



# Cornwall's nationally protected landscape



Cornwall  
Area of Outstanding  
Natural Beauty

## About Us

# 20 Year Vision



**Our intention** is to inspire all who live, work and visit to be connected with the landscape.

**Our vision** is for a landscape that is inclusive and appreciated by everyone.

Girls head to Porthcurnick Beach,  
Portscatho | Rebecca Walker

# 20 Year Vision

This is the Cornwall AONB Partnership's vision statement which captures the essence of where we aspire to be in 20 years (2016 -2036).

The Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a national asset, critical to Cornwall's economy and the wellbeing of communities. The special qualities of the Cornwall AONB are conserved, enhanced and appreciated by all who live, work and visit, inspiring those people to be connected with the landscape.

It is our intention that the status of the Cornwall AONB, as a nationally and internationally important protected landscape – with equal status and protection to a national park, is recognised and understood by all. This includes the landscape characteristics that combine to give the Cornwall AONB its natural beauty, unique identity and sense of place.

Through effective Partnership working the protected landscape plays a crucial role in nature recovery, resilience to climate change and conservation of the historic and natural environment, by consideration of four key priorities:



People



Place



Nature



Climate

**Our Primary Purpose is to conserve and enhance Natural Beauty.**

With inclusivity at the heart, everyone should be supported to understand the value of the Cornwall AONB. These stakeholders benefit from a protected landscape that provides the opportunity for prosperity, good health and a high quality of life, allowing them to recognise, contribute, and reinvest in the landscape in order to sustain these benefits in the long term.

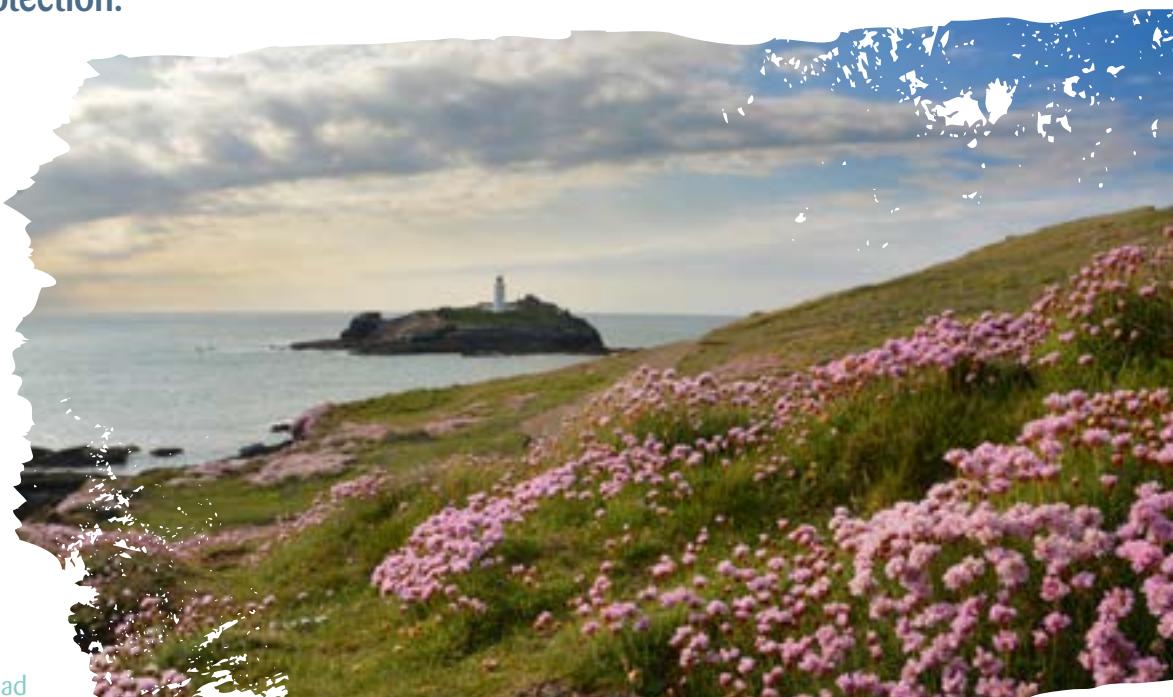


Lapwing in the mist | Jane Lewarne

# An Introduction to AONBs

**Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are protected landscapes whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them. As such they have been nationally designated by the same legislation as National Parks and have the same status and level of protection.**

Thrift covered cliffs  
at Godrevy | Mary Poad



The 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland cover approximately 1/8th of the land surface. The distinctive character and natural beauty of AONBs make them some of the most special and cherished places in England. AONBs are living, working landscapes that contribute some £16bn every year to the national economy. Although home to less than half a million people (under 2% of England's population), over two thirds of England's population live within half an hour's drive of an AONB and around 150 million people visit English AONBs every year, spending in excess of

£2bn. Together with National Parks, AONBs represent our most outstanding landscapes; unique and irreplaceable national assets, each with such distinctive character, natural beauty and cultural heritage that they are recognised internationally as part of the global Protected Areas Family. AONBs in particular, as 'working' landscapes, lead the way in pioneering new approaches to integrated countryside management based on voluntary partnerships engaging and working with local communities to secure common goals.



Bee looking for nectar | Sally Munday

## International Context

AONBs are 'Protected Landscapes' - along with UK National Parks - in the world scale of landscape and environmental protection.

Our AONB is part of a global family of 6,555 protected areas, covering 12% of the earth's surface. These are overseen by the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) administered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The IUCN has defined a series of six protected area management categories and all AONBs in the UK as defined as Category V protected landscapes. A protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.

In contrast AONBs are living and working landscapes where human activities are part of everyday life; villages thrive, the land is farmed, foresters are active, and people enjoy all aspects of the countryside.

## European Context

The European Landscape Convention – also known as the Florence Convention, – promotes the protection, management and planning of European landscapes and organises European co-operation on landscape issues.

The Convention has defined Landscape as "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors".

This landscape convention builds upon earlier European Conventions, aimed at conserving wildlife and protecting architectural and archaeological heritage, and the Rio Convention on biological diversity. It starts from the fundamental acknowledgement:

**"that the landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas"**

## **Landscapes Review: National Parks & AONBs - Glover**

In May 2018, Secretary of State at Defra, Michael Gove, commissioned a panel of experts led by Julian Glover to make recommendations on the future of Designated Landscapes (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) in England.

Announcing [\*\*the Review\*\*](#), which formed part of the Government's work to implement its 25 Year Environment Plan, the Secretary of State said:

**“Amid a growing population, changes in technology, and a decline in certain habitats, the time is right for us to look afresh at these landscapes. We want to make sure they are not only conserved, but enhanced for the next generation.”**

The review focused on 5 key areas:

- 1. Landscapes alive for nature and beauty**
- 2. Landscapes for everyone**
- 3. Living in landscapes**
- 4. More special places**
- 5. New ways of working**

Each of the focused areas have several recommended proposals.

AONB representatives have strived to support Defra to develop an ambitious government response to the Glover Review, while also responding to the opportunities and challenges presented by the Covid pandemic, addressing the need to connect more people with nature, and to urgently reverse declines in nature and tackle the effects of climate change. The Government responded to the Glover Review in January 2022, with a focus on nature recovery, building climate resilience and engaging people. Public consultation on the response is open for comment until April 2022.

The Government plans to publish a Green Paper for public consultation in 2022.

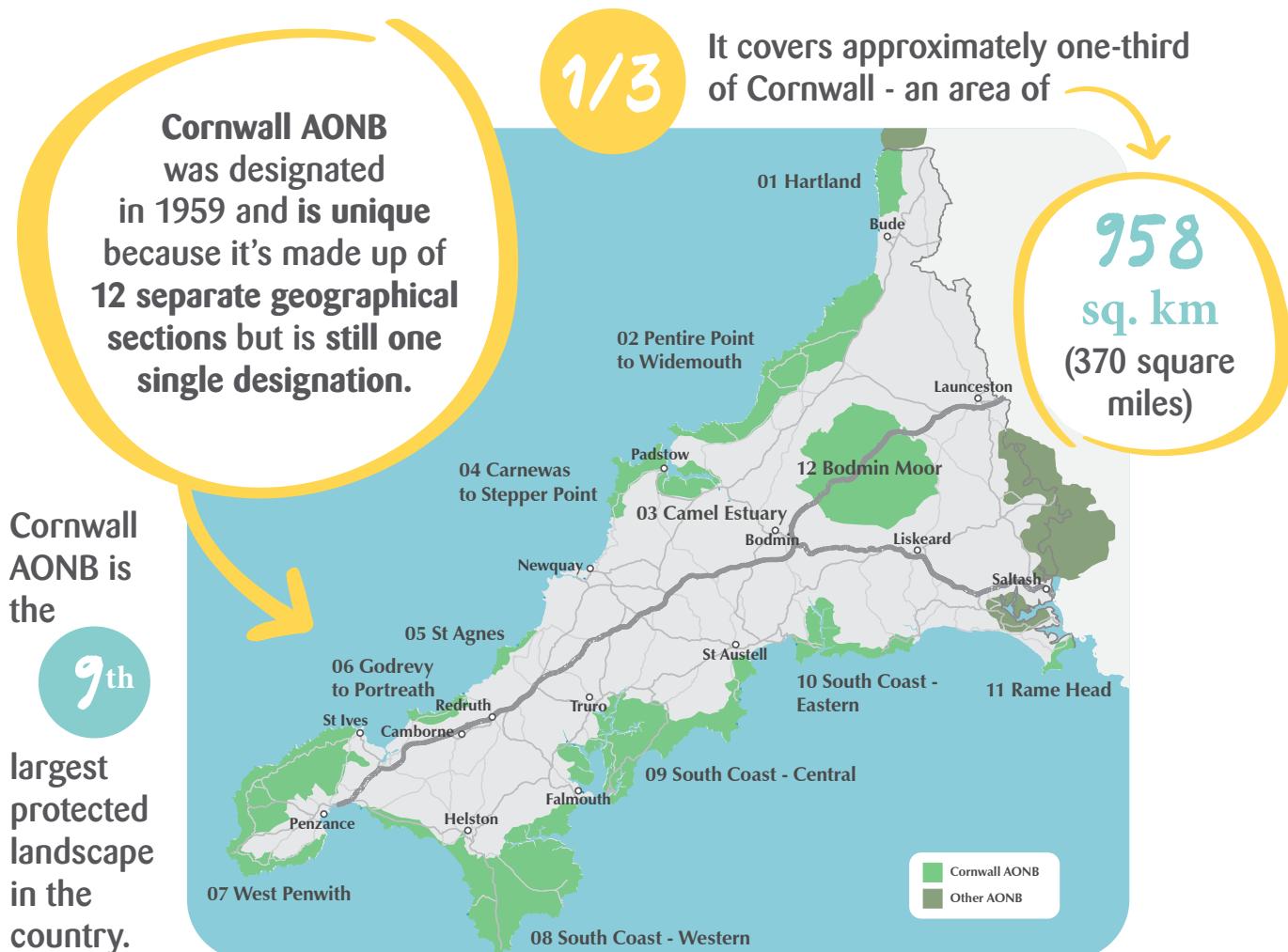
## **The Colchester Declaration 2019**

Set against a backdrop of unprecedented concern for the future of the natural world and intergovernmental reports that the current global response to the effects of human impact on nature is insufficient, the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty believes that now is the time to significantly increase the scale and pace of nature conservation activity in AONBs. Using our unique network and local partnership model, we are making a collective Declaration on Nature in AONBs, setting out our strategy for change. Please see appendix viii, Colchester Declaration.

Cornwall AONB's host authority Cornwall Council has declared a climate and ecological emergency and Cornwall AONB are supportive and demonstrating readiness to work collaboratively to redress declines in nature within the context of a wider response to climate change. Please see appendix vii.

## The Meaning of Natural Beauty

Natural beauty goes well beyond scenic or aesthetic value. The natural beauty of an AONB is to do with the relationship between people and place. It encompasses everything - 'natural' and cultural - that makes an area distinctive. It includes the area's geology and landform, its climate and soils, its wildlife and ecology. It includes the rich history of human settlement and land use over the centuries, its archaeology and buildings, its cultural associations, and the people who live in it, past and present.



A vast stretch of the coastal sections of Cornwall AONB are also defined as a Heritage Coast. Heritage coasts are 'defined' rather than designated, and there isn't a statutory designation process like that associated with an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

In 1986 10 separate Heritage Coasts were defined in Cornwall; Hartland, Pentire Point to Widemouth, Trevose Head, St Agnes,

Godrevy to Portreath, Penwith, The Lizard, The Roseland, Gribon Head Polperro and Rame Head, all of which overlap with the Cornwall AONB sections.

Heritage Coasts were established to conserve the best stretches of undeveloped coast in England. A heritage coast is defined by agreement between the relevant maritime local authorities and Natural England. [Read the report here.](#)

# The Purpose

The Management Plan is a shared strategy for those who live, work and visit the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It provides guidance to help Government, statutory organisations and any public body to ensure they are fulfilling their Section 85\* duty to 'have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty' of AONB.



Sunset at Crown  
Houses, Botallack  
James Reed

The Management Plan sets out the vision of the Partnership for the Cornwall AONB and its management aims over the five-year plan period. It incorporates the Delivery Plan detailing the activities upon which the Partnership wants to collaborate across the plan. The aims, policies and objectives provide the overall strategic approach to the management of the Cornwall AONB.

The **Aims** outline the focus of the Cornwall AONB Partnership over the next 5 years and set our intention of activity and direction of travel for the duration of this Management Plan.

The **Policies** outline the principles on which decisions should be made on any matters or actions which affect the AONB.

They provide the decision-making framework through which to achieve the AONB Management Plan purpose. The policies have been built on an assessment of the key environmental, social and economic issues relevant to the AONB.

The **Objectives** provide tangible opportunities for collaboration to deliver the primary purpose, to conserve and enhance the protected landscape. The 12 Local Sections provide policies and objectives for the individual areas of the Cornwall AONB.

The management plan Aims, Policies and Objectives can be found in the [Strategy](#) section of the plan.

\*Section 85 duty refers to section 85 of the 2000 Countryside and Rights of Way Act.

## The Management Plan is structured to be able to:

Inform and guide organisations and individuals whose work and actions impact on the AONB. In particular those who have a statutory duty to ensure that their decisions and actions contribute positively to the primary purpose of AONB: to conserve and enhance landscape and natural scenic beauty and be applied to the designated AONB sections and its setting.

The Plan operates from a strategic to local level, there are three key areas where the Plan must be influential, these being:

- a. will influence local policy through informing other plans and strategies; ensuring that policies and decisions that will affect the AONB are developed with an understanding of the primary purpose of the designation and of how the AONB can be developed in a sustainable way; and
- b. to inform and guide organisations and particularly those who have a statutory duty to have regard to the primary purpose in discharging their responsibilities; and
- c. to ensure the primary purpose of the AONB is a material consideration in planning decisions

- Raise awareness and profile of the Cornwall AONB protected landscape
- Highlight the special qualities and key landscape characteristics of each of the 12 Local Sections of the AONB
- Deliver projects through collaborative initiatives
- Outline the opportunities for the involvement of people living, working and visiting within the AONB to conserve and enhance its special qualities
- Direct resources to deliver the AONB's primary purpose, to conserve and enhance, to attract additional funding to maximise the benefits to the protected landscape.



**The Cornwall AONB  
is not a land or asset  
owner. We work with  
organisations to  
influence and encourage  
best practice and  
positive management of  
the Protected Landscape**



# The Organisation

## Cornwall AONB Partnership and Executive Board

The Cornwall AONB is governed by a **Partnership of 20 organisations**, with each member organisation signed up to a Partnership Agreement (Memorandum of Understanding). The main role of the Partnership is to collaboratively deliver the AONB Management Plan and it meets to implement this framework.

It also has an advisory role, providing advice to Cornwall Council and other organisations on issues such as planning and project development.

The Cornwall AONB Executive Board are a small core group of funding partners and representatives who meet to discuss staffing, budgets and delivery.

## Our Partners

|    |   |    |  |
|----|---|----|--|
| 1  | <b>Cornwall Agri Food Council</b>   | 11 | <b>Fal River Cornwall</b>  |
| 2  | <b>Cornwall Association of Local Councils</b>                                     | 12 | <b>Farming &amp; Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)</b>                                |
| 3  | <b>Cornwall Council (Exec B)</b>  | 13 | <b>Historic England</b>  |
| 4  | <b>Cornwall Heritage Trust</b>  | 14 | <b>National Farmers Union (NFU)</b>  |
| 5  | <b>Cornwall Rural Community Charity (Exec B)</b>                                  | 15 | <b>National Trust (Exec B)</b>   |
| 6  | <b>Cornwall Wildlife Trust (Exec B)</b>   | 16 | <b>Natural England (Exec B)</b>  |
| 7  | <b>Cornwall &amp; West Devon (UNESCO) World Heritage Site</b>                     | 17 | <b>South West Coast Path Association</b>   |
| 8  | <b>Country Land and Business Association</b>                                      | 18 | <b>University of Exeter in Cornwall/Environment &amp; Sustainability Institute</b> |
| 9  | <b>Environment Agency</b>   | 19 | <b>Visit Cornwall (Exec B)</b>   |
| 10 | <b>Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (ERCCIS)</b> | 20 | <b>Westcountry Rivers Trust</b>  |

## Cornwall AONB – The Team



**Team Huddle Walk | Melodie Manners**

The Partnership is supported by the Cornwall AONB, a small team of proactive officers and volunteers. The team enables and coordinates the delivery of the Management Plan. It seeks to deliver the aims, policies and objectives and monitors and reports on the established key performance indicators.

Defra is the key majority funder for the Cornwall AONB team which is hosted by Cornwall Council, who also part-fund the AONB along with the National Trust. The team is subject to additional delivery programmes as directed by government.

# Core functions of the AONB team



Developing, reviewing, preparing and publishing the AONB vision and the CRoW Act AONB Management Plan (Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000)

Developing an involvement by the community in the management of the AONB

Monitoring AONB landscape condition

Promoting the AONB vision and management plan to help distinguish the special qualities of the AONB

Monitoring and reporting on progress against AONB Management Plan targets

Providing a management role to co-ordinate AONB protection through the actions of the AONB unit, the AONB partnership and other partners at a local and strategic level

Accessing resources for management activities

As a Non-Statutory Consultee, providing response letters to planning applications in the AONB, upholding the primary purpose and management plan policies, aims and objectives

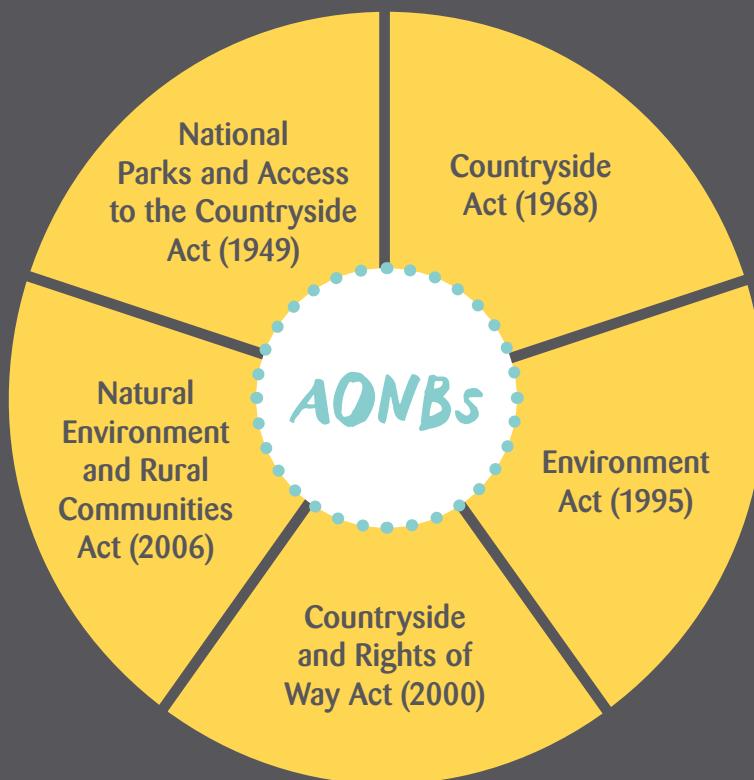
Advising upon, facilitating and co-ordinating implementation by others of the Management Plan

Advising Local Authorities on their activities within AONBs, to encourage them to go beyond normal levels of service (attain the highest possible standards) in countryside management

Working with and contributing to the National Association of AONBs' activities, sharing advice and best practice nationally and regionally

## Legal Framework

AONBs exist within a legal framework which has been progressively strengthened since the first AONBs came into existence after the Second World War.



**The 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act** first established the AONB designation, provided AONBs with protection under planning law against inappropriate development and gave local authorities permissive powers to take action for 'preserving and enhancing natural beauty' in them.

**The Countryside Act 1968** placed a responsibility on local authorities, the statutory conservation bodies, and civil servants, in exercising their functions under the 1949 Act (as amended by subsequent legislation) to 'have due regard to the needs

of agriculture and forestry and to the economic and social interests of rural areas. Within AONBs, this means a responsibility to acknowledge and, where appropriate, to promote farming, forestry and the rural economic and social context wherever this can be done without compromising the primary purpose of conserving natural beauty.

**The Environment Act 1995** introduced the phrase 'conserve and enhance' in place of 'protect and enhance' in relation to duties of local authorities, the Environment Agency and other bodies.



## The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000)

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW) subsumes and strengthens the AONB provisions of the 1949 Act. It confirms the purpose and significance of AONBs, clarifies the procedure for their designation, and created a firm legislative basis for their designation, protection and management.

### In particular:

**Section 82** reaffirms the primary purpose of AONBs: to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

**Section 83** establishes the procedure for designating or revising the boundaries of an AONB, including Natural England's duty to consult with local authorities and to facilitate public engagement

**Section 84** confirms the powers of local authorities to take 'all such action as appears to them expedient' to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of an AONB and sets consultation and advice on development planning and on public access on the same basis as National Parks in the 1949 Act.

**Section 85** places a statutory duty on all 'relevant authorities' to 'have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty' of AONBs when coming to any decisions or carrying out activities relating to or affecting land within these areas. 'Relevant authorities' include all public bodies (including county, borough,

district, parish and community councils, joint planning boards and other statutory committees); statutory undertakers (such as energy and water utilities, licensed telecommunications companies, nationalised companies such as Network Rail and other bodies established under statute responsible for railways, roads and canals); government ministers and civil servants. Activities and developments outside the boundaries of AONBs that have an impact within the designated area are also covered by the 'duty of regard'.

**Sections 86 to 88** allow for the establishment in an AONB of a Conservation Board to which the AONB functions of the local authority (including development planning) can be transferred. Conservation Boards have the additional but secondary function of seeking to increase public understanding and enjoyment of the AONB's special qualities. They also have an obligation to 'seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities' in co-operation with local authorities and other public bodies.



**Sections 89 and 90** create a statutory duty on all AONB partnerships (local authorities and Conservation Boards) to prepare a Management Plan ‘which formulates their policy for the management of their area of outstanding natural beauty and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it’, and thereafter to review adopted and published Plans at intervals of not more than five years.

**Section 92** makes clear that the conservation of natural beauty includes the conservation of ‘flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features.’

## The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC)

**Section 99** formally clarifies in law that the fact that an area consists of or includes land used for agriculture or woodlands, or as a park, or ‘any other area whose flora, fauna or physiographical features are partly the product of human intervention in the landscape’ does not prevent it from being treated, for legal purposes ‘as being an area of natural beauty (or of outstanding natural beauty)’.



Sunset at Trebarwith Strand | Myles Pinkey



**"I am the  
curator of my  
own hearen  
hung with  
paintings of  
starry nights"**

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Extract from 'Beast of Bodmin' by Pascale Petit

Pascale was the inaugural winner of The Laurel Prize in 2020. Cornwall AONB, along with AONBs across the country, sponsored the prize. The winner received a commission to create a poem about the Protected Landscape closest to them. With 12 sections and one single designation, Pascale chose a section that resonated with her. And so the Beast was born...

The prize was created with the support of Simon Armitage, Poet Laureate, and is an annual award for the best collection of nature or environmental poetry to highlight the climate crisis and raise awareness of the challenges and potential solutions at this critical point in our planet's life.

The AONB team worked with a Kickstarter Apprentice to create two digital recordings of the Beast of Bodmin poem. An [English reading](#) and [Cornish Translation](#) are set against incredible footage of Section 12 Cornwall AONB and are free to access and share.



# Thank you for supporting and advocating for Cornwall AONB



**Cornwall  
Wildlife Trust**



**falRiver** CORNWALL



**Historic England**



**South West  
Coast Path**

UNIVERSITY OF  
**EXETER**

**Visit  
Cornwall**





### iii. Host Authority Responsibilities for AONBs

**The formal legal responsibility for both development control and for management of AONBs (including the duty to prepare an AONB Management Plan) lies with the local authorities in whose area(s) the AONB exists, Cornwall Council is the responsible body for the Cornwall AONB.**

The duty of all public bodies and statutory undertakers to 'have regard' places an obligation on a wide range of organisations not just to consider any detrimental impacts of their policies and activities outside as well as within the boundaries of any AONB, but positively to consider how they might benefit the AONBs special qualities.

Statutory guidance for the production of AONB Management Plans make it clear that preparation needs to engage and gain the support of all key stakeholders, who will assist in its delivery. The AONB Management Plan is a place-based plan derived through local consensus. It seeks to define the approach to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB through the application of local solutions to local challenges that also respect the national and international importance of the AONB.



Bodmin Moor | Julie Taylor





## iv. AONB Designation

AONBs are designated in law following a prescribed process which includes an objective appraisal of landscape quality, statutory assessments by the national conservation agencies and wide consultation with stakeholders including local landowners, residents and businesses.

Following initial proposals for an AONB there is the opportunity for all stakeholders including visitors and the wider public to make representations, either in regard to the AONB itself or to proposed boundaries.

**The Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty was designated in 1959 with the Camel Estuary being added in 1981. A section of the Tamar Valley AONB is also in Cornwall but is not covered in the scope of this management plan.**

