



Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



# Historic Environment Action Plans

Creating Historic Environment Action  
Plans for Protected Landscapes





This document forms part of a suite of documents which together comprise the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Environment Action Plans.

The HEAPs provide a summary of the key characteristics of the historic environment of the AONB at a landscape scale, they then set out the significance, condition and forces for change affecting the historic fabric and character of this special landscape and identify proactive actions to conserve and enhance these special characteristics. These summaries are divided into two groups:

1. Summaries of the historic environment of the AONB by area
2. Summaries of the historic environment of the AONB by theme

These core documents are accompanied by documents which provide background information, supplementary information and detail on the methodologies used to create these documents.

A series of icons help you navigate this suite of documents:

 **Background** - Provides an introduction to the AONB Historic Environment Action Plans and provides background information on the history and archaeology of the landscape **(B1 to B10)**

 **Area** - Summarises key characteristics of discrete geographical areas within the AONB, they then set out the significance, condition and forces for change affecting the historic fabric and character of each area and identify proactive actions to conserve and enhance its characteristics **(A1 to A12)**

 **Theme** - Summarises key characteristics of historic environment themes, each document then sets out the significance, condition and forces for change affecting the historic fabric and character of each theme and identify proactive actions to conserve and enhance its characteristics **(T1 to T14)**

 **Supplementary** - A series of documents which explore supplementary issues of relevance to the Historic Environment Action Plans **(S1 to S2)**

 **Method** - Introduces the methodology behind the production of the Historic Environment Action Plans **(M1 to M3)**



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## The purpose of this document

This document sets out the relevance and appropriateness of Historic Environment Action Plans to protected landscapes. It flows from the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Environment Action Plans. The AONB received funding from English Heritage to create Historic Environment Action Plans for its landscape with the primary purpose of creating a best practice exemplar for other protected landscapes (National Parks and AONBs). This project demonstrated how Historic Environment Action Plans can be used to aid AONBs in their primary purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty and National Parks in their primary purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and providing for recreation.

This document provides a brief guide to Historic Environment Action Plan for protected landscapes. In particular it aims to:

- Introduce Historic Environment Action Plans (HEAPs)
- Describe why HEAPs are of particular relevance to protected landscapes
- Detail why a protected landscape might want to create its own HEAP
- Describe who HEAPs are for
- Detail what creating an HEAP might involve and outline the stages in their creation

This document aims to complement forthcoming guidance from English Heritage which will discuss the application of Historic Environment Action Plans for all landscapes, places and sites.

## Introducing Historic Environment Action Plans

The Historic Environment in this context means as all aspects of the landscape resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, or landscaped and planted or managed flora.

At the heart of Historic Environment Action Plans (or HEAP for short) is an action plan, a series of specific, attainable time based actions which address key threats to or opportunities in the historic environment of a landscape, area, place, site or theme.

The actions flow from assessments which describe the key archaeological and historic characteristics of the landscape, area, place, site or theme in question, and set out the significance, condition and forces for change affecting these historic characteristics. These assessments are based on information derived from the AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation; the county based Historic Environment Records and other surveys and studies.

The documents also form an important evidence base in their own right which can be used to inform planning policy and strategy, management policy and practice, research and outreach.

Historic Environment Action Plans differ from a traditional archaeological research strategies which tend not to cover landscape matters, as their primary purpose is not to enhance understanding of past human activity but to conserve and enhance the key historic and archaeological characteristics of the present day landscape, and also the way time depth is articulated in that present day landscape. They also differ from a traditional site management plans as they are landscape scale in approach and they focus on the commonplace as well as the special.

They provide a systematic and transparent mechanism for assessing the significance of the historical and cultural assets of a landscape, area, place, site or theme.

There are close parallels with Biodiversity Action Plans which are discussed by English Heritage in its forthcoming guidance on Historic Environment Action Plans.



*Historic Field Barns in the Yorkshire Dales National Park*

### **Guiding Principles for Historic Environment Action Plans**

Historic Environment Action Plans (HEAPs) assesses the significance, condition and forces for change acting upon the historic and archaeological characteristics of a site, place, area, theme or landscape in order to identify actions that will address threats and pursue opportunities. These assessments should be based on a synthesis of the

key historic and archaeological characteristics of the site, place, theme or landscape in question.

A series of ten principles, based on those developed to support Historic Landscape characterisation, can be used to guide this process for protected landscapes:

- 1) Present not past: it is the present-day landscape and the way in which time-depth is articulated in the present that is the main focus of attention in HEAPs
- 2) All aspects of the landscape, no matter how modern, or commonplace are considered as part of HEAPs, not just 'special' areas or places
- 3) Semi-natural and living features (woodland, land cover, hedges etc.) are as important as archaeological features; past human land use has shaped the natural habitats of the UK making bio-diversity a cultural phenomenon.
- 4) People's views: it is important to consider collective and public perceptions of the historic environment alongside more expert views in the creation of HEAPs.
- 5) Places, spaces, and landscapes have always been dynamic: HEAPs should address the management of change, rather than concentrate solely on preservation.
- 6) HEAPs should consider how aspects of the Historic Environment recognise, acknowledge, and reinforce sense of place, and local distinctiveness.
- 7) The process of creating HEAPs should be transparent, with clearly articulated records of data sources and methods used. HEAPs should be inclusive, engaging with as wide a cross-section of individuals, groups and organisations as possible.
- 8) HEAPs should be easy to understand, jargon free, and easily accessible, both physically and intellectually, to users
- 9) HEAPs, even when undertaken on a targeted area, should aim to take a landscape scale view focusing on both area and point data. They should also consider interrelationships between different aspects of the historic environment in a given location.
- 10) The creation of HEAPs involves interpretation rather than record, nevertheless there should be a separation between the processes of characterisation, analysis and assessment and management in the creation of the plans.

### **Relationship of HEAPs to Historic Landscape Characterisation and HERs**

Historic Landscape Characterisation provides a detailed evidence base which captures, maps, and analyses the present day historic landscape character of a landscape. While the county based Historic Environment Record provides point based information on archaeological sites, buildings, finds and events. The complexity of these complementary datasets means that it is often time consuming and difficult for non specialists to understand the significance of the information held within them. The

point based data held within Historic Environment Records also has limitations in terms of landscape scale evaluation and assessment.

Historic Environment Action Plans can be used to provide a more accessible overview of the information held within these records. They also can be used to identify the significance of the key attributes of these data sets.



*The Hell Stone Dolmen in the Dorset AONB  
(Hazel Dunning licensed for reuse under a Creative Commons license.)*

### Why are HEAPs of Particular Relevance to Protected Landscapes?

The special qualities of Protected Landscapes are derived both from the impact of past human activity in the landscape and its natural aspects. This is reflected by the European Landscape Convention which defines landscapes as “*an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action an interaction of natural and/or human factors*”. Historic Landscape Characterisation and the Historic Environment Action Plans derived from them form part of the evidence base through which protected landscapes can conceive an holistic understanding of landscape.

Historic Environment Action Plans, therefore, provide a powerful tool for protected landscapes which can help them consider the attributes of the historic environment at a landscape scale, and the way this contributes to the special characteristics of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). The Historic Environment Action Plan approach provides a mechanism through which a Protected Landscape can systematically and transparently assess the significance, needs and potential of its historic and cultural assets.

HEAPs fit in with the formal management plans that support the planned actions of all National Parks and AONBs, most of which already contain policies and actions related

to the historic environment. HEAPs can support and extend those policies and by turning them into positive actions can help Protected Landscape Services and the communities they support meet identified targets and needs.

### Why create an HEAP for a Protected Landscape?

**An Historic Environment Action Plan can be used as a means of increasing understanding of the archaeological, historical and cultural aspects of a protected landscape.** The documents forming the HEAP can be used to:

- synthesise the wealth of available historic environment information about a protected landscape and present it in one easy to use of source;
- provide a clearer vision of how different aspects of the historic environment contribute to the special qualities of the protected landscape;
- present the key historic environment characteristics of the protected landscape in a way which is accessible to non-specialists.

**The documents comprising the Historic Environment Action Plan can be used as an evidence base.** This evidence base can be used to support the following:

- Add value to both spatial policy and development application decisions effecting the protected landscape. In particular they inform:
  - the strategic evidence base for Local Development Frameworks and other strategies.
  - forward planning documents including regeneration strategies and masterplans.
  - development management decisions.

The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB has documented its work in this area using its own Historic Environment Action Plans in a document entitled "A guide to the role of historic landscape characterisations in planning in and around the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty". This document includes case studies of where and how it has promoted the evidence base provided by the Historic Environment Action Plans as a tool to:



- allow the creation of specific planning policies which address the historic aspects of landscape.
- develop a strategic overview of historic landscape character.
- develop an understanding of the landscape context from which to appreciate site-specific information.
- assess potential and actual development sites and produce statements of significance.

- Inform wider planning and management strategies including AONB and National Park Management Plans.
- Enhance existing landscape characterisations.
- Inform land management practices including agri-environment agreements.
- Facilitate the better targeting of historic environment resources and advice.

**An Historic Environment Action Plan can be used as a tool for engagement within a protected landscape.** The documents forming the HEAP can be used:

- in outreach to present the key historic environment characteristics of the landscape in a way which is accessible to the non-specialist.
- to facilitate a debate with a wide range of individuals, groups and organisations surrounding the key features of the historic environment in a given area, their significance and the forces for change enacting upon them.
- to raise the profile of the historic environment and historic landscape within the protected landscape.

**An Historic Environment Action Plan can be used as a tool for research.** The Historic Environment Action Plan approach provides an opportunity to assess gaps in current knowledge and understanding, and identify actions through which research can be undertaken to fill those gaps.

**An Historic Environment Action Plan can be used as a means of creating real action.** The action plan at the centre of the HEAP provides the opportunity to implement a series of specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-based actions. The action plan will identify targeted opportunities through which the historic aspects of the protected landscape can be both conserved and enhanced. This will include improved management of features, sites and landscapes. This is achieved by closely involving active partners, in the identifying of issues, prioritising these and working out the most effective way to achieve the desired ends. These partners should be drawn from a wide range of backgrounds including interest group, agencies, communities and individuals

### Who are the Historic Environment Action Plans for?

Historic Environment Action Plans have a wide range of end users beyond protected landscape teams and partnerships. These include the wider historic environment sector; partners to the historic environment sector; local authorities; and local planning authorities and land managers, owners and advisors. Many actions may be expected to be adopted by a range of individuals and bodies, either working together or simply taking inspiration from the HEAP and working separately.

### What might creating an HEAP for a Protected Landscape involve?

Historic Environment Action Plans do not require new studies to be undertaken, rather they offer an opportunity to appraise and assess current knowledge and information. A

protected landscape might choose to undertake an Historic Environment Action Plan for the entire landscape or target a particular area or theme.

The process of creating an Historic Environment Action Plan for an area, theme or landscape involves four stages:

- 1) characterisation
- 2) assessment of significance
- 3) assessment of state of the historic environment and consequent issues and opportunities
- 4) formulation of actions.

The success of Historic Environment Action Plans as a strategy for protected landscapes will depend on the strength of the steering or stakeholder groups involved in preparing the plan. These should involve the widest range of experience and comment to enable best practice to be drawn on as well as widening ownership of the outputs.

The AONB has documented its work in this area using its own Historic Environment Action Plans in two documents entitled:

- M2** Creating and Describing Historic Environment Areas – This documents the methodology used for identifying, creating, and describing Historic Environment Character Areas for the AONB Landscape
- M3** Creating and Describing Historic Environment Themes – This documents the methodology used for identifying, and describing Historic Environment Themes for the AONB Landscape.



*Gunnislake Clitters Mine in the Tamar Valley AONB*

## Stages in developing an Historic Environment Action Plan

Stage	Approach for Protected Landscapes	Example of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB HEAP
<b>Stage 1: Characterisation</b>		
<b>1A Determine the scope of the project</b>	Decide whether the HEAP will focus on the whole landscape, or a particular area or theme	Targeted the whole AONB landscape
<b>1B Establish steering group</b>	Establish steering/stakeholder group from a wide range of interests as possible and identify lead body or dedicated project officer to coordinate production of Historic Environment Action Plans	Dedicated HEAP project officer employed by the AONB took lead for AONB supported by a large steering group and a wider stakeholder group. AONB topic groups provide specialist advice.
<b>1C Define area for assessment</b>	Define area(s) for assessment, this may involve using new historic character areas; existing LCAs; historic landscape types derived from HLC; or identifying key themes	Twelve new Historic Landscape Character Areas identified using HLC data as a basis. Fourteen Themes defined by steering group
<b>1D Describe key characteristics</b>	Separate description for each area, theme or type including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining attributes</li> <li>• Principal historic processes</li> <li>• Typical components</li> <li>• Principal locations and variability</li> </ul>	Each area/theme document includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location, Geology, Land Use and Topography (for area)</li> <li>• Linkages to other areas/themes</li> <li>• History and context</li> <li>• Key Secondary Sources</li> <li>• Landscape Scale Characteristics and components</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 2: Analysis and Assessment of Significance</b>		
<b>2A Statement of Significance</b>	Assess key characteristics of area, theme or type in local, regional and national contexts systematically, using standard criteria such as Principal Historical Processes, Typical Historical or Archaeological Components, Rarity, Survival, Degree of Surviving Coherence, Past interaction with other types, Evidence for time-depth, and Contribution to the present landscape character.	Each area had its own statement of significance including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coherence, local distinctiveness, rarity and time depth</li> <li>• Typical surviving components</li> <li>• Archaeological fieldwork</li> <li>• Value (evidential, aesthetic, communal, and historical)</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 3: Analysis and Assessment of Management</b>		
<b>3A State of the Historic Environment</b>	Create State of the Environment Report – including assessment of effects of forces for change and range of opportunities for enhancing both understanding and the state of the historic environment.	Each area has its own state of the historic environment report including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current knowledge</li> <li>• Existing levels of protection and heritage at risk</li> <li>• Loss and condition</li> <li>• Coherence</li> <li>• Forces for change</li> </ul>

Stage	Approach for Protected Landscapes	Example of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB HEAP
<b>Stage 4: Creation of Action Plan</b>		
<b>4A Create Action Plan</b>	Extract priorities from the issues identified and formulate SMART actions	Overarching action plan established with links to each area or theme
<b>4B Implementation of Action Plan</b>	Identify how the proposed actions will be most effectively undertaken	Dedicated group established to oversee implementation of action plan



*Historic Field Patterns in the Peak District National Park*

### **The example of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Historic Environment Action Plans**

The AONB has developed Historic Environment Action Plans for the whole of the AONB landscape. These are being funded by English Heritage and are designed as a best practice exemplar of this new tool for other protected areas.

The AONB Historic Environment Action Plans, or HEAPs for short, provide a summary of the key characteristics of the historic environment of the AONB at a landscape scale.

The HEAPs are based on a robust evidence base including Historic Environment Records, the AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation, Landscape Character Assessments, and other studies and documents such as Conservation Area Appraisals.

They exist as a suite of cross connecting documents, and the summaries of key characteristics of the historic environment of the AONB landscape are split into two interrelated parts:

- 12 Geographically discrete Historic Landscape Character Areas
- 14 AONB wide Historic Landscape Themes

They are also supported by a suite of overarching background statements and supporting documents. This is described in more detail in the inside front and back cover of this document.

These documents are used to identify a series of actions which will help to conserve and enhance the historic aspects of the landscape of the AONB. This action plan identified four main types of action:

- Actions to deal with heritage under threat
- Actions to deal with lack of information or knowledge
- Actions to deal with lack of appreciation and understanding
- Actions to deal with lack of appropriate management

The Historic Environment Action Plans (HEAPs) are split into a series of 41 cross referenced documents. These can be explored via hard copies, using linked .pdfs on computer or downloaded from the website [www.historiclandscape.co.uk](http://www.historiclandscape.co.uk).



*Knowlton Church and Henge, Dorset*

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Background	B1	Introducing the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Environment Action Plans
	B2	Description of the Archaeology of the AONB by Time Period
	B3	History of Archaeological Discovery
	B4	Land Use
	B5	Local Distinctiveness
	B6	People in the Landscape
	B7	Major Historical Events, Trends and Fashions
	B8	Designated Heritage Assets
	B9	Full List of Historic Environment Actions
	B10	References and Glossary
Area	A1	Longleat to Penselwood Hills and Kilmington Common
	A2	Sutton Veny, Cold Kitchen Hill and Zeals Knoll
	A3	Chalk River Valleys
	A4	Northern Wylde and Ebbel Valley Sides
	A5	West Wiltshire Downs
	A6	Great Ridge and Grovelly Woods
	A7	Fovant Terrace and the Area Between Chalbury and Woodlands
	A8	Chalk Escarpments
	A9	Vale of Wardour
	A10	Wooded Chalk Downland of the Cranborne Chase and Chetterwood
	A11	Downland Hills
	A12	Southern Downland Belt
Theme	T1	Ancient Boundaries and Land Ownership
	T2	Farms and Farming
	T3	Fields in the Landscape
	T4	Historic Parks and Gardens in the Landscape
	T5	Hunting Landscapes
	T6	Industry in the Landscape
	T7	Landscapes of Militarism, Commemoration & Defence
	T8	Landscapes of Prehistory
	T9	Open Land
	T10	Routeways in the Landscape
	T11	Settlement in the Landscape
	T12	Water in the Landscape
	T13	Woodland and Trees in the Landscape
	T14	Historic Features of Local Value
Supplementary	S1	Planning and Historic Landscape Character: A Guide for the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB
	S2	Forces for Change Operating on the Historic Environment of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB at a Landscape Scale and their Past, Current and Future Impacts
Method	M1	<b>Creating Historic Environment Action Plans for Protected Landscapes</b>
	M2	Creating and Describing Historic Environment Areas
	M3	Creating and Describing Historic Environment Theme



Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



## Historic Environment Action Plans

[www.historiclandscape.co.uk](http://www.historiclandscape.co.uk)

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