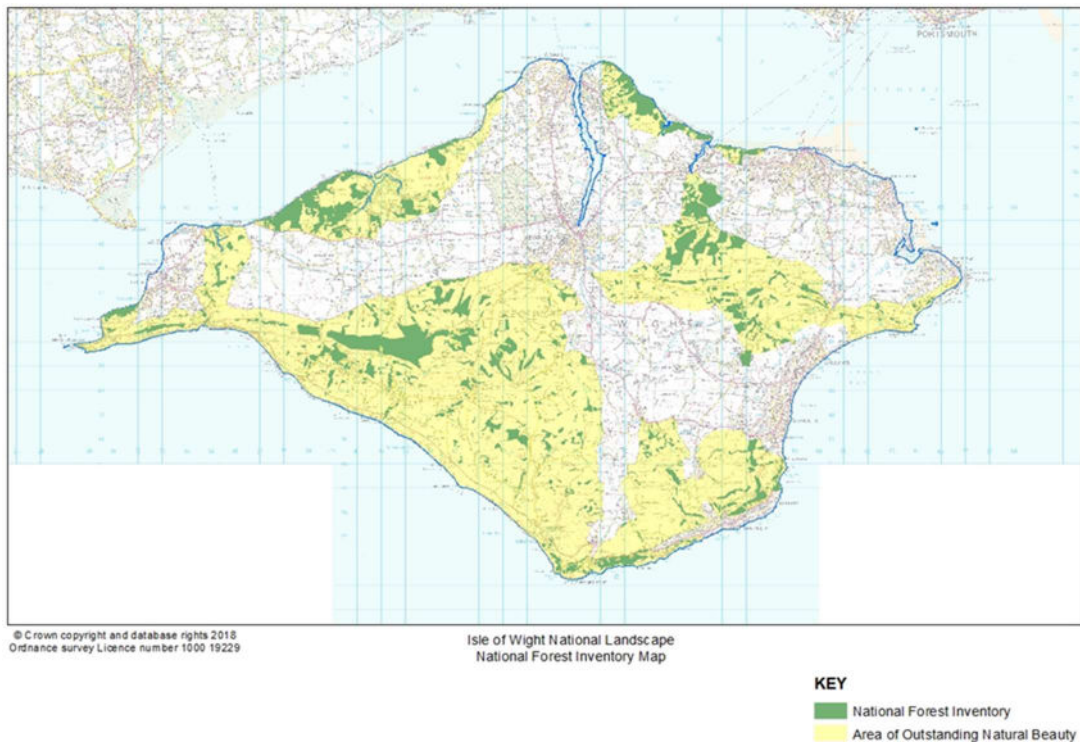
Between 1996 and 2019 the amount of woodland on the Isle of Wight, increased by 13%<sup>100</sup>. Much of this increase was due to the Forestry Commission's JIGSAW (Joining and Increasing Grant Scheme for Ancient Woodland) initiative funded by EU Challenge Funds.

Timber from plantation forestry under the control of the Forestry Commission has been largely exported to the mainland, with the contracts for this going to larger mainland companies. Through the development of a collaborative approach, local woodland contractors can now compete to work these woodlands. As a consequence of this woodland management linked to local fuel production has started to increase the viability of local woodlands. There is a need to provide necessary infrastructure and investment for enhanced wood fuel markets.

There are two medium sized active sawmills in operation on the Isle of Wight, but the local market remains small. Increasing regulation in response to a more litigious society is having an impact on these small businesses.

## 14.1 KEY FACTS & FIGURES

Map of Woodland in the Isle of Wight AONB



## 14.2 SUSTAINING THE LANDSCAPE

Woodlands provide a range of ecosystem services these include; timber, wood for fuel, wildlife habitats (including those for rare woodland species such as Red Squirrels, Hazel Dormouse, Barbastelle and Bechstein's Bat), regulation of soil erosion, alleviation of flood risk and sequestration of carbon.

Well-sited trees and woods can:

- help prevent silts and nutrients from entering watercourses (both from agricultural land and sewage works where there may be potential to treat grey water by filtering through woodland);
- slow down flood flows across flood plains (which can be enhanced by using 'woody debris' dams to push flood flows onto wider floodplains);
- provide a valuable alternative land use which is not adversely affected by flooding (particularly if linked to local use of wood as a renewable fuel);
- maintain and improve fisheries by providing shade to reduce the temperature of water during summer months;
- provide the skeleton of a more resilient catchment landscape able to cope with the physical and ecological impacts of climate change; and
- help stabilise river channels, either directly via the growing trees, or indirectly by using the carbon lean woody material (e.g. faggots).

Woodlands also provide an important multifunctional recreational resource and have great cultural resonance with people.

Much of the management of woodland, outside Forestry Commission sites, is focussed on biodiversity as the value of the timber is low and transport is expensive. Undermanaged woodlands will have an impact upon elements of ground flora and invertebrate interest and will influence the availability of habitat for key species.

There is also a range of archaeological sites occurring within woodland. Some, such as Bronze Age burial mounds and prehistoric/Romano-British field systems pre-date the planting of woodland. Others, such as wood banks, saw pits or charcoal burning platforms are associated with woodland activities.

### 14.3 MANAGEMENT INFLUENCES AND FORCES FOR CHANGE

The uptake of products from emerging wood fuel markets promotes the use of local wood products that are sustainably sourced, support woodland resilience and the local economy.

The prevalence of Ash-die back, Pine-needle blight, horse chestnut moth, Dutch elm disease and Phytophthora on oak and alder, with the threat of sweet chestnut blight will have a profound effect on the woodlands, wood pasture, hedgerows and amenity trees in the Isle of Wight AONB. There is an increasing need for mixed and resilient species and varieties within woodlands to avoid significant landscape change through individual tree species loss as a result of pests and diseases. Resilience will be increased by species diversity as well as diversity of age structure produced by both natural regeneration and silvicultural management.

As part of the Environmental Improvement Plan 2022 the UK Government is committed to plant 34,000 ha of new woodland by 2028, relying on third parties to plant the great proportion of this woodland. Grants are available to plan and create new woodlands to UK Forestry Standards from the Forestry Commission to incentivise new woodland planting.

There is a need to consider the impact on the distribution of particular tree species in relation to a changing climate particularly when undertaking long term planting schemes.

There may be an increased incidence of forest fires due to the potential effects of climate change.

Any future changes to the Forestry Commission may result in changes from current approaches being taken by this national body.

Under-managed woodland areas can also experience inappropriate and damaging impacts from uncontrolled leisure activities (mountain biking, skateboard jumps) and fly tipping.

#### 14.3.1 DEFRA Targets and Outcomes for Woodland

The Isle of Wight National Landscape team will be supporting and promoting the targets for woodland as laid out in the IWAONB Nature Recovery Plan as its contribution to the DEFRA Targets and Outcomes for Protected Landscapes Framework. Specific targets for woodland for the life of this Plan are shown below:

Habitat	Maintain	Fav Condition	Restore/ create
Woodland (ha)	871*	352	130

\*Note: this figure includes Planting on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) so includes area for both maintenance and restoration

## **14.4 POLICIES FOR FORESTRY AND WOODLAND MANAGEMENT**

These policies should be read in conjunction with the overarching objectives for Isle of Wight AONB as detailed in Section 3.13.

- P34** Encourage sustainable forestry, sympathetic woodland planting proposals, woodland management practices and the development of sustainable wood markets (fuel and other products) to deliver AONB objectives.
- P35** Promote opportunities to deliver sustainable woodland management and promote the intrinsic relationship between woodland activities and the landscape of the Isle of Wight AONB.

## **14.5 PRIORITIES FOR DELIVERY**

- Promote and support the DEFRA Targets and Outcomes for the Isle of Wight National Landscape regarding woodland maintenance, restoration and creation.
- Support activity that encourages the sustainability of local wood markets where this benefits woodland management for landscape and biodiversity.
- Support the establishment of new native woodlands in appropriate sites which can contribute to climate change mitigation through carbon sequestration.

## **15. ARTS AND CULTURE**

The Isle of Wight AONB includes a wealth of history contained within the landscape. These are physical reminders of our past; linked to this are the varied components that gives us our sense of history and define the distinctiveness of both the Island in its entirety and also the different areas within it. In this context we consider that arts and culture reinforce the local distinctiveness and character of the AONB landscape.

More recently the Isle of Wight AONB / National Landscape has encouraged partners to reinforce the connection between the landscape and environment with the people who live there. Projects have included a bid to the Great Place Scheme; helping employ apprentices under the Lift the Lid project; co-ordinating the Creative Biosphere project; supporting the formation of the Island Collection (now Creative Island); contributing to Supporting Young Minds and Biosphere in the Bays project. We believe this effort has helped the Isle of Wight being recognised as a priority area for the Arts Council.

This topic acknowledges the important role of dialect, customs, folklore and fable, people, writers, artists and landmarks. It is also about the communal and individual importance of landscape to people. This is a more ephemeral appreciation of the sense of belonging to the area. Change is part of the story of Isle of Wight AONB and we need to capture past influences and embrace new stories.

The Isle of Wight National Landscape has been and continues to be a source of inspiration to people who have expressed this through writing, art, sculpture and more latterly photography and film. This has led to particular associations of notable individuals with the Isle of Wight National Landscape such as Lord Alfred Tennyson, Julia Margaret Cameron, John Keats, Joseph Turner, Algernon Swinburne and J.B. Priestley. Other residents and visitors from Robert Hooke, Guglielmo Marconi, John Nash and in particular Queen Victoria and her entourage have contributed to the story of the Isle of Wight National Landscape, often also leaving their mark on their landscape (Tennyson monument, Dimbola House, Hooke Hill, Osborne House, Marconi memorial, John Nash designed buildings).

These associations were celebrated through the West Wight Landscape Partnership (2008 – 2013) with walks and trails highlighting the life and work of Robert Hooke and the 'Freshwater Circle' including Tennyson, Charles Dodgeson, William and Helen Allingham, Edward Lear, G F Watts, Charles Darwin and Julia Cameron. The Down to the Coast Landscape Partnership (2015 -2020) also highlighted the work of artists from the late eighteenth century to the modern-day such as Turner, Brannon, Daniell, Barth, King, Vickers, Gray, Kirkpatrick, Gregory, Cooper, Tomkins, Carrick, Cooke, Knowler, Richens and Samuelson who have all produced landscape paintings inspired by the Isle of Wight AONB and coast.

More recently the arts and culture scene has become more vibrant on the Isle of Wight with the creation of the Creative Island organisation (previously Island Collection) and the work of the Creative Development Network (with over 100 artists and growing) and Cultural Education Partnership. The Ventnor Fringe Festival and other local events highlight the work of local artists and performers as well as attracting celebrated people from off the Island. These developments have been reinforced with the award by the Arts Council National Portfolio grants to three more local arts and creative organisations.

This topic is, of course, intrinsically linked with the Historic Environment and heritage. However, we have separated the two to reflect the statutory basis for the management and protection of the historic environment as against the less formal context for arts and culture issues.

### **15.1 KEY FACTS AND FIGURES.**

The Local List also records locally important places (parks and gardens) and other smaller structures which have been acknowledged by the local community as being of significance and importance.

Nine hundred works of art featuring the Isle of Wight were exhibited at the Royal Academy or other significant London exhibitions in the nineteenth century.<sup>101</sup>

Landscape Partnership Schemes on both West and East Wight have sought to capture oral history, experiences and stories and complement the previous 'All Our Stories' project which captured stories from people during the celebration of fifty years of designation of the AONB from 1963 through to more recent times. The enthusiasm and interest in stories from the farming community was particularly fruitful.

Since 2019 the IW National Landscape has supported:

Isle of Wight Mardi Gras – 2019 and 2020  
Crossing the Bar – celebration of coastal access – 2022 and 2023  
Cultural Education Partnership conference 2022  
All Along the Riverbank – celebration of IW rivers  
Creative Biosphere – artists and young people project 2022  
Hullabaloo – 2020 and 2021  
Biosphere in the Bays - 2023  
'Its Your Museum' Project - 2024

Between 2020 and 2023 the IW National Landscape was also a partner in an international project 'UNESCO Sites Across the Channel' with Kent NL in the UK , Amorique and Caps et Marais d'Opale Regional Natural Parks in France<sup>102</sup>.

## **15.2 SUSTAINING THE LANDSCAPE**

Arts and Culture are a valuable contributor to local distinctiveness. They are individual and collective representations of belonging and emotional responses to the Isle of Wight National Landscapes and the part it has played in people's lives.

An important factor is educating and interpreting the natural and historic environment to local audiences and visitors through experiential learning such as IW Walking Festival, IW National Landscapes Summer Walks Programme, Forest Schools and cultural activities run by New Carnival Company, Ventnor Exchange, The Common Space and Quay Arts.

The Island has played host to many internationally renowned artists and writers and continues to expand its creative economy by attracting more artists and makers to live here.

The Isle of Wight was a major resource in the development of knowledge of geology and palaeontology in the C17th, C19th and C20th.

The Undercliff was a significant part of the appeal of the Isle of Wight during the Picturesque Movement in art and architecture from the late 18th century.

The Isle of Wight AONB is perceived as quiet, traditional and safe, with a slower pace of life and high levels of tranquillity. Residents often feel a heightened sense of identity as part of the wider Island community.

## **15.3 MANAGEMENT INFLUENCES AND FORCES FOR CHANGE**

Whilst there are methodologies which include consideration of the contribution of cultural associations to a character of an area (Landscape Character Assessment, HLC and Ecosystems Services) there would seem to be no definitive national policy in relation to this landscape service.



Society is more fluid in that people move around and are less likely to stay all their lives in one place. Conversely an increase in interest in family history and the advent of electronic records and the internet has enabled people from further afield to investigate the history of their ancestors and the areas in which they lived and worked.

The Creative Island organisation is a National Portfolio Organisation funded by the Arts Council England, committed to ensure access to cultural activities for everyone on the Island, in order to enjoy and shape the place they live in. The IW National Landscape Partnership is an active supporter of this aim.

‘All the Wonder’<sup>103</sup> is the Cultural Strategy for the Isle of Wight with a vision that: ‘By 2033, the Isle of Wight will be nationally recognised as a distinctive set of communities with a rich cultural heritage and vibrant creative spirit’.

Creative Island supports the IW Cultural Education Partnership and the IW Creative Network. The Network supports artists and creatives through business support, networking, resources and profiling. It aims to nurture and inspire, allowing creatives to thrive and become more sustainable.

#### **15.4 POLICIES FOR ARTS AND CULTURE**

These policies should be read in conjunction with the overarching objectives for the Isle of Wight AONB as detailed in Section 3.13.

**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.

#### **15.5 PRIORITIES FOR DELIVERY**

- Support arts and culture-based education and health and well-being programmes that reconnect people with the natural world
- Encourage the celebration of, and access to, the Isle of Wight National Landscape arts and culture through increasing audience development and community engagement.

## 16. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.

The landscape of the Isle of Wight National Landscape has been shaped over the centuries by the activities of people. Its character adds to the quality of life of communities within the National Landscape and is the draw for the millions of visitors who come to the Isle of Wight each year.

The Isle of Wight National Landscape team led the nomination for the designation of the whole island and its surrounding waters to become a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve ('Biosphere') between 2017 and 2018. The designation was awarded by UNESCO in 2019<sup>104</sup>. This designation celebrates the sustainable approach adopted by Isle of Wight community and is reflected in local policy and its implementation.

Landscape Character Assessments<sup>27,31,32</sup> and Historic Landscape Characterisation<sup>30</sup> help us to better understand and describe the special qualities and time depth of the individual areas that make up the wider AONB.

### 16.1 ISLE OF WIGHT AONB PARISHES

Approximately 8401 (6% of the Island population) people live in the Isle of Wight AONB<sup>105</sup>.

Traditional settlement patterns, vernacular design and the lack of a single predominant building style reflect the diverse geology and landform of the Isle of Wight National Landscape. This adds to the interest and distinctiveness of the towns and villages within and adjacent to the area. Living and working in their immediate area; historically, communities would have been more self-sufficient, reliant on what the landscape in their area could provide. Today's National Landscape includes communities from isolated farmsteads and hamlets, to villages of varying sizes and one small town (Yarmouth). Taking into account the fragmented nature of the Isle of Wight National Landscape, the designation can be found in all but four of the Island's parishes.

Life in today's National Landscape includes the following issues and opportunities:

- Globalisation – the availability of modern (often generic) commodities and communications.
- Demographics – changing age profiles.
- Services – economic viability of maintaining needed and effective rural services.
- Connection – sense of belonging, social interaction, social exclusion.
- Employment – commuting outside of the area, self-employment, home working.
- Housing – affordability, second-homes, holiday lets, age and condition of stock and supply.
- Localism – empowering local communities to decide on matters concerning their future.

### 16.2 ROADS AND TRANSPORT

The Isle of Wight National Landscape's road network provides access to the diverse landscapes across the area. It provides the means for transporting goods and for accessing many services for people who live in, work in or visit the area.

Highway maintenance has in recent times focused on motor traffic on all roads, reflecting the bulk of their use; however, this should not be at the expense of road users on foot, in wheelchairs, on bicycles or horseback. Alongside motor vehicles, the needs of other road users must be considered in order to encourage

an increase in sustainable transport options, healthier lifestyles, better social inclusion and access to the countryside.

The minor and unclassified road network, contributes to the character of the Isle of Wight National Landscape and can contribute to sustainable transport approaches. Verges, hedges and historic signs all add to the local distinctiveness of the landscape. The standardisation of signage and the design of road schemes have a major impact on the local distinctiveness and the character of an area. Traffic regulation requires signage and there are fewer discretionary powers regarding its design, size and placement. The design of new road schemes, signage and road furniture needs to be sympathetic to the landscape. Maintaining existing signage and programmes to rationalise signs, can help to ensure that the impact is minimised. The use of temporary plastic signs, and of street furniture for fly posting, should be discouraged.

Maintaining strategic roads within the National Landscape is an on-going challenge, especially in areas subject to coastal erosion and/or active land movement. This will need to balance carefully the social and economic need for the road network with its potential impact on the environment.

Although distances between settlements on the Isle of Wight are lower than in other rural areas of England, a high proportion of rural dwellers do not have access to a car during the working day. They therefore rely on public transport. This needs to be regular, reliable, affordable and convenient if it is to provide an alternative to the car.

### **16.3 RURAL BUSINESS**

It will be very important for the economic health of our rural economy to ensure the continuation of a wide range of economic activity. As Island businesses become increasingly national and global in their outlook, there will be an increasing tendency for these businesses to locate near our ferry gateways to improve accessibility to cross-Solent travel and beyond - both for themselves and their customers. If these businesses are going to be our higher value businesses, then the National Landscape needs to find ways of avoiding having only the low-value sectors in its area.

Consequently, there is a need to improve the wealth and job-creation potential of the National Landscape, by improving the productivity of the larger sectors and promoting the growth of higher productivity sectors. For example, developing higher value-added tourism should see an improvement in the productivity of the hotels and catering sector. By encouraging and enabling the Agriculture/ Forestry/ Fishing sector to explore ways of adding value to their products, this will encourage new jobs and wealth creation in these areas.

Investment in broadband connectivity to isolated rural communities is an important factor in increasing sustainable businesses in the designated landscape.

### **16.4 WASTE**

Waste - the level of consumption and use of resources on the Isle of Wight is related to:

- Island status (transporting goods on and off the Island).
- Natural resource availability/management.
- Lifestyle.

All of these factors have an impact on the landscape. A particular pressure is the disposal of waste to land fill as the Island's land fill site is located within Isle of Wight National Landscape, as well as the waste sorting facility and a number of other isolated waste management sites.

The Isle of Wight Council aims to re-use 61.79% of household waste; recycle / compost 55% municipal waste; recycle / compost/ re-use 75% of waste from household recycling centres and divert 90% of all contract waste from landfill<sup>106</sup>.

Recycling rates have increased as methods have been introduced to make domestic recycling more convenient. Economies of scale for commercial and domestic waste decrease the economic viability for recycling. There is a need to work with waste operators to ensure the short term impact on the landscape is minimised and in the longer term the landscape is restored appropriately. A good example of this is at Standen Heath where parts of former landfill have been re-landscaped.

## **16.5 USE AND DISPOSAL OF WATER**

The availability and use of water is an important element in the sustainable development of the Isle of Wight National Landscape. Factors include levels of personal water consumption and the associated water efficiency standards in housing. This is in the light of 25% of the Island's water coming from the mainland, which, in drought conditions, could lead to increased pressure on flows in these important chalk stream habitats.

Furthermore, the removal and treatment of waste water can cause negative environmental impacts, particularly in the light of the regular overwhelming of foul water sewers with rainwater in recent high rainfall events. These events will only become more common with climate change leading to increased flooding of sewers affecting rivers and in-shore waters. Water companies and owners of septic tanks should be encouraged to seek solutions to this problems.

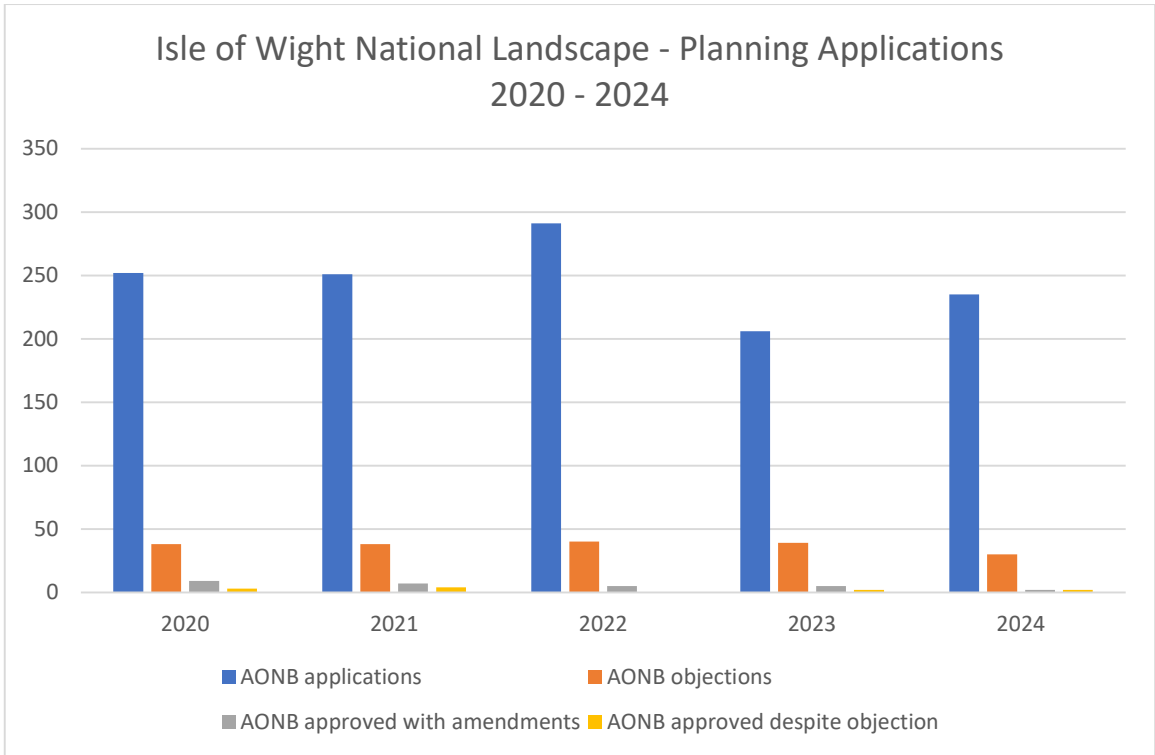
These issues are addressed in Chapter 10: Air and Water

## **16.6 KEY FACTS & FIGURES**

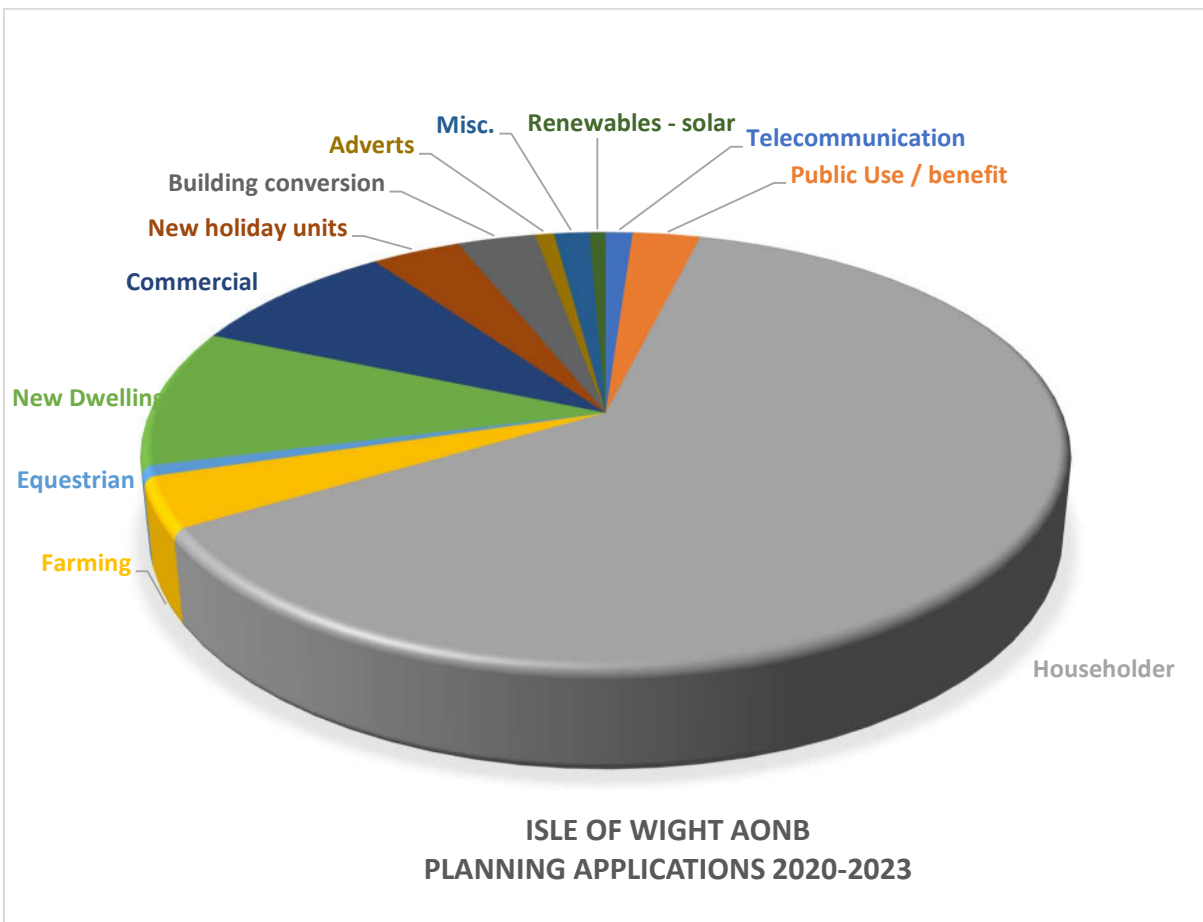
Population – The most recent census<sup>107</sup> shows the total Isle of Wight population as 140,500, of this population approximately 6% (8,401) reside within the National Landscape. However, it is important to reiterate the interrelationship between the National Landscape and the rest of the Isle of Wight. Many of the more built-up and urban areas are close to the National Landscape making it readily accessible. People will travel in and out of the National Landscape to access work, leisure opportunities, essential services for their health and wellbeing and to shop.

Of the 33 parishes on the Isle of Wight, twenty-nine have the designation within their boundary – Cowes, Nettlestone and Seaview, Northwood and St Helens are the exceptions. Of the rest, only three are entirely within the designated area – Shorwell, Brighstone and Chale.

The Isle of Wight National Landscape team includes a Planning officer who responds to planning applications submitted to the local planning authority for permission within the designated landscape. Approximately 25% of all planning applications submitted to the local authority are within the AONB. The Planning Officer's responses are published on the Isle of Wight Council's Planning part of their website. The record of the effectiveness of the Planning Officer's responses are shown on the graph below:



Over the past five years, of the 1235 planning applications submitted to the local authority that are within the AONB, eleven (<1%) have been approved despite our objections.



Over the past four years householder applications (general, extensions, outbuildings and fencing / drives) have dominated planning work (63% of all applications submitted).

## **16.7 SUSTAINING THE LANDSCAPE**

### **16.7.1 National Landscape Parishes**

Sympathetic development within the designation, reflecting appropriate vernacular style and materials, will ensure the conservation and enhancement of the landscape's unique sense of place. There is a need to take into account the high sensitivity of the landscape when considering development, yet also maintain healthy and vibrant local communities and enable access to goods and services.

Landscape Character Assessments and Historic Landscape Characterisation provide detailed information on the character of the individual parishes.

### **16.7.2 Roads and Transport**

The highways network provides access to the diverse landscapes across the National Landscape. It provides the means for transporting goods and access to many services for people who live and work in, or visit the area. Care is required to ensure that generic approaches are avoided wherever possible to minimise their impact on local distinctiveness and the character of the designation.

### **16.7.3 Rural Business**

Economic development needs to link with maintaining the strength of communities. It may well be that rural productivity is lower because much of the service provision is not as profitable in small towns and villages as it would be in urban areas. However, these service businesses provide economic and social "glue" for local communities, and their successful survival needs to be promoted, encouraged and assisted.

### **16.7.4 Waste**

The Island cannot move waste between authorities for treatment (such as bulking prior to processing or recycling) or share the investment costs of waste infrastructure. This increases the pressure for land fill and its impact upon the designated landscape. Smaller scale solutions are being sought on the Island which will help to reduce this pressure for additional land fill but it unlikely to address the issue fully.

## **16.8 MANAGEMENT INFLUENCES AND FORCES FOR CHANGE**

### **16.8.1 National Landscape Parishes**

Development Pressures - As identified on section 3.8.2 and section 3.9.3 of this document, the National Planning Policy Framework and the Island Plan set out the Policy context for development and as such has a direct bearing on the sustainability of communities within the Isle of Wight AONB. The adopted Island Plan is undergoing a review (called the Island Planning Strategy)

The Island Plan Core Strategy (2012)<sup>68</sup> clearly describes a hierarchy for the spatial location of development.

The Wider Rural Area covers the remaining countryside areas and small villages of the Island and includes much of the Isle of Wight AONB. Development here has the most restrictions, and also requirement to prove

need in that location. The Island Plan does allow for appropriate tourism related development where it is contributing to sustainable (green) tourism, generally raising the quality of the tourism offer or providing a for a particular niche market. In the Isle of Wight AONB we would expect the planning application process for such proposals to fully consider the likely impact on the conservation and enhancement objectives of the designation and the other policies within this Management Plan.

There is a presumption against major development within the National Landscape. Major development in the designated landscape is a matter for the decision-maker taking into account its nature, scale and setting and whether it could have adverse impacts on features for which the area was designated.

Where there is no alternative to the development, a thorough assessment of its potential environmental and visual impact is required. This often triggers the need for a formal Environmental Impact Assessment.

Five parishes have adopted Neighbourhood Plans<sup>108</sup> all of which have the Isle of Wight AONB in their boundary – Brading, Brighstone, Bembridge, Gurnard and Freshwater. An application for Yarmouth and Thorley to become a create a Neighbourhood Plan is currently being considered (2023). Although most mention the AONB, only two refer to the Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan.

Small-scale development is less well regulated. Certain activities are allowed under permitted development rights. Although this is more stringent in the designated landscape, the cumulative impact of such small-scale change can be damaging to the character of an area and its overall 'sense of place'. The agricultural sector, for example, benefits from permitted rights for some development.

It is important that any development proposals within the designated landscape are based upon a proper formal assessment of need through documents such as Housing Need Surveys and adopted Neighbourhood Plans. All proposals would still be expected to be of high quality design and be in keeping with the landscape character of the local area.

For the continued conservation and enhancement of the landscape, there is a need for land management practices to be maintained. There may be occasions where there is a need for agricultural, woodland and rural workers to live where they work, or additional buildings in relation to the land management sector. There is a need for the Isle of Wight National Landscape to better understand the future requirements for a sustainable rural economy and how this can be facilitated without having a negative impact on the designated area.

Certain authorities and public bodies also have specific permitted development rights for public services such as highways and the utility companies. Such activities are covered by the duty to further the purposes of the AONB outlined in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended)<sup>3</sup>, in addition to existing duties under the National Parks and Access to Countryside Act 1949<sup>2</sup>.

### **16.8.2 Roads and Transport**

The Isle of Wight Local Transport Plan 2011-2038<sup>109</sup> gives the policy context for the highways network. This sets out aspirations and targets for improved sustainable transport networks throughout the Isle of Wight AONB. Key aspirations within this plan include:

- Helping to ensure that people can get into and around the AONB.
- Minimise the environmental impact of travel and transport.
- Making the best use of sustainable transport routes.
- Promoting sustainable transport to locals and visitors alike.
- Improving quality of life.

As the local Highways Authority, The Isle of Wight Council manages a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) for highways. The PFI contractor, Island Roads, is required to deliver the necessary improvements and maintenance (fence to fence) of the complete road and cycleway network. This includes works to all the Isle of Wight AONB roads over the life of this Plan. The document 'Considering the Island's landscape, natural and historic environment - Guidance for Work on the Highways and Public Realm'<sup>110</sup> was produced to inform these works.

Challenges for the maintenance of the road network include the A3054 between Bouldnor and Yarmouth and the A3055 between Brook and Freshwater Bay which suffers from periodic landslip and ground instability. The section of the A3055 between Niton and St Lawrence was closed in 2014 due to major landslips and an inability to restore vehicular access.

A HEAP Report<sup>53</sup> on Historic Routeways (including Hollow Ways, also known as sunken lanes) discusses the origins and character of roads and public rights of way, making proposals for future management and study.

### **16.8.3 Rural Business**

A number of funding mechanisms may be able to help with the development of small rural business in the Isle of Wight AONB, particularly where it relates to adding value to farming, forestry or is for green tourism.

Local Neighbourhood Plans provide the opportunity for local communities to influence development within their local area based on the views of the residents, businesses and other stakeholders in the area. Bembridge, Brading, Brighthstone, Gurnard, Freshwater currently have these plans in place.

The WightFibre 'Gigabit Island Project'<sup>111</sup> aims to provide full-fibre broadband to over 60,000 homes and businesses across the Island by 2024 and is already available to over 57,000 households. The project has received over £110M from Infracapital Partners (including funding from HM Treasury) and NatWest Bank. WightFibre is also receiving funding from Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) to extend the reach of our network to some 80,000 premises on the Island.

Farm diversification may include small rural business units (see Chapter 13: Farming).

### **16.8.4 Waste**

The Isle of Wight Council awarded the waste management contract to Amey Cespa in 2015 for 25 years. A target of 90% of household waste to be diverted from landfill was expressed and waste treatment works at Parkhurst Forest are being deployed.

A waste processing works has also been established by Westridge Waste in the Isle of Wight National Landscape at Combley, opposite the Standen Heath site. The company supplies skips and containers and includes commercial tipping facilities. Waste that cannot be recycled is tipped at the Lynn Pitt Transfer station on site.

The level of public support and uptake of recycling will have an impact on the levels of landfill as will the treatment of commercial waste.



## **16.9 POLICIES FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES**

The following policies should be read in conjunction with the overarching objectives for Wight AONB as detailed in Section 3.13.

### **National Landscape Parishes Policies**

**P38** Ensure that the National Landscape objectives are given full regard in the formulation, review and implementation of plans and policies affecting National Landscape parishes, for strategic planning documents, local initiatives, etc.

**P39** Support National Landscape parishes and community groups to deliver local initiatives, which involve people in the appreciation of active conservation and enhancement of the designated landscape at a local level.

**P40** Ensure that development proposals for sustainable rural communities (services, housing etc) complement the character of the area, strengthening its local distinctiveness and has provided robust evidence of need in that location.

**P41** Encourage sensitive approaches and increase communication with owners of permitted development rights within the designated landscape.

### **Roads and Transport Policies**

**P42** Ensure that National Landscape objectives are given full regard in the approaches taken to road management and maintenance.

**P43** Encourage sensitive approaches and seek opportunities to strengthen the contribution of the road network (including footways, street lighting, grass verges, drainage and street furniture) to the character and the local distinctiveness of the Isle of Wight National Landscape.

**P44** Encourage and promote sustainable access to the Isle of Wight National Landscape through the use of public transport, walking and cycling to establish a sustainable transport network integrating roads and public rights of way.

**P45** Promote approaches that encourage better sustainable transport integration between the road network and public rights of way.

### **Rural Business Policies**

**P46** Support sustainable rural enterprise (and associated infrastructure development such as broadband) where it respects the purposes of the designated landscape

**P47** Encourage better rural broadband connections to more isolated communities and businesses

**P48** Support initiatives that add value to land-based products and make them more sustainable

### **Waste Policies**

**P49** Encourage ways to reduce waste through encouraging more careful consumption, recycling and lower land fill rates.

**P50** Ensure proposals for landfill and waste management fully consider the impacts on the landscape of the Isle of Wight National Landscape and take full regard of the purpose of the designations, in both active and restoration phases.

#### **16.10 PRIORITIES FOR DELIVERY**

- Support local communities in their understanding of National Landscapes objectives and their role in the delivery of these.
- Support strategic bodies and local organisations to ensure that green infrastructure opportunities are maximised throughout the designated landscape.
- Support approaches and initiatives that encourage local sustainable transport.
- Encourage and support the local highway authority and Island Roads to review their management and maintenance programme in light of the purposes of the designated landscape.
- Encourage industry, regulating bodies and landowners to ensure National Landscape objectives are embedded in waste management and land fill proposals.

## 17. VISITOR ECONOMY

The history of tourism for the Isle of Wight AONB has its roots in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Picturesque movement and the discovery of the scenic quality of the area. It was a favoured location as part of the 'England Grand Tour' chosen by genteel explorers no longer able to tour Europe due to the Napoleonic War. As a direct result of this some people chose to build summer residences and retirement properties, the most notable of these being Queen Victoria through the development of Osborne House at East Cowes. Royal patronage and greater accessibility due to the railways led to the increased choice of the Isle of Wight as a destination.

It is the quality and diversity of the landscape and coasts and their geology, wildlife, historic environment and cultural associations, along with the ease of access of these areas and the ability to experience tranquillity and dark skies that contribute directly to the appeal of the Isle of Wight as a place to visit.

Cultural events are also a major draw for visitors. The original Isle of Wight Festival was held in the AONB (Wootton 1969, Afton 1970) and although no longer located within the area, the Isle of Wight Festival pays great homage to those early roots. Throughout the year many other events, fetes, fairs and festivals take place within the Isle of Wight National Landscape, celebrating local customs, arts, sports and pastimes and reflecting community pride in the landscape.

There are opportunities for people to experience the connection between the Isle of Wight AONB's beautiful landscape and farming by staying in accommodation in the rural area (including farm-based holiday lets) or through purchasing local produce in farm shops.

### 17.1 KEY FACTS AND FIGURES.

Information produced by Visit Isle of Wight<sup>112</sup> identified:

- Approximately 1.9m visitor trips were undertaken in 2023, a fall from 2.2m in 2019, due to the recovery of the industry following the COVID pandemic 2020-2021. This does not include a further approx. 300,000 arriving off recreational boats via the Island's marinas
- Approximately 700,000m of these visitors are day visitors, mostly originating from South East England.
- This contributed £ 280m to the Island's GDP directly with a further £190m from related services. The industry provides 8023 jobs and estimated to contribute 38% of the Isle of Wight's overall GDP.
- Length of stay is 4 nights or more have increased since pre-pandemic levels but short breaks of 1-3 nights have declined over the same period. Short breaks are still the most popular reason for trips to the Island (38% of all trips recorded)
- Other popular reasons for coming to the Island is to visit friends and relatives (25%) and business trips (12%)

### 17.2 SUSTAINING THE LANDSCAPE

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. Whilst most of the accommodation and focus of traditional tourism has been centred on coastal resort towns, visitors use these as a base to then explore the wider attractions and countryside of the Isle of Wight National Landscape.

The Isle of Wight National Landscape offers a distinct marketable resource by highlighting the natural, historic and cultural elements of the landscape. This can contribute to the regeneration of coastal resort towns as a result. The extension of the season for short breaks is advantageous for the economy and for employment opportunities.

The importance of tourism to the economic and social well-being of the local community needs to be in balance with the conservation and enhancement of the Isle of Wight AONB. Wherever possible, the Isle of Wight National Landscape Partnership needs to promote sustainable tourism approaches and monitor the impacts of tourism on all aspects of the designated landscape.

### **17.3 MANAGEMENT INFLUENCES AND FORCES FOR CHANGE**

Visit Isle of Wight is the local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) – a collaborative not-for-profit marketing organisation, funded by IW-based tourism businesses and grants. They are currently operating a Wight BID (Business Improvement District), following the success of the campaign to create a fund to promote the Isle of Wight through a levy on all tourist businesses. Visit IW recently updated their BID Business Plan<sup>113</sup> This is a process of leading, influencing and co-ordinating the management of all the aspects of a destination that contribute to a visitor’s experience, taking account of the needs of visitors, local residents, businesses and the environment.

The Isle of Wight is now one of 40 nationally recognised Local Visitor Economy Partnerships.

The key objectives in the Plan moving forward include:

- 1: Attracting visitors for life
- 2: Delivering the experience
- 3: Working together
- 4: Sustainability

The draft Island Planning Strategy<sup>21</sup> sets out the policy context for tourism development across the Isle of Wight. It includes objectives and policies to improve the current tourism offer. In the designated landscape there are a number of larger tourism sites (caravan parks, large attractions etc) which would benefit from improvements to soften their impact on the landscape and its character. There may also be opportunities to identify new tourism attractions and activities which fully utilise the natural beauty of the National Landscape without compromising its conservation and enhancement.

Visit IW promotes sustainable tourism through its sponsorship of the ‘Green Tourism Awards’ encouraging tourism businesses to become more sustainable. Three levels of Awards are available based on criteria in the fields of People, Place and Planet. This includes promotion of the use of public transport, walking and cycling as means of accessing the Isle of Wight National Landscape as well as to attractions and accommodation.

Furthermore, Visit IW sponsors the Annual Walking Festivals in May and October which (in 2023) engaged 2,144 participants over 143 walks. Participants included 41% visitors to the Island.

### **17.4 POLICIES FOR VISITOR ECONOMY**

These policies should be read in conjunction with the overarching objectives for the Isle of Wight AONB as detailed in Section 3.13.

**P51** Encourage the tourism sector to enable sensitive approaches to increase appreciation and enjoyment of the AONB landscape, realise AONB objectives, and provide positive benefits for tourism businesses.

**P52** Support sustainable tourism activities and development that respect the objectives of the Isle of Wight AONB and also contribute to the viability of the tourism sector.

## **17.5 PRIORITIES FOR DELIVERY**

- Development of monitoring programmes to understand the carrying capacity of the AONB, to highlight changes in the tourism sector and to assess the potential impact of these on Isle of Wight AONB.
- Help businesses and organisations to fully realise the potential of the AONB as part of their sustainable tourism offer.
- Continued support and contribution to the development and delivery of the Destination Management Plan.

## 18. ACCESS AND RECREATION

The Isle of Wight AONB is of great importance to the whole Island community. People value the opportunities available to them for leisure and recreation: from surfing and paragliding along the Tennyson Heritage Coast to taking part in the 'Walk the Wight' annual cross-Island sponsored walk. Whilst only a small proportion of the population live within the designated area, there are numerous settlements that are immediately adjacent to the AONB. Bearing in mind the dispersed nature of the AONB, access to these special landscapes is a relatively short distance, even from the most built-up urban areas on the Isle of Wight; sometimes, just a short walk.

The Countryside Code<sup>114</sup> (Respect, Protect and Enjoy) provides guidance on the way we can all explore the countryside in a considerate and sustainable way. It says:

- Respect other people
  - Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors.
  - Leave gates and property as you find them, and follow paths unless wider access is available.
- Protect the natural environment
  - Keep dogs under effective control.
  - Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home.
- Enjoy the outdoors
  - Plan ahead and be prepared.
  - Follow advice and local signs.

### 18.1 RIGHTS OF WAY

Rights of Way are an essential means of sustainable access to the Isle of Wight AONB landscape and the extensive Rights of Way network provides a protected and managed public resource. The category of Public Right of Way dictates the right of access from footpaths, bridleways and byways to areas of Open Access land.

Many of the Isle of Wight AONB's public paths are a historic record of how people have travelled across the landscape: from villages to the coast; from farms to the downs and the markets of nearby towns; and from hamlets to churches and schools. Their social importance is reflected in many of them being named (Dark Lane, Hoxall Lane, Rowdown Lane, etc). Much of the road network would have originally been of a similar character to these routeways, as described in the 'Historic Routeways'.<sup>45</sup>

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000<sup>4</sup> brought in a statutory definition of a new public right to access on foot to open countryside. Over 1000 ha of 'Open Access' are in the designated landscape including extensive areas of the Isle of Wight AONB downland and woodland, much of which was already publicly accessible through ownership of organisations such as the National Trust and Forestry Commission. It is anticipated that there will be an increase in Open Access land when the King Charles III England Coastal Path National Trail is confirmed. Under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009<sup>107</sup> generally all land on the seaward side of the National Trail will be classified as Open Access.

A number of promoted routes traverse the landscape linking Isle of Wight AONB with the adjacent rural villages, towns and urban centres of the Island (e.g. Worsley Trail, Tennyson Trail etc).

Natural England, under their obligation to establish a coastal path along the English coastline (the King Charles III Coastal Path), is actively working with landowners and the local authority to provide a National Trail along the Island's coast. Whilst much of the route is already established, there are parts of the coast which are

exempt or not included in the proposed Trail, such as the east of the Newtown estuary and Osborne coast which are in the Isle of Wight AONB.

In 2018 the Isle of Wight Council produced its second iteration of its Rights of Way Improvement Plan<sup>115</sup> to cover the period 2018-2028. The following policies are established:

- Policy A: maintain a high quality right of way network
- Policy B: making improvements to the existing network
- Policy C: create new access
- Policy D: promotion

Action tables are produced for Policies A-C. Where possible new links should be developed to ensure a safer walking environment and better connectivity where this does not conflict with the primary purpose of the designation.

## **18.2 SPORTS, HOBBIES AND PASTIMES**

In addition to the cultural benefits of activities within the Isle of Wight AONB; the patchwork farmland, downs, hills, woodlands, coasts and estuaries are the location for many sports and recreational activities such as walking, cycling, horse riding, paragliding, sailing, surfing, windsurfing, kitesurfing, snorkelling and fishing. The Isle of Wight AONB also provides the backdrop and space for sport and outdoor events including: The Round the Island Race, Cowes Week sailing regatta and the annual Spring and Autumn Walking Festivals featuring 'Walk the Wight'. There are so many ways the landscape can be explored and enjoyed.

Some of these activities on their own have a limited landscape impact, but cumulatively, or if under taken in large enough numbers may be problematic. For this topic, we have focused on those activities which have the greatest potential to influence the landscape character of the Isle of Wight AONB.

### **18.2.1 KEEPING OF HORSES**

Historically horses were used to farm the landscape or as a means of transport. Increased mechanisation, particularly changing farming practices in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century led to a decrease in the number of horses actively used in farming. Increased affluence and leisure time from the 1960s onwards saw a number of farms diversifying into riding schools and then providing livery. From the 1970s individual horse ownership started to increase, initially with the horses being kept on the farm livery sites, but since the 1990s there has been growth of small paddock ownership by those who keep horses. This was helped by farms selling parcels of land; initially pasture, to help supplement the declining profitability of dairy farming. With increasing demand, paddock now commands a higher price than most types of farmland and this has led to the keeping of horses being a feature in the AONB landscape, particularly, but not confined to Traditional Enclosed Pasture areas.

Change of use towards recreational pursuits such as keeping horses has the potential to radically change the character of the landscape and if unsympathetic can cause significant harm to the conservation and enhancement of the AONB. Conversely, if managed in a way which is appropriate to the landscape character, horses have the ability to continue to provide the grazing needed to prevent scrub growth and keep grasslands in a good state of management. Often the keeping of horses requires additional fencing, shelters, jumps, stabling, feed storage, sand schools, manure storage and disposal and other such paraphernalia. All of these can have a negative impact on the landscape.

There is a need for the Isle of Wight AONB to work with equestrian organisations to develop guidance on keeping horses in the protected landscape.

## **18.2.2 SHOOTING**

There are approximately 50 shoots on the Island ranging from larger commercial operations to small scale and local recreational activities. They contribute to the rural economy and can have environmental benefits. The game shoots operate in the pheasant and partridge seasons between September and the beginning of February. Pheasants are brought to the Island to supplement birds reared locally to provide sufficient stock the shoots. Game cover has been provided through management of existing woodland, or additional woodland planting for this purpose. In addition game crops, such as maize, kale or quinoa are planted to provide habitats and cover. Management of land for shooting has the potential to radically change the character of the landscape. If landscape character appropriate, it can contribute to woodland wildlife and landscape objectives. However, there is the potential for inappropriate approaches which can cause harm by significantly altering the landscape character.

The Isle of Wight AONB needs to continue to engage with the landowning community regarding both the positive and negative aspects to shooting.

## **18.2.3 FISHING**

Small fishing boats operate from Yarmouth and a number of other smaller coves and bays around the coastline of the Isle of Wight AONB. Beach fishing, coarse fishing and sea fishing are all enjoyed with a number of coarse fishing ponds and chartered boats operating in the area.

There are fishing lakes at Nettlecombe, Thorncross and Combley which are run for members or as part of a holiday experience.

Due to the diverse nature of the angling sector on the Island, we have little in the way of detailed information regarding commercial or recreational fishing activities in the Isle of Wight AONB or the impact or benefits they bring to the area.

## **18.2.4 HEALTH**

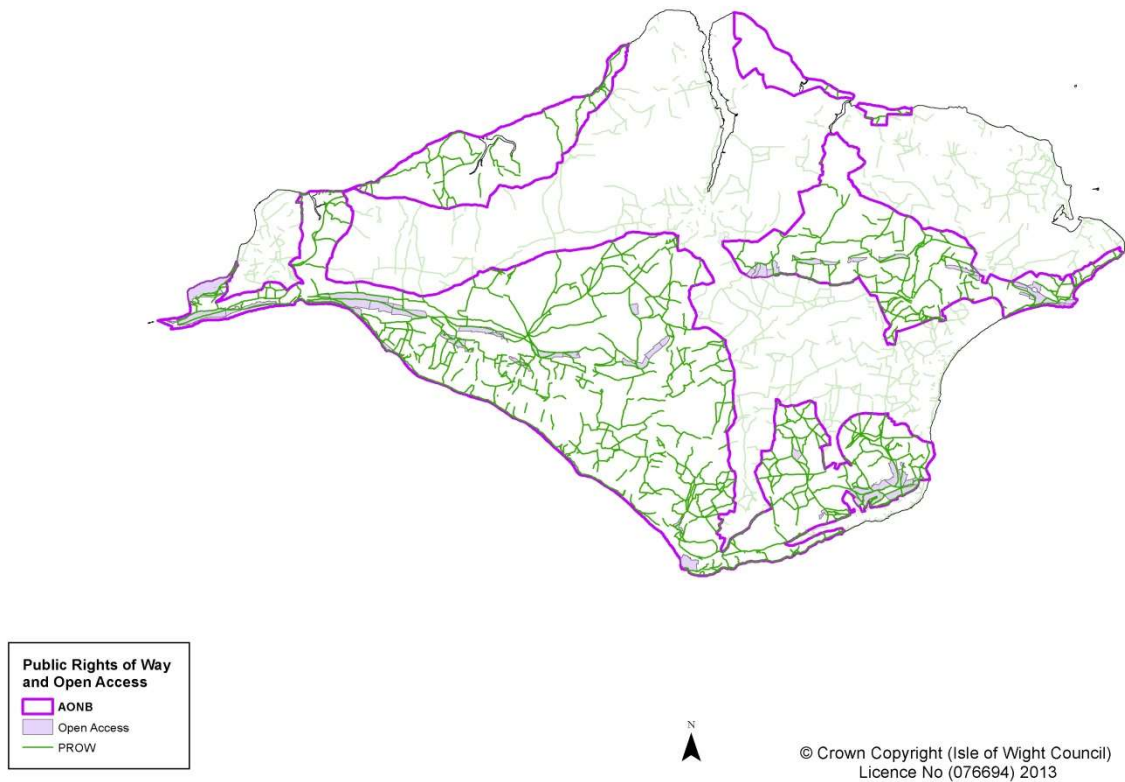
The Isle of Wight Joint Strategic Needs Assessment was updated in 2022 in their 'Isle of Wight Healthy People' report<sup>116</sup>.

Amongst many challenges facing the community of the Island, living longer with chronic medical conditions, deteriorating mental health, obesity and finding the funding to secure these services are the most acute. Access to landscape and nature can improve both mental and physical health and the Isle of Wight AONB, amongst other places of natural beauty, can provide the opportunity for residents and visitors to experience real health benefits.

The Isle of Wight has a statistically higher prevalence of mental illness than the English national average. The percentage of people diagnosed with a mental health problem and on a GP register is approximately 10.1%, this equates to 14,200 people. The prevalence of severe mental illness is higher than the national average with 1,730 people (1.19%) as opposed to a national average of 0.95%. The rate of GP registered people with diagnosed depression is around 11.7%



### 18.3 KEY FACTS & FIGURES



### 18.4 SUSTAINING THE LANDSCAPE

The natural environment is important to human health not just for the physical ‘work out’ that can be enjoyed through walking, cycling or other countryside pursuits, but also for positive benefits it has on mental health and a sense of wellbeing. Being able to easily access the countryside is increasingly being seen as of key importance in raising health levels and going some way to resolving obesity issues. As well as the installation of a network of green infrastructure within and around settlements, there is a need to ensure that there are good connections with the existing rights of way network to allow for more easy access into the AONB countryside.

Linear public Rights of Way can restrict the impact upon sensitive sites valued for their wildlife, historic and geological importance. Conversely intensive use of linear routes can cause significant harm to these same features. The Isle of Wight AONB would like to understand more about recreational impacts on vulnerable and ‘honey pot’ sites.

Events such as the guided walks of the spring (May) and autumn (October) Walking Festivals provide the opportunity for residents and visitors to learn more about the protected landscape and Heritage Coasts and gain further enjoyment though insight into our history and environment.

There are approximately 2000 horses and ponies in work on the Isle of Wight with a total population of just over 3000. There is a significant and noticeable equine presence on the Isle of Wight, which contributes to the Island’s economy and impacts rural life.

## 18.5 MANAGEMENT INFLUENCES AND FORCES FOR CHANGE

DEFRA have produced Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework<sup>14</sup> which includes a requirement for Isle of Wight National Landscape to improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with the designated landscape.

The highways network includes roads, cycleways and Public Rights of Ways. The Isle of Wight Council, as Highway Authority, is responsible for the maintenance, protection and management of the network. The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) transferring the maintenance of cycleways and roads to Island Roads has meant that Rights of Way are now managed separately from the rest of the highway network. To maintain effective sustainable access to the Isle of Wight AONB, there is a need to ensure that integration between all parts of the highways network continues.

The Isle of Wight Council Rights of Way department administers the Isle of Wight Local Access Forum<sup>117</sup> which meets quarterly to discuss highways and other rights of way issues. Local Access Forums (LAFs) are statutorily prescribed bodies, introduced by sections 94 and 95 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000<sup>4</sup>. Their main function is to advise the Isle of Wight Council, as to the improvement of public access to land in that area for the purposes of open-air recreation and enjoyment. The Forum is made up of local interest groups and individual members and is attended by parish and town council representatives.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2018<sup>115</sup> forms part of the Local Transport Plan and sets out a number of policies and potential projects to improve walking, cycling and riding opportunities across the Island to 2028. These include:

- A. Maintaining a high quality rights of way network
- B. Make improvements to the existing network – working with Town and Parish Councils and developers
- C. Creating new access – disabled access and community links
- D. Promotion – for sustainable journeys, health and leisure

Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plans, which help communities identify priorities for funding of local walking and cycling infrastructure, have been developed progressively since the publication of Newport and Ryde Plans in 2018. Further plans were prepared in 2022 prepared for

- Cowes, Northwood and Gurnard
- East Cowes and Whippingham
- Bembridge, Brading and St Helens

An LCWIP is currently in preparation for the Bay area (public consultation in 2023).

Cyclewight have produced 'A cycling strategy for the Isle of Wight'<sup>118</sup> 'to make the Isle of Wight a place where people of all ages and abilities feel able to cycle safely and easily and enjoy the experience'. The Strategy includes improving links at Freshwater, Godshill and Alverstone in the Isle of Wight AONB.

As part of a successful award from central Government around Levelling Up the Isle of Wight Council will receive £ 13.6m for a number of ambitious projects. These include:

Ryde to Yarmouth Public Transport Corridor – around bus infrastructure  
West Wight Greenway – cycleway from Gunville to Freshwater  
Newport Hub and Spokes Scheme – improve Newport for walkers and cyclists

The Motoring Organisations' Land Access and Recreation Association (LARA) have published 'Managing Motor Vehicle Use in the Countryside' guidelines on managing motor vehicles on unsurfaced (unsealed) public roads.<sup>118</sup>

Promotion of access to the countryside needs to go hand in hand with an assessment of the impact of recreation and leisure activities on the landscape and special characteristics of the Isle of Wight AONB.

The economic viability of farming and forestry has a direct link to the pressure for the subdivision and sale of land for non-agricultural or woodland management use. This increases the pressure for alternate uses for recreation and leisure activities which in some cases may have potential to impact on the character of the landscape.

In October 2023, Defra announced that it had reversed its earlier decision to repeal the rights of way 'cut-off date' legislation and that the cut-off date would be implemented, but deferred five years, from 2026 to 2031. This legislation will extinguish any historical rights of way not recorded on the definitive map by the cut-off date.

## **18.6 POLICIES FOR ACCESS AND RECREATION**

These policies should be read in conjunction with the overarching objectives for the Isle of Wight AONB as detailed in Section 3.13.

**P53** Promote and celebrate the AONB as a venue for sustainable recreation where this does not conflict with the purposes of the designation.

**P54** Encourage responsible use of the existing public rights of way and open access areas across the Isle of Wight AONB which provide access to its diverse and beautiful landscape.

**P55** Encourage the development of educational and health activities, with both delivery organisations and participants, in the designated landscape, to better understand the relationship between their activities and the Isle of Wight AONB objectives.

## **18.7 PRIORITIES FOR DELIVERY**

- Promote guidance to access and recreational users of the AONB for them to have better understanding of their impact on the landscape on the newly established King Charles England Coast Path National Trail.
- Promote increased accessibility to the designated landscape for less able, minority and deprived communities and fulfil the requirements of the DEFRA Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework.
- Encourage AONB access for recreational and educational activities that improve skills, confidence and health and well-being,

## 19. DELIVERY AND MONITORING

### 19.1 DELIVERING THE IWAONB MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Management Plan is accompanied by a Delivery Plan which has been devised by the Isle of Wight National Landscape team and ratified by the Steering Group. Together these documents provide a mechanism to annually monitor and measure progress of all partners towards delivering the strategic objectives of the AONB.

In assembling the Delivery Plan the Isle of Wight National Landscape Partnership has sought to include a range of actions and projects that contribute to the AONB policies, but can also be easily measured without becoming a bureaucratic burden. The list is therefore not comprehensive and the role played by all its partners is acknowledged, whether or not recognised within the Plan.

Whilst the Management Plan is a five-year strategic document, the Delivery Plan is focused on priority actions and associated projects likely to be delivered in the immediate 2-3 years. These actions and projects are classed as 'Doing', 'Planned' and 'Wish'. Where 'Planned' the Lead Partner has indicated the proposed partners and a timetable for measuring progress. These may change prior to commencement. 'Wishes' have been included where there is a project and lead partner, but no current means of delivery. The usual restriction in this case would be lack of funds. Other actions, where there are currently no defined projects or lead partner, have been excluded from the Delivery Plan, even as wishes, however, they remain recorded in the Management Plan as priority actions.

This Delivery Plan can be accessed through the Isle of Wight AONB website [www.wightaonb.org](http://www.wightaonb.org). It will be updated on an annual basis following the Isle of Wight National Landscape AGM. At the AGM attendees will be able to review both progress and priorities for the coming years.

### 19.2 MONITORING

In order to assess the effectiveness of both the AONB Management Plan and the broader environmental condition of the Isle of Wight AONB, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms need to be in place. These should be: simple and easily understood; relevant to the landscape character of the AONB; capable of repetition over time so that any trends become apparent; and, where possible, based on standard procedures to enable comparison with the national family of protected landscapes.

Metrics exist for the monitoring of the Isle of Wight AONB progress against the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework published by DEFRA in 2024.

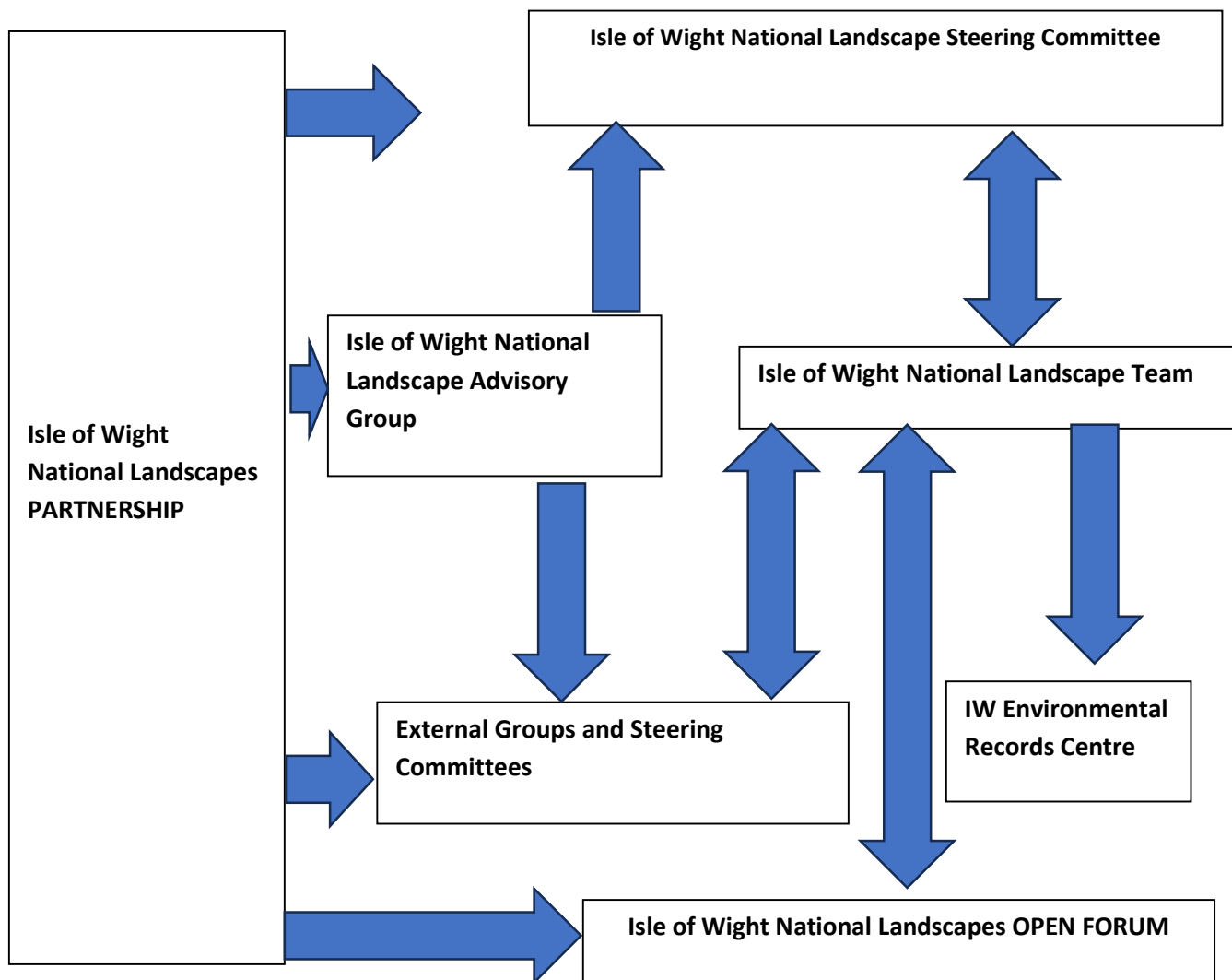
The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was developed in a parallel with the Management Plan 2025 – 2030. The environmental baseline presented within the SEA should be considered an overview of known data about the AONB and AONB management. Where knowledge gaps exist, it is hoped ongoing consultation and partnership working will provide suitable data. However, if there is no known baseline data, it will become part of the delivery of the Management Plan to establish appropriate methodology to assess the services. A full outline of the scoped baseline is available in the Appendix 2 of the SEA.

Further examination of the benefits delivered by the Wight AONB landscape will be undertaken throughout the lifetime of the Management Plan. Moreover, comprehensive monitoring of the benefits where they do not exist will also be developed in line with appropriate indicators, over the course of the Plan.

## 21. APPENDIX B: NATIONAL LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP

In November 2023, national AONBs Partnerships, Teams, Advisory Groups and Open Forums were rebranded as National Landscapes.

Structure of National Landscape Partnership:



## **21.1 ISLE OF WIGHT NATIONAL LANDSCAPE STEERING COMMITTEE**

The Steering Committee act as a catalyst and facilitator in implementing AONB Management Plan policies and projects. They also manage and allocate resources and steer, develop and support initiatives to help enhance and conserve the AONB.

The main role of the National Landscape Steering Committee is:

- To plan and implement AONB management via the medium of the AONB Management Plan and primary purposes of AONB designation.
- To bring skills and expertise from their portfolio area to the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee is appointed by a vote at the Isle of Wight National Landscape AGM. It is chaired by an independent individual appointed by the Steering Group after an internal recruitment process.

## **21.2 NATIONAL LANDSCAPE ADVISORY GROUP**

The National Landscape Advisory Group membership represent the wider interest of stakeholders within the AONB, and provides a way for partners to become involved in the future vision and management of this valued asset.

Its membership consists of representatives from organisations and stakeholders who have a direct interest in the management of the AONB. In accord with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended), which places a duty on public bodies to further the purposes of the designation to conserve and enhance AONBs, the Advisory Group membership includes a number of public bodies.

## **21.3 NATIONAL LANDSCAPE OPEN FORUM GROUP**

The Open Forum Group includes organisations and individuals with an interest in the management of our Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Through the IWNL website, social media and occasional workshops these members are kept up to date with the work of the National Landscape Team, Steering Committee and Working Groups to conserve and enhance the Island's finest landscapes.

## **21.4 NATIONAL LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP – CURRENT MEMBERS**

### **Advisory Group**

Amey Waste  
Artswork  
Council for the Protection of Rural England  
IW Chamber of Commerce  
Community Action IW  
Country, Land and Business Association  
CycleWight  
Department of Environment and Rural Affairs  
Dinosaur Isle  
Eastern Yar Farmers Group  
English Heritage  
IW Coppice Group  
Environment Agency  
Footprint Trust  
Forestry Commission  
Hampshire and IW Wildlife Trust  
Historic England  
IFCA  
Island Roads  
IW Biodiversity Partnership  
IW Gardens Trust

Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeological Society  
Local Access Forum  
Marine Management Organisation  
National Landscapes Association  
National Trust  
Natural England  
Natural Enterprise  
New Carnival Company  
Peoples Trust for Endangered Species  
Ramblers Association  
Red Funnel  
South East Reserve Forces and Cadets Association  
Scottish and Southern Electricity  
Southern Vectis  
Southern Water  
Vectis Astronomy  
Visit IW  
Wightlink  
Yarmouth Harbour Commissioners

**Open Forum Group**

Age UK IW  
Arc Consulting  
Bembridge Heritage Society  
Brading Roman Villa  
Brading Green Group (Brading Town  
Council)  
British Horse Society  
Clifford J Matthews  
Discovery Centre- Fort Victoria  
Garlic Farm  
Green Gym  
Historical Association IW Branch  
Island History Forum  
IW Bridleways Group  
IW Country Federation of Womens' Institutes  
IW Estuaries Project  
IW Farmers Market  
IW Grain Storage  
IW Metal Detecting Club  
IW Self Catering Association  
IW Society  
Julia Margaret Cameron Trust  
Landscape Therapy  
Newtown Residents Association  
Office for IW MP  
Past Wight  
Quay Arts  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds  
Solent Forum  
Undercliff Society  
Vectis Housing  
Vectis Searchers  
Wight Fibre Limited

Wight Nature Fund  
Wight Squirrel Project  
Woodland Forum  
Woodland Trust  
Yarmouth Society

**Isle of Wight Council**

County Councillors  
Archaeology  
Archives  
Estuaries Officer  
Highways Contract Supervisors  
Island Heritage Services  
Planning – Arboriculture  
Planning - Building Control  
Planning – Coastal  
Planning – Conservation and  
Design  
Planning – Development Control  
Planning – Ecology  
Planning – Enforcement  
Planning - Policy  
Rights of Way  
Town and Parish Councillors



## APPENDIX C:

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES OF THE ISLE OF WIGHT AONB

### 22.1 LCT1: CHALK DOWNS

An open landscape with long vistas, distinct skylines, large fields, sparse hedge or field boundaries, few mature hedgerow trees and a sense of space and exposure. This landscape character type is the most dominant within the Isle of Wight AONB. It is also the landscape type best known by the public because of the dramatic white cliffs at either end of the east–west central ridge, including the Needles Chalk stacks. There is another large area of chalk on the southern downs around Ventnor. Landmarks and seamarks such as St Catherine’s Oratory and the Tennyson Memorial occur on high vistas.

The geology of this area was laid down on a seabed during the Late Cretaceous period from 98 to 65 million years ago. It was subsequently folded and eroded to give the landform, angular flint deposits and soil base that we see today.

Chalk grassland has a very rich ecology and holds a number of important habitats for rare plants and animals. The habitats within this landscape character type continue to be under threat from intensive farming techniques, inappropriate grazing, recreation pressures and scrub invasion. Management of this important habitat is heavily dependant upon a correct grazing regime, which is in itself linked to the economic conditions of farming for graziers.

Ancient semi-natural woodlands on northern slopes, with distinctive woodland wildlife, are an important feature of the area.

A number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) fall within this landscape character area, representing the important nature conservation value of chalk downs. Small pockets of chalk heath occur on flint gravel deposits.

Rich in archaeology, with many scheduled and non-scheduled sites and monuments, this landscape has a strong time depth. Neolithic farmers started woodland clearance. Situated on cleared chalk downland, the Afton Down Longbarrow and Tennyson Down Mortuary Enclosure are burial monuments from this time. More extensive woodland clearance on the chalk took place in the succeeding Bronze Age. Many Bronze Age round barrows are situated on the central chalk ridge and the southern chalk downs. Roman villas are situated in close proximity to the central chalk ridge and major Anglo-Saxon cemeteries have been recorded from this area.

Manors and farms originating in medieval times cluster around the edge of the downs. Although traditionally grazed, with areas of common land, archaeological remains such as lynchets and ridge and furrow indicate that some chalk grassland has been ploughed in prehistory, Roman times or the Middle Ages. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century old chalk grassland was ploughed up for use as arable or reseeded as improved pasture.

Historic removal of chalk for liming of heavy clay soils and for building materials has resulted in a number of disused quarries. These are now regenerating naturally and have become a rich nature conservation resource. Place names often refer back to this former use such as Lime Kiln Shute, at Mersley.

Settlement is mainly linear in nature. It is found at the base of the chalk downs in valleys and combes where shelter and water is available from the chalk aquifer through natural springs. Place names often reflect these landscape elements (Shalcombe). Access via footpaths, bridleways and track ways along the ridge have left a strong pattern on the landscape. The modern Tennyson Trail follows part of the route of a trackway, of possible prehistoric origin, which ran along the central ridge from Freshwater Bay to Brading. Evolving throughout history these routes are echoes of the movement of animals, a route to high ground for ceremonial purposes or as a vantage point, and as passage on horse back, horse drawn cart or carriage across the chalk ridge when lower routes were wet and impassable. Traditional build uses local hard chalk, flint and a common scale and design. Slate or thatch roofs (some tile), small windows and large walls and roofs of a simple style are typical.

High areas have been used throughout history as look out points for defence and the safety of seafarers. St Catherine's Oratory, The Needles Battery and other smaller installations, and beacon sites were used as an early warning against invaders. Few Iron Age hillforts exist, one on Chillerton Down, together with a recently discovered defended site just north of Bembridge Down. The earliest defences at Carisbrooke Castle date from the Anglo-Saxon period, if not earlier, and the medieval castle, with its chalk cut moats, dominates the surrounding landscape. On the southern downs, St Catherine's Oratory provided a rather ineffectual lighthouse for medieval mariners and a chain of medieval beacons on the chalk warned of possible invaders. Victorian and later defensive sites on the chalk include the Old and New Needles Batteries at the western end of the Island and Bembridge Fort at the eastern end. History was made at the New Needles site when it was used for testing the Black Knight rocket in the 1950s and 1960s. On the southern downs, Ventnor Radar Station played a vital defensive role in the Second World War.

### **22.1.1 KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- Open and exposed with sparse hedgerows and no mature hedgerow trees.
- Limited windswept and scrubby vegetation on higher downs.
- Traditional grazing with extensive arable cultivation.
- Broadleaved woodlands predominantly beech and ash on the lower downs.
- Dominant high chalk cliffs.

### **22.1.2 MANAGEMENT AIM**

- To retain the generally open nature and long views to and from the downs and to conserve and enhance their ecological and historic importance.

## **22.2 LCT2: TRADITIONAL ENCLOSED PASTURE**

This landscape character type occurs most frequently on heavier soil or in wet areas where arable cultivation has remained unviable. Most of this landscape character type is found north of the central and southern chalk downs because of the geology of the Island. To the north of the central chalk ridge is a landscape of lush green pastures with large hedges, small copses and woodlands that may be characterised as 'ancient' countryside. This landscape includes areas such as the pasturelands around the Newtown estuary, Farringford, Calbourne, Combley, Quarr, Nunwell and south east of Osborne. Field shapes tend to be irregular, reflecting subtle changes in local topography, with some more regular hedgerows reflecting later enclosure. There are many mature oak trees within pasture fields and as hedge trees, giving a sense of permanence to this landscape. Country lanes, footpaths and bridleways are winding in nature and enclosed by hedges. Some arable cultivation takes place where modern farming equipment has made this possible. Some traditional pasture has been made more intensive to produce silage.

The chalk valley pastures of the Bowcombe Valley have a different character. Grazed by sheep, they have a more open aspect and views to the surrounding chalk downs.

Other areas of this landscape character type are clustered around the foot of the southern chalk downs on the Lower Greensand or on the Upper Greensand slopes that form a part of this downland. Areas of note include Sainham, Appuldurcombe, Wydcombe and Gotten.

Copses and woodland in this landscape character type are semi-natural and some may benefit from active coppicing and management to retain their integrity.

Villages south west of the central chalk ridge are either of an open linear pattern or comprise small clusters of historic settlement, usually associated with farms. To the north of the central chalk ridge the settlement pattern is more dispersed. The main traditional building material in the northern part of this area is Bembridge Limestone, with the softer Greensand employed in the southern part.

The historic landscape to the north of the central chalk ridge includes areas such as the failed medieval borough of Newtown and the landscape parks of Westover and Nunwell. On the Greensand is situated the remains of the Island's largest Georgian landscape park at Appuldurcombe. The landscape parks of Westover, Nunwell and Appuldurcombe are all on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

Reliant on small farms, livestock rearing and woodland management, this landscape is most at threat from changes to the agricultural sector that result from economic pressures.

### 22.2.1 KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Land mainly used for pasture.
- Well preserved and dense hedgerows with mature hedgerow oak trees in the northern part of the area
- Irregular small fields.
- Narrow enclosed winding lanes.
- Well wooded, with numerous copses.
- Small scattered farmsteads.
- Settlement patterns mostly linear in nature or small clusters.

### 22.2.2 MANAGEMENT AIM

- To ensure the retention of a viable, well farmed landscape as a buffer for urban areas and woodlands, characterised by a mosaic of permanent pasture, well managed hedgerows and copses.

## 22.3 LCT3 INTENSIVE AGRICULTURAL LAND

This landscape character type is found in a number of areas within the AONB. The first and most significant is the large, flat lower Greensand arable plain stretching from the south west of Rookley to the Tennyson Heritage Coast between Barnes High and Walpan Chine. A second sizeable area lies to the south of Arreton Down and stretches eastwards to Alverstone. Both of these areas are sub categorised as **Intensive Arable Land**. A third area is to the north of the chalk downs at Chessell and running west to Afton along with two areas both sides of the Western Yar Estuary. This area is sub categorised as **Central Agricultural Belt**. Finally, two small areas occur at Southford near Stenbury Manor, and in the Whitcombe Valley south of Newport.

The land in the Central Agricultural Belt involves farming on heavier soils, with greater prevalence of dairy farming and winter cereal crop production. Farming units tend to be large and associated with evergreen shelter belts. Hedgerows are scarce and, where present, often degraded.

The land in the Intensive Arable Lands exists on the Lower Greensand hills and Greensand plains, the most productive arable land on the Island. This part of the AONB has seen dramatic change due to Dutch Elm Disease. This has resulted in the loss of a former key feature of this landscape and the intensification of agriculture practices since the middle of the last century. The outcome is an open and sparsely populated landscape, with broad sweeping views, where the coastal climate has a strong influence. This landscape changes with the seasons; the gold and brown of autumn and winter give way to the greens of spring, and the greens, yellows and blues of summer. In this part of the AONB the dynamics of the landscape are most apparent, with the use of farm machinery to turn the soil, irrigation of crops with large water canon, the use of polythene for early potato and maize production and the movement of ears of cereal crops emulating the waves along the Heritage Coast.

Although a long tradition of arable agriculture has removed whatever archaeological earthworks may have formerly existed in this landscape, the light and easily worked soils of the Lower Greensand were attractive to farmers from prehistoric times onwards.

### 22.3.1 KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Large, open fields.
- Large-scale hedge removal and degraded remaining hedges.
- No hedgerow trees.
- Land use is predominantly rural.
- Large farms and farm buildings.
- Trees restricted to shelter belts.

### **22.3.2 MANAGEMENT AIM**

- To recognise and retain the open nature of this well farmed zone, but to increase its visual and ecological interest by encouraging hedgerow and watercourse management.

### **22.4 LCT4: SOUTHERN COASTAL FARMLAND**

This landscape character type largely occurs in one area between Shippards Chine and Barnes High and inland to the villages of Brighstone and Shorwell, with a further small area at Yaverland on the east coast. It has an open and exposed feel, with a gently undulating landform.

The influence of the sea can be seen by the few mature trees, which have been bent over by the salt laden winds, and the dramatic cliff falls along the seaward edge of fields. Travelling westwards along the Military Road, there is a gradual change from arable to pastoral land use. Most fields have a regular shape, with low hedges and few trees. The existence of Chines along the coastline adds drama to an otherwise largely gentle landscape.

The continuing coastal erosion process often exposes fossil remains in the soft geology of the cliffs. Archaeological finds are also frequently uncovered by coastal erosion in this area and along the whole of the AONB coastline. The Chines and eroding cliffs provide important habitats for rare species such as the Glanville fritillary butterfly. Willow scrub occurs in areas of wet pasture and adjacent to drainage channels such as at Sud Moor.

Ancient tracks and paths have created a dense network of public rights of way running from settlements to the coast and Chines. Settlement tends to exist in the form of small hamlets associated with formal communal grazing areas now known as greens (Marsh Green and Brook Green).

#### **22.4.1 KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- Large regular gently undulating fields.
- Low hedgerows with few hedgerow trees.
- A transition from arable in the east to pastoral in the west.
- Valleys, old drainage channels and Chines cross the arable landscape and are associated with willow scrub and unimproved pasture.
- Eroding coastline of key geological and archaeological interest.

#### **22.4.2 MANAGEMENT AIM**

- Seek to diversify habitats while maintaining the dominant mixed agricultural use. To allow natural coastal processes to occur unhindered.

### **22.5 LCT5 : SANDSTONE HILLS AND GRAVEL RIDGES**

This landscape character type appears primarily in small land parcels south of the central chalk ridge. The largest area is to the west of Arreton at St Georges Down, with further small ridges in the area of Knighton, Southdown at Pyle near Chale, south of Chillerton and in a long band west of Shorwell to Brook.

The high Greensand hills (Sandstone Hills), in general support pasture except on steeper slopes. These slopes are often planted with mixed forestry and occur immediately to the south of the central chalk ridge.

From prehistoric times until the twentieth century there was some heathland in this area, as at Mottistone Common. The Neolithic 'Longstone', a burial mound with a stone marking the former entrance, is situated here. Conifers were planted on Mottistone Common before the Second World War. However, much of the forestry plantation has now been cleared and heathland is being re-established.

Gravel ridges and terraces are often wooded or support gorse and bracken communities. Occurring as high ground in the south of the Island, they are in stark contrast to adjacent flat and fertile agricultural land.

Sunken lanes or shutes are a feature of this landscape, often on the slopes facing on to the chalk downs. These historic track ways support ancient woodland flora and give an intimate and secretive ambience.

Settlement, where present, tends to nestle in the steep sided valleys that offer shelter and access to the natural springs that filter through from the chalk aquifer.

The geological resource of this landscape character type has led to pressure for quarrying for sand and gravel extraction. This needs to be managed carefully as it can have a major impact on the visual quality of the landscape.

#### **22.5.1 KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- Some traditional pasture, steep slopes planted to mixed forestry.
- Lower gravel terraces support gorse and bracken.
- Sunken lanes support ancient woodland flora.
- Traditional sheltered settlement in the valleys.

#### **22.5.2 MANAGEMENT AIMS**

- To encourage sympathetic management to ensure that the very visible, often steeply sloped areas, rich in flora are retained.
- Where practical, restore former heathland and encourage management of areas that are neglected at present.
- To consider carefully the visual impact of any proposals to extend quarrying activity.
- To retain the character of the rural road and rights of way network.

#### **22.6 LCT6 : NORTHERN WOODLAND**

Occurring on the heavier soils in the north of the Island where agricultural use has been unviable, these large areas of plantation and mixed woodland are a dominant feature in the landscape. Bouldnor, Combley and Firestone Copse are managed by Forestry England, with smaller areas of copse and other ancient woodland in private ownership.

In medieval times much of the Island's woodland was concentrated to the north of the central chalk ridge. Most of the Island's non-plantation woodland is still in this area. Combley Great Wood was owned and managed by Quarr Abbey in medieval times and is partly surrounded by a historic enclosure bank.

Some woodland has public access provision and is an important amenity for leisure pursuits for the local community. Active woodland management, including clearance and coppicing, is required to secure the integrity of this landscape character area.

#### **22.6.1 KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- Large woodland blocks of conifers and broadleaved species form a dominant feature in the landscape.
- Small enclosed fields.

#### **22.6.2 MANAGEMENT AIM**

- To retain, conserve and where possible extend woodlands and maintain the broadleaved woodland characteristics of much of the north of the Island. Conservation will require improved woodland management and public access.
- To seek to develop the skills and markets for woodland products that would benefit woodland management and public access.

#### **22.7 LCT7 : LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENT ZONE**

This landscape character type describes parts of the AONB that have changed as a result of sporadic and urbanising development over time. Usually found at the edge of larger development, these areas blur the boundary between urban and rural. They include areas of former agricultural land that have been changed by the addition of horse paddocks and stabling; intensive horticulture; poultry and pig farming; waste disposal sites; extensive residential, industrial or retail development; holiday camps, mobile homes, caravan and campsites.

This results in an increasingly chaotic character, with a decline in the quality of management of hedgerows, woodland and agricultural landscapes.

Areas included in this landscape type are Lower Woodside Wootton, Cranmore, Pilgrims Park Thorness, Forelands, Wilmingham, Afton, Rookley, and Alverstone.

Mitigation and enhancement measures should be sought whenever there is a proposal for development in these areas. These areas are also likely to be subject to increasing development pressures. The formulation of design or supplementary planning guidance on issues of concern may help to guide change that will restore the landscape and enhance the AONB.

Early review using the new landscape character assessment guidance will help to identify ways to enhance these areas.

#### **22.7.1 KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- Traditional agricultural landscape changed and often degraded by urbanising development.
- Overall visual chaos and neglect of agricultural landscape in a town edge setting.
- Degraded hedgerows and unmanaged woodland.
- General feeling of neglect and blur in the setting and edge of settlements.

#### **22.7.2 MANAGEMENT AIM**

- To prevent the expansion of urban influence, to retain and interpret sites of ecological interest and to seek landscape improvements by focusing resources into this landscape.

### **22.8 LCT8: HARBOURS AND CREEKS**

This landscape character type covers those estuarine environments on the Island that are within the AONB boundary, namely Wootton Creek, Kings Quay, Newtown, and the Western Yar. All have common features such as mudflats, shingle, salt marsh, reed beds, an open aspect, and fringing oak woodlands. However, each has its own distinct form and features.

Of these, the Western Yar is the largest and is subject to a number of pressures. As one of the ferry terminals linking the Island with the mainland, the Yar is a busy harbour. It is also valued as a place for quiet leisure activities, such as cycling, walking and sailing. Of high importance for nature conservation, it supports a number of important plant species (Norton Spit) and is a resource for over wintering migratory birds. Designated as an SSSI, the area needs careful and considered management. The Western Yar Estuary Management Plan seeks to fulfil this function.

Newtown estuary has great historic, cultural and nature conservation value. The only National Nature Reserve on the Isle of Wight, it is primarily within the ownership and protection of the National Trust. It has a timeless, tranquil and secluded atmosphere, with a quality of light similar to the flat lands of East Anglia. Along with Kings Quay these two parts of this landscape character type represent the finest unaltered inlets on the Island.

At Wootton Creek, the upper part of the estuary south of Wootton Bridge is within the boundary of the AONB. It is quiet, rural and surrounded by oak woodlands.

From prehistoric times these harbours and creeks have been important for trade and transport. It is no coincidence that the Island's medieval towns are all set beside harbours and creeks, even though Yarmouth struggled and Newtown failed to become viable.

In and around Wootton Creek and along the coastline from Wootton to Ryde a major archaeological project has found evidence of trade and subsistence activities dating back to Neolithic times. The Wootton-Quarr Project demonstrated the wealth of fragile remains that exist along this stretch of coastline, and that are under threat from erosion. The project also highlighted the enormous potential to increase our understanding of the past environment and landscape change. Other parts of the AONB coastline may prove to have equal potential.

### **22.8.1 KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- Flat exposed tidal mudflats, shingle banks and grazing marshes.
- Open aspect.
- Peripheral; enclosure created by surrounding oak woodlands.

### **22.8.2 MANAGEMENT AIM**

- To retain the quiet solitude of harbours and creeks.
- To conserve intertidal habitats and to record archaeological material.

## **22.9 LCT9: THE UNDERCLIFF**

The Undercliff is an area of landscape character that is unique to the Isle of Wight AONB. This is the largest inhabited rotational landslip in western Europe. It is of major geological, ecological and archaeological importance. There is the added pressure of the need to maintain and protect property, business and transport infrastructure in the area.

Running from Blackgang Chine in the west to Luccombe in the east, the Undercliff sits below the southern chalk downs. The landform is the result of coastal erosion processes and landslips caused by groundwater lubrication of slip planes within the Gault Clays and Sandrock Beds. Its picturesque beauty was appreciated from the late eighteenth century, when the earliest cottages ornés were built. Several more such cottages and marine villas were built in the early nineteenth century. Valued by artists in the early nineteenth century for its picturesque and sublime natural beauty, the Undercliff quickly became the subject of study as part of wider Victorian interest in geological development and processes. Latterly the Undercliff has been appreciated for its temperate microclimate afforded by the shelter of the inland cliff and its southern aspect. This led to the construction of more residences for the well-to-do and the formation of a 'gardenesque' resort in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with associated walled gardens and exotic plant species.

The modern Ventnor Botanic Garden, featuring significant plant collections, has been developed in the grounds of a Victorian hospital for the treatment of tuberculosis. The Undercliff retains all of the elements admired and created over the last two centuries, offering a varied landscape of natural elements and man-made additions.

Although areas of the inland cliff remain visible there has been a gradual increase in secondary woodland particularly with Holm oak and sycamore, leading to a more enclosed and secretive ambience. On-going natural coastal processes are of great ecological importance because the gradual re-establishment of plant species and specialist micro habitats caused by continued land slides is essential for many plant and animal species. This is reflected in the cSAC designation of this area as of great European importance.

### **22.9.1 KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- Dramatic inland vertical cliffs.
- Slumped grasslands.
- Coastal pasture.
- Exotic ornamental planting.
- Nineteenth century villas and modern suburban housing with landscaped gardens.
- Unmanaged natural woodland regeneration.

### **22.9.2 MANAGEMENT AIMS**

- To maintain open slumping habitat.
- To enhance the special atmosphere and architectural character of the area.

## **22.10 LCT10 : OSBORNE COAST**

This landscape character type is a distinct part of the coast and hinterland to the north and east of East Cowes. A planned landscape of the nineteenth century, it was largely the concept of Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's beloved Prince Consort. Designed as a very private area screened from the town, the house and terrace afford vistas of the landscaped grounds and Solent beyond. Lying mostly within the extensive grounds of the former Royal estate of Osborne House, this landscape is characterised by rich ornamental

and exotic planting, distinctive architecture in comparison to the surrounding traditional enclosed pasture agricultural land, and a wooded shoreline.

Now in the care of English Heritage, Osborne House and its grounds are being restored to their former glory. Major works have been undertaken in the gardens, and on the external fabric of the building. One of the most visited sites under the care of English Heritage, Osborne House is an important cultural and tourism resource for the Isle of Wight. The grounds are included on English Heritage's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. The private landscape grounds of Norris Castle are also included on the Register and fall within this landscape character type.

Unusually this is the only landscape within the AONB that has no legal informal public access, with no public rights of way recorded in the area. The return to private ownership of Barton Manor Estate immediately adjacent to Osborne has further restricted opportunities for quiet informal recreation in the area.

#### **22.10.1 KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- Exotic ornamental planting set within more naturalistic parkland.
- Victorian villa architecture.
- Very limited informal public access, the exception being the seasonal opening of Osborne House.
- Ancient semi-natural woodland.
- Wooded coastline.

#### **22.10.2 MANAGEMENT AIMS**

- To continue restoration of the landscape of the estate as conceived by Prince Albert, and to encourage access and interpretation.

#### **22.11 LCT11 : NORTHERN COASTAL CLIFFS**

A small but important landscape character type occurring along the north-west coast of the Island from Gurnard through to Alum Bay. Consists of low slumped and sloping broken cliffs of clay and gravel that were formed as a result of the effects of the action of the sea on the underlying geology. The main characteristics of this area are rough cliff edges, scrub growth, hollows in the landform and a lack of development because of the instability of the land.

Bordered by agricultural land in the east at Thorness and Gurnard and plantation forestry in the west at Bouldnor near Yarmouth, some opportunities for access are afforded by the Coastal Path and connecting footpaths running inland. Coastal access is always under pressure from erosion because of the need to realign the route. The majority of this coastline is also designated as Heritage Coast (Hamstead), reflecting its largely unspoilt character, importance for nature conservation, geology and as an area for quiet enjoyment.

#### **22.11.1 KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- Characteristically low sloping broken unstable cliffs.
- Limited permanent development and public access.

#### **22.11.2 MANAGEMENT AIMS**

- To restrict development but, where safe, to allow or extend public access to rugged slopes of scrub and heathland



## **23. APPENDIX D:**

### **MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW, SCOPE AND PROCESS**

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (as amended) 2000 sets out the legislative requirements for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This Act resulted in the need for all Local Authorities with AONB designation within their administrative area to work with stakeholders to formulate a statutory AONB Management Plan for its future conservation and enhancement. This Plan is also the guide for public bodies with a duty to have regard to the purpose of the designation when considering how their work and function may impact on the area.

Along with the production of an AONB Management Plan (initially in 2004), legislation also requires a review within five years of its publication. In line with guidance issued by Natural England the previous Plan was prepared and was adopted by the local authority in November 2018. The Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan 2025-2030 therefore represents the fifth review of the 2004 plan.

This review has provided an opportunity to look critically at the pPlan and make amendments, as required, to update this to reflect current challenges and opportunities facing the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

To ensure that we have done this effectively, focused consultation with Partnership members, key stakeholders and the Public has formed the heart of the approach we have taken. This has been overseen by the Isle of Wight National Landscape Steering Committee.

Initial consultation through a series of meetings and workshops were undertaken in November 2023. This involved Partnership members and key stakeholders including Isle of Wight Council Officers and UK Government Agencies

Public Consultation on the Draft AONB Management Plan will run from 23rd April 2024 to 4<sup>th</sup> July 2024

#### **23.1 ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS**

##### **23.1.1 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA)**

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

The environmental report, available as a separate document, has been compiled in parallel with the production of the Draft Management Plan.

### 23.1.2 HABITAT REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT (HRA)

The aim of the Habitats Regulations Assessment is to apply the tests of the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c) Regulations 1994, as set out in Regulation 48 of the Regulations, to the policies given in the plan. The requirements are such that prior to a land use plan being published, the plan-making authority must assess the potential effects of it upon European sites.

There are four stages to the Habitat Regulations Assessment (sometimes referred to as Appropriate Assessment):

STAGE 1 : Screening

STAGE 2 : Appropriate assessment

STAGE 3 : Assessment of alternative solutions

STAGE 4 : Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain

At the screening stage, a decision is made as to whether or not the plan policies will have a likely significant effect (LSE) on interest features of European sites within/adjacent to the AONB. The primary aim at this stage should be to ensure that none of the policies will have a LSE and should, if possible, be modified to ensure it does not.

If this is not possible then it would have to be subject to the full rigour of an 'appropriate assessment'.

This process was undertaken in parallel with the review and the final report of the Habitats Regulations

Assessment is available as a separate document.

### 23.1.3 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2012 places a public duty on Local Authorities to have due regard to the need to:

**Eliminate** unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act

**Advance** equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

**Foster** good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 include age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership. Whilst equality impact assessments are not a statutory requirement, in order to be able to demonstrate that this general duty has been taken into account within any decision making process, they form an essential part of the necessary evidence base.

As the Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan is adopted by the Isle of Wight Council as their policy for Isle of Wight AONB, therefore an equality impact assessment has been undertaken to identify concerns and ensure adherence to the Equality Act 2012.

# Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan :

## Appendix F - Bibliography

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