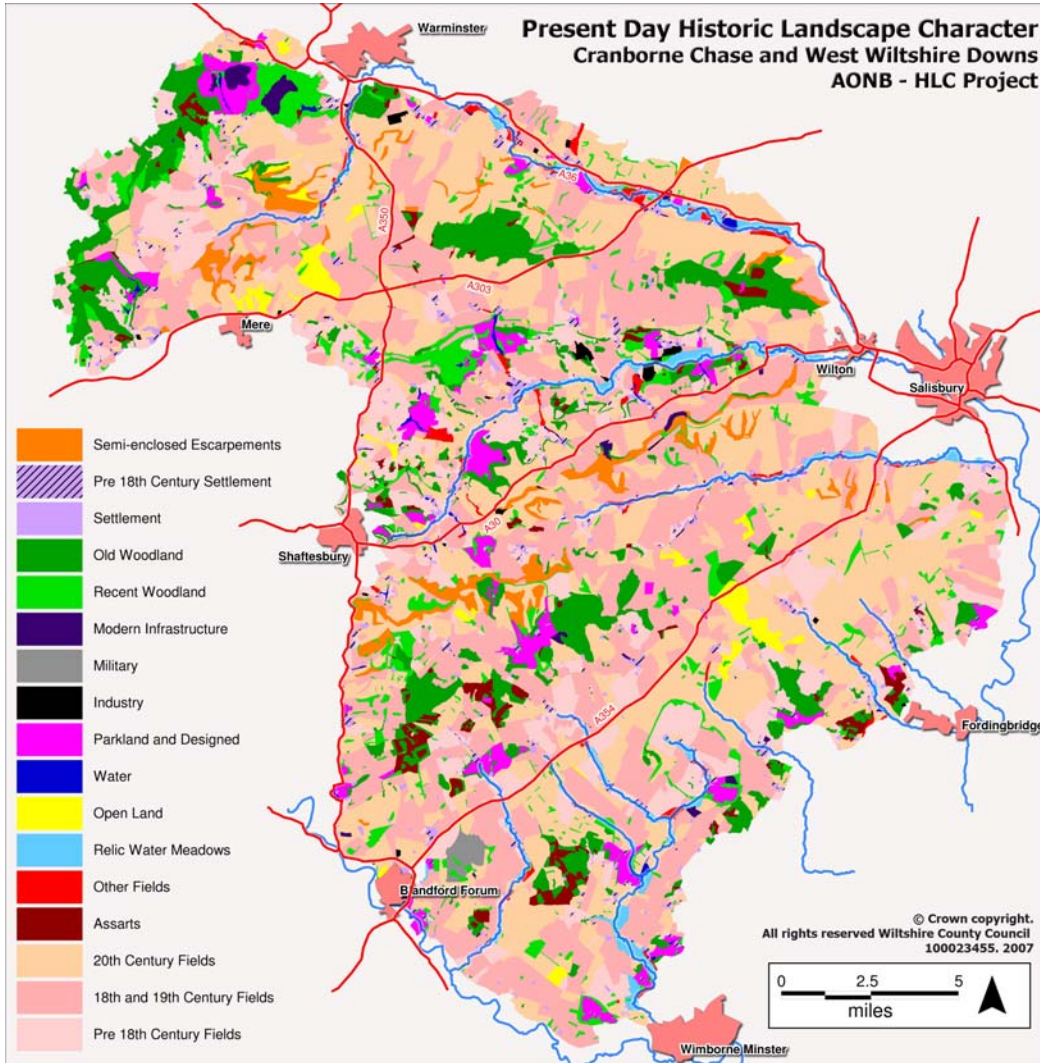


Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation Project

SECTION 8: CONCLUSION



ENGLISH HERITAGE

CONTENTS

8.1 Summary of the CCWWD AONB HLC Project.....	428
8.2 Moving Forward.....	429

8.1 Summary of the CCWWD AONB HLC Project

Between January 2007 and July 2008 the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB undertook a programme of Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) sponsored by English Heritage. The project has completed the following work during this time: -

- Compiled a HLC dataset in GIS with associated data table.
- Created HLC maps including an iconic map for the AONB.
- Prepared general descriptive statements of the character of the historic landscape across the AONB by theme e.g. enclosed land, parkland & designed landscape.
- Undertaken initial analysis of the HLC against other datasets including SMR & HER data, and designated wildlife sites.
- Produced a detailed report including methodology, analysis and Historic Landscape Type descriptions.
- Produced a shorter overview document introducing the project.
- Produced a project website.

The Historic Landscape Characterisation has provided the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB with an enhanced understanding of the historic elements of the whole landscape of the AONB

Ever since its inception the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation has proved to be a valuable resource and tool for the AONB partnership. It has been used to inform planning decisions, fed into the AONB Management Plan review, provided a new framework for policy making and has provided a new tool for managing the historic environment and the integrated management of the landscape as a whole.

Throughout the project the AONB has strived to create enthusiasm across a range of professionals, community members, and the public at large to learn more about HLC, what it means, and how it can be used. The AONB team, therefore, has promoted the new HLC to a wide range of audiences over the past 18 months. This outreach has included: -

- Attendance and poster presentations at national conferences.
- Articles in local journals and specialist group newsletters.
- Interactive seminars to familiarise Local Authority professional officers, consultants, heritage professionals, and local interest group members.
- Creation of a new interactive Historic Landscape Characterisation website, www.historiclandscape.co.uk, aimed at a general audience but which can be interrogated more deeply by academics and professionals.
- Engaging local people, parishes and communities through local and sub-regional events.

Feedback from the outreach events indicates there is a long term aspiration to have HLC available in desktop GIS for anyone wishing or needing to use it. In the shorter term there seems to be a considerable gap between where people would like to be in

their understanding of the HLC dataset and associated maps and where they actually are. This is due to the fact that for the majority of individuals HLC deals with a new set of fundamental concepts which have to be understood and assimilated before the data itself can be engaged or even appreciated. The ground work from the initial outreach can be built upon in the future.

It is the AONB's perception, from a range of contacts, that to be of maximum practical use the HLC needs to be interpreted at a variety of levels and scales to satisfy the needs of a range of people and purposes. This could involve providing various levels of interpretation of the data, and providing comparative information across the AONB. A particular concern, but also an opportunity, is the need for consideration of what might be the most effective means to communicate effectively the level of time depth that has been identified in the landscape.

8.2 Moving forward

The HLC fits into a number of local, regional and national strategies. In particular whilst this project has been underway the European Landscape Convention has come into force in Britain (1st March 2007). "It concerns landscapes that might be considered outstanding as well as everyday or degraded landscapes", and defines landscape as "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors". Historic Landscapes are clearly very significant elements in this definition of landscapes, where human perceptions and human interactions with nature are so important. The Convention also brings with it obligations towards the protection, management, and planning of all landscapes, urban as well as rural. Sub regional projects, such as Historic Landscape Characterisation, relating to the cultural, historic and heritage aspects of landscapes clearly help to implement the objectives of the Convention in a tangible way.

The AONB, therefore, is keen to build on the HLC work and hopes to undertake a new project which builds on the foundation of the existing Historic Landscape Characterisation. The primary aim of the project would be the creation of Historic Environment Action Plans. These will facilitate the proactive and effective management of the historic and archaeological aspects of the AONB from a landscape perspective. Proposed actions can be adopted not just by the AONB Team but by all the other members of the AONB partnership.

The HLC Project has also identified specific areas of interest that also warrant further research and study. This would further enhance and allow greater understanding of the historic landscape of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. These areas of interest are mentioned in the main report, but are summarised here: -

- Researching the exact mechanisms through which pre 1800 enclosure occurred.
- Gaining a fuller understanding of the history of common land in the AONB.
- Gaining a fuller understanding of the contribution of historic routeways to the character of the landscape of the AONB.
- Increasing knowledge on the specific historic character of settlements.
- The relationship between the distribution of monument types in the HER/SMR dataset and Historic Landscape Types in the HLC dataset clearly warrants further attention.
- Spatial and functional relationships between other Wildlife Designations (and mappings of other elements of the physical and natural environment,

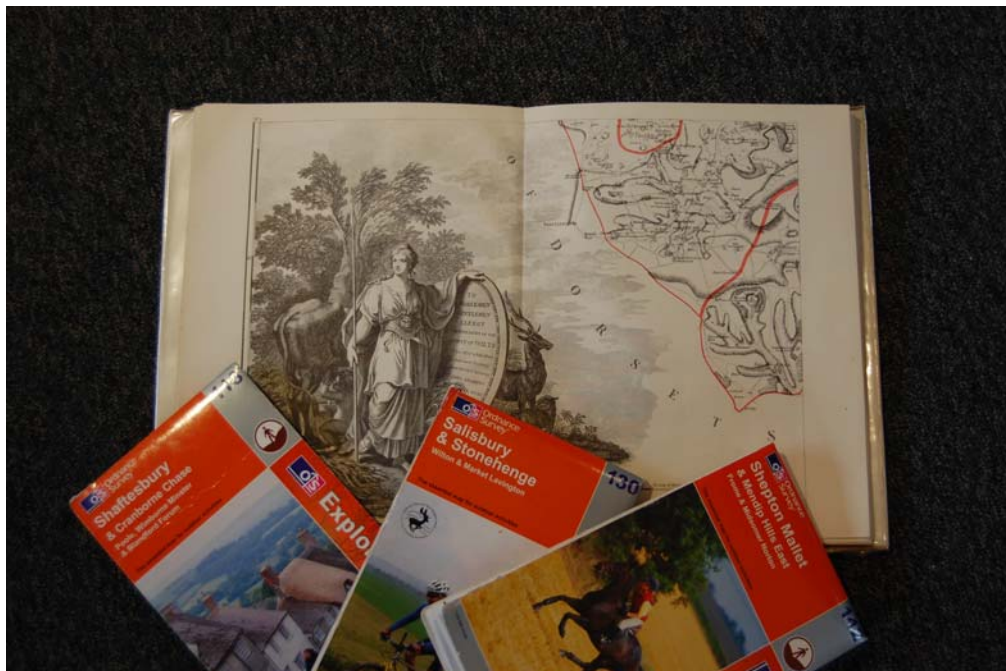
including relief, drainage, geology, soils, woodland) and Historic Landscape Types in the HLC dataset will also be of considerable interest and clearly warrants further attention.

- Comparison of the HLC against other key datasets, such as census information.

In conclusion, the Historic Landscape Characterisation Project provides an enhanced understanding of the historic aspects of the landscape of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. The results of the project would be of interest to anyone concerned with conserving, enhancing, understanding, describing, studying or celebrating the landscape of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB
Historic Landscape Characterisation Project

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