

# **Blackdown Hills National Landscape: Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2025 - 2030**

**Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report**

**Final Draft**

**April 2025**



**Blackdown  
Hills**  
National  
Landscape

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## Executive Summary

This Screening Report has been produced to determine whether it is necessary to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape 2025 – 2030 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan.

It is determined that full Strategic Environmental Assessment will not be required for the 2025 – 2030 Management Plan because the Plan demonstrates little deviation from its previous iterations. The 2014-2019 version was subject to full Strategic Environmental Assessment and the current revision is unlikely to display further significant environmental effects.

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 The Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan

Although now known as a National Landscape, 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' (AONB) remains the legal term for the designation and so is referred to as such in legislation.

Section 82 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 establishes the primary purpose of AONB designation as the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty. Section 85 of the CROW Act (as amended by section 245 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) places a duty on all relevant authorities (public bodies) to 'seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty'. Under section 89, the relevant local authorities must prepare and publish a Management Plan for each AONB that "formulates their policy for the management of the area of outstanding natural beauty and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it"; and keep it under review (every 5 years).

The Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan (from hereon in referred to as 'the Management Plan') addresses this legal requirement by setting out the policy framework for the conservation and enhancement of the designated Blackdown Hills AONB for the next five years. Put simply, it describes the Special Qualities of the area and why the National Landscape is important, sets out an agreed long term vision for its future, identifies the challenges and opportunities for the area, and sets out objectives and policies for how these will be addressed.

The Management Plan 2025-2030 is the result of a review of the previous iteration (2019-2024), and is a revised and updated version of all previous management plans for the Blackdown Hills National Landscape. The first revision in 2009 and subsequent 2014–2019 management plan both underwent full Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

### 1.2 Purpose of this Report

The purpose of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening is to determine whether a plan, programme, or strategy is likely to have significant environmental effects, thus deciding if a full SEA is required.

This report has been produced to determine whether it is necessary to undertake an SEA of the Management Plan for 2025-2030. This is to ensure compliance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations, 2004 (Statutory Instrument 2004 No. 1633), commonly referred to as 'The Strategic Environmental Assessment or SEA Regulations'.

The three statutory bodies for the purposes of SEA screening are Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England. These bodies will be consulted for their views on the conclusions of this screening assessment.

## 2 SEA Screening

### 2.1 SEA Guidance

This Screening Report has been developed in accordance with extant government guidance: [A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive](#) (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005), and with reference to [Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal - GOV.UK](#).

In 2012, Natural England, the National Association for AONBs and Defra published an 'Advice Note to AONB Partnerships, the Conservation Boards and Relevant Authorities on Management Plan Reviews', which gave guidance on considering the need for SEA:

*'The requirements of the SEA and Habitats Directives, and the need for compliance with them, apply to new management plans, and to revisions or re-issues of existing management plans.'*

*AONBs and National Park Authorities (protected landscape managing bodies) should screen their revised or amended Management Plan to evaluate whether the individual or cumulative effect of the changes which they are proposing is likely to have a significant effect, as defined under the Strategic Environmental Assessment or Habitats Regulations. They may wish to seek informal guidance from Natural England (and Environment Agency, English Heritage for SEA) at this screening stage'.*

That same guidance goes on to state that:

*'Given that all the extant AONB Management Plans have been assessed under the regulations, the AONB Partnership / Conservation Board (protected landscape managing body) may decide that the proposed changes to the extant plan are not likely to have a significant effect and may conclude that there is no requirement to carry out further assessment. The AONB Partnership / Conservation Board should record the screening decision and supporting reasons for it'.*

## 2.2 Screening Process

The 2005 guidance referred to at Section 2.1 helpfully synthesises the requirements of the European SEA Directive, and as transposed into UK law by the SEA Regulations, into a flowchart to determine which plans and programmes require SEA.

Figure 1 shows the flowchart with the decision process applied for the Management Plan (blue arrows).

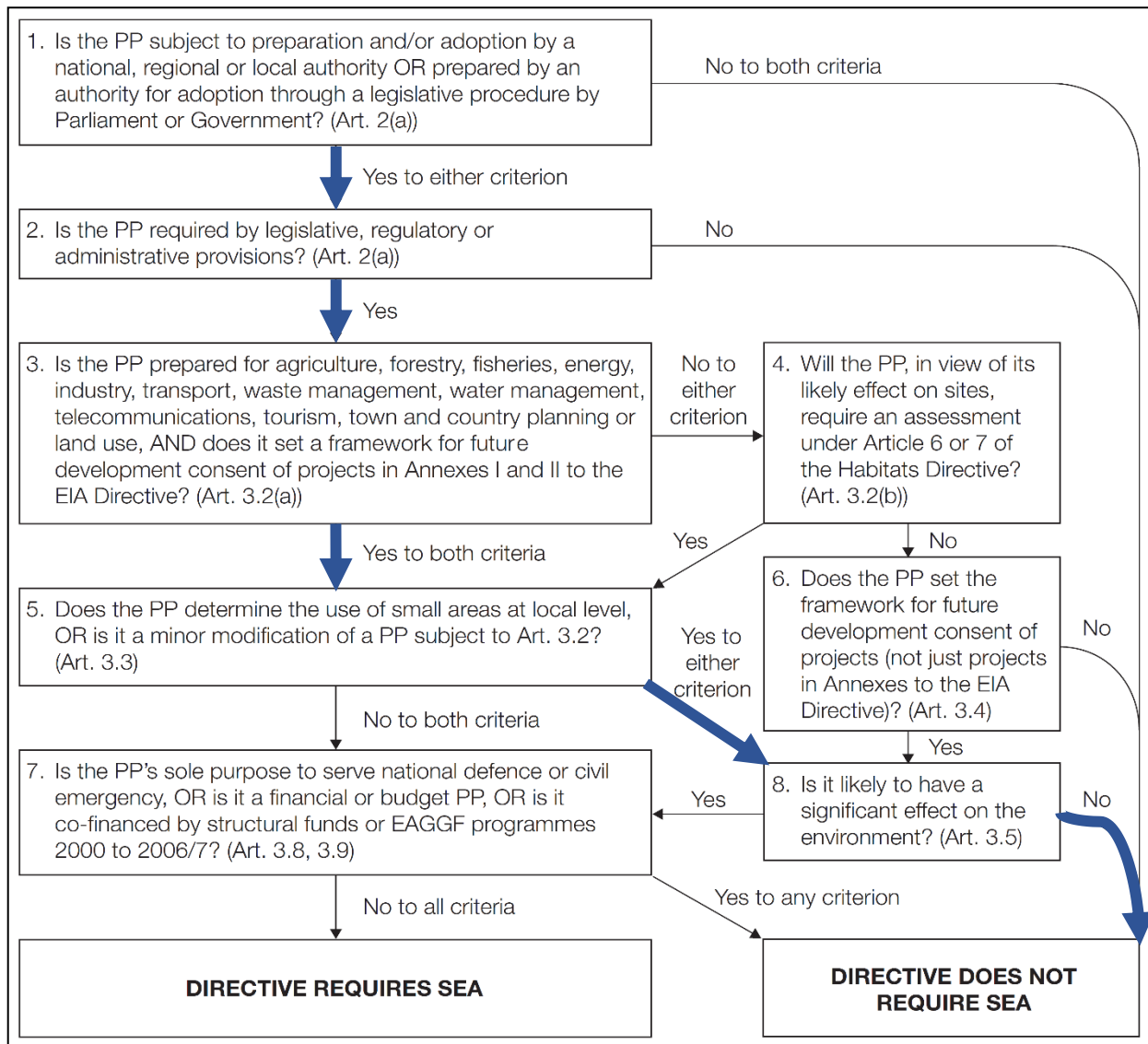


Figure 1 – SEA decision process for the Management Plan. Flowchart taken from “A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive” (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005). ‘PP’ is an abbreviation for ‘Plan or Programme’. Article numbers refer to those of the SEA Directive.

Table 1 provides an explanation for the decisions taken within the flowchart in Figure 1.

Flowchart Question	Decision	Explanation
1. Is the PP subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2 (a))	Yes	The Management Plan is being prepared by the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership through delegation from Devon County Council, Somerset Council, East Devon District Council, and Mid Devon District Council, and it will be adopted by them.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Yes	Part IV, Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 sets out the requirement for Local Authorities to publish and review a management plan for their AONB.
3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use AND does it set a framework for future development consents of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art. 3.2 (a))	Yes	<p>Although the Management Plan is not explicitly prepared to cover these topics, it could arguably influence all of them within the Blackdown Hills National Landscape.</p> <p>Whilst it is unlikely that development of the scale described for projects in Annexes I and II of the EIA Directive (Schedule 1 and 2 EIA Regulations) will occur in the Blackdown Hills National Landscape as a matter of course, the Management Plan nonetheless would be used as a “framework for future development consent” – all the more so in the context of relevant authorities duty to seek to further the purpose of designation.</p> <p>The “framework” is defined by the European Commission<sup>1</sup> as “criteria or conditions that guide the way the consenting authority decides an application for development consent. Such criteria could place limits on the type of activity or development which is to be permitted in a given area; or they could contain conditions which must be met by the applicant if permission is to be granted; or they could be designed to preserve certain characteristics of the area concerned”.</p>
4. Will the PP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6	Non-Applicable	

<sup>1</sup> European Commission (2001) [\*Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment\*](#)

Flowchart Question	Decision	Explanation
or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art 3.2 (b))		
5. Does the PP determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art 3.2? (Art 3.3)	Yes	<p>The Management Plan does not “determine the use of small areas at local level”. The European Commission<sup>1</sup> suggest that this phrase is intended to refer to plans that, for example, outline how buildings must be constructed.</p> <p>However, the Management Plan is a minor modification to the 2019-2024 Management Plan. The European Commission advise that the interpretation of ‘minor’ must consider the likelihood that the modified elements of the plan will lead to significant environmental effects. See Flowchart Question 8 below.</p>
6. Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects ? A narrower interpretation of ‘framework for development consents’ would exclude the (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive) (Art 3.4)	Non-Applicable	
7. Is the PP’s sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency, or is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7 (Art 3.8, 3.9)?	Non-Applicable	
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art 3.5)	No	<p>Firstly, looking strategically, the PP does not propose uses or make allocations, and the improvements to the National Landscape resulting from the strategic direction given by the Management Plan are unlikely to have negative effects on the environment.</p> <p>In addition, the objectives of the Management Plan (reflecting the purpose of designation) seek to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Landscape, which will have a moderating impact on any development and other actions that may seek to modify the environmental character of the National Landscape.</p>



Flowchart Question	Decision	Explanation
		Furthermore, the vision of the Management Plan, although updated, remains true to the previous version, and the environmental outcomes of the revised objectives and policies are not substantially or significantly different – see Appendices 1 and 2 of this report.

## 2.3 Screening Conclusion

It is determined that an SEA will not be required for the 2025-2030 Management Plan because the Plan demonstrates little deviation from its previous iteration (as described in Appendices 1 and 2).

The previous version (2019-2024) was itself an iteration of the 2014-2019 plan which was subject to full SEA. As such it is concluded that therefore the current revision is unlikely to display further significant environmental effects and hence the modifications are considered minor within the context of question 5 in the flowchart shown in Figure 1.

## Appendix 1 – Comparison of Management Plan Objectives

The table below compares the 2019 – 2024 Management Plan objectives (as updated post-public consultation) with the proposed objectives for the 2025-2030 Management Plan. The objectives and policies were checked and compared to identify and determine whether the modifications are minor or could lead to outcomes that would result in the plan having a significant effect on the environment.

Proposed Objective 2025-2030	Similar Objectives 2019-24	Notes on likely significance of any divergence to the environment
<b>PLACE</b>		
To restore, conserve and enhance the natural capital stock of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape and maximise the flow of ecosystem goods and services it provides.	Objective NC To conserve and enhance the natural capital stock of the AONB and maximise the flow of ecosystem goods and services they provide	<b>Minor Positive.</b> The proposed objective recognises there may be requirement to restore features as well as conserve and enhance.
To support sustainable farming, forestry and land management practices that conserve and enhance the special qualities of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape and deliver a range of ecosystem services	Objective FLM To support sustainable farming and forestry practices that conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB and deliver a range of ecosystem services	<b>None.</b> The proposed objective in the 2025-2030 Management Plan achieves the same outcome.
To strengthen the Blackdown Hills special sense of place, with a diversity of landscape patterns and pictures, unique geology, archaeology, and buildings of architectural appeal, through sound custodianship	Objective LC To ensure that the distinctive character and qualities of the Blackdown Hills landscape are understood, conserved, enhanced and restored Objective CH To ensure effective conservation, management and understanding of the Blackdown Hills historic environment, including historic buildings, archaeological sites and heritage landscapes Objective PD To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Blackdown Hills by ensuring that all development affecting the AONB is of the highest quality, sensitive to landscape setting and conserves its wildlife, historic character and other special qualities	<b>None.</b> The proposed objective in the 2025-2030 Management Plan achieves the same outcome. The three previous objectives collectively are concerned with strengthening sense of place through sound custodianship.

Proposed Objective 2025-2030	Similar Objectives 2019-24	Notes on likely significance of any divergence to the environment
<b>PEOPLE</b>		
To nurture flourishing communities, where the population is both cohesive and diverse, where there is easy access to a range of services and facilities, and where the commitment of local people helps to conserve and enhance the environment, heritage and landscape of the Blackdown Hills.	Objective CC To foster vibrant, healthy and resilient communities who enjoy a high quality of life and feel connected to the AONB and its special qualities	<b>None.</b> The proposed objective in the 2025-2030 Management Plan achieves the same outcome.
To foster a thriving and diverse Blackdown Hills economy that provides jobs for local people, makes wise use of local resources and benefits local communities, while conserving and enhancing the outstanding landscape and distinctive character of the countryside and villages.	Objective RET To sustain a local economy that makes wise use of the resources of the AONB and conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the Blackdown Hills Objective CC To foster vibrant, healthy and resilient communities who enjoy a high quality of life and feel connected to the AONB and its special qualities	<b>None.</b> The proposed objective in the 2025-2030 Management Plan achieves the same outcome.
To ensure that appropriate opportunities to explore and enjoy the Blackdown Hills countryside and its special qualities that are compatible with conserving and enhancing natural beauty are available to all and that everyone feels welcome.	Objective AE To ensure that opportunities to explore and enjoy the Blackdown Hills countryside and special qualities are compatible with conserving and enhancing natural beauty	The parallel Habitat Regulations Assessment proposes that this objective is amended to include the reference to conserving and enhancing natural beauty, and that being so, there is <b>no divergence</b> .
To commit to eliminate discrimination, provide equal opportunities, and challenge prejudice and foster good relationships between diverse groups in and around the Blackdown Hills.	No direct equivalent, but is relatable to; Objective CC To foster vibrant, healthy and resilient communities who enjoy a high quality of life and feel connected to the AONB and its special qualities	This is outside the scope of SEA, as it seeks to address equality, diversity and inclusion.
<b>NATURE</b>		
To ensure the effective conservation, enhancement, expansion and connectivity of habitats to form coherent and resilient ecological networks across the Blackdown Hills and beyond, facilitating the movement of	Objective BG To conserve geodiversity and ensure effective conservation, enhancement, expansion and connectivity of habitats, forming coherent and resilient ecological networks across the Blackdown Hills and	<b>None.</b> The proposed objective in the 2025-2030 Management Plan achieves the same outcome. Geodiversity is now addressed in the Place theme and is encapsulated in the relevant objective there.

Proposed Objective 2025-2030	Similar Objectives 2019-24	Notes on likely significance of any divergence to the environment
species of conservation concern across the landscape.	beyond, facilitating the movement of priority species across the landscape	
<b>CLIMATE</b>		
To safeguard the carbon stores in the Blackdown Hills National Landscape, reduce emissions from land and increase carbon sequestration, in ways which are compatible with nature.	Objective NC To conserve and enhance the natural capital stock of the AONB and maximise the flow of ecosystem goods and services they provide	<b>None.</b> The new objective deals with a specific element of natural capital stock and relevant ecosystem services.
To promote and deliver nature-based solutions to climate change.	Objective NC To conserve and enhance the natural capital stock of the AONB and maximise the flow of ecosystem goods and services they provide	<b>None.</b> The new objective deals with a specific element of natural capital stock and relevant ecosystem services.
To play an active role in addressing the climate emergency by delivering meaningful actions for climate change mitigation and adaptation, ensuring the actions are aligned with existing national, regional and local plans.	No direct objective, but aligns with policies NC4 Encourage local communities, businesses and visitors to respect the environment and minimise their carbon footprint PM1 Encourage co-ordination and partnership amongst the wide range of national, regional and local agencies and organisations to secure funding for the care and enhancement of the AONB	<b>Minor positive.</b> The new objective deals with a specific, important priority that was not specifically spelt out previously. It is more pro-active than the previous comparable policy.

## Appendix 2 - Comparison of Management Plan Policies

The table below compares the 2019 - 2024 Management Plan policies (as updated post-public consultation) with the proposed policies for the 2025 - 2030 Management Plan.

Proposed policy 2025-2030	Similar 2019 – 2024 Management Plan Policies	Divergence of environmental outcomes
<b>PLACE</b>		
<b>PL1</b> Approach the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape according to landscape-led principles, based on landscape character, underpinned by a sound understanding of the area's rich stock of natural and cultural capital assets and its value to society in terms of the flow of goods and services.	<p>LC1 Approach the conservation and enhancement of the AONB based on landscape character underpinned by comprehensive and up-to-date evidence bases that are also made widely available to decision makers and others</p> <p>NC3 Support studies, research and improve understanding of the AONB's rich stock of natural capital and ensure that its value to society (in terms of the flow of goods and services) is recognised and understood by decision-makers and others</p>	<b>None.</b> The outcomes from the previous policies will be achieved by the proposed new policy, which combines them, reflecting the revised themes of the new plan.
<b>PL2</b> The special qualities, distinctive character and key features of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape will be conserved and enhanced, and opportunities will be sought to strengthen or restore landscape character where landscape features are in poor condition, missing or fragmented.	LC7 Opportunities will be sought to strengthen landscape character by improving the condition of landscape features in poor condition and reinstating landscape features identified as missing or fragmented	<b>Minor positive.</b> The amended policy wording provides a fuller framework, reiterating the purpose of designation, but does not alter the outcome.
<b>PL3</b> Promote a catchment-scale, multiple-benefit, collaborative-based approach to soil conservation and restoration, water quality improvements, reducing flood risk, and improving resilience, based on the Otter, Axe, Culm and Parrett/Tone catchments.	NC1 Promote a catchment, multiple-benefit, collaborative-based approach to soil conservation, water quality and flood alleviation improvements utilising the Otter, Axe, Culm and Parrett/Tone catchments	<b>Minor positive.</b> Amended wording to include soil restoration and improving resilience are typical of such an approach.

Proposed policy 2025-2030	Similar 2019 – 2024 Management Plan Policies	Divergence of environmental outcomes
<b>PL4</b> Approaches to flood risk management and erosion control which work with natural processes, conserve the natural environment and improve biodiversity will be advocated and supported.	NC2 Improve land management in respect of the control of surface water run-off, to mitigate against flooding during more extreme weather events. Where appropriate within the landscape, seek to reinstate or improve the management of woodland, wetland and hedges to slow and store run-off	<b>None.</b> The amended policy wording does not alter the outcome.
<b>PL5</b> A profitable, sustainable and environmentally beneficial farming, forestry and land management sector providing a range of public goods and services will be fostered as one of the principal means of maintaining the special qualities and distinctive landscape of the National Landscape.	FLM1 A profitable, sustainable and environmentally beneficial farming and land management sector providing a range of public goods and services will be fostered as one of the principal means of maintaining the special qualities and distinctive landscape of the AONB	<b>None.</b> No change to policy, other than including forestry as a separate sector.
<b>PL6</b> Promote, encourage and support widespread take-up of Environmental Land Management schemes that help conserve and enhance natural beauty and deliver a range of environmental outcomes through sustainable farming and forestry practices.	FLM2 Encourage a high take-up of agri-environment schemes, especially high quality environmental land management that helps conserve and enhance the natural beauty through sustainable farming and forestry practices	<b>None.</b> The amended policy wording does not alter the outcome.
<b>PL7</b> Encourage the production and marketing of local food, timber and other agricultural and wood products where these are compatible with the National Landscape and purpose of designation.	FLM4 Encourage the production and marketing of local food and other agricultural products where these are compatible with the AONB designation	<b>None.</b> No change to policy, other than including wood products as a separate sector.
<b>PL8</b> Encourage sensitive management of field boundaries and hedgerow trees, woodlands, orchards and ponds, protect ancient woodland and veteran trees, and restore the original broadleaved character of plantations on ancient woodland sites.	FLM5 Support and promote initiatives that encourage sensitive environmental management of field boundaries and hedgerow trees, woodlands, particularly those that conserve ancient woodland and veteran trees, orchards and restore the	<b>Minor.</b> The policy has been amended to include ponds, and the wording simplified, but this does not alter the intended outcome.

Proposed policy 2025-2030	Similar 2019 – 2024 Management Plan Policies	Divergence of environmental outcomes
	original broadleaved character of plantations on ancient woodland sites	
<b>PL9</b> Encourage well managed woodland creation and expansion that considers both the ecological value and landscape character of a site and surroundings and opportunities for maximising ecosystem services including natural flood management.	FLM6 Give careful consideration to the landscape and visual impact of new woodland planting schemes	<b>Minor positive.</b> The amended policy wording provides a more detailed framework, but does not alter the outcome.
<b>PL10</b> Monitor, manage and mitigate damaging diseases such as ash dieback that have potential to impact negatively on landscape and biodiversity.	FLM7 Monitor, manage and mitigate damaging diseases such as ash dieback	<b>None.</b> The amended policy wording does not alter the outcome.
<b>PL11</b> Wider community engagement with the farming and land management sector will be encouraged to enable a deeper understanding and appreciation of the important role played by land managers in maintaining the National Landscape's special qualities.	FLM9 Wider community engagement with the farming and land management sector will enable a deeper understanding of the important role played by land managers in maintaining the AONB's special qualities	<b>None.</b> The policy has been amended by the inclusion of 'encourage' – this was the intent of the previous policy but it was missed in error. It does not alter the outcome.
<b>PL12</b> Conserve and enhance the historic built environment and rural heritage assets, support training in traditional heritage skills, and promote the use of Historic Environment Record (HER), historic landscape characterisation and other tools to inform projects, policymaking and management activities.	CH1 Conserve and enhance the historic built environment and rural heritage assets and integrate into other land management initiatives in the AONB  CH2 Monitor the extent and condition of historic sites, features and landscapes in the AONB and promote the use of Historic Environment Record (HER), historic landscape characterisation and other tools to inform projects, policy-making and management activities	<b>None.</b> The outcomes from the previous policies will be achieved by the proposed new policy, which combines them.
<b>PL13</b> Monitor the extent and condition of historic sites, features and landscapes across the Blackdown Hills and seek to address	CH2 Monitor the extent and condition of historic sites, features and landscapes in the AONB and promote the use of Historic	<b>Minor positive.</b> Part of the old policy has been incorporated into a separate new policy. The amended policy wording provides

Proposed policy 2025-2030	Similar 2019 – 2024 Management Plan Policies	Divergence of environmental outcomes
sites and features in poor and declining condition.	Environment Record (HER), historic landscape characterisation and other tools to inform projects, policy-making and management activities	a more detailed framework, but does not alter the outcome.
<b>PL14</b> Promote awareness and understanding of the geology and geomorphology of the Blackdown Hills and secure effective management of important features and sites.	BG4 Ensure sites of geological and geomorphological importance are appropriately managed to conserve their special features and reduce impacts of development	<b>None.</b> The amended policy wording does not alter the outcome.
<b>PL15</b> All relevant strategic, local and neighbourhood plan documents and planning decision-making will: Seek to further the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape. Utilise the Management Plan and consider other Blackdown Hills statements and guidance. Ensure that conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty is given great weight.	PD1 All relevant local and neighbourhood plan documents and planning decision-making will have regard to the AONB purpose, the management plan and other AONB statements and guidance, and ensure that conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the AONB is given great weight	<b>Minor positive.</b> The new policy has been updated to reflect the updated duty to further the purpose of designation.
<b>PL16</b> All development affecting the Blackdown Hills National Landscape should conserve and enhance natural beauty and special qualities by: Respecting landscape character, settlement patterns and local character of the built environment Being sensitively sited and of appropriate scale. Reinforcing local distinctiveness. Seeking to protect and enhance natural features and biodiversity.	PD2 All necessary development affecting the AONB will conserve and enhance natural beauty and special qualities by: Respecting landscape character, settlement patterns and local character of the built environment, Being sensitively sited and of appropriate scale, Reinforcing local distinctiveness, and Seeking to protect and enhance natural features and biodiversity	<b>None.</b> The amended policy wording does not alter the outcome..



Proposed policy 2025-2030	Similar 2019 – 2024 Management Plan Policies	Divergence of environmental outcomes
<b>PL17</b> Promote and protect tranquillity and dark skies by minimising intrusive noise and development and light pollution that may undermine the intrinsic character of the National Landscape.	LC3 Promote high levels of peace and tranquillity with dark night skies by minimising noise, intrusive development and light pollution	<b>None.</b> The amended policy wording does not alter the outcome.
<b>PL18</b> The character of skylines and open views into, within and out of the National Landscape will be protected and enhanced.	LC5 The character of skylines and open views into, within and out of the AONB will be protected	<b>Minor positive.</b> The amended policy wording provides a fuller framework, reiterating the purpose of designation, but does not alter the outcome.
<b>PL19</b> The deeply rural character of much of the land adjoining the National Landscape boundary forms an essential setting for the Blackdown Hills and care will be taken to maintain its quality and character.	LC6 The deeply rural setting of much of the land adjoining the AONB boundary forms an essential setting for the AONB and care will be taken to maintain its quality and character	<b>None.</b> No change to policy.
<b>PL20</b> Community-led planning tools, such as neighbourhood plans, and initiatives such as Community Land Trusts will be supported as the principal means of identifying need and securing local community assets such as affordable housing. Any development should conserve and enhance natural beauty.	PD4 Support the provision of affordable housing to meet identified local needs in locations with access to employment and local services, ensuring that developments are appropriately scaled and sited to respect landscape and settlement character, and avoiding impacts on nature conservation and historic interests  CC2 Community-led planning tools (neighbourhood plans, parish plans, village design statements and others) that contribute to conserving and enhancing the AONB will be supported	<b>None.</b> The amended policy wording does not alter the outcomes. The design related detail of previous policy PD4 is covered by PL16 which covers any development.
<b>PL21</b> Road and transport schemes (including design, maintenance, signage, landscaping and safety measures) affecting the National Landscape will be undertaken in a manner that is sensitive and appropriate to landscape character and special qualities, seeking to	TH1 Road and transport schemes (including design, maintenance, signage, landscaping and safety measures) affecting the AONB will be undertaken in a manner that is sensitive and appropriate to landscape character, having regard to the purpose of AONB	<b>None.</b> The amended policy wording does not alter the outcome.

Proposed policy 2025-2030	Similar 2019 – 2024 Management Plan Policies	Divergence of environmental outcomes
further the purpose of designation. The landscape, biodiversity and cultural features of the area's road network such as hedge banks, flower-rich verges, and locally distinctive historic highway furniture, will be protected, conserved and enhanced.	designation and conserving and enhancing the area's special qualities. The landscape and cultural features of the AONB's road network (including hedge banks, flower-rich verges, and locally distinctive historic highway furniture) will be protected and conserved	
<b>PEOPLE</b>		
PE1 Seek to inspire and foster connection with the Blackdown Hills through provision of a range of sensitive and sustainable opportunities for volunteering and active engagement with the countryside, wildlife and heritage of the Blackdown Hills that are available and accessible to all, working to ensure that everyone feels welcome to explore and enjoy the area.	<p>AE3 Opportunities to use the Blackdown Hills AONB to benefit the health and well-being of residents and visitors will be sought and promoted, seeking a range of sensitive and sustainable access opportunities for users of all abilities to enjoy the special qualities of the AONB</p> <p>CEA1 Through promotion and education make more people aware of what makes the Blackdown Hills special, inspiring them to help care for the area and contribute to its conservation and enhancement</p>	<b>None.</b> The amended policy wording does not alter the outcome.
PE2 Take a coordinated, strategic approach to the management of public rights of way and publicly accessible land to achieve an accessible, well-connected network that conserves and enhances the special qualities of the National Landscape, improves access and connectivity with surrounding areas, avoids impact on sensitive sites and minimises conflict between different interests.	<p>AE1 Take a coordinated, strategic and planned approach to the management of public rights of way and publicly accessible land to achieve an accessible, well-connected network that conserves and enhances the special qualities of the AONB, avoids impact on sensitive sites and minimises conflict between different interests</p> <p>AE2 Opportunities will be sought to extend and improve the rights of way network, including improving connections with surrounding settlements where this is</p>	<b>None.</b> The outcomes from the previous policies will be achieved by the proposed new policy, which combines them.

Proposed policy 2025-2030	Similar 2019 – 2024 Management Plan Policies	Divergence of environmental outcomes
	compatible with conserving and enhancing natural beauty	
PE3 Opportunities to use the natural and historic environment resource of the Blackdown Hills to benefit the health and well-being of residents and visitors which are compatible with conserving and enhancing natural beauty will be sought and promoted, particularly where this will enhance landscape, biodiversity, heritage and access.	<p>AE3 Opportunities to use the Blackdown Hills AONB to benefit the health and well-being of residents and visitors will be sought and promoted, seeking a range of sensitive and sustainable access opportunities for users of all abilities to enjoy the special qualities of the AONB</p> <p>CC4 Support local community engagement in cultural and natural heritage initiatives within the AONB</p> <p>CEA2 Develop and support a range of opportunities for active engagement with the countryside, wildlife and heritage of the Blackdown Hills AONB, promoting the benefits that the natural environment provides to us</p>	The parallel Habitat Regulations Assessment proposes that this policy is amended to include the reference to sensitive and sustainable access opportunities as previously, and that being so, there is <b>no divergence</b> , and the outcomes from the previous policies will be achieved by the proposed new policy, which combines them.
PE4 Local communities will be supported to identify, plan, and provide for their own needs, in undertaking activities to encourage sustainable lifestyles, reinforce and celebrate local cultural traditions, and engagement in cultural and natural heritage initiatives. Support initiatives that help to provide, retain or enhance community facilities and services where they are compatible with conserving and enhancing natural beauty	<p>CC1 Local communities will be supported to identify, plan, and provide for their own needs, in undertaking community activities to encourage sustainable lifestyles, reinforce local cultural traditions, and in celebrating their achievements and strengths</p> <p>CC3 Support and promote initiatives that help to provide, retain or enhance community facilities and services where they are compatible with conserving and enhancing natural beauty</p>	<b>None.</b> The outcomes from the previous policies will be achieved by the proposed new policy, which combines them.
PE5 Support the principle of local markets and sustainable local products where it adds	FLM4 Encourage the production and marketing of local food and other agricultural	<b>None.</b> Policy FLM4 has not been carried forward, but it is not necessary to as it is

Proposed policy 2025-2030	Similar 2019 – 2024 Management Plan Policies	Divergence of environmental outcomes
value to the local economy without compromising the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and the special qualities of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape	products where these are compatible with the AONB designation RET1 Support the principle of local markets and sustainable local products where it adds value to the local economy without compromising the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and the special qualities of the AONB	encapsulated by old policy RET1 and the new policy.
PE6 Economic capacity, employment and skills in the area will be supported through training opportunities, community enterprise, business networking and cooperation especially where these assist businesses to conserve or enhance the special qualities of the National Landscape and contribute to employment and prosperity.	RET2 Economic capacity, employment and skills in the area will be supported through training opportunities, community enterprise, business networking and cooperation especially where these assist businesses to contribute to AONB purposes	<b>None.</b> The amended policy wording does not alter the outcome.
PE7 Tourism and recreation provision will be supported where it contributes to the local economy without harm or detriment to the Blackdown Hills landscape, historic environment, biodiversity or tranquillity, and respecting special qualities.	RET3 Tourism and recreation provision will contribute to the local economy without harming the Blackdown Hills landscape, historic environment, biodiversity or tranquillity, and respecting the special qualities of the AONB	<b>None.</b> The amended policy wording does not alter the outcome.
PE8 Support efforts to secure and improve fast and reliable broadband and mobile phone coverage without adversely affecting special qualities	RET4 Support efforts to secure and improve superfast broadband and mobile phone coverage in the AONB without adversely affecting special qualities	<b>None.</b> The amended policy wording does not alter the outcome.
PE9 Traffic management measures will be supported which reduce the impact of large and heavy vehicles on the most minor roads and help to provide a safer environment for walking, cycling and horse riding, where this is compatible with conserving and enhancing natural beauty	TH2 Traffic management measures will be supported which reduce the impact of large and heavy vehicles on the most minor roads and help to provide a safer environment for walking, cycling and horse riding, where this is compatible with conserving and enhancing natural beauty	<b>None.</b> No change to policy.

Proposed policy 2025-2030	Similar 2019 – 2024 Management Plan Policies	Divergence of environmental outcomes
PE10 Promote the development of high quality, integrated and sustainable transport services and initiatives in and around the Blackdown Hills where they can be achieved without compromising the conservation of natural beauty and local character	TH3 Promote the development of high quality, integrated and sustainable transport services and initiatives in and around the AONB where they can be achieved without compromising the conservation of natural beauty and local character	<b>None.</b> No change to policy.
<b>NATURE</b>		
N1 Use the Lawton <i>making space for nature</i> principles of ‘better, bigger, more and joined’ to create networks that are fit for purpose for nature to thrive in and adapt to climate change.	BG1 Take a strategic landscape-scale based approach to the creation, restoration and maintenance of habitats within the AONB (focussing on designated and undesignated priority sites) in order to ensure resilience to climate change and other pressures BG2 Connect habitats at a landscape scale and ensure permeability for species movement within coherent and resilient ecological networks	<b>None.</b> The outcomes from the previous policies will be achieved by the proposed new policy, which combines them.
N2 The mantra of ‘right tree, right place’ should be extended to ‘right habitat/species, right place’. This should ensure that scarce and irreplaceable habitats are protected and that the development of one habitat does not damage the network of another.	BG1 Take a strategic landscape-scale based approach to the creation, restoration and maintenance of habitats within the AONB (focussing on designated and undesignated priority sites) in order to ensure resilience to climate change and other pressures	<b>Minor positive.</b> The new policy deals with a specific aspect of the ‘strategic landscape-scale based approach’ of the old policy. Both are concerned with positive habitat management.
N3 Species of conservation concern will be conserved. Targeted action will be taken to support the recovery of champion/priority/indicator species.	BG3 Priority species (including Section 41, Devon Special Species, Protected Species) will be conserved. Targeted action will be taken to support the recovery of priority species	<b>None.</b> The amended policy wording does not alter the outcome.
N4 All public bodies within the Blackdown Hills National Landscape must have regard to Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).	No direct equivalent, but is within the context of;	<b>Minor positive.</b> Policy N4 is specific to local nature recovery strategies, which is

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There should be alignment between the National Landscape and LNRS needs, and LNRS opportunities need to be reflected in partnership delivery on the ground.	PM1 Encourage co-ordination and partnership amongst the wide range of national, regional and local agencies and organisations to secure funding for the care and enhancement of the AONB	something the more general previous policy PM1 would cover.
N5 A strategic approach to the control, or eradication where feasible, of invasive non-native species will be taken where they threaten or damage local habitats and species and where action is practicable.	BG6 A strategic approach to the control, or eradication where feasible, of invasive non-native species will be taken where they threaten or damage local habitats and species and where action is practicable	<b>None.</b> No change to policy.
N6 Increased recreational pressure will be resisted at locations where unacceptable damage or disturbance to vulnerable habitats or species is likely to arise.	BG7 Increased recreational pressure will be resisted at locations where unacceptable damage or disturbance to vulnerable habitats or species is likely to arise	<b>None.</b> No change to policy.
<b>CLIMATE</b>		
C1 To transition to net zero, support communities, businesses and individuals to collectively make changes to their behaviour, such as energy use, eating habits, travel choices, waste disposal and more, in addition to using technological solutions.	NC4 Encourage local communities, businesses and visitors to respect the environment and minimise their carbon footprint CC1 Local communities will be supported to identify, plan, and provide for their own needs, in undertaking community activities to encourage sustainable lifestyles, reinforce local cultural traditions, and in celebrating their achievements and strengths TH3 Promote the development of high quality, integrated and sustainable transport services and initiatives in and around the AONB where they can be achieved without compromising the conservation of natural beauty and local character	<b>None.</b> The outcomes from the previous policies will be achieved by the proposed new policy, which combines them, reflecting the revised themes of the new plan.
C2 Use less energy to reduce the amount of new energy infrastructure required to meet net zero.	NC4 Encourage local communities, businesses and visitors to respect the	<b>Minor positive.</b> The new policy deals with a specific aspect of the old more general NC4 policy in line with the revised themes of the

Proposed policy 2025-2030	Similar 2019 – 2024 Management Plan Policies	Divergence of environmental outcomes
	environment and minimise their carbon footprint PD3 Support measures to improve energy efficiency and resource use and support appropriate small scale renewable energy schemes that do not detract from historic character or visual amenity, and do not conflict with the special qualities of the AONB or the conservation of natural beauty	new plan. The outcomes from the previous policies will be achieved by the proposed new policy.
C3 Transition to renewables; energy used within the area needs to rise to near 100% renewable by 2050. The transition to low carbon and renewable energy should be undertaken in a way that seeks to further the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape, and is compatible with its special qualities, landscape character and heritage value.	NC4 Encourage local communities, businesses and visitors to respect the environment and minimise their carbon footprint PD3 Support measures to improve energy efficiency and resource use and support appropriate small scale renewable energy schemes that do not detract from historic character or visual amenity, and do not conflict with the special qualities of the AONB or the conservation of natural beauty	<b>None.</b> While the new policy has a specific driver, the outcomes from the previous policies will be achieved by the proposed new policy.
C4 Reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions through encouraging sustainable farming practices and maximise carbon storage in the environment by encouraging interventions such as tree planting and peaty soil restoration.	NC4 Encourage local communities, businesses and visitors to respect the environment and minimise their carbon footprint FLM1 A profitable, sustainable and environmentally beneficial farming and land management sector providing a range of public goods and services will be fostered as one of the principal means of maintaining the special qualities and distinctive landscape of the AONB	<b>Minor positive.</b> The new policy deals with a specific aspect of the old more general NC4 policy and policy FLM1 in line with the revised themes of the new plan. The outcomes from the previous policies will be achieved by the proposed new policy.
C5 Develop demand for sustainably produced food.	FLM4 Encourage the production and marketing of local food and other agricultural	<b>Minor positive.</b> The previous policy was focused on local food production, where compatibility with the AONB designation



Proposed policy 2025-2030	Similar 2019 – 2024 Management Plan Policies	Divergence of environmental outcomes
	products where these are compatible with the AONB designation	could be deemed to equate to 'sustainably produced'. The new policy seeks to shift demand to such products.
C6 Avoid waste and create a circular economy through redesigning products to reduce their environmental impacts and improve their reusability and recyclability, buying second hand and recycling.	NC4 Encourage local communities, businesses and visitors to respect the environment and minimise their carbon footprint CC1 Local communities will be supported to identify, plan, and provide for their own needs, in undertaking community activities to encourage sustainable lifestyles, reinforce local cultural traditions, and in celebrating their achievements and strengths	<b>Minor positive.</b> The new policy deals with a specific aspect of the old more general NC4 and CC1 policies in line with the revised themes of the new plan. The outcomes from the previous policies will be achieved by the proposed new policy.
C7 Reduce emissions from unavoidable biodegradable waste and wastewater treatment.	NC1 Promote a catchment, multiple-benefit, collaborative-based approach to soil conservation, water quality and flood alleviation improvements utilising the Otter, Axe, Culm and Parrett/Tone catchments NC4 Encourage local communities, businesses and visitors to respect the environment and minimise their carbon footprint	<b>Minor positive.</b> The new policy deals with a specific aspect of the previous more general NC4 and NC1 policies in line with the revised themes of the new plan. The outcomes from the previous policies will be achieved by the proposed new policy.
C8 Develop and encourage measures which reduce energy usage in existing buildings and improve energy efficiency for all buildings using low carbon technology in all refurbishment, regeneration and improvement schemes. As part of the transition, new buildings need to be net zero as soon as possible.	NC4 Encourage local communities, businesses and visitors to respect the environment and minimise their carbon footprint PD3 Support measures to improve energy efficiency and resource use and support appropriate small scale renewable energy schemes that do not detract from historic character or visual amenity, and do not conflict with the special qualities of the AONB or the conservation of natural beauty	<b>None.</b> The outcomes from the previous policies will be achieved by the proposed new policy, which combines them, reflecting the revised themes of the new plan.



Proposed policy 2025-2030	Similar 2019 – 2024 Management Plan Policies	Divergence of environmental outcomes
C9 Reduce the need to travel and support the development of sustainable low carbon transport and active travel options, while working to avoid leaving any community isolated.	NC4 Encourage local communities, businesses and visitors to respect the environment and minimise their carbon footprint TH3 Promote the development of high quality, integrated and sustainable transport services and initiatives in and around the AONB where they can be achieved without compromising the conservation of natural beauty and local character	<b>None.</b> The outcomes from the previous policies will be achieved by the proposed new policy, which combines them, reflecting the revised themes of the new plan.