



Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



# Historic Environment Action Plans

Area 12: Southern Downland Belt





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)**

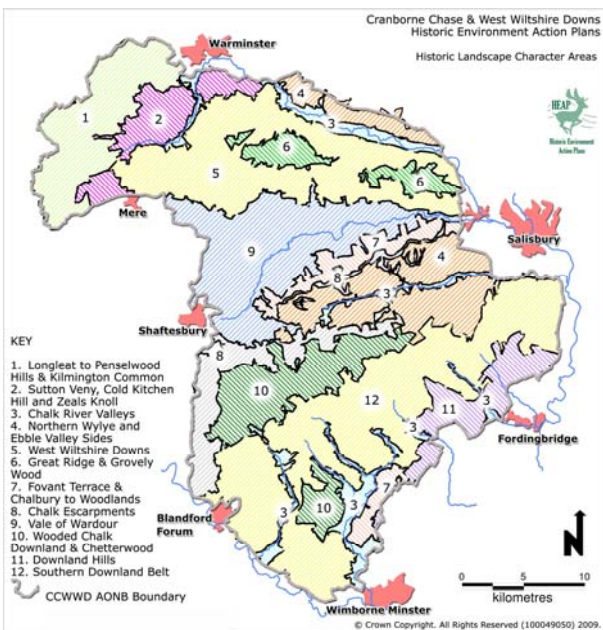


**Method** - Introduces the methodology behind the production of the Historic Environment Action Plans **(M1 to M3)**

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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.

Landscape Character Areas were identified, information used to create these descriptions statement 'Creating and Describing Historic Character Areas'.

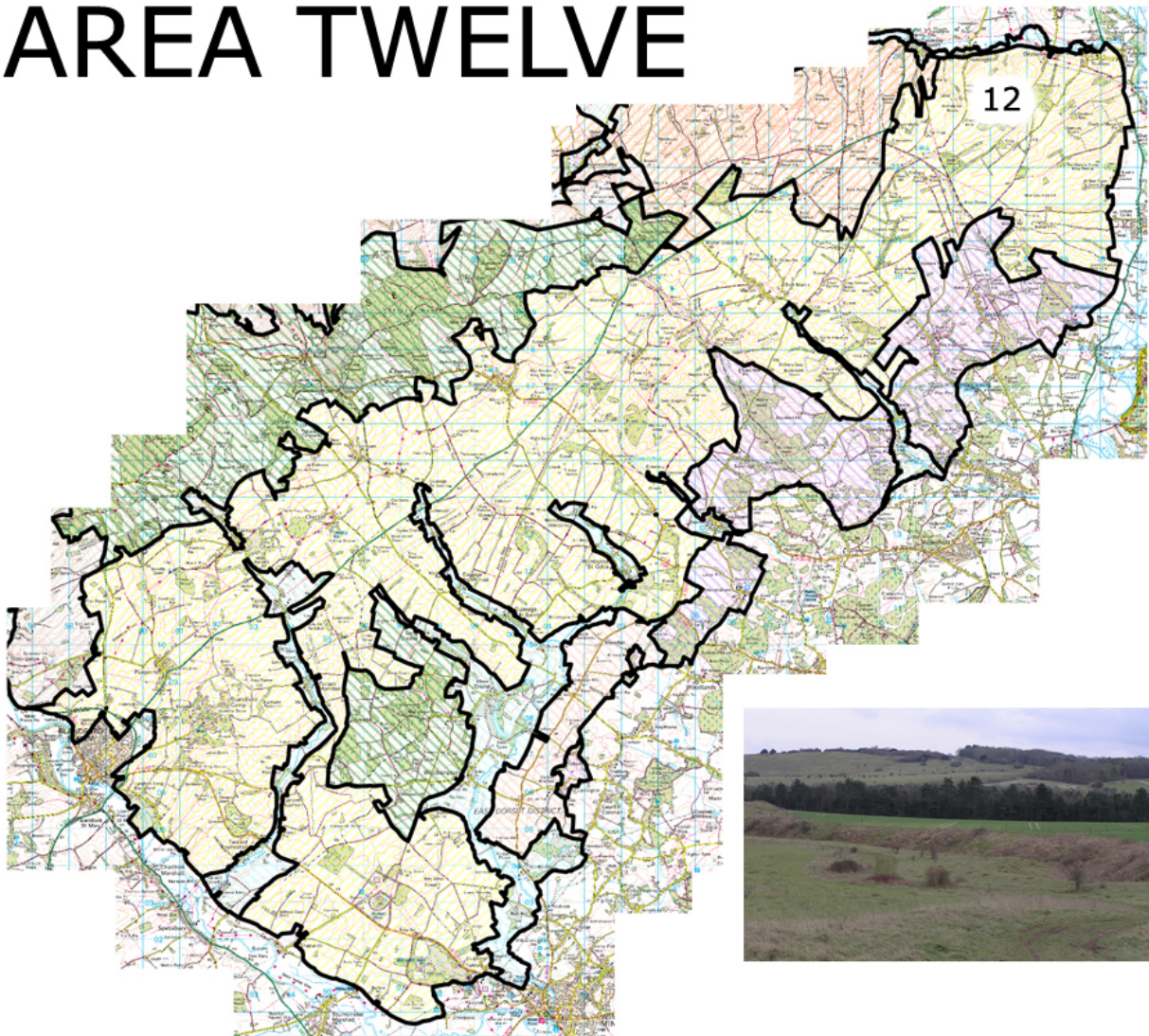
**M2** The process through which the Historic and mapped, and the sources of is documented in the methodological

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

The Southern Downland Belt extends across the southern part of the AONB. It is a large scale landscape with a solid geology of Upper Chalk. Intensive arable farming is the dominant land use with small areas of improved pasture and remnant chalk grassland. Pockets of woodland also occur. The land form is comprised of gentle slopes which slope down towards the south east. These downs are cut by a series of distinct river valleys (see Area 3 C-F). This Historic Landscape Character Area is bounded to the north by the wooded chalk downland of the Cranborne Chase (see Area 10) and the Ebbie Valley (see Area 4B), and Downland Hills (Area 11) to the South.

Location Map

# AREA TWELVE



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## Summary

### Summary of Key Characteristics

- *Large scale open 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century fields the boundaries of which often cut across the prevailing topography. These were created from vast areas of former downlands.*
- *Pockets of open downland survive*
- *Extremely rich archaeological record*
- *The West Wiltshire Downs is notable for its Iron Age and Romano British archaeology, while the southern downland belt is famous for its spectacular Prehistoric archaeology, including the Dorset Cursus.*
- *Historic road junctions.*
- *The areas are crisscrossed by Roman roads and other ancient routeways such as droveways.*
- *Coherent patterns of nucleated historic settlement with locally distinctive vernacular architecture.*
- *Nationally important historic parks and gardens.*

### Summary of Statement of Significance

- *Coherent historic landscape character of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century fields juxtaposed alongside significant pockets of older land use including pre 1800 fieldscapes and open downland*
- *High numbers of nationally important archaeological sites including complexes of prehistoric monuments*
- *Designed historic parks with important aesthetic value*
- *Significant historic and evidential value including strong illustrative value to many of the historic features in the landscape.*

### Summary of Forces for Change

- *Changes in Agriculture and Farming*
- *Changes in Climate*
- *Changes in Land Holdings*
- *Changes in Natural Environment*
- *Changes in Recreation and Tourism*
- *Changes in Settlement and Infrastructure Development*

**Summary of State of the Historic Environment**

- *This is a strong and coherent landscape of large scale 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> fields which have replaced formerly open downland interspersed with important areas of pre 1800 enclosure and historic parks which give time depth to the landscape.*
- *Nationally important archaeological and historical features are under threat.*

**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 6: Gain AONB wide coverage of mapping and interpretation of archaeological features from aerial photographs*
- *ACTION 10: Gain greater understanding of historic farm buildings and farmsteads*
- *ACTION 11: Enhance appreciation of the Prehistoric archaeology of the area*
- *ACTION 13: Enhance appreciation of the military history and archaeology*
- *ACTION 15: Increase understanding of Medieval landscape elements of the AONB by academics, teachers and public.*
- *ACTION 17: Improve management of historic boundaries and ensure they are retained*
- *ACTION 19: Coordinate advice on historic parks and gardens management*

**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:



Area 3: Chalk River Valleys

Area 4: Northern Wylve and Ebbles Valley Sides

Area 7: Parliamentary Patterns on the Fovant Terrace and between Chalbury and Woodlands

Area 10: Wooded Chalk Downland of the Cranborne Chase and Chetterwood

Area 11: Downland Hills

Area 12: Southern Downland Belt

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



Theme 1: Ancient Boundaries and Land Ownership

Theme 2: Farms and Farming

Theme 3: Fields in the Landscape

Theme 4: Historic Parks and Gardens in the Landscape

Theme 7: Landscapes of Militarism, Commemoration & Defence

Theme 8: Landscapes of Prehistory

Theme 9: Open Land

Theme 10: Routeways in the Landscape

Theme 11: Settlement in the Landscape

## History and Context

The area is wholly within the Medieval hunting area of the Cranborne Chase. The rights to hunt on the Chase first came into Crown hands during the reign of William I and during the Medieval period they passed between the Crown and magnates close to the Crown. During the whole of the Medieval period the Chase rights were imposed across the whole of the Chase bounds which placed restrictions on the amount of enclosure which could incur in this area.

The Southern Downland Belt was up until 150 years a large area of open chalk downland. Today the open downland in this area is limited to small areas on the edge of farms, in steep sided combs or at the Martin Down Nature Reserve. However, historic ordnance maps show that as recently as 50 years ago the Southern Downland Belt was dominated by open downland and unimproved grassland.

These high downlands were typified by vast uninterrupted vistas, lack of dwellings, few marked roads and very large flocks of sheep. The open downland, areas of rough grazing, and furze were all extremely important features of the landscape in the past, much of these areas were subject to

common rights which gave people access to fuel, summer grazing and materials for construction. These more marginal lands were increasingly encroached upon as the land was more intensively farmed in the 19th and 20th centuries. These pressures meant that the open land in the AONB shrunk to a fraction of its former size. The locations where it is still found mark an important historical survival, therefore, which is often also of great ecological significance.

Piecemeal enclosure of this area began prior to 1750 but was formalised through the process of Parliamentary enclosure between 1750 and 1850 and accelerated during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The nucleated settlements on the northern side of the area exploited this resource and are associated with pockets of earlier land use, including the fossilised Medieval strip fields at Martin.

Between 1600 and 1900 landowners expressed their status and wealth through the construction of great houses, often associated with formally designed gardens and landscapes. The Southern Downland was no exception to this trend, with several strikingly designed landscapes being created including Kingston Lacy, Eastbury and Wimborne St Giles.

B2

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

B6

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

B7

*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 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.

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

Rolland Gant's book Dorset Villages (1980) provides a useful potted history of the villages in this area in Dorset.

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

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 at Kingston Lacy, as well as a regional archaeological strategy 2008-2011.

Overviews of the archaeological evidence for past human activity in the Cranborne Chase are available from Martin Green's description of the Down Farm landscape in *A Landscape Revealed 10'000 years on a Chalkland Farm* (2000) published by Tempus, and in *Landscape, monuments and society, The prehistory of Cranborne Chase* (1991) describing research undertaken on the Prehistoric landscape by Martin Green, John Barrett and Richard Bradley and published by the Cambridge University Press. The Dorset Cursus is discussed further by Martin Green in *The Chase, the Hart and the Park. An exploration of the historic landscapes of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB* available from the AONB.

Several excavations of round barrows in the AONB have been published in the area including by Piggott in 1944 of the barrows at Crichel and Launceston Downs in *Archaeologia* 90: 47-80.

Wainwright's excavations *Gussage All Saints An Iron Age Settlement* (1979) was published as a stand alone report by the Department of the Environment

The Roman buildings excavated at Minchington are discussed in an interim report by Sparey-Green in the *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society* vol 128 (2007): 53-60.

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.

The evidence for the transition from Roman to Saxon influence is looked at in a series of papers in *Roman Wiltshire and After: Papers in Honour of Ken Annable* (2001) edited by P. Ellis and published by the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society.



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

## Landscape Scale Characteristics and Components

### Ancient Boundaries and Land Ownership

- The Southern Downland Belt is crossed by the ancient county boundaries of Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire which deviates from the course of the modern boundary.
- The ancient parish boundaries across the Southern Downland Belt are irregular in shape and become increasingly large to the south. Those on the western side of the area incorporate a slice of downland, and the Stour Valley which is beyond the border of the AONB.

- The line of the Bokerley Dyke runs north-south across the area. This has a prehistoric origin, possible Iron Age, and there is evidence that suggests that the earthwork was considerably reinforced and modified by the Roman administration, in the 4thC AD, in an attempt to overcome the threats of Germanic insurgents. This marks the boundary of Saxon influence in the 6<sup>th</sup> century.
- Bokerley Dyke cuts or truncates an earlier Bronze Age Boundary known as Grims Ditch or Dyke. In the Bronze Age the ranch was likely to have enclosed a quantity of banked enclosures within its demarcation. These enclosures are recorded but are not necessarily assigned to the Bronze Age – fieldwork is required to positively date these. Typifying Bronze Age land claims, there are examples of round barrows sited just outside the ranch boundary and two years ago, Bronze Age sherds were recovered from rabbit scrapes on one of these barrows, within a kilometre of the Bokerley earthwork. Soldiers Rings and other marked prehistoric settlements may well be associated with this ranch. Much more work needs to be undertaken in this area.
- The Bankes family have had a considerable influence on the landscape in the vicinity of Kingston Lacy in the Post Medieval period.

T1

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

### Farms and Farming in the Landscape

- One of the main areas of arable production is across the southern downland belt but this is interspersed with areas of permanent grassland and parkland. Historically this was a vast area of open chalk grassland punctuated by nucleated settlements surrounded by open fields.
- Medium survival of pre-1750 farmstead buildings.
- Loose courtyard plans predominate, with regular courtyard plans dating from the 19th century being dominant on the higher downs.
- The principal manor farms were provided with two or three barns. The importance of arable is reflected in the surviving barns of up to nine bays in length, although five bay barns are most common.
- Increases in grain production and yields in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries often led to the construction of an additional barn and in many cases, the enlargement of earlier barns.
- A small number of late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century outfarms survive on the downs, typically with barn and flanking shelter sheds facing into yards. Some retain rare surviving evidence of sheds for sheep.
- The oldest barns are stone built, but brick farm buildings dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> /19<sup>th</sup> centuries predominate.

T2

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

### Fields in the Landscape

- There is also a wealth of dated and undated field systems and many undated linear features and enclosures.
- This downland is characterised by blocks of large modern fields and regular grid like 19<sup>th</sup> century parliamentary and planned enclosure which have over the last 200 years divided up and enclosed great swathes of formerly open downland. This leaves a homogenous landscape.
- In the Southern Downland Belt this wider pattern is punctuated by blocks of pre 1800 fields at Martin, in the vicinity of Chettle, and Handley Green.

T3

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

### Historic Parks and Gardens in the Landscape

- Pockets of parkland dominate areas within the wider Southern Downland Belt including:
  - The parkland and woodland at Kingston Lacy surrounded by a pattern of smaller pre 1800 fields
  - The parkland and Brownian ride at Wimborne St Giles
  - The historic house and garden at Gunville and Eastbury Park
- There are locally listed parks and gardens across the Southern Downland Belt.
- Blagdon originated as an extensive Medieval Deer Park. The park pale can still be traced around much of its length today.

T4

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

### Hunting Landscapes

- The Southern Downland Belt is nearly wholly within the ancient hunting grounds of the Cranborne Chase, with the exception of the far south-eastern edge, which falls within the Medieval Badbury Forest. It comprises the vast majority of the outer bounds of the Chase.

T5

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

### Industry in the Landscape

- The downlands are dotted with the remnants of small chalk quarries.
- Association with 'brick and tile' works, 'domestic, decorated and fancy' pottery wares, 'pipe making', extensive 'coppice working' (thatching spars, brooms, fencing and hurdling), and milling by wind and water.

T6

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

### Landscapes of Militarism, Commemoration & Defence

- There are relic rifle ranges and practice trenches associated with Martin Down.
- The large Military Camp at Blandford is located in the south west corner of the Southern Downland Belt.
- There was a military airfield at Tarrant Rushton opened during the Second World War and closed in 1980 and a military hospital at Kingston Lacy open between 1944 and 1947.

T7

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

### Landscapes of Prehistory

- These areas have an extremely rich archaeological record, including nationally important Prehistoric archaeology.

- On the Southern Downland Belt this includes a nationally important complex of Prehistoric monuments centred on the Dorset Cursus and including Henges, Neolithic round and long barrows and mortuary enclosures, a dense concentration of Bronze Age round barrows, and several important Prehistoric settlements.
- Long barrows are distributed across the Southern Downland Belt.
- There is a high density of Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age flint artefacts which have been collected on the Southern Downland Belt through fieldwalking, especially associated on the clay with flints.

T8

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

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

- There is a golf course at Ashley Wood on the Southern Downland Belt

### Open Land

- Pockets of former downland survive, notably in the nature reserve of Martin Down.

T9

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

### Routeways in the Landscape

- There is only one major road across the Southern Downland Belt – the modern day A354 – this did not become a major highway until it was turnpiked in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It appears that during the Medieval period the main routeways from Salisbury passed to the south east via Cranborne and Wimborne, circumnavigating the main area of the Cranborne Chase. One ancient trackway crosses the eastern edge of the area, known as the Cloven Way, running south from Salisbury through Odstock, Downton and Breamore.
- A small section of the A354 has been dualled in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Roads strike off from the A354 into valley systems. There is only one main road northward leading into the wooded heartland of the Cranborne Chase, running through Sixpenny Handley which was also a former turnpike. This ran parallel with another turnpike through Chettle, which is a minor road today. These join together south of Wyn Green.
- The network of paths and bridleways across the Southern Downland Belt are fairly straight often running parallel to each other. There is a more complex system of bridleways in the vicinity of Pentridge and Martin running parallel to each other between areas of fossilised Medieval strip fields.
- There is one relic military line on the Southern Downland Belt – the Blandford Camp line. This was a branch railway from the Somerset and Dorset Railway to take personnel to the camp from Blandford Forum during the First World War. The line of this railway can be traced as a cutting.
- The Roman road between Badbury Rings and Old Sarum, known as the Ackling Dyke, is a highly legible feature in the landscape and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument along much of its length. Badbury Rings is also an important landscape feature not just as an Iron Age Hillfort but as a major Roman road junction and a focus for Roman settlement. This former road is either bridleway or footpath along its length, as well as a short stretch of the A354 near Pentridge, which was also a former turnpike.

- In addition part of the B3081 north of Ashmore traces the course of the former Roman road northwards from Badbury Rings. However this heritage is much less legible in the landscape due in part to topography, and the lack of obvious continuation of the feature.

T10

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

### Settlement in the Landscape

- There are several high status Roman buildings on the Southern Downland Belt, with other Roman settlement being associated with the former Roman Roads on the western and southern edges of the area.
- There are a string of deserted Medieval settlements across the northern edge of the Southern Downland Belt.
- The Southern Downland Belt has a slightly denser settlement pattern but is still sparsely populated compared to other Historic Landscape Character Areas in the AONB. The settlement pattern is of scattered farm and nucleated settlements such as Sixpenny Handley, especially along its northern side, and linear settlements, such as Martin, at the far end of the Winterbournes. These settlements have expanded in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There has also been an infilling of isolated farms and settlements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Since the Prehistoric period settlement seems to have gravitated from downland areas into river valleys. There is archaeological evidence for Bronze Age and Iron Age settlements on the higher areas of the Southern Downland Belt.
- Buildings in the Southern Downland Belt tend to be constructed from white render and cob or brick, with thatch being a common building material.
- Fire has had a great influence on the settlements in both areas with both Hindon and Sixpenny Handley having to undergo major rebuilding in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries respectively.
- There are 4 Conservation Areas on the southern downland belt

T11

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

### Water in the Landscape

- There are a number of ornamental lakes associated with the historic parks and gardens in the area .

T12

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

### Woodland and Trees in the Landscape

- There has been a gradual increase in the number of small linear and rectangular plantations especially along the southern and northern edges of the Southern Downland Belts.
- Noticeable losses of woodland have occurred on the Southern Downland Belt around Chetterwood, and in the vicinity of Pimperne Wood.
- Pockets of woodland occur on the Southern Downland Belt corresponding to the loamy brown earth soils that overlie the clay-with-flint drift deposits. The landscape is more wooded towards the valleys and to the west. Small blocks of pre 1750 woodland are widely

scattered across the Southern Downland Belt. Veteran woodlands overlap the southern boundary of the Character Area from the Dorset heaths and close to the Hampshire-Wiltshire border is Great Yews, which represents one of the two best examples of natural yew woodland in Wiltshire. 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century plantings are particularly evident in and around the parklands and planned landscapes of Kingston Lacy and Wimborne St Giles. Coniferous woodland blocks established in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as game coverts and shelter belts are similar to those found on the West Wiltshire Downs and are a common feature of the area forming geometric edges. Isolated veteran trees can be found in chalk pits and hidden within conifer game coverts. The majority of ancient and veteran trees will be found in boundary features, particularly the ancient hedgerows and roadsides. The longevity of the boundaries in this area, some dating back to the Bronze Age, make the hedgerows and woodland strips associated with the boundaries. such as the Shire Rack, fruitful areas to search for ancient and veteran trees of all species.



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

## Statement of Significance

### Introduction

The area is very significant both in terms of the coherence of the historic landscape character, and the presence of Prehistoric archaeology. There are a very high number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments including clusters of internationally important Prehistoric monuments. Surviving blocks of open grassland are significant both as a historic landscape type and also due to the archaeological earthworks they contain. Time depth is also displayed in pockets of older enclosure types.

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

The wider historic landscape character of this area is extremely coherent, homogenous landscape of blocks of large modern fields and regular grid like 19<sup>th</sup> century parliamentary and planned enclosure. These are visually dominant and distinctive to chalk downland landscapes and have obscured earlier traces of land uses. These patterns are juxtaposed by pockets of pre 1800 enclosure and includes historic landscape types which are rare in the landscape as a whole.

Built settlement evidence is generally sparse with scattered farm and nucleated settlements. However where these are found they are associated with a distinctive vernacular architecture using local building materials and large numbers of historic buildings.

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 and wider landscape elements.

Traces of former land uses are confined to large pockets of surviving open chalk grassland and areas where pre 1800 landscape survive. Time depth in the wider landscape is also displayed in the form of the high number of Prehistoric archaeological earthworks which are visible in the landscape. However many other known sites especially the Prehistoric and Roman field systems are only visible as crop marks which reduces their coherence.

### Typical surviving components of the area

- Ancient parish boundaries.
- Ancient large scale linear banks and ditches.
- Homogenous landscape of blocks of large modern fields and regular grid like 19<sup>th</sup> century Parliamentary and planned enclosure, punctuated by blocks of pre 1800 fields.
- Extremely rich archaeological record, including nationally important. Prehistoric archaeology.
- Pockets of parkland dominate areas within the wider Southern Downland Belt.
- Large pockets of former downland survive.
- Evidence for former Roman roads, droveways and turnpikes.
- Scattered farm and nucleated settlements.
- Pre 1800 small scale scattered woodland and 20<sup>th</sup> century smaller conifer plantations.
- Military activity including Blandford Camp.

### Nationally Protected Heritage



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

There are a very high number and density of Scheduled Ancient Monuments (227) compared with other areas. This includes a large number of Bronze Age round barrow and other Prehistoric monuments. The sites on the Southern Downland Belt include the Prehistoric sites which cluster around the Dorset Cursus, multi-period field systems, and Medieval settlements.

There are 176 listed buildings. These are associated with the historic settlements or farms but a significant number are also milestones and boundary features. There are 3 Grade I listed buildings which are all country houses, and 11 Grade II\* listed buildings, including churches, farm houses, manor houses and features associated with the great house, designed garden and parkland at Kingston Lacy.

There are 3 registered parks and gardens. There are two Grade II\* parks at Eastbury and Wimborne St Giles and one Grade II park at Kingston Lacy.

There are 4 Conservation Areas.

### Archaeological Fieldwork in the AONB



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

The 18<sup>th</sup> century antiquarian William Stukely features several Dorset monuments on the Southern Downland Belt, including the Ackling Dyke, in his book 'Itenerarium Curiosum'. The same area was a focus of interest for General Pitt Rivers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Southern Downland Belt remains a focus for study in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Systematic excavations were undertaken by R C Clay of the Iron Age settlements of the Cranborne Chase in the 1920s.

Aerial photographic survey of archaeology centred on Bokerley Dyke undertaken by the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments in the early 1990s (now subsumed by English Heritage).

Research project, led by Richard Bradley, John Barrett and Martin Green, initially focused on excavations of the Bronze Age site at South Lodge Camp before widening its scope to look at the social development of monuments and landscape of the Cranborne Chase from the Neolithic to the Iron Age. Since this project Martin Green has continued his investigation of the Prehistoric and historic landscape surrounding his farm, and continues to conduct regular fieldwalking, survey and excavations.

### Evidential Value

Parts of the area have been subject to detailed archaeological excavation and systematic survey (*Legacy of Archaeological Discovery* above). Where information is available the county Historical Environment Records amongst other sources indicate features including:

- Archaeological sites:
  - Neolithic Cursus associated with Neolithic long barrows, henges, round barrows and other features
  - Twenty-two Neolithic long barrows
  - Large numbers of (in excess of 400) Bronze Age round barrows including barrow cemeteries
  - Bronze Age enclosures, settlements and field systems.
  - Five Iron Age hillforts
  - Iron Age and Roman enclosures, settlements, trackways and extensive field systems
  - Possible Roman amphitheatre close to Badbury Rings
  - Roman road
  - Roman villa sites and a Roman well
  - Several burials including an Early Saxon cemetery
  - Medieval deer parks
  - Medieval pillow mounds
  - Medieval lynchets and ridge and furrow
  - Post Medieval lime kilns
  - Early Medieval settlement site
  - Shrunken and deserted Medieval settlements
  - Prehistoric, Roman and Early Medieval extensive banks and ditches
  - Large numbers of undated circular features, linear features and enclosures
  - Extensive undated field systems

Many of these sites are under the plough. Earthworks survive adjacent to settlements, in areas of surviving chalk grassland and where scheduled ancient monuments have been placed in set aside.

- Ancient borderlands between Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire
- Fossilised Medieval field systems
- Living archaeology associated with ancient boundaries and Medieval deer parks and open downland.
- Medieval drove ways and trackways
- Internationally important 18<sup>th</sup> century parks and gardens
- A rich architectural history including great houses such as Kingston Lacy and their estate style but also including:
  - Medieval churches and monuments in their church yard



- Village crosses and pumps
- Local vernacular architecture
- Lodge houses
- Manor houses
- Historic farmsteads including farmhouses and farm buildings
- Toll house and boundary stones and milestones.

The key to the unique historic landscape character of the area is the history of the Cranborne Chase and the long survival of chalk grassland in this area. This helped to preserve the ancient historic landscape characteristics including open chalk grassland and relic medieval farming patterns.

### Historical Value

#### *Illustrative Value*

Prehistoric monuments, field systems and settlement sites existing as visible earthworks, including the group of monuments surrounding the Dorset Cursus.

The Ackling Dyke and junction at Bokerley Dyke are legible reminders of the legacy of Roman presence in Britain.

The linear earthen banks and ditches, including the Bokerley Dyke, are visible evidence of the influence of prehistoric boundaries in the landscape.

Remnants of Medieval farming preserved as fossilised strip fields provide evidence of feudal system of open farming.

Transformation of church interiors illustrates the English Reformation AD 1500-1600 and the Church of England breakaway from the authority of the Pope

Highly legible post dissolution pattern of landownership can be used to illustrate the rise of the new peers, landed gentry and yeoman classes AD 1600-1800.

The great houses established in the centre of parkland can be used to illustrate the way landowners expressed their status and wealth between 1600 and 1900.

Small number of late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century out-farms surviving on the downs can be used to provide linkages to the sheep/corn system of agriculture.

The modern picture of extensive arable holdings on former downland areas interspersed with remnant grasslands still used as grazing can be used to illustrate the enclosure of land through Parliamentary acts and informal enclosure.

The expansion of arable land across downland areas can be used to illustrate the expansion of agriculture during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The lasting legacy of war graves and memorials provide a visible link to the First and Second World Wars.

Blandford Camp provides a highly visible reminder of the Cold War and modern military conflict.

### *Associative Value*

Charles Kingsley, author of the *Water Babies*, was curate at Pimperne for a short time.

The house, garden and park at Wimborne St Giles is intimately associated with the family which shaped them, the Earls of Shaftesbury.

Shapwick is associated with the Farquharsons, wealthy newcomers to the Cranborne Chase in 1717. This association is marked by the Farquharsons, Arms a local pub.

The remnants of the country house at Eastbury are associated with Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726) English architect. The remains of the gardens and parkland are associated with Charles Bridgeman (1690-1738) English garden designer. James Thomson (1700-1748) poet, was inspired by the parks and gardens at Eastbury.

William Barnes (1801-1886) was a poet born near Pentridge in 1800 and was later a rector and schoolteacher at Mere. He wrote many poems in Dorset dialect and reflected on county life and character.

Argentinean born W H Hudson (1841-1922) based his book *A Shepherd's Life* (1910) on his conversations with a shepherd named Dawes from Martin. In this book, Hudson renamed the village Winterbourne Bishop.

The downlands inspired Daniel Defoe (1659-1731) an English writer who wrote a three volume travel book; *Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, published between 1724 and 1727.

### **Aesthetic Value**

The aesthetic value of the area is derived from the homogenous imposition of large scale arable fields on the landscape juxtaposed with pockets of much older land use, including Medieval fields, pockets of ancient woodland and chalk grassland.

The designed landscapes of Kingston Lacy, Eastbury and Wimborne St Giles also have value in their formal design.

### **Communal Value**

The villages in this area are strong vibrant communities. A snapshot of heritage which is valued by local people can be seen from available local parish plans:

The Colehill Parish Plan identifies the importance of the six Bronze Age round barrows in the parish as providing important links to past people who lived in the area. Another important element is the network of ancient trackways which cross the parish.

Pimperne Village Plan (2003) also highlights the longevity of settlement in the parish. It highlights the importance of the 12<sup>th</sup> century church and remains of a 14<sup>th</sup> century preaching cross, and the long connection with the military from 1720 to present, and the connection with Charles Kingsley.

Sixpenny Handley with Pentridge (2009) parish plan (2007) identifies the wealth of prehistoric sites and artefacts as a key attribute of the parish. The parish perceives itself as forming the centre of

the Cranborne Chase. Manor Farm is associated with the venue for hatching the abortive plot against the state in 1655 by the Royalist Colonel Penruddock, who was later executed. The great fire of 1892 is identified as a key historical event within the village.

## State of the Historic Environment

### Introduction

This is a strong and coherent landscape of large scale 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> fields which have replaced formerly open downland, interspersed with important areas of pre 1800 enclosure and historic parks which give time depth to the landscape. Remnant areas of open chalk downland are an important historical survival. The archaeological resource in this area is under considerable threat from ploughing, but surviving earthworks are an important characteristic of views across the landscape.

### Current Knowledge

Some of the Prehistoric sites and features in the area have been subject to detailed study and excavation so that Cranborne Chase is synonymous with Prehistoric studies. An aerial survey also identified a wealth of sites centred on the Bokerley Dyke complex.

In addition the historic parks and gardens in the area, due to their importance, have been subject to analysis and enquiry.

There are significant gaps in our knowledge and understanding of this area:

- There has not been a systematic assessment of aerial photographs of the whole 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.
- Lack of information on the relationship between the prehistoric Bokerley Dyke, Grims Ditch and the enclosures and field systems associated with this boundary.
- Evidence for later human activity in the landscape has largely been ignored.
- 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.
- There has not as yet been any comprehensive systematic survey of the features associated with ancient county boundaries and ancient parish boundaries, or any studies of their interrelationships, although the Dorset County Boundary survey is beginning to rectify this issue.

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 pre1800 enclosure and woodland in the area

### Existing Levels of Protection and Heritage at Risk

Over half of the Scheduled Ancient Monuments are at high risk (141). The majority of SAMs in this area are under threat from arable clipping and ploughing, although scrub and tree growth, and

vehicle erosion, also has a part to play (English Heritage at Risk Register 2009). This is indicative of the risk to the wider known archaeological record.

Two of the four Conservation Areas have appraisals.

### Loss and Condition

The most striking feature of this area is the loss of former areas of open downland and their enclosure during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, meaning that only small pockets of open land survive. During this period small angular blocks of woodland were created across the area. In some areas pre 1800 fieldscapes survive with minimal boundary alterations.

The ploughing up of former grassland also resulted in the loss of archaeological earthworks to the extent that many archaeological sites in the area are only visible as crop marks. However enough extant features survive to make visible archaeology, such as round barrows, a key component of this landscape.

Some of the historic parks and gardens in the area, such as Kingston Lacy, are in good condition and in active management whilst others, including Wimborne St Giles House and Park, are cause for considerable concern. Eastbury Park survives mainly as earthworks and only part of the original house survives.

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 features associated with historic parks, 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

This is a strong and coherent landscape which has been radically transformed in the last 100 years. Vast tracts of open chalk grassland have vanished and with them much of the sense of time depth in the landscape, to the extent that the remaining visible vestiges of historic land use and past human activity are even more precious. This includes the blocks of Pre 1800 fields at Martin, in the vicinity of Chettle, and Handley Green.

Enough archaeological monuments survive as earthworks for this area to remain synonymous with Prehistoric archaeology. However the relationship between many of these features and the occurrence of large scale features such as field systems and the great Dorset Cursus are a lot less apparent.

The historic park and garden at Kingston Lacy is a particularly accessible and easily appreciated feature in the area

### Forces for Change

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

The characteristic open, expansive qualities of these landscapes make them highly sensitive to most forms of development and land management changes, as the introduction of new characteristics into the landscapes would be readily perceptible in most views. These are large-scale landscapes of broad rolling hills and gentle slopes, with a large 'skyscape' and panoramic, distant views. The typical rolling chalk 'upland' relief ensures that this landscape has few concealed corners and areas which appear relatively well hidden from one viewpoint are likely to be fully exposed from another.

The landscape elements making up the character of the landscape of the Southern Downland Belt are still recognisable, their combination and patterning is generally less consistent than the West Wiltshire Downs Open Chalk Downland, and is therefore less distinctive. However, the character area does have a high density of significant ecological and cultural elements. The sensitivity of this landscape to change is moderate-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. Changes in stocking densities and grazing regimes have the potential to rapidly affect the appearance of this historic landscape. Archaeological monuments on surviving grassland need carefully planned grazing regimes if they are to remain free of scrub.
- Archaeological monuments already under the plough will continue to be ploughed for the foreseeable future. New crops and further intensification may increase damage to buried archaeology, and change appearance of landscape, and result in further removal of field boundaries.
- Major changes to the way in which fields are managed and used, increased mechanisation has the potential to lead to the need for larger agricultural buildings served by larger machinery, increased redundancy, and conversion of historic farm buildings.

##### Theme 2: Climate Change

- 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. Wind turbines and wind farms could, if insensitively located, compromise significant

landscapes, the visual settling of important sites and buildings, or the integrity of the wider historic environment.

- New biomass crops may pose a risk to buried archaeology or radically change the appearance of the wider historic landscape character.
- Some micro-renewable energy solutions might be suitable to fit on historic buildings.
- Energy saving measures could detract from the historic character and fabric of buildings.

#### Theme 4: Land Holdings in the AONB

- Landscape scale legacy of the great estates remains visible. In some areas conservatism in land use practices is encouraged and tolerated by estates, through the use of covenants leading to the maintenance of historic landscape character.
- Erosion in the historic patterns of land holdings resulting from farm amalgamation and diversification and the further intensification of agriculture. Decrease in profitability of small land holdings could lead to neglect of small or marginal areas of the AONB. This would lead to the loss of key elements in the historic landscape, including fields, field boundaries, parish boundaries and trackways.

#### Theme 5: Natural Environment

- Increased levels of soil erosion have potential for major erosion of important archaeological sites. Loss or impoverishment of soil will affect viability of agricultural businesses, with a knock-on affect on patterns of agricultural exploitation and thus on historic landscape character.
- Increased water extraction has a potential impact on buried archaeological remains and, in particular, those that are currently waterlogged.
- Closer dialogue between historic and natural environment interests should lead to the design of initiatives that have mutual benefit. A better understanding of long term historical change may suggest potential for more innovative schemes that could include some reversion of intensively used land.

#### 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 7: Settlement and Infrastructure Development

- Reuse of historic farmsteads provides increased opportunities for maintaining these structures that contribute much to the historic landscape character of the AONB as long as care is taken on the design of any conversions to retain original materials, openings and character. The creation of new farmyards with standardised farm buildings adjacent to the historic farmstead may lead to neglect of these historic assets or conversely to opportunities to ensure their future through well considered conversion.
- Continuance of the current road maintenance regime may lead to an increasing erosion of the historic character of rural roads; alternatively the character of historic routeways could be improved through the implementation of rural roads protocol. The visual

impact of overhead power lines on the historic landscape continues to be reduced by undergrounding.

- New settlement on the edge of this area may place increased strain on the historic road network, and impact on the view from key historic landscapes within the AONB. Increased threat to buried archaeological remains, archaeological earthworks and historic field patterns on the edge of the AONB from development. Increased light pollution may blur the distinction between urban and rural areas and affect people's perception of a sense of long-established cultural heritage.



*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

- Loss or damage to buried archaeology through ploughing.
- Erosion of historic landscape character in key historic settlements lacking Conservation Area Appraisals.
- Potential loss of historic farm buildings and other built heritage not in active management.
- Nationally important parks and gardens under threat from neglect.
- Further boundary loss or change to pre 1800 fieldscapes reducing the coherence of these features.

### 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 6: Gain AONB wide coverage of mapping and interpretation of archaeological features from aerial photographs**

**The Threat and the Opportunity:** The buried or surviving archaeology of the AONB has never been systematically recorded from crop marks or earthworks displayed in aerial photographs. This means that there is potential for important archaeological sites to be damaged or inappropriately managed because they have not yet been recognised.

**The Potential Mechanism** - A mapping project for the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB could fill gaps in knowledge of plough damage sites, uncover new sites (through crop marks, earthwork patterns etc.), and spatially link known buried archaeology. The aim of English Heritage's National Mapping Programme (NMP) is to enhance the understanding of past human settlement, by providing primary information and synthesis for all archaeological sites and landscapes visible on aerial photographs, or other airborne remote sensed data.



**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 13: Enhance appreciation of the military history and archaeology**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** - The military history and archaeology of the AONB landscape is an under appreciated component of the story of the AONB. This includes the camps established for Kitchener's new armies in 1914, Second World War camps and airfields, and Cold War sites, including RAF Chilmark.

**The Potential Mechanism** - The lack of appreciation of surviving military remains in the AONB could be combated by making information on the military historic and archaeology of the AONB more accessible and by identifying private collections of information which will shed light on these important aspects of the historic environment of the AONB. Individuals who have drawn together historic material could be encouraged to become involved in a study of surviving remains. An event could be organised to coincide with the centenary of WW1 in 2014.

**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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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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