Background Area Theme Supplementary **M3** Method

Historic Environment
Action Plans

Creating and Describing
Historic Environment Themes

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)**

Contents

Summary

The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB has created Historic Environment Action Plans for the AONB landscape. The action plan at the core of this work was derived from newly created summaries of the key characteristics of the historic environment in the AONB. These summaries set out the significance, condition and forces for change affecting the historic fabric and character of this special landscape. These summaries were 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*

This document outlines the process through which the summaries of the AONB by theme were created.

It outlines existing methodologies for creating theme descriptions, describing the final methodology which was adopted by the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. It then goes on to outline the process through which the written descriptions for each theme were prepared.

Introducing Themes

The creation of Historic Character Areas provides a method of consolidating historic characterisation data, and other sources such as Historic Environment Records into a more generalised dataset based on themes particularly relevant to a landscape.

All historic characterisations (landscape, urban or seascape) form detailed, often complex, datasets which record the historic dimension of the present day. This complexity derives from the interrelation of several factors:

1. The characterisation dataset is often formed of many thousands of individual parcels of land each associated with a large amount of data.
2. The primary unit of these characterisations, often called the Historic Landscape Character Type, is usually not geographically specific. They often occur across the full geographical range of any given landscape. This forms a complex spatial pattern of interrelated types.
3. More recent characterisations record information on previous as well as present character.

It is sometimes desirable to rework the datasets to provide a synthesis of the complex characterisation based on discrete themes. This can be undertaken for five main reasons:

1. To allow the broad assessment of the historic and archaeological dimensions of historic elements which are found across the whole of a landscape and which are, therefore, not captured by an area based approach, e.g. historic routeways.
2. To allow the broad assessment of a particular Historic Landscape Type identified in an Historic Characterisation, e.g. Open Land.
3. To allow the broad assessment of evidence relating to a particular time frame, e.g. Prehistoric Archaeology.
4. To create statements that can be more easily engaged with, and recognised, by local people.
5. To aid in the creation of Historic Environment Action Plans and other management tools.

Once a Theme has been identified it needs to be accompanied by text which identifies and describes the main characteristics of each area.

This description should include both the nationally important and unique but also commonplace and locally distinctive. It should encapsulate the main features of the Historic Environment in its widest form and include both the archaeological and historical, the very old and the more recent. It should aim to be comprehensive but also in the interests of usability concise. The descriptions for each theme should be consistent in order to allow easy communication. They should also capture the imagination of the reader, creating a mental picture of the area in question.

Existing Methodologies for Creating Historic Landscape Character Themes

A brief literature review of projects shows that Historic Character Areas have been used much more frequently then themes. This is due to the fact that many of these projects have been instigated on the edge of growth areas and, therefore, have a very particular discrete geographical focus.

A key project that used 'themes' was work undertaken to enhance to the Cornwall Historic Landscape Characterisation (Herring 1998), through the creation of descriptive statements related to individual Historic Character Types. This included in the context of Cornwall the identification of Anciently Enclosed Land as a theme and the preparation of descriptions relating to it.

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The other project which has used themes is the Isle of Wight Historic Environment Action Plan. These themes relating to Historic Routeways, Rural Settlement and Urban Settlement have been identified alongside Historic Character Areas which were identified as important by the project Steering Group (Isle of Wight County Archaeology and Historic Environment Service, 2008a; 2008B)

Table One: Historic Environment Projects which have identified themes

Name	Who?	When?	What?	Why?
Isle of Wight HEAP	Historic Environment Service for Isle of Wight Council	2008	Historic Environment Action Plan including 'types'	Management of Historic Environment
Cornwall HLC	Cornwall County Council *(P Herring)*	1998	Historic Landscape Zones (HLZ)	Historic Landscape Zones used to inform Cornwall LCA

Existing methodologies for describing Historic Character Themes

A literature review of projects which have created and described Historic Character Areas demonstrates the wide range of attributes that have been captured. These approaches are summarised in Table Two. Unsurprisingly the most recent description of Historic Character Areas undertaken for the Isle of Wight HEAP is the most comprehensive. This is due to the fact that the creation of Historic Character Areas involves a continually evolving methodology. The descriptions outlined here similarly follow this more comprehensive approach.

Table Two: Historic Environment Projects which created Theme Statements

	Summary	Legal Designations	Geology	Topography	Current Character	Previous Character	Use	Historic Development	Archaeological Potential	Relationship to other Areas	Time-depth	Research, Documentation	Amenity, Education	Perceptions, Values	Vulnerability, Coherence, Rarity, Condition	Forces for Change*	Management Issues*	References
Isle of Wight HEAP *(Isle of Wight Council: 2008)*	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	
Cornwall HLZs *(Herring: 1998)*	x			x	x		x		x	x		x	x	x		x	x	

3

A New Approach to the Identification of Historic Themes

The methodological review of the two available approaches used to identify themes of importance has been analysed to formulate a more transparent approach to identifying themes. Existing methodologies have adopted two approaches:

1. The identification of key themes for a landscape by directly using historic landscape types derived from historic landscape characterisations.
2. The identification of key themes to complement existing historic character areas by a steering group of professionals and local experts.

Guiding Principles

Based on the above analysis of the potential ways of identifying Historic Character Themes and the review of methodologies used in their creation, it is possible to suggest a series of fundamental principles which should underlie the creation of any Historic Character Themes. These follow closely the guiding principles of both Historic Seascape and Historic Landscape Characterisation.

- Each theme should reflect a unique locally distinctive part of the wider landscape with its own particular characteristics and historical trajectory.
- It is the historic aspects of the present day landscape which, in the first instance, defines each theme.
- One of the most crucial characteristic of any theme is its time depth.
- All aspects of any given theme are important, not just special or designated components.
- The characteristics of any theme should be derived from the available historic characterisation dataset, historic environment record and other secondary sources.
- The process of the identification and subsequent description of Historic Character Themes should be transparent and easily understandable.
- Wider public perceptions of themes should be considered, where feasible, alongside more expert views.

General Approach

The attributes used to identify a theme should firstly reflect the key information available in the Historic Characterisation, that is data on the present day historic landscape character and the surviving evidence of the historical development of that area of landscape. These two exist in a recursive relationship, both contributing to the character of the present day landscape:

Present Day Historic Landscape Character   ⟳   Time depth historic development

The list of themes derived from this approach should be supplemented by local knowledge and expert opinion to identify additional themes which are:
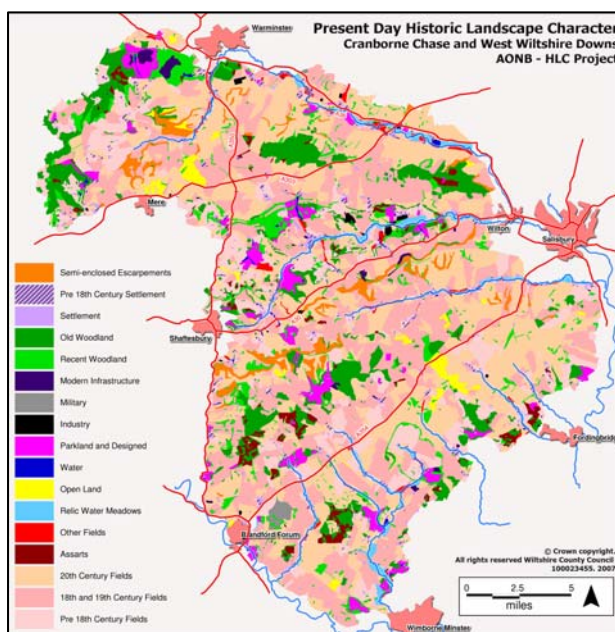- not adequately captured through an area based approach.

4

- not adequately captured through the process of historic landscape characterisation.
- key components of the distinctive historic and archaeological character of the area in question.

CCWWD AONB HEAP Methodology for Identifying Historic Character Themes

The methodology used to map, create and identify Historic Character Themes has two distinct stages.

Step One: Identifying key themes from any available Historic Characterisation

In the case of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB this involved integrating the Historic Llandscape Characterisation. This map displays the main categories of current Historic Landscape Types existing in the present day landscape, at an appropriate scale for the whole AONB. This includes:

- Pre 1800 Fields
- 19th Century Fields
- 20th Century Fields
- Assarts
- Open Land
- Parkland
- Old Woodland
- Recent Woodland
- Settlement
- Other Fields
- Water Meadows

When looking at this dataset at a more detailed scale these categories can be broken down into their constituent sub types to look at more local trends in the data, but they can also be grouped together to identify key historic character themes for the AONB landscape as a whole. The themes identified were as follows:

- Fields in the AONB Landscape
- Historic Parks and Gardens
- Industry in the Landscape
- Military
- Open Land
- Settlement in the AONB Landscape
- Water in the AONB Landscape

5

- Woodland in the AONB Landscape

Step Two: Supplementing the list of themes with local and expert knowledge

This list was then put in front of the project Steering Group which consisted of historic environment professionals and local experts. They identified additional theme topics which were either not adequately captured by the area approach, missing from the historic landscape characterisation, or particularly distinctive to the area. These were as follows

- Ancient Boundaries and Land Ownership
- Farms and Farming
- Historic Routeways
- Hunting Landscapes
- Landscapes of Prehistory
- Local Features of Historic Interest

The result

This process lead to the identification of fourteen distinct themes in the AONB.

The next step was to produce written descriptions that provided an overview of each theme which encapsulates the main features of the Historic Environment present and include both the archaeological and historical, the very old and the more recent.

CCWWD AONB HEAP Methodology for Describing Themes

Stage One: Review and collation of domprehensive datasets available

Any descriptive framework depends on the sources of information which are available. It is important that the individual Theme descriptions are described in a comprehensive and systematic manner, therefore as a first stage descriptions information was collated from datasets which cover the whole AONB. These datasets should also be available for any area of England.

Greater detail on each of these datasets is provided in Method 2: xxxx

- **Nationally Designated Heritage**

The national system of heritage protection has two parts, firstly identifying heritage through designation and, secondly, protecting it through the planning system by using different kinds of consent. These datasets can be used to identify nationally important historic and archaeological features, sites and buildings in the AONB relevant to a particular theme.

Nationally Designated Heritage includes:

- **Scheduled Ancient Monuments**
- **Listed Buildings**
- **Register of Parks and Gardens**

- **Protected Wreck Sites**
- **World Heritage Sites**
- **Register of Battlefields**

- **Conservation Areas** (nationally important but locally designated)

▪ **Heritage at Risk**

The aim of the English Heritage at Risk Registers is to understand the overall state of England's heritage, to identify those components that are facing the greatest pressures and threats. The At Risk Registers focuses on nationally designated buildings, archaeological sites (Scheduled Ancient Monuments), Parks and Gardens (Register of Designed Landscapes), Battlefields, Shipwrecks, Conservation Areas and Places of Worship at Risk.

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▪ **Sites and Monuments Record and Historic Environment Records**

The AONB covers four counties Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset and Wiltshire. These each have their own archaeological record which is either called a Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) or an Historical Environment Record (HER). These are the same kinds of database, HER being an augmentation of an SMR containing a wider scope of data, such as information on buildings or the inclusion of Urban Archaeological Databases. SMRs commonly evolve into HERs when a certain data standard is reached. Most HERs/SMRs maintain three types of records: monuments (sites and finds), events and sources/archives. Only those records relating to monuments have been made available to the AONB. Sites within a SMR/HER are given a monument type. These are compiled using the MIDAS (A Manual and Data Standard for Monument Inventories) data standard (MIDAS Heritage: 2007), in association with other shared reference data such as National Monuments Record *The Thesaurus of Monument Types* (English Heritage 1999). This means that there will be a high level of similarity between the databases of different HERs/SMRs. The details of each of the relevant HERs/SMRs are as follows: -

1. Dorset County Council has an Historic Environment Record. This contains 1235 entries for the AONB.
2. Hampshire County Council has an Historic Environment Record. This contains 405 entries covering the AONB
3. Somerset County Council has an Historic Environment Record. This contains 43 entries covering the AONB.
4. Wiltshire County Council has a Sites and Monument Record. This contains 2368 which are in the AONB.

Each county's SMR/HER record is available in electronic format and can be imported into GIS (Geographical Information Systems). Each of the SMR/HER datasets was acquired as a GIS extract cut to the AONB boundary from the relevant county as data files.

They were then manipulated to create one dataset, which can be queried by monument type or period to extract the information of relevance to a particular theme.

▪ **Historic Landscape Characterisation**

The Historic Landscape Characterisation was completed for the AONB in June 2009. It maps and describes the historic dimension of the present day landscape of the AONB and identifies time depth. It formed the basis for the identification of many themes, and therefore, also forms a major component in the description of these themes. More information on the Historic Landscape Characterisation can be accessed from www.historiclandscape.co.uk.

▪ **Portable Antiquity Scheme**

The Portable Antiquities Scheme is a voluntary scheme to record archaeological objects found by members of the public in England and Wales. It comprises a database recording details of each find, and the founder. This dataset was kindly made available to the AONB by the British Museum and the grid reference recorded for each find used to create a GIS dataset which was cropped to the AONB boundary.

This dataset can be used to gain an overview of metal detecting in the AONB, and the recovery of finds through other means. It can also be used in the identification of possible location for important sites which have not been formally recorded in the SMR/HER. The Portable Antiquity Scheme has been particularly helpful in pinpointing Saxon activity, for example, which has been absent from the more traditional archaeological records.

Stage Two: Review and collation of other datasets available

The individual Themes descriptions can be supplemented with information from secondary sources.

▪ **Conservation Area Appraisals**

Following designation, Local Planning Authorities have a duty from time to time to draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas. These proposals take the form of Conservation Area Appraisals. Currently only 16 of the 63 Conservation Areas in the AONB have CAAs, though many of the Local Authorities are undertaking rolling programs of CAA creation.

Where they exist Conservation Area Appraisals form a useful source of information on the history of settlements in the AONB, and descriptions of their main historic features.

• **Parish Plans and Other Documents**

Parish Plans are documents produced by the local community living within a particular parish. They are designed to be "holistic" or comprehensive in scope and should set out a vision of how the community wants to develop, and identify the action needed to achieve it. They can include everything that is relevant to the people who live and work in the community, from employment and playgrounds to the design of new buildings

and protection of hedges and ponds. They can include any social, environmental or economic issues. They often identify heritage features of value to a local community.

Village Design Statements are another useful reference document. These are a practical tool prepared by communities to help influence decisions on design and development. Prepared correctly, a VDS will provide a clear statement of the character of a particular village or town against which planning applications may be assessed. These should also indicate the historic features which are particularly locally important. The AONB is aware of two VDS for the AONB.

- **Local Lists**

Some Local Authorities maintain list of buildings of local interest and have in some instances begun to indicate which of these are 'At Risk'. These can be used to look at the locally distinctive characteristics of buildings in the area.

Both the Dorset and Wiltshire Gardens Trust maintain written lists of historic parks and gardens of local interest which have been transformed into a GIS dataset. The lists can be used to describe parks and gardens of interest with Historic Character Areas not on the English Heritage register.

- **Other Management Plans**

This includes National Trust strategies and individual estate management plans.

- **Specialist Articles, Reports and Surveys**

Many themes have been the subject of excavation, historic research, synthesis, and detailed surveys or reports. The details of these can be found in journals, or specialist publications. One useful source of information for example is the Victoria County History of Wiltshire, while the County based archaeological journals provide another important source of information.

Stage Three: Writing and organising the Historic Character Area descriptions

Clarity and ease of comparison are key factors influencing the legibility and usability of the Theme descriptions. As discussed earlier these descriptions should seek to be transparent and the sources of information clearly related. For ease of reference the descriptions should have the same layout, though obviously the variable availability of data will affect the length of any given section.

- **Title**

This should capture the imagination and the main features of the area, drawing on local features and place names.

- **Introducing the Themes**

Brief overview describing historic themes, and their relationship to the Historic Environment Action Plans as a whole.

▪ **Summary of Key Characteristics**

For ease of reference a summary of Key Characteristics of the theme is included as a bullet point list

▪ **Linkages to other areas/themes**

Important linkages to other historic landscape character areas and themes were listed.

▪ **History and context**

The main archaeological periods of activity relevant to the theme were identified. Key historical events which shaped the historic landscape characteristics of the theme was described.

Key Sources

Outlined the key sources which were used to compile the description.

Landscape Scale Characteristics and Components

This should describe:
- The main archaeological components relevant to the theme, notably visible sites, iconic sites of those which have been subject to research.
- The characteristics of any Historic Landscape Character Types of relevance and their contribution to the historic landscape character of the present day.
- Important Previous Historic Landscape Type.s
- Time depth should also be noted along with major historical developments and processes relating to the theme which have impacted on the landscape.
- Particularly important morphological features should be described e.g the visual aspects of the fields.
- The characteristics of the historic built environment of relevance.
- Designed aspects of relevance.
- 20th century activity of relevance.

In the case of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Landscape Character Area description this section was split into a series of subsections which identified the main component of the theme. This allowed easy cross reference with the 'area' statements. These subsections consisted of:

  ▪ A title describing the component
  ▪ Background to the component
  ▪ Landscape scale impact of the component.

- **Historic Environment Actions**

List of actions included in the Historic Environment Action Plans and of relevance to the theme.

- **Pictures, Illustrations and Maps**

Photographs and images capturing views of the historic landscape and key archaeological and historic features in an area.

- **Linkages**

Where appropriate links should be added to the description to:
- Background documents
- Other Theme Statements
- Area statements
- Methodological statements
- Supporting documents

Conclusion

The AONB Historic Character Themes have been identified using two sources: -

1. The Historic Landscape Characterisation.
2. Local Knowledge and expertise.

This analysis led to the identification of 14 Historic Character Themes in the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.

Each Historic Character Theme is accompanied by a comprehensive and concise description of its main historic and archaeological components.

These descriptions formed the basis for identifying actions for the Historic Environment in the AONB.

References

Herring, P., 1998 *Cornwall's Historic Landscape Characterisation: Presenting a method of Historic Landscape Character Assessment*. Cornwall Archaeological Unit
Isle of Wight County Archaeology and Historic Environment Service, 2008a *Historic Environment Action Plan Isle of Wight Overview* Isle of Wight Council
Isle of Wight County Archaeology and Historic Environment Service, 2008b *An Introduction to the HEAP The Isle of Wight Historic Environment Action Plan* Isle of Wight Council

Historic Environment Action Plans

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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