

2013 – 2018

# Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan



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Heaths



Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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*Richard Benyon*

**Richard Benyon**

Minister for Natural  
Environment and  
Fisheries



Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are some of our finest landscapes. They are cherished by residents and visitors alike and allow millions of people from all walks of life to understand and connect with nature.

I am pleased to see that this management plan demonstrates how AONB Partnerships can continue to protect these precious environments despite the significant challenges they face. With a changing climate, the increasing demands of a growing population and in difficult economic times, I believe AONBs represent just the sort of community driven, collaborative approach needed to ensure our natural environment is maintained for generations to come.

AONB Partnerships have been the architects of a landscape-scale approach to land management. This approach is a key feature of the Government's Natural Environment White Paper and emphasises the need to manage ecosystems in an integrated fashion, linking goals on wildlife, water, soil and landscape, and

working at a scale that respects natural systems.

This management plan also makes the important connection between people and nature. I am pleased to hear that local communities have been central to the development of the plan, and will be at the heart of its delivery. From volunteers on nature conservation projects to businesses working to promote sustainable tourism, it's great to hear of the enthusiasm and commitment of the local people who hold their AONBs so dear.

AONBs are, and will continue to be, landscapes of change. Management plans such as this are vital in ensuring these changes are for the better. I would like to thank all those who were involved in bringing this plan together and I wish you every success in bringing it to fruition.



**Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs**



**Cllr David Wood**

Chairman of the  
Suffolk Coast &  
Heaths AONB  
Partnership



Welcome to the 2013–2018 Management Plan for the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

This is our third AONB Management Plan since the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW) placed a duty on local authorities to prepare and publish five-yearly plans for AONBs within their area. CRoW also introduced a requirement for all statutory undertakers such as Local Authorities to have regard to the purpose of AONBs in their areas in discharging any function. In legal terms, CRoW put AONBs firmly on the map, and this Management Plan shows how important the AONB Partnership has become.

The consultation process for this Plan has been our most comprehensive so far, with over 350 (online and written) responses. These have validated much of the activity that the AONB Partnership is already engaged in to keep this area so special, and so this review has been relatively light-touch as we acknowledge the importance of building on the successes of the last Plan, published in 2008. Clearly, the world moves on and the changes since that time have been incorporated into this Plan and include issues such as Marine Conservation Zones, the governance of decision-making for developments in the marine environment and the

changing face of tourism marketing and management.

We have simplified the structure of the Plan and also the themes of work in the Action Plan. This has resulted in a document that should be more useable for everyone to work with and will steer work to deliver our primary objective, to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths. All the work of the Partnership is now arranged into four themes: Coast and estuaries, Land use and wildlife, Enjoying the area, and Working together. There is a lot to do. The next five years will be busier than ever as we face a range of both challenging and exciting issues together.

I believe the AONB Partnership is now stronger than it ever has been, with a much greater level of engagement and collaboration in the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty. I think we are well placed to meet the inevitable challenges and opportunities that lie before us. However, it is not just about the work of the AONB Partnership. Everyone has a role to play in looking after the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, from local communities and farmers, to businesses and individuals. Together we really can make a difference.

# Document purpose and introduction





# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. The purpose of this document

**1.1.1.** This Plan sets out the management objectives for the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) agreed by the local authorities within whose areas the AONB falls, and supported by the organisations that make up the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership. Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act) requires local authorities to formulate their policy for the management of AONBs. This Management Plan formulates that policy. Section 85 of the Act places a duty on all relevant authorities to have regard to the objectives contained within this Plan. Management Plans for AONBs must be produced and published every five years, and this document replaces the earlier Plan for the period 2008–2013.

**1.1.2.** The Management Plan has a key role in supporting and co-ordinating the action of the organisations that make up the AONB Partnership, including setting the AONB team's work programme

for the period. It sets a framework for any organisation or individual whose activities will have an impact on the objectives for the area. It sets targets for action, especially where it is important for organisations and/or communities to work together or where action might fall between responsibilities. The Plan also identifies the need to monitor changes occurring in the AONB as a result of the management process.

**1.1.3.** The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan is set in the context of national and local policy and strategy. It has a role in supporting the Local Development Frameworks of the local authorities (which themselves contain many references to conserving the AONB) and the developing Marine Plans lead by the Marine Management Organisation. The Plan identifies issues, aims, objectives and actions that are relevant to the AONB and can be underpinned by planning policy. It is also set within the context of other local plans and strategies, such as Sustainable Community Strategies. The Plan does not constitute Supplementary Planning Guidance.



## 1.2. What does this document contain?

**1.2.1.** The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan is divided into five sections plus Appendices:

### Section 1 Document purpose and introduction

Explains why the Management Plan is needed and provides background information about AONBs, the reason for their creation and their place within the context of our protected landscapes. This section also contains a review of the previous Management Plan.

### Section 2 Landscape character and special qualities of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB

A description of the landscape of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB and the special qualities that led to its designation.

### Section 3 Setting the scene – the context and issues

An analysis of the main issues affecting or likely to affect the area, and the broader policy context.

### Section 4 Vision statement

The Vision Statement is the centrepiece of this document and sets out an ideal outcome for the long-term management of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB and how it might look in 2033. This Management Plan can be considered a stepping stone on the way towards achieving that goal.




### Section 5 Aims, objectives and action plan

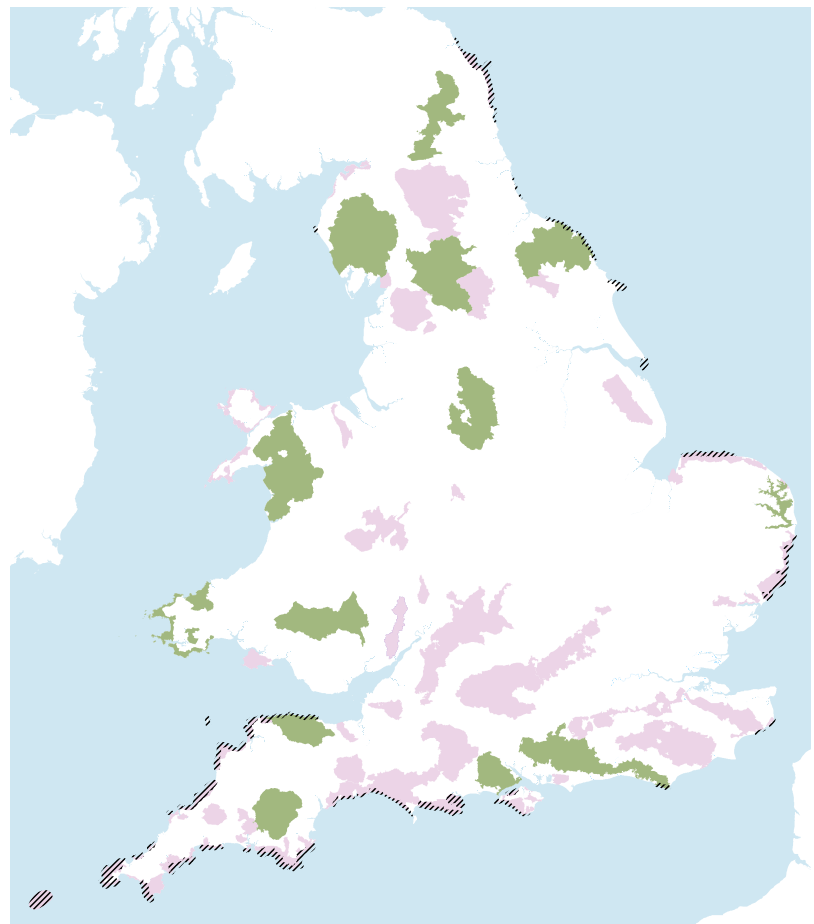
Our objectives for 2013–18 and the actions required to achieve them.

### Appendices A–F

## Map 1: Protected landscapes in England and Wales

### Key to map

-  Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
-  National Parks
-  Heritage Coast



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### 1.3. What is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

**1.3.1.** An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a landscape that has been recognised as being of national importance and has received special protection from the UK government. AONBs were created by the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949) and their management was strengthened through the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000). AONBs form part of a 'family' of protected and defined landscapes that, together with National Parks and Heritage Coasts, include our finest countryside. There are 46 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The first AONB was designated in 1956, and the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB had its designation confirmed in 1970.

### 1.4. What is the purpose of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

**1.4.1.** The statutory purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. In pursuing this purpose, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves help to conserve and enhance natural beauty. Recreation is not an objective of designation but the demand for recreation should be met and managed, in so far as this is consistent with the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty.

### 1.5. What does 'Natural Beauty' mean?

**1.5.1.** Natural England broadly defines 'natural beauty' as: 'not just the look of the landscape but also the landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries'. In section 99 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006), natural beauty was defined as: 'The fact that an area in England or Wales consists of or includes land used for agriculture or woodlands, land used as a park, or any other area whose flora, fauna or physiographical features are partly the product of human intervention in the landscape, does not prevent it from being treated, for the purposes of any enactment (whenever passed), as being an area of natural beauty (or of outstanding natural beauty)'.

### 1.6. Responsibility for the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB

**1.6.1.** The designated purpose to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB is the responsibility of all relevant authorities in the area under section 85 of the CRoW Act 2000 '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 is; any Minister of the Crown, any public body, any statutory undertaker, any person holding public office.

**1.6.2.** The relevant local authorities with respect to the AONB have a particular duty, under section 89 of the CRoW Act, to prepare and publish a Management Plan for the area. These authorities are: Suffolk County Council, Waveney District Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council and Babergh District Council. If the AONB boundary extension into north Essex (Tendring District) is agreed within the 2013–18 Plan period, this responsibility will extend to Tendring District Council and Essex County Council. All the above authorities are currently represented on





the AONB's Joint Advisory Committee. Unlike National Parks, AONBs do not have separate bodies with their own planning or development control functions and other executive powers.

**1.6.3.** Section 84 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act) empowers relevant local planning authorities to 'take all such action as appears to them expedient for the accomplishment of the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB'.

**1.6.4.** The AONB has been protected for future generations, not just for its intrinsic wildlife and natural environment: it's as much about people living or working in, and enjoying the area as it is about wildlife. The area is rich in history and the landscape paints a fascinating story of our past. The statutory duty of the AONB is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. This is different to National Parks where there is also a duty to further public enjoyment. However, there is an expectation in all protected landscapes that where conservation and recreation interests cannot be reconciled by skilful management, conservation should come first. This is known as the Sandford Principle. Whether the Sandford Principle is possible in all circumstances is debatable but it is something we should aim to achieve. With awareness and understanding of the special qualities of each landscape, how they came about, and how they can be conserved, people are more willing to make the changes necessary to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

## 1.7. The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership and team

**1.7.1.** To ensure the efficient and co-ordinated management of the AONB, the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership was formed in 1993. The Partnership is made up of organisations with a particular interest in the AONB who work together to implement the Management Plan. It encompasses local

authorities and statutory agencies as well as private, community and voluntary organisations active in the area. The AONB Partnership has a public commitment to work together to implement the Management Plan. The AONB Partnership is made up of 26 organisations, providing a high level of stakeholder representation.

**1.7.2.** Members of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership:

- Babergh District Council
- Country Land and Business Association
- The Crown Estate
- Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs)
- English Heritage
- Environment Agency
- Essex County Council
- Forestry Commission
- Haven Gateway Partnership
- Ipswich Borough Council
- National Farmers' Union
- National Trust
- Natural England
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Suffolk ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England)
- SALC (Suffolk Association of Local Councils)
- Suffolk Coast Ltd
- Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB
- Suffolk Coastal Business Forum
- Suffolk Coastal District Council
- Suffolk County Council
- Suffolk Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
- Suffolk Preservation Society
- Suffolk Wildlife Trust
- Tendring District Council
- Waveney District Council
- Visit East Anglia





**1.7.3.** To act as a focal point and champion for the AONB and to co-ordinate the work of the Partnership, the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB team was established. The team currently consists of 7.5 full time equivalent (FTE) staff members (including core and three third-party funded project staff). Core activity is primarily funded by Defra, with local authorities contributing significant funds. Project work, including that funded by the European Union and the Heritage Lottery Fund, are part of the AONB team's current activities. It is important to maintain core capacity in the team to develop and support third-party funded project activity.



## 1.8. The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB – an overview

**1.8.1.** The designated area covers 403 square kilometres (c.155 sq miles) stretching from Kessingland in the north to the River Stour in the south.

**1.8.2.** The unique character of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB is a product of its underlying geology, shaped by the effects of the sea and the interaction of people with the landscape. It is a mainly flat or gently rolling landscape, often open but with few commanding viewpoints. In many places, and especially near the coast, habitats and landscape features lie in an intimate mosaic, providing great diversity in a small area.

**1.8.3.** The AONB comprises mainly farmland. Other main components of the landscape are forestry plantations, low-lying freshwater marshes, intertidal estuaries, heathland, the coast, small villages and iconic coastal market towns. The area is probably best known for the particularly distinctive features of the coast and lowland heath which of course give the AONB its name.

**1.8.4.** Where it joins the sea, the AONB consists of predominantly shingle beaches, often extensive in nature, and backed in places by sandy cliffs. The coastline is interrupted by five river estuaries (Blyth,

Alde/Ore, Deben, Orwell and Stour) with extensive wildlife-rich intertidal areas of mudflat and saltmarsh. In some places, old estuary mouths have become blocked, creating large areas of brackish or freshwater marshland of significant wildlife value. Centuries old river walls were created to reclaim intertidal areas from the estuaries. These areas claimed from the sea are now important for agriculture. Many have boreholes that provide vital freshwater irrigation to the farmed hinterland. The area's heathland, known locally as the Sandlings and now much fragmented, follows the line of the coast. Large areas that were once Sandlings heath have been converted to farmland, planted as coniferous forests or developed for housing or military airfields, particularly during the 20th century.

**1.8.5.** The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB remains a lightly populated, undeveloped area, popular for outdoor recreation and tourism. The area is prized for its tranquillity, the quality of the environment and culture and for its outstanding wildlife. Compared to other parts of Great Britain it has a relatively dry climate.

## 1.9. The area covered by the Plan

**1.9.1.** Although AONB policies in national and local policy documents refer specifically to the statutory designated area, some adjacent areas share many similar landscape features. The Partnership has been managing these areas of the Shotley peninsula and the south side of the Orwell Estuary in the same way as the AONB proper, to protect and enhance their landscape and heritage. These "Additional Project Areas" are shown on Map 2.

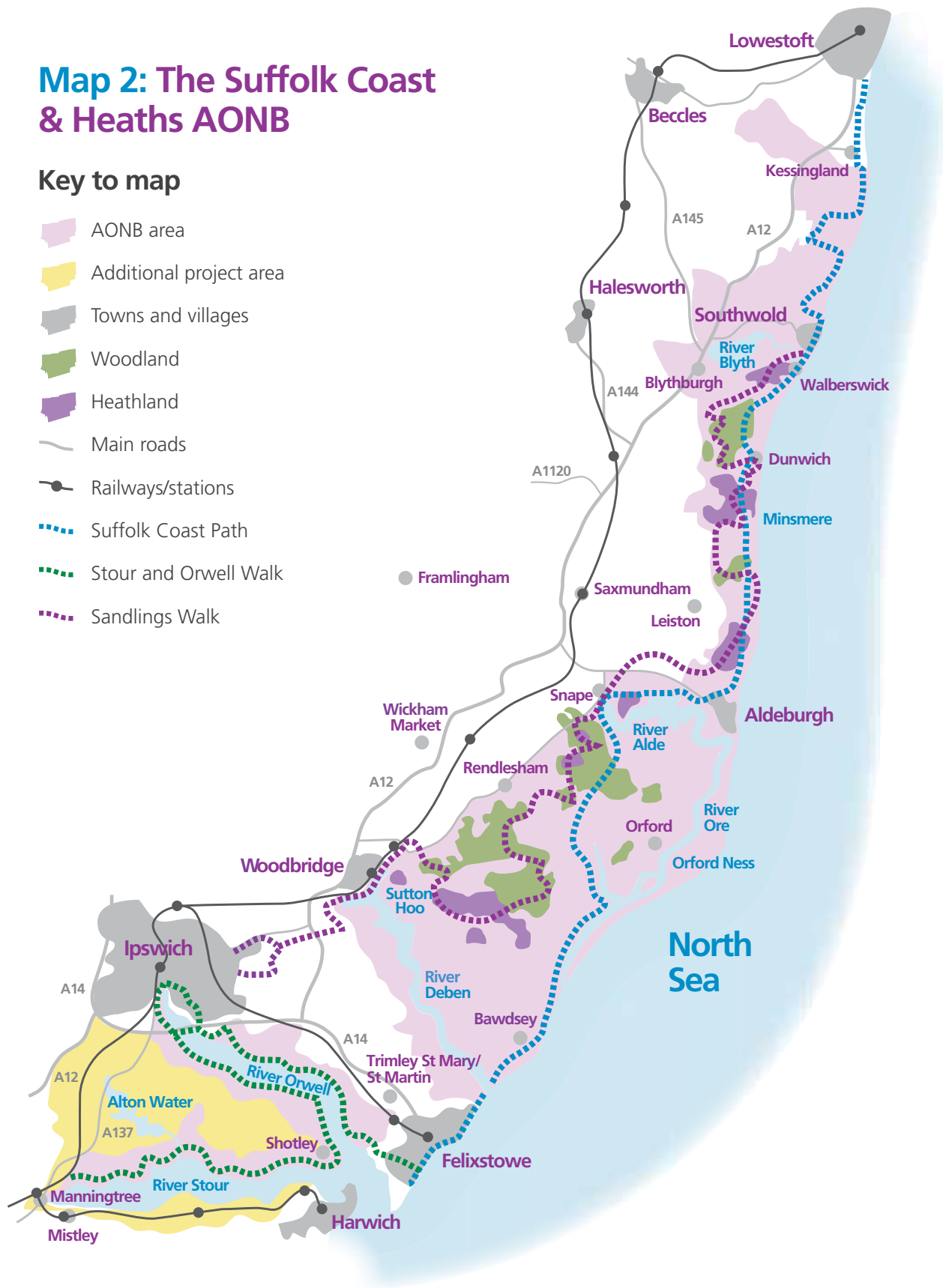
**1.9.2.** The Partnership does wish to see the area on the Essex (south) side of the Stour estuary, as defined by the Tendring Local Plan, formally designated as part of the AONB. As of early 2013, there is a statutory designation procedure in process to achieve this.



## Map 2: The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB

### Key to map





-  AONB area
-  Additional project area
-  Towns and villages
-  Woodland
-  Heathland
-  Main roads
-  Railways/stations
-  Suffolk Coast Path
-  Stour and Orwell Walk
-  Sandlings Walk



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# Map 3: The area covered by the Plan

## Key to map

-  AONB
-  Additional Project Area
-  District boundary
-  Railways/stations



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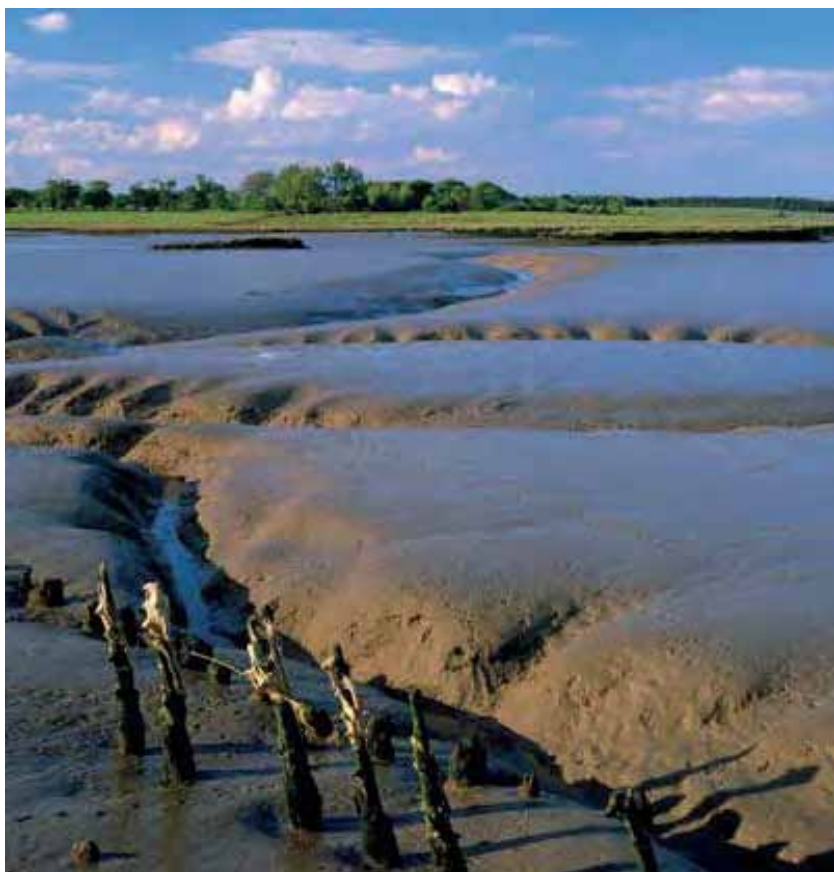
# “The Suffolk Heritage Coast is largely contained within the AONB”

## 1.10. The relationship of the AONB to the Suffolk Heritage Coast

**1.10.1.** The Suffolk Heritage Coast was defined in 1973 and is largely contained within the AONB. It runs from Kessingland to Felixstowe and incorporates the Blyth, Alde/Ore and lower Deben estuaries. There are no statutory requirements or powers associated with the Heritage Coast definition.

**1.10.2.** The purpose of Heritage Coast definition is similar to that of an AONB. However, it should be noted that it also includes objectives for conserving the environmental health and biodiversity of inshore waters and beaches, and to extend opportunities for recreational, educational, sporting and tourist activities that draw on, and are consistent with, the conservation of their natural beauty and the protection of their heritage features.

**1.10.3.** A Suffolk Heritage Coast Plan was adopted in 1978. Its policies were subsequently incorporated into the AONB Management Plan. This Plan therefore includes objectives, policies and action that will be applied to the Heritage Coast.





## 1.11. 2008–2013 Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan Review

**1.11.1.** The last Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan, published in 2008, was the second Plan for the AONB. Regular monitoring was carried out to record progress with the implementation of the Plan and, in 2012, a Partnership evaluation was carried out which sought to identify how effective the Plan had been.

### The five main conclusions of this work were:

- The AONB vision, statement of significance and policies were still largely valid but could be improved by some minor changes, in particular by making them more contemporary and focused
- The AONB Partnership is now more vibrant and active than ever, with meetings well attended. Activity and progress against the last Plan has been positive with 75% of the last Plan's actions being completed successfully. 80% of those assigned to the AONB team were also completed. Of the 46 priority actions in the last Plan, 72% have been completed

- In the last Plan period only three years of actions were initially developed, which required a mid-term review. We will undertake a mid-term review of the 2013–2018 action plan but will develop a full five year action plan from the start
- Reduction in funding in the middle of the 2008–13 Plan period affected delivery by the AONB team (including a 24% cut in core staff) but this has been counterbalanced by focussing on securing external funding for delivery of AONB projects



### Notable successes in delivery from the last plan included:

- Development of landscape scale conservation practice, particularly in Dunwich Forest
- Community-led activity and governance, particularly on the coast and estuaries
- The development of tourism promotion in the area and the AONB's role in preparing a tourism strategy
- Development of large AONB-led projects supporting sustainable tourism and Heritage Coast conservation
- Continued development of innovative projects, benefitting both wildlife and people in the area, led by Partnership organisations
- Development of local food and drink awareness, particularly through our support of and attendance at the Aldeburgh Food & Drink Festival
- Improved information for visitors to the area, particularly through books, walks leaflets and outdoor interpretation
- Undergrounding of low-level power lines, funded through the Ofgem distribution price control review allowance, which has seen over £3 million of direct landscape enhancement to date
- Increases in volunteer activity in the area, both through AONB Partnership organisations, but also the new AONB volunteer scheme
- An increase in the overall area of the AONB in Agri-Environment schemes to promote wildlife, access, and landscape conservation of the area
- A strengthened working relationship between the AONB team and local planning authority officers
- £250,000 of grants to community and partnership projects through the Sustainable Development Fund

**1.11.2.** At the time of writing, remaining priority actions are still being delivered. However, some will not be. Reasons for this vary.

In some cases, such as the Tendring AONB boundary extension, the AONB boundary signage project and the roll-out of Coastal Access, timescales have proved longer than anticipated.

In other cases better options have materialised. This includes the AONB team itself producing long-distance route guides. In this case a private company, Cicerone Press, specialising in long-distance walking guides worked with us to publish a new book. Another action was to develop a range of 'Explorer' short circular walks guides – now better delivered through our EU BALANCE project than through core funds.

Of course public money also declined steeply during the last Plan period and it is fair to say one or two of the last Plan's priorities were no longer seen as such, for example, the project to define landscape type descriptions in an accessible format and language. However, this project is now being delivered as part of the development stage of the Heritage Lottery Funded funded Touching the Tide project for the Heritage Coast.

**1.11.3.** The Joint Advisory Committee, comprising representatives of the local authorities, considered the advice of Defra, Natural England and the National Association of AONBs. It concluded that a new plan should be prepared and published, but that the review should be light-touch and the resultant 2013–2018 Plan should be action-oriented. The AONB Partnership supported this approach.

**1.11.4.** This new Management Plan covers the period 2013-2018 and incorporates a five-year action plan that will be reviewed in 2015/2016.



# Landscape character and special qualities of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB



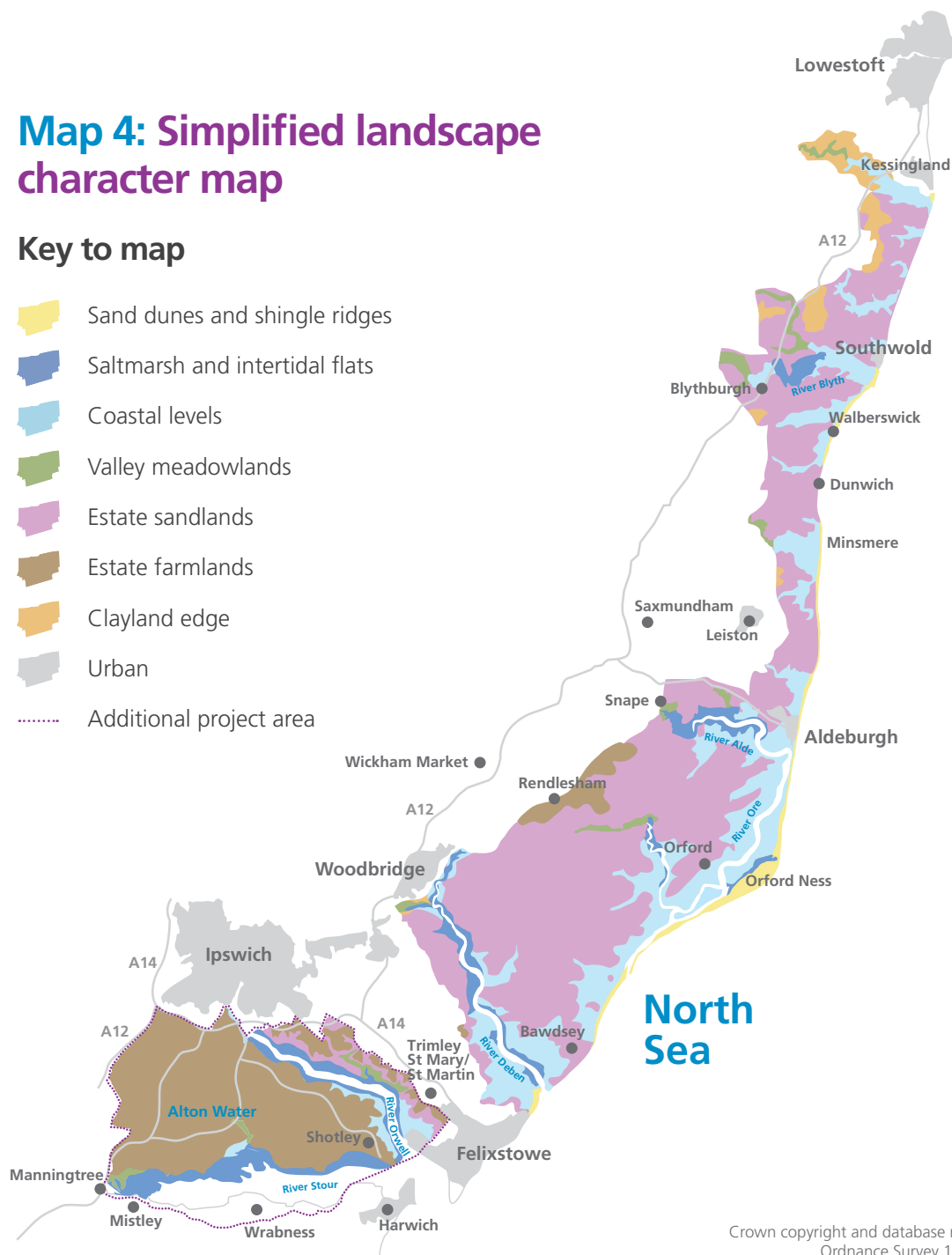




## Map 4: Simplified landscape character map

### Key to map

-  Sand dunes and shingle ridges
-  Saltmarsh and intertidal flats
-  Coastal levels
-  Valley meadowlands
-  Estate sandlands
-  Estate farmlands
-  Clayland edge
-  Urban
-  Additional project area



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## 2.1. Introduction

**2.1.1.** This section describes the landscape of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB and identifies its special qualities. The quality of the landscape in the AONB is what gives it its particular character, setting it apart from the wider countryside and leading to its designation as an AONB in 1970. Many of the objectives and actions contained in this Plan address the specific needs of these assets, so a description of their characteristics is the essential starting point for this document.

**2.1.2.** The character of any landscape comes from the interaction of a variety of factors. These include physical features arising from the underlying rocks and deposits (geology), the surface soils and the land cover. Its character will also be influenced by the way people have settled and developed the area over hundreds or even thousands of years, and the resulting cultural heritage of the area. Suffolk County Council undertook a Landscape Character Assessment at a county level in 2008, the findings of which are mapped and available to view online:

**[www.suffolklandscape.org.uk](http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk)**

From this work we have defined the main landscape character types that make up the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB as:

- Sand dunes and shingle ridges
- Saltmarsh and intertidal flats
- Coastal levels
- Open coastal and wooded fens
- Valley meadowlands
- Estate sandlands
- Estate farmlands
- Seascape

Many of these landscape types are subject of a local Suffolk Biodiversity action plan, see

**[www.suffolkbiodiversity.org](http://www.suffolkbiodiversity.org)**

**2.1.3.** Coastal market towns and small settlements are a key feature of the AONB's landscape, but were not identified as distinct landscape character types in their own right, but rather subsumed into the landscape character type.

**2.1.4.** There follows a general description of each landscape character type, and a summary of their special qualities and importance in environmental, social and economic terms. The unique quality of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB is defined by the rich mosaic of landscape types in a relatively small area. Coast, estuaries, heath, forest, farmland and coastal market towns together create an intimate pattern, an important part of Britain's natural and cultural heritage. Other less tangible features, such as its tranquillity, lack of significant congestion and light pollution, and its relatively undeveloped nature, contribute to the special character of the area.

**2.1.5.** Any developer seeking to use this Management Plan to assess landscape character and special qualities of the AONB should also refer to the full Suffolk County Council Landscape Character Assessment (2008) (**[www.suffolklandscape.org.uk](http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk)**), as well as identifying whether any subsequent work has been undertaken or is under way, through liaison with the AONB team.



## 2.2. Sand dunes and shingle ridges

A dynamic environment of sand and shingle on the coast

### Description of this landscape character type and its development

**2.2.1.** The low-lying coast of the AONB, comprising mainly sand and shingle, is a naturally dynamic environment, being constantly shaped and reshaped by the action of the sea. In places it is backed by soft, sandy cliffs up to 15 metres in height which, in rural areas, are largely undefended and actively eroding. This natural process provides sand and shingle that is transported by the action of tide and longshore drift to form beaches further south along the coast. Where large quantities of beach material are accreted it can become a relatively stable, semi-permanent feature, allowing communities of specialised plants to become established, such as at Shingle Street, Thorpeness and Kessingland. The most significant coastal feature is Orford Ness, the largest shingle spit in Europe, with its pattern of shingle ridges, vegetation and pools, is a geological and

geomorphological feature of international significance. Havergate Island too, as Suffolk's only island, is significant in the Ore estuary. It is also important for its wildlife and historical interest. In places, pools have formed within and behind the shingle. These are of varying levels of salinity, giving rise to distinct and rare wildlife, and can be frequently changed by the sea.

**2.2.2.** There is no continuous coast road and settlements are small in scale. Fishermen's huts are found at the small fishing villages and their boats are often launched directly from the beach. Colourful beach huts are a feature of Southwold, while Martello Towers appear as sentinels over the low-lying parts of the coast. Thorpeness is noteworthy as a purpose-made holiday village, created in the early 1900s. The popularity of the coast with visitors means that, in places, there are car parks close to the shore, often packed on sunny summer days.



## The importance of this landscape type in terms of:

### 2.2.3. Ecological heritage

- Much of the coast is designated as of European importance – for its habitat and for the birds and other species associated with it. Some of these are further recognised on a world stage as ‘wetlands of international importance’ called Ramsar sites. Biodiversity Action Plan national and local priority habitats include: coastal vegetated shingle (c. 21% of national and 7% of European resource); saline lagoons; coastal sand dunes; maritime cliffs and slopes

### 2.2.4. Economic interests

- Acts as a major tourist destination contributing significantly to the local economy, especially Southwold and Aldeburgh
- Natural landscape, varied coastal habitats and rare birds are a significant attraction for walkers and wildlife enthusiasts, especially birdwatchers
- Fishermen, while a typical part of the scene, have declined considerably in numbers
- Sizewell nuclear power stations located on and directly adjacent to this landscape type

### 2.2.5. Social values

- The vulnerability of some communities to erosion is a key concern within this landscape, with soft defences forming an integral part of the ‘natural’ coastal defences in some rural locations
- The coastal landscapes and definition as a Heritage Coast make the area attractive to residents and second home owners

### 2.2.6. Special qualities

- Shingle features, some vegetated, notably Orford Ness
- Short sections of crumbling soft cliffs – Dunwich, Covehithe, their landscape prominence and associated biodiversity and geodiversity through exposure of geological strata

- Bodies of water (broads/saline lagoons) – Shingle Street, Benacre and Easton Broads
- Sense of space, isolation and tranquillity, long-distance walking routes
- Coastal towns and villages – Aldeburgh, Southwold, Walberswick, Dunwich
- Beach huts and fishermen’s huts
- Distinctive built heritage in the landscape such as Martello towers and Cold War buildings on Orford Ness, which add a sense of history to the landscape
- The iconic resort of Thorpeness, built as a bespoke holiday village in the early 1900s
- Havergate Island in the Ore estuary, Suffolk’s only island





## 2.3. Saltmarsh and intertidal flats

The saline tidal areas of rivers

### Description of this landscape character type and its development

**2.3.1.** These are the tidal areas of rivers, subject to the saline influence of the sea and varying periods of inundation each day. Human intervention over many centuries has reduced the extent of the AONB's estuaries, which are restricted by many miles of man-made walls, separating them from the surrounding land. Where inundation is infrequent within the intertidal area, specialist saltmarsh plants and reeds can thrive. Where inundation is more frequent, and especially where the tidal action is erosive, few plants will survive, and open mudflats predominate.

**2.3.2.** The estuarine landscape is mainly flat and open with extensive views. Interest and texture is provided by a blend of subtle, often horizontal, features: the curves of half-hidden creeks and channels; the geometric shapes of river walls; the reflective qualities of water and mud and the varied carpet of saltmarsh foliage. Although highly colourful in summer, in winter the combination of brown mud and grey-green saltmarsh plants can give this landscape a sombre appearance, relieved by migratory wildfowl and wading birds that bring life and movement.

**2.3.3.** Remnants of human exploitation range from abandoned craft on mudflats, to former fish traps and causeways. Today, passing sailing boats, dinghies and kayaks, or craft on swinging moorings give a feeling of activity.



## The importance of this landscape type in terms of:

### 2.3.4. Ecological heritage

- Wintering areas for wading birds and wildfowl of European Importance
- Biodiversity Action Plan national and local priority habitats: saltmarsh and mudflats
- Range of historic features related to past exploitation of the landscape

### 2.3.5. Economic interests

- Saltmarsh makes an important contribution to wave dissipation, lowering the cost/specification for backing flood defence structures
- A landscape rich in wildlife and good for coastal walks, attracting a vibrant tourism economy
- Can be important nursery areas for fish
- Important sailing/boating area especially the Orwell and Deben estuaries with extensive moorings and boatyards contributing to the local economy
- The major ports of Felixstowe, Harwich and Ipswich are located on the Stour and Orwell estuaries and are important to the local and national economies
- Inshore fisheries are an important part of the local economies mix promoted by the Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

### 2.3.6. Social values

- Saltmarshes, estuarine creeks and wide expansive estuaries are recognised as attractive features for sailors, walkers and other visitors
- In places, they are much valued as a wildfowling location
- Increasing interest for recreational fishing; fluctuating interest for commercial fishing
- Wildlife watching and walking, sense of space and tranquillity

### 2.3.7. Special qualities

- Extensive areas of saltmarsh and mudflats
- Navigation opportunities for small boats
- Numerous boats on swinging moorings provide an attractive feature in the landscape
- Open and extensive views
- Specialist wildlife
- Walking where estuary-side paths exist





## 2.4. Coastal levels

The low-lying freshwater land found beside estuaries and the coast, protected by sea walls

### Description of this landscape character type and its development

**2.4.1.** This is low-lying freshwater marshland found beside estuaries and the coast, often protected behind grass-covered man-made river walls. Underlying these marshes is soil of marine origin. These areas, created by the enclosure of former intertidal areas between the 12th and 19th centuries, feature a changing pattern of ditching (older and wavy in the north, newer and straighter in the south) and have been traditionally used for grazing. However, modern pumps and better drainage have allowed extensive areas to be converted to arable land, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. In some areas this landscape type is found where old estuaries were once connected to the sea, such as the Minsmere River.

**2.4.2.** Fencing is not common on grazing marshes where ditches are used to control stock. Historic features can be

found within the marshes, such as former enclosure walls, duck decoys (from the mid 17th to mid 19th centuries), the remnants of wind pumps and military defence structures dating from the two world wars and earlier.

**2.4.3.** Where water levels are maintained at or above marsh level, this landscape type supports freshwater reedbeds, for example, at Minsmere. Managed for their rare and distinctive wildlife, reedbeds support birds such as bittern, marsh harriers and bearded tits.



## The importance of this landscape type in terms of:

### 2.4.4. Ecological heritage

- Biodiversity Action Plan national and local priorities: coastal and flood plain grazing marsh, reedbeds, bittern, water voles, barn owls, otters
- Historic evolution of patterns of drainage and location for military defence structures
- Important feeding, roosting and nesting areas for wetland and coastal birds
- Reedbeds can hold vast numbers of roosting starlings in the winter
- Important areas for wintering wildfowl and breeding waders

### 2.4.5. Economic interests

- Agricultural production where land has been improved
- Important for grazing livestock where it still contributes to income
- Location for marinas and boatyards with their contribution to the local economy
- Many freshwater levels contain well-points, essential for irrigating high-value vegetable crops on the light soils inland

- Reed bed extent and the associated economic viability of reed cutting businesses
- Reservoirs, where sited in the landscape

### 2.4.6. Social values

- Amenity value for tourism and leisure based activities, especially the extensive network of coastal nature reserves and footpaths on river walls
- Important areas for peace and tranquillity and the sense of remoteness with health links to physical and psychological well-being

### 2.4.7. Special qualities

- Extensive wet, grazing marshes
- Large reedbeds
- Ancient drainage and enclosure patterns
- Open and extensive views
- Specialist wildlife
- Freshwater sources (well-points and reservoirs).







## 2.5. Open coastal and wooded fens

Distinct areas with deep peat deposits, largely managed for wildlife

### Description of this landscape character type and its development

**2.5.1.** Open coastal fen landscape is found in a distinct but important area of the AONB between Walberswick and Dunwich. The area includes Dingle, Corporation and Westwood Marshes. This landscape was formed by marine erosion and movement of coastal sediments and as a result, since c.1300 the Dunwich River has flowed north, parallel to the coast, to exit at the mouth of the Blyth. Unlike Minsmere, where the soils were originally marine sediment (alluvium), the marshes between Dunwich and Walberswick are peat-based, suggesting they have not been open to the sea. Indeed in the Middle Ages, when Dunwich was an important east coast port, these coastal marshes which we know today would have been inland river valley marshes.

**2.5.2.** Wooded fens are also distinctly located, particularly in the north of the AONB, at Covehithe, Benacre and Easton Broads. The appearance of these areas, as reedbeds, with extensive areas of open water (Broads) is similar to other landscape types, such as Minsmere (coastal levels). The key difference is that, just as with coastal fens, wooded fens sit on deep peat deposits rather than marine alluvium.

**2.5.3.** These are generally unsettled landscapes because of the wetness of the ground in the AONB, and are now managed primarily for nature conservation.

## The importance of this landscape type in terms of:

### 2.5.4. Ecological heritage

- Important freshwater and occasionally brackish areas rich in wildlife. Reedbeds are especially important for rare birds like the bittern, bearded tit and marsh harrier
- Biodiversity Action Plan national and local priorities: reedbeds, wet woodlands, bittern, reed bunting, otter

### 2.5.5. Economic interests

- With drainage they can be useful for grazing (such as Dingle Marshes), but constrained by the topography they do not offer high economic returns
- The importance of the wildlife habitat is significant for attracting birdwatchers/ wildlife watchers/countryside visitors as a noticeable part of the tourism industry
- There is still a local economy based on reed cutting, primarily for thatching

### 2.5.6. Social values

- Sparsely inhabited areas that generate a feeling of wildness and remoteness

### 2.5.7. Special qualities

- Large reedbeds, with a strong sense of tranquillity
- Flat open landscapes
- An undeveloped nature to these areas
- Freshwater habitats especially reedbeds and their associated wildlife



“A strong sense of tranquillity”



## 2.6. Valley meadowlands

River valley grasslands above the tidal range

### Description of this landscape character type and its development

**2.6.1.** This landscape is found in the middle reaches of the river valleys above the tidal influence, or where streams and small rivers have no direct connection with the sea. It is normally characterised by grass fields in the flood plain which, where waterlogged, can become dominated by reedbeds. In some areas they have become wooded and, in places, extensive drainage has allowed arable farming.

**2.6.2.** There are very few buildings, limited mainly to an occasional isolated house, farmstead or historic wind pump that creates a point of interest. The lower reaches of most river valleys are under some form of conservation management.

### The importance of this landscape type in terms of:

#### 2.6.3. Ecological heritage

- Important freshwater and occasionally brackish areas rich in wildlife. Reedbeds are especially important for rare birds like the bittern, bearded tit and marsh harrier

- Biodiversity Action Plan national and local priorities: reedbeds, wet woodlands, bittern, reed bunting, otter

#### 2.6.4. Economic interests

- With drainage they can be profitable for grazing. In the past some areas have been more extensively drained and put down to arable to provide a better income
- The importance of the wildlife habitat is significant for attracting bird-watchers and other countryside visitors as a significant part of the tourism industry

#### 2.6.5. Social values

- Sparsely inhabited areas that generate a feeling of wildness and remoteness
- The few buildings can be vulnerable to flood risk

#### 2.6.6. Special qualities

- Small-scale undeveloped landscapes
- Freshwater habitats especially reedbeds and their associated wildlife



## 2.7. Estate sandlands and rolling estate sandlands

The light lands inland and north of the River Deben, a landscape of farmland, forest and the remaining fragments of Sandlings Heath

### Description of this landscape character and its development

**2.7.1.** The Estate sandlands are a flat or at most gently undulating landscape that runs along much of the length of the coast. It is an area of light, sandy, acidic soils overlaying crag and in some areas older London Clay (particularly in the southern parts of the AONB).

**2.7.2.** The acidic, sandy and free-draining soils limit the vegetation that can naturally grow in this area. Since the early clearance of the trees from the Neolithic period onward, farming has often been temporary or marginal.

**2.7.3.** Extensive 'sheep walks' dominated the area in medieval periods. These lowland heaths, known locally as the Sandlings, were not a natural landscape, but one that evolved as a result of the way the land was managed by people.

Sheep roamed the heaths by day but were folded (fenced in) on the surrounding arable land at night, so their dung could improve its fertility. This process allowed the land to be periodically cultivated for cereals if the prices were favourable. Enclosure of this heathland and sheep walk landscape occurred from the medieval period onwards, with more formal acts and arrangements between the 17th and 19th centuries. Enclosure was driven by technological changes, fashion for improvement and higher cereal prices. The impact on the landscape was profound, creating a network of rectilinear fields with belts and coverts to reduce soil movement and improve shooting.

**2.7.4.** The landscape is sparsely settled, due to the historical scarcity of water, with small clustered villages and a scattering of estate farms. Elm hedges form many boundaries with shelterbelts and lines of pine in the southern area of the AONB.





**2.7.5.** The combination of falling land values and national need in the 1920s led to the creation of the Forestry Commission's Sandlings forests (Dunwich, Tunstall and Rendlesham forests), all planted on former Sandlings heath. These forest plantations now form a major part of the landscape and are important for outdoor recreation. In some areas where a more open heathland mosaic has been, restored they are once again important for rare wildlife. An intensification of agriculture and the construction of military airfields further destroyed and fragmented the heaths that were left. The forest plantations and the encroaching seedling trees (particularly birch and pine) have taken away many large-scale vistas, though large field sizes and a lack of development have helped to retain a sense of openness.

**2.7.6.** Few ancient woods exist in this landscape, with notable exceptions such as Sudbourne Great Wood and Staverton Thicks.

**2.7.7.** The open fields are dominated by vegetable and turf production, with increasing numbers of outdoor pig units. Grazing animals are now almost exclusively restricted to the heathland areas where they are used to maintain important habitats. Some good quality heathland areas still remain on golf courses in the area, which characteristically retain a good mosaic of open ground and scrub/woodland cover.

**“These forest plantations now form a major part of the landscape and are important for outdoor recreation”**



## The importance of this landscape type in terms of:

### 2.7.8. Ecological heritage

- Biodiversity Action Plan national and local priorities: lowland heath, dry acid grassland, silver studded blue butterfly, antlion, nightjar, stone curlew, Dartford warbler, woodlark, adder, natterjack toad, red-tipped cudweed: cereal field margins, mixed deciduous woodlands (including ancient woodlands), barbastelle and Natterer's bat, farmland birds and brown hare
- Geodiversity includes the unique Suffolk Coralline Crag and major areas of the other Craggs with their Pliocene faunas, exposed in many pits and cliffs
- Hedges are significant and although often species-poor, many are ancient, such as the elm hedges in the Dunwich area

### 2.7.9. Economic interests

- Little direct economic return from the heaths themselves apart from golf courses
- Low intensity grazing of the heaths often needs subsidising
- Former heath planted with conifers has economic returns from the timber and also potential for recreation-related returns
- Vegetable production where irrigation (links to coastal levels) is present and fertilizers are used, makes fields highly productive. The rotation may also include turf (also irrigated) and outdoor pigs

### 2.7.10. Social values

- Most areas of lowland heath have been designated as open access for pedestrians and many are managed as nature reserves
- Popular walking areas due to free-draining soils and open vistas especially if near settlements or with good parking
- Increasing usage for horse riding and cycling
- Important historic associations include its early clearance by Neolithic people; development as sheep walks since the medieval period; churches and other ecclesiastical buildings; location for WWII airfields

### 2.7.11. Special qualities

- Rare lowland heath and its associated wildlife
- Large skies, open vistas across heath/wooded mosaics
- Distinctive field patterns and elm and pine hedges
- Coniferous forest meeting multiple needs and a few iconic ancient woods
- Good walking, cycling and riding opportunities
- Glorious colour of red crag pits
- Natural, unspoilt cliffs and beaches





## 2.8. Estate farmlands

The better soils south of the River Deben, with a landscape of winding lanes, parkland and ancient woodland

### Description of this landscape character and its development

**2.8.1.** These landscapes are found in the south of the AONB, particularly around the Stour and Orwell estuaries and on the Shotley Peninsula. In these areas the soils, whilst still light, are generally less impoverished. The Felixstowe peninsula has considerable areas of sandy soil, but the Shotley peninsula has consistently better soil. Late 18th and 19th century agricultural writers called these soils the ‘rich loams’ and they were considered to be the best in the county. This has had a significant impact on the character of the landscape. The better soils attracted the first farms and settlements – it is an area of ancient settlement, with a substantial Neolithic ritual enclosure at Freston, which is probably around 5,000 years old. Unlike the Sandlands to the north, this landscape has a network of meandering lanes.

**2.8.2.** The area has a substantial number of ancient woods, some up to 80ha in size. In the west there is the close grouping of ancient woods around Bentley and Tattingstone, including Dodnash and Martin’s Woods in Bentley; Old Hall Wood on Bentley’s northern boundary is close to Spinney Wood and Wherstead Wood, with Holbrook Park and Cutler’s Wood forming another group north of Tattingstone.

**2.8.3.** The crop production is mainly arable and, unlike the Estate sandlands to the north, the landscape is clustered with medium-sized farms. The pattern of fields is characterised by large-scale arable blocks divided into rectilinear fields. The pattern is indicative of relatively late enclosure, but there is no recorded parliamentary enclosure of common-field arable. There are some notable hedges of holly with pollard oaks and suckering elm, usually dominant on the lightest land.

**2.8.4.** The changes in slope overlooking the estuaries are characterised by designed parkland landscapes around large houses, including Orwell, Freston, Wherstead and Woolverstone Parks. These parklands form a key component of the landscape around the Stour and Orwell estuaries and include many ancient parkland trees.

**2.8.5.** In many places this landscape is quite open with extensive views across the estuaries. Woodland can be a strong feature in some parts. The western edge is bordered by the Ipswich to London main rail line and the A14 trunk road. In some places views of the ports of Felixstowe and Harwich can be very prominent.



## The importance of this landscape type in terms of:

### 2.8.6. Ecological heritage

- Biodiversity Action Plan national and local priorities: cereal field margins, arable flowering species, mixed deciduous woodlands (includes ancient), barbastelle and Natterer's bat, farmland birds and brown hare
- Ancient woods such as the Bentley cluster and designed parkland landscapes containing many ancient trees
- Hedges are significant. Although often species poor, they are locally distinctive with species such as holly on the Shotley peninsula

### 2.8.7. Economic interests

- Arable farmland and other agricultural activities
- The Shotley Peninsula is an important area for spring (malting) barley production

### 2.8.8. Social values

- The Shotley Peninsula has a dense network of rights of way compared to the rest of the AONB
- Alton Water Reservoir forms an important recreational resource for both land and water based activities

### 2.8.9. Special qualities

- Spring cereal crops and their important wildlife
- Large open views from the uplands down to the Orwell and Stour estuaries
- Ancient woodlands, distinctive field patterns and designed parkland landscapes with ancient trees
- A particularly quiet and undisturbed part of the AONB (and project area)







## 2.9. Seascape

The area's seascapes are as distinctive as its landscapes

**2.9.1.** There is currently no description of the seascape character for the Suffolk Coast. It is expected that seascape will be fully described and better understood by the start of the next plan period (2018–2023).

**2.9.2.** Seascapes include the interface between land and sea and also offshore waters. Of particular relevance to the AONB, with its statutory purpose to conserve and enhance natural beauty, is the conservation of seascape character in the zones of inter-visibility between land and sea.

### 2.9.3. Ecological heritage

- Marine Protected Areas and Marine Conservation Zones contain a wide variety of protected marine wildlife e.g. red-throated diver, little tern
- Cultural heritage on the sea bed, underwater Dunwich, wrecks

### 2.9.4. Economic interests

- A wider range of economic interests including offshore wind farm development
- Shipping and recreational boating
- Pipelines, telecommunications, underwater cabling
- Sand and gravel extraction
- Coastal tourism
- Fishing

### 2.9.5. Social values

- The principle attraction of the coast, views out to sea, landscape/seascape interface
- Cultural interests below water
- Recreation
- Less understood than the terrestrial environment



# Setting the scene – the context and issues





## 3.1. Introduction

**3.1.1.** This section sets out the current social, economic, ecological and environmental context for the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB.

**3.1.2.** References to some European, national and local policies are made, but these are neither exhaustive nor intended to be comprehensive.

**3.1.3.** Suffice to say a huge range of policies impact on the management of the AONB, ranging from European Directive, national policy and regulation, through to community strategies and development frameworks.

**3.1.4.** This AONB Plan articulates how the AONB Partnership can play its part in delivering and supporting these policies, as we seek to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area.

## 3.2. Climate change

**3.2.1.** There is overwhelming evidence that global climate change, influenced by the human use of fossil fuels, raw materials and intensive agriculture, is occurring. Any significant change in climate is likely to present challenges to the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB in a variety of ways. Critical issues in the short to medium term are likely to include:

- Water (increased coastal, flood plain and surface water flood events leading to damage to property, disruption to economic activity and availability of freshwater)
- Farming (water and crops)
- Biodiversity (increased need for wildlife to adapt and move across landscapes or risk extinction), both within but also into and out of the AONB
- Tourism (potential for positive or negative weather-related impacts on UK tourism)
- Fire risk (increased likelihood of significant heath/forest fires)
- Damage/disruption to transport, utility and communications infrastructure caused by increased extreme weather events (flooding, heat, high winds etc)

**3.2.2.** On the Suffolk coast, there is a growing acceptance of the need to adapt to inevitable coastal change over the medium to long term, but with importance placed on coastal management allowing time for communities to adapt. The legislative framework already exists to ensure that no net loss of internationally important habitat occurs, but there is a need to better understand the adaptation techniques for other climate change risks. Work in the last plan period has begun to address this for farming in the AONB, through the Future Landscapes project.

**3.2.3.** There remains a need to increase understanding of the potential effects of climate change on the characteristic habitats, species and landscapes of the AONB and to develop longer term strategies that will mitigate any adverse effects. In the absence of comprehensive evidence for all habitats and species within the AONB, a landscape-scale approach that seeks to develop ecological networks, through which wildlife can easily move across the landscape, is now actively being pursued in the AONB and is also supported through Government policy.

**3.2.4.** Within the AONB, the conservation sector has started to explore the concept of removing barriers to enable widespread grazing over large areas and a range of different habitats. As well as helping to address climate change, by making habitats more resilient to change and longer-term management more sustainable and less dependent on fossil-fuels, this approach brings other potential benefits such as landscape enhancement and improved access experiences for people. Many details still need to be addressed but, with significant amounts of land in conservation management in some parts of the AONB, the potential exists for land managers to work together for mutual benefit.

This approach should also be extended outside nature reserves to include commercially farmed land.

**3.2.5.** A further consequence of the growing climate change consensus is recognition of the need to reduce our 'carbon footprint' and to mitigate these problems through positive action for the environment and through green transport campaigns. Initiatives such as 'Suffolk – Creating the Greenest County' can continue to act as a forum for developing new thinking and, through the delivery of the Climate Change Action Plan, promote carbon-reduction solutions within local communities and businesses.

**3.2.6.** Because climate change is such a cross-cutting issue, it will not be drawn out as a specific theme itself, but rather climate change based objectives and actions will appear across all themes within the Plan (Coast and estuaries, Land use and wildlife, Enjoying the area, Working together).





## 3.3. Landscape

One definition of a landscape is “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”

**3.3.1.** In UK law, protected landscape areas are designated on the basis of their natural beauty. Natural beauty can also be a confusing concept as the criteria for natural beauty places as much emphasis on human culture and its artefacts as it does about the natural environment and the wildlife and habitats of an area. The AONB’s landscape that we see today is a combination of both human activity and the natural world around us. Both have influenced the area hugely.

**3.3.2.** People’s sense of place and belonging in landscape should not be underestimated, and often it is this sense of connectedness and ownership that ends up in conflict about change. Clearly much of the land is privately owned in the AONB, but there is a deep sense of public ownership of the landscape. This is supported by evidence in Natural England’s 2009 research document (NECR024), on the experiential values of landscape. A public sense of ownership of landscape manifests itself in all sorts of ways; conflict at times of change, but perhaps most notably with individuals and communities stepping forward to help look after the area or take part in discussions affecting its future.

**3.3.3.** All landscapes matter! The European Landscape Convention (ELC) seeks to recognise the concept of landscape in law and integrate it into relevant policy frameworks for landscape protection and management. The Convention therefore underpins the work to care for the UK’s protected landscape, including the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB. The primary purpose of this plan is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of this area. However, this plan is not alone in seeking to conserve the AONB. The ELC, England & Wales’ CRoW Act (2000), various national planning policies and statements and the National Planning Policy Framework, right through to our local authority’s local development frameworks, also make clear statements in supporting this statutory purpose.

**3.3.4.** Suffolk County Council’s 2008 character assessment of the landscape is a valuable resource in terms of describing the distinctive qualities of Suffolk’s landscape, including the AONB. It also provides some guidance on how to conserve the various landscape character types. The Touching the Tide project managed by the AONB will incorporate a Heritage Coast landscape character assessment to bring an increased level of detail to this work for part of the AONB.

**3.3.5.** In order to assess larger scale land use changes and their effect on landscape character, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments are routinely used. This is to ensure significant impacts on landscape character will be avoided, as required by national planning policy. However, where national public interest overrides these policies (such as major infrastructure developments for energy installations), landscape and visual impacts should be minimised and any residual impacts offset.

**3.3.6.** Essex local authorities have led a campaign to have the southern shore of the Stour estuary designated as part of the AONB. Research undertaken in conjunction with the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Landscape Assessment (Countryside Commission 1993) identified it as of similar landscape quality and it is certainly part of the same National Character Area. Both the District and County Plans have policies to seek its designation as AONB to safeguard its special qualities. This work continues to be a priority following the submission to Natural England of evidence to support the extension in June 2010.

**3.3.7.** Natural England has divided the country into 159 National Character Areas (NCAs). Each NCA is a landscape, recognisable at a strategic scale, for which management guidance and policy priorities can be set. NCA 82, the Suffolk Coast & Heaths, encompasses the AONB and much of the surrounding area. Local Landscape Character Assessments (LCAs), such as those carried out by Suffolk County Council and the AONB, complement the NCAs at a much finer grained, local scale.

**3.3.8.** Landscape, like climate change, is an all-encompassing issue. All themes within this plan will relate to the delivery of the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB's landscape. For this reason landscape will not have its own theme, but conserving and enhancing it, just like delivering on climate change adaptation and mitigation, will be delivered across all themes.

**3.3.9.** Many of the issues that we are seeking to balance within the landscape of the AONB, also occur outside the boundary. Land use changes of all sorts, such as agricultural changes or terrestrial and marine development can have an impact on the AONB. It is therefore often necessary as we manage changes to the protected area, to look beyond its boundaries and engage with issues that have an impact here, but may be taking place further away.

**3.3.10.** Biosphere Reserve status would enable access to a greater profile and thereby resources to sustainably manage the area. Biosphere Reserves are sites established by countries and recognised by UNESCO to promote sustainable development based on local community efforts and sound science. As places that seek to reconcile conservation of globally important biological and cultural diversity with economic and social development, through partnerships between people and nature, they are ideal to test and demonstrate innovative approaches to sustainable development from local to international scales. Biosphere Reserves act in some ways as 'living laboratories' for testing out and demonstrating integrated management of land, water and biodiversity.





## 3.4. Theme 1

# Coast and estuaries

**3.4.1.** There is an increasing focus on the marine environment at both a European and national level, most notably with the new Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009). The new Marine Management Organisation will address the planning and management of coastal waters below mean high water, open sea and seabed. This is of particular relevance to the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB as it addresses the interface between the land and the sea. Understanding and conserving Suffolk's seascape character, its forces for change and sensitivities are key issues that the AONB Partnership is well placed to champion and promote as the East Area Marine Plans (East Inshore and East Offshore) are developed and then adopted.

**3.4.2.** The management of flood and coastal erosion risk remains one of the most important issues currently facing communities and businesses below the flood line or on the coastal strip. The AONB has played a key role in enabling local communities to participate and even lead in managing coastal change, helping to establish a Suffolk Coast Forum and the Deben, and Alde & Ore Estuary Partnerships. The building blocks are now in place to ensure decisions are integrated across sectors and policy areas as well as encompassing the views of

local communities. Despite – or perhaps because of – the progress made to date, tensions between national and local priorities for addressing coastal change will remain a critical issue in this Plan. It is therefore important that the grassroots support by the Suffolk Estuaries Officer, hosted by the AONB, continues.

**3.4.3.** It is also important to ensure that coastal management decisions take full account of the landscape and the environmental and visual impacts as part of an integrated approach. All relevant authorities have a statutory duty to have regard to the landscape of the AONB.

**3.4.4.** Coastal change associated with both sea-level rise, as well as flood and erosion risk, will continue to play a key part in the work of the AONB team and Partnership, as well as the many landowners and communities directly affected.



**3.4.5.** As well as the existing internationally-designated marine wildlife areas of our estuaries and the newly designated offshore Special Protection Area (SPA) aimed at protecting red-throated diver, there will be a new series of designations, called Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs), applied to some of our estuaries. MCZs are a positive step forward, further conserving a vital resource for the long term. However, MCZ status and its impact on certain economic and recreational activities remains unclear. It will be important to ensure that the socio-economic interests of local communities are compatible with the protection for our environment, afforded by existing and any future designated sites.

**3.4.6.** The dynamic coastline has implications for public access. We are already at the forefront of new innovations to integrate coastal change and public access in the AONB, with community projects such as the Orford river wall crest trial and Shotley Gate, which both sought to protect coastal areas whilst improving public access. Legally, there is no automatic roll back of Public Rights of Way (PROW) lost to the sea, although this might not stop new public use. Coastal Access as part of the Marine and Coastal Access Act is currently expected to be taken forward in Suffolk in 2015–2016, i.e. within the Plan period.

**3.4.7.** Our coast and estuaries remain vitally important places for rare wildlife and the habitats that support them.

They also offer authentic and revitalising experiences for people, whether this is a family day on the beach, or a bracing winter walk beside one of our estuaries. Recreational disturbance of wildlife is a growing problem. This manifests itself most obviously through issues including litter on our beaches, disturbance by dogs to wildlife (particularly on mudflats), people inadvertently trampling on little tern nests on a shingle beach, commercial bait-digging, or speeding recreational craft. The AONB Partnership will continue to work with communities, environmental organisations, tourism businesses, marinas and harbour authorities to manage this problem with a view to decreasing advertent or inadvertent negative impacts.

**3.4.8.** As changes occur to the coast and estuaries there is a clear need to engage proactively with people to help clarify what makes the Suffolk Coast different from other places. How has it become the landscape that we see today? Why is it so special and how can we look after it? Touching the Tide, a Heritage Lottery Fund landscape partnership scheme for the area (to run up until 2016), is designed to do just this, working with a wide range of partner organisations and local communities. Touching the Tide is not about coastal defence, it is about helping people better understand, celebrate and conserve what makes Suffolk's Heritage Coast so special. Adaptation to coastal change, particularly in hearts and minds, is a key element of the project.





## 3.5. Theme 2

# Land use and wildlife

### Biodiversity and Geodiversity

**3.5.1.** Recent national policy documents relating to biodiversity such as the Lawton Report, *Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network*, and the subsequent White Paper *The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature*, provide the strategic steer for this Plan's approach to biodiversity conservation. Lawton sets out the actions needed to enhance the resilience and coherence of England's ecological network in four words: more, bigger, better and joined-up. *Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services* aims to halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people. The need for urgent biodiversity action is only part of the picture as other ecosystem services such as water quality and availability are issues that have both medium and long term implications for local communities.

**3.5.2.** The network of important European wildlife sites, collectively called Natura 2000 sites, is underpinned by strong legislation, requiring mitigation or compensation for any plans or projects that have significant adverse effects. Nationally designated sites of wildlife and geological importance (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) also enjoy strong legislative protection. More locally, non-statutory County Wildlife Sites and Geodiversity Sites offer recognition for the county's most important sites, not covered by national or European designations.

Any sites designated as MCZs would add to and strengthen the network of Marine Protected Areas. National and county biodiversity action plans articulate broad actions required to improve the quality of our most important wildlife. The national geodiversity action plan and GeoSuffolk's action pack seek to conserve important local features and enhance public understanding of geological and geomorphological resources.

To ensure that this Plan does not impact upon the integrity of these wildlife sites, the Plan has undertaken an appropriate assessment compliant with the Habitat Regulations Directive.

**3.5.3.** A statutory duty to further biodiversity and geodiversity has been placed on local authorities and similar public bodies and this has been an important part of the AONB Partnership's work. However, we all have a moral duty to protect wildlife and this applies to visitors and all members of the public. Wildlife designations can provide leverage for funding, and mechanisms by which the local area is protected, which is of course one of the key reasons the AONB is such a lovely place to live and work in and for visitors to enjoy. It is the quality of the natural environment, protected in part through designation that helps protect this special place and supports significant parts of its economy, particularly tourism.

**3.5.4.** In furthering the localism agenda that is being promoted by Government, it is important that local communities fully understand the importance of the natural environment of the AONB and that designations are not simply seen or act as barriers to meeting sustainable and appropriate local aspirations. 'Localism' will require closer interaction and stronger partnerships, involving local communities seeking to protect and conserve the AONB's natural environment. The recently established East Suffolk Partnership will provide more opportunities to strengthen an already thriving relationship with communities and volunteers.



**3.5.5.** AONBs feature high up in the hierarchy of protection, seeking to prevent inappropriate exploitation (e.g. minerals, development, etc) while maintaining high-quality renewable resources (e.g. water resource protection or food production). The European Water Framework Directive is now influencing planning and may have a significant impact on the future management of water resources and pollution on land and at sea. Common Agricultural Policy, scheduled for 2013, will influence changes to farming over the Plan period across the whole of Europe and not just locally in the AONB. Clearly though, the future of farm payments supporting biodiversity and how this links to a number of land use policy agendas will be subject to much discussion.



**3.5.6.** Catchment Sensitive Farming plays an important part in meeting the Water Framework Directive and work, particularly by Natural England and the Environment Agency, should continue to offer advice to farmers especially in areas where diffuse pollution can be a particular problem. In the past such diffuse pollution has had an impact on European Union designated wildlife sites within the AONB.





## Farming

**3.5.7.** Arable farming within the AONB remains a dynamic activity, influenced by market forces and by the support provided by the European Union. Crop preferences and farming methods may be subject to rapid changes as farmers adapt to the opportunities provided by the prevailing economic climate. Climate change too, is likely to have an increasing influence on farming, and the AONB Partnership will have an important role to play supporting the adaptation of farm businesses to climate change, whilst also ensuring that the special qualities of the AONB are conserved and enhanced.

**3.5.8.** Where irrigation is possible on the light lands within the AONB, production can be intensive. This is because the land can be worked virtually all the year and, with the addition of water and fertilisers, precise cropping regimes can be created that suit vegetable production. The use of plastic covers early or late in the season also helps to extend the growing season. Stones are often removed to prevent damage to vegetable crops and harvesting equipment. This process has a significant negative impact on local soil structure and can impair drainage and exacerbate 'capping'. While important for production, the presence of aerial irrigation rigs and the use of reflective plastic can result in adverse visual impacts on the landscape in some locations. Maximising the returns from the land can

impinge on the conservation value of the headlands and reduce the presence of over-wintering stubbles vital for farmland birds. With water abstraction often at the environmental limits, there is a growing trend for the creation of winter-filled reservoirs, which need careful siting and design to avoid adverse landscape impact. It is a sobering thought to understand that as much freshwater is pumped into our estuaries to drain freshwater marshes in the winter, as would be needed in the driest of summers. Could more joined-up solutions be found to use this precious resource more sustainably?

**3.5.9.** Turf production and outdoor pig units are now commonplace in the AONB. Turf helps to retain the open vistas of the AONB, but its vibrant green colour and uniform texture can impact on the landscape and the continual loss of soil can damage the archaeological resource. Cultivation of bio-fuel crops is more localised in the western fringes of the AONB where clay is more dominant. Outdoor pigs are certainly favoured by the market and Suffolk has a widespread reputation for its quality pork. There can be landscape impacts associated with this success though, as the pens, straw stacks and fencing can become dominant in the landscape. The management practices, in particular feeding regimes, attract large numbers of gulls and corvids, so supporting artificially large local populations all year round - with a potential knock-on effect of increasing

predation of nesting birds in surrounding areas. Outdoor pig units on valley sides are also vulnerable to run-off, resulting in soil loss and diffuse pollution. Further work is required to ensure that a balance is struck between maintaining the vibrancy of this part of the farming economy, whilst also protecting the special qualities of the landscape within which it operates.

**3.5.10.** The increasing size of farm machinery can affect the verges of minor roads, and the additional weight can impact on soil structure, making some areas vulnerable to run-off under storm conditions. Noise from farm related traffic is part of the rural scene, but in some cases where farm activities are industrialised, in or adjacent to small communities, it can have an adverse effect on the quality of life of residents.

**3.5.11.** The benefits of higher returns from intensive farming and of the financial incentives offered by farm environment schemes has enabled many farmers to invest in conservation measures right across the farm. The area of farmland in 'agri-environment' schemes, focussing on proven options for wildlife delivery, has increased over the last Plan period and it is important that this continues.

**3.5.12.** To remain competitive, meet current consumer demand, reduce food miles and to support food security it is important that productive agriculture continues to be part of the AONB's landscape. Farming in the AONB, and in such close proximity to designated wildlife sites and scheduled ancient monuments, does bring added responsibility to farmers. It is important that farming is sustainable and does not detract from the special qualities of the landscape. The AONB Partnership has a key role to play in continuing to engage, advise and influence farming practice.

**3.5.13.** Grazing livestock numbers are now stable in the AONB, following a period of decline. Dairy farming however has significantly declined in the AONB. Increased production costs and poor returns have made it unviable here.

Flood plain and coastal grazing marshes are now largely converted to arable and where they are grass, have limited productivity without improved drainage or the addition of fertilisers. Grazing of remaining areas is now largely done by beef cattle or sheep. Most grazed marshes are within agri-environment schemes, and many are managed by conservation organisations.

**3.5.14.** Sheep farming on heather-dominated heaths is not commercially viable and is only undertaken to support nature conservation. On heath that is dominated by acid grassland, sheep farming is more productive but tends only to be economical when supported through environmental schemes.

**3.5.15.** There is slow growth in equestrian grazing leading to the development of some 'pony paddocks' that can bring intrusive infrastructure and little biodiversity gain. This is normally associated with settlement edges and is not widespread.

**3.5.16.** The classic agri-environment schemes of Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) and Countryside Stewardship (CS) have helped to ensure that many potentially harmful changes within farming have been ameliorated. Significant areas of grazing have been retained thanks to the ESA, and help for heathlands has come from CS. These schemes have been phased out and replaced by Environmental Stewardship's Entry and Higher Level Schemes (ELS and HLS). Whether river valley grassland, important from a landscape perspective and supported by ESA, is retained by ELS or HLS remains to be seen. There remains a concern that some will be lost, given that priorities for both ELS and HLS do not include landscape conservation. Overall however we have seen ELS and HLS bring larger areas of AONB farmland into Agri-Environment schemes and it is important this upward trend continues.



## Forestry

**3.5.17.** Large areas of coniferous forest were planted in the 1920s on former heath. Established trees, particularly birch and pine, act as seed sources which have promoted the spread of trees across the heaths. The forests, Dunwich, Tunstall and Rendlesham, known collectively as the Sandlings forests and managed by the Forestry Commission, have provided vertical and textural elements in the landscape and are now recognised as an important part of the local area for both wildlife and people. The proposed sell off of the public forest estate in 2011 created an outcry and a local campaign to 'Save the Sandlings forests'. Campaigners were concerned for the interests of both wildlife and recreational interests, well served by the Forestry Commission and potentially much less so by different, private, owners.

**3.5.18.** The timber returns from the forests have varied, depending on the state of the global market. However the forests provide many benefits beyond wood products and the landscape; recreational and biodiversity benefits and potential of the Sandlings forests are now probably more important than the timber. This is leading to a change of forest objectives, particularly at Dunwich, where restructuring is underway to produce

more open, grazed, heathland mosaics, as part of a much wider ecological network of sites between the Alde and the Blyth estuaries. The potential for similar projects in the southern forests continues to be explored, as are the opportunities for increased recreational use of the Sandlings forests, particularly at Rendlesham where the potential is high. Such increases could help to relieve the recreational pressure at more sensitive coastal and estuary locations. Interest in cycling in the AONB continues to grow and the forests provide a range of opportunities in themselves, as well as providing off-road linkages between the network of quiet lanes.

**3.5.19.** In addition to the forests owned by the Forestry Commission, there are a number of smaller, privately owned woods in the AONB, some of which are in active conservation management and open to the public.

**3.5.20.** Wood fuel markets continue to grow in the area and this may help drive management of some of the smaller broadleaved woodland, and the restructuring and future management of the Sandlings forests.

## Planning

**3.5.21.** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) continues to afford landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs the highest level of protection ('great weight') in planning policy. It also states that wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations. The NPPF not only requires the conservation of landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs, but also expects development to help deliver Government aspirations for ecological networks. The NPPF has placed significant importance on the Local Development Frameworks (LDF) i.e. Local Plans and Local Development Documents. It is vital that suitable policies relating to AONBs are included in new and revised LDF documents. Planning and the role it has to play in conserving and enhancing natural beauty is critical.

**3.5.22.** We now face the challenge of major infrastructure development within the AONB, with both nuclear new build at Sizewell and offshore wind farms seeking to bring transmission cables ashore. There is no doubt that major infrastructure developments within the AONB have an impact on the landscape. There is also little doubt that such developments need to happen somewhere. Tests set out in National Policy Statements require the need for the project and alternative sites be looked at, before AONB locations are decided upon for such schemes. Once national decisions have been made, the AONB Partnership will work constructively with developers to reduce and mitigate adverse impacts. Major developments that do go ahead within or adjacent to the AONB (i.e. that pass the tests set out in National Policy Statements) and that cause a significant impact on landscape and scenic beauty must include an assessment of the detrimental effect on the environment, landscape and/or seascape and recreational opportunities. It should also assess the extent to which effects can be moderated (mitigated) and residual effects offset, within the AONB, through appropriate landscape and amenity enhancements as set out within this Plan.

Full landscape and visual impact assessment will be a fundamental requirement of such major developments.

**3.5.23.** The undergrounding of high voltage power lines, associated with major infrastructure energy developments, should be actively pursued in the AONB as part of mitigation packages. In the same vein, ongoing work to underground low voltage power lines in the AONB through the Ofgem Price Control Review allowance should be actively continued. This work is facilitated by the AONB team in response to scheme ideas that are put forward by communities in the area. Care should be taken to ensure that undergrounding work does not impact on important geodiversity.

**3.5.24.** Planning policies and decisions by Local Authorities also have the potential to impact adversely on the landscape. However, the NPPF provides clear guidance, and local planning authorities covering the AONB have local development plans and frameworks in place. These recognise the importance of conserving and enhancing the landscape of the AONB, and make working with planning officers and planning committee members more straightforward. There will be differences of opinion from time to time amongst the AONB Partnership, with local planning authorities, and with some communities. Where there is doubt or concern, an Environmental Impact Assessment, including landscape and visual impact assessment, will provide an independent evidence base.

**3.5.25.** Within the AONB, new housing should include affordable housing to meet local needs. This will help to sustain a more diverse demographic within the area. Development should respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation. There remains a need for AONB-specific design guidance to ensure developments fit in with the landscape character to retain local distinctiveness.



**3.5.26.** The growth in micro-generation, particularly small-scale wind and solar photo voltaic (PV) installations, makes good sense from a climate change perspective but consideration of location, scale and potential impact on wildlife, particularly bats, is vital to avoid significant impact on the AONB. Consideration of visual impact, both individually and cumulatively is also important. Clearly the larger the installation and the more exposed the location, the higher the landscape and visual impact. As with all such locally determined developments, these schemes require proper assessment through the planning process to ensure landscape and visual impact is not significant. Passive energy efficiency measures as part of new developments are vital for all sorts of reasons, but from an AONB perspective, such measures will reduce the requirement for micro-generation installations in the future, thereby reducing potential visual impacts.

**3.5.27.** Care needs to be taken to ensure that piecemeal development does not produce cumulative adverse impacts. The road corridor, if peppered with signs, lighting, kerbs or control measures, widening or improvement schemes can quickly cause problems, just as landscaping or facilities like car parks or pumping stations can impact if attention is not given to materials or local character.

**3.5.28.** The peace and tranquillity of the AONB - a facet of its natural beauty - is greatly treasured, allowing people to relax and 'recharge their batteries'. With cars being the only realistic travel option for many, as well as busier skies, mechanised

farming, and mobile technology that allows us to do more in remote places, the background noise levels are increasing. The unregulated use of powered water craft and the increase of low-flying aircraft, whether for recreation or military training, is a particular problem. Whilst some activity is vital, particularly military low-fly training, managing traffic and taking care to constrain unnecessary noise and disturbance must be an increasing priority within the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB.

**3.5.29.** Another indicator of tranquillity is the lack of light pollution in much of the AONB. Dark night skies give a chance to see the stars, an asset perhaps more often valued after it has been lost.

**3.5.30.** Future development within the AONB must recognise the essential value of tranquillity and must build in solutions that respect this special quality and allow it to be retained. This may include such easy 'wins' as low-level/directional/timed lighting, traffic calming and alternative transport options, and exploring how tranquil areas can be mapped and retained.

**3.5.31.** Community Led Planning, as part of the Localism Act, will become an increasingly important factor within the Plan period. The AONB Partnership and planning authorities need to respond to this and support Plan development, and will clearly need to take account of the Neighbourhood Plans that result. Similarly the new East Suffolk Partnership will support a variety of local community led activity.



## 3.6. Theme 3 Enjoying the area

**3.6.1.** Tourism is vital to the economy of the Suffolk Coast and is reliant upon people being able to access and enjoy the area. However, given it is the landscape and special qualities of the AONB that drive this economy, it should not be difficult to put the longer-term conservation of the area above any short-term economic or social interests. Without maintaining a high-quality landscape, the tourism product would be very different and could potentially support fewer jobs. It is important therefore that more tourism businesses become active custodians of the area and supportive of the innovative projects developed by the AONB Partnership to care for it into the future. Some businesses have actively engaged with the landscape, most have not. There is certainly scope to further develop the AONB's visitor payback scheme – linking business activity with the conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape.

**3.6.2.** A positive and balanced approach to developing access to the AONB is essential if people are to have an enjoyable experience. It will be important to ensure that visitors recognise the responsibilities that come with improved access to the area.

**3.6.3.** The importance and popularity of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB for water-borne recreation is reflected in the high demand for landing, mooring and marina facilities, and the strength of the local boatbuilding and servicing industry. While sailing in particular is relatively benign in terms of its impact on the landscape, its supporting infrastructure can have a significant impact on natural beauty. The continuing popularity of water-based recreation means that the demand for further growth in this area is likely. Future proposals of any kind will need to be planned with the utmost respect for both the character and quality

of the area, the requirements of wildlife designations, and the need to retain tranquillity.

**3.6.4.** Most people support the need for up-to-date, inclusive and contemporary visitor information, in a variety of media. The most popular questions from visitors are, where can I go and what can I do? It is important that the AONB is not seen as an exclusive destination and that everyone is made to feel welcome. Encouraging a more diverse audience continues to be important, be that more young people, those from minority ethnic groups, or those from deprived areas outside the AONB.

**3.6.5.** Suffolk County Councils' Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) has set six objectives covering a network that is accessible, better signed and maintained so that it is safer, and made more continuous to meet the needs of all users, whether on foot, cycle or horse. It is proposed to improve the promotion and understanding of what is on offer and increase community involvement in managing and improving the network. The AONB's three long-distance walking routes largely make use of rights of way and given the active promotion of these routes by the AONB team it is important that they are maintained to a high standard. The Cicerone guide to the three routes, first published in 2012, has significantly raised their profile.

**3.6.6.** The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW 2000) introduced access rights across the whole of designated areas such as the Sandlings heaths and registered commons. The Forestry Commission has also dedicated their entire estate to open access, so there is now a vast area in the AONB that is accessible to people. This can cause problems particularly during the bird breeding season when ground nesting birds are very vulnerable to dogs that are





not under close control, a critical problem in this area. A successful “Responsible Dog Ownership campaign” led by the AONB team, as part of the BALANCE project, saw free training given to dog owners and way-marker discs installed by many land managers, clarifying where dogs can go off the lead, on the lead, or not at all. The AONB Partnership collectively, will need to maintain the momentum on responsible dog ownership/behaviour.

**3.6.7.** Increasing levels of public access to the AONB can result in increased disturbance and damage to wildlife (particularly as a result of uncontrolled dogs), pressure on popular locations (‘honey pots’), adverse impacts on residents, and significant pressure on resource as surfaces and access ‘furniture’ is worn. The sheer number of people visiting the area, particularly in the summer months and in some locations, can also impact on tranquillity. Future growth in tourism should therefore focus on the shoulder seasons and winter months when there is spare capacity. The AONB team is closely involved with the new Suffolk Coast Destination Management Organisation, which also now sits on the AONB Partnership. We are therefore in a good position to work together to balance the growth in visitors with the sensitivities of the area. Visitor walking guides can act as a useful mechanism to direct people to certain areas where infrastructure is better placed to cope.

**3.6.8.** Areas of shingle are particularly vulnerable to visitor pressure. The highly specialised vegetation is easily destroyed

by trampling and the numbers of ground nesting birds, such as little terns have plummeted recently (an 80% decline). Litter and waste is most obvious on beaches and, although some is sea borne, much is left by visitors. The use of sea and estuarine walls for walking and cycling can place people above the skyline and can have a significant impact, particularly in the winter, on wading birds and wildfowl.

**3.6.9.** As part of increasing people’s opportunities to enjoy the area it will be important to further develop the sustainable transport opportunities. Demand responsive bus services are on the increase and the East Suffolk Rail Partnership is keen to work with others to increase promotion of public transport. Cycling and walking as sustainable modes of transport for increasing numbers of people will also be promoted. The area’s four foot ferries struggle to remain economically viable but are a vital part of the network and the AONB will continue to support them. Cars will continue to be the first choice for most, but improving the linkages and ease by which people can get around the area by other means can only benefit a wider audience of visitors.

**3.6.10.** The history of the AONB is fascinating and we have many important cultural artefacts and historic buildings in the area. The archaeology, both above and below ground, remains a largely untold story and we will endeavour to uncover the potential of this part of the area’s natural beauty to further increase people’s enjoyment and understanding.



## 3.7. Theme 4

# Working together

**3.7.1.** The high-quality landscape of the AONB is a benefit for all those who live, work in or visit the area. Being one of the protected landscape family (AONBs and National Parks) sets us apart from other areas of the country. The AONB's primary role is to ensure that the area will long continue to be a beautiful, tranquil and inspiring place. However, looking after an area that covers over 155 square miles, and in which there are so many differing interests, is beyond the scope of any one organisation. It is absolutely vital, a simple necessity, that organisations work in partnership and with the communities of the area, to keep it special. This chimes perfectly with the current localism agenda, although we have been successfully working in this way for many years.

**3.7.2.** The AONB team are well placed to take the lead on many of the Plan's actions, particularly where they are strategic or relate to whole-AONB issues. The AONB Partnership organisations and local communities also have a vital part to play, both in their own activities in the area, but also in how they approach the need for collaborative working. As Harry S Truman said "it is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit".

**3.7.3.** Strong community engagement can be demonstrated in a number of ways. At the moment, estuary partnerships particularly are increasingly determining their own future, supported by a range of organisations and the Suffolk Estuaries Officer. Communities away from the coast, particularly those located close to heathland, and the users of heathland sites, are also seeking greater involvement in, and understanding of the decisions that affect their local environment. Hundreds of people across the AONB are stepping forward to carry out practical work with a range of organisations.

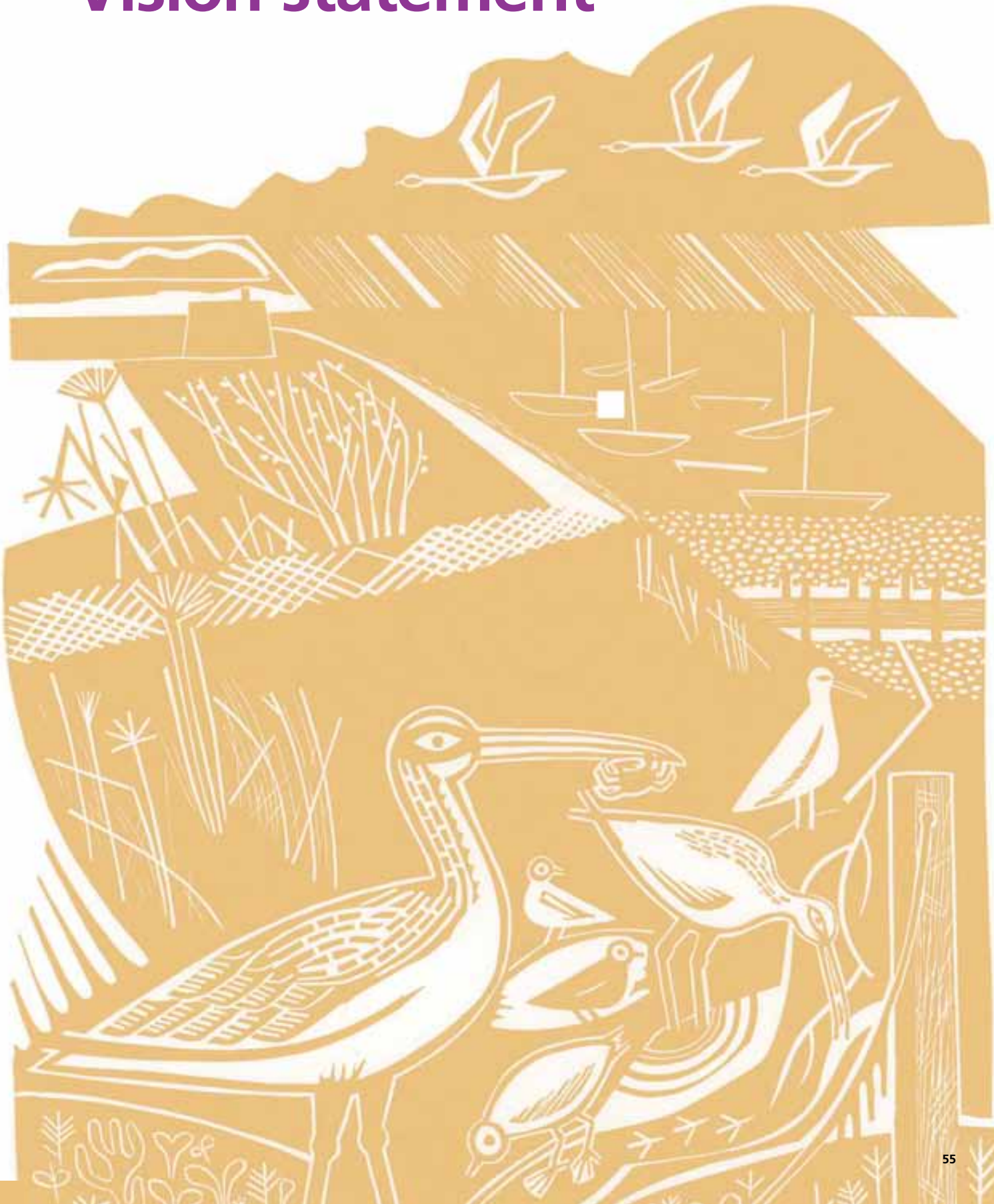
The AONB Partnership and the AONB team will continue to support these communities and individuals as they seek to get more involved in shaping the future of their AONB.

**3.7.4.** The AONB team administers a number of small grant funds, supporting communities which undertake projects that are beneficial to the area. It is possible that these funds may increase over the Plan period and we will ensure that maximum value is gained from these at a community level.

**3.7.5.** The AONB team is the only organisation specifically set up to champion and work across the whole area. This role of raising awareness of the area's importance and vulnerability is never ending, and we will continue this endeavour. The AONB team also has an important role to support the work of the AONB Partnership and to act as 'honest broker' in the interests of the AONB.



# Vision statement





## 4.1. 20-year Vision statement (2033)

**4.1.1.** This 20-year Vision builds on that published as part of the previous Management Plan (2008–2013) and has been updated to reflect the current environmental, economic and social context. It has been divided into two sections; aspirations that relate to the AONB as a whole, and those that relate to particular landscape areas.

**4.1.2.** AONB designation aims to conserve and enhance natural beauty and this Vision imagines and projects how that objective can be achieved. It also takes account of the needs of people who live, work in and visit the area. The objectives and actions contained in Section 5 of this Management Plan are intended to work towards achieving the vision presented here.



## The 2013–2033 Vision can be summarised as:

- Special wildlife, landscape, seascape and heritage qualities are conserved and meet the needs of people who live, work in and visit the AONB
- Local communities are fully engaged in the care of the area
- A high-quality landscape and infrastructure exists to support sustainable access, tourism and business

## 4.2. Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB in 2033

### 4.2.1. 'A high-quality landscape and seascape, their special qualities retained and enhanced'

As a result of strong leadership and effective Partnership action, the area's natural beauty has been successfully maintained and, wherever possible, enhanced. The landscape and seascape, while dynamic and changing, maintain the character recognised in the original designation. Wildlife areas are in favourable condition. Changes generated by climate change and sea level rise have been embraced through adaptation and, where necessary, any adverse impacts have been mitigated. New development, particularly major infrastructure, has been sympathetic to the area's landscape, seascape and scenic beauty and complements the existing built and natural environment. Residual impacts are appropriately offset. The AONB designation has been extended to include the Stour estuary and its southern shore.

### 4.2.2. 'Local communities are passionately and actively engaged with their environment'

Local people have a deep appreciation and understanding of the area's special qualities. Local communities are at the heart of decision making and by developing community led plans and activities are fully engaged and supported in the management of their environment.

There is a range of opportunities for people to get actively involved in caring for their landscape. The challenge of sustainable living and carbon emission reduction has been embraced by communities and local businesses. There is support for people affected by the impacts of climate change.

### 4.2.3. 'A thriving economy: a landscape of opportunity'

New and established enterprises use the area in an informed, sensitive and sustainable way, flourishing in a beautiful environment. Within a broad-based local economy, sustainable tourism is widespread and tourism businesses are increasingly involved in careful stewardship of the area. Local food and drink is a key attraction of the area and good sales outlets are commonplace. Energy production infrastructure does not detract significantly from the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB and the impact of industrialised outdoor farming is minimised.

### 4.2.4. 'High-quality facilities and integrated transport give everyone the opportunity to enjoy the AONB'

Excellent visitor facilities, information and infrastructure enable the public to appreciate the area and enjoy the many opportunities for outdoor recreation, without damaging the area's many special qualities. Flexible and integrated transport options are readily available and meet the needs of both residents and visitors. Walking and cycling across the area are key, practical choices within a sustainable transport network. Residents, visitors and tourism businesses are aware of their responsibilities, actively helping to retain the area's special qualities.

### 4.2.5. 'Tranquillity has been retained and undesirable intrusion prevented'

The importance of peace and tranquillity to the character of the AONB is fully recognised and sources of noise and visual intrusion have been resisted or mitigated. The area's dark night skies are valued as an important feature and continue to be retained. Low-voltage power lines continue to be buried underground.



### 4.3. Our vision for the key landscape areas

#### 4.3.1. 'An outstanding lowland coast, managed for people and wildlife'

An integrated approach to managing the coastal zone has enhanced its value for people and wildlife. A careful balance has been struck between the need to safeguard communities and develop key infrastructure while ensuring that the character and special qualities of the dynamic coastline are retained. Improved public awareness and active management has improved the declining condition of coastal habitats and provided better protection for coastal wildlife, particularly from recreational disturbance. The loss of freshwater wetlands to coastal erosion or flooding has been prevented where sustainable to do so and managed, planned for and alternative sites sought, where protection is not possible. The erosion of maritime cliffs and slopes continues to replenish sand and shingle beaches along the coastline. Coastal farmland is managed with particular environmental sensitivity and landowners receive financial subsidies for doing so. Public access is encouraged but is consistent with the high conservation value of the coastline. Water bodies are in good to high status by 2015.

#### 4.3.2. 'The estuaries retain their character and special qualities for both people and wildlife'

The estuaries are proactively managed to balance the many demands placed on them whether from recreation, commerce, agriculture, wildlife or the aspirations of local communities. Rich intertidal feeding grounds have been retained while existing areas of eroding saltmarsh are restored and protected to provide natural defences to river walls. Freshwater wetlands have been protected from the sea where it is sustainable to do so. Where protection is not possible alternative sites have been identified, and management has started to provide continuity of habitat.

4.3.3. In principle, managed retreat to create new intertidal areas would be welcome where landowners are in agreement. However, realignment of the river walls can have significant impacts on the wider estuary and so it is important that multiple benefits to people and wildlife can be delivered by any scheme. Where retreat is planned, heritage features should be protected in context or, where this is not possible, rescued and recorded.

# “An outstanding lowland coast, managed for people and wildlife”

## 4.3.4. ‘The Sandlings heaths have increased in size and forest areas have diversified’

Active management has expanded the area of Sandlings heath, reducing fragmentation and safeguarding biodiversity. Grazing has increased and spread into adjoining forest and grassland, creating open vistas with scattered trees and varied textures. The Sandlings forests are managed for the benefit of wildlife and people as well as for their timber, creating a richer, more diverse landscape with high levels of public access. Local communities are fully consulted on projects to restore heathland and are given the opportunity to influence management decisions, where appropriate.



## 4.3.5. ‘Farming remains economically viable while enhancing biodiversity and landscape character’

Farmers and land managers are supported to make extensive use of agri-environment schemes to help wildlife, improve access, restore landscapes and retain heritage features. Grazing continues to maintain the open fields and produce diverse habitats. Unsustainable farming practices and diffuse pollution have been phased out. Farming activities which have a particular impact on the special qualities of the area meet the highest standards of best practice and are appropriately located so as not to have a cumulative impact on the landscape. Farmers are recognised as vital contributors to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the landscape and have adapted to climate change. The loss of farmland to coastal erosion and flooding has been prevented where sustainable to do so and managed and planned for where protection is not feasible.





# Aims, objectives and action plan



## Key to acronyms

<b>Babergh DC</b> Babergh District Council	<b>GtGC</b> Creating the Greenest County	<b>SCC</b> Suffolk County Council
<b>CLA</b> Country Land and Business Association	<b>IDB</b> Internal Drainage Board	<b>SGP</b> Suffolk Geodiversity Partnership
<b>EA</b> Environment Agency	<b>LPAs</b> Local Planning Authorities	<b>S&amp;O EMG</b> Stour and Orwell Estuaries Management Group
<b>EH</b> English Heritage	<b>MMO</b> Marine Management Organisation	<b>SPS</b> Suffolk Preservation Society
<b>EIFCA</b> Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority	<b>NE</b> Natural England	<b>Suffolk FWAG</b> Suffolk Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
<b>ESWAG</b> East Suffolk Water Abstractors Group	<b>NFU</b> National Farmers' Union	<b>SWT</b> Suffolk Wildlife Trust
<b>FC</b> Forestry Commission	<b>NPA</b> National Pig Association	<b>Tendring DC</b> Tendring District Council
	<b>RSPB</b> Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	<b>TtT</b> Touching the Tide

 Priority actions are highlighted

Objectives	Actions	Lead organisation/s	2013 /14	2014 /15	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017 /18
<b>Theme 1 Coast and estuaries</b>							
<b>1.1</b> Landscape and seascape are taken into full account in Integrated Coastal Zone Management	<b>1.1.1</b> Develop a seascape character assessment of the Suffolk Coast, both from and back to the coastline to support marine development decision-making	SCC, AONB team		*			
	<b>1.1.2</b> Produce a report that assesses landscape and visual impacts of different coast defences to support decision-making processes	AONB team, TtT Board		*			
	<b>1.1.3</b> Act as the local champion of the Heritage Coast's seascape character	AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*
<b>1.2</b> Shared learning and decision-making processes for management of the Suffolk Coast involve and include statutory duties of regard to the AONB	<b>1.2.1</b> Actively engage with the Suffolk Coast Forum	AONB team, AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>1.2.2</b> Clarify the governance of coastal erosion management in the Stour and Orwell Haven	EA, SCC, Babergh DC	*				
	<b>1.2.3</b> Support the conservation of the special qualities of the Suffolk coast and estuaries	EA, LPAs, NE, MMO	*	*	*	*	*
<b>1.3</b> Coastal and estuarine habitats at risk of loss are conserved and enhanced	<b>1.3.1</b> Encourage and deliver projects to restore intertidal habitat, particularly saltmarsh, in the Plan period	NE, EA, AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>1.3.2</b> Protect important designated habitats in situ where possible, and where not possible, provide compensatory habitat	EA	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>1.3.3</b> Increase involvement in bait-digging management to reduce disturbance to SPA features	AONB team, Estuary Management Groups	*	*	*	*	*
<b>1.4</b> Communities are encouraged and supported to deliver projects that support AONB objectives across the area	<b>1.4.1</b> Facilitate, support and encourage Estuary Partnerships and Forums and community-based project delivery	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>1.4.2</b> Encourage a co-operative approach to managing commercial, recreational and environmental interests on the Stour and Orwell with the Stour and Orwell EMG and Regulators group	S&O EMG	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>1.4.3</b> Encourage a co-operative approach to managing commercial, recreational and environmental interests on the Deben, Alde & Ore and Blyth estuaries working with the estuary partnerships as necessary/appropriate	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>1.4.4</b> Sustainable, local and small-scale activities on the estuaries are supported	AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*

Objectives	Actions	Lead organisation/s	2013 /14	2014 /15	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017 /18
<b>1.5</b> An understanding of recreational capacity and disturbance of sensitive coastal and estuarine areas has been developed and negative impacts are minimised	<b>1.5.1</b> Support the LIFE+ funded shingle access management work on NT Orford Ness and promote good practice throughout the AONB	AONB Partnership	*	*			
	<b>1.5.2</b> Co-ordinate a shingle and little tern strategy across the area	AONB Partnership		*	*		
	<b>1.5.3</b> Produce interpretation for schools, decision-makers and the public to raise awareness of coastal change in local context	AONB team, AONB Partnership				*	
<b>1.6</b> Awareness of local commercial fishing industry in building local distinctiveness is improved	<b>1.6.1</b> Develop information with inshore fishermen, to raise awareness of their industry as part of the character of the AONB	AONB team, EIFCA			*		
	<b>1.6.2</b> Support the EIFCA in the management of sustainable fishing in the Stour and Orwell estuaries, including any review of bye-laws, to enable the estuaries to act as a nursery for fish stocks	S&O EMG	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>1.6.3</b> Support fisheries moving to sustainable fisheries accreditation	AONB Partnership, EIFCA	*	*	*	*	*
<b>1.7</b> There is a reduction in the effects of pollution on sea, coast and estuary environments	<b>1.7.1</b> Analyse Beachwatch results locally and take forward any local action to prevent litter, as appropriate	AONB team, AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>1.7.2</b> Engage with future consultation and decisions regarding Ship-to-Ship oil transfer off the Suffolk coast	AONB Partnership			*	*	*
<b>1.8</b> There is a range of opportunities for communities and visitors to get involved in and better understand the conservation and special qualities of Suffolk's Heritage Coast	<b>1.8.1</b> Deliver HLF Touching the Tide project	TtT Board	*	*	*		

## Theme 2 Land use and wildlife

<b>2.1</b> Understanding of the distinctive characteristics of the local landscape is improved and relevant guidance produced	<b>2.1.1</b> Complete the revision of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths National Character Area description (NCA 82) in consultation with AONB Partnership	NE	*				
	<b>2.1.2</b> Carry out LCA work across the wider AONB and project area to the same scale and methodology as for Touching the Tide work on the Heritage Coast	AONB team				*	
	<b>2.1.3</b> Actively promote LCA work covering the area to inform decision-making, such as <a href="http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk">www.suffolklandscape.org.uk</a>	SCC, AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>2.1.4</b> Develop and articulate the concept of tranquillity as an important part of the character of the area, and test through consultation	SPS, AONB team	*	*	*		
<b>2.2</b> Features that detract from landscape quality are removed where possible and feasible to do so	<b>2.2.1</b> Deliver low-voltage undergrounding schemes already in programme for DPCR5 (2010–2015)	AONB team	*	*	*		
	<b>2.2.2</b> Develop new low-voltage undergrounding schemes with local communities to deliver within DPCR6 (from 2015)	AONB team			*	*	*
	<b>2.2.3</b> Engage with Ofgem and National Grid over potential to underground high voltage lines in protected areas	AONB team	*	*	*		
	<b>2.2.4</b> Engage with other utility providers to seek a reduction in the impact of infrastructure on landscape (e.g. telecommunications)	AONB team	*	*	*		

Objectives	Actions	Lead organisation/s	2013 /14	2014 /15	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017 /18
<b>2.3</b> Awareness of the range and importance of the AONB's cultural and natural heritage and the sustainable use of the area is improved	<b>2.3.1</b> Explore the potential for Biosphere Reserve status for the area	AONB team				*	*
<b>2.4</b> Awareness of the links between landscape, human activity, geology, landform and natural processes is improved	<b>2.4.1</b> Develop accessible landscape character narratives from LCA work to clearly articulate why the landscape looks as it does	AONB team	*	*	*		
<b>2.5</b> River catchments that start outside the AONB are recognised as influencing factors in the AONB and managed accordingly	<b>2.5.1</b> Develop river corridor projects in the AONB, engaging communities with monitoring and care for their rivers/estuaries (WFD, BAP, CSF targets etc)	AONB team	*	*	*		
<b>2.6</b> Areas of high landscape importance adjacent to the AONB are designated as AONB	<b>2.6.1</b> Achieve AONB status for the proposed boundary extension of the Stour estuary and its southern shore in Tendring District	Tendring DC, AONB team			*	*	
	<b>2.6.2</b> Assess the potential for future potential boundary extensions (or at least project area extensions) which meet natural beauty criteria and NE Designation Strategy, from updated LCA work	AONB team				*	*
<b>Planning</b>							
<b>2.7</b> There is a consistently high standard of development control decision-making. This will prevent significant adverse impact on the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB, as set out in the National Policy Planning Framework (the NPPF states that landscape and scenic beauty of AONBs should be given 'great weight').	<b>2.7.1</b> Develop closer working through workshops, seminars, 1:1s and CPD on AONB conservation issues, to support Development Control Committee Members, planning officers and other partners involved in planning decisions	LPAs, AONB team	*		*		*
	<b>2.7.2</b> Undertake a review of design guidance in the AONB and update/produce as necessary to ensure the distinctive built character of the AONB and its market towns is conserved and enhanced	AONB team, LPAs					*
	<b>2.7.3</b> Assess visual impacts of developments on landscape and seascape character and scenic beauty, either through LVIA as part of EIA or through less formal visualisations (photographs etc) of minor developments where visual impacts are unclear, both within and adjacent to the AONB	LPAs, MMO, AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
<b>2.8</b> The special qualities of the AONB are consistently taken into account and enhanced by the planning process	<b>2.8.1</b> Review and as necessary develop guidance for planners on how to deliver improvements to ecological networks through the planning process	AONB team, RSPB, NE	*				*
	<b>2.8.2</b> Review and as necessary develop guidance on the conservation of geodiversity, to support the planning process	AONB team, EH, SGP	*				*
	<b>2.8.3</b> Review and as necessary develop guidance on tranquillity, and its main detractors, to support the planning process	AONB team, SPS	*				*
	<b>2.8.4</b> Review and as necessary develop planning guidance for the conservation of historic parks and gardens	AONB team, EH		*			

Objectives	Actions	Lead organisation/s	2013 /14	2014 /15	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017 /18
2.9 Avoid, mitigate and offset impacts from major infrastructure developments within or adjacent to the AONB	2.9.1 Work closely to ensure that major infrastructure developments that go ahead within or adjacent to the AONB (i.e. that pass the tests set out in National Policy Statements) causing significant impacts, are appropriately mitigated and any residual impacts offset	LPAs, NE, MMO, AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
	2.9.2 Ensure new high-voltage power lines associated with major infrastructure energy developments on or off shore are placed underground	LPAs, NE	*	*	*	*	*
	2.9.3 Develop and administer amenity funds to mitigate and/or offset major infrastructure development in the AONB	AONB team, LPAs	*	*	*	*	*
2.10 Small-scale renewable energy developments are supported in the AONB where they are in keeping with conserving and enhancing natural beauty and do not detract from landscape character, either individually or cumulatively	2.10.1 Support and advise planning officers, as appropriate, on a case-by-case basis, on the scale, location and design of renewable energy installations	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
2.11 Neighbourhood Plans prepared by communities in the AONB help to conserve and enhance natural beauty	2.11.1 Develop an 'AONB toolkit', including conservation of AONB special qualities, to support communities developing plans	AONB team		*			
<b>Wildlife</b>							
2.12 A thorough audit of wildlife across the AONB is established	2.12.1 Complete biodiversity audit using UEA methodology developed for the Brecks	AONB team		*			
2.13 The implications of climate change on priority species and habitats in the AONB is better understood, to enable conservation and enhancement	2.13.1 Develop and promote a project to better understand the species and habitats winners and losers of climate change in the AONB	AONB Partnership			*		
	2.13.2 Ensure well promoted landscape-scale conservation strategies and targets are adequate to meet the requirements of priority species and habitats and the management of invasive species	AONB Partnership				*	
2.14 Conservation management helps wildlife to adapt to climate change, enabling greater connectivity for dispersal across the landscape	2.14.1 Develop and promote ecological networks in the AONB through various mechanisms including agri-environment, planning gain and conservation land acquisition	AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*
	2.14.2 Support land acquisition through a partnership approach, where opportunities arise	AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*
	2.14.3 Improve integration, support and advice for land owners adjacent to nature reserves, and in the wider countryside, to buffer and extend the area available for wildlife	RSPB, SWT, NE, Suffolk FWAG	*	*	*	*	*
	2.14.4 Deliver phase 2 of the South Sandlings Living Landscape project	Sandlings Group	*	*	*		
	2.14.5 Develop an AONB Partnership Position Statement and Strategy on ecological networks	AONB Partnership	*				
2.15 Protected sites are managed effectively	2.15.1 Support targeted action to ensure SSSIs in the AONB are in favourable, or favourable-recovering, condition	AONB Partnership, NE	*	*	*	*	*

Objectives	Actions	Lead organisation/s	2013 /14	2014 /15	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017 /18
<b>2.16</b> Habitat management helps to conserve distinctive landscape character	<b>2.16.1</b> Safeguard and manage characteristic habitats, particularly diminishing areas of grazing marsh and larger river valley meadowlands, through HLS	NE	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>2.16.2</b> Pursue habitat restoration opportunities (heathland particularly) in close consultation with local communities	Sandlings Group	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>2.16.3</b> Engage with golf courses as important custodians of semi-natural habitat in the AONB (400 ha, 1% of land area)	AONB Partnership			*	*	
<b>2.17</b> Wildlife management has ensured a sustainable balance between deer numbers and the wider ecosystem	<b>2.17.1</b> Establish deer management groups, as appropriate, particularly to manage red and muntjac deer in the Dunwich, Minsmere area	FC, RSPB, NE				*	
<b>Farming and Forestry</b>							
<b>2.18</b> Farming in the AONB is profitable, but sustainable and appropriate to location	<b>2.18.1</b> Promote climate change adaptation on farms using toolkit developed through the Future Landscape project	NFU, AONB team	*				
<b>2.19</b> There is support and advice available to farmers particularly on sustainable farming in the AONB	<b>2.19.1</b> Provide support to farmers entering Agri-Environment schemes and integrate landowner advice on offer from multiple organisations	NE, Suffolk FWAG, RSPB, SWT	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>2.19.2</b> Provide advice to farmers about Catchment Sensitive Farming to reduce diffuse water pollution and thereby to protect the Water Framework Directive environmental status of water bodies	NE, EA	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>2.19.3</b> Work together to develop and source funding for farmland advice officers to facilitate HLS applications across AONB	AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>2.19.4</b> Develop a best-practice guidance note on outdoor pig farming in the AONB	AONB team, NPA (NFU), CLA, NE		*			
<b>2.20</b> Building on Future Landscapes, there is an increased understanding and appreciation of the impacts of climate change on farming and appropriate adaptation techniques	<b>2.20.1</b> Manage licences to ensure no sub-catchments are classified as 'over-abstracted' in the East Suffolk Catchment, by 2015	EA	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>2.20.2</b> Explore opportunities for better use of surplus flows of water to reduce the burden on over abstracted points during the dry seasons	EA			*	*	*
	<b>2.20.3</b> Incorporate soil organic matter (SOM) improvements in all AE schemes, to help water retention, as part of CSF and as long-term economic sense	NE	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>2.20.4</b> Reduce the practice of de-stoning of soils, resulting in long-term loss of structure and soil organic matter, through AE schemes and the dissemination of advice	NE, Suffolk FWAG			*	*	*
	<b>2.20.5</b> Work with relevant organisations to identify ways in which excess winter water could be stored for summer irrigation and other uses, whilst also delivering ecosystem services.	EA, NFU, ESWAG, IDB, SCC, AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
<b>2.21</b> Increase the area of land in AONB that is in agri-environment schemes, with a particular focus on classic schemes moving across to ELS / HLS	<b>2.21.1</b> Increase the area of land under HLS particularly through conversion of old CS and ESA schemes	NE	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>2.21.2</b> Ensure that the conservation of the AONB's landscape is a priority in agri-environment scheme targeting	NE		*	*	*	*
<b>2.22</b> Sustainable, local food and drink production in the AONB is championed and celebrated	<b>2.22.1</b> Maintain AONB category in Suffolk Food and Drink Awards, encouraging more producers and retailers to participate and celebrate the local distinctiveness of the area	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*

Objectives	Actions	Lead organisation/s	2013 /14	2014 /15	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017 /18
<b>2.23</b> Commercial farming and forestry helps to support the special qualities of the area	<b>2.23.1</b> Carry out an assessment of the cumulative impact of small-scale developments and changes in farming practice on the AONB since its designation in 1970	AONB team		*			
	<b>2.23.2</b> Inform the development of the next Forest Design Plans for Rendlesham and Tunstall forests to deliver landscape and wildlife enhancements	AONB Partnership			*	*	*
<b>2.24</b> Multi-objective management of the Sandlings forest helps to improve landscape, biodiversity and recreation	<b>2.24.1</b> Increase the development of ecological networks in the Sandlings forests, particularly through expanding and linking heathland sites	FC	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>2.24.2</b> Manage and develop the Sandlings forests as a key recreational resource (within the context of their nature conservation designations), helping to relieve pressure at more sensitive coastal and estuary locations	FC	*	*	*	*	*
<b>2.25</b> The AONB's ecosystem services and their value are clearly defined	<b>2.25.1</b> Commission work to highlight and quantify the various ecosystem services delivered by the key characteristics of the AONB's landscape	AONB team		*	*		

### Theme 3 Enjoying the area

#### Tourism

<b>3.1</b> Tourism in the AONB is inclusive, sustainable and supports the conservation of the area	<b>3.1.1</b> Increase by 25% the number of tourism and other business that are signed up as 'AONB Supporters' and contribute through visitor payback to the AONB Community and Conservation Fund	AONB team					*
	<b>3.1.2</b> Develop annual campaigns to promote sustainable tourism within businesses	Suffolk Coast Ltd	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>3.1.3</b> Develop a joined-up package of nature reserve destinations on the Suffolk Coast (eco-tourism)	Suffolk Coast Ltd, NE, SWT, RSPB, NT, LAs			*		
	<b>3.1.4</b> Develop opportunities for volunteering/heritage exploration holidays with accommodation providers	Suffolk Coast Ltd	*	*	*	*	*
<b>3.2</b> Good practice examples of sustainable tourism in the AONB are championed and celebrated	<b>3.2.1</b> Participate in initiatives to celebrate sustainable tourism, e.g. award schemes	Suffolk Coast Ltd, AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*
<b>3.3</b> There is a strategic overview of tourism and its future development and management is planned	<b>3.3.1</b> Complete the AONB (BALANCE) tourism strategy together with Suffolk Coast Ltd and develop the action plan into BALANCE phase 2	AONB team, Suffolk Coast Ltd	*	*			
<b>3.4</b> Local marketing of the AONB as a tourism destination is consistent and improved, and footfall increased but only when there is capacity	<b>3.4.1</b> Organise annual training days for front of house staff in key visitor locations and businesses ('AONB Supporters') on what is special about the AONB, to support a consistent message	AONB Partnership, Suffolk Coast Ltd		*		*	
	<b>3.4.2</b> Increase marketing of the area for winter and shoulder-season visitors	Suffolk Coast Ltd	*	*	*		
	<b>3.4.3</b> Install boundary signage to mark the AONB boundary but also the Suffolk Coast as a destination in its own right	AONB team, LPAs, SCC			*		
	<b>3.4.4</b> Build links with Heritage Coast Market Towns Initiative in order to improve businesses' understanding of the AONB	AONB Partnership			*	*	*
	<b>3.4.5</b> Reduce proliferation of signs within the AONB, particularly in sensitive locations	AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*

Objectives	Actions	Lead organisation/s	2013 /14	2014 /15	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017 /18
<b>Access</b>							
<b>3.5</b> Public rights of way and wider access networks across the AONB are maintained and enhanced	<b>3.5.1</b> Develop sensitively located off-road cycle/horse routes in the AONB	AONB team		*	*	*	
	<b>3.5.2</b> Develop an informal network of 'quiet lanes' in the AONB	AONB team, SCC Transport team			*		
	<b>3.5.3</b> Support the Shotley Peninsula Community Path project: aiming to develop a new, largely traffic-free community path from the edge of Ipswich to Shotley Gate	AONB team, SCC transport team and Access Development team, LAs	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>3.5.4</b> Implement Coastal Access in Suffolk using the Suffolk Coast Path and Stour and Orwell walks as its basis	AONB team, SCC				*	*
	<b>3.5.5</b> Update PRoW signage to show long distance routes and destination	SCC, AONB team			*	*	*
	<b>3.5.6</b> Encourage greater access from a diverse range of people	AONB team, Partnership			*	*	*
<b>3.6</b> The AONBs long-distance walking routes are seen as key assets to the area and managed as such	<b>3.6.1</b> Promote and support the 3-year review of the Cicerone long-distance route guide	AONB team		*			*
	<b>3.6.2</b> Undertake 2-yearly surveys of long-distance routes with volunteers	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>3.6.3</b> Maintain and improve information and way-marking (such as distance markers) on the long-distance routes	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>3.6.4</b> Identify opportunities to improve access in the AONB and seek inclusion of schemes in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan	AONB team, SCC Access Development team	*	*			
	<b>3.6.5</b> Raise awareness of the social and economic value of the long-distance routes	AONB team		*	*	*	*
<b>3.7</b> Sustainable transport and associated linkages are maintained and improved	<b>3.7.1</b> Develop a project that draws together all the sustainable transport options into a coherent package for the visitor, including rail, demand responsive bus services, cycling and walking	AONB team		*			
	<b>3.7.2</b> Support communities in preventing deterioration of local road network by HGVs	SCC Transport team			*	*	*
	<b>3.7.3</b> Support communities wishing to implement road safety measures for walking and cycling	SCC Transport team			*	*	*
	<b>3.7.4</b> Support communities in the management of visitor-hotspot car parking	AONB team, SCC Transport team, LAs	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>3.7.5</b> Promote all existing foot ferries in the AONB and support the development of new services	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
<b>3.8</b> Responsible access is actively encouraged to ensure recreation and access does not damage the area's special qualities	<b>3.8.1</b> Manage recreation and access to avoid conflicts with conservation objectives	AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>3.8.2</b> Develop the responsible dog behaviour campaign to reach a wider audience and more land managers	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>3.8.3</b> Promote information regarding Open Access areas and restrictions during bird breeding season (1st March–31st July)	NE	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>3.8.4</b> Protect eroding dune and shingle systems and other 'soft' sea defences from recreation as necessary	LAs, AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>3.8.5</b> Develop a Responsible Access Position Statement for the AONB	AONB Partnership		*			



Objectives	Actions	Lead organisation/s	2013 /14	2014 /15	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017 /18
<b>Information</b>							
<b>3.9</b> People are aware of the AONB, its special qualities and the issues it faces	<b>3.9.1</b> Champion the area by publicising major issues affecting the protected area	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>3.9.2</b> Produce position statements to articulate the collective view on major issues affecting the area	AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>3.9.3</b> Produce and distribute a range of AONB communication materials (newspaper, newsletters, leaflets, reports, website, social media etc) to promote the special qualities of the area	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>3.9.4</b> Undertake regular reviews of the AONB website and publications portfolio and revise and update to ensure they provide quality information	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>3.9.5</b> Engage young people in the conservation and understanding of the area by working with Suffolk Environmental Education Network	AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>3.9.6</b> Undertake targeted interpretation programmes on key sites to foster understanding and support for their special character (e.g. heathland)	AONB team			*	*	
<b>3.10</b> High-quality, sustainable, outdoor recreational opportunities, infrastructure and information is commonplace within the AONB	<b>3.10.1</b> Maintain and develop the series of interpretation boards and walking and cycling guides in the area	AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>3.10.2</b> Develop guidance and contacts for responsible recreational use of vulnerable areas to disturbance within the AONB, such as; estuaries, shingle beaches and heathland	AONB team	*				
<b>3.11</b> The geodiversity of the AONB is better understood and appreciated	<b>3.11.1</b> Develop a factsheet on geodiversity as part of the suite of coastal knowledge factsheets	AONB team, SGP		*			
<b>3.12</b> The historic and cultural assets of the AONB are better understood and appreciated	<b>3.12.1</b> Develop and promote a register of undesignated heritage assets to increase understanding	EH, SCC			*		
	<b>3.12.2</b> Develop a factsheet on the historic landscape as part of the suite of coastal knowledge factsheets	AONB team, EH, SCC		*			
	<b>3.12.3</b> Record key archeological, cultural and heritage assets before they are lost to the sea	SCC Archeological team, EH, AONB team			*		
<b>Theme 4 Working together</b>							
<b>AONB Partnership</b>							
<b>4.1</b> AONB Partnership representation is regularly reviewed	<b>4.1.1</b> Develop strong links with new Partnerships in the area: Local Nature Partnership, Local Enterprise Partnership and the East Suffolk Partnership, to maximise the effective use of resources	AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>4.1.2</b> Review membership to ensure the right community, agency, local authority, private sector, NGO representation is in place and co-opt new members as necessary	AONB Partnership	*		*		*
<b>4.2</b> AONB Partnership has position statements on all priority issues affecting the AONB	<b>4.2.1</b> Develop a position statement on ecological networks to support activity by partners	AONB Partnership	*				
	<b>4.2.2</b> Develop a position statement on responsible access to support conservation of natural beauty and the importance of the Sandford Principle	AONB Partnership		*			

Objectives	Actions	Lead organisation/s	2013 /14	2014 /15	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017 /18
4.3 There is clarity and consistency in AONB messaging	4.3.1 Develop a short paragraph of common wording about the AONB for Partnership to use as appropriate, to ensure references to the AONB are consistent	AONB team, AONB Partnership	*				
4.4 AONB Partnership acts as a key focal point connecting business, communities, organisations and authorities in the area	4.4.1 Hold AONB public forums as required, to engage with a range of communities and stakeholders on topical issues	AONB team		*		*	
	4.4.2 Hold biennial seminars on topical issues for Partners and wider stakeholders	AONB Partnership		*		*	
4.5 Progress on the implementation of the Management Plan is monitored and reported	4.5.1 Develop and adopt annual AONB business plan	AONB JAC	*	*	*	*	*
	4.5.2 Hold 2 x formal AONB Partnership meetings each year focussing on Management Plan delivery	AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*
	4.5.3 Undertake a mid-term review of the AONB Management Plan	AONB Partnership			*		
	4.5.4 Produce a summary at the end of the Management Plan period summarising the outcome of actions undertaken by the Partnership	AONB team					*
4.6 The Partnership is fully engaged with national protected landscape issues	4.6.1 Maintain membership and active engagement with National Association of AONBs, through annual NAAONB conference and ongoing work between protected landscape officers	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
	4.6.2 Hold an annual meeting of Partnership Leaders, CEOs, Directors to discuss strategic AONB issues	AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*
4.7 AONB governance is responsive to change	4.7.1 Review AONB structures as necessary	AONB JAC	*	*	*	*	*
	4.7.2 Maintain current levels of Defra and Local Authority core funding enabling the development of 3rd-party funded project activity	AONB JAC	*	*	*	*	*
	4.7.3 Oversee AONB budgets, team structures and performance quarterly	AONB JAC	*	*	*	*	*
4.8 Awareness and profile of the AONB and its importance and vulnerability is maintained and enhanced	4.8.1 Continue to champion the area both as a nationally important protected landscape, but also as an area much identified and valued by local people	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
	4.8.2 Ensure that AONB materials reflect the national protection and local importance of the area	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Communities</b>							
4.9 AONB grants support local activities to meet AONB objectives	4.9.1 Promote and administer Community and Conservation Fund grants, generated from visitor payback income from AONB Supporter businesses	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
	4.9.2 Promote and administer Sustainable Development Fund grants to appropriate projects in the AONB, ensuring projects make a difference at the community level	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
	4.9.3 Promote and administer Amenity and Accessibility Fund grants (and similar), generated from major infrastructure development (mitigation & offset) within the AONB.	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*

Objectives	Actions	Lead organisation/s	2013 /14	2014 /15	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017 /18
<b>4.10</b> There is a range of opportunities for individuals, communities and businesses to get actively involved in caring for the AONB	<b>4.10.1</b> Continue to develop volunteering schemes in the area enabling people to get directly involved, particularly at the weekends	AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>4.10.2</b> Ensure communities are engaged in and fully aware of sensitive site management issues	AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>4.10.3</b> Increase AONB volunteer numbers by 100 by the end of the Plan period	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>4.10.4</b> Maintain and expand Beachwatch and adopt-a-beach schemes particularly in Tendring District	AONB team	*	*	*		
	<b>4.10.5</b> Continue to develop the coastal and estuarine warden scheme to improve people's enjoyment of the coast (incl. habitats and access management, surveys and recording, interpretation and information)	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>4.10.6</b> Raise the profile of the Suffolk Association of Local Volunteering Organisations register of volunteer opportunities, for people to find out about opportunities	AONB team			*		
	<b>4.10.7</b> Respond to community requests and opportunities, drawing in other Partners as appropriate	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>4.10.8</b> Promote carbon reduction in local communities. Use the Creating the Greenest County (CtGC) project and Greenprint forum to underpin the concept of sustainable living and promote the landscape and biodiversity category in the annual CtGC awards	CtGC, Greenprint Forum, AONB Partnership	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>4.10.9</b> Increase by 25% the number of businesses who are signed up as 'AONB Supporters' and contribute to the AONB Community and Conservation Fund through the Plan period	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>4.10.10</b> Develop the Community Conservation Fund Supporters Scheme and make it an effective way for businesses to engage with the AONB whilst raising money for conservation	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
	<b>4.10.11</b> Increase opportunities for young people to become more involved with the AONB through volunteering, grant schemes and other projects	AONB team	*	*	*	*	*
<b>4.11</b> Mechanisms are developed that enable individuals and groups to join a network of support for the AONB	<b>4.11.1</b> Develop a 'Friends of' group for the AONB	AONB team			*	*	*

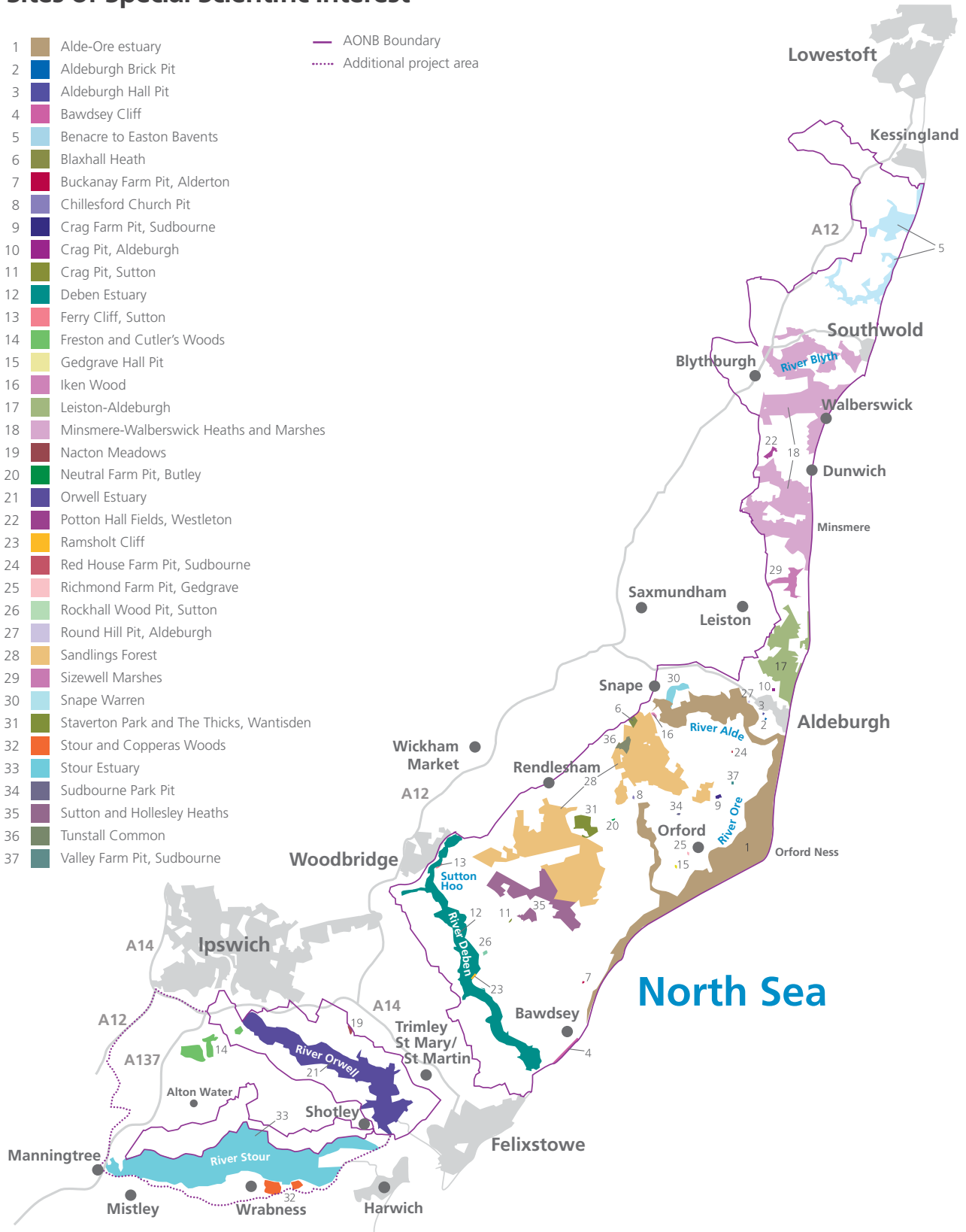
# Appendices











# Appendix A: Maps

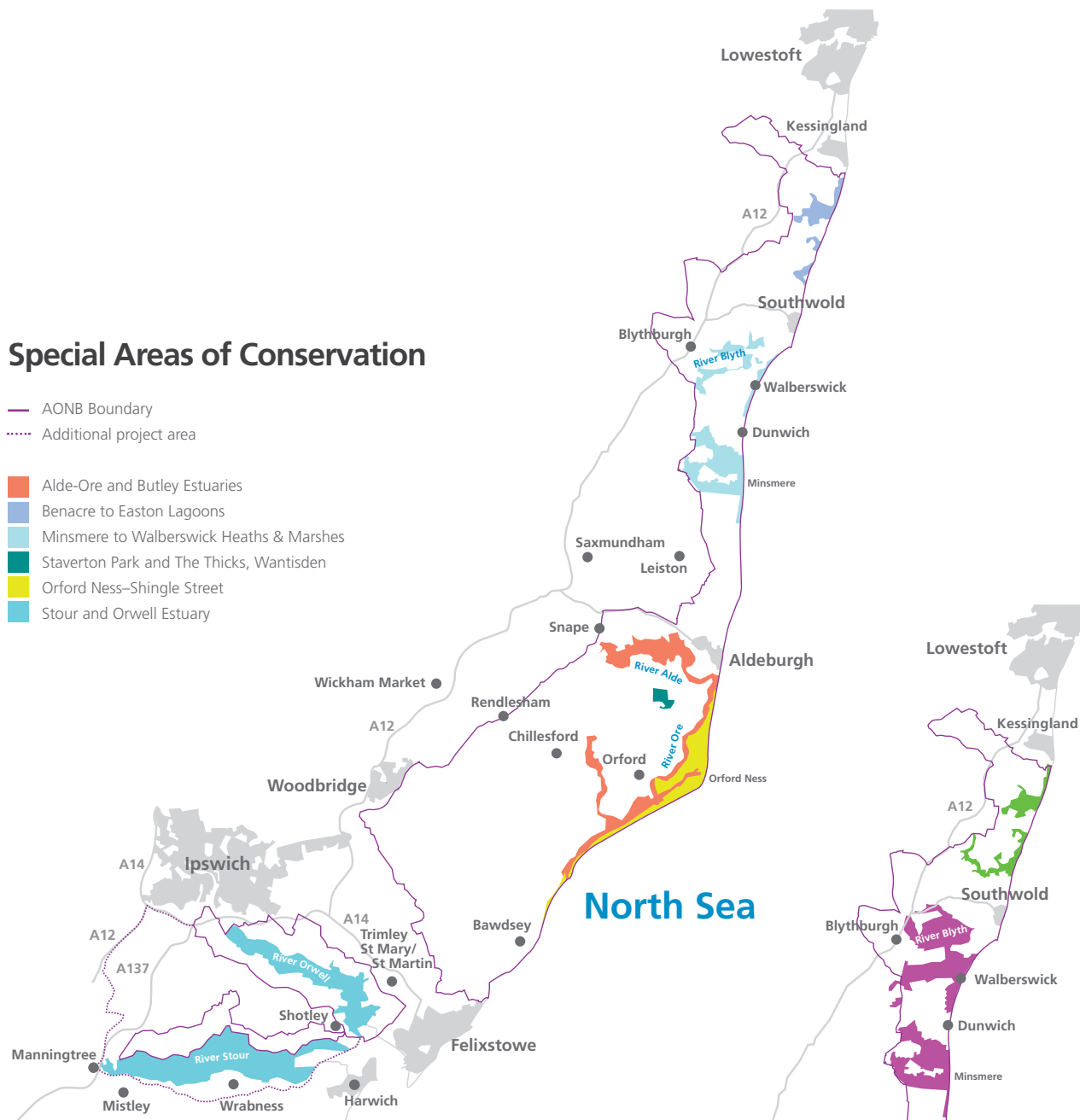
## Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB and additional project area

### Sites of Special Scientific Interest










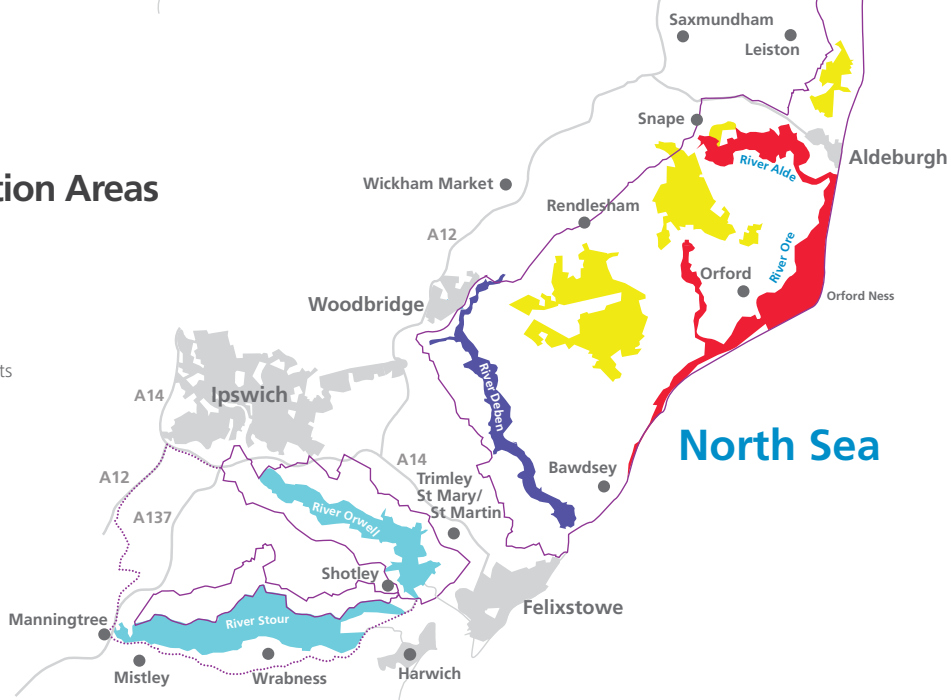
## Special Areas of Conservation

-  AONB Boundary
-  Additional project area
-  Alde-Ore and Butley Estuaries
-  Benacre to Easton Lagoons
-  Minsmere to Walberswick Heaths & Marshes
-  Staverton Park and The Thicks, Wantisden
-  Orford Ness–Shingle Street
-  Stour and Orwell Estuary



## Special Protection Areas

-  AONB Boundary
-  Additional project area
-  Alde-Ore Estuary
-  Benacre to Easton Bavents
-  Deben Estuary
-  Minsmere–Walberswick
-  Sandlings
-  Stour and Orwell Estuary

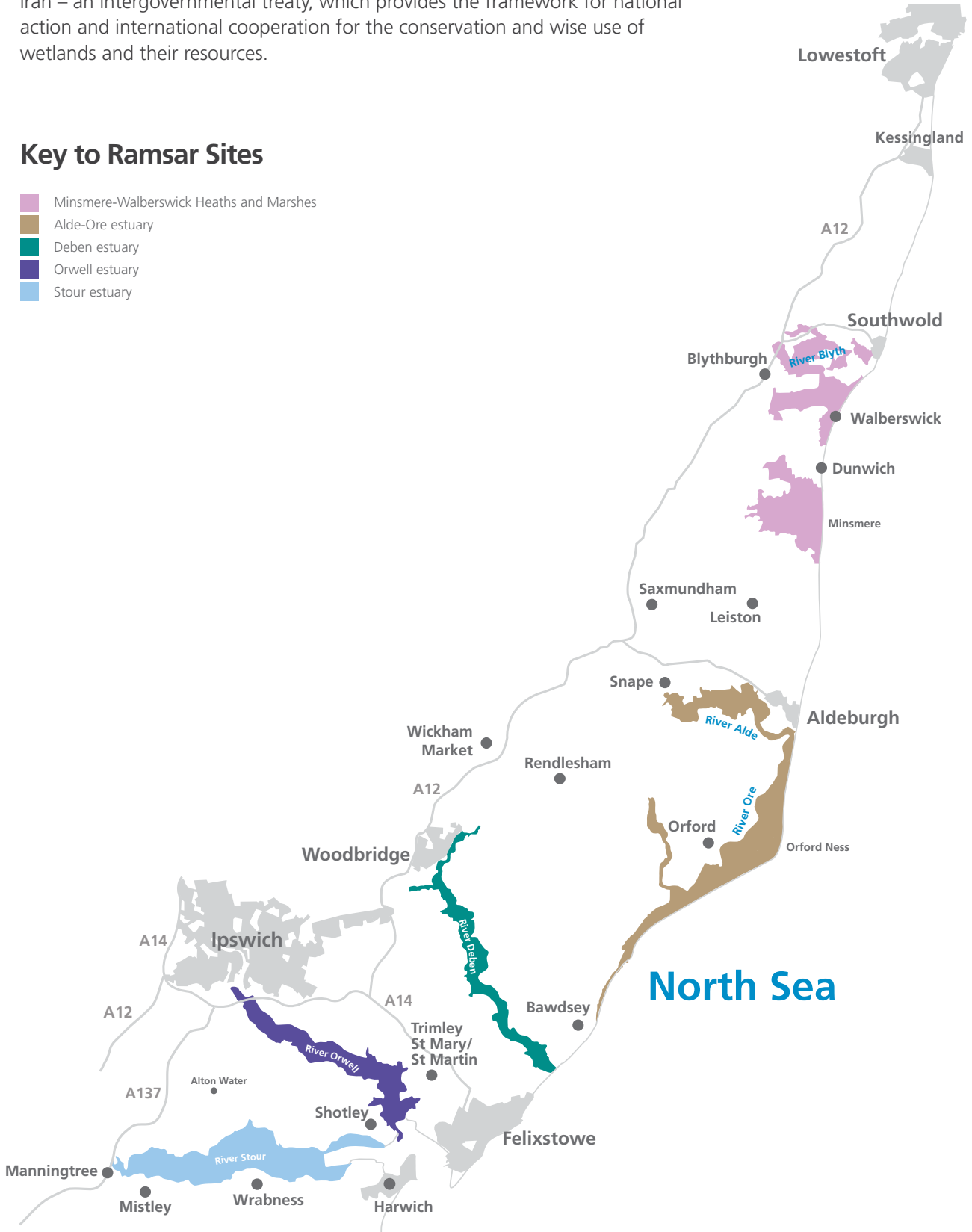


# Ramsar

Ramsar Convention: The Convention on Wetlands, signed in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran – an intergovernmental treaty, which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

## Key to Ramsar Sites

- Minsmere-Walberswick Heaths and Marshes
- Alde-Ore estuary
- Deben estuary
- Orwell estuary
- Stour estuary



## Appendix B: State of the AONB statistics

### 1. Landscape Character type (Source: SBRC)

Landscape Character Type	Area (ha)	% of AONB
Ancient estate claylands	685	1.69
Ancient estate farmlands	1,422	3.52
Coastal dunes	680	1.68
Coastal levels	6,348	15.74
Estate farmlands	7,457	18.49
Estate sandlands	15,423	38.25
Open coastal fens	488	1.2
Plateau claylands	1	0.002
Plateau estate farmlands	838	2.07
Plateau estate sandlands	392	0.97
Plateau farmlands	31	0.07
Rolling valley farmlands	673	1.66
Saltmarsh and inter tidal flats	2,140	5.3
Urban	286	0.7
Valley meadowlands	353	0.87
Valley meadowlands and fens	432	1.07
Wooded fens	1,037	2.57
Wooded valley meadowlands	110	0.27
Estuaries	1,565	3.88
<b>Total</b>	<b>40,358</b>	<b>100</b>



### 2. Main habitats (Source: SBRC)

Habitat	Data collated 2012		Data collated 2007/8		Reason for change
	Area (ha)	% of AONB	Area (ha)	% of AONB	
Saltmarsh	740	1.84	957	2.37	Using more accurate mapping techniques than previous years
Vegetated shingle	587	1.46	587	1.45	
Grazing marsh	3,220	7.99	3,899	9.67	2012 figure using NE data, previous data captured using remote sensing
Reedbed	678	1.68	713	1.76	2012 mapping looks at significant areas of reedbed visible in aerial photographs
Heathland	2,626	6.51	2,051	5.08	2012 mapping includes lowland heath and lowland acid grassland as per Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan definition



Habitat	Data collated 2012		Data collated 2007/8		Reason for change (if known)
	Area (ha)	% of AONB	Area (ha)	% of AONB	
Wet woodland	488	1.21	293	0.72	2012 figure using remote sensing method
Deciduous trees	1,955	4.85			
Mixed trees	1,436	3.56			
Coniferous trees	2,964	7.35			
Freshwater	679	1.68	664	1.64	
Saline lagoons	145	0.36	117	0.29	
Unimproved grassland	66	0.16			

All priority BAP habitat (excluding NWT)	All priority BAP habitat (excluding NWT)	All priority BAP habitat (excluding NWT)	All priority BAP habitat (excluding NWT)	All priority BAP habitat (excluding NWT)	
In BAP and AE Scheme	3,554	8.82	–	–	
% BAP in AE Scheme	46%				

### 3. Wildlife designation (Source: SBRC)

Wildlife Designation	Area (ha) 2012	% of AONB	Area (ha) 2007/8	% Increase since 2007/8	% Decrease since 2007/8
County Wildlife Site	4,784	11.87	4,743	0.86	No change
SAC	4,057	10.07	SAME	No change	No change
SPA	10,371	25.73	SAME	No change	No change
Ramsar	6,693	16.60	SAME	No change	No change
SSSI	11,425	28.34	11,427	No change	0.02
<b>Total</b>	<b>37,330</b>	<b>92.61</b>	<b>37,291</b>		

### 4. Condition of SSSIs (Source: NE/SBRC)

	Data collated 2012					Data collated 2007/8		
	Area (ha)	% of AONB	% of SSSI	% increase since 2007/8	% decrease since 2007/8	Area	% of AONB	% of SSSI
Favourable	4,669	11.58	40.87		36.3	7,330	18.16	64.17
Unfavourable recovering	5,454	13.53	47.73	170		2,020	5.01	17.69
Unfavourable no change	195	0.48	1.71		20.73	246	0.6	2.14
Unfavourable declining	1,104	2.74	9.66		39.37	1,831	4.54	15.99
Part destroyed	3	0.01	0.03			0		
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,425</b>	<b>28.34</b>	<b>100.00</b>		<b>0.02</b>	<b>11,427</b>	<b>28.31</b>	<b>100</b>

## 5. Public and voluntary sector ownership of nature reserves and forests

Reserves/Forest	Area (ha)	% of AONB	Number	Date Mapping Acquired	Area on Last Plan	% Increase
Local Nature Reserves	47	0.12	2	Jan-12	SAME	
National Nature Reserves	2,269	5.63	4	Jan-12	SAME	
Suffolk Wildlife Trust	1,449	3.59	21	Jan-12	1,153	25.67
RSPB	2,042	5.07	6	2010	1,991	2.56
National Trust	915	2.27	4	2010	898	1.89
Forestry Commission woodland	3,082	7.64				
Natural England	1,053	2.60				
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,804.04</b>	<b>24.32</b>	<b>37</b>		<b>6,358</b>	<b>5.73</b>

## 6. Other land statistics (Source: SBRC)

Other land	Area (ha)	% of AONB	Number	Mapping Date Approx
Historic parkland	748	1.85	12	2012
RIGS	1	0.00	2	Apr-11
County GeoSites	13	0.03	9	Apr-11

## 7. Percentage of land area and population within AONB by District (Source: SBRC)

Reserves/Forest	Area km <sup>2</sup>	% of AONB	Population within AONB	No. of residential properties within AONB	Source
Ipswich Borough	0.20	0.1			Not available
Babergh District	33.21	8.2		1,013	Babergh District Council
Suffolk Coastal	320.00	79.4		7,900	SCDC Property data 2012
Waveney District	49.51	12.3	4,800		WDC Parishes 2010 mid-year population estimates
Tendring	9.47 sq km Project Area only, not designated AONB	No proportion (Project Area only)			
Coastal areas outside district boundaries	0.38				
<b>Total</b>	<b>403.10</b>	<b>100</b>			

## 8. Land in agri-environment and England Woodland Grant Scheme (Source: Defra)

	2012 Area (ha)	% of AONB land area	2008 Area (ha)	% of AONB land area 2008
Entry Level Stewardship (ELS)	22,670	56.23	8,735	21.67
Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS)	515 750	1.27 1.86	639 70	1.59 0.17
Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)	2,657	6.59	749	1.86
HLS & ELS	450	1.15	164	0.41
Countryside Stewardship (CS)	0	0	5,168	12.82
Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA)	0	0	4,615	11.45
Woodland Grant Scheme	224.8	0.56		
<b>Total</b>	<b>27,266.8</b>	<b>67.66</b>	<b>20,140</b>	<b>49.96</b>

Note: CS and ESA phasing out - all agreements finish by end of 2013 and are replaced with ELS, OELS and HLS

## 9. Soil classification by agricultural type (Source: SBRC)

	Data collected 2012	% of AONB land area
Grade 1	1,169	2.89
Grade 2	2,862	7.09
Grade 3	10,763	26.67
Grade 4	11,206	27.77
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,000</b>	<b>64.42</b>

## 10. Water abstraction (Source: EA)

	Based on 2010 Returns		2007/8 data	
	Licensed quality (Ml/d)	Licensed quality ('000m <sup>3</sup> /yr)	Licensed quality (Ml/d)	Licensed quality ('000m <sup>3</sup> /yr)
General agriculture	18.153	228.117	0.4	135
Spray irrigation	215.226	8,359.758	46.8	9,123
Spray irrigation storage	59.712	3,525.487	16.1	2,626
Top up water (amenity/environmental)	2.902	133.059	1.2	193
Mineral industry	0.035	2.147	0.5	195
Golf courses	0.757	71.524	0.5	100
General industry	1.271	217.369	0.1	21
Private water supply/undertaking	0.205	25.961	0.1	44
Public water supply	5.924	541	1.5	541
<b>Totals</b>	<b>304.185</b>	<b>13,104.422</b>	<b>67.2</b>	<b>12,976</b>
<b>Total licences</b>	<b>213</b>		<b>160</b>	
Surface water licences	349.624	5,469.806	72	8,218
Groundwater licences	258.746	7,634.61589	88	4,758

## 11. Estuarine and River Water Framework Directive Overall Status (Source: EA) 2009 classification, based on data collected 2006–2008, relevant up to 2015

Estuary	Total Area (km <sup>2</sup> )*	WFD Overall Status	Biological Status	Water Quality
Blyth	3	Moderate	Not Assessed	Moderate
Alde & Ore	11	Moderate	Good	Moderate
Deben	8	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Orwell	13	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Stour	26	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>Moderate</b>		<b>Moderate</b>

River	Total River Length (km)	River Length in AONB (km)	WFD Overall Status	Biological Status	Water Quality
Lothingland Hundred	12	11	Moderate	Poor	Moderate
Easton Broad	8	4	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Wang	13	3	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Blyth	6	2	Moderate		Moderate
Wenhaston Watercourse	7	1	Bad	Bad	Moderate
Minsmere Old River	21	4	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Leiston Brook	5	5	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Thorpeness Hundred	11	4	Poor	Poor	Moderate
Butley	6	6	Moderate	Moderate	Good
Tang	4	4	Moderate	Good	Moderate
Shottisham Mill River	5	5	Good	Good	High
Black Ditch Hollesley	4	4	Moderate		Moderate
Holbrook	9	2	Moderate	Poor	Moderate

\*The above refers to the 'new' Water Framework Directive classification of the rivers and estuaries in the Suffolk Coasts & Heaths AONB. The data presented is that in the 2009 First River Basin Plan. This will next be updated in 2015 when the Environment Agency publishes the next River Basin Plan.

The Water Framework Directive requires the Environment Agency to consider a broad range of quality elements in a particular waterbody (river, lake, estuary), and to assign each element a status on a scale of high, good, moderate, poor or bad. 'High' represents largely undisturbed conditions, with the other classes showing increasing deviation from undisturbed or 'reference' conditions. The status is then combined for each of the elements to give an Overall Ecological Class or status. By the rules of the Water Framework Directive, the overall ecological status is determined by the worst scoring component element.

The biological class is also given, this is a combination of the status for the fish, invertebrates and water plants sampled. The water quality status presented above is the combination of the status for ammonia, phosphorus, dissolved oxygen and temperature.

## 12. Highways (Source: SCC)

Classification – Data collected 2012	length (km)	% of total
A roads	27	7.58
B roads	61	17.13
C roads	268	75.28
<b>Total</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>100</b>

### 13. Public rights of way, open access (Source: SCC)

Public rights of way	2012		2007/8	
		% of total		% of total
Footpaths	471 (km)	71.6	490 (km)	75.15
Bridleways	117 (km)	17.8	97 (km)	14.88
Restricted Byways	30 (km)	4.6	29 (km)	4.44
Byways	40 (km)	6.1	36 (km)	5.52
<b>Total</b>	<b>658</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>652</b>	<b>100</b>
Open Access Land	4,311 (ha)	10.68	4311 (ha)	10.68%

### 14. Employment (Source: Defra)

Employment	
Total employees in tourism sector	1,810
Proportion of workforce	19.9%
Business in the tourism sector as a proportion of all businesses in AONB	16.3%
Farm holdings	137
Total employees in agricultural industry	733

### 15. Heritage assets (Source: English Heritage)

Heritage assets – Data collated 2012	
Listed buildings Grade 1 and 2*	667
Buildings at risk	4
Scheduled Ancient Monuments	38
Monuments at risk	9
Registered Parks and Gardens	2
Registered Parks and Gardens at risk	1
Total recorded as At Risk	14

### 16. Built environment (Source: Defra)

Environment – Data collated 2012	Area (ha)	% of AONB
Built Conservation Area	522	0.013%

#### Key

**Defra** Department of environment, food and rural affairs

**EA** Environment Agency

**SAC** Special Area of Conservation

**SBRC** Suffolk Biological Records Centre

**SPA** Special Protection Area

**SSSI** Site of Special Scientific Interest

**NE** Natural England

**Ramsar** Sites designated under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance

**RIGS** Regionally Important geological/geomorphological Sites



## Appendix C: Feedback from the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was undertaken during the process of developing the Management Plan. This is a statutory requirement (The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, Statutory Instrument 2004, No.1633). It ensures that land use plans and programmes that are likely to have a significant effect on the environment are subject to an overarching assessment of options and courses of actions during plan preparation, in order to avoid or mitigate any adverse effects. The Assessment, a formal process which systematically assesses the individual actions proposed in the Plan against a range of environmental factors, confirmed that the Plan would have a positive impact on the AONB.

Preparation of an SEA is a two-stage process: a scoping report which identifies the issues, and then the Environmental Report itself.

The scoping report was sent to statutory consultees, Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency in May 2012. Their comments, which demonstrated agreement in general, have been incorporated into an Environmental Report and the review of the Management Plan and are summarised below:

**Natural England** requested that:

- information in the document refers back to the previous management plan 2008–13
- the objectives in the Strategic Environmental Assessment are linked to those in the Management Plan

- all relevant key environmental issues related to the Suffolk Coast are included

**Environment Agency** suggested that they could provide advice on a 'light-touch' approach to Strategic Environmental Assessment.

**English Heritage** made no additional comments.

The comments from the statutory consultees guided the assessment undertaken in the Environmental Report. No comments were provided from the wider stakeholder group.

The Environmental Report contains the assessment of the individual proposed actions against environmental factors. None of the proposed actions indicated a negative impact upon the AONB or any element of the AONB, indeed many of the proposed actions were seen to positively enhance the area.

The Environmental Report was subject to public consultation and also further consultation with the three statutory consultees. There were no comments from the public, Natural England or English Heritage. The Environment Agency suggested two assessments be moved from 'supports' to 'strongly supports' objectives.

The SEA report highlighted the most important information to record and will help inform priorities.

It is clear that the Management Plan will have a positive impact upon the AONB.

## Appendix D: Monitoring Plan

It is important that we know how the key landscape habitats in AONBs are changing, for example, is heathland increasing or decreasing? The AONB is unlikely to

have sufficient resources to regularly collect data itself and will primarily have to rely on data collection by individual partner organisations. However there

may be cases where a vital set of data is required as a clear indicator of success and progress. This will need to be part of a wider debate about creating the evidence base to ensure energy and resources are being directed effectively.

Currently, the range of data available is not ideal. There are differences in how it is collected, how easily it can be related to the AONB and the wider sample area, and how to measure some of the aspects of

natural beauty that the AONB is seeking to influence.

There is likely to be a need for a regular picture of the 'health' of the AONB. This will create a better understanding of issues such as changes to habitats and landscape features, housing levels and visitor numbers. These are likely to be long-term trends and it may take longer than the current Plan period of five years before trends can be recognised.

## Appendix E: Partnership operation and commitment

The AONB Management Plan is supported by a wide range of organisations that are committed to finding ways of retaining the special qualities of the AONB.

By becoming a signatory to this Plan they are committing themselves to supporting the aims and objectives within it, seeking ways to ensure the Action Plan is implemented and directing their own activities to bring benefits to the AONB.

See section [1.7.2](#) for a full list of Partnership organisations.

The AONB Partnership is the mechanism to enable the AONB Management Plan to be taken forward. The Partnership meets at least twice a year to take a strategic look at the management of the AONB – setting long and mid-term goals as well as overseeing the implementation of the Action Plan and championing its conservation (even if at times a partner organisation may have conflicting needs to meet its own work aims and priorities).

All public bodies have a duty to have regard to AONB objectives conferred by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, and should therefore seek to minimise, mitigate or compensate where there is an overriding need to follow a different policy.

When signing up to the AONB Management Plan, the organisation is

committing itself to providing annual information to the AONB team about progress in implementing the Plan.

The Partnership will provide advice to help the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) fulfil its role of conserving the AONB and oversee the activities of the AONB team. The JAC was formed by a Memorandum of Agreement between the funding local authorities and Defra to oversee the work of the AONB team and to meet the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requirements of the local authorities.

There is a growing need to make management decisions based on robust data. Detailed data is sometimes limited but the data that is available can indicate the worth or otherwise of delivering the Plan.

The AONB Partnership will be asked to report back at the end of each year on progress made with the actions and also on any relevant work that has moved forward the objectives. This will form the basis of the AONB's annual report and will be transmitted to the community forums.

The feedback will also be used to review the Action Plan regularly so that it can be updated according to progress, and changing priorities as reflected through public policy.



## Appendix F: Public engagement process to develop this Plan

A comprehensive public engagement process was carried out to review and develop this Plan including:

- A Management Plan consultation workshop held with the AONB Partnership on 16th March 2012
- An introductory article in the Summer 2012 edition of Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB newspaper about Management Plan review and the formal launch of a public consultation in May 2012
- An invitation to register interest in the public consultation on Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB website or by phone
- Press releases and distribution of information about the consultation to local libraries and information centres to raise awareness
- The draft Management Plan was subject to a formal public consultation between 3rd May and 30th June 2012. The results of this were considered by the AONB Partnership and JAC
- Full draft Management Plan review (hard copy) sent to every Parish Council within the AONB
- The Management Plan review was the subject of an Adaptive Management workshop in June 2012 at the Centre for Etonics and Ecosystem Management (CEEM) at Writtle College, a partner of the University of Essex
- A revised draft was issued in November 2012 for final approval and adoption by the Local Authorities and other organisations in the Partnership, prior to publication

A consultation report and a full list of summarised consultation comments and the responses to them is available from the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB team.

The public consultation process resulted in 322 responses to the online consultation questionnaire and 24 written responses.





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