

# Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

MANAGEMENT PLAN 2020-2024



## Part Two

### Aims, objectives, policies and actions





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### Vision for 2040

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

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



## Introduction

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

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

**There are four aims within the plan:**

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

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



## Which common issues run throughout the Management Plan?

### Climate Change

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

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

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

The UK Government has set a target of achieving net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050. To meet this target requires urgent action that must be led at the level of national Governments and international cooperation between nations, as well as massive changes in the corporate sector. It also requires action at a local level, both because much of this change must ultimately feed through to the choices made by individual people and because actions need to be taken locally to prepare for and to reduce the impact of changes caused by a changing climate.

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







The assumption of this plan is that the policies and actions within it will, wherever possible, contribute to achieving the net zero target but schemes such as new forestry planting or large-scale solar arrays, which would impact negatively on the landscape, will need careful scrutiny. Changes to land management that contribute to the net zero target and bring about benefits for nature conservation and the conservation or enhancement of the landscape will normally be supported.

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

## **Sustainability**

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

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

## **Exit from the European Union**

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

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

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

## North of Tyne Devolution and the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal

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

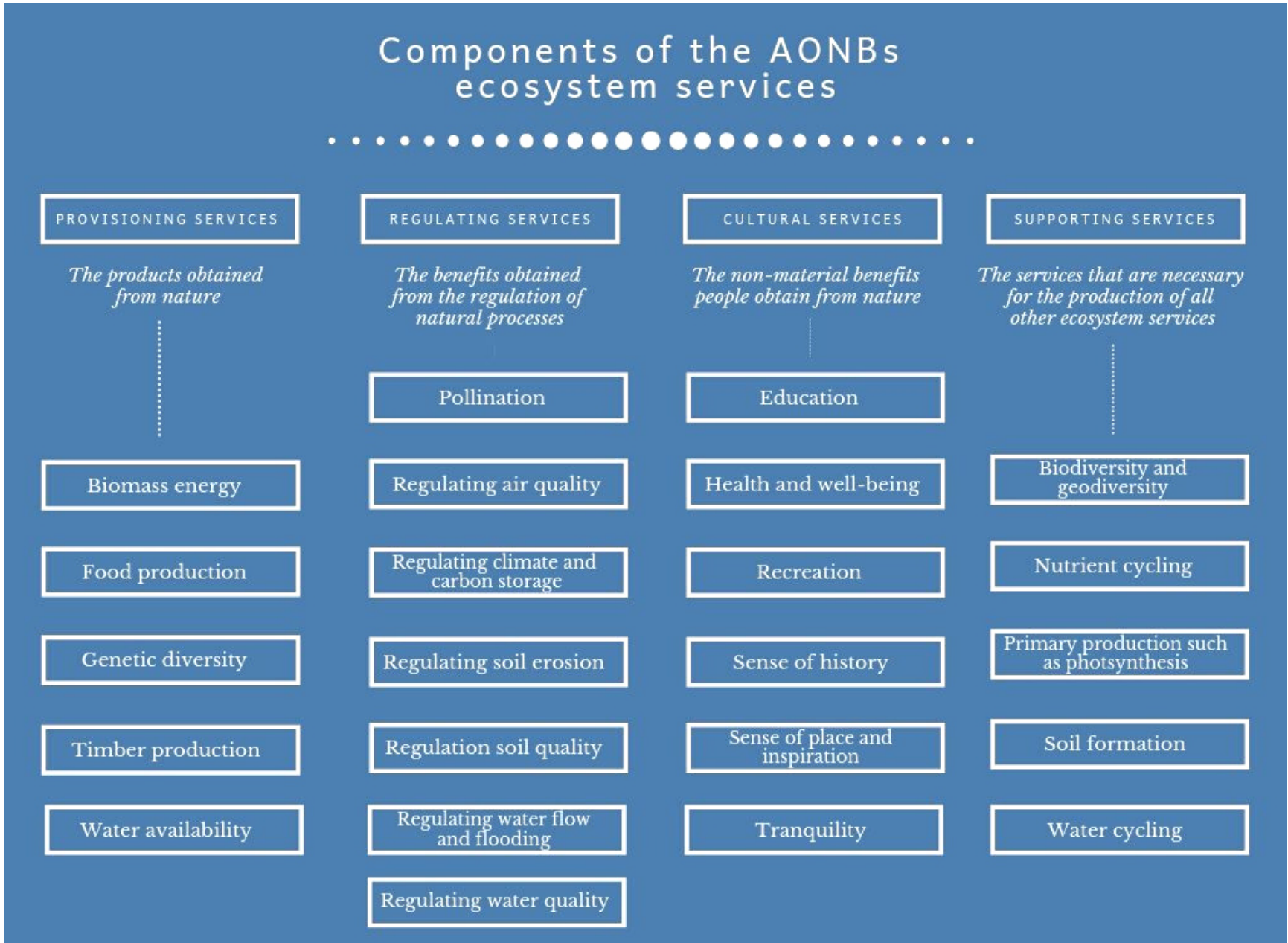
The Borderlands Partnership brings together the five cross-border local authorities of Carlisle City, Cumbria, Dumfries and Galloway, Northumberland and Scottish Borders Councils. They have signed a Growth Deal with the UK and Scottish Governments who have committed up to £350 million to the Deal, which focuses on the themes of Place, Infrastructure, Innovation and Skills and Green Growth.



## Natural and Cultural Capital and Ecosystem Services

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

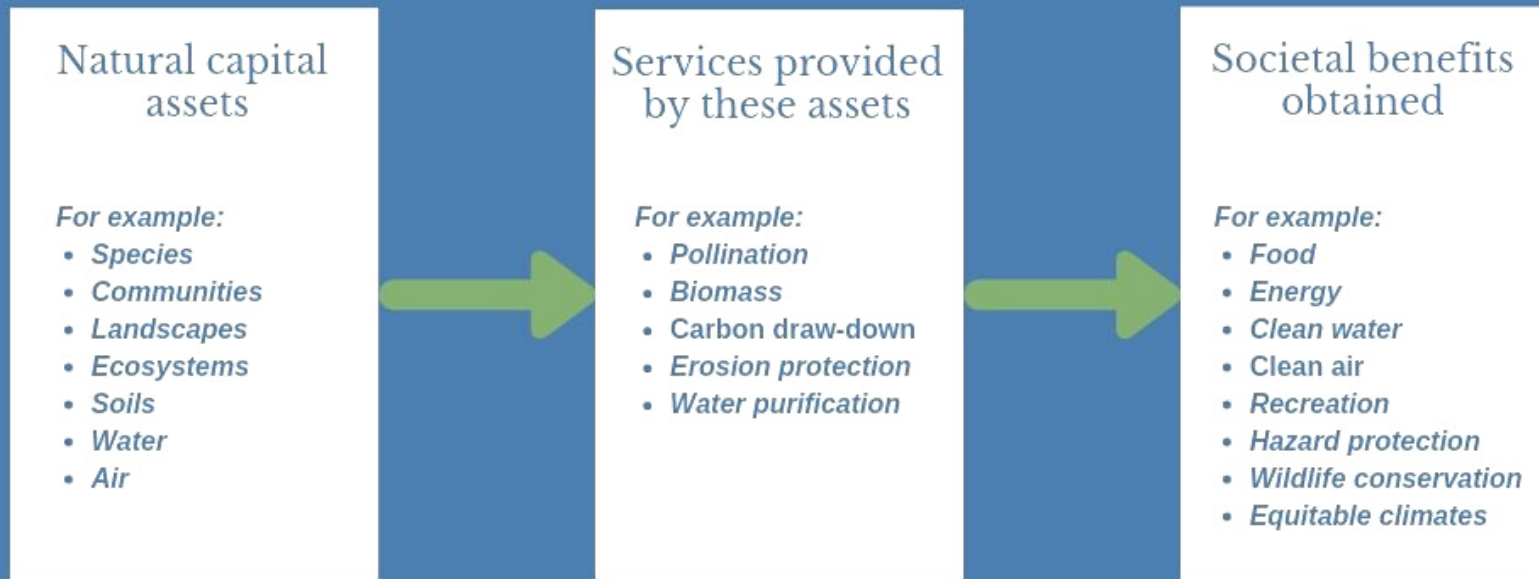
Natural and Cultural Capital and Ecosystem Services





## Natural and Cultural Capital and Ecosystem Services

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



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

### **Nature Conservation**

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

Within the AONB, 5371ha of land is designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The condition of SSSIs is regularly assessed by Natural England to determine the extent to which they are conserving and enhancing the special features for which they have been designated. 38% of the area of SSSI in the AONB is in unfavourable declining condition because of problems with the extensive mud and sand flats around Lindisfarne, where poor water quality due to nutrient enrichment is causing excessive growth of filamentous green algae. This forms mats that smother the seagrass and saltmarsh plant communities that the important populations of waders and wildfowl in the SSSI depend on for feeding.

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

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





The openness of the North Northumberland coastal plain is one of its defining characteristics, but this does not mean that trees and woodlands are not important in the AONB; hedgerow trees are a very important component of the landscape. Small woodlands beside watercourses can play a valuable role in tackling diffuse pollution. The Forestry Commission has identified areas in the AONB suitable for the creation of small woodlands to improve water quality, mainly through reductions in phosphorus levels, but also nitrates and sediment.<sup>1</sup>

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



In 2018, the Government published a [25 Year Environment Plan](#), which ‘sets out Government action to help the natural world regain and retain good health. It aims to deliver cleaner air and water in our cities and rural landscapes, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats. It calls for an approach to agriculture, forestry, land use and fishing that puts the environment first.’<sup>2</sup>

The Plan identifies the need for a ‘Nature Recovery Network’ to take forward the recommendations of the Lawton Report. The Plan commits the Government to investigating how this can be rolled out and considering delivery options for it. It is hoped that this will bring opportunities for habitat management, restoration and creation in the AONB within the lifetime of this Management Plan. However, it is currently unclear what these opportunities will be or how they might be funded.

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<sup>1</sup> Broadmeadow, S and Nisbet, T (2013) Yorkshire & North East England Woodland for Water Project Phase 1: Opportunity Mapping Final Report. Forest Research.  
[historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register](http://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register)

<sup>2</sup> Defra (2018) [25 Year Environment Plan](#), p.9.

## Forces for change

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

## Our Work to Date

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





### **Objective One: To conserve and enhance important habitats and populations of important species**

#### **Policies**

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Priority Actions**

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

#### **Main Partners**

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

## Historic Environment

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



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

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

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

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

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



## Forces for change

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

## Our Work to Date

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



## Objective Two: To conserve the historic environment of the AONB, and enhance the distinctive heritage assets

### Policies

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

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

### Priority Actions

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

### Main Partners

NCC, Historic England, landowners, asset owners, parish councils, National Trust

## Planning, development and infrastructure

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

### The National Planning Policy Framework

The Government published an updated version of the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) in 2019. This maintains the requirement for planning authorities to give great weight to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs, and requires that major development should be refused in them other than in exceptional circumstances and subject to a series of rigorous tests. Appeal decisions and case law that have emerged since the first NPPF was published in 2012 have been helpful in clarifying these requirements. In particular, giving great weight to the conservation and enhancement of landscape and scenic beauty has been interpreted by the courts as meaning that it must be placed into a special category of material consideration, rather than being one of many factors to be given equal weight in the planning balance.

### Neighbourhood Development Plans

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

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







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

## The Northumberland Local Plan

After several years of preparation, Northumberland County Council submitted a draft Local Plan to the Secretary of State in May 2019, with Examination in Public taking place during 2019 and 2020. Once adopted, this will replace a bundle of saved policies from very dated Alnwick and Berwick Local Plans. The draft Plan includes a strong protective policy specifically for the Northumberland Coast AONB, as well as policies concerning the natural and historic environment.

### Forces for change

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

### Our Work to Date

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

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

#### Policies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Policies

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

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

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

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

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

## Priority Actions

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

## Main Partners

Northumberland County Council, Parish Councils, architects.



## Tranquility



CPRE has described tranquility as an expression of the degree to which people experience the environment unhindered by disruptive noise or movement, or by artificial structures and lighting. It is an important reason why people are drawn to rural areas, and there is strong evidence that tranquility helps people to alleviate stress and improves psychological well being. Because it is part of what attracts people to the countryside, it is also of economic significance to the tourism industry and therefore should be recognised as being an asset that must be properly valued and protected. Surveys undertaken by CPRE in North East England and in the Chilterns have helped to define the factors that most influence peoples' sense of tranquility, and these are set out below:

### What tranquillity is – the top 8 survey responses

1. Seeing a natural landscape
2. Hearing birdsong
3. Hearing peace and quiet
4. Seeing natural looking woodland
5. Seeing the stars at night
6. Seeing streams
7. Seeing the sea
8. Hearing natural sounds

### What tranquillity is not – the top 8 survey responses

1. Hearing constant noise from cars, lorries and/or motorbikes
2. Seeing lots of people
3. Seeing urban development
4. Seeing overhead light pollution
5. Hearing lots of people
6. Seeing low flying aircraft
7. Hearing low flying aircraft
8. Seeing power lines

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

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

## Dark Skies

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

## Urbanisation of the countryside

Items of infrastructure normally associated with urban areas are appearing more often in rural areas and open countryside. Bins, signs, barriers, benches, memorials and similar things bring an urbanising effect which impacts on the quality of the environment and a feeling of tranquility. The provision of such things is often the result of a 'need to be seen to be doing something' about an actual or perceived issue - 'put up a sign' is often the easiest response.

## Forces for change

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

## Our Work to Date

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

### **Objective Four: To maintain existing levels of tranquillity and increase them where possible**

#### **Policies**

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Priority Actions**

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

#### **Main Partners**

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



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

### Tourism and the visitor economy

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

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

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

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

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

## Box 1: A Sustainable Model for Tourism



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

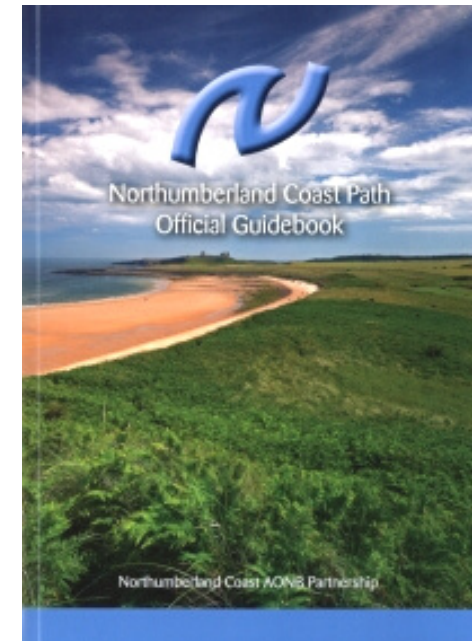
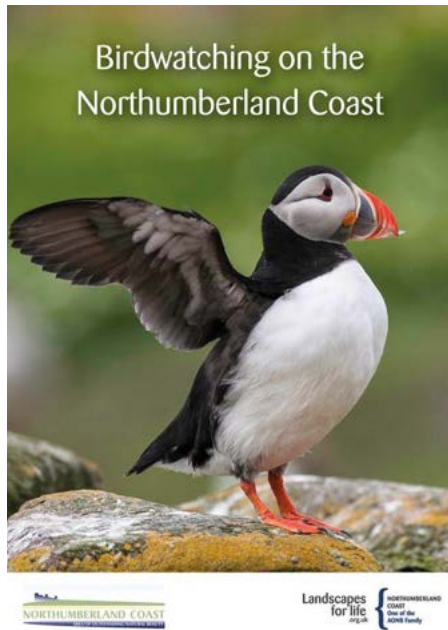
- Facilitate the movement to a lower volume - higher value tourism product
- Presume against large scale, high volume, low value tourism developments (particularly in the self-catering sector) that could be detrimental to the special qualities of the area
- Ensure that appropriate data is gathered so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

## Forces for change

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

## Our Work to Date

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





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

#### **Policies**

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

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

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

#### **Priority Actions**

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

#### **Main Partners**

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

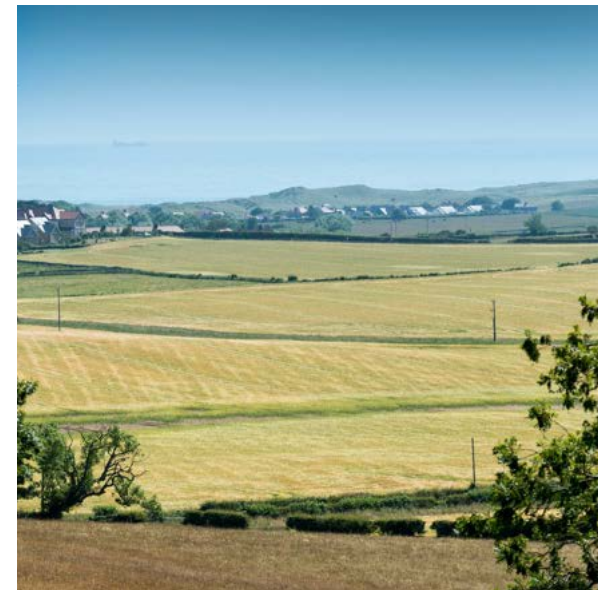
## Farming and Land Management

Farming is the dominant land use in the AONB, and it is vital that the contribution of farmers to the conservation and enhancement of the area is recognised and supported. Land management on the Northumberland coast is predominated by a pattern of small, mixed, family farms. However in some areas of the AONB this pattern is disappearing as large estates turn to industrial-scale intensive arable units. The consequences for land that is currently grazed and that cannot be converted to arable could be either an opportunity or a threat - the outcome is dependent on the right support and advice.

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

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

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



### Soils

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



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

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

## Forces for change

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

## Work to date

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



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

### Policies

- 6.1 Support and promote farming systems and land management practices that contribute to the aims of the AONB Management Plan
- 6.2 Support farmer-diversification schemes where they contribute to conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the AONB
- 6.3 Support the establishment of farmer-led farm clusters and contribute to their activities

### Priority Actions

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

### Main Partners

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

## Community Vitality

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

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

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

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

### Forces for change

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

### Work to date

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



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

### Policies

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

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

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

### Priority Actions

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

### Main Partners

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



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

## Understanding the Designation

AONBs and National Parks are of equal status with regard to landscape quality and that they share the same level of protection. However, the degree of understanding of the AONB as a protected landscape of national importance remains variable among relevant bodies and local communities. S.85(1) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 imposes the following duty on all relevant authorities:

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

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

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



## Forces for change

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

## Work to date

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



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

### **Policies**

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

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

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

### **Priority Actions**

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

### **Main Partners**

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



## Education



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

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

Informal education, skills training and life-long learning can play an important role in providing a pool of skilled people in local communities who are able to support the conservation and understanding of the AONB and connecting people to nature and their environment and history.

### Forces for change

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

### Work to date

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

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

### **Policies**

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

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

### **Priority Actions**

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

### **Main Partners**

Coast Care, NE, NT, NCC, DMO

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

## Environmental Quality

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

### Litter and dog-fouling

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

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

### Air Quality

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



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



## Water Quality

Holy Island and Budle Bay coastal waters are failing to meet Water Framework Directive (WFD) standards for Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen (DIN), and opportunistic macroalgae. The Lindisfarne NNR is also described as unfavourable-declining by Natural England. Nitrogen in coastal streams is very difficult to manage due to its mobile chemical nature. There are many sources of this nitrogen including but not limited to: diffuse agricultural runoff, misconnections in both public and private sewage treatment works, seasonal pressures from tourism on dated sewage treatment facilities, offshore influence from the North Sea and the River Tweed and also natural nutrient recycling within these shallow intertidal inlets.

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

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



## Forces for change

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

## Work to date

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



### **Objective Ten: The AONB, its villages, beaches, open countryside and facilities are clean and welcoming places to visit**

#### **Policies**

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

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

10.3 Voluntary litter groups and individuals will be supported

#### **Priority Actions**

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

#### **Main Partners**

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

## Access, Health and Wellbeing

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

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

There is a good network of Public Rights of Way in the AONB, including the 100km Northumberland Coast Path. This well-established long-distance route will also become the route of the new England Coast Path within the lifetime of this plan which will also bring new rights of public access on the shore and in the coastal margin. The Coast and Castles Cycle Route is very well used by local people and inbound visitors but the route suffers from a lack of maintenance, no provision of on-road alternatives to off-road sections and poor pre-arrival information.

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

### Forces for change

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

### Work to date

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

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

#### **Policies**

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

11.2 Initiatives that sustain and promote public transport will be supported

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

11.4 Promoted routes will be prioritised for maintenance and improvements

#### **Priority Actions**

- Continue to work with bus operators and NCC to improve public transport within the AONB, and to promote this among residents and visitors
- Improve links to the health and wellbeing sectors
- Participate in the England Coast Path Partnership
- Develop programme of improvements to promoted routes through the Borderlands Growth Initiative
- Redesign and re-launch the Northumberland Coast Path Passport Scheme
- Develop new website for Northumberland Coast Path

#### **Main Partners**

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



## Volunteering

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

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

### Forces for change

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

### Work to date

- Established Coast Care volunteering initiative with partners



## Objective Twelve: People have opportunities to contribute to the conservation and enhancement of their local area

### Policies

12.1 The Coast Care initiative is supported to continue to provide volunteering opportunities in the AONB beyond the funded period

12.2 Opportunities that can allow Coast Care to grow sustainably are taken

### Priority Actions

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

### Main Partners

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

## Delivery and Monitoring

This Management Plan will be delivered by the staff team working on behalf of the Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership through a combination of direct projects, support and advocacy. Previous management plans have included a formal five-year delivery and action plan. Due to the amount of uncertainty at the time of writing this plan deriving from the United Kingdom's exit from the EU, changes to agricultural policy and support and the Government led review of protected areas (the Glover review), a different approach has been adopted. Annually, the AONB Partnership will agree an action plan and business plan that will set out what the Partnership will do in that year to deliver this plan. This action plan will cover actions by partner organisations and the role of the AONB Partnership in delivering them, as well as providing a work programme for the staff team.

### Monitoring

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

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



## Abbreviations

CPRE	Campaign to Protect Rural England
DIN	Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen
DMO	Destination Management Organisation
EA	Environment Agency
EU	European Union
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
Interreg	EU Project funding
LED	Light-emitting diode
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnerships
LIFE	EU Project funding
LNP	Local Nature Partnership
NALC	National Association of Local Councils
NCC	Northumberland County Council
NE	Natural England
NELMS	New Environmental Land Management Scheme
NLHF	National Lottery Heritage Fund
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NNTA	North Northumberland Tourism Association
NPPF	National Policy Planning Framework
NT	National Trust
NTCA	North of Tyne Combined Authority
NWT	Northumberland Wildlife Trust
PCs	Parish Councils
RDPE	Rural Development Programme for England
SMART goals	Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
STEAM data	Tourism economic impact modelling process
WFD	Water Framework Directive



## Images

Cover	Dunstanburgh Castle - Gavin Duthie
Part 1	
05	Beadnell Bay - Gavin Duthie
06	Birling Links - Gavin Duthie; Burnet Moth - Iain Robson
07	View towards Budle Bay - Gavin Duthie
08	Curlew - Iain Robson
09	Old Chapel, Alnmouth - Gavin Duthie
10	Dunstanburgh Castle, Lindisfarne Castle, Warkworth Castle - Gavin Duthie
11	Holy Island - Gavin Duthie
12	Pilgrims Way - Ben Wayman
13	Seahouses Harbour - Gavin Duthie
14	Seaton Point, Alnmouth - Gavin Duthie; Dunstanburgh - Gary Woodburn
15	Vipers Bugloss, Dune Wildflowers, Burnet Moth - Iain Robson
16	North of Cocklawburn - Gavin Duthie
17	Zostera - Liam Rooney; Brent Geese - Gavin Duthie
18	Beadnell Bay - Gavin Duthie
19	Whin Grassland, Bamburgh - Iain Robson
20	Towards Shoreston - Gavin Duthie
21	St Mary's Church, Priory and view from St Cuthbert's Island, all Holy Island - Gavin Duthie
22	St Lawrence's Church, Warkworth - Gavin Duthie
23	Howick Mesolithic Hut - Raymond Byrne
24	Boulmer and Craster - Gavin Duthie
25	Warkworth Castle - Gavin Duthie
Part 2	
26	Beadnell Bay - Gavin Duthie
27	Holy Island - Gavin Duthie
28	Foxton, Bamburgh Castle - Gavin Duthie; Holy Island - Catherine Gray
29	Saltmarsh, Alnmouth - Gavin Duthie
30	River Aln - Gavin Duthie
34	Inner Farne - Gavin Duthie
35	Field margins, Bamburgh - Gavin Duthie
36	Gorse Removal, Kippy Heugh - Coast Care
38	Repairs to Osborne's Fort, Holy Island - Gavin Duthie
39	Official opening of St Aidan's Crypt - Crest Photography

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42	Northumberland Local Plan - Northumberland County Council
45	Ross Back Sands - Gavin Duthie
49	Ross, Beadnell, Warkworth - Gavin Duthie
50	AONB Publications - Catherine Gray
52	Bamburgh - Gavin Duthie
53	25 Year Plan - Defra
55	Low Newton by the Sea - Gavin Duthie
57	Sea Thrift - Gavin Duthie
58	AONB Annual Forum, Ellingham Hall - Iain Robson
60	Bamburgh Festival - Rob Turner
62	Litter - Iain Robson
63	Towards Budle Bay - Gavin Duthie
64	Coast Care volunteers - Coast Care
68	Coast Care volunteers - Coast Care
70	Bamburgh Castle - Gavin Duthie