

**Solway Coast AONB
Management Plan
2015 – 2020**

“A shared responsibility for a very special place”

Public and Stakeholder Consultation Draft

May 2014



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Ministerial Foreword

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.



Lord de Morley, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)



Chairman's Foreword

Vision

Overall Vision

This document drives the Third stage (part 3, 2015 – 2020) in the delivery of a 30 year vision for the future enhancement and prosperity of the Solway Coast AONB. That vision was signed up to by the AONB Partnership in 2004 and reiterated in 2010.

The vision is confirmed by the AONB partnership in this document taking our joint commitment to 2020.

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 managed 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 trails supported by good information. 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 efficient 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.

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PART 1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1 Legislation and Need

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) strengthened previous Countryside and National Parks Act (1949) making further provision for the protection and enhancement of AONBs. It requires Local Authorities to prepare, publish and review, every five years, a Management Plan for AONBs in their area. In the case of Solway Coast AONB the plan is undertaken and led by the Solway Coast AONB staff unit on behalf of Cumbria County Council, Allerdale Borough Council and Carlisle City Council and with support from Natural England and Defra. Essentially this Plan represents a comprehensive review of the 2010-2015 Management Plan. The Plan must be reviewed within five years of its original publication and at similar intervals thereafter. In addition the CRoW Act also places a duty on public bodies and others, to have regard to the special purposes of the AONB designation when carrying out their work.

The designation of an AONB:

- Gives formal statutory recognition to these nationally important landscapes;
- Requires special land use planning policies to apply; and
- Encourages an integrated approach to land management.

The AONB Management Plan is a statutory plan which sets out a Vision for the next 20 years. It describes the broad range of issues we face in this area and how we will manage them to conserve and enhance the area for future generations.

The aims of the Management Plan, which reflect the AONB purposes, are to:

- Conserve and enhance Natural Beauty through securing the natural and cultural heritage of UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, ensuring they can meet the challenges of the future
- Support the economic and social well-being of local communities in ways which contribute to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty
- Promote public understanding and enjoyment of the nature and culture of AONBs and encourage people to take action for their conservation

- Value, sustain and promote the benefits that the UK's AONBs provide for society, including clean air and water, food, carbon storage and other services vital to the nation's health and well-being
- To meet the recreational needs of local residents and visitors alike – where these are compatible with the purpose of AONB designation.

The revised Plan will need to recognise an updated agenda and a changed context, and revised policies including:

- The Natural Environment White Paper 2011
- Defra Biodiversity 2020 Delivery Plan
- New planning legislation and National Planning Policy Framework including Green Infrastructure
- Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform post-2013
- Revised National Character Area profiles
- Conservation of the historic environment
- Ecosystem goods and services and landscape-scale approach
- Government targets for renewable energy
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Localism
- Natural England Protected Landscapes Designation guidelines
- New marine legislation, marine planning, Marine Conservation Zones and seascape character assessment
- Establishment of Marine Management Organisation (MMO)
- Nationally agreed set of AONB Objectives / tripartite agreement between Defra, Natural England and the National Association of AONBs
- Slightly older but being implemented : NERC act – duty on local authorities with regards biodiversity, Revised SMP, CRoW coastal access, ELC

The developing Local Plans for Allerdale Borough Council and Carlisle City Council

The new plan will be subject to scrutiny through both a Strategic Environmental Assessment and, where it affects European Nature Conservation sites, by a Habitats Regulations Assessment.

1.2 What's new?

There have been a number of important changes since publication of the last Management Plan in 2010, which have a significant impact on the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in the Solway Coast AONB. This changed context includes:

- Significant changes in the planning system with the adoption of the National Planning Policy Framework, adopted Core Strategies and developing Local Plans for Allerdale Borough Council and Carlisle City Council.
- New Government guidance on renewable energy <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planningpractice-guidance-for-renewable-energy> replaced "Planning for renewable energy: a companion guide to PPS22" confirms that the need for renewable energy does not automatically override local environmental and heritage protections and the concerns of local communities.
- The production of 'Making Space for Nature' (The Lawton Report 2010) which highlighted the importance of enhanced ecological networks across the landscape and taking an approach to management which was summed up by the phrase, 'bigger, better, more, more joined-up'
- The publication of the 'State of Nature' report, which chronicles the dramatic decline in the UK's wildlife and which should be a wake-up call to all who have responsibility for policy affecting our natural environment.
- Publication of the 2011 Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP), *The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature* which sets out the Government's vision for the natural environment, shifting the emphasis from piecemeal conservation action towards a more integrated landscape-scale approach. The AONB Partnership contributes to delivery of three of the four ambitions: to protect and improve our natural environment, grow a green economy and reconnect people and nature.
- Publication of Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services. Building on the NEWP, the mission for the strategy for the next decade is: '*to halt biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people*'. To show what achieving this overarching objective by 2020 will mean in practice, the strategy sets out high level outcomes. The AONB Partnership is well placed to contribute to the delivery of these outcomes and help meet Biodiversity 2020 targets.
- An increasing emphasis on taking an ecosystem approach to landscape management. Outcome 1C of *Biodiversity 2020* is of particular relevance to

AONBs and sets out the challenge we are helping to meet: *'By 2020, at least 17% of land and inland water, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, conserved through effective, integrated and joined up approaches to safeguard biodiversity and ecosystem services including through management of our existing systems of protected areas and the establishment of nature improvement areas'*. NIAs, aimed at enhancing and reconnecting nature on a significant scale, were introduced in the NEWP and a competition launched to fund twelve initial areas in the period 2011 to 2015.

- Creation of Local Nature Partnerships (LNP) in July 2012. LNPs were proposed in the NEWP to strengthen local action and to raise awareness about the service and benefits of a healthy natural environment.
- Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform, the end of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) 2007 - 2013 and the development of a new environmental land management scheme. A desire for a more outcome-focused approach to agri-environment schemes
- 'Think big: ecological recovery in Protected Landscapes – the AONBs' and National Parks' response to *Making Space for Nature* which recognised that protected landscapes have huge potential to form the core of coherent and resilient ecological networks, and that, in order to achieve this, habitat improvement and creation becomes part of sustainable land management systems and businesses, and provides adequate reward for land managers.
- Recent global economic downturn, continuing pressure on public sector finances and the Government's growth agenda.
- Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. The Act creates a strategic marine planning system aiming at more sustainable use and protection of marine resources, sets up the Marine Management Organisation to deliver the Government's objectives for the marine environment, strengthens fisheries and environmental management arrangements to conserve marine ecosystems and help achieve a sustainable fisheries sector, and promotes integrated coastal zone management. The Act also enables the creation of an England Coast Path, a continuous, signed and managed route around the coast plus areas of spreading room.
- Localism Act 2011. The Act outlines the key measures that underpin the Government's approach to decentralisation and includes provisions regarding strengthening local democracy, community empowerment and neighbourhood planning.
- The signing of the European Landscape Convention which aims to embed a holistic understanding of landscape and 'place' into plans and policies. Its 7 key principles can be seen here:
http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/ELCGUIDANCE- PART-2_tcm6-23585.pdf

Valuing ecosystem services

What has nature ever done for us? Apart from providing food, jobs, wildlife, clean air and water, carbon storage, flood relief, pollination, nutrient cycling, a tourism industry and a 'natural health service'?

The benefits derived from nature are often described as 'ecosystem services' and sustainable economic growth relies on them. Some products like food and timber have a known financial value, but in other cases, we are only just beginning to fully understand the benefits and value that are provided, such as the role of bees in pollinating crops or the storage of carbon in woodland and wetlands.

Understanding the wide range of benefits provided to society by the special landscape of the AONB and their value both in monetary and non-monetary terms can help us design, plan and prioritise appropriate management activity to ensure that our natural resources and systems are more effectively recognised, supported and valued in the future.

Many of the objectives set out in this Plan influence the management of land and natural systems to help sustain and improve the range and quality of benefits or ecosystem services that are provided.

Appendix 2 categorises and describes the range of ecosystem services relevant to the AONB and gives links to relevant objectives in the Management Plan.

1.3 National and European Landscape Framework

The European Landscape Convention (ELC) came into effect in the United Kingdom in March 2007 and is adopted and promoted by the Council of Europe. The ELC definition of landscape is all embracing: 'Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action of natural and/or human factors.'

The ELC promotes landscape protection, management and planning, and European co-operation on landscape issues. The ELC is the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape.

It applies to all landscapes, towns and villages, as well as open countryside; the coast and inland areas; and ordinary or even degraded landscapes, as well as those that are afforded protection. The Convention was reaffirmed as being part of the Defra delivery framework through the Natural Environment White Paper June 2011.

It highlights the importance of developing landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and creation of landscapes and establishing procedures for the general public and other stakeholders to participate in policy creation and implementation.

The UK is recognised as already putting many of the principles of the ELC into practice. For example, the National Character Area map of England has been in use for nearly 10 years. Another example is the well-established practice of using Landscape Character Assessment to inform local policymaking.

Natural England is leading the implementation of the ELC in England and has worked with Defra and English Heritage to produce [European Landscape Convention: A framework for implementation in England: \(215kb\)](#), published in October 2007.

This framework seeks to further strengthen the protection, management and planning of England's landscapes, by providing a structure for action plans that will be prepared by any interested partners and stakeholders. It underpins a wide range of activities which, through public engagement and stakeholder involvement, will lead to wider understanding and appreciation of landscapes, improved knowledge and care, as well as a sense of inspiration, well-being and connection between people and place.

1.4 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

What is an AONB?

Our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are some of the finest landscape assets in the British Isles. This status is underpinned by a legislative framework for their protection and enhancement into the future.

The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949) provided for the designation of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). Following this initial legislation over 60 years ago, AONBs have received varying management and a range of management solutions driven by Local Authorities. In 2000 the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) created legislation for the better protection of AONBs. This new Act consolidates and strengthens the 1949 Act concerning AONBs, reaffirming the purpose of designation and confirming the powers of Local Authorities to take appropriate action to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of AONBs. The following are the objectives of the relevant sections of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 with regard to AONBs:

Section 82	reaffirms the purpose of AONBs
Section 84	confirms the powers of local authorities to take appropriate action to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of AONBs
Section 85	places a duty on all public bodies and statutory undertakers to 'have regard' to the 'purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty'
Section 89	creates a statutory responsibility for Local Authorities to prepare and publish and periodically review a plan which formulates their policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it

The purpose of AONB designation is the 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 statement of purpose of AONB designation is:

'To Conserve and Enhance Natural Beauty'

The natural outcome for the statement of purpose is to pursue its aims through a management plan. Therefore the primary driver for this document is the statement of purpose.

Having due regard for the purpose of AONB designation is a provision of the CRoW Act (2000), 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.

The AONB Unit has a dual role, one as a delivery team, but two as a co-ordinator to ensure joined up asset management by various bodies including agencies, Authorities and NGO activities to support the AONB and its purpose. Thus many Management Plan actions are not 'owned' by the AONB Unit.

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. In the past Natural England, but now Defra, 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.

Reporting, Governance and Finance

As described, the Solway Coast AONB JAC came into being in 2002 and its structure and membership has proven successful over the past 12 years. A number of small changes have been made to both the membership of the JAC and its constitution (working arrangements) over the years to enhance its role as a governance structure and maintain it as 'fit for purpose'.

The life of this Plan is five years and in that time change is inevitable whether on a small or large scale and the forces for change can be many and varied, from European and National legislation to changes in local partner priorities. Whatever the driver, the AONB Partnership must be flexible but must always concentrate on the successful delivery of the plan and, equally as important, to maintain the Partnership. The Plan both covers the direct delivery lead by the AONB Unit but also the work of the partners with the AONB Unit providing a co-ordinating role. All of the 46 AONBs are part of the AONB Family and all share the same objectives under the influence of NAAONB.

How will progress be measured?

The Solway Coast AONB Partnership has two priorities with regard to plan delivery progress and how it is measured. Actions driven by the plan must be monitored within the context of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) outputs and the subsequent success of the actions must be measured against the condition of the AONB.

To fulfil this need, we will:

- Assess progress and achievements made against the Action Plan Targets for each year
- Confirm Action Plan activities and targets for the year ahead whilst incorporating unfinished actions from the previous year
- Identify new areas of action based upon partner activities or new forces for change
- Keep the Action Plan under review over the five year life of the Plan

To monitor condition we will identify a range of condition and direction of change indicators which can be used to establish a baseline and measure change:

- Countryside and landcover indicators
- Cultural and vernacular indicators
- Ecological and environmental indicators (purpose of designation)
- Socio-economic and quality of life indicators

The Annual Review document published by the AONB Partnership in December each year will describe measure and report on all of the indicators above. The Annual Review is produced by the AONB Unit on behalf of the Partnership and is signed off by the Joint Advisory Committee each year.

Monitoring

A partnership of representatives from Natural England, Defra, the English National Park Authorities Association, the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and English Heritage is developing a Protected Landscape Monitoring Framework. This will provide a consistent means of monitoring some of the environmental outcomes that occur in protected landscapes, and which the wide range of relevant authorities and local people will be helping to deliver via the Management Plan. As part of this process useful National data on those environmental outcomes and local information will become available and can be used as evidence as part of the Management Plan Reviews, e.g. State of the Environment Reports.

Delivery of Management Plan Actions

The measurement of success or otherwise regarding delivery of Management Plan objectives entails performance indicators once again. However, the measurement this time can be simple or complex. On the one hand delivery of a simple project such as the design and publication of a leaflet by the AONB Unit is in the hands of the Partnership. In this context both delivery and performance can be directly attributed to the AONB Partnership. Alternatively, a project supported by the AONB

Unit such as a partnership approach to a common theme may be compromised in both delivery and performance by a member organisation. This situation cannot be directly attributable to the AONB Partnership.

To avoid any misunderstandings and to provide a SMART scoring system, the AONB Unit must identify the external threats to each of the actions and factor them in as part of the monitoring and reporting process. This approach is embedded in the Action Plan matrix in section three of this plan.

Core and Project Funding

Core Funding

Core funding is provided by Defra and the three Local Authorities. It covers the cost of running the AONB Staff Unit and delivery of the core functions as stipulated by Defra (see list XXX). The funding and governance arrangements are outlined in the current Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), updated in 2007. This was replaced during 2010 by a new agreement outlining the new working arrangements between Natural England, Defra and the constituent Local Authorities.

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Project Funding

Funding will be sought from a range of sources to fund delivery of the actions identified in this Management Plan provided as projects. Defra has provided funding for a Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) for the AONB. The SDF has been a grant scheme managed by the AONB Unit. It supported innovative and sustainable projects that combined social, environmental and economic benefits to the AONB. The fund, at present, goes to the Solway Wetlands Landscape Partnership Project to provide a 'Community Fund' which gives funding towards sustainable community projects in the project area (some of which is just outside the AONB).

State of the AONB

In 2008, as part of the 2004-09 Management Plan Review, the AONB Partnership commissioned a State of the AONB Report. For the first time the AONB Unit had a 'baseline' data set from which it could measure change and monitor condition within a range of subject matter pertaining to the AONB. From the condition of SSSI, to the cost of housing, to visitor spend, to land use. This report has now been succeeded by a new 'State of the AONB Report 2013' and there is now information on which to inform progress in the conservation and enhancement of the AONB. Almost all of the subject matter is contained within this Report, however only part of it is directly influenced by the AONB Partnership.

Issues and Forces for Change

The main forces for change that have operated in the past and are likely to continue to shape the landscape of the AONB are listed below and drive our theme objectives and policies.

- Natural Processes

- Climate Change (including changes in temperature, sea level, storminess and rain fall patterns)

Development pressures, particularly

- Renewable energy
- Housing and industry
- Leisure and tourism
- Traffic and transportation (both journeys and infrastructure upgrades)
- National Grid Developments
- Nuclear Waste containment

Agricultural and land management, particularly changes affecting

- Ongoing intensification of agricultural systems
- Trees and hedgerows
- Water bodies
- Habitats and species
- Setting to historic sites
- Farm based renewable energy installations

1.5 The Solway Coast AONB (Special Qualities)

AONB map

Designated in December 1964, the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is one of 46 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is the only AONB that is fully within Cumbria, it lies in a narrow linear strip along the Solway Firth coastline between Carlisle in the east and Maryport in the west and it covers an area of 115 sq km. The AONB is the statutory responsibility of Allerdale Borough Council, Cumbria County Council and Carlisle City Council.

Statement of Significance

The Solway Coast AONB contains a unique mosaic of coastal and pastoral landscapes set among a wide and low lying coastal plain and lying under the ever-changing drama of the dominant sky. The landscape is further enriched by the twice daily influence of the tide that in turn reveals the rich birdlife which use the estuary all year round.

The area is steeped in heritage from archaeological evidence of the Stone Age, through to Roman remains associated with Hadrian's Wall to the airfields of WWII. Today the area is home to 13,000 residents who both live and work within the landscape and help maintain its unique cultural identity.

The AONB lies on the southern edge of the Solway Firth, a large intertidal estuary, which also forms the border between England and Scotland. The area has remained relatively unchanged in character since its designation and follows 59 km of coastline from the River Esk near Rockcliffe to Maryport in West Cumbria.

The town of Silloth, with its surrounding industrial areas and golf course, sits at the heart of the AONB but is not designated and splits the AONB into two distinct areas.

The Solway Coast contains many locally, nationally and internationally important features, some centring on landscape and others on wildlife and heritage. Many features are protected by designations and collectively they indicate the high value of the area's heritage and underpin the need to protect and enhance it for future generations.

The AONB contains areas of lowland raised mire which represent a significant proportion of the UK national resource.

Grazed saltmarshes are present in an unbroken ribbon throughout the inner estuary area and, as such, are internationally important. They provide feeding and roosting areas for ducks, geese, swans and waders that over-winter on the estuary in internationally important numbers. Part of the AONB's nationally rare natterjack toad population uses the saltmarshes.

An almost unbroken tract of sand dunes, much of it designated as SSSI, forms the coastal fringe of the western section of the AONB.

Agriculture is the dominant type of land-use. Pasture for dairy, beef and lamb production, both as grazing and grass silage, is the primary crop. Arable agriculture is confined to maize, now a major crop, with some rape and vegetables. Characteristic small fields with 'kested' hedges sometimes associated with drainage ditches create a mosaic pattern in the landscape.

Settlement character is extremely varied from linear villages with space between dwellings, as at Burgh by Sands, to closely assembled and attached cottages and farms like those in Bowness on Solway. Some villages reflect their establishment or growth periods where their architecture can be attributed to styles; fine examples are the Georgian façade at Port Carlisle and Victorian buildings in Allonby. These contrast starkly with Anthorn village and its Ministry of Defence utilitarian style architecture. Building fabrics are both local, such as beach cobbles and clay dabbin, and imported and create a non-uniform character across the area. .

The Solway Coast has a nationally significant archaeological and historical resource, arguably the most important of which is the internationally designated Frontiers of the Roman Empire - Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site. Other find-spots, features, buildings and clusters of sites are representative of Mesolithic and Neolithic settlement, the Bronze and Iron Ages, the Roman occupation and the Anglo-Scandinavian period followed by the Norman Conquest and its associated Monastic

period, the Late Medieval, the Industrial Revolution and finally WWII and its airfields.

In general, the most important landscape features of the area are as follows:

- Large flat expanses of coastal terrain
- The sky is a dominant feature
- Dynamic and large intertidal estuary
- Vast unbroken vistas across the estuary to Scotland
- Extensive areas of traditionally grazed saltmarsh
- Large but fragmented areas of lowland raised mire
- Long narrow linear tract of coastal sand dune and dune heath
- Large areas of exposed sand and mud with gravel storm ridges and sandy beaches
- Culture of dairy, beef and sheep farming on medium grade improved grassland
- Small kested hedge bound fields with sunken lanes and narrow roads
- Very scarce woodland cover
- Rich archaeological and historical heritage
- High levels of biodiversity associated with a wide range of intertidal, coastal and inland habitats
- Internationally important area for birdlife

The AONB in its Local and Regional Setting

The North West of England Region consists of Cheshire, Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester and Cumbria and covers an area of 14,170 sq km. The region contains three National Parks - parts of the Yorkshire Dales and the Peak District and the whole of the Lake District make up this resource. Four AONBs are also represented comprising Forest of Bowland, Arnside and Silverdale and Solway Coast and a small part of North Pennines AONB which runs into Cumbria. Solway Coast AONB is completely in Cumbria and is around 15km from the northern boundary of the Lake District National Park. In total, protected landscapes cover 4,177 sq km or 29% of the region.

The Solway Coast covers 115 sq km of the Cumbrian landscape and over 5% of the northwest 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).

To the north, and sharing the intertidal expanses of the Solway, lies Scotland, with the international boundary existing as a set of map coordinates, reflecting the mid-point, rather than a physical feature in the landscape.

Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site is contiguous with Solway Coast AONB as it straddles its east to west coast linear corridor. Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail stretches 15km into the eastern end of the AONB from Beaumont to Bowness on Solway where it begins/ends. The international Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Specially Protected Area (SPA) designations that cover the estuary system are continuous with the Scottish side of the Solway.

1.6 Landscape and Seascape Character and Setting

The character of the Solway Coast AONB is the product of physical, ecological and human influences. The landscape has a strong unity of character which is greatly influenced by the proximity of the sea, and yet has considerable variation within it which creates local diversity and distinctiveness. The landscape as a whole is characterised by coastal and estuarine features such as beaches, sand dunes, saltmarshes and low cliffs; contrasting agricultural land and moorland; the diversity of the flora and fauna; and the typical settlements and buildings.

In 1995 the Countryside Commission published 'The Solway Coast Landscape' (CCP 478) on behalf of Solway Coast AONB. As this became dated, in 2009 the AONB commissioned an updated Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment (LSCA) for the AONB and its setting, updating and improving the earlier work. The European Landscape Convention (ELC) came into effect in the UK in March 2007 and is adopted and promoted by the Council of Europe. The new AONB-wide LSCA recognises the importance of all landscapes and seascapes, and includes appropriate guidelines for their protection, management and future planning. The study area includes the extent of the AONB, but also considers those areas of land and sea which constitute the 'setting' of the AONB. (quote LCA p6)

Seascapes and Intertidal Landscapes.

The Solway Coast AONB seascapes comprise extensive areas of both the Inner and Outer Solway Firth. This dynamic and changing coastline includes flats, intertidal creeks, sands and saltmarshes, and is bounded in places by shingle bays, sand dune systems and low earth cliffs. The transition between land and sea is marked by beach and dune systems, generally along the west coast, and the mudflats and saltmarshes of the more sheltered northern areas of the Inner Firth.

The setting of the AONB

Open areas within the AONB and wider area afford panoramic views south to the Lake District fells, including Skiddaw, and of the hills of Dumfries and Galloway, seen across the Solway Firth, particularly Criffel.

Low lying inland landscapes

Inland moorland and raised mires contrast with improved pasture, enclosed by hedges and 'kest's'. Open areas of the raised mires, gentle rises in the landscape of the coastal plains and the hilltops of the rolling and undulating lowland hills afford panoramic views. Settlements have developed along the coastline, including the seaside resorts of Silloth and Allonby. The area is important for seasonal tourism,

and some of the coastal villages are popular destinations for holidays and retirement and people 'escaping' Carlisle. Birds and flora attract visitors to nature reserves such as Campfield Marsh RSPB Reserve and Bowness Common and Glasson Moss National Nature Reserves. The landscape of the Solway Coast has a rich historic and cultural heritage closely linked to its historical position as a 'frontier' landscape on the border between Scotland and England. Evidence of a long and historic land use is seen in the field patterns, such as ridge and furrow on the grazed marshes, and the medieval pattern of 'infield' and 'outfield' farming linked to the agricultural improvements brought by the Cistercian monks of Holme Abbey.

THE LANDSCAPE/SEASCAPE CLASSIFICATION & CHARACTER

Fit with the previous AONB classification

The landscape types which were presented in the *Solway Coast Landscape* (1995) and the Solway coast AONB Management Plan 2010-2015 are listed below. Some of these types are very general and do not convey the differences and variations that can be found within the specific areas within the types of landscape under consideration. The new classification uses more descriptive names and subdivides the character types into areas to bring out differences.

Previous and new Solway Coast AONB types

Existing Types	Updated Types
<p>COASTAL MARGIN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open sea and river channels • Foreshore • Saltmarsh • Sand dunes • Cliff 	<p>SEASCAPE/INTERTIDAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type A: Inner Firth Intertidal Flats and Saltmarsh • Type B: Outer Firth Beaches and Dunes <p>LOWLAND LANDSCAPES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type C: River Floodplain and Marshy Grassland • Type D: Coastal Mosses • Type E: Coastal Plain • Type F: Drumlinised Lowland Farmland • Type G: Undulating Coastal
<p>MOSSLAND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised Peat Bog 	
<p>AGRICULTURAL LAND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved pasture and arable land • Rough pasture 	

	<p>Farmland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type H: Coastal Town and Urban Fringe
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For comparison The landscape and seascape classification for the AONB and the landscapes which fringe the area is mapped on **Figures 11-12** and listed below.

- **Figure 11:** Superseded Landscape Character Types (1995)
- **Figure 12:** Updated Landscape Character Areas (2012)

<p>SEASCAPE</p> <p>Landscape Type A: Inner Firth Intertidal Flats and Saltmarsh</p> <p>Landscape Character Area A1 Rockcliffe and Burgh Marshes</p> <p>Landscape Character Area A2 Eden Channel</p> <p>Landscape Character Area A3 Moricambe Bay</p> <p>Landscape Character Area A4 Nith Estuary and Blackshaw Bank</p> <p>Landscape Type B: Outer Firth Beaches and Dunes</p> <p>Landscape Character Area B1 Middle Bank to Dubmill Point</p> <p>Landscape Character Area B2 Dubmill point to Maryport (Allonby Bay)</p> <p>LOWLAND LANDSCAPES</p>

Landscape Type C: River Floodplain and Marshy Grassland

Landscape Character Area C1 River Eden Floodplain

Landscape Character Area C2 Whitrigg Marsh and River Wampool Floodplain

Landscape Character Area C3 River Waver Floodplain

Landscape Character Area C4 Holme Dub

Landscape Character Area C5 Black Dub

Landscape Type D: Coastal Mosses

Landscape Character Area D1 Drumburgh Moss

Landscape Character Area D2 Bowness Common and Glasson Moss

Landscape Character Area D3 Wedholme Flow

Landscape Type E: Coastal Plain

Landscape Character Area E1 Bowness to Boustead Hill

Landscape Character Area E2 Cardunock Peninsula

Landscape Character Area E3 Newton Arlosh and Kirkbride

Landscape Character Area E4 Mawbray

Landscape Character Area E5 Rockcliffe and Mossband

Landscape Type F: Drumlinised Lowland Farmland

Landscape Character Area F1 Abbeytown to Edderside

Landscape Character Area F2 Maryport to Aspatria

Landscape Character Area F3 Wigton and Bromfield

Landscape Character Area F4 Aikton and Orton

Landscape Character Area F5 Fingland and Kirkbampton

Landscape Type G: Undulating Coastal Farmland

Landscape Character Area G1 Allonby

Landscape Character Area G2 Burgh-by-Sands and Beaumont

Landscape Type H: Coastal Town and Urban Fringe

Landscape Character Area H1 Kingmoor and Cargo

Landscape Character Area H2 Silloth

Landscape Character Area H3 Maryport

Seascape/Intertidal Landscapes – Key features and attributes

Type A: Inner Firth Intertidal Flats and Saltmarsh

This area falls within the Intertidal Flats and Coastal Marsh sub-types in the Cumbria Landscape Character Assessment. This document was produced by Cumbria County Council in 2011 and is divided into two parts; part 1 is the Cumbria Landscape Character guidance and part2 the Cumbria Landscape Character Toolkit.

Map and Picture of Saltmarshes

- Dynamic character influenced by the state of the tide and changing with the longer term cycle of erosion and deposition
- Large expanses of fine sands and mudflats dissected by dendritic creeks and channels
- Open, flat expanses of saltmarsh, transitional to the flat coastal plains, mosses and enclosed farmland of the inland areas
- Large scale of the landscape with expanses of tidal flats extending towards open sea and the skylines of Dumfries and Galloway
- Open skies and sense of space
- Saline tolerant species often grazed by sheep and cattle with sights and sounds of large number of birds

Type B: Outer Firth Beaches and Dunes

Map and Picture of open sea and estuary channels

Occurs throughout the open coastal area, the eastern section has more channels and has finer deposits due to the low energy tidal regime characteristic of the inner estuary. The western section has open sea and is more characteristic of a traditional seaside landscape with high wave and tidal energy providing movement of larger sediments such as gravels.

- Large scale dramatic landscape of undeveloped flats and open water, with open skylines and long views over the Solway firth to the Scottish coastline and Criffel mountain
- Visually and aurally dynamic seascape characterised by sights and sounds of the sea, lapping water and large numbers of birds that feed on the flats, notably waders
- Large and open expanses of intertidal sand flats opening out to the open sea and backed by shingle and pebble beaches and dune systems to the south and mudflats along more sheltered northern stretches of the coastal fringe
- 'scaurs' or pebble patches are distinctive along the beaches and support mussel beds and honeycomb worm reefs providing important feeding grounds for wading birds
- Small linear towns and villages along the coast
- Visibility of Robin Rigg in the Solway Firth

Map and Picture of sand dunes

Sand dunes

- Mobile dunes form at the landward interface of the vegetated shingle ridges by deposition of wind-blown sand
- Dune slacks contain some ephemeral freshwater ponds and pools
- Dune heath or heather dominated areas occur behind the mobile dunes where acid soil conditions prevail due to the underlying boulder clays and the leaching of sandy soils
- Dune grasslands grow on the alkaline shelly sands and soils and contain a rich variety of herb species and orchids
- The rare natterjack toad is resident throughout the dune system
- SSSI status for Silloth and Mawbray Dunes and the Grune

Map and Picture of cliff features

Type C: River Floodplain and Marshy Grassland

Occurs throughout the AONB behind the saltmarshes and sand dunes and surrounding the raised mires or mosses: Some areas are backed by low cliffs, eg. Crosscanonby area. These areas are reclaimed from other wetter habitats.

The key characteristics of the River Floodplain and Marshy Grassland type are:

- Low lying, flat areas of floodplain and wet pasture, with some areas of grazed marsh, which follow the course of rivers that flow into the firth.
- Enclosure is partial and irregular, with fencing and occasional, fragmented hedges, creating an open landscape with long views along flat river valleys.
- The lush rye-grass is grazed by sheep and cattle in some areas, whilst others are characterised by rough grazing, rushes and scrub.
- A dense network of streams, ditches and creeks dissect the areas, usually intensively managed and with eroded river banks in places.
- Development is confined to the outer fringes of the area as the land rises above sea-level, where dispersed farmsteads are scattered, along the margins of the former wetlands.
- An open, flat landscape, contrasting with the undulating and rolling topography of the farmed lowland hills and drumlins surrounding it.
- Fen peat soils are characteristic in the dubs and upper reaches of the broad and gentle river valleys.

Map and Picture of Landuse

Type D: Coastal Mosses

The Mosses or raised mires centre on the Cardurnock peninsula where Bowness Common and Glasson Moss cover an area of 1080ha. In the west of the AONB Salta Moss covers around 46ha. Two other large areas of raised mire lie just outside of the AONB at Wedholme Flow and Drumburgh Moss.

Map and Picture of Raised Mires

Raised mire

- Low lying raised mires, raised by peat formation above the surrounding land, comprising flat or slightly undulating hummock-hollow mosaics, including water pools, marsh, moss, reeds and fringing wet woodland, usually birch, heather and purple moor grass grow in the drier areas
- Sharply contrasting with adjacent improved grasslands.
- Dynamic landscape changing colour with the seasons, time of day and weather

- Sense of remoteness and tranquillity, absence of settlement and intrusion
- Landscape supports rare assemblages of deep peat with sphagnum mosses and many acic loving plants
- Important habitat for specialised wading bird species
- Long views to the Lake District, across low-lying mosslands
- Increasingly promoted as an attraction for visitors to the area

Type E: Coastal Plain

The coastal plain areas are included mainly as sub-type 2c Coastal Plain in the Cumbria Landscape Character Assessment.

Low lying farmland occurring along the coastal fringes of the LCA study area, along the West coast and through the northern areas bounding the Inner Firth.

- Large, flat, open landscape, with a strong relationship to the coastal margins and the rural farmland of the plains
- Wind sculpted trees lining roadsides, including avenues of beech
- Coastal pasture predominates, enclosed by ditches and hedgerows planted on raised banks (kests), with a distinctive pattern of small inner fields and larger outer fields and long narrow strip fields
- Historic villages, such as Newton Arlosh, Kirkbride and Mawbray are clustered within coastal pasture and closely related to the field patterns, with traditional buildings of cobble, sandstone and 'clay dabbin'
- Sandstone gate stoops
- Open views to Lakeland Fells and over to the Scottish Hills
- Sunken roads often winding across more linear roads

Type F: Drumlinised Lowland Farm

The Drumlinised Lowland Farmland is the most extensive character type in the study area. Large areas lie predominantly beyond the AONB boundary to the south and southeast and play an important role as the setting of character areas within the AONB.

- A deeply rural, agricultural landscape, with green pastoral fields divided by hedgerows draped over the rolling drumlin landforms.

- Predominantly agricultural land, intensively managed for grazing and silage production with some arable crops.
- Large regular, geometric fields of parliamentary enclosures are interspersed with older field enclosure patterns of medium sized irregular fields and long narrow strip fields.
- Distinctive wide and sunken lanes, that are former drove roads, rise up and down across the farmland, with clear edge profiles of ditches and raised banks topped with hedges, locally known as 'kests'. Ferns and wild flowers grow in the hedgerow bottoms and ditches.
- Varied mixtures of architectural styles and building materials, with thatched roofs, 'crook' barns, and long houses built of 'clay dabbin' are found in the historic settlements. Farms often have large sheds, outbuildings and slurry tanks.
- Tranquil and peaceful areas of farmland, less exposed and influenced by the coastal setting and more enclosed than the adjacent coastal plains, with views to Lakeland Hills.

Type G: Undulating Coastal

This landscape occurs immediately inland from the coast from the Inner Firth area to the Outer Firth area.

- Deeply rural, agricultural landscape, with green pastoral fields divided by hedgerows, hedgebanks and drainage ditches.
- Predominantly agricultural land, managed largely for grazing and silage production with some arable crops and occasional copses and woodland plantations.
- Medium sized enclosures are interspersed with areas of older field enclosure patterns of medium to small sized irregular fields, contained by the undulating landform and winding becks that run through the area.
- Distinctive wide and sunken lanes, that are former drove roads, run through some parts of the farmland, with clear edge profiles of ditches and raised banks topped with hedges, locally known as 'kests'. Ferns and wild flowers grow in the hedgerow bottoms and ditches.
- There is a coastal outlook from some of the northern and western sections, with views out across the Solway seascape, although views are often contained by the varied undulating landform and the network of hedges planted on banks.

- Varied mixtures of architectural styles and building materials, with thatched roofs, 'crook' barns, and long houses built of 'clay dabbin' found in the historic settlements. Farms often have large sheds and outbuildings.
- A variation in tree cover across the different character areas according to coastal exposure, with the hedgerow trees and small copses being important features in areas with sparse tree cover.
- Views inland over series of rolling ridges to the Cumbria high fells, which rise up in the far distance to the south and southwest.
- Tranquil and peaceful areas of farmland, less exposed and open than the adjacent coastal plains.
-

Type H: Coastal Town and Fringe

Lying outside of the AONB boundary, but in close proximity to it, are the larger settlements of Maryport, Silloth and an area of urban fringe west of Carlisle between Kingmoor Nature Reserve and Rockcliffe

- Low-lying areas, generally flat and open in character.
- Linear settlements with old centres and a wider range of development types surrounding them, or areas of urban fringe with loosely dispersed developments of different types.
- Settlement cores and facades are characterised by distinctive architecture styles and building materials, including the Georgian and Victorian facades fronting onto the sea in the seaside resorts of Maryport and Silloth.
- Hard, man-made forms shape the shoreline and the coastal edge of the settlements of Maryport and Silloth.
- Urban fringe areas comprise a disparate collection of development with very mixed land uses including airfields, allotments, caravan parks, and railway sidings on the fringes of Carlisle.
- Rich historical interest, including industrial heritage and archaeological sites associated with the Roman frontier.
- Vast seaward views out across the Solway Firth, large skies with changing colours and moods depending on weather and seasonal changes.
- Small areas of agriculture interspersed with development at the edges of the settlements and areas of open mown grass within the settlements themselves.

- Views to the offshore wind farm at Robin Rigg, visible across the open horizon.
-

SETTLEMENTS

Settlements within the AONB are strongly associated with the coastline and rivers. Where settlements do not conform to this pattern they are usually associated with major roads, disused canals and railways, farmsteads or Hadrian's Wall.

Picture of Settlements

Settlements

- Most of the larger settlements have a strong linear form either influenced by the coastline or an adjacent highway
- The settlements in the eastern section have clear seaward frontages with some development behind
- The establishment of villages is extremely varied from those with 12th Century origins to those developed through new ports and latterly by WWII airfields

Picture of Buildings

Buildings

- There is a complex mixture of vernacular styles from fortified stone buildings to 'cruck' based structures
- Fortified farm houses or 'Bastles' are common in the Borders area and the AONB has one at Drumburgh
- Fortified churches can be seen at Burgh by Sands and Newton Arlosh
- Longhouses, clay dabbins and cruck roofed dwellings are scattered around the farmsteads across the landscape
- The only large country estate at Castletown has an associated 'Hall' type dwelling
- Building materials are extremely diverse from shoreline cobbles to dressed stone, brick and clay. Many buildings, especially multi-phase farm settlements have a range of fabrics
- Roofs are usually covered in slate or sandstone pan-tile Some reed thatch still survives

- Architectural influences are typical of the northwest coastal area where single storey longhouses hug the topography and the settlements tend to be two storeys with the upper floor as part of the roof apex and probably added at a later date
- The village of Port Carlisle has Georgian terraces, and is the product of investment into the port associated with the Carlisle canal; it is a peculiar and quirky feature in the area
- Allonby has some notable Victorian buildings and was developed during that period as a Spa-style resort
- Recent building styles have taken away much of the character of the villages with modern bungalows providing infill and boundary expansion

Picture of Roads

Roads, footpaths and Waths

- Drove roads or sunken lanes with high hedge kests are common
- Extant, derelict and in-filled ponds occur along highways; most are within settlement boundaries
- Estuary crossing points known locally as 'Waths' are unmarked and shift with the movement of estuary sediments
- Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail, Hadrian's Cycle Route, the Cumbria Coastal Way and the England Coast Trail all share the highways and byways of the AONB
- A large Public Rights of Way network criss-crosses the landscape many parts of which follow sunken lanes and field boundaries
- Open access areas include a selection of sand dunes, salt-marshes and raised mires along with with the England Coast Trail 'spreading room'.
- Natural England Coastal Path along the coast from Allonby to Whitehaven (Maryport as end of the AONB stretch)

Tranquillity

- The AONB generally is mapped as a 'most tranquil' area with the level of tranquillity decreasing slightly in the southern area of the AONB along the coast from Silloth to Maryport. The impact of the roads on tranquillity is clearly seen. Increasing visitor numbers, increasing car use, improved access and changing recreational activities may lead to a decrease in tranquillity within the AONB.

Significant features

- Hadrian's Wall, contemporary defences of the Cumbrian coast, remains and earthworks (Mileforts and Vallum)
- Elizabethan Sea Dyke at Skinburness
- Salt extraction sites on saltmarshes and behind open beaches
- Carlisle canal
- Railway buildings, bridges and cuttings
- Ministry of Defence wireless array (15 masts) near Anthorn
- Robin Rigg Turbines in the Outer Firth

Historic Landscape Characterisation (add LCA map)

Historic Landscape Characterisation has taken place for Cumbria at a County wide scale. A range of historic landscape types have been defined and historic landscape character areas have been developed. The AONB forms part of the Solway Plain character area. This extends from the coast from near Carlisle to Crosscanonby and inland towards the A596. It also forms part of the Ellen and Marron Valley Character area south of Crosscanonby. More information can be found in the Guide to Cumbria Historic Landscape Characterisation Database for Cumbria's Planning Authorities.

1.7 Management and Operating Framework

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 22 seats:

Statutory Bodies (2)

Natural England

Environment Agency

Local Government Elected Members (5)

Cumbria County Council (2) Allerdale Borough Council (2)

Carlisle City Council (1)

Parish Council Representation (4)

Lead Groups

West One Oughterside & Allerby

West Two Allonby

East One Bowness on Solway

East Two Burgh by Sands

Town Council Representation (2)

Silloth

Maryport

Community (4)

Port Carlisle Community Group

Lakes Area of Ramblers

Action with Communities in Cumbria (ACT)

Bowness on Solway Community Group

Local Land Ownership and Management Issues (3)

Friends of the Lake District

Senhouse Roman Museum

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

Nominated (Non Voting) (2)

Cumbria Tourism

Solway Coast Volunteer Group

Further to the JAC, the AONB is guided 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 comprises the AONB Manager (FT), Assistant AONB Manager (PT), Community Volunteer Coordinator (PT) and Administrator (PT). Also there is the Solway Wetlands Partnership staff accommodated in the AONB Office (until 2016) comprising; Solway Wetlands Project Manager (FT), Education Officer (FT), Wetlands Officer (FT), Solway Wetlands Administrator(PT) . The Partnership is core funded through Defra, Allerdale Borough Council, Cumbria County Council and Carlisle City Council. The AONB Partnership (JAC) is hosted by Allerdale Borough

Council which acts as the 'Accountable Body' for the AONB Partnership. They provide financial management, employment facilities and accommodation on behalf of the AONB Partnership.

Who is this Plan for?

It is the Solway Coast AONB Partnership that will own, steer, and facilitate the implementation and review of this Management Plan. The wider partnership is inclusive of all stakeholders within the AONB and, as such, all have a say in its delivery. The plan will also inform, influence and integrate all partner/stakeholder activities in the AONB area with the ultimate goal of fulfilling the 'Vision'. It is the staff unit and the Joint Advisory Committee that will monitor progress and make the decisions about reaching the ultimate vision for the AONB.

AONB Management Plans do not form part of the Statutory Development Plan, but may contribute to setting the framework for development by providing evidence and principles which should then be reflected in the Local Authorities' Development Plans.

Where does this Plan fit into the wider policy framework?

The context or relationship of this Plan to other strategies and plans is extremely important. The supporting documentation that underpins the Local Development Framework (LDF) provides the primary focus for the AONB Plan. This Plan will work as an informing document which will influence other plans but, and more importantly, it has taken full account of the many policies, objectives and aspirations of the wider framework.

The Plan must also fit into the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) common objectives

International, national, regional and local plans have all influenced the Plan in some way and this makes it both relevant and alive and as aspirational as others.

The table in Appendix ??? outlines the relevant local, regional and national strategies and plans which influence this Plan. A more comprehensive review can be found in (The Environmental report 2013).