

A Shared Responsibility
for a Very Special Place



The Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Management Plan

2010-2015

In partnership with:



The Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Management Plan

Executive Summary

2010-2015

An introduction to Solway Coast AONB

The Solway Coast AONB covers 115 sq km of the Cumbrian landscape and over 5% of the North West regional coastline, it lies within the boundaries of three Local Authorities namely Allerdale Borough Council (88% of area), Cumbria County Council (100% of area) and Carlisle City Council (12% of area).

It is one of 49 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and is the only AONB that is fully within Cumbria. It occupies 59 km along the Cumbrian coastline between Rockliffe West of Carlisle and Maryport in the South, and was designated in 1964.

It is a nationally protected landscape and internationally important for roosting and feeding grounds for tens of thousands of over wintering wildfowl including geese, swans and ducks; the salt marshes, mud-flats and lowland raised mires having designations of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) National Nature Reserves (NNR), candidate Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protected Area (SPA) and Ramsar.

One of its most distinguishing qualities is its combination of different landscape types

The landscape of the Solway Coast is also of great archaeological, cultural and historical importance, from the Bronze Age, through to the Roman era and Hadrian's Wall, a World Heritage Site; onto the Vikings, Medieval (Monastic), Post-Medieval, Agricultural and Industrial eras and into the 20th Century.

The Solway Coast has a unique character that is treasured by visitors and locals and its sustainable management is essential to ensure its character endures.

The Purpose of AONB Designation

The purpose of AONB designation is conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the landscape. Government confirmed in July 2000 that since the landscape qualities of National Parks and AONBs are equivalent, the protection being given to both types of area by the land use planning system should also be equivalent.



The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act) placed a statutory duty on local authorities with responsibilities for AONBs to prepare and adopt management plans to be reviewed every 5 years. Having due regard for the purpose of AONB designation is a provision of the CRoW Act (2000), and Section 85 places a duty of regard on all bodies undertaking work within AONBs. Therefore this Management Plan is a useful tool for public bodies to support AONB purposes.

Who is responsible for AONBs?

Local Authorities have the primary responsibility for the conservation and enhancement of AONBs. The duty under section 89 of the CRoW Act, to produce a plan giving policies for the management of the area also falls on the Local Authorities for the area covered by the designation. Natural England with the three constituent local authorities, Allerdale Borough Council (ABC), Carlisle City Council (CaCC), and Cumbria County Council (CCC) provide both the foundation and the core funding to maintain the AONB Partnership through the provision of a Staff Unit and a Joint Advisory Committee (JAC). The Staff Unit has produced this Management Plan revision on behalf of the three Local Authorities.

How is the AONB managed?

The JAC is made up of representatives of organisations with a particular interest in the area. They include Local Authorities, Parish Councils, Community Groups, Statutory Agencies and other public and voluntary sector organisations. The JAC was set up and constituted in 2002 and comprises 24 seats. Further to the JAC, the AONB is supported by a technical officer steering group made up of officers from the three Local Authorities and officers from Natural England, Environment Agency and Solway Firth Partnership. This group supports the work of the permanent staff unit. The Staff Unit currently comprises the AONB Manager (FT), Assistant AONB Manager (PT), Education Officer (PT), Community Volunteer Coordinator (PT) and Administrator (PT).



Vision

The 20 year vision set out in the AONB Management Plan outlines a positive scenario for the future of the Solway Coast AONB.

The Solway Coast AONB through active conservation and enhancement, is an exemplar of well planned and implemented sustainable development. The wild and remote parts of the coastline are protected and enhanced to include open marshes, wetlands and dune areas. Traditional boundaries form a complex mosaic throughout the farming hinterland, reinforcing historic field patterns and supporting a sustainable farming economy. The area's wildlife is abundant and habitats have been developed to reflect changes in climate and the wild nature of the area. Marine protected areas across the Solway Firth support a balanced estuarine ecosystem. The natural beauty and abundant wildlife found throughout the area have established the Solway as the best eco destination in the north of Cumbria.

People living in and visiting the Solway understand, enjoy and help protect the area through a network of information and trails. People move around through a matrix of quiet lanes and routes by foot and on bikes. Traditional farmsteads and villages are complemented by new eco buildings. Together they support a range of sustainable businesses that draw on and complement the special resources available in the area. Local services and high quality IT infrastructure support a vibrant community. Small scale renewables that complement the area's special qualities are found throughout the area and the peatlands and mudflats provide a natural active carbon sink.

Format of the Management Plan

The Plan is divided into two main sections:

Part One describes the significance of the Solway Coast AONB providing a local and regional outline of its setting; landscape character area and features; purpose and context; governance; monitoring and reporting and notes the state of the AONB Report and forces for change.

Part Two of the Management Plan seeks to encapsulate related subject matter into overarching themes that provide a process through which we identify our work over the coming five years. The themes identified are as follows:

1. Landscape
2. Natural Heritage
3. Cultural and Built Heritage
4. The Coast
5. Environmental Management
6. Climate and Renewables
7. Tourism, Transport, Access & Recreation
8. Education and Awareness
9. Economy and Community

Each of the themes is presented in the following way:

1. Vision statement
2. Scope of theme and evidence
3. Issues and forces for change
4. Objectives – what we want to achieve
5. Policies – the ways in which we plan to meet the objectives
6. Actions – the mechanisms to deliver the objectives
7. Progress – The ways we will report and measure progress in delivery of the objectives

The Plan was subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment to enable the published new version to comply with the SEA Directive (2001/42EC) which came into force on 20 July 2004. The SEA process was carried out alongside the review process.

The new Management Plan 2009-2014, is the result of a comprehensive review and consultation process undertaken between 2007 and 2009. The review scrutinised and considered both the delivery of the 2004 – 2009 Management Plan and the relevant European, National, Regional and Local legislation, plans and policies that have emerged over the past five years. In effect we have taken-stock and updated the plan to meet the aspirations of our partnership now and into the future.

The content of the plan:

- Highlights the special qualities and the enduring significance of the AONB, and the importance of its different features;
- Presents an integrated vision for the future of the AONB as a whole, in the light of national, regional and local priorities;
- Sets out the agreed policies incorporating specific objectives which will help secure that vision;
- Identifies what needs to be done, by whom, and when in order to achieve these outcomes;
- Identifies the means by which objectives and actions will be reviewed.

Our National parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are the finest landscape assets in the British Isles. This status provides a legislative framework for their protection and enhancement into the future. In Cumbria we have a National Park and three AONB's of which one is the Solway Coast. Not surprisingly the constituent local authorities wish to provide for their AONB's to secure their future protection.

Acknowledgements:
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Summary of Management Objectives

In Part Two the nine themes set out the AONB Management Plan objectives, policies and actions.

The Objectives

LANDSCAPE

The landscape characteristics that create the distinctive identity of the Solway Coast AONB are appropriately protected, managed, conserved and enhanced.

NATURAL HERITAGE

The biodiversity and geodiversity of the AONB will be appropriately protected, conserved, enhanced and managed.

CULTURAL AND BUILT HERITAGE

The built and cultural heritage of the AONB is appropriately conserved, enhanced and managed and there is a better understanding and appreciation of its special qualities.

THE COAST

The special qualities of the coastal area and its wider marine setting are appropriately conserved, enhanced and managed.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Land and water management are undertaken using sustainable methods which seek to conserve and enhance the special character of the AONB.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

The natural resources of the AONB are managed in a sustainable manner, maximising the opportunities to support climate change adaptation and mitigation and ensuring, wherever possible, that measures are compatible with the AONB purpose.

TOURISM, TRANSPORT, ACCESS AND RECREATION

Sustainable access, recreation, tourism and transport, which are compatible with the area's special qualities, is supported.

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

There is greater awareness of the AONB's special qualities, purpose for designation and the range of opportunities for environmental education within it.

ECONOMY AND COMMUNITY

A sustainable rural economy and community facilities and services are supported where they are compatible with the special qualities of the area.