



Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



# Historic Environment Action Plans

Area 1: Longleat to Penselwood  
Hills and Kilmington Common






This document forms part of a suite of documents which together comprise the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Environment Action Plans.


The HEAPs provide a summary of the key characteristics of the historic environment of the AONB at a landscape scale, they then set out the significance, condition and forces for change affecting the historic fabric and character of this special landscape and identify proactive actions to conserve and enhance these special characteristics. These summaries are divided into two groups:


1. Summaries of the historic environment of the AONB by area
2. Summaries of the historic environment of the AONB by theme


These core documents are accompanied by documents which provide background information, supplementary information and detail on the methodologies used to create these documents.

A series of icons help you navigate this suite of documents:

 **Background** - Provides an introduction to the AONB Historic Environment Action Plans and provides background information on the history and archaeology of the landscape **(B1 to B10)**

 **Area** - Summarises key characteristics of discrete geographical areas within the AONB, they then set out the significance, condition and forces for change affecting the historic fabric and character of each area and identify proactive actions to conserve and enhance its characteristics **(A1 to A12)**

 **Theme** - Summarises key characteristics of historic environment themes, each document then sets out the significance, condition and forces for change affecting the historic fabric and character of each theme and identify proactive actions to conserve and enhance its characteristics **(T1 to T14)**

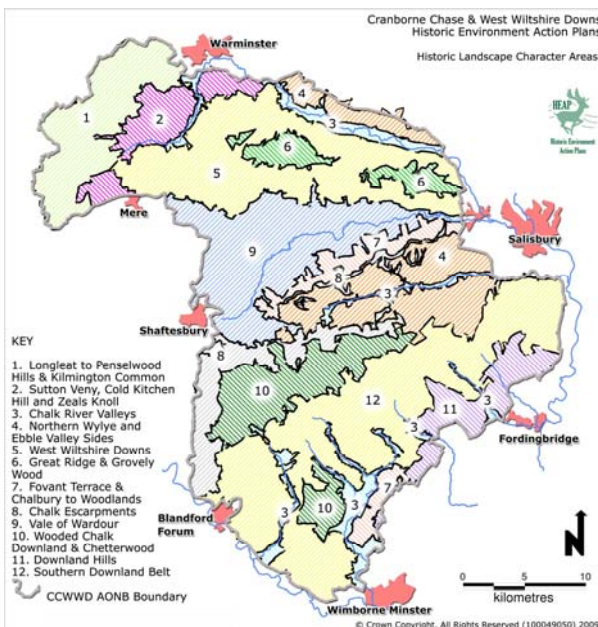
 **Supplementary** - A series of documents which explore supplementary issues of relevance to the Historic Environment Action Plans **(S1 to S2)**

 **Method** - Introduces the methodology behind the production of the Historic Environment Action Plans **(M1 to M3)**

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**Introducing the Historic Landscape Character Areas**



Twelve distinct Historic Landscape Character Areas have been identified in the AONB. The attributes used to identify the Historic Landscape Character Areas was based on information in the AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation. The HLC provided two key pieces of information:

1. The present day historic landscape character present in the AONB.
2. The surviving evidence of the historical development of the area.

The following descriptions aim to provide an overview of each area

which encapsulates the main features of the Historic Environment present and include both the archaeological and historical, the very old and the more recent.

**M2**

The process through which the Historic Landscape Character Areas were identified, and mapped, and the sources of information used to create these descriptions is documented in the methodological statement ‘Creating and Describing Historic Character Areas’.

**Location, Geology, Land Use and Topography**

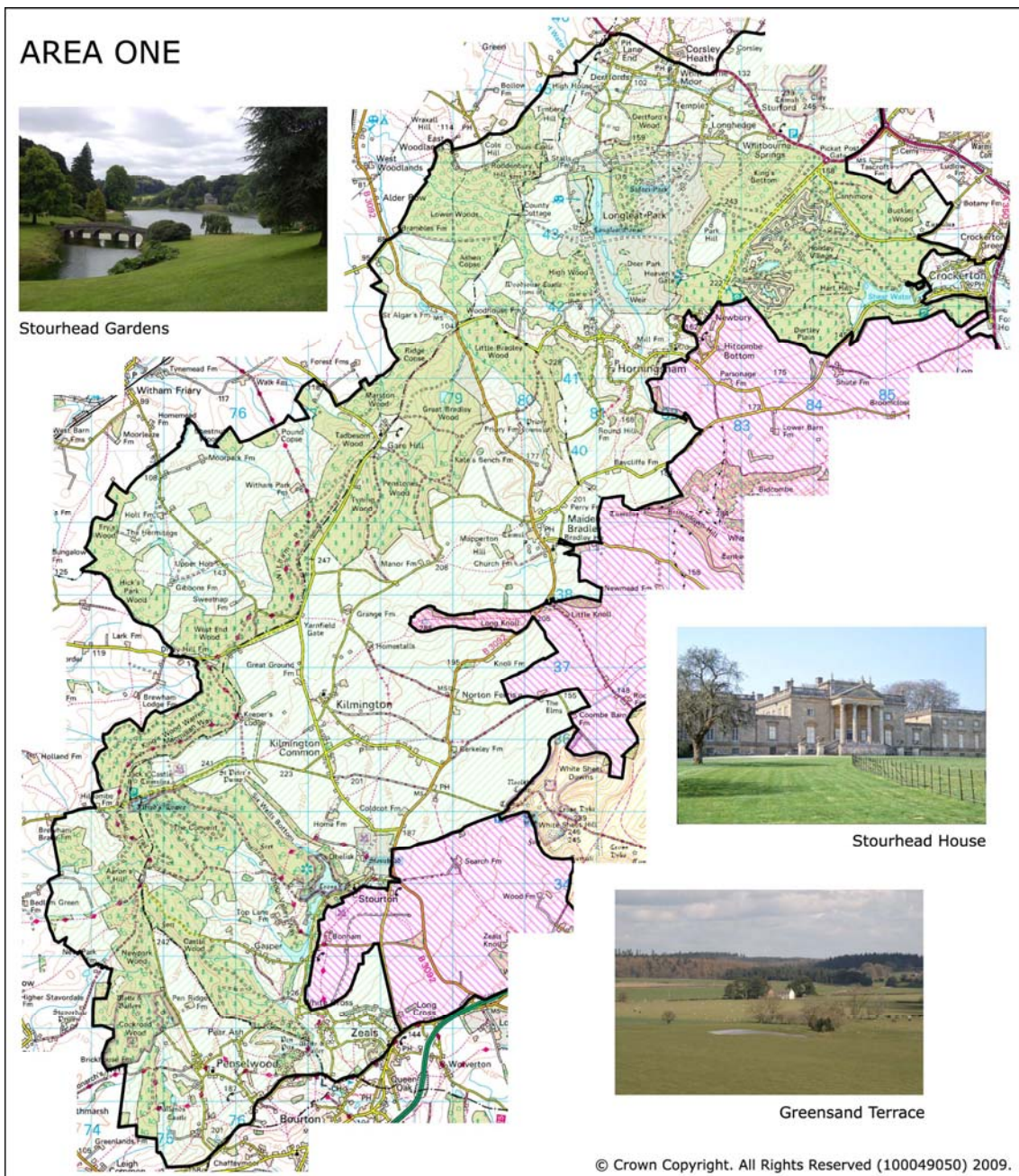
Area 1 is located in the far north-western edge of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. It comprises the area straddling the Wiltshire and Somerset border and stretches from Longleat in the north to Penselwood in the south. The landscape has a steeply undulating landform. The Penselwood-Longleat hills comprise

the west facing edge of the band of greensand which extends from Mere to Warminster. This has been eroded at both its northern and southern ends to form deep river valleys. The steep slopes of the hills are covered in woodland. The boundary with the terrace of Kilmington common to the east is clearly defined by a change in the density of the contours and the amount of woodland. The area of Kilmington Common also sits on upper greensand, but is an open landscape dominated by arable crop production. This Historic Landscape Character Area sits next to the continuation of the greensand terrace (see Area 2) and also abuts the West Wiltshire Downs (see Area 5).

A2

A5

Location Map



## Summary

### Summary of Key Characteristics

- *Great swathe of veteran forest which runs from Warminster to just north of the A303 at Penselwood, along the sinuous greensand escarpment.*
- *Core of the former Medieval forest of Selwood.*
- *Nationally important historic houses and their associated gardens and parklands.*
- *Remnants of Medieval deer parks.*
- *Ancient shire boundary between Wiltshire and Somerset*
- *Long continuity of land holdings.*
- *Former common land in vicinity of Kilmington and Horningsham*
- *Ancient irregular fields in the vicinity of Penselwood.*
- *Cluster of Medieval motte and bailey castles in the south of the area.*
- *Ancient quern stone quarries at Pen Pits.*
- *Dense network of historic routeways.*
- *Archaeological association of Colt Hoare and Cunnington and the antiquarian book "Ancient Wiltshire".*
- *Impact of modern tourism in the north of the area with the creation of Centre Parcs and the safari park at Longleat*

### Summary of Statement of Significance

- *Landscape legacy of the relationship between the Medieval Selwood forest and the distinctive historic landscape character of the area.*
- *Important evidential value in the form of ancient boundaries, areas of ancient woodland and archaeological earthworks in woodland and nationally important historic parks and gardens and a rich architectural record.*
- *Strong aesthetic value of the area derived from the visible presence of time depth in the landscape and the designed landscapes in the area*

### Summary of Forces for Change

- *Changes in Recreation and Tourism*
- *Changes in Woodland*
- *Changes in Climate*
- *Changes in the Natural Environment*
- *Changes in Agriculture and Farming*

## Summary of State of the Historic Environment

- *Significant gaps in our knowledge of woodland archaeology, the landscape legacy of the Selwood Forest and vernacular building character*
- *Erosion of historic landscape character through the loss of historic boundaries*
- *Loss or damage to archaeology through ploughing and scrub encroachment*

## Summary of Historic Environment Actions

- *ACTION 1: Provide an AONB wide synthesis of the distinctive character of historic settlements.*
- *ACTION 3: Identify and record components of historic highways*
- *ACTION 5: Reduce unintended/accidental damage to buried archaeology or extant monuments*
- *ACTION 8: Increase knowledge of woodland archaeology in the AONB*
- *ACTION 9: Gain greater understanding of the components of the Medieval hunting areas of the AONB.*
- *ACTION 10: Gain greater understanding of historic farm buildings and farmsteads*
- *ACTION 11: Enhance appreciation of the Prehistoric archaeology of the area*
- *ACTION 12: Widen knowledge of ways and means of maintaining historic farm buildings*
- *ACTION 13: Enhance appreciation of the military history and archaeology*
- *ACTION 14: Increase understanding of extensive woodland not part of former Medieval hunting areas*
- *ACTION 15: Increase understanding of Medieval landscape elements of the AONB by academics, teachers and public.*
- *ACTION 16: Make more widely available enhanced and targeted information on managing archaeology in woodland.*
- *ACTION 17: Improve management of historic boundaries and ensure they are retained*

## Linkages to other Historic Landscape Character Statements

This statement forms one of 12 Historic Landscape Character Area statements which cover the whole of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of

Outstanding Natural Beauty. These are accompanied by AONB wide Historic Landscape Character Theme statements. These documents together build up a picture of the key characteristics of the Historic Environment of the AONB at a landscape scale.

Other Historic Landscape Character Areas adjacent to this area are:

- A2** Area 2: Sutton Veny, Cold Kitchen Hill and Zeals Knoll
- A5** Area 5: West Wiltshire Downs

Historic Landscape Character Themes (HLCT) of particular relevance to this area are:

- T1** Theme 1: Ancient Boundaries and Land Ownership
- T4** Theme 4: Historic Parks and Gardens in the Landscape
- T5** Theme 5: Hunting Landscapes
- T13** Theme 13: Woodland and Trees in the Landscape

## History and Context



*Medieval Hunting played a crucial role in shaping the landscape of this area.*

The Medieval royal forest of Selwood was located on the boundary between Somerset and Wiltshire, covering a large part of the north west of the AONB. The Victoria County of History of Wiltshire has discussed the history of Selwood Forest from a Wiltshire perspective, this reveals that the hunting area encompassed large woodlands that existed at the time of Domesday (AD 1086) and included the four royal manors of Westbury, Warminster, Heystebury

and Mere. At its greatest geographic extent in the 13<sup>th</sup> century forest law affected the whole of the northwest of the AONB, as far east as the edge of the West Wiltshire Downs. However, by the reign of Edward III, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, disafforestation had reduced the size of the forest to a small area not more than two miles wide lying along the Somerset and Wiltshire border. This sudden decline was due to a programme of disafforestation by Edward III in response to pressure over the stringent laws that hunting areas imposed, and over abuses of rights. It is this area straddling the AONB boundary which has therefore been most affected by the imposition of forest law. This approximate area continued under forest law until its eventual disafforestation in 1627.

The decline in the imposition of forest rights was also accompanied by shifts in land ownership a century earlier when the influence of Shaftesbury Abbey in the area was curtailed with the dissolution of the monasteries, and new landowners, such as the Thynnes, gained influence in the area.

Post disafforestation the common land to the east of the core of the area was enclosed and potentially woodland assarted to form at least some of the pre 1800 fields today, but this requires further research.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century designed landscapes at Longleat and Stourhead were created. The designed landscapes of both Stourhead and Longleat initially involved landscape gardening elements from the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century this was supplemented by large scale woodland creation on open land. During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century the two estates began to transform areas of existing woodlands with the planting of conifers, and new conifer plantations were also established to the north east of the area, as well as a new lake at Shear Water.

Major changes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century have tended to occur in the north of the area, focussing on the tourist industry and the establishment of new leisure enterprises, including Centre Parcs and Longleat Safari Park.



*See Background Paper 2 for an overview of the archaeology and history of the AONB by time period.*



*See Background Paper 6 for an overview of the key historical figures associated with the AONB.*



*See Background Paper 7 for an overview of Major historical events trends and fashions and their impact on the AONB.*

## Key Secondary Sources

The AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation is the main source of information on the historic landscape of the AONB and is available at [www.historiclandscape.co.uk](http://www.historiclandscape.co.uk).

The main archaeological record for the area is the county based Historic Environment Record in Dorset and the Sites and Monuments Record in Wiltshire.

Information on the listed buildings in the area is available from English Heritage's Listed Buildings Online <http://lbonline.english-heritage.org.uk>.

Information on nationally important historic parks and gardens in the AONB are available from the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

The Wiltshire Community Website pages on the Wiltshire Council Website provide a wealth of information on the parishes in the area. This is complemented by descriptions of parishes in the Victoria County History of Wiltshire which are organised by Hundred. The Victoria County History of Wiltshire also contains a section on Selwood Forest.



Information on historic farm buildings in the area is only available at the scale of National Character Area as part of English Heritage's preliminary characterisation of historic farmsteads.

Nearly all parishes in the AONB have had parish histories created for them and these are available from the relevant county reference library.

Information on the woodland in the area can be found in the AONB booklet 'A landscape view of trees and woodland' (2010).

The National Trust has produced various information booklets on sites and buildings in its care, including Stourhead, as well as a regional archaeological strategy 2008-2011.

The importance of the shire boundaries in the early Medieval period is discussed by Katherine Barker in an article in *The Chase, The Hart and the Park* (2009) published by the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.

B10

*A full list of References is provided in Background Paper 10.*

## Landscape Scale Characteristics and Components

### Ancient Boundaries and Land Ownership

- The ancient county boundary between Somerset and Wiltshire runs north – south across the area, whilst the ancient county boundary between Dorset and Wiltshire runs close to the southern boundary of the area. Selwood is mentioned as a boundary in Saxon charters. This boundary deviates from the modern county boundary at Kilmington. It has never been surveyed but is most likely associated with veteran trees and banks. There is a boundary stone situated at the junction of three counties, traditionally known as Egberts or Ecbrytestone Stone.
- The Ancient Parishes are irregular in shape but run east west from the county boundary, encompassing a slice of the higher wooded ground and the greensand terrace below. These are important historic boundaries, again, associated with veteran tresses which also coincide with the ancient hundreds.
- In the Medieval period major landowners were monasteries and the crown – evidenced by the earthworks of the former Priors at Maiden Bradley and Witham Friary. The latter which has been excavated.
- The Post Medieval land ownership was dominated by three major landowners with the same pattern in today's landscape. The Thynnes (later Marquess of Bath) at Longleat, The Dukes of Somerset at Maiden Bradley and Lord Stourton, later the Hoares, at Stourhead. The designed park and house at Stourhead was passed into the management of the National Trust in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There has therefore been a continuity of land holdings reflected in the historic land patterns present.

T1

*See 'Ancient Boundaries and Landownership' for more information on this theme*

### Farms and Farming in the Landscape

- Historically a mixed pattern of farming reflected by the general pattern of farmsteads, including threshing barns, cattle housing, cart yards and stables, occurring on most farms.
- Distinctive patterns of large farms developing with the large estates from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, including the model farm at Longleat.
- Introduction of more intensive arable production into the west of the area with new Parliamentary enclosure in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- Dispersed historic pre 1800 farms across the east of the area.
- Creation of dispersed farmsteads in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the west of the area and concentrated on former common land.

T2

See *'Farms and Farming'* for more information on this theme.

### Fields in the Landscape

- Ancient field systems have been recorded from aerial photographs on the edge of woodland in the vicinity of Maiden Bradley and Horningsham. It is likely these continue into the woodland.
- Pre 1800 fields interspersed with blocks of 19<sup>th</sup> century enclosure are found along the eastern side of the area. These have seen only small scale modification of the early field boundaries.
- The southern edge of the area is dominated by pre 1800 piecemeal irregular curving enclosure which links beyond the borders of the AONB to a similar pattern of fields in the Donheads. The hedged field boundaries here are especially important. This is a very locally distinctive form of field.

T3

See *'Fields in the Landscape'* for more information on this theme.

### Historic Parks and Gardens in the Landscape

- Two very large nationally important landscaped parks with great historic houses at their core. These are Longleat and Stourhead, and both are formed of extensive parkland largely of mid 18<sup>th</sup> century origin. Longleat Park is notable as it was designed by Lancelot Brown, with additions by Humphrey Repton, whilst Stourhead is visited for its landscaped gardens laid out with a classical theme by the Hoare family.
- At Stourhead the desire to create large areas of new woodland as a distinct phase in the development of the designed landscape is very marked here and appears to have had influence elsewhere in the area e.g. Melbury Park and Fonthill.
- There is a large concentration of former Medieval deer parks. This includes one multiple deer park.
- There are three locally listed historic parks and gardens.

T4

See *'Historic Parks and Gardens in the Landscape'* for more information on this theme.

### Hunting Landscapes

- The area is completely within the Medieval hunting forest of Selwood. The special laws governing this area overarched the pattern of historic landownership in the Medieval period.

T5

See 'Hunting Landscapes' for more information on this theme.

### Industry in the Landscape

- Penselwood is known for a series of quarry pits for quern stone, probably multi-period but dating back to the Iron Age. These cover a fairly extensive area.
- The area around Penselwood and Zeals was associated with the cloth trade, and there were mills associated with the upper reaches of the River Stour. The history of industry in this area is intrinsically linked with the Bourton foundry and mill which lies just outside the AONB border but was a major employer in the wider area.

T6

See 'Industry' in the Landscape for more information on this theme.

### Landscapes of Militarism, Commemoration & Defence

- Three Medieval motte and bailey castles cluster around Penselwood and Zeals suggesting this area was strategically important in the period in the 11<sup>th</sup> century in the period immediately after the Norman Conquest.
- There was a Second World War airfield at Zeals between 1942 and 1945; the control tower associated with the airfield is now in use as a modern house.

T7

See 'Landscapes of Militarism, Commemoration & Defence' for more information on this theme.

### Landscapes of Prehistory

- Bronze Age Round Barrows are located along the greensand ridge and in the vicinity of Maiden Bradley.
- On the edge of the woodland there is a dispersed low level scatter of Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age findspots.
- Several Iron Age hillforts, of which Cley Hill is associated with multi period earthworks and is a dominant feature of the northern area.
- The Pen Pits Quern Stone Quarries date back to the Iron Age (see above).

T8

See 'Landscapes of Prehistory' for more information on this theme.

### Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century activity in the Landscape

- Modern tourist enterprise dominates the northern area with the Longleat Safari Park situated within the historic parkland, and Centreparks to the west concealed within modern plantations. The artificial Shearwater (late 18<sup>th</sup>

century) on the north west edge forms another feature which is the focus of modern recreational activity.

### Open Land

- Former common land at Kilmington and Horningsham enclosed by the 19<sup>th</sup> century but influencing subsequent field morphology and surviving as place names.
- Former common land in plantations near Centre Parcs to the east of Longleat Park mark an area of former common land and rough grazing.
- Area of unimproved chalk grassland associated with Cley Hill.

T9

See 'Open Land' for more information on this theme.

### Routeways in the Landscape

- Dense irregular network of curving footpaths associated with former common land and providing access to dispersed settlement.
- Gap in pattern of public access across the historic Longleat Estate.
- Network of tracks in forestry not publically accessible.
- One north-south minor road on eastern edge of the area which was a former turnpike road, marked by Milestones. This forms part of a wider network of turnpikes in the area but these have no known milestones associated with them.
- Several historic byways in the vicinity of Kilmington Common associated with access routes across the common land.
- The east-west droveway, the Harrow Way, crosses the area.
- The area is crossed by a Roman Road the line of which is marked by a public footpath on the higher ground in the woodland.
- The modern day route of the A303 touches the southern edge of the area this deviates from the original path of the original carriage road further south and now bypasses Mere.

T10

See 'Routeways in the Landscape' for more information on this theme.

### Settlement in the Landscape

- Archaeological evidence for one Iron Age settlement.
- The settlement at Penselwood is given historically an 8<sup>th</sup> century origin.
- Archaeological evidence for early Medieval settlement in the vicinity of Zeals.
- Concentration of deserted/shrunken later Medieval settlement either side of the woodland belt.
- A mixed historic settlement pattern including historic settlement located on the edge of former common land at Kilmington and Horningsham.
- Dense nucleated dispersed pre 1750 settlement in the vicinity of Zeals, Crockerton, Selwood and around Longleat providing access to the higher ground.
- The house and parkland at Longleat is separated from nearby settlement while in contrast the village of Stourhead is more intimately related to Stourhead.
- Infilling of existing settlements, notably Maiden Bradley in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

- Local building material is red brick and limestone with clay roof tiles.
- Overarching influence of estate style especially at Stourton.
- Three Conservation Areas, Horningsham, Maiden Bradley and Stourton.
- King Alfred's Tower and other built features associated with the historic estates are notable features of the area.



See 'Settlement in the Landscape' for more information on this theme.

### Water in the Landscape

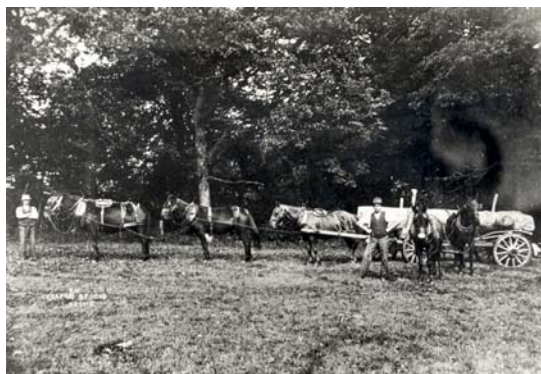
- The Greensand Hills have been eroded by a series of small streams and rivers, historically these were associated with mills, for example at Stourhead, but the remaining evidence for these has not been examined.
- The most obvious historic water features in this area are the ponds and lakes associated with the designed landscapes of Longleat and Stourhead.
- The lake of Shearwater, in the north of the area, was created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



See 'Water in the Landscape' for more information on this theme.

### Woodland and Trees in the Landscape

- Sinuous wide ribbon of veteran forest which runs from Warminster to just north of the A303 at Penselwood, along the greensand escarpment. This forms the core of the former Medieval forest of Selwood Forest but in the present day is dominated by conifers, with some remnant semi-natural woodland. This woodland had been extended in the northwest with the addition of large plantations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The woodland belt has seen the clearance of small areas of woodland during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and small scale addition of woodland on its edges.
- Long-established woodland is perhaps the most distinguishing feature of this character area and much of it has been replanted with exotic coniferous species. There is very little recent establishment except around the forest edge.
- The response of the Hoare family from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards to the management of their relatively new woodland in order to maintain landscape continuity as a backdrop to the gardens around Stourhead House has produced an innovative approach to silviculture.
- This area has a long history of forest management.
- The Kilmington Terrace has retained some excellent ancient trees in hedgerows, river banks and alongside springs. Occasional shelterbelts, the majority of which comprise relatively recent broadleaved plantation, occur throughout.



*Timber wagon near Kilmington in 1925  
(Courtesy of Kilmington Parish Album)*

T13

See 'Woods and Trees in the Landscape' for more information about this theme'

## Statement of Significance

### Introduction

The area is highly significant both in terms of the strength of the historic landscape character, the visibility of time depth in the landscape and the richness of the built and designed landscape.

### Coherence, Local Distinctiveness, Rarity, and Time Depth

The wider landscape character of this area is fairly coherent; this includes the key relationship between the history of the Medieval hunting forest of Selwood and the visibility of the 'Medieval' components in the landscape, including ancient woodland and former deer parks. This contributes to a strong feeling of local distinctiveness.

The two large designed landscapes in this area are visually dominant and coherent features in the landscape which contribute immensely to the sense of place. These are associated with nationally important built heritage which include their own distinctive estate styles.

Easily visible and generally clearly understandable time depth is a key feature in this area, including the distinctive band of woodland, including woodland which has been planted as a distinct phase in the development of the designed landscapes, common land fossilised in later field patterns, and the distinctive pattern of pre 1800 piecemeal irregular enclosure in the south of the area.

Patterns within the archaeological resource are generally less coherent, being hidden in woodland or visible only as crop marks.

### Typical surviving components of the area

- Archaeological earthworks in woodland and buried archaeology in farmed land.
- Ancient boundaries, including earthworks and living archaeology such as ancient trees.
- Nationally important historic parks and gardens.
- Cluster of Medieval motte and bailey castles.
- The remnants of Medieval deer parks.
- Veteran forest forming the core of the former Medieval forest of Selwood.
- Ancient enclosures.
- The more recent imposition of 19<sup>th</sup> century enclosure on former common land and rough grazing.
- Distinct pattern of Post Medieval land ownership.
- A mixed historic settlement pattern including historic settlement located on the edge of former common land and dense nucleated dispersed pre 1750 settlement.
- A rich architectural history.

## Nationally Protected Heritage



See Background Paper 8 'Designated Heritage Assets' in the AONB for an introduction to nationally designated heritage.

Low number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments (17) compared with other areas. These date to a range of periods and include Bronze Age round barrows several Iron Age hillforts, several Medieval motte and bailey castles in the south of the area and the Penselwood quern stone quarries.

There are 174 listed buildings in the area. These cluster in the historic settlements and are associated with the historic estates. There are 16 Grade I Listed Buildings, and these are all associated with Longleat and Stourhead, and include the main house, secondary buildings such as carriage houses and grottos, and other garden features. There are also 10 Grade II\* listed buildings away from the historic estates, including churches, chapels and farmhouses.

There are two Grade I registered parks and gardens. The extensive and complex landscape garden and park at Stourhead and the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> formal gardens at Longleat, sitting within a Brownian 18<sup>th</sup> century parkland.

There are three Conservation Areas, Horningsham, Maiden Bradley and Stourton.

## Archaeological Fieldwork in the AONB



See Background Paper 3 'History of Archaeological Discovery in the AONB' for more information on this topic.

Stourhead was the home of Sir Richard Colt Hoare who along with William Cunnington wrote 'Ancient Wiltshire'.

## Evidential Value

There has been no systematic programme of archaeological fieldwork in this area and many sites may lay undiscovered in the woodland which comprises the core of the area.

Where information is available the county Historical Environment Records, amongst other sources, indicate features including:

- Archaeological sites such as:
  - Bronze Age round barrows focused on higher ground along the spine of the woodland, to the east of the area and at Cley Hill.
  - Iron Age hillforts, including Cley Hill which is highly visible in the landscape.
  - Roman settlement southwest of Algar Farm and a Roman road running between the Mendips and Old Sarum.
  - Medieval motte and bailey castles.
  - Medieval settlements, including deserted and shrunken villages.
  - Other Medieval features, including pillow mounds (rabbit warrens), cross bases, and ecclesiastical sites.

- Undated enclosures in the woodland.
- Undated field systems in the vicinity of Zeals, Stourhead, Mapperton Hill and Cley Hill.
- Quern stone quarries at Pen Pits.

In general where these sites are associated with woodland and areas of surviving grassland they exist as extant earthworks. However in the area of Kilmington Common, dominated by arable production, these sites are buried and often show mainly as crop marks.

- Thirty one recorded find spots from a range of periods including a Bronze Age rapier and torc in the vicinity of Pen Pits.
- Living archaeology associated with ancient woodlands, ancient boundaries and Medieval deer parks including veteran trees and ancient pollards
- Ancient borderlands between Somerset, Wiltshire and Dorset.
- A rich architectural record dominated by the internationally important houses at Longleat and Stourhead and the influence of their distinctive estate style but also including:
  - Medieval cross bases.
  - Churches and churchyard features including monuments and memorials.
  - Chapels.
  - Model farm buildings at Stalls Farms.
  - Milestones.
  - Historic farmhouses and farm buildings.
  - Vernacular cottages.
- Internationally important Arcadian gardens at Stourhead and a Capability designed Park at Longleat.

The key to the unique historic landscape character of the area is the history and legacy of the Selwood Forest. The key attribute of this area in the Medieval period was its status as a hunting landscape (See Historic Landscape Character Theme 10 for more information). It has also helped preserve the other ancient historic landscape characteristics of this area, discussed in typical surviving components above. For example Pre 1800 irregular fields in the southern edge of the area provide evidence for early enclosure of the landscape.

## Historical Value

### *Illustrative Value*

The history of early piecemeal enclosure in the south of the area is very legible. Place names also hint at the former open common land in the east of the area.

The Medieval history of the area including the juxtaposition between Medieval hunting forest, settlement, defence, enclosure, common land and fields can be read clearly in this landscape.



Surviving common land and place name evidence marks a Medieval system of ancient common rights.

The landscape and parkland at Stourhead and Longleat and their associated buildings provide a glimpse at an 18<sup>th</sup> century vision of the landscape.

#### *Associative Value*

The area is historically associated with King Alfred. Egbert's Stone, a standing stone near Zeals, is associated in myth with the location where Alfred, rallied the Saxons in May 878 before the important Battle of Ethandun, where the Danish army was defeated. This connection was commemorated by the construction of King Alfred's Tower, conceived by Henry Hoare II on his Stourhead estate in 1762 to commemorate the accession of George III to the throne. This is a popular visitor attraction which provides excellent views of the surrounding countryside.

Stourhead was the home of Richard Colt Hoare the notable 18<sup>th</sup> century antiquarian who, with William Cunnington, excavated many archaeological sites in the AONB and published 'Ancient Wiltshire'.

The houses, gardens and parks at Stourhead and Longleat are intimately associated with the families who created them, the Hoares and the Thynnes respectively.

Other local landowners had an important impact on the area. For example the Chafyn Grove family were important benefactors at Zeal, building four almshouses in 1865, a spire for the church of St Martin in 1875, and the village hall in 1888. These provide a central focus of this village. The parish of Maiden Bradley is intimately associated with the Earls of Somerset.

The late Marquis of Bath has had a notable impact at Longleat, creating the first safari park in the country and transforming Longleat into a large scale tourist enterprise.

#### **Aesthetic Value**

The aesthetic value of the area is derived from the visible presence of time depth in the landscape and the landscape scale juxtaposition of ancient woodland, fields and previous open common land. The woodland blocks provide a dominant visual feature in the landscape.

The designed landscapes of Stourhead and Longleat also have value in their formal design.

#### **Communal Value**

The nucleated villages of the area provide the centres for thriving local communities.

There is also an important collection of tourist attractions including Longleat and Stourhead.

Mere Parish Plan (2009) identifies the importance of Egbert's Stone and Stourhead gardens. Maiden Bradley Parish Plan (2005) emphasises the long history of the parish and its connection with the Duke of Somerset's estates. Buildings and features which are unlisted but which are locally important, include the Knapp and Fountain, Village Hall, Somerset Arms, village shop and Bradley House walled garden and greenhouses.

## State of the Historic Environment

### Introduction

The coherence of the historic landscape characteristics of this area has declined over the last 100 years. However the majority of the historic features in this area are in active management and the designed landscape features in particular are in excellent condition. The greatest threat to this area is through lack of knowledge and understanding.

### Current Knowledge

The best understood features in this landscape are the two nationally designated designed landscapes which due to their importance have been subject to detailed analysis and enquiry.

The other known important archaeological and historical sites and features in the areas have only been subject to limited study.

There are significant gaps in our knowledge and understanding of this area, particularly within the woodlands:

- When the existing known archaeological sites are plotted on a map, it can be seen that there is a cluster of sites along the edges of woodland areas, but an obvious lack of information on sites.
- There is a high likelihood that there are unrecorded Medieval deer parks within this area.
- There is a lack of information on Post Medieval historic management of woodland e.g. saw pits and industrial activity.
- The woodlands in particular may be hiding evidence of the chronology and form of agricultural land use as they expanded and contracted over the centuries.
- In many instances SMR and HER are recorded as points and therefore do not give the wider picture, such as the extent of field systems.
- There have not been any systematic surveys of the features associated with ancient county boundaries and ancient parish boundaries, or any studies of their interrelationships.
- There has not been a systematic assessment of aerial photographs of the area and it is therefore likely that many barrows for instance, which have been ploughed out, have not been recorded. A recent Aerial Survey of sites in the Tarrant Valley by English Heritage discovered on average 12 new sites per square kilometre.
- Building records for the area are sparse and attention has focused on the listed buildings associated with the designed landscape rather than on vernacular architecture.

The AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation has revealed the character of the wider historic landscape, but further information is required on the history and development on the pre-1800 enclosure in the area and in particular on the pre-1800 piecemeal irregular curving enclosure on the southern edge of the settlement.

Despite the importance of the Selwood Forest in defining the historic character of this area key aspects of the hunting legacy are either unknown or poorly understood.

- It is not clear what aspects of the landscape of the Medieval Selwood Forest survive, including boundaries, traces of woodland management, settlements, and deer parks.
- What physical evidence is there for the Selwood Forests supposed Saxon origins?
- More research could be undertaken on historical features with biodiversity importance, such as ancient trees and unimproved grassland.

The area is associated with a dense historic pattern of Rights of Ways but the historic characteristics of all the routeways have not been systematically recorded.

#### **Existing levels of Protection and Heritage at Risk**

Three of the seventeen SAMs in the area are at High Risk. They are under threat from scrub and tree growth, forestry practices and visitor erosion (English Heritage at Risk Register 2009). This is indicative of the risk to the wider known archaeological record.

The three Conservation Areas in Area 1 do not as yet have Conservation Area Appraisals.

The threat to Grade II listed buildings is unknown.

#### **Loss and Condition**

Over the last 100 years there has been considerable boundary loss leading to deterioration in the coherence of the pattern of pre-1800 enclosure and the potential loss of historic boundary features. This pattern has been concentrated among the pre-1800 fields on the western, southern and northern sides of the area. However pockets of pristine fields do survive. Some of these fields are in arable production with a potential impact on buried archaeology.

The pre-1800 fields to the west of the area below the woodland belt have seen little boundary alteration and on the whole are under pasture.

This contrasts with the situation around Kilmington where new fields have been created in what was former common land, and in the north of the area around Cley Hill where formerly open grazing has been enclosed. In addition to the loss of historic land uses the introduction of more intensive arable production into these areas will impact on the known buried archaeology and earthworks in this area.

The main area of woodland has seen little addition or shrinkage over the last 100 years with the exception of the northwest of the area with the addition of large plantations in

the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This has radically transformed the former common land which previously existed in this area. There have however been shifts in the composition of woodland with the introduction of greater numbers of conifers. The woodland is in active management but some archaeological earthworks are under threat from scrub encroachment.

The historic parks and gardens in the area are in good condition and in active management. The landscape of Longleat has seen the greatest changes, with the introduction of the safari park being the most notable addition.

The state of the wider built heritage in the area is unknown, but as many of the known listed features are either in active management as part of designed landscapes or as residential dwellings, it can be postulated that the condition of most buildings is good. The main risk being to any redundant farm buildings features not in active management, such as milestones, or to features with high maintenance costs, such as churches.



*See Background Paper 4 for an overview of the change in land use patterns in the AONB.*

## Coherence

The designed landscapes in this area are the most coherent, accessible and easily appreciated features. The pre 1800 characteristics of the landscape are also very coherent in places, including pre 1800 fieldscapes, ancient woodland and remnants of historic land use such as common land or downland; these are not so easily appreciated however. The historic features of the built environment associated with historic settlements and designed landscapes are very visible. However important archaeological sites and features in the area are not so easily appreciated, being associated with woodland.

## Forces for change

### *Overview of the sensitivities of the landscape area to change*

The woodland, in conjunction with the mosaic of parkland and pasture, is an integral element of the area's character. The landscape also has a very special sense of remoteness and mystery which would be easily eroded by piecemeal development. The sensitivity of the character area to change is high.

The sensitivity of Kilmington Common lies in its sense of openness and the uniformity of its land cover, which evokes a simple, uncluttered character. The sensitivity of this landscape to change is moderately-high.

For more information see "Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Landscape Sensitivity Study 2007".

### *Overview of forces for change operating on the historic environment*

Theme 1: Agriculture and Farming

- Increased positive management of elements of the historic environment by landowners until 2013 as an increasing number of farmers enter agri-environment schemes for a 10 year period. Maintenance of current levels of agri-environment scheme monies would increase the numbers of land holdings undertaking positive management of historic environment assets. However the likely possibility of reduced levels of agri-environment money post 2013 could have a major impact on the positive management of archaeological sites and the wider historic landscape in the future.

#### Theme 2: Climate Change

- More frequent and severe flooding, which may damage some historic buildings.
- Fewer frosts and drier summers, and the northward migration of pests and diseases, which may make it difficult to maintain traditional planting schemes in some historic gardens.
- Some historically authentic tree plantings may not be viable by the time they reach maturity.
- A possible increase in the frequency of extreme weather, or a change in its geographical distribution, which could pose an increased risk of damage to some historic landscapes and buildings, as well as trees.
- Construction of new renewable energy infrastructure, including wind turbines. small scale hydroelectric turbines may also have a direct archaeological impact on riverside remains.
- An increased reliance on wood fuel might provide opportunities for the more active management of the woodland, thereby helping to protect archaeological remains; conversely increased woodland exploitation could intensify use of heavy machinery and increase woodland planting, providing a threat.

#### Theme 5: Natural Environment

- Increased demand on irrigation requirements throughout the summer, with potential water shortages leading to a knock on impact on maintenance of historic features in valley floors and wider afield, including lakes, ponds and relic water

#### Theme 6: Recreation and Tourism

- Key assets remain under positive management but may be increasingly threatened by the impact of large visitor numbers. Historic and archaeological features could be threatened by new tourist enterprises, but careful design normally enables heritage and enterprise to coexist.

#### Theme 8: Woodland in the Landscape

- Woodland in the future may be more intensively managed which may have a positive impact on known archaeological and historic features but a negative impact on areas were such features survive but have not been

identified. New woodland can reinforce the pattern of historic landscape if its location is carefully guided.



*For more information see supplementary document "Forces for change operating on the historic environment of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB at a landscape scale and their past, current and future impacts".*

### Summary of Key Threats

- Further boundary loss or change to pre 1800 fieldscapes reducing the coherence of these features.
- Loss or damage to unknown archaeological and historical features in woodlands through forestry work and scrub encroachment.
- Loss or damage to buried archaeology through ploughing.
- Potential loss of historic farm buildings and other built heritage not in active management.
- Lack of appreciation of the landscape scale legacy of Selwood Forest and the Medieval and earlier components of this landscape.
- Erosion of historic landscape character in key historic settlements lacking Conservation Area Appraisals. Erosion of historic pattern of settlement through poorly conceived infilling of existing settlements.

### Historic Environment Actions



*See Background paper 9 for a full list of Historic Environment Actions and the stages identified in their implementation.*

#### **ACTION 1: Provide an AONB wide synthesis of the distinctive character of historic settlements.**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** – Guiding change within the AONB's numerous historic villages is done best when there is an informed understanding of their particular development and character. Over half of the Conservation Areas in the AONB do not have a Conservation Area Appraisal, and there are only three Village Design Statements. Only one District has a design guide. This means that there is no easily available information source identifying the distinctive character of either individual settlements or the rural settlements of the AONB overall.

**The Potential Mechanism** – Characterisations of local settlements could be prepared to provide an accessible source of information on the historic characteristics of individual settlements and the range of characteristics found in the AONB's settlements as a whole to inform planning decisions and ensure that the distinctive character of the AONB settlements is conserved and enhanced.

#### **ACTION 3: Identify and record components of historic highways**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** - The historic highways of the AONB are an under appreciated component of the environment of the AONB and there is no coherent approach to their management and maintenance. The forms of the numerous

routeways that thread through the AONB's countryside, and the lines they take, reveal much about their complex history. They are often the means by which people still move around and appreciate the Area's landscape, but like all other parts they are subject to change and the erosion of character and fabric can lead to a loss of historic meaning. Although individual historic features associated with ancient highways, such as milestones, are recorded, the way that these features relate to each other, and the setting of the historic highways, is often ignored. This action would increase understanding, appreciation and knowledge of historic highways and by doing so ensure that their key features are retained and appropriately managed. This action is intended to draw attention to the issues at the same time as realising the potential of routeways to enhance people's enjoyment of the AONB.

**The Potential Mechanism** - attention could be focused initially on the droveways of the AONB as these represent some of the oldest routeways and are served by a good Rights of Way network. One possible Mechanism could be through the creation of self-guided trails.

#### **ACTION 5: Reduce unintended/accidental damage to buried archaeology or extant monuments**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** - Approximately 55% of the agricultural land in the AONB is cultivated. One result of this activity is the unintended damage and loss of buried archaeology. This is especially damaging in the AONB due to the complex archaeological remains which survived into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for example prehistoric settlements set within extensive field systems. This damage can be mitigated against through advice to land owners delivered, in part, through agri-environment schemes. Another area where advice can be of assistance is in increasing awareness and appreciation of more recent components of the historic landscape such as historic field boundaries (see Action 17).

**The Potential Mechanism** - Examples from other areas in the country suggest that advice to landowners aimed at reducing damage is most effectively delivered by specialist advisors. Many local authorities maintain a Historic Environment Countryside Advisor Service (HECAS) to maximise the gain for the historic environment from the various schemes designed to support the environment and rural economy (Higher and Entry Level Environmental Stewardship, Woodland Grant Schemes the AONB's own Sustainability funding, etc). A HECAS officer can be crucial in transforming the potential of these schemes into reality and in so doing help a range of agencies achieve their wider aims with regard to managing and enhancing the historic environment. In the CCWWD AONB it may be expected that a key role for a HECAS would be to provide targeted agri-environment advice aimed at reducing damage and loss of buried archaeology through ploughing.

#### **ACTION 8: Increase knowledge of woodland archaeology in the AONB**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** - The woodlands are a feature of the AONB which conceal a wealth of information on past human activity. This includes archaeological sites such as settlements and field systems, as well as information on the historic management of the woodland, such as ancient pollards and wood banks, and evidence for historic woodland industries including saw pits, charcoal burning pits and lime kiln. The lack of information on the archaeological and historic features in the woodland

means potentially nationally important and locally distinctive historic assets could be under threat from inappropriate management.

**The Potential Mechanism** – One approach to filling the gap in our knowledge of the archaeology concealed in the ancient and new woodlands of the AONB is undertaking a LiDAR (Light Detection And Ranging) survey. This could provide woodland owners and managers with the information they need to conserve and enhance these features. LiDAR is an optical remote sensing technology, normally used when flying over a study area. It is normally able to penetrate the canopy of woodland and accurately record as dense arrays of points the positions of earthwork and structural remains that would take considerable resources to plot with traditional ground survey. Quality of LiDAR results in tree cover is very dependent on how much finance was invested in the original air coverage, and it is likely that this action will require new surveys to be commissioned

**ACTION 9: Gain greater understanding of the components of the Medieval hunting areas of the AONB.**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** - The Historic Environment Action Plans have identified the Medieval hunting forests of the AONB (Cranborne Chase, Grovely Forest and Selwood Forest) as one of the most important components of the historic landscape of the AONB. However although the history of these areas has been studied their physical archaeological and historical components have not received similar attention. The role of the Medieval hunting areas, combined with the ecclesiastical powers who dominated land ownership within the AONB, and the relationship to land use and feudal society is poorly understood.

**The Potential Mechanism** – A forum could be established of local people and experts to direct research into the Medieval landscape of the area. This would help to fill the gap in our knowledge of the landscape legacy of Medieval hunting areas of the AONB.

**ACTION 10: Gain greater understanding of historic farm buildings and farmsteads**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** - Historic farm buildings and farm complexes are a key feature of the locally distinctive vernacular architecture of the AONB. There is, however, a lack of information on the location and character of historic farm buildings in the AONB, including their types, ages, typical components, materials, the ways buildings and spaces like yards work together within farmsteads, and the ways they have changed in the last few decades.

**The Potential Mechanism** - The national farmstead characterisation work championed by English Heritage could be built on to fill gaps in our knowledge of historic farm buildings and thereby help to ensure that they are properly conserved and enhanced in the future, or to ensure that any reuse is undertaken sensitively and on the basis of full understanding of the original form and function of the structures and spaces. One approach would be to:

- Collate existing information and make it accessible
- Undertake additional research & survey



**ACTION 11: Enhance appreciation of the Prehistoric archaeology of the area**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** - Although the Cranborne Chase is widely accepted in academic circles as containing internationally important complexes of Prehistoric archaeology, this is not widely appreciated by local people and visitors.

**The Potential Mechanism** - The lack of appreciation of the AONB's Prehistoric archaeology could be combated through the establishment of a series of self guided trails through which people could explore different aspects of the Prehistoric archaeology of the AONB.

**ACTION 12: Widen knowledge of ways and means of maintaining historic farm buildings**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** - The Historic Environment Action Plan Steering Group identified that although there had been some good examples of schemes which had reused historic farm buildings, while still maintaining their historic characteristics, these were not widely known.

**The Potential Mechanism** - Good examples of the maintenance and reuse of historic farm buildings could be celebrated and shared with Local Planning Authorities and land owners thereby helping to inspire the conservation and enhancement of other historic farm buildings and farmsteads.

**ACTION 15: Increase understanding of Medieval landscape elements of the AONB by academics, teachers and public.**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** - There is perceived to be a lack of appreciation of the Medieval components of the AONB's landscape: settlements, buildings, castles, fields, pastures, woodlands, roads, mills, hunting chase, parks, etc, all of which contribute greatly to the fabric and character of the AONB as it survives today.

**The Potential Mechanism** - The lack of appreciation of the Medieval components of the AONB landscape could be combated by a seminar and the creation of a research framework that encourages and sets out a range of achievable goals for further research in the area.

**ACTION 16: Make more widely available enhanced and targeted information on managing archaeology in woodland.**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** - The Historic Environment Action Plan Steering Group felt that there was a lack of simple readily available information targeted at woodland owners to help them more effectively manage the heritage assets in their woodland. The use of the heavy machinery involved in woodland management and harvesting can be very damaging to archaeological remains and lack of awareness of issues amongst forestry operatives has so far been a major stumbling block.

**The Potential Mechanism** – Invest effort in improving working relationships between forestry operatives, managers and archaeologists. An information base could be created for forestry operatives to help them better conserve and enhance the

archaeology of woodlands, including information on protected heritage, good practice, information sources and heritage grant schemes for woodland. This could be promoted through a training day.

**ACTION 17: Improve management of historic field boundaries and ensure they are retained**

**The Threat** - The historic fieldscapes of the AONB are key characteristics of the AONB landscape which are not at present subjected to integrated and holistic management. There has consequently been loss and gradual removal of the historic patterns of pre 1800 boundaries, including the distinctive pattern of small curving irregular fields around the Donheads. Elsewhere older field boundaries have not been maintained and are either degrading or, if originally hedgerows are becoming overgrown.

**The Potential Mechanism** - This action would aim to halt the decline in the condition of particular field boundaries and the legibility of historic field patterns by providing training for agri-environment and other land management advisors. There is already much advice available on historic field boundary conservation (including implementation of the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations) and management, often generated via the HECAS officers mentioned under Action 5, but most of this is specific to the region's where it was generated. However, this material can be reviewed and tailored to suit the needs of the AONB once a clearer understanding has been gained of the character and needs of the field boundaries within the Area.

This material should then form the basis of training sessions for farmers and land managers working within the AONB. Involvement in such an initiative might be attractive to partners such as FWAG, the National Trust, Natural England and the local Wildlife Trusts.

**ACTION 19: Coordinate advice on historic parks and gardens management**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** - Historic parks and gardens are a key characteristic of the landscape of the AONB but some historic parks and gardens are under threat from lack of resources and inability to become involved in management schemes to conserve and enhance their key features.

**The Potential Mechanism** – An initial approach to this issue might be to provide the owners and managers of historic parks and gardens with advice and a readily accessible source of information on achievable best practice. Such material is available elsewhere in southern England (often generated by HECAS officers and usually based on carefully constructed Conservation Management Plans). This could be reviewed and tailored to the needs of the AONB as a whole and to particular parks and gardens as required. Registered Parks and Gardens and those that contain assets subject to other forms of designation (Scheduling, Listing, SSSIs, etc) should ideally be subjected to the preparation of a fully and carefully considered management plan.

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Historic Environment  
**Action Plans**



Version 1 December 2010. Written by Emma Rouse, HEAP Officer  
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Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



## Historic Environment Action Plans

[www.historiclandscape.co.uk](http://www.historiclandscape.co.uk)

This document forms part of a suite of documents which together comprise the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Environment Action Plans, or HEAPs for short. The HEAPs provide a summary of the key characteristics of the historic environment of the AONB at a landscape scale, they then set out the significance, condition and forces for change affecting the historic fabric and character of this special landscape and identify proactive actions to conserve and enhance these special characteristics.



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