

Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Draft Management Plan 2020-2024

Part One - The Special Qualities of the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a nationally important landscape, and the most northerly AONB in England. The beautiful landscape that we see today is the result of the complex interaction of many forces, both natural and human, over very long periods of time. In order to conserve this landscape, it is necessary first to discern and describe what is special about it. This is explored in this chapter of the management plan, under the three headings of Landscape, Natural Environment and Cultural Environment.

The term 'natural beauty' first gained currency in a legislative context in the 1907 Act which gave legal status to the National Trust ('for Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty'). It has been the basis for the designation of both AONBs and National Parks since the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act in which however, the term was not defined. S.92 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act formally stated that natural beauty includes conservation of '*flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features.*' Natural beauty goes well beyond scenic or aesthetic value. The natural beauty of an AONB is to do with the relationship between people and place. It encompasses everything - 'natural' and human - that makes an area distinctive. It includes the area's geology and landform, its climate and soils, its wildlife and ecology. It includes the rich history of human settlement and land use over the centuries, its archaeology and buildings, its cultural associations, and the people who live in it, past and present.

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Dramatic natural coastline of rocky headlands and cliffs contrasting with extensive sweeping sandy beaches and dynamic sand dune systems

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Landscape

Dramatic natural coastline of rocky headlands and cliffs contrasting with extensive sweeping sandy beaches and dynamic sand dune systems

The long coastline of the AONB comprises a series of rocky headlands alternating with sandy bays and extensive sand and mud flats, largely determined by the underlying geology. The coast is generally low-lying to the North Sea, with significant coastal cliffs occurring only to the north of Berwick, beyond the AONB.

As the Carboniferous sedimentary strata and the Whin Sill (roughly horizontal sheets of hard, igneous dark rock), sequentially intersect the coast, a sequence of cliffed headlands, reefs and bays has formed. Thick sandstones, resisting marine erosion, form most of the

headlands, whilst thinner sandstones and limestones form reefs, offshore rocks, and wave-cut platforms (often called 'carrs' or 'steels') running out to sea or parallel with the shore. The coastline at Boulmer is a particularly good example. The Whin Sill can be seen as a series of volcanic rock intrusions into the surrounding sedimentary rocks. The quartz dolerite which makes up the Whin Sill occurs across the county and typically forms elevated ridges which are more resistant to erosion and weathering than the surrounding strata. These ridges provide ideal defensive locations along the coastline with Dunstanburgh, Bamburgh and Lindisfarne Castles all sitting on top of such outcrops.

These characteristics of the 'hard' coast contrast with a 'soft' coastline where weaker rocks have been eroded to form bays. Between Berwick and south of Bamburgh, long stretches of broad sandy beach at Cocklawburn and Cheswick are backed by dunes, with tidal flats between. Further south the longer sweeping bays at Beadnell, Embleton and Alnmouth have broad sandy beaches and well developed dune systems, often forming high ridges. These are popular tourist locations, and the dunes near Alnmouth have been developed as a 'links' golf course.

Holy Island, connected to the mainland by a tidal causeway, is generally low-lying but comprises contrasting rocky cliffs to the north and east. Extensive sand and mud flats lie to the south west of the island and south on the mainland at Budle Bay. Along its south shore the remains of the Priory stand on a localised ridge or 'heugh' and Lindisfarne Castle is perched impressively on an outcrop of the Whin Sill. The Farne Islands comprises two small groups of rocky islands of Whin Sill, home to internationally important bird and mammal populations.

Coastal and riverside setting of iconic historic and cultural landmark features which provide localised vertical emphasis within a predominantly horizontal landscape and seascape

The chain of imposing castles at Lindisfarne, Bamburgh, Dunstanburgh and Warkworth are iconic historic features of national, if not international status. They are significant tourist attractions with special scenic qualities due primarily to their dramatic coastal and, in the case of Warkworth Castle, its riverside setting. They provide evidence and a special legacy of the need to defend this northern frontier.

Lindisfarne, Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh castles are outstanding landmark features sitting prominently on isolated outcrops of Whin Sill right on the edge of the sea. Bamburgh Castle is built on an impressive outcrop of dolerite rock which dominates the adjacent sands and the settlement. They create dramatic vertical focal points within a predominantly horizontal setting of sweeping sandy bays and the sea.

The impressive medieval castle at Warkworth, cutting off a promontory created by a meander in the River Coquet, is a major local landmark and tourist attraction, evoking the power of the medieval Dukes of Northumberland.

Remote historic, cultural and spiritual qualities and ecclesiastical associations of the Holy Island of Lindisfarne

Linked to the mainland only by a tidal causeway, the Holy Island of Lindisfarne retains a remote, spiritual quality which first prompted the founding of an ancient monastery (later a priory) by Saint Aiden in AD635, at the request of King Oswald, and later linked with Saint Cuthbert and Saint Wilfred. It was the centre from which the 7th Century conversion to Christianity of the Anglo Saxon Kingdom was based and the place where the Lindisfarne Gospels were written.

The island has inspired religious and cultural works for more than thirteen centuries. The romantic ruins of the priory inspired sketches and paintings by the artist J M W Turner (who also painted the ruins of Dunstanburgh Castle in 1797). Today the island is not only a centre for pilgrimage, but its scenic quality attracts visitors from all over the world each year, mostly attracted to its medieval religious heritage, compact village, fishing harbour and the more recent 16th Century castle (and registered historic park and garden) on the higher, southern part of the island, but also to the peace and tranquillity of the more remote, sandy, northern side.

Rocky Farne Islands archipelago feature in many coastal views

A group of twenty eight rocky islands lying between two to five miles off the coast, the Farne Islands form the easternmost outcrop of the hard dark rock of the Whin Sill. From an area stretching from north of Berwick to south of Castle Point, the islands are a distinctive feature in particularly striking views of the diverse natural coastline comprising the sea, rocky headlands and sandy bays, together with castles and other historic and cultural landmark features. Views back to Bamburgh Castle on the coast with the backdrop of the Cheviot Hills provide an unforgettable picture for the islands visitors.

The islands provide probably the most accessible seabird colony in England and are also home to a large grey seal colony. These draw about 45,000 tourists each year on a short boat trip from the mainland, where features of interest include a medieval Pele Tower, chapel, lighthouse and information centre on Inner Farne, and Longstone Lighthouse (with its connections to the heroine Grace Darling) on the outermost island. Historically the islands have strong links with Celtic Christianity and St Aidan and St Cuthbert, who valued the island's solitude for meditation.

Traditional coastal fishing villages clustered around small harbours

Settlements along the coast have evolved through centuries of association with the sea for trading and fishing, located where there are indentations in the cliffs and reefs providing a degree of shelter. The coastline between Bamburgh and Craster provides an increasing amount of shelter. Craster is still an important fishing village, with tightly knit buildings clustered around a small sheltered harbour, as to a lesser extent are Low Newton and Boulmer where the village stretches out along the coast as the reef formations of the North and South Reins provide a protective envelope around Boulmer Haven. The simple vernacular design of the traditional fishing village, distinguished by its historic compact and

ordered settlement pattern, often single storey buildings built with grey sandstone rubble and red pantile or grey slate roofs, is a special and distinctive characteristic of the AONB.

Fishing still takes place from harbours on Holy Island, at Seahouses, Beadnell, Boulmer and Craster, but some harbours now cater increasingly for the tourist industry.

Views inland to the rounded sandstone hills and Cheviot Hills provide a dramatic and dynamic backdrop to the coast.

In addition to the strong visual qualities of views up and down the coast, particularly from iconic castles and raised topography in areas such as Waren Mill, views inland help to provide a wider context or setting to the relatively constrained designated landscape. Vistas inland stretch to the west, over the extensive gently undulating coastal plain of arable farmland and fragmented woodland and plantations. The openness of this landscape setting is underpinned and amplified by a relative absence of obtrusive development or structures, reflecting its arable use and remoteness. Even major transport infrastructure, such as the A1 and the East Coast Mainline is absorbed within the vastness of the landscape without significant prominence, although the construction of the Middlemoor and Wandylaw wind farms has had an adverse impact on views inland from much of the AONB.

Consequently, the wider landscape context of the AONB is defined to the west by a fragmented line of low, rounded hills and moorland, running south to north from the Alnwick Moors, through to the Chillingham and Kyloe Hills, before the topography falls to the extensive lowland area south of the river Tweed. Occasionally, longer distance views to the dramatic Cheviot Hills in the Northumberland National Park are possible, and provide a visual link between the nationally important landscapes. Highpoints along this raised middle distance help create a visual sense of context to the coast, although this envelope extends well beyond the AONB itself. Within the wider landscape setting of the AONB the current absence of intrusive development adds to the special qualities and context of the coast.

Feeling of exposure and tranquillity on the flat, low lying open coastal plain and windswept coast, with sparse tree cover, huge skies and wide seascape views

The low-lying and open character of much of the AONB, the absence of heavy tree cover, low hedges and sparse and scattered elements of human habitation and infrastructure can lead to strong feelings of tranquillity and remoteness. Seascape is an essential component of this character, both that experienced looking out to sea and that experienced viewing the coast from Lindisfarne and the Farne Islands. Despite the settled and farmed nature of the landscape, the network of country lanes and paths, access along the coast on the shore and its links are frequently free from significant human presence, particularly outside peak holiday seasons. Experience of this wide-open landscape beneath vast skies spanning from the seaward horizon to the Cheviot Hills in the west can result in a perception of isolation and freedom from the intensity of urban life, and is a valued component of the area.

Weather and seascape, altering light, wind, and changing seasonal colours and hues, in combination with the rich cultural heritage of the area can lead variously to peaceful contemplation, relaxation and even melancholy. Alternatively, exposure to harsh climatic conditions and the primacy of natural environment forces, whether on the shore or on the

coastal plain, can focus the mind on less ethereal matters and remind residents and visitors of the wild coastal exposure of the AONB.

Dark skies

Ever-increasing levels of outdoor lighting are constantly diminishing our view of the spectacular sky visible on a clear night, and most people have to travel far from their homes to experience a good view of the night sky. Areas of the Northumberland Coast AONB still retain such dark skies, and these are a special quality of the area, valued by residents and visitors alike.

Natural Environment

Dune grassland

Long sandy beaches backed by sand dunes form an impressive part of the Northumberland coastal landscape. Most of the dunes are relatively young single ridge systems occurring at the backs of bays such as those at Embleton, or on spits across estuaries such as at Alnmouth and Warkworth. More extensive dune systems occur at Goswick, on Holy Island and at Ross Links. Unlike most sandy soils dunes are calcareous due to the quantity of shells in the sand, and so once the shifting sand has been stabilised by pioneer plants such as marram and lyme grass support a diverse community of lime-loving grassland plants.

Among the more distinctive flowering plants of dune grasslands are bloody crane's-bill, lesser meadow-rue, sea bindweed, seaside centaury, purple milk-vetch and burnet rose. Also common are lady's bedstraw, viper's-bugloss, common restharrow, bird's-foot trefoil and wild thyme. Lichens are common; especially species of *Cladonia* and *Peltigera*, and it is these that give the more mature fixed dunes the name 'grey' dunes (as opposed to the 'yellow' mobile dunes with bare sand). Petalwort, a scarce and tiny liverwort with a lettuce-like appearance is known from a few sites within the AONB.

Several scarce plants occur in damp hollows in the dunes called dune slacks, including coralroot orchid, dune helleborine, marsh helleborine, black bog-rush and round-leaved wintergreen. Of particular importance is Lindisfarne helleborine, an orchid known from nowhere in the world other than the dune grasslands on Lindisfarne. A few areas of dune in the more extensive systems around Lindisfarne are old enough to have had their shell content dissolved out by percolating rainwater, or comprise glacial sands which never contained shell fragments, and so have acidic soils. These support small areas of coastal heath with common heather, bell heather and in damper areas cross-leaved heath, such as are found at Ross Links and Bamburgh Golf Club.

Dune systems in Northumberland support a significant proportion of the north-east England populations of two species of butterfly; dark green fritillary and grayling, and the diverse invertebrate community also includes uncommon moths such as the sand dart, shore wainscot and the Portland moth.

Because of the internationally important plant communities that they support, several types of dune grassland communities are specially protected under the European Union's Habitats Directive. For this reason six areas of dune grassland in the AONB totalling 806ha in area are included in the North Northumberland Dunes Special Area of Conservation.

Rocky shores

The intertidal rocky shores of Northumberland vary from areas of broken bedrock and boulder fields, cobbles, vertical rock walls and horizontal ledges. They provide a permanent foundation for marine life to colonise, and the varying conditions created by the daily tides make the reefs one of the most diverse habitats on the Northumberland coast. The rocky shores around Holy Island and the Farne Islands are also protected as Special Protection Areas as the marine life provides a valuable food source for internationally important birds.

Inlets and bays

Whilst predominantly rocky, the Northumberland coast has several characteristic, sediment-dominated embayments, including Budle Bay, Beadnell Bay and Embleton Bay. These beautiful beaches are relatively exposed, fairly uniform in nature and support many marine invertebrates. Budle Bay lies on the mainland just south of Holy Island. This area forms one of the most extensive areas of sand flat between the Firth of Forth and the Wash, with one of the richest assemblages of sediment species in the North East of England.

Beyond the intertidal area, Beadnell Bay and Embleton Bay form a sandy break in the otherwise continuous rocky reefs, with extensive areas of clean sand that support dense populations of the heart urchin *Echinocardium cordatum*, and razor clams *Ensis illicia* and *E. arcuatus*. The inlets and bays around Holy Island, as well as many of the mainland bays, are also protected as a Special Protection Areas for their importance as a habitat to internationally important birds.

Intertidal sand and mud flats

The Northumberland coast has extensive, biologically diverse sand and mud flats, ranging from wave exposed areas with mobile coarse sand, to more sheltered areas of fine sediment. The type of animals and plants which are supported by a sand or mud flat will vary according to a number of factors including the type of sediment present, its stability and the salinity of the surrounding water. Lindisfarne, Budle Bay and the coast adjacent to the north of Holy Island form the most extensive area of intertidal sand and mud in North East England.

These extensive areas support one of the largest intertidal beds of the narrow leaved eel grass *Zostera angustifolia* and dwarf eelgrass *Zostera noltii* on the east coast the UK. There is also a diverse collection of animals living within the sediment and large beds of the blue mussel *Mytilus edulis*. Many of the bays along the open coast consist of fairly mobile sand, which supports communities of small crustaceans and marine worms. Areas of more sheltered sediment, such as Newton Haven, support stable lower shore communities of burrowing heart urchins *Echinocardium cordatum* and bivalve molluscs. The intertidal sand and mud around Holy Island is also protected as a Special Protection Area as the many marine invertebrates provide a rich food source for birds.

Migratory and wintering wildfowl and waders

A range of habitats including the wide shallow bays and saltmarshes around Lindisfarne, the rocky shores that punctuate lengths of sandy beach and the estuaries of the Coquet and the Aln provide rich and vital feeding grounds for huge numbers of ducks, swans, geese and wading birds that either pass through on migration between their arctic breeding grounds and wintering grounds further south, or spend the winter here, on habitats kept ice-free by the sea.

The soft sediments of bays and estuaries support flocks of waders including bar-tailed godwit, redshank, golden plover, grey plover, curlew and dunlin, probing the mud for the many invertebrates that live in it, especially small bivalve molluscs and lugworms. Extensive beds of eelgrass within Fenham Flats and Budle Bay are grazed by pale-bellied brent geese, wigeon and whooper swan. The eelgrass beds are the largest on the east coast of England and this area supports a high proportion of the Svalbard population of pale-bellied brent geese during the winter, after which they return to breed in the Svalbard Archipelago, about half way between mainland Norway and the North Pole. Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve, which extends to 3541 ha and includes the dunes and much of the inter-tidal waters of Holy Island was established in 1964 to protect these important populations and to provide a mechanism to manage conflicts between conservation and wildfowling, for example through the creation of sanctuary areas. The NNR is managed by Natural England.

Rocky shores are inhabited by waders that forage among the seaweed such as purple sandpiper, turnstone and redshank. Rafts of ducks including long-tailed duck, red-breasted merganser, common scoter and eider can be seen on the sea, the latter being the only species to stay in the area to breed, and a species with a close association with the Christian heritage of Lindisfarne, being locally known as 'Cuddy ducks' after St Cuthbert.

Breeding seabirds

The Farne Islands are internationally important for the seabird colonies that gather to breed on them each spring, and are a National Nature Reserve. Of particular importance are the colonies of arctic, common and sandwich terns, guillemot and puffin. The terns nest on the ground on the islands in large noisy colonies, with about 1900 pairs of arctic tern, 820 pairs of sandwich tern, and about 90 pairs of common tern. The Islands' population of about 40,000 pairs of puffins occupy burrows, where each pair rears a single young. About 50,000 guillemots lay their eggs on precarious ledges on the cliffs, which they share with smaller numbers of kittiwakes, shag, cormorant and razorbill. Eider duck also nest on the islands, with about 550 nest scrapes lined with their famously soft feathers or eiderdown.

An important breeding colony of arctic and little terns occurs in Beadnell Bay, with smaller numbers of little tern at Lindisfarne.

Much of the intertidal area of the AONB is specially protected as Special Protection Areas under the European Birds Directive, and all of it is protected under domestic law as Sites of Special Scientific Interest because of its national and international importance for migratory and wintering wildfowl and waders and breeding sea birds.

Whin grassland

The outcrops of whinstone that form the Farne Islands, the crags on which Bamburgh, Lindisfarne and Dunstanburgh Castles are seated and other rocky outcrops within the AONB support a distinctive plant community called whin grassland. This is almost unique to Northumberland, because the Whin Sill, which is a very distinctive formation of igneous quartz-dolerite rock originating from magma intrusions into pre-existing sedimentary rocks, is a rare geological formation outside of the county. Examples of coastal whin grassland are restricted entirely to the AONB.

The best examples of whin grassland form where the rock has weathered to form a base-rich but thin and drought-prone soil, which supports short grazed turf interspersed with patches of bare rock slab. Scarce species found on the whin include maiden pink, a delicate member of the carnation family that has intensely coloured rose-red flowers; a diminutive, blue-flowered lily called spring squill; several alliums including field garlic and, very rarely, wild chives; and the pink-flowered and reddish-leaved hairy stonecrop. Common rockrose and a number of clovers and hawkweeds add to the colour in early summer, but by mid-summer many plants have succumbed to drought in this harsh environment. Whin outcrops also support a large number of species of lichen, many of which are scarce in Britain.

Good examples of whin grassland can be found at Dunstanburgh, Craster, Cullernose Point, Hips Heugh, Bamburgh and on the Heugh at Holy Island.

Small family-run mixed farms

Arable farming is the dominant land use on the rich productive soils of the coastal plain, and this traditionally has supported its own distinctive bird community, including species such as grey partridge, tree sparrow, corn bunting, skylark and yellowhammer. Changes in agriculture in recent decades have caused dramatic declines in the populations of many of these species as both seed and insect food sources have diminished. However, the Northumberland coastal plain still supports important populations of most of them, and farmers within and around the AONB play a vital role in sustaining them through the provision of buffer strips, overwintered stubbles and small patches of vegetation grown to provide a range of seeds through the winter. The corn bunting is a particular concern, with intensive efforts being taken to try to ensure its survival in the county.

Arable land and grassland, especially damp grasslands with shallow flooding, can also be important for some waders, especially wintering curlew, redshank and golden plover, providing roosting and feeding habitat which is used especially at high tide. Wet grassland also supports small breeding populations of declining species including lapwing, curlew, snipe and yellow wagtail.

The scarce arable plant corn marigold has recently been found near Bamburgh, highlighting the potential for farmland within the AONB to support a range of important species in addition to farmland birds.

Cultural Heritage

The history of human interaction and occupation of the landscape is integral to the character of the Northumberland Coast AONB. The sea has always been the dominant force not only in how it has shaped the coastline but in how our ancestors have attempted to manipulate and exploit it. Evidence of this interaction ranges from field patterns to settlements sites, route ways to buildings and quarries to castles.

The cultural heritage of the Northumberland Coast AONB encompasses archaeology, built environment, landscapes, history and culture. The cultural heritage of the AONB falls broadly into four themes – ecclesiastical; fishing and farming; industry and transport; and castles and defence.

Ecclesiastical

The isolation of dramatic coastal locations of Northumberland was undoubtedly very important within the early Celtic Christian Church where solitude, prayer and contemplation were essential. The small islands and peninsulas along the coast provided ideal locations for the austere ecclesiastical life of the early church in the 7th Century. The earliest and certainly the best known of these foundations is the monastery at Lindisfarne. Oswald's accession to the throne of the Kingdom of Northumbria in 634 resulted in the arrival of St. Aidan from Iona and the conversion to Christianity of the region. Oswald gifted Lindisfarne to St Aidan to establish his small Christian community, and the original monastery would have comprised modest Anglo-Saxon timber buildings. The leadership of the small monastic community eventually passed to St Cuthbert and he in turn sought greater solitude and lived as a hermit first on the St Cuthbert's Island off Lindisfarne then Inner Farne. The spectacular Priors buildings visible today date from the 12th century. Other sites established during the early Christian period are the small monastery founded by St. Ebba on the promontory at Beadnell known as Ebba's Snook and the site on the promontory at the mouth of the river at Alnmouth called Church Hill, which is the possible location of the Synod of 'Tyford' in 684 that elected Cuthbert the Bishop of Lindisfarne.

The Synod of Whitby in 664 established the Roman Church as the established denomination of Christian faith in England and this, as well as growing wealth, led to a fusion of continental, Anglo-Saxon and Celtic influences that resulted in the 'Golden Age' of Northumbria. The Lindisfarne Gospels, produced on Holy Island in about 700AD, represents the Golden Age at its height.

The peace, tranquillity and wealth of monastic sites along the coast came to an abrupt end in 793AD when the first recorded Viking raid on the British Isles took place on Lindisfarne, with the Monks of Lindisfarne abandoning the island completely in 875AD.

Many of the parish churches along the coast have early origins such as St. Aidan's in Bamburgh, where elements of the current church date from the 12th century and inside there is a preserved wooden beam above the belfry which is said to be the buttress that St. Aidan

died leaning against. Warkworth Church is a beautiful Norman church with an early Anglo-Saxon foundation.

The Hermitage at Warkworth continues the tradition of religious exclusion, though its foundation is much later (in the 14th Century), and has a romantic legend attached involving mistaken identity, revenge and repentance.

Undoubtedly the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1537 had a profound impact on the ecclesiastical landscape of the Northumberland Coast but the landscape has continued to inspire and provide spiritual motivation. It is clear that the coast must have engendered spirituality of a sort in our prehistoric ancestors as the numerous burial and ritual sites of Bronze Age (2000-700BC) testify.

Fishing and farming

There is evidence of human exploitation of the land and sea in this area dating back at least 10,000 years to the Late Mesolithic period. As the last ice age ended, tundra condition retreated and rising sea levels resulted in Britain becoming an island, small groups of Mesolithic peoples were hunting and fishing within the Northumberland coastal plain. A camp site has been discovered at Howick, and on Holy Island and Ross Links concentrations of flint tools and tool making debris have been found.

During the Neolithic period (4,000-2,000BC) more settled conditions prevailed and social and technological changes were marked. Within Holy Island village, excavations have revealed remains of settlement from this period and distinctive Neolithic stone flint tools continue to be found along the coast. During the Bronze Age (2,000-800BC) there was a shift from hunter-gatherers to settled farming communities together with the development of social rituals, a typical landscape feature from this period are burial mounds. Shifting sands and dunes have revealed burials from this period at Low Hauxley, just south of the AONB. Deterioration in the climate was a feature of the transition into the Iron Age (800 BC – 40AD) and this dictated that there was pressure on resources, particularly the fertile coastal plain and the population shifted to enclosed fortified sites – such as Howick and Craster.

The current landscape is palimpsest of accumulated evidence. Medieval ridge and furrow, earthworks of deserted settlements and abandoned quarries are overlain by field boundaries, settlements and even golf courses provide an intriguing insight into historic activity. Other notable features that are testament to farming include the distinctive steam chimneys for thrashing developed in the 19th century and duckets, shorthand for dovecotes which often date from the medieval period.

The sea has always dictated how people have lived along the coast; it has influenced architecture such as the well preserved and rare fisherman squares of Seahouses and the way in which most settlements shelter from the elements using the topography of the landscape. Fishing has always been immensely important, records dating back to the 14th century show the industrial scale of the ecclesiastical fishing operations around Lindisfarne. Harbours at Craster, Beadnell and Seahouses are still active and while now dominated by leisure as opposed to the once thriving fishing industry the harbours still provide a wonderful

insight into a historic way of life. The distinctive aromas of the working smokeries at Seahouses and Craster are incredibly evocative of an industry that is a shadow of its former self, as are the stakes of lobster and crab pots and the tar blacked half boat sheds on Holy Island. The coble, a local fishing boat, with a distinctive flat bottom enabled fishing out from shallow bays such as Boulmer, Embleton and Newton.

The frequently treacherous coastal waters resulted in increasing numbers of shipwrecks, which now form a valuable element of the known marine archaeological record.

Industry and transport

To support the changes in the economy of the county in the 18th century, new industries were to develop along the coastline. Notable amongst these was the lime industry, with large kilns at sites including Holy Island, Seahouses and Beadnell supplying essential raw materials for improving soil fertility. The volume of lime production was such that a significant export trade developed. Craster also developed as a port for the export of whinstone to the continent, with pantiles coming in as ballast. A distinct architecture is associated with this period of growth in trade and industry with agricultural warehouses and merchant houses being amongst the building types, which survive to the present day. The increased wealth amongst major landowners resulted in the building of stately houses with associated landscaped ground of which Adderstone Hall near Belford and Howick Hall are prominent examples.

Another notable feature of the AONB is the linear form which is emphasised by the north-south routes to the western edge of the A1 and the East Coast mainline railway. The development of the railway not only facilitated trade and industry, it heralded the start of tourism, notably enabling the eccentric publisher Edward Hudson to refurbish Lindisfarne Castle as a holiday retreat, with the help of Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll.

Castles and defence

The Vikings raid on Holy Island in 793 was a precursor to instability in the early medieval period with individual kingdoms battling for supremacy. Whilst upstanding physical remains from this period are few, the Norman invasion of England had a profound impact on the built heritage of the coast. Disputes between England and Scotland which began in the 14th century, started nearly three centuries of warfare and raiding. The Northumberland coast assumed a strategic importance that was to lead to the construction of major castles of Bamburgh, Dunstanburgh and Warkworth and the town defences of Berwick. A fort was constructed on Holy Island in 1570-72, which formed the basis for Lindisfarne Castle.

During the twentieth century the requirements of defence were again to leave a built legacy on the coast. With the long sandy beaches along the coast seen as a possible location for invasion, extensive concrete and wire defences were erected during the Second World War. The wary vigilance of the Cold War has also left a legacy on the coast at sites such as Newton Point. Throughout the twentieth century pressures for leisure developments were also to be experienced along the coast. Chalet and caravan sites, hotels and farm conversions to holiday homes form a new built legacy, which marks a distant time in the history of the north Northumberland coastline.

The historic evolution of settlements on the coast and their relationship to the land form, climate and available building materials has resulted in the special and distinctive characteristics. These characteristics of the built landscape are integral to the special qualities and attraction of the AONB.

Draft Management Plan 2020-24 - Part Two

Aims, objectives, policies and actions

Vision for 2040

A sense of remoteness and wildness is maintained, with wide open coastal and sea views, a naturally functioning coastline rich in wildlife, and a clear distinction between settlements and open countryside. The AONB is a living, working area with a celebrated history and culture, and a vibrant present in which social and economic wellbeing is successfully integrated with the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the area.

The primary purpose to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB is the overriding principle underlying this Plan.

Introduction

This part of the Management Plan sets out the aims, objectives and policies with some text to justify these and put them into context.

Because there is so much uncertainty around the implications of leaving the European Union, future agricultural policy and any implementation of the proposals within the Defra Landscape Review (the Glover Review), producing a detailed five-year SMART action plan in this iteration of the plan was deemed futile. Instead more broad priority actions or activities have been suggested and a detailed work programme and activity plan will be agreed by the AONB Partnership annually.

There are four aims within the plan:

- **Aim 1: To ensure that the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB are conserved and enhanced**
- **Aim 2: To ensure that the communities in and around the AONB are thriving places to live and work**
- **Aim 3: The designation of ‘Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’ and the special qualities of the Area are understood and valued for their contribution to life in the wider region and are seen as being worthy of protection**
- **Aim 4: The AONB provides a high quality, clean environment that is welcoming and accessible to all**

For each aim, a number of objectives follow, along with policies setting out the stance of the AONB Partnership to ensure these aims can be met. There are only written policies where they are needed. If there is no threat to the special qualities of the AONB or the threat is dealt with by 'higher' legislation, there is no need for a policy.

Which common issues run throughout the management plan?

Some of the issues that are likely to be prominent within the lifetime of this plan are cross-cutting across every aim and many objectives. These common issues are therefore dealt with in this section rather than being repeated throughout the plan.

Climate Change

It is becoming increasingly clear that climate change due to the increase of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere is going to bring a wide range of impacts and challenges including temperatures increasing and changing weather patterns.

As sea levels rise, important intertidal habitats are going to be lost unless the coastline is allowed to roll-back in response. This will reduce feeding and nesting opportunities for important populations of seabirds, wading birds and wildfowl. Rising sea temperatures will cause changes in the composition of the plant and animal communities living in the marine environment. For example, it is likely to become too warm for northerly species such as sand eels, the major food source for puffins and tern species.

The UK Government has set a target of achieving net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050.

To meet this target requires urgent action that must be led at the level of national Governments and international cooperation between nations, as well as massive changes in the corporate sector. It also requires action at a local level, both because much of this change must ultimately feed through to the choices made by individual people and because actions need to be taken locally to prepare for and to reduce the impact of changes caused by a changing climate.

There is an expectation that protected landscapes in the UK will have a role to play in achieving net zero. Tree planting, for example, has already been identified as a way to 'lock-up' carbon, but woodland is not the only habitat to do this. Due to their high productivity and high sedimentation rates, saltmarshes and freshwater wetlands are extremely efficient at capturing and storing carbon. A move to renewable energy will bring an increase in the numbers of solar farms, wind turbines and biodigesters, potentially posing challenges for the conservation of the landscape. Protected landscape organisations will also have a role to play in stimulating action at a local level.

The assumption of this plan is that the policies and actions within it will, wherever possible, contribute to achieving the net zero target but schemes such as new forestry planting or large-scale solar arrays, which would impact negatively on the landscape, will need careful

scrutiny. Changes to land management that contribute to the net zero target and bring about benefits for nature conservation and the conservation or enhancement of the landscape will normally be supported.

It is important to identify how and where the coastline is going to be enabled to adjust to rising sea levels, for example by allowing dunes to rollback onto what is currently farmland, and by enabling new areas of saltmarsh to form. This will not only reduce the pressure on wildlife caused by rising sea levels; it will also reduce the risk of coastal flooding and help to dissipate the energy of storm waves as they hit the coast in addition to capturing carbon.

Sustainability

Sustainability is about making sure that our actions today do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

There is a need to protect what we have - the natural and cultural capital - that supports economic prosperity and human well-being. Management of the AONB should take full account not only of the environment but also of social and economic issues. This will ensure that any potential impacts conserve and enhance, rather than compromise, these vital resources.

Exit from the European Union

The implications of the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union are largely unknown at the time of writing but there will be implications for agriculture and food, funding, environmental protection, energy security and other areas that could affect the AONB. These changes will not be immediate but will have an impact during the life of this plan.

A new agriculture policy for England will need to be developed. Defra have already set out that in future, 'public money for public goods' will be the basis for financial contributions to farming. UK-wide changes to agricultural support could make marginal areas of the sector unprofitable in some locations and this will have consequences for land management and how it affects the landscape.

The AONB Partnership has utilised funding from Europe through Interreg, LIFE and RDPE programmes previously. Any replacement funding is yet to be announced.

North of Tyne Devolution and the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal

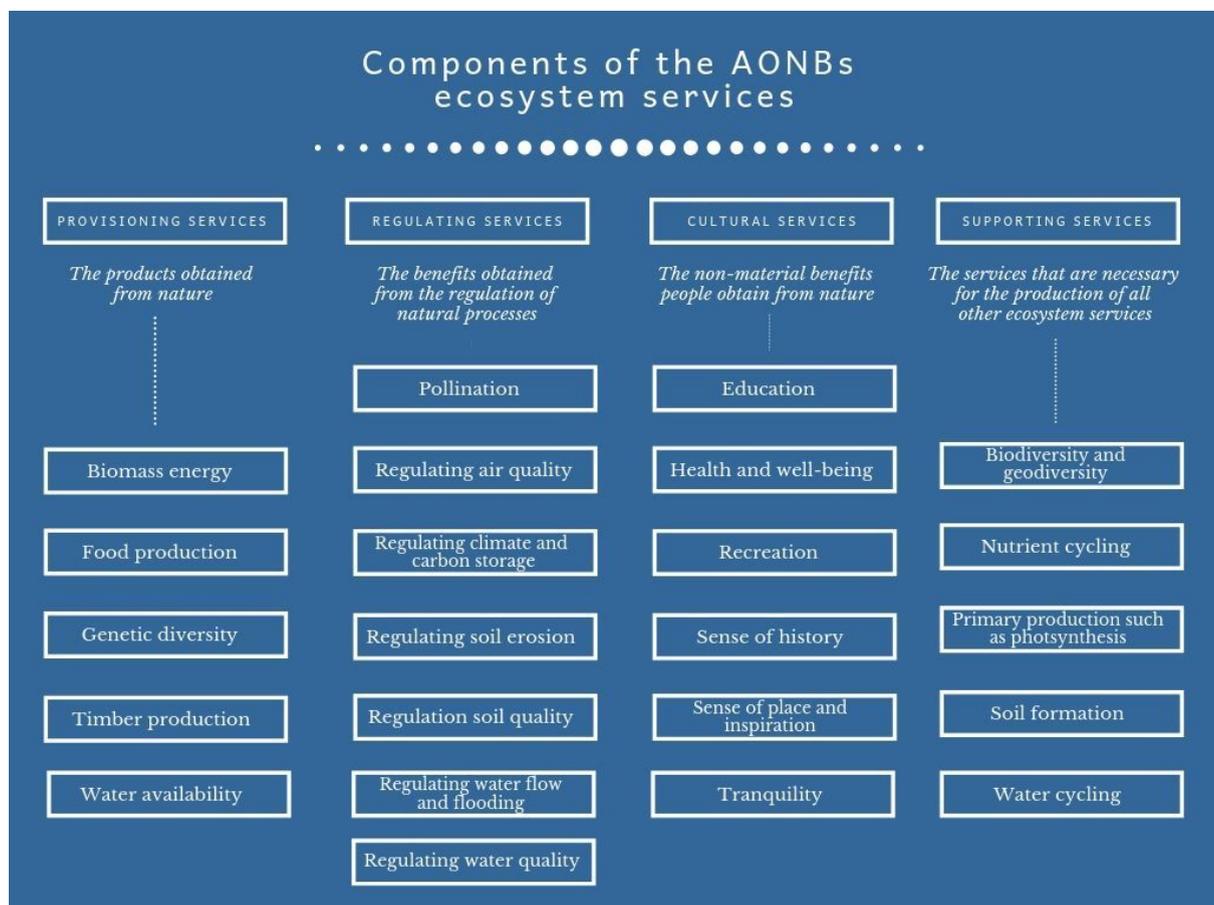
The North of Tyne Combined Authority is a partnership of Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland Councils, which has secured a devolution deal with Government involving the transfer of £600 million of expenditure from central Government to the Combined Authority. It's focus is on economic development and education and skills, including the development of a North of Tyne Rural Productivity Plan.

The Borderlands Partnership brings together the five cross-border local authorities of Carlisle City, Cumbria, Dumfries and Galloway, Northumberland and Scottish Borders Councils. They have signed a Growth Deal with the UK and Scottish Governments who have

committed upto £350 million to the Deal, which focuses on the themes of Place, Infrastructure, Innovation and Skills and Green Growth.

Natural and Cultural Capital and Ecosystem Services

Since the last Management Plan was published in 2019 there has been growing realisation of the importance of considering nature in terms of natural capital and ecosystem services. Natural Capital is the stock of physical and natural assets that support society, including the air we breathe and the water we drink, minerals and natural materials that we use, the soil that we grow our crops in and the food we eat. These assets also provide a range of services for us: well-managed saltmarshes and sand dunes absorb the energy of the sea and so protect us from flooding; wild plants support the insects that pollinate many of our crops and wetlands reduce flooding and improve water quality through the way in which they store water. There are also less obvious but equally important services provided by nature, for example contact with nature from day to day encounters with birds in your garden to time spent in a valued landscape such as an AONB is incredibly important for people’s sense of wellbeing. Similarly, time spent in nature is highly beneficial to people’s physical health. Ecosystem services are usually described in the following categories:



Natural capital approaches consider the relationships between natural assets, the services they support and the benefits derived from them



Aim 1: To ensure that the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB are conserved and enhanced

Nature Conservation

The State of Nature report published by a coalition of wildlife organisations in 2016 highlights the continuing decline of wildlife in the UK. *Making Space for Nature: a Review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network* (the Lawton Report) published in 2010 highlighted the importance of developing ecological networks across the landscape rather than relying on scattered and often isolated protected areas, and taking an approach to their management which was summed up by the phrase: 'bigger, better, more, more joined-up'. Realising this vision continues to be the primary challenge if declines in nature are to be reversed, but the means to achieve this remain elusive.

Within the AONB, 5371ha of land is designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The condition of SSSIs is regularly assessed by Natural England to determine the extent to which they are conserving and enhancing the special features for which they have been designated. 38% of the area of SSSI in the AONB is in unfavourable declining condition because of problems with the extensive mud and sand flats around Lindisfarne, where poor water quality due to nutrient enrichment is causing excessive growth of filamentous green

algae. This forms mats that smother the seagrass and saltmarsh plant communities that the important populations of waders and wildfowl in the SSSI depend on for feeding.

The Farne Islands National Nature Reserve is rightly considered as one of the best wildlife-watching experiences in the UK, as memorable encounters can be experienced with breeding populations of puffin, guillemot, razorbill and several species of tern.

The spread of non-native invasive species continues to be one of the most significant threats to wildlife globally, and brings significant problems to some habitats within the AONB. Pirri-pirri bur is one such species that is a particular problem within the North Northumberland dunes, having arrived in the UK via seeds attached to fleeces imported from New Zealand. As well as displacing internationally important dune grassland communities, the very sticky burs produced by this plant are a nuisance to walkers and are exceptionally difficult to remove from dogs' coats, even resulting in them having to be shorn.

The openness of the North Northumberland coastal plain is one of its defining characteristics, but this does not mean that trees and woodlands are not important in the AONB; hedgerow trees are a very important component of the landscape. Small woodlands beside watercourses can play a valuable role in tackling diffuse pollution. The Forestry Commission has identified areas in the AONB suitable for the creation of small woodlands to improve water quality, mainly through reductions in phosphorus levels, but also nitrates and sediment¹.

Allowing scrub to develop in field corners greatly increases the value of those fields to a range of wildlife, and by locating such areas on less productive land and in places that it is difficult for large farm machinery to reach, the economic impact of such actions can be minimised. Shelterbelts are another form of woodland habitat on farms. They tend to be even-aged conifer plantations, but as they reach a harvestable age, there are opportunities to improve their value to wildlife and landscape by increasing the proportion of locally native tree and shrub species.

In 2018, the Government published a 25 Year Environment Plan, which '*sets out Government action to help the natural world regain and retain good health. 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, forestry, land use and fishing that puts the environment first.*'²

The Plan identifies the need for a 'Nature Recovery Network' to take forward the recommendations of the Lawton Report. The Plan commits the Government to investigating how this can be rolled out and considering delivery options for it. It is hoped that this will

¹ Broadmeadow, S and Nisbet, T (2013) *Yorkshire & North East England Woodland for Water Project Phase 1: Opportunity Mapping Final Report*. Forest Research.

historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register

² Defra (2018) 25 Year Environment Plan, p.9.

bring opportunities for habitat management, restoration and creation in the AONB within the lifetime of this Management Plan. However, it is currently unclear what these opportunities will be or how they might be funded.

Forces for change

- Loss of European funding post-Brexit reducing opportunities to fund project work.
- Workstreams developed by the Government to implement the 25 year Environment Plan may offer a range of opportunities.
- Climate change will bring a very wide range of changes.
- Loss of mixed farming and conversion of pasture to arable land reducing the availability of grazing animals for conservation grazing.
- Increased use of the coast and marine environment for recreational activity.

Our Work to Date

- Lead partner in the EU Life funded Little Tern Recovery project - enhancing protection at the two main sites
- Creation of shorebird habitat on one former-arable site
- Continued to support the Northumberland Coast Barn Owl Project
- Worked to secure habitat improvements through agri-environment agreements
- Habitat management on several whin grassland sites including three hectares of gorse removal on Bamburgh Hills SSSI

Objective One

To conserve and enhance important habitats and populations of important species

Policies

1.1 Networks of priority habitats will be conserved, enhanced and expanded to provide resilient ecological networks across the AONB. Habitats will be created and managed to support priority species

1.2 The potential value of land to accommodate the landward migration of important coastal habitats either through natural processes or planned habitat creation will be accorded a high priority when investigating, planning or considering land use change

1.3 Opportunities for managed retreat will be sought and promoted, and appropriate managed retreat schemes will be supported

1.4 Control strategies will be developed, implemented and promoted for non-native species recognised as posing a significant threat to important habitats and species in the AONB, or which are likely to be transported to pose such a threat in other areas. Enforcement action will be undertaken in response to the fly tipping of garden waste

1.5 Impacts on ecosystem services and opportunities to protect and enhance them will be given appropriate weight when proposed development and land use change is being considered. Opportunities to enhance ecosystem services will be sought through project work and by influencing land management initiatives

Priority Actions

- Contribute to a collaborative process to review the management plans for Lindisfarne and the Farne Islands NNRs
- Update SSSI condition monitoring on dune grasslands and develop a work programme
- Develop a project to better manage areas of public land for pollinators
- Deliver the habitat creation scheme for shorebirds at Warkworth and investigate other areas
- Deliver a partnership project to raise awareness of shorebirds and better manage their habitats
- Develop opportunity mapping to identify priority areas for habitat creation
- Work with the Coastal Mitigation Service to develop an effective response to increasing levels of recreational disturbance and to tackle the spread of pirri-pirri bur

Main Partners

Natural England, National Trust, farmers and landowners, Environment Agency, NCC.

Historic Environment

The Northumberland Coast AONB landscape is testimony to centuries of human interaction with the landscape. Visiting a castle or ancient settlement site or taking part in a local custom are compelling ways of making a tangible connection to the past. These experiences give people a sense of where they have come from and the important role that they play in conserving the landscape for future generations.

The Historic Environment can, at times, be almost intangible and only a small proportion of heritage assets are nationally designated. However all heritage assets contribute to the jigsaw that is the unique sense of place and character.

The seemingly ever increasing speed of change, be that natural or man-made, is impacting on the AONB's historic character and heritage assets. It is essential that the historic environment of the coast is fully understood, well-managed and better protected and that cultural traditions are cherished and celebrated.

Natural threats - Extreme weather events are increasing in frequency and each extreme high tide not only has the potential to flood houses, damage the built historic fabric but also destroy whole archaeological sites and expose new ones. In line with the national register of Heritage at Risk, scrub and vegetation encroachment are major threats to the historic environment and can impact both archaeological sites and the built environment.

Human threats - Development pressure is increasing from new housing developments to extensions and rebuilds. New developments on previously undeveloped land can erode settlement and landscape character as well as obliterate archaeological sites. Current trends in building alteration such as overly large fenestration and glass balconies are altering the traditional character of the built environment as well as causing increasing light pollution in an intrinsically dark sky area.

The Northumberland Coast is a distinctive rural landscape. Increasing and creeping urbanisation though over development is eroding the historic character. Seemingly small changes are incrementally altering the character and sense of place.

Forces for change

- Natural processes - such as coastal erosion resulting in the loss of sites, flooding is damaging historic fabric and scrub encouragement is damaging archaeology
- Farming and land management
- Development pressure
- Tourism and recreation led change
- Incremental and cumulative change
- Economic climate - funding opportunities are limited and there is no evidence of any new funding for the historic environment.

Our Work to Date

- National Lottery Heritage Funded project - Accessing Aidan to interpret Anglo-Saxon Bamburgh
- Five-year HLF Peregrini Lindisfarne Landscape Partnership project to celebrate and protect the Holy Island and the surrounding shoreside
- Historic building and scheduled monument surveys
- Conservation work to remove two scheduled monuments from the Heritage at Risk register
- Local heritage assets lists for Beadnell, Seahouses and Bamburgh
- Progressing the designation of Beadnell conservation area

Objective Two

To conserve the historic environment of the AONB, and enhance the distinctive heritage assets

Policies

2.1 Important heritage assets including designated and non-designated archaeological sites, the character and appearance of historic buildings, settlements and the built environment will be protected, conserved and well managed

2.2 Standards of traditional building skills and craft will be maintained through advocacy, working in collaboration with local colleges and builders and encouraging the use of the Building Design Guide

Priority Actions

- Increase understanding of the historic and cultural landscape and that the customs and traditions of the Northumberland Coast are widely known and valued
- Ensure that the historic environment is well-managed and better protected
- Continue to develop funding bids for natural and historic environment projects, so as to maintain an appropriate succession of such activity
- Get more people involved in learning about and conserving the historic environment and cultural heritage.

Planning, development and infrastructure

New development is not inevitably harmful to the special qualities of the AONB, but can easily be so, especially given how small and narrow the Northumberland Coast AONB is. Development pressure is intense, with the staff team providing advice on 120 -160 planning applications per year. However, there have been some helpful developments in planning policy in recent years, which are set out below.

The National Planning Policy Framework

The Government published an updated version of the National Planning Policy Framework in 2018. This maintains the requirement for planning authorities to give great weight to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs, and requires that major development should be refused in them other than in exceptional circumstances and subject to a series of rigorous tests. Appeal decisions and case law that have emerged since the first NPPF was published in 2012 have been helpful in clarifying these requirements. In particular, giving great weight to the conservation and enhancement of landscape and scenic beauty has been interpreted by the courts as meaning that it must be placed into a special category of material consideration, rather than being one of many factors to be given equal weight in the planning balance.

Neighbourhood Development Plans

Neighbourhood planning was introduced through the Localism Act in 2011 and gives communities the opportunity to shape and define how their area should grow and change in the future through the production of Neighbourhood Plans. In Northumberland, this must be led by parish councils. Neighbourhood Plans become part of the Local Plan and the policies contained within them are then used in the determination of planning applications.

Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders allow communities to grant planning permission either in full or in outline for the types of development they want to see in their areas. Policies included in Neighbourhood Plans cannot block development that is already part of the Local Plan. What they can do is shape where that development will go and what it will look like.

As of April 2019, a Neighbourhood Plan has been made that covers the parishes of Beadnell, Seahouses & North Sunderland and Bamburgh. Plans are at an advanced stage of preparation in Embleton and Lesbury, while Norham & Islandshire, Belford, Craster and Longhoughton are all at an earlier stage of Plan preparation.

The Northumberland Local Plan

After several years of preparation, Northumberland County Council submitted a draft Local Plan to the Secretary of State in May 2019, with Examination in Public scheduled for autumn 2019. Once adopted, this will replace a bundle of saved policies from very dated Alnwick and Berwick Local Plans. The draft Plan includes a strong protective policy specifically for the Northumberland Coast AONB, as well as policies concerning the natural and historic environment.

Forces for change

- Adoption of the recently-submitted Local Plan will clarify and strengthen policy protection for the AONB.
- Development of more Neighbourhood Plans for parishes within and adjacent to the AONB
- Pressure to develop the tourism economy and the attraction of the coast to housing developers means that intense development pressure is very likely to continue.
- Erosion of tranquility in previously tranquil areas

Our Work to Date

- Contributed to the development of relevant sections of the draft Northumberland Local Plan
- Contributed to the work of Neighbourhood Plan groups in the AONB
- Provided advice concerning the impact of planning applications on the special qualities of the AONB

Objective Three

To ensure that the conservation, enhancement and restoration of the landscape and special qualities of the AONB is integrated into all land-use management and development decisions

Policies

3.1 The setting of the AONB and important views into it and from it are recognised and protected

3.2 The erosion of rural character through cumulative urbanising influences is halted and where possible, reversed

3.3 Development on the currently undeveloped coastal slope will be opposed. The use of private sea defences to make a development safe within its planned lifetime will not be supported and will be regarded as evidence of the fundamental unsuitability of that site to accommodate such development

3.4 Conversion of agricultural buildings to residential use or visitor accommodation will be scrutinised particularly in terms of the quality of the design and materials, and the extent to which the original form of the building is respected as set out in the AONB Design Guide for the Built Environment, as well as any impacts on designated sites. Nesting and roosting sites for important species such as barn owls, swifts, swallows and bats should be built in to conversions. Budget accommodation such as bunk-barns that is appropriately designed and located will be supported, because of the shortage of such accommodation within the AONB

3.5 High quality of design and landscaping in new buildings, conversions, alterations and maintenance work will be sought through advocacy of the AONB Design Guide for the Built Environment

3.6 New static caravan or chalet sites or extensions to existing sites will only be supported where it can be robustly demonstrated that they will not have a significant adverse effect on the special qualities of the AONB and that they conform with the relevant policies of the Northumberland Local Plan

3.7 Proposals for new camping and caravan sites or extensions to existing sites will be scrutinised in terms of the amount of permanent infrastructure to be constructed on the site, the nature and extent of the proposed landscaping and the proposed opening season, as well as the overall impact on the special qualities of the AONB

3.8 Proposals for domestic or farm scale renewable energy developments will be supported if they will not have a significant adverse effect on the special qualities of the AONB. Individual wind turbines should be associated with existing settlements or buildings, of a size appropriate to their landscape setting and subject to a landscape and visual impact assessment. A landscape and visual impact assessment may also be required for other forms of renewable energy

3.9 Proposals for large scale renewable energy schemes within the AONB will be opposed. Large scale schemes outside of the AONB, but visible from it, will be carefully scrutinised to determine the extent to which they will have an adverse effect on the special qualities of the AONB

3.10 Where the parking of cars, in villages or open countryside, detracts from the quality of life of residents or the natural beauty and tranquillity of the AONB, a collaborative approach will be taken to design and implement an appropriate solution. The development of new car parks will only be supported where it can be clearly demonstrated that there is local support, need can be demonstrated outside of peak times and the scheme achieves a net reduction in impact on the special features of the AONB

3.11 Highway management, maintenance and design should be in accordance with the AONB 'Guidance on the management and maintenance of rural roads'

3.12 Conservation of the rural landscape and settlement character will be through the careful placement of signs and other street furniture that ensures visual clutter is minimised in the public realm

Priority Actions

- Ensure that the determination of planning applications that have the potential to affect the AONB is informed by a thorough understanding of the special qualities of the area
- Revise the AONB Built Environment Design Guide
- Revise the 'Guidance on the management and maintenance of rural roads'
- Continue to work with Neighbourhood Plan groups in the AONB
- Work with NCC in the development of a system of Biodiversity Net Gain in new development
- Develop a clutter policy and removal programme

Main Partners

Northumberland County Council, Parish Councils, architects.

Tranquility

CPRE has described tranquility as an expression of the degree to which people experience the environment unhindered by disruptive noise or movement, or by artificial structures and lighting. It is an important reason why people are drawn to rural areas, and there is strong evidence that tranquility helps people to alleviate stress and improves psychological well being. Because it is part of what attracts people to the countryside, it is also of economic significance to the tourism industry and therefore should be recognised as being an asset

that must be properly valued and protected. Surveys undertaken by CPRE in North East England and in the Chilterns have helped to define the factors that most influence peoples' sense of tranquility, and these are set out below:

What tranquillity is – the top 8 survey responses	What tranquillity is not – the top 8 survey responses
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seeing a natural landscape 2. Hearing birdsong 3. Hearing peace and quiet 4. Seeing natural looking woodland 5. Seeing the stars at night 6. Seeing streams 7. Seeing the sea 8. Hearing natural sounds 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hearing constant noise from cars, lorries and/or motorbikes 2. Seeing lots of people 3. Seeing urban development 4. Seeing overhead light pollution 5. Hearing lots of people 6. Seeing low flying aircraft 7. Hearing low flying aircraft 8. Seeing power lines

Source: CPRE (2006) Saving Tranquil Places: How to protect and Promote a Vital Asset

The AONB has areas that are experienced as being highly tranquil and which should be highly valued as such, but it is equally clear that this tranquility is under constant pressure, especially from new development and from growing levels of tourism. Indeed this issue epitomises the main challenge facing everyone involved in tourism in the AONB: how to maintain and increase its economic value to the local communities that depend on it while ensuring that it doesn't further degrade the special qualities that draw tourists to the area in the first place.

Dark skies

CPRE's Night Blight report in 2016 recognised that Northumberland has the highest proportion of pristine dark skies of any county in England at 72%. It also recognised the improvements that were being made through Northumberland County Council's streetlight replacement programme which has seen the introduction of LED street lighting throughout the county. However there is still much to be done to maintain and improve the quality of the dark skies that are so valued by residents of and visitors to the AONB. The design of glazing within individual developments is important, with rooflights and floor-to-ceiling glazing being particular concerns because of the cumulative contribution they can make to light pollution. While LED street lighting is much better than the lighting it has replaced, the development of previously undeveloped land inevitably introduces street lighting into previously unlit areas. There is also a legacy of outmoded, unnecessarily polluting light sources from homes and businesses across the area.

Urbanisation of the countryside

Items of infrastructure normally associated with urban areas are appearing more often in rural areas and open countryside. Bins, signs, barriers, benches, memorials and similar things bring an urbanising effect which impacts on the quality of the environment and a feeling of tranquility.

The provision of such things is often the result of a 'need to be seen to be doing something' about an actual or perceived issue - 'put up a sign' is often the easiest response.

Forces for Change

- Increasing visitor numbers and their use of cars to travel around the AONB
- Increasing development, especially that occurring outside of larger settlements
- Greater awareness of the night sky and light pollution
- Roll-out of LED streetlights across Northumberland
- Trends in architecture favouring large areas of glazing and poor design increasing light pollution
- Urban creep - the urbanisation of rural villages an open countryside by the installation of paraphernalia such as signs, benches, memorials and bins normally associated with towns.

- **Our Work to Date**
 - Ran series of dark sky discovery events
 - Provided advice on dark skies in the AONB to statutory agencies
 - Provided advice to NCC and Parish Councils about the provision of street furniture

Objective Four

To maintain existing levels of tranquility and increase them where possible

Policies

4.1 An understanding of the meaning and value of tranquility will be increased through advocacy and advice.

4.2 All development proposals will be assessed concerning their impact on the tranquility of the AONB.

4.3 The quality of the dark sky will be maintained and improved through advocacy and advice.

4.4 All development proposals will be assessed concerning their impact on the dark skies of the AONB.

4.5 The installation of signs, bins, benches and other street furniture outside of settlements should be avoided unless there is an overriding safety or management issue that cannot be mitigated in other ways. Opportunities to reduce clutter should be taken.

4.6 Initiatives to encourage visitors to take more car-free days and car-free trips will supported

Priority Actions

- Raise the profile of tranquility as a special quality of the AONB that is increasingly valued by residents and visitors and ensure that it is properly considered by policy and decision makers
- Undertake a tranquility mapping exercise across the AONB
- Update light pollution and dark skies advice in the AONB Buildings and Highways design guides
- Develop a clutter policy and removal programme

Main Partners

Northumberland County Council, Parish Councils, architects. CPRE, bus companies.

Aim 2: To ensure that the communities in and around the AONB are thriving places to live and work

Tourism and the visitor economy

Visitor numbers are increasing year-on-year on the Northumberland coast. There isn't any data for the coast as a stand-alone destination but the county-wide STEAM data is the best available and this shows a steady increase in both staying and day-visitors to the County. It is widely accepted that the coast attracts many more visitors than other areas of Northumberland.

Tourism is very important for the economy of Northumberland and this is exacerbated in the AONB where tourism is the major employer and economic driver. The impact of increasing visitor numbers isn't only an economic one and isn't always positive. The growth in numbers is already impacting on the environment and the landscape of the AONB and on the quality of life of those people who live on the coast.

Just aiming to increase economic prosperity through an unmanaged increase in visitor numbers is not sustainable. Every place has a tipping point and increasing visitor pressure can easily catch a destination unaware. Elsewhere in the UK there are examples of destinations where a huge increase in visitor numbers has led to a poorer quality visitor experience which drives down the value of tourism, the quality of the environment (on which tourism relies) has declined and the pressure from tourism has alienated many rural communities.

A different model on the Northumberland coast is needed - a model that will lead to a regenerative economy, where success is measured in balance with environmental, social, and cultural factors. A model that protects and enhances the environmental and cultural assets on which tourism depends and that improves the quality of life of those living in the area by adding value to the place. The assumption that economic growth is always the only objective should be challenged by policy makers.

In Northumberland there is a Destination Management Organisation (DMO) - Northumberland Tourism. Northumberland County Council also has a role in the management of tourism. In recent years the DMO has predominantly become a Destination *Marketing* Organisation, not resourced or given responsibility to *manage* the destination. There is no strategic overview of tourism leading to unmanaged increase in visitor numbers and a high-volume, low-value model that encourages unsustainable tourism developments that threaten the special qualities of the area.

Box 1: A Sustainable Model for Tourism

In order to have a sustainable model for tourism on the Northumberland coast there needs to be a strategic overview of tourism across the County as a whole, with investment in the development of the destination to meet the challenges ahead. The sustainable tourism model for the Northumberland Coast AONB will benefit from a unified strategic organisational approach, empowered by consultation and collaboration with businesses and communities which will:

- Facilitate the movement to a lower volume - higher value tourism product
- Presume against large scale, high volume, low value tourism developments (particularly in the self-catering sector) that could be detrimental to the special qualities of the area
- Ensure that appropriate data is gathered so that the strategic direction of tourism is evidence led and the impact of tourism on the environmental and cultural assets of the AONB and on the lives of local people is evaluated
- Social capital (which includes historical, cultural, and community capital) that provides a long-term connection to place is valued alongside natural capital (which is the source of ecosystem services)
- Move towards a low-carbon, low waste tourism economy
- Reduce the use of the private car significantly
- Tackle the 'hidden economic burden' of tourism with an investment in infrastructure to protect environmental and cultural assets of the AONB through the development of a visitor-giving scheme
- Ensure that the reasons for the designation of AONB and the special qualities of it are communicated to visitors
- Lessens the use of the AONB as the primary marketing tool to attract visitors to the County of Northumberland. Measures should be introduced as part of a strategic policy to entice visitors to other destinations around the county including Berwick-upon-Tweed and the Northumberland National Park.

Forces for Change

- Increase in visitor numbers
- There is no strategic overview of tourism
- An over-supply of self-catering accommodation versus an under-supply of serviced accommodation in some areas
- Seasonality is still an issue, although the peak season is becoming more protracted

Our work to date

- Delivered the 2014 Sustainable Tourism Strategy
- Developed plans for new visitor facilities at Beadnell
- Increased frequency and patronage of coastal bus services
- Produced an annual visitor guide, a series of guidebooks and provided digital information for visitors
- Provided advice and support to the DMO, NCC and NNTA

Objective Five

To ensure that there is a strategic overview of tourism ensuring that its future development and management is planned to support its role in the local economy in a way that conserves the environment and special qualities of the AONB

Policies

5.1 Destination management planning for the AONB is integrated into a sustainable destination management plan for Northumberland

5.2 Support and promote sustainable tourism initiatives that contribute towards the special qualities of the AONB.

5.3 The use and sale of local produce and products will be encouraged and promoted, particularly those that contribute to the conservation, enhancement and understanding of the special qualities of the AONB.

Priority Actions

- Develop a sub-destination management plan for the coastal area
- Develop a visitor giving scheme to support the conservation and enhancement of the AONB and the provision of better infrastructure to support the visitor economy
- Improve visitor facilities in at least three locations to provide a better visitor experience and greater understanding of the special qualities of the area
- Provide good quality visitor information in a range of formats to encourage visitors to act responsibly
- Recognise, celebrate and disseminate examples of good practice within the tourism sector
- Undertake visitor survey and increase monitoring of recreational routes

Main Partners

Northumberland County Council, Northumberland Tourism, tourism associations, National Trust, tourism businesses.

Farming and Land Management

Farming is the dominant land use in the AONB, and it is vital that the contribution of farmers to the conservation and enhancement of the area is recognised and supported. Land management on the Northumberland coast is predominated by a pattern of small, mixed, family farms. However in some areas of the AONB this pattern is disappearing as large

estates turn to industrial-scale intensive arable units. The consequences for land that is currently grazed and that cannot be converted to arable could be either an opportunity or a threat - the outcome is dependent on the right support and advice.

The AONB is not a wooded landscape - tree cover is sparse and forestry and commercial woodland management is limited.

The vote to leave the European Union in 2016 introduced a period of great uncertainty, with the potential for momentous changes in many areas of policy that are relevant to the conservation and enhancement of the AONB. In particular, departure from the EU will include leaving the Common Agricultural Policy, and the UK will need to develop its own agricultural policies for the first time since the early 1970s. Given that agriculture is the dominant land use in the AONB, these will be of particular significance in shaping its landscape and ecology.

Agricultural support will likely focus on public money for public goods, with results-based payments focused in the main on outcomes rather than prescriptions and the removal of basic payments. This approach could deliver more for nature conservation and empower farmers to look after their land in a better way.

Soils

Erosion, compaction, loss of soil organic matter and loss of soil flora and fauna are well understood consequences of intensive agricultural production, but issues that tend to receive little attention. However, they are of real significance for a number of reasons. Most obviously, our food supply in an ever more turbulent world depends on the ability of our farmers to grow that food, and healthy soils can maintain yields with lower inputs of artificial fertilizer, maintain plant health and are more resilient to extreme weather. As well as being fundamental to us as a nation, they also improve the viability of farming by enabling productivity to be maintained while using less inputs.

However, healthy soils are also an extremely important carbon sink and so have a vital role to play in reducing the impact of climate change, whereas degraded soils are net contributors of greenhouse gases. Soils also have complex interactions with water, with soil health and quality affecting the rate at which water infiltrates into and is held by the soil. This in turn affects the rate at which water enters rivers after rainfall, and also the quality of that water; water that has rapidly run off degraded and compacted soils carries finer soil particles with it, depriving the land of this irreplaceable asset, and turning it into a problem that blocks drains and ditches, and degrades rivers. It also carries fertilizer and pesticides with it. Conversely healthy soils help to slow the flow of water, thereby reducing flood risk, and also improves water quality by retaining soils, fertilizers and pesticides where they are needed.

Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan includes a goal to manage all soils sustainably by 2030, and it is anticipated that the measures to achieve this will be established in the forthcoming Agriculture Bill. Given the significance of intensive arable production within the AONB, the measures that are included in the Bill as it is finally enacted and the funding that goes along side these, will be of the utmost importance in determining the extent to which soil health in

the AONB can be addressed, together with the consequences this has for water quality, biodiversity, flooding and climate change.

Forces for change

- Changes to agricultural support with a stronger focus on public money for public goods and a greater emphasis on ecosystem services and food and energy security
- A farmer-led approach to agri-environment schemes
- Post-brexite agricultural policy and the 25 year Environment Plan
- A move away from small, mixed farms to large arable units
- Soils protection and the management of pollutants from agriculture
- Changes to forestry policy
- Crop and machinery innovation
- Borderlands Growth Deal for natural capital

Work to date

- Supported networking and training events for farmers and land managers
- Supported Natural England and farmers to increase biodiversity through agri-environment schemes
- Organised a long term study of farmland bird populations across ten farms and supported a barn owl conservation project on farms in the AONB
- Supported the establishment of the '23 Burns' farmer group

Objective Six

To support farmers to produce high-quality food whilst ensuring that the landscape, historic features and wildlife habitats are conserved and enhanced

Policies

6.1 Support and promote farming systems and land management practices that contribute to the aims of the AONB Management Plan

6.2 Support farmer-diversification schemes where they contribute to conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the AONB

6.3 Support the establishment of farmer-led farmer clusters and contribute to their activities

Priority Actions

- Continue to support the 23 Burns farmer-cluster
- Analyse and report on the first five years of farmland bird data
- Provide targeted advice to farmers and agents to achieve maximum benefit for AONB management plan aims from agri-environment funding and NELMS
- Priority habitat and opportunity mapping for land-management in the AONB
- Investigate a facilitation fund for the north of the AONB
- Work with the Borderlands Growth Deal around Natural Capital

Main Partners

Farmers and landowners, land agents, Natural England, Environment Agency, universities, Northumberland County Council.

Community Vitality

A consequence of increased development pressure is the erosion of the community viability and vitality. Second-homes and holiday lets now account for close to half of the housing stock in the AONB, with some communities actually closer to 80%.

The impact of this is that a settlement becomes unsustainable - an effective holiday village only vibrant in the high holiday season leaving the permanent population without services and provisions out of season. Whilst recognising the importance of tourism to the local economy, it is also recognised that second-home ownership is a different kind of tourism that has much less economic value as temporary residents are less likely to shop locally, eat out or visit local attractions.

The perceived high value of the holiday letting market has helped fuel an increase in house prices. Couple this with low and seasonal wages means that many local people and lower income groups have been priced out of the area which impacts considerably on community sustainability and vitality.

The coastal area has an older age profile than Northumberland as a whole. Research for the Coastal Community Team (CCT) Economic plan for Bamburgh, Seahouses and Beadnell found that only 18.4% of the CCT area population is aged 24 and under, compared to 26.8% across Northumberland and a national average of 30.8%. Almost a third of the BSB CCT area population are aged 65 and above compared to a fifth across Northumberland. This is almost double the national average.

Forces for change

- Increasing numbers of dwellings are becoming second homes or holiday lets
- The rise in home-sharing platforms such as Airbnb
- Economic activity rate is lower within the area than the County and national average
- Significantly higher level of retired residents in the area (28.4% of 16-74 year olds in the area compared to 18.8% across Northumberland)
- Wages in the area are below the County average
- Lack of diversity in employment opportunities outside tourism
- Fewer people of working age resident in the area
- Digital theme in Borderlands and 4G infil through Rural Growth Fund

Our Work to Date

- Inputted to neighbourhood planning process
- Mapped second/holiday homes in all major settlements
- Raised awareness of the issues of second-home ownership

Objective Seven

To enable the communities in and around the AONB to have the opportunity to play an active part in its management and a say in shaping its future

Policies

7.1 The AONB Partnership will support communities preparing Neighbourhood Plans to ensure that they conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB and are integrated with the AONB Management Plan.

7.2 The construction of housing for permanent occupation will be supported where it will not adversely impact upon the special qualities of the AONB and conforms with relevant policies within the emerging Northumberland Local Plan. The imposition of occupancy restrictions to ensure that such housing is used for permanent residential accommodation rather than tourist accommodation will be promoted.

7.3 Increased opportunities for local people to support and participate in the conservation and enhancement of the AONB through volunteering or other forms of involvement will be developed.

Priority Actions

- Secure the future of Coast Care, including through the development of a system of visitor-giving
- Support small businesses whose work does not conflict with the special qualities of the AONB
- Support further research around the dominance of second-home ownership and holiday-lets in communities and on rural services

Main Partners

Northumberland County Council, Parish Councils, Development Trusts, Coast Care, business community

Aim 3: The designation of ‘Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’ and the special qualities of the Area are understood and valued for their contribution to life in the wider region and are seen as being worthy of protection

Understanding the Designation

AONBs and National Parks are of equal status with regard to landscape quality and that they share the same level of protection. However, the degree of understanding of the AONB as a protected landscape of national importance remains variable among relevant bodies and local communities.

S.85(1) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 imposes the following duty on all relevant authorities:

'In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.'

Relevant authorities include public bodies such as the County Council, Parish Councils and Government agencies, statutory undertakers (energy and water utilities, licensed telecommunications companies, nationalised companies such as Network Rail and other bodies established under statute responsible for railways and roads) and government ministers and civil servants.

The duty to 'have regard' places an obligation on these organisations, not just to consider any detrimental impacts of their policies and activities outside as well as within the boundaries of any AONB, but positively to consider how they might benefit the AONBs special qualities.

Forces for change

- Low levels of understanding of the importance and purpose of the designation of AONB
- Low levels of understanding of the roles the AONB Partnership and the work of the staff team
- Confusion among the public and organisations about the multiple agencies operating in the natural environment
- Defra Landscapes Review (the Glover Review)
- Business awareness of the importance of a high-quality landscape to their businesses
- Changes in media and communications methods and formats
- Challenge of communicating responsibility and respect for the environment alongside positive action, access and enjoyment
- Challenge of 'AONB brand' being difficult to communicate to the public

Work to date

- Provided information about the designation and role of the Partnership on the AONB website, e-newsletters and Annual Forum
- Held annual Parish Councils Chairs meetings and attended Parish Council meetings when required
- Provided training to NCC planners
- Regular press releases issued
- Social media channels regularly updated
- Talks given to local interest groups

Objective Eight

The value of the economic, social and environmental contribution that the AONB makes to life in North-East England is recognised and understood

Policies

8.1 To ensure that the distinctive character, tranquility and special qualities of the Northumberland Coast and its designation as an AONB are understood by decision-makers, statutory agencies, businesspeople, local residents and visitors

8.2 Authorities to take full account of the environmental quality of the AONB in their decision-making and place-shaping activities

8.3 To promote and support others to communicate the AONB and its special qualities to a broad audience

Priority Actions

- Provide training and advice to Parish Councils concerning their duty of regard and how to fulfill this
- Provide training and support for NCC planning officers and planning committee members concerning planning policy relevant to AONBs
- Provide training and support for other relevant functions within NCC
- Update the building and highways design guides for the AONB and promote these among local communities, developers and relevant authorities
- Develop appropriate monitoring that will provide data to guide policymakers making decisions that may affect the special qualities of the AONB
- Develop a scheme to recognise and promote best practice in the AONB
- Redesign the AONB logo
- Develop an interpretation strategy for the AONB

Main Partners

NCC, Parish Councils, NALC, NTCA, LEP, LNP, NE, National Association for AONBs

Education

If we are to conserve our natural and cultural heritage, it is imperative that people understand how natural systems and how past lives have contributed to the cultural evolution of this special place.

Formal education - The AONB provides a natural classroom for formal education from primary school children through to university students and beyond. Barriers to the use of the AONB for formal education include transport costs, affordable accommodation for large groups, access to specialist knowledge and health and safety considerations.

Informal education, skills training and life-long learning can play an important role in providing a pool of skilled people in local communities who are able to support the

conservation and understanding of the AONB and connecting people to nature and their environment and history.

Forces for change

- Defra Landscapes Review
- Greater emphasis on outdoor learning (beach schools, forest schools)
- More retired people in the local population
- Cost of transport for school groups and a perceived health and safety risk

Work to date

- Published a series of guidebooks about the AONB
- Given talks to local communities about the AONB and its special qualities
- Provided information about the AONB online
- Supported geo-walks programme
- Provided a range of learning opportunities through Peregrini Lindisfarne and Coast Care
- Talks and field visits provided to a range of further education groups

Objective Nine

The AONB is available as an outdoor classroom to a greater range of people for informal and formal education and that this learning provides support for the conservation and enhancement of the AONB

Policies

9.1 Provide a more diverse range of learning opportunities to help people understand, value and contribute to conserving, enhancing and enjoying the AONB's natural and cultural heritage

9.2 Greater understanding of the AONB's historic environment and cultural heritage will be promoted and the cultural heritage of the coast will be celebrated, through research, events and outreach.

Priority Actions

- Rewrite and publish the historic buildings and archaeology guidebooks
- Publish the beach guide
- Evaluate existing learning resources and develop a plan to improve and communicate the offer
- Deliver a programme of events aimed at increasing understanding and appreciation of the special qualities of the AONB
- Deliver 'place' education for those working in tourism

Main Partners

Coast Care, NE, NT, NCC, DMO

Aim 4: The AONB provides a high quality, clean environment that is welcoming and accessible to all

Environmental Quality

The range of issues which contribute to a decline in the 'environmental quality' of the AONB is broad but includes urbanisation of character, air quality, water quality, noise pollution, beach and marine litter, and dog fouling to name a few.

Litter and dog-fouling

The airing of programmes such as Blue Planet and 'Drowning in Plastic' on television has massively raised awareness of the issue of marine and beach litter, particularly plastics. Coast Care has attracted a huge number of beach litter volunteers and they are making a real difference on the beaches. An AONB-wide survey of beach litter in 2017 concluded whilst litter is a problem on the beaches of the AONB, the beaches here are some of the cleanest in the UK.

Litter isn't only a problem on the beach - it is also an issue in open countryside and villages. Litter bins are provided in villages and main car parks where they can be emptied regularly. In more rural areas and open countryside the provision of bins in locations where they aren't serviced daily actually increases littering. Visitors to the countryside are encouraged to reduce, reuse and recycle and take their litter home.

Air Quality

The agriculture sector accounts for 88% of UK emissions of ammonia, which is emitted during storage and spreading of manures and slurries and from the application of inorganic fertilisers. Ammonia damages sensitive natural habitats and many areas are now receiving more than they can absorb without harm. For example nitrogen deposition in much of the North Northumberland Dunes Special Area of Conservation is exceeding its critical load (the maximum amount it can be exposed to without significant harm) and acid deposition is significantly exceeding critical load, with agricultural nitrogen accounting for much of this.

The Clean Air Strategy published by Defra in February 2019 includes commitments to undertake a range of measures to reduce ammonia emissions from agriculture including requiring and supporting farmers to make investments in the farm infrastructure and equipment that will reduce emissions and developing a future environmental land management system to fund targeted action to protect habitats impacted by ammonia.

Water Quality

Holy Island and Budle Bay coastal waters are failing to meet Water Framework Directive (WFD) standards for Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen (DIN), and Opportunistic macroalgae. The Lindisfarne NNR is also described as unfavourable-declining by Natural England. Nitrogen in coastal streams is very difficult to manage due to its mobile chemical nature. There are many sources of this nitrogen including but not limited to: diffuse agricultural runoff,

misconnections in both public and private sewage treatment works, seasonal pressures from tourism on dated sewage treatment facilities, offshore influence from the North Sea and the River Tweed and also natural nutrient recycling within these shallow intertidal inlets.

Over the last two years, the Environment Agency have been working on the Holy Island and Budle Bay water quality investigation. The aim of this project is to identify sources of nutrients which enter into the coastal waterbody which fails WFD for DIN and opportunistic macroalgae. The bulk of this project involves regular targeted water quality sampling and catchment walkovers. These have facilitated the 'Land and Water' team greatly in identifying point sources of pollution in the catchment. A number of private septic tanks which were discharging directly to the coastal waterbody have been rectified. A surface water outfall which had a foul water sewer misconnected to it was also identified and rectified. The Environment Agency hosted two stakeholder engagement events in the area last year which were well attended by land owners and DEFRA partners alike. The first event raised awareness of the project in the community and the second event shared some of the findings from the monitoring and highlighted some of the issues in the area. A final report, the 'Water Quality Improvement Plan', is being produced and will be circulated to members of the AONB on completion.

All of the designated bathing waters in AONB meet the 'excellent' standard under the revised Bathing Water Directive.

Forces for change

- Greater awareness of marine and beach litter, particularly single-use plastics
- Increased numbers of visitors, particularly with dogs, to the coast
- Increasing visitor numbers and their use of cars to travel around the Area has a direct impact on air quality
- Loss of European funding streams post-Brexit reducing opportunities to fund project work
- Workstreams developed by Government to implement the 25 year Environment Plan and the Clean Air Strategy
- Completion of a DEFRA Water Improvement Plan for the Holy Island and Budle Bay catchments
- Implementation of DEFRA's 'Farming Rules for Water' and raising awareness of new general binding rules for septic tanks

Work to date

- Undertook year-long, coast-wide beach litter survey
- Implemented a beach litter awareness campaign
- Coast Care volunteers undertaking regular clean-ups
- Provided advice to NCC and Parish Councils on minimising clutter
- Worked on campaign to increase car-free days
- Lindisfarne catchment work

Objective Ten

The AONB, its villages, beaches, open countryside and facilities are clean and welcoming places to visit

Policies

10.1 A strong message of 'take your litter home' will be reinforced in all visitor communication and signage. Where bins are not serviced daily they will not normally be provided.

10.2 Careful consideration is given to other ways to solve problems before signage is considered in the countryside

10.3 Voluntary litter groups and individuals will be supported

Priority Actions

- Continue to run campaigns to encourage residents and visitors to reduce, reuse and recycle, to take their litter home and to responsibly deal with the consequences of bringing a dog to the coast
- Raise the profile of tranquility as a special quality of the AONB that is increasingly valued by residents and visitors and ensure that it is properly considered by policy and decision makers
- Continue work to identify sources of dissolved inorganic nitrogen in the Fenham Flats - Budle Bay area and maintain regular communication with farmers and landowners about this issue
- Develop actions to tackle gaseous emissions of nitrogen from agriculture

Main Partners

Coast Care, NCC, EA, NE, Parish Councils, landowners,

Access, Health and Wellbeing

Whilst the purpose of the designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the coast, providing opportunities for people to enjoy the coast is important where this can be achieved without damaging the special qualities of the area.

It is widely recognised that spending time in natural environments, even if this is just to enjoy the view, is important for people's physical and mental wellbeing (Defra Evidence Statement 2017). Improvements to physical access to the coast and countryside for people to enjoy the area for recreation and leisure have been implemented as a result of previous plans but further improvements can be made.

There is a good network of Public Rights of Way in the AONB, including the 100km Northumberland Coast Path. This well-established long-distance route will also become the route of the new England Coast Path within the lifetime of this plan which will also bring new rights of public access on the shore and in the coastal margin. The Coast and Castles Cycle Route is very well used by local people and inbound visitors but the route suffers from a lack

of maintenance, no provision of on-road alternatives to off-road sections and poor pre-arrival information.

As well as improving physical access, access to the coast for mental wellbeing, learning and exploration and volunteering can also be improved.

Forces for change:

- Constraints on local authority budgets for rights of way and green infrastructure management
- Greater emphasis on the role of protected landscapes to improve the health and wellbeing of visitors and residents especially areas with ageing population.
- Increasing recognition of the potential and cost savings from ‘naturally healthy activities’ for the physical and mental wellbeing of the whole population, reflected in recent policy and activity.
- The establishment of the England Coast Path and associated access rights
- The ongoing funding of the Coast Care volunteering initiative
- The coast is a mobile environment where fixed access provision cannot always be accommodated

Work to date

- Worked with NE and NCC on the implementation of the England Coast Path
- Access improvements made on Northumberland Coast Path
- Worked with bus companies to promote travel by public transport and increase the number of ‘car-free days’
- Provided access advice to partners

Objective Eleven

The AONB is an accessible place for everyone to enjoy for quiet recreation that improves both physical and mental health in a tranquil environment

Policies

11.1 Good quality information that encourages responsible visits to the AONB will be provided to a wide audience.

11.2 Initiatives that sustain and promote public transport will be supported.

11.3 Access will be improved for all where it can be physically and sustainably constructed.

11.4 Promoted routes will be prioritised for maintenance and improvements

Priority Actions

- Continue to work with bus operators and NCC to improve public transport within the AONB, and to promote this among residents and visitors
- Improve links to the health and wellbeing sectors
- Participate in the England Coast Path Partnership

- Develop programme of improvements to promoted routes through the Borderlands Growth Initiative
- Redesign and re-launch the Northumberland Coast Path Passport Scheme
- Develop new website for Northumberland Coast Path

Main partners

Bus operators, NCC, GP surgeries, NE, Sustrans, Coast Care, Borderlands,

Volunteering

Established in 2016, The National Lottery Heritage Fund funded Coast Care initiative provides opportunities for people to help to look after their local area to help to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB. Coast Care is a partnership initiative with Northumberland Wildlife Trust and Seahouses Development Trust. Funding from NLHF ends in April 2020.

As well as helping people to look after their local environment, volunteering for Coast Care can also combat loneliness and social isolation and increase rates of physical activity in the natural environment contributing positively to the ‘ageing well’ strategy. Coast Care also provides opportunities for people to learn more about the natural and cultural heritage of the Area through volunteering which increases understanding of the special qualities of the Area.

Forces for change

- Cessation of funding for Coast Care in October 2020
- Greater emphasis on the role of protected landscapes to improve the health and wellbeing of visitors and residents especially areas with ageing population
- Increasing recognition of the potential and cost savings from ‘naturally healthy activities’ for the physical and mental wellbeing of the whole population
- Significantly higher level of retired residents in the area (28.4% of 16-74 year olds in the area compared to 18.8% across Northumberland)

Work to Date

Established Coast Care volunteering initiative with partners

<p>Objective Twelve People have opportunities to contribute to the conservation and enhancement of their local area</p>
<p><u>Policies</u></p> <p>12.1 The Coast Care initiative is supported to continue to provide volunteering opportunities in the AONB beyond the funded period</p> <p>12.2 Opportunities that can allow Coast Care to grow sustainably are taken</p>

Priority Actions

- Identify and implement a new management structure to maintain Coast Care
- Identify revenue sources to maintain and grow Coast Care

Main partners

NWT, Seahouses Development Trust, NCC, landowners, tourism businesses

Delivery and Monitoring

This management plan will be delivered by the staff team working on behalf of the Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership through a combination of direct projects, support and advocacy.

Previous management plans have included a formal five-year delivery and action plan. Due to the amount of uncertainty at the time of writing this plan deriving from the United Kingdom's exit from the EU, changes to agricultural policy and support and the Government led review of protected areas (the Glover review), a different approach has been adopted.

Annually, the AONB Partnership will agree an action plan and business plan that will set out what the Partnership will do in that year to deliver this plan. This action plan will cover actions by partner organisations and the role of the AONB Partnership in delivering them, as well as providing a work programme for the staff team.

Monitoring

There will be two strands for monitoring the AONB and the Partnership:

1. National indicator/performance programme. These will comprise of annual Key Performance Indicators developed through the National Association for AONB's (NAAONB) and Defra, reported annually by NAAONB.
2. Monitoring of the implementation of this plan will be undertaken by the AONB Partnership through the annual action planning and work programme process.