Ministerial Foreword

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are some of our finest landscapes. They are cherished by residents and visitors alike and allow millions of people from all walks of life to understand and connect with nature.

I am pleased to see that this management plan demonstrates how AONB Partnerships can continue to protect these precious environments despite the significant challenges they face. With a changing climate, the increasing demands of a growing population and in difficult economic times, I believe AONBs represent just the sort of community driven, collaborative approach needed to ensure our natural environment is maintained for generations to come.

AONB Partnerships have been the architects of a landscape-scale approach to land management. This approach is a key feature of the Government’s Natural Environment White Paper and emphasises the need to manage ecosystems in an integrated fashion, linking goals on wildlife, water, soil and landscape, and working at a scale that respects natural systems.

This management plan also makes the important connection between people and nature. I am pleased to hear that local communities have been central to the development of the plan, and will be at the heart of its delivery. From volunteers on nature conservation projects, to businesses working to promote sustainable tourism, it’s great to hear of the enthusiasm and commitment of the local people who hold their AONBs so dear.

AONBs are, and will continue to be, landscapes of change. Management plans such as this are vital in ensuring these changes are for the better. I would like to thank all those who were involved in bringing this plan together and I wish you every success in bringing it to fruition.

Lord de Mauley, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Natural Environment and Science
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a statutory designation established by the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and given further impetus by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Together with National Parks, AONBs represent the nation’s finest landscapes, and the primary purpose of the AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. There are 34 AONBs in England, covering 14% of the country.

The Northumberland Coast AONB was designated in 1958. It covers an area of 138 square km along 64km of coastline from just south of Berwick-upon-Tweed to the Coquet Estuary. The AONB is only 2.5km wide at its widest point, and yet this stretch of English countryside contains a tremendous variety of features of natural, historical and cultural value.

The area is best known for its sweeping sandy beaches, rolling dunes, rocky headlands and isolated islands. Amid this striking land and seascape is abundant evidence of 7000 years of human activity, conflict and spiritual pursuit, while a host of national and international nature conservation designations attest to the great variety of important habitats and species in the AONB.

Given the long history of human interventions in the landscape, natural beauty can seem an elusive term; however, guidance provided by Natural England states that ‘natural beauty is not just the look of the landscape, but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over centuries’. Therefore the ‘natural beauty’ of the Northumberland Coast AONB is best expressed as the special qualities of the landscape, embracing all of these elements. These special qualities are set out in Part One of the Management Plan.

All public bodies (such as County and Parish Councils) and statutory undertakers (such as electricity and water companies) have duties under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act to ‘have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.'
The AONB Management Plan

As the relevant local authority, Northumberland County Council has a statutory duty to prepare and publish a Management Plan that formulates the Council’s policy for the management of the Northumberland Coast AONB and for the carrying out of the Council’s functions in relation to it. This Plan must be reviewed at least every five years.

The Council has a wide range of functions that could or do affect the AONB; most obviously as the local planning authority it is responsible for establishing local planning policies through the Local Development Plan and for the determination of planning applications. However, it is also responsible for highways and parking, waste management and the provision of a range of services to local communities.

Northumberland County Council has duties under other legislation to further the social and economic wellbeing of local communities; however, within AONBs these have to be implemented in ways which are consistent with the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the AONB. This Management Plan will also help in enabling an appropriate approach to be found within the Northumberland Coast AONB.

Although the plan is specifically for the Council to set out it’s polices and how it will carry out its functions, it will also help other public bodies to fulfil their obligations by clearly setting out the special qualities of the AONB and the sort of changes and pressures that could harm these. More widely, it will be of interest and value to any organisation whose work is within or could affect the AONB.

The Preparation of the Management Plan

This Management Plan has been informed by previous Plans, from the experience gained in their implementation and by changing pressures upon the special qualities of the AONB. It has been subject to wide consultation with members of the AONB Partnership, local communities including all Parish Councils within the AONB, and a wide range of other stakeholders and interest groups.

A concurrent Strategic Environmental Assessment has been undertaken as required by the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations 2004, and a Habitats Regulations Assessment has been undertaken as required by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. These can be found on the AONB website.
The AONB Staff Unit and the AONB Partnership

The AONB Staff Unit is funded by Defra and Northumberland County Council. The staff unit assists and facilitates Northumberland County Council and all other partners to implement the Management Plan and to undertake projects that fulfil the purpose of conserving and enhancing the AONB, and forms part of the Conservation Team within the Development Services department of Northumberland County Council.

To assist the Council in the conservation and enhancement of the Northumberland Coast AONB, the Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership was formed in 2003. This comprises representatives of the following key stakeholders and interest groups:

Northumberland County Council
Natural England
English Heritage
Environment Agency
Community Development Trusts
Parish Councils
National Farmers Union
Country Land and Business Association
National Trust
Northumberland Tourism
Special interest members drawn from the local community and relevant groups

The Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast European Marine Site

The Berwickshire and Northumberland Coast EMS is a designated site of international importance for nature conservation that encompasses 635 square km of sea and shore extending along 115km of coast line from Fast Castle Head in Berwickshire to Alnmouth in Northumberland. It
is designated for a number of specific habitats and species, comprising rocky reefs, sea caves, intertidal sand a mudflats, large shallow inlets and bays, grey seals, and a range of migratory and wintering wildfowl and waders.

The EMS and the AONB overlap geographically in the intertidal zone from Alnmouth to the northern end of the AONB at Spittal, but more importantly they have a range of common interests, and a close working relationship is maintained between the AONB staff unit and the EMS Project Officer. The previous Management Plan was a joint plan for the two designated areas; however, while the AONB Plan has a statutory 5 yearly review, European Marine Sites in England are moving towards a six yearly monitoring and review process and so are reverting to separate Management Plans. This also better reflects the very different nature of the two designations, with the AONB having a very broad landscape remit embracing landscape, geological, ecological historic and cultural special qualities, and the EMS having very specific biological interest features. However, co-ordination and joint working will continue across the two designations.

The North Northumberland Heritage Coast

Heritage Coasts are non-statutory designations agreed by Natural England and local authorities as being representative of our most beautiful and undeveloped coastline. They are managed to conserve their natural beauty and, where appropriate to improve accessibility.

The North Northumberland Heritage Coast stretches from the south end of Druridge Bay to the Scottish border, and extends offshore to the ten fathom contour. From the Coquet estuary to Spittal the inland boundary is identical to that of the AONB. Because the objectives of the heritage Coast are so similar to those of the AONB, implementation of this Plan will help to conserve much of the Heritage Coast.
Part one - The Special Qualities and forces for change

The Special Qualities of the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a nationally important landscape, and the most northerly AONB in England. The beautiful landscape that we see today is the result of the complex interaction of many forces, both natural and human, over very long periods of time. In order to conserve this landscape, it is necessary first to discern and describe what is special about it. This is explored in this chapter of the management plan, under the three headings of Landscape, Natural Environment and Cultural Environment.

Landscape

Dramatic natural coastline of rocky headlands and cliffs contrasting with extensive sweeping sandy beaches and dynamic sand dune systems

The long coastline of the AONB comprises a series of rocky headlands alternating with sandy bays and extensive sand and mud flats, largely determined by the underlying geology. The coast is generally low-lying to the North Sea, with significant coastal cliffs occurring only to the north of Berwick, beyond the AONB.

As the Carboniferous sedimentary strata and the Whin Sill (roughly horizontal sheets of hard, igneous dark rock), sequentially intersect the coast, a sequence of cliffed headlands, reefs and bays has formed. Thick sandstones, resisting marine erosion, form most of the headlands, whilst thinner sandstones and limestones form reefs, offshore rocks, and wave-cut platforms (often called ‘carrs’ or ‘steels’) running out to sea or parallel with the shore. The coastline at Boulmer is a particularly good example. The Whin Sill can be seen as a series of volcanic rock intrusions into the surrounding sedimentary rocks. The quartz dolerite which makes up the Whin Sill occurs across the county and typically forms elevated ridges which are more resistant to erosion and weathering than the surrounding strata. These ridges provide ideal defensive locations along the coastline with Dunstanburgh, Bamburgh and Lindisfarne Castles all sitting on top of such outcrops.

These characteristics of the ‘hard’ coast contrast with a ‘soft’ coastline where weaker rocks have been eroded to form bays. Between Berwick and south of Bamburgh, long stretches of broad sandy beach at Cocklawburn and Cheswick are backed by dunes, with tidal flats between. Further south the longer sweeping bays at Beadnell, Embleton and Alnmouth have broad sandy beaches and well developed dune systems, often forming high ridges. These are popular tourist locations, and the dunes near Alnmouth have been developed as a ‘links’ golf course.
Embleton Bay (Photo: Gavin Duthie)

Holy Island, connected to the mainland by a tidal causeway, is generally low-lying but comprises contrasting rocky cliffs to the north and east. Extensive sand and mud flats lie to the south west of the island and south on the mainland at Budle Bay. Along its south shore the remains of the Priory stand on a localised ridge or ‘heugh’ and Lindisfarne Castle is perched impressively on an outcrop of the Whin Sill. The Farne Islands comprises two small groups of rocky islands of Whin Sill, home to internationally important bird and mammal populations.

Dramatic coastal and riverside setting of iconic historic and cultural landmark features which provide localised vertical emphasis within a predominantly horizontal landscape and seascape

The chain of imposing castles at Lindisfarne, Bamburgh, Dunstanburgh and Warkworth are iconic historic features of national, if not international status. They are significant tourist attractions with special scenic qualities due primarily to their dramatic coastal and, in the case of Warkworth Castle, its riverside setting. They provide evidence and a special legacy of the need to defend this northern frontier.

Lindisfarne, Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh castles are outstanding landmark features sitting prominently on isolated outcrops of Whin Sill right on the edge of the sea. Bamburgh Castle is built on an impressive outcrop of dolerite rock which dominates the adjacent sands and the settlement. They create dramatic vertical focal points within a predominantly horizontal setting of sweeping sandy bays and the sea.

The impressive medieval castle at Warkworth, cutting off a promontory created by a meander in the River Coquet, is a major local landmark and tourist attraction, evoking the power of the medieval Dukes of Northumberland.

Remote historic, cultural and spiritual qualities and ecclesiastical associations of the Holy Island of Lindisfarne

Linked to the mainland only by a tidal causeway, the Holy Island of Lindisfarne retains a remote, spiritual quality which first prompted the founding of an ancient monastery (later a priory) by Saint Aiden in AD635, at the request of King Oswald, and later linked with Saint Cuthbert and Saint Wilfred. It was the centre from which the 7th Century conversion to Christianity of the Anglo Saxon Kingdom was based and the place where the Lindisfarne Gospels were written.
The island has inspired religious and cultural works for more than thirteen centuries. The romantic ruins of the priory inspired sketches and paintings by the artist J M W Turner (who also painted the ruins of Dunstanburgh Castle in 1797). Today the island is not only a centre for pilgrimage, but its scenic quality attracts visitors from all over the world each year, mostly attracted to its medieval religious heritage, compact village, fishing harbour and the more recent 16th Century castle (and registered historic park and garden) on the higher, southern part of the island, but also to the peace and tranquillity of the more remote, sandy, northern side.

**Distinctive rocky Farne Islands archipelago feature in many coastal views**

A group of twenty eight rocky islands lying between two to five miles off the coast, the Farne Islands form the easternmost outcrop of the hard dark rock of the Whin Sill. From an area stretching from north of Berwick to south of Castle Point, the islands are a distinctive feature in particularly striking views of the diverse natural coastline comprising the sea, rocky headlands and sandy bays, together with castles and other historic and cultural landmark features. Views back to Bamburgh Castle on the coast with the backdrop of the Cheviot Hills provide an unforgettable picture for the islands visitors.

The islands provide probably the most accessible seabird colony in England and are also home to a large grey seal colony. These draw about 45,000 tourists each year on a short boat trip from the mainland, where features of interest include a medieval Pele Tower, chapel, lighthouse and information centre on Inner Farne, and Longstone Lighthouse (with its connections to the heroine Grace Darling) on the outermost island. Historically the islands have strong links with Celtic Christianity and St Aidan and St Cuthbert, who valued the island’s solitude for meditation.

Distinctive traditional coastal fishing villages clustered around small harbours

Settlements along the coast have evolved through centuries of association with the sea for trading and fishing, located where there are indentations in the cliffs and reefs providing a degree of shelter. The coastline between Bamburgh and Craster provides an increasing amount of shelter. Craster is still an important fishing village, with tightly knit buildings clustered around a small sheltered harbour, as to a lesser extent are Low Newton and Boulmer where the village stretches out along the coast as the reef formations of the North and South Reins provide a protective envelope around Boulmer Haven. The simple vernacular design of the traditional fishing village, distinguished by its historic compact and ordered settlement pattern, often single storey buildings built with grey
sandstone rubble and red pantile or grey slate roofs, is a special and distinctive characteristic of the AONB.

Fishing still takes place from harbours on Holy Island, at Seahouses, Beadnell, Boulmer and Craster, but some harbours now cater increasingly for the tourist industry.

Beadnell harbour (Photo: Gavin Duthie)

**Views inland to the rounded sandstone hills and Cheviot Hills provide a dramatic and dynamic backdrop to the coast.**

In addition to the strong visual qualities of views up and down the coast, particularly from iconic castles and raised topography in areas such as Waren Mill, views inland help to provide a wider context or setting to the relatively constrained designated landscape. Vistas inland stretch to the west, over the extensive gently undulating coastal plain of arable farmland and fragmented woodland and plantations. The openness of this landscape setting is underpinned and amplified by a relative absence of obtrusive development or structures, reflecting its arable use and remoteness. Even major transport infrastructure, such as the A1 and the East Coast Mainline is absorbed within the vastness of the landscape without significant prominence, although the construction of the Middlemoor and Wandylaw wind farms has had an adverse impact on views inland from much of the AONB.

Looking towards the Cheviot Hills from Beadnell Bay (Photo: Iain Robson)

Consequently, the wider landscape context of the AONB is defined to the west by a fragmented line of low, rounded hills and moorland, running south to north from the Alnwick Moors, through to the Chillingham and Kyloe Hills, before the topography falls to the extensive lowland area south of the river Tweed. Occasionally, longer distance views to the dramatic Cheviot Hills in the Northumberland National Park are possible, and provide a visual link between the nationally important landscapes. Highpoints along
Feeling of exposure and tranquillity on the flat, low lying open coastal plain and windswept coast, with sparse tree cover, huge skies and wide seascape views

The low-lying and open character of much of the AONB, the absence of heavy tree cover, low hedges and sparse and scattered elements of human habitation and infrastructure can lead to strong feelings of tranquillity and remoteness. Seascape is an essential component of this character, both that experienced looking out to sea and that experienced viewing the coast from Lindisfarne and the Farne Islands. Despite the settled and farmed nature of the landscape, the network of country lanes and paths, access along the coast on the shore and its links are frequently free from significant human presence, particularly outside peak holiday seasons. Experience of this wide-open landscape beneath vast skies spanning from the seaward horizon to the Cheviot Hills in the west can result in a perception of isolation and freedom from the intensity of urban life, and is a valued component of the area.

Weather and seascape, altering light, wind, and changing seasonal colours and hues, in combination with the rich cultural heritage of the area can lead variously to peaceful contemplation, relaxation and even melancholy. Alternatively, exposure to harsh climatic conditions and the primacy of natural environment forces, whether on the shore or on the coastal plain, can focus the mind on less ethereal matters and remind residents and visitors of the wild coastal exposure of the AONB.

Dark skies

Ever-increasing levels of outdoor lighting are constantly diminishing our view of the spectacular sky visible on a clear night, and most people have to travel far from their homes to experience a good view of the night sky. Areas of the Northumberland Coast AONB still retain such dark skies, and these are a special quality of the area, valued by residents and visitors alike.
**Geology and Geomorphology**

A number of nationally important geological sites occur within the boundary, including Loughoughton Quarry SSSI, Howick to Seaton Point SSSI, Bamburgh Coast and Hills SSSI and the Castlepoint to Cullernose Point SSSI.

Cheswick Black Rocks beach (Photo: Clive Crossley)

Goswick – Holy Island – Budle Bay is a key site for coastal geomorphology - comprising three main units: (i) the dunes and barrier beaches of Cheswick and Goswick Sands, (ii) the dunes of the Snook and the clifftop dunes and cliff-beach system on the north coast of Holy Island, and (iii) the dunes and sandy beaches of Ross Links and Budle Bay.

The significance of the site lies, first, in the extensive progradation of sandy beaches; secondly, in illustrating the role of different wave energy distributions north and south of Holy Island on beach forms and processes; and thirdly, in the total assemblage and variety of contemporary and older coastal features. It is one of only four locations in England and Wales where barrier-type beaches occur and is the sole example in the North Sea wave climate which coincides with conditions of coastal emergence rather than submergence.
**Natural Environment**

**Dune grassland**

Long sandy beaches backed by sand dunes form an impressive part of the Northumberland coastal landscape. Most of the dunes are relatively young single ridge systems occurring at the backs of bays such as those at Embleton, or on spits across estuaries such as at Alnmouth and Warkworth. More extensive dune systems occur at Goswick, on Holy Island and at Ross Links. Unlike most sandy soils dunes are calcareous due to the quantity of shells in the sand, and so once the shifting sand has been stabilised by pioneer plants such as marram and lyme grass support a diverse community of lime-loving grassland plants.

Among the more distinctive flowering plants of dune grasslands are bloody crane’s-bill, lesser meadow-rue, sea bindweed, seaside centaury, purple milk-vetch and burnet rose. Also common are lady’s bedstraw, viper’s- bugloss, common restharrow, bird’s-foot trefoil and wild thyme. Lichens are common; especially species of *Cladonia* and *Peltigera*, and it is these that give the more mature fixed dunes the name ‘grey’ dunes (as opposed to the ‘yellow’ mobile dunes with bare sand). Petalwort, a scarce and tiny liverwort with a lettuce-like appearance is known from a few sites within the AONB.

Several scarce plants occur in damp hollows in the dunes called dune slacks, including coralroot orchid, dune helleborine, marsh helleborine, black bog-rush and round-leaved wintergreen. Of particular importance is Lindisfarne helleborine, an orchid known from nowhere in the world other than the dune grasslands on Lindisfarne. A few areas of dune in the more extensive systems around Lindisfarne are old enough to have had their shell content dissolved out by percolating rainwater, or comprise glacial sands which never contained shell fragments, and so have acidic soils. These support small areas of coastal heath with common heather, bell heather and in damper areas cross-leaved heath, such as are found at Ross Links and Bamburgh Golf Club.

Dune systems in Northumberland support a significant proportion of the north-east England populations of two species of butterfly; dark green fritillary and grayling, and the diverse invertebrate community also includes uncommon moths such as the sand dart, shore wainscot and the Portland moth.

Because of the internationally important plant communities that they support, several types of dune grassland communities are specially protected under the European Union's Habitats Directive. For this reason six areas of dune grassland in the AONB totalling 806ha in area are included in the North Northumberland Dunes Special Area of Conservation.
Rocky shores

The intertidal rocky shores of Northumberland vary from areas of broken bedrock and boulder fields, cobbles, vertical rock walls and horizontal ledges. They provide a permanent foundation for marine life to colonise, and the varying conditions created by the daily tides make the reefs one of the most diverse habitats on the Northumberland coast. The rocky shores around Holy Island and the Farne Islands are also protected as Special Protection Areas as the marine life provides a valuable food source for internationally important birds.

Soft sediment shores (inlets and bays)

Whilst predominantly rocky, the Northumberland coast has several characteristic, sediment-dominated embayments, including Budle Bay, Beadnell Bay and Embleton Bay. These beautiful beaches are relatively exposed, fairly uniform in nature and support many marine invertebrates. Budle Bay lies on the mainland just south of Holy Island. This area forms one of the most extensive areas of sand flat between the Firth of Forth and the Wash, with one of the richest assemblages of sediment species in the North East of England.

Beyond the intertidal area, Beadnell Bay and Embleton Bay form a sandy break in the otherwise continuous rocky reefs, with extensive areas of clean sand that support dense populations of the heart urchin *Echinocardium cordatum*, and razor clams *Ensis illica* and *E. arculatus*. The inlets and bays around Holy Island, as well as many of the mainland bays, are also protected as a Special Protection Areas for their importance as a habitat to internationally important birds.

Intertidal sand and mud flats

The Northumberland coast has extensive, biologically diverse sand and mud flats, ranging from wave exposed areas with mobile coarse sand, to more sheltered areas of fine sediment. The type of animals and plants which are supported by a sand or mud flat will vary according to a number of factors these include the type of sediment present, its stability and the salinity of the surrounding water. Lindisfarne, Budle Bay and the coast adjacent to the north of Holy Island form the most extensive area of intertidal sand and mud in North East England.

These extensive areas support one of the largest intertidal beds of the narrow leaved eel grass *Zostera angustifolia* and dwarf eelgrass *Zostera noltii* on the east coast the UK. There is also a diverse collection of animals living within the sediment and large beds of the blue mussel *Mytilus edulis*. Many of the bays along the open coast consist of fairly mobile sand, which supports communities of small crustaceans and marine worms. Areas of more sheltered sediment, such as Newton Haven, support stable lower shore
communities of burrowing heart urchins *Echinocardium cordatum* and bivalve molluscs. The intertidal sand and mud around Holy Island is also protected as a Special Protection Area as the many marine invertebrates provide a rich food source for birds.

**Sea caves**

Examples of partly submerged caves can be found in the sandstone cliffs to the north of Berwick, in the limestone at Howick, and on the north side of Holy Island. They support a diverse assemblage of marine life.

Reefs, inlets and bays, intertidal sand and mud, and sea caves from Alnmouth north into Scotland are protected as part of the Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast Special Area of Conservation. This SAC and the Lindisfarne Special Protection Area together form the Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast European Marine Site.

**Migratory and wintering wildfowl and waders**

A range of habitats including the wide shallow bays and saltmarshes around Lindisfarne, the rocky shores that punctuate lengths of sandy beach and the estuaries of the Coquet and the Aln provide rich and vital feeding grounds for huge numbers of ducks, swans, geese and wading birds that either pass through on migration between their artic breeding grounds and wintering grounds further south, or spend the winter here, on habitats kept ice-free by the sea.

The soft sediments of bays and estuaries support flocks of waders including bar-tailed godwit, redshank, golden plover, grey plover, curlew and dunlin, probing the mud for the many invertebrates that live in it, especially small bivalve molluscs and lugworms. Extensive beds of eelgrass within Fenham Flats and Budle Bay are grazed by pale-bellied brent geese, wigeon and whooper swan. The eelgrass beds are the largest on the east coast of England and this area supports a high proportion of the Svalbard population of pale-bellied brent geese during the winter, after which they return to breed in the Svalbard Archipelago, about half way between mainland Norway and the North Pole. Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve, which extends to 3541 ha and includes the dunes and much of the inter-tidal waters of Holy Island was established in 1964 to protect these important populations and to provide a mechanism to manage conflicts between conservation and
wildfowling, for example through the creation of sanctuary areas. The NNR is managed by Natural England.

Rocky shores are inhabited by waders that forage among the seaweed such as purple sandpiper, turnstone and redshank. Rafts of ducks including long-tailed duck, red-breasted merganser, common scoter and eider can be seen on the sea, the latter being the only species to stay in the area to breed, and a species with a close association with the Christian heritage of Lindisfarne, being locally known as ‘Cuddy ducks’ after St Cuthbert.

**Breeding seabirds**

The Farne Islands are internationally important for the seabird colonies that gather to breed on them each spring, and are a National Nature Reserve. Of particular importance are the colonies of arctic, common and sandwich terns, guillemot and puffin. The terns nest on the ground on the islands in large noisy colonies, with about 1900 pairs of arctic tern, 820 pairs of sandwich tern, and about 90 pairs of common tern. The Islands’ population of about 40,000 pairs of puffins occupy burrows, where each pair rears a single young. About 50,000 guillemots lay their eggs on precarious ledges on the cliffs, which they share with smaller numbers of kittiwakes, shag, cormorant and razorbill. Eider duck also nest on the islands, with about 550 nest scrapes lined with their famously soft feathers or eiderdown.

An important breeding colony of arctic and little terns occurs in Beadnell Bay, with smaller numbers of little tern at Lindisfarne.

Much of the intertidal area of the AONB is specially protected as Special Protection Areas under the European Birds Directive, and all of it is protected under domestic law as Sites of Special Scientific Interest because of its national and international importance for migratory and wintering wildfowl and waders and breeding seabirds.

**Grey seal**

The UK supports approximately 45% of the world population and 95% of the European population of grey seals *Halichoerus grypus*, based on pup production. Grey seals have bred on the Farne Islands since historical records began with the early Christians in the 7th Century. Today, an estimated 4,000 individuals live and breed on the Farne Islands, with approximately 1,000 pups being produced each year, although mortality can be high due to frequent bad weather and sea conditions. Females give birth on the Farnes from September through to December, often selecting sites close to where they gave birth in the previous season.
On the Farne Islands, rocky and coarse sediment shore areas provide the main habitats for breeding. Access to undisturbed pupping areas is a key requirement of the seals and the success of the Farne Islands colony is thought to be largely due to the undisturbed nature of the islands. Outside the breeding season, grey seals come ashore to rest and, during late winter, to moult. The area around the Farne Islands and Lindisfarne holds the largest concentration of hauled out seals along the east coast of the UK, with a small haul out area at Newton Bay.

**Whin grassland**

The outcrops of whinstone that form the Farne Islands, the crags on which Bamburgh, Lindisfarne and Dunstanburgh Castles are seated and other rocky outcrops within the AONB support a distinctive plant community called whin grassland. This is almost unique to Northumberland, because the Whin Sill, which is a very distinctive formation of igneous quartz-dolerite rock originating from magma intrusions into pre-existing sedimentary rocks, is a rare geological formation outside of the county. Examples of coastal whin grassland are restricted entirely to the AONB.

The best examples of whin grassland form where the rock has weathered to form a base-rich but thin and drought-prone soil, which supports short grazed turf interspersed with patches of bare rock slab. Scarce species found on the whin include maiden pink, a delicate member of the carnation family that has intensely coloured rose-red flowers; a diminutive, blue-flowered lily called spring squill; several alliums including field garlic and, very rarely, wild chives; and the pink-flowered and reddish-leaved hairy stonecrop. Common rockrose and a number of clovers and hawkweeds add to the colour in early summer, but by mid-summer many plants have succumbed to drought in this harsh environment. Whin outcrops also support a large number of species of lichen, many of which are scarce in Britain.

![Whin grassland at the Heugh on Holy Island (Photo: Gavin Duthie)](image)

Good examples of whin grassland can be found at Dunstanburgh, Craster, Cullernose Point, Hips Heugh, Bamburgh and on the Heugh at Holy Island.

**Farmland birds**

Arable farming is the dominant land use on the rich productive soils of the coastal plain, and this traditionally has supported its own distinctive bird community, including species such as grey partridge, tree sparrow, corn bunting, skylark and yellowhammer. Changes in agriculture in recent decades have caused dramatic declines in the populations of many of these species as both seed and insect food
sources have diminished. However, the Northumberland coastal plain still supports important populations of most of them, and farmers within and around the AONB play a vital role in sustaining them through the provision of buffer strips, over-wintered stubbles and small patches of vegetation grown to provide a range of seeds through the winter. The corn bunting is a particular concern, with intensive efforts being taken to try to ensure its survival in the county.

Arable land and grassland, especially damp grasslands with shallow flooding, can also be important for some waders, especially wintering curlew, redshank and golden plover, providing roosting and feeding habitat which is used especially at high tide. Wet grassland also supports small breeding populations of declining species including lapwing, curlew, snipe and yellow wagtail.

Other farmland wildlife

The scarce arable plant corn marigold has recently been found near Bamburgh, highlighting the potential for farmland within the AONB to support a range of important species in addition to farmland birds.

Cultural Heritage

The history of human interaction and occupation of the landscape is integral to the character of the Northumberland Coast AONB. The sea has always been the dominant force not only in how it has shaped the coastline but in how our ancestors have attempted to manipulate and exploit it. Evidence of this interaction ranges from field patterns to settlements sites, route ways to buildings and quarries to castles.

The cultural heritage of the Northumberland Coast AONB encompasses archaeology, built environment, landscapes, history and culture. The cultural heritage of the AONB falls broadly into four themes – ecclesiastical; fishing and farming; industry and transport; and castles and defence.

Pilgrim's Way (Photo: Peter Sutcliffe)
The isolation of dramatic coastal locations of Northumberland was undoubtedly very important within the early Celtic Christian Church where solitude, prayer and contemplation were essential. The small islands and peninsulas along the coast provided ideal locations for the austere ecclesiastical life of the early church in the 7th Century. The earliest and certainly the best known of these foundations is the monastery at Lindisfarne. Oswald’s accession to the throne of the Kingdom of Northumbria in 634 resulted in the arrival of St. Aidan from Iona and the conversion to Christianity of the region. Oswald gifted Lindisfarne to St Aidan to establish his small Christian community, and the original monastery would have comprised modest Anglo-Saxon timber buildings. The leadership of the small monastic community eventually passed to St Cuthbert and he in turn sought greater solitude and lived as a hermit first on the St Cuthbert’s Island off Lindisfarne then Inner Farne. The spectacular Priory buildings visible today date from the 12th century. Other sites established during the early Christian period are the small monastery founded by St. Ebba on the promontory at Beadnell known as Ebba’s Snook and the site on the promontory at the mouth of the river at Alnmouth called Church Hill, which is the possible location of the Synod of ‘Tyford’ in 684 that elected Cuthbert the Bishop of Lindisfarne.

The Synod of Whitby in 664 established the Roman Church as the established denomination of Christian faith in England and this, as well as growing wealth, led to a fusion of continental, Anglo-Saxon and Celtic influences that resulted in ‘the Golden Age’ of Northumbria. The Lindisfarne Gospels, produced on Holy Island in about 700AD, represents the Golden Age at its height.

The peace, tranquillity and wealth of monastic sites along the coast came to an abrupt end in 793AD when the first recorded Viking raid on the British Isles took place on Lindisfarne, with the Monks of Lindisfarne abandoning the island completely in 875AD.
The Hermitage at Warkworth continues the tradition of religious exclusion, though its foundation is much later (in the 14th Century), and has a romantic legend attached involving mistaken identity, revenge and repentance.

Undoubtedly the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1537 had a profound impact on the ecclesiastical landscape of the Northumberland Coast but the landscape has continued to inspire and provide spiritual motivation. It is clear that the coast must have engendered spirituality of a sort in our prehistoric ancestors as the numerous burial and ritual sites of Bronze Age (2000-700BC) testify.

**Fishing and farming**

There is evidence of human exploitation of the land and sea in this area dating back at least 10,000 years to the Late Mesolithic period. As the last ice age ended, tundra condition retreated and rising sea levels resulted in Britain becoming an island, small groups of Mesolithic peoples were hunting and fishing within the Northumberland coastal plain. A camp site has been discovered at Howick, and on Holy Island and Ross Links concentrations of flint tools and tool making debris have been found. During the Neolithic period (4,000-2,000BC) more settled conditions prevailed and social and technological changes were marked. Within Holy Island village, excavations have revealed remains of settlement from this period and distinctive Neolithic stone flint tools continue to be found along the coast. During the Bronze Age (2,000-800BC) there was a shift from hunter-gatherers to settled farming communities together with the development of social rituals, a typical landscape feature from this period are burial mounds. Shifting sands and dunes have revealed burials from this period at Low Hauxley, just south of the AONB. Deterioration in the climate was a feature of the transition into the Iron Age (800 BC – 40AD) and this dictated that there was pressure on resources, particularly the fertile coastal plain and the population shifted to enclosed fortified sites – such as Howick and Craster.

The current landscape is palimpsest of accumulated evidence. Medieval ridge and furrow, earthworks of deserted settlements and abandoned quarries are overlain by field boundaries, settlements and even golf courses provide an intriguing insight into historic activity. Other notable features that are testament to farming include the distinctive steam chimneys for thrashing developed in the 19th century and duckets, shorthand for dovecotes which often date from the medieval period.

![Bamburgh Ducket (Photo: The Handley Partnership)](image)

The sea has always dictated how people have lived along the coast; it has influenced architecture such as the well preserved and rare fisherman squares of Seahouses and the way in which most
settlements shelter from the elements using the topography of the landscape. Fishing has always been immensely important, records dating back to the 14th century show the industrial scale of the ecclesiastical fishing operations around Lindisfarne. Harbours at Craster, Beadnell and Seahouses are still active and while now dominated by leisure as opposed to the once thriving fishing industry the harbours still provide a wonderful insight into a historic way of life. The distinctive aromas of the working smokeries at Seahouses and Craster are incredibly evocative of an industry that is a shadow of its former self, as are the stakes of lobster and crab pots and the tar blacked half boat sheds on Holy Island. The coble, a local fishing boat, with a distinctive flat bottom enabled fishing out from shallow bays such as Boulmer, Embleton and Newton.

The frequently treacherous coastal waters resulted in increasing numbers of ship wrecks, which now form a valuable element of the known marine archaeological record.

Industry and transport

To support the changes in the economy of the county in the 18th century, new industries were to develop along the coastline. Notable amongst these was the lime industry, with large kilns at sites including Holy Island, Seahouses and Beadnell supplying essential raw materials for improving soil fertility. The volume of lime production was such that a significant export trade developed. Craster also developed as a port for the export of whinstone to the continent, with pantiles coming in as ballast. A distinct architecture is associated with this period of growth in trade and industry with agricultural warehouses and merchant houses being amongst the building types, which survive to the present day. The increased wealth amongst major landowners resulted in the building of stately houses with associated landscaped ground of which Adderstone Hall near Belford and Howick Hall are prominent examples.

Howick Hall (Photo: Tom Cadwallender)

Another notable feature of the AONB is the linear form which is emphasised by the north-south routes to the western edge of the A1 and the East Coast mainline railway. The development of the railway not only facilitated trade and industry, it heralded the start of tourism, notably enabling the eccentric publisher Edward Hudson to refurbish Lindisfarne Castle as a holiday retreat, with the help of Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll.

Castles and defence

The Vikings raid on Holy Island in 793 was a precursor to instability in the early medieval period with individual kingdoms battling for supremacy. Whilst upstanding physical remains from this period are few, the Norman invasion of England had a profound impact on the
built heritage of the coast. Disputes between England and Scotland which began in the 14th century, started nearly three centuries of warfare and raiding. The Northumberland coast assumed a strategic importance that was to lead to the construction of major castles of Bamburgh, Dunstanburgh and Warkworth and the town defences of Berwick. A fort was constructed on Holy Island in 1570-72, which formed the basis for Lindisfarne Castle.

During the twentieth century the requirements of defence were again to leave a built legacy on the coast. With the long sandy beaches along the coast seen as a possible location for invasion, extensive concrete and wire defences were erected during the Second World War. The wary vigilance of the Cold War has also left a legacy on the coast at sites such as Newton Point. Throughout the twentieth century pressures for leisure developments were also to be experienced along the coast. Chalet and caravan sites, hotels and farm conversions to holiday homes form a new built legacy, which marks a distance time in the history of the north Northumberland coastline.

The historic evolution of settlements on the coast and their relationship to the land form, climate and available building materials has resulted in the special and distinctive characteristics. These characteristics of the built landscape are integral to the special qualities and attraction of the AONB.
Forces for Change: the Trends Affecting the Special Features and Qualities of the AONB

In recent centuries and especially in recent decades, the ability of people to make significant changes to this landscape very quickly, and often as the unintentional consequence of other activities, has become increasingly pronounced. The narrow, ribbon-like shape of this coastal designation accentuates the way in which such pressures and trends can be acutely apparent, with relative small changes having a much larger than anticipated impact. In order to manage the Northumberland Coast AONB effectively for the lifetime of this plan it is necessary to identify what potential forces for change threaten its special qualities.

Inappropriate development

One of the main threats to the special qualities of the Northumberland Coast AONB is intrusive and inappropriate development. Development within or around coastal settlements and on the coastal plain, including tourist infrastructure such as caravan parks, the conversion of farmsteadings to tourist accommodation and the construction of new build tourist developments requires careful consideration and management, to protect coastal character, key views to the sea and the special coastal landscape features and landmarks. To ensure that the Northumberland Coast AONB landscape is safeguarded it is essential to work in close partnership with Northumberland County Council and through advocacy and guidance.

It has been recognised by CPRE that Northumberland has the darkest skies in the England. The Dark Sky tranquillity of the Northumberland Coast is undoubtedly one of the special features that this plan seeks to protect. Erosion of this tranquillity can be subtle, but once lost, is almost impossible to regain. Overdevelopment on the outskirts of settlements and in rural locations and poor design of lighting schemes is leading to the steady erosion of the quality of the dark skies in the AONB.

Middlemoor and Wandylaw wind farms have already had an adverse impact on views inland from much of the AONB. Further wind farm and single turbine development proposals are being progressed, and this is likely to remain a significant pressure on the special qualities of the AONB. Novel forms of energy extraction and generation including fracking and undersea coal gasification may emerge as pressures within the lifetime of this plan.

On-going reforms to the planning system could have a range of impacts on the AONB as for example more permitted development for house extensions and barn conversions relax the control that the planning system has over some types of development.

Visitor pressures

Visitors bring many benefits to the area; tourism makes up almost 12% of Northumberland’s economy and over 11,000 people are employed in tourism in the county. However, increasing numbers of
visitors can exacerbate the erosion of special landscape features due to increased activity, requiring careful management and measures to improve awareness of the sensitivities of the AONB’s landscape and potential man-induced impacts.

Excessive trampling of dunes can result in a loss of vegetation, with consequent drifting of blown sand which can then develop into large ‘blow-outs’ (bowl shaped formations of bare sand). Whilst loss of important areas of dune grassland are of concern, this needs to be balanced by an appreciation that mobile sand is a fundamental and important aspect of natural dune processes, and creates many important ecological niches. Therefore actions that over-stabilise dune systems are also harmful, as they interfere with natural processes that dune flora and fauna are adapted to and in many cases require.

By opening up the vegetation and creating areas of bare sand, trampling does increase the opportunity for pirri-pirri bur to become established and spread, as do the fires that occur periodically in the dunes, usually from visitors’ barbecues or open fires. Dune grasslands are important nesting sites for ground-nesting birds such as meadow pipit; high visitor pressure especially off-lead dogs can have adverse effects on these populations.

Wading birds feed and roost on mudflats, rocky shores, sand and farmland, depending on the species. They are naturally vigilant, and will tend to regard people and especially dogs as potential predators. Sports such as power-kiting have the potential to disturb large areas, and bait digging can also cause relatively high levels of disturbance. Taking flight to avoid perceived threats uses energy and reduces the time available for feeding, especially in the intertidal zone where feeding time is already constrained by the tides. If this happens repeatedly it can affect fitness and even survival, especially in severe weather. Fortunately there are areas where disturbance levels are always likely to be low due to poor accessibility. However, a clear understanding of the distribution and scale of both wader populations and human disturbance is essential if the impact of disturbance is to be accurately assessed.

Accessing the intertidal rocky shore can also cause disturbance by trampling and turning cobbles and boulders. This can leave delicate marine life exposed to desiccation while the tide is out.

Grey seals breed on the Farne Islands and rely on a relatively undisturbed environment. Too many visitors to the islands could cause problems if not managed. Grey seals haul out at various spots along the coast and are vulnerable to disturbance from people and dogs. Seals are also vulnerable to water-based sports.

Litter is widely perceived as a problem in the AONB, with even a small amount having a marked effect on people’s perception of a wild and unspoilt coastline. Much beach litter is brought in by the tides, reflecting a wider issue with marine litter. Marine plastics in particular are a growing concern, as evidence increases about the harm these cause to marine wildlife.
The use of housing as a second and holiday homes is having a significant detrimental effect on many of the small villages in the AONB, increasing house prices and reducing the availability of housing for local people. Second and holiday homes make limited contributions to the sustainability of the local economy, community and maintenance of local services. This has the potential to contribute to disjointed communities and ultimately an erosion of cultural traditions and community cohesion, due to local families being unable to live in the area.

There is an inevitable conflict between encouraging visitors to enjoy the special qualities of the coast – part of which is its remoteness and isolation – and yet trying to manage the problems of access and parking. There is on-going pressure for additional car parking along the coast, with localised parking problems during the peak holiday season.

Changes in land management

High quality soils, a relatively benign climate and gentle slopes make large areas of the AONB of great importance for food production, a land use of primary importance which is all too easily taken for granted. Integrating intensive arable farming with the conservation of valued landscape features and wildlife can be challenging. The loss of landscape features and the erosion of character in some areas of the farmed coastal plain within the AONB should be arrested by the restoration and improved management of traditional boundary features, particularly hedgerows where these are gappy or have been replaced by post and wire fences, and stone walls. A close working relationship with farmers, landowners and agents is required to encourage appropriate farm management and sensitive design and siting of new farm buildings, to help maintain or restore traditional character.

Traditionally dune grasslands and whin grasslands have been grazed, and a moderate level of grazing is one of the most important factors in maintaining the high diversity of wild flowers found in these special grasslands. In the absence of grazing, coarse grasses and scrub become dominant and many of the more distinctive dune flowers become rare or are lost, while if grazing levels are heavy, the plant community becomes dominated by a few common grazing–tolerant species. Recent agricultural practices have tended to lead to the abandonment of dune and whin grazing, either because farms have changed from mixed farming to purely arable, or because this rough grazing does not suit modern fast-maturing breeds. Conversely, a few sites are used as winter-standing for high densities of cattle provided with supplementary feeding, because the free-draining sandy soil does not become boggy in wet weather.
Historic Environment features within the landscape can be affected by land management operations from scrubbing up of archeologically sites due to a reduction in grazing or erosion of sites from over stocking or natural forces. The historic environment is sensitive to change and this non-renewable resource is fragile and needs careful land management.

In recent years there have been significant steps forward in tackling many sources of pollution, such as the upgrading of the coastal sewage treatment network. However diffuse pollution (pollution arising from many different sources) such as runoff from agricultural land entering watercourses is a concern, especially within Fenham Flats and Budle Bay, where it can promote the growth of algae and adversely affect feeding habitats for wildfowl and waders.

A sustained increase in nutrients can have serious effects on marine plants and animals too, such as enrichment, poisoning, smothering, and the disruption of growth, respiration, reproduction, and the immune systems of marine invertebrates. Increasing levels of the algae Enteromorpha around Holy Island and in Budle Bay are beginning to degrade the sand and mud flats, which are protected as part of the Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast Special Area of Conservation and the Lindisfarne Special Protection Area. Recent monitoring shows a decline in condition as the algae is starving the sediments of oxygen, which impacts on the marine invertebrates living here. There is also concern that the eel grass beds are also being impacted due to smothering by the Enteromorpha.

Currently many natural environment features and historic assets are protected through positive management by landowners under Stewardship Schemes. The current round of schemes comes to an end over the life of this Management Plan and the uncertainty about the nature of any successor schemes is a major factor influencing the future of many of the special qualities of the Northumberland Coast AONB.

**Climate change**

Key trends and forces for change are likely to include erosion of the natural coastline due to climate change, especially the loss of historic and natural environment features and habitats. It is anticipated that rising sea levels will result from climate change and this will directly impact on sites, habitats, species and structures as well as archaeological deposits in the inter-tidal and coastal environment. Some of these deposits are of national and international importance.

Climate change could result in an increase in flood events, which could lead to damage to or the direct destruction of historic structures such as bridges, mills and other waterside buildings. Continued collaboration with organisations such as the National Trust and Natural England is required to ensure protection of the area’s built legacy and conservation of the natural environment via local, national and international designations.

Sand dunes are naturally mobile features, rolling inland or progressing seaward in response to factors such as changes in sea level. However, the capacity of dunes to roll back is now greatly constrained by human infrastructure such as roads and built development, and there are now very few opportunities for rollback to occur in Northumberland. When coastal habitats such as dunes and intertidal habitats become trapped between rising sea levels and hard infrastructure they must inevitably diminish in size and possibly change greatly in nature, a phenomenon known as coastal squeeze. Coastal squeeze caused by the construction of hard defences will particularly affect rocky shore, a habitat which there is very limited prospect of recreating elsewhere, for example through managed realignment. This issue has been
taken account of in the Northumberland Shoreline Management Plan and its recommendations concerning where sea defences should and should not be maintained. However, this is a non-statutory document, and so there is a risk that insufficient account is taken of it in importance decisions concerning land use and land use change on the coast.

Recent increases in the frequency and intensity of storm events seem set to continue as a result of climate change. The creation of habitats such as saltmarsh which are very effective in absorbing the power of incoming waves can play a valuable and cost-effective role in sea defence in an environment of rising seas levels and increased storminess. Similarly, habitats such as floodplain grassland have a valuable role to play in the management of river and surface water flooding, because of their capacity to hold vast volumes of water during storm events.

Climate change can also facilitate the natural movement of species, affecting their natural range and distribution, and providing opportunities to colonise previously uninhabitable areas. Many species will have no major impact on local species, yet some will compete for space, food and other resources and can have a serious adverse effect on the local ecosystem. Climate change and rising sea surface temperatures is also exacerbating the spread of marine non-natives via human vectors, such as movement around the country on the hulls of boats, or through ballast water transfer. Warming temperatures are now creating viable conditions in areas that would have previously been too cold for species to survive and thrive.

**Non-native invasive species**

A significant proportion of the plant species found in the British countryside are not native, and have only arrived through intentional or accidental transportation by people and their crops and traded goods. The vast majority of these do not have any adverse impact on native plant communities, but a few do become strongly invasive, displacing valued plant communities and forming dense monocultures of very little value to wildlife. Pirri-pirri bur is one such species that is a particular problem within the North Northumberland dunes, having arrived in the UK via seeds attached to fleeces imported from New Zealand. As well as displacing internationally important dune grassland communities, the very sticky burs produced by this plant are a nuisance to walkers and are exceptionally difficult to remove from dogs’ coats, even resulting in them having to be shorn. This is also causing them to be spread to other parts of the county, including the Cheviots, Cragside and Hadrian’s Wall.

![Pirri-pirri bur (Photo: Raine bryant)](image)

Other non-native invasive species within the dunes include Michaelmas daisy, cotoneaster and sycamore. Himalayan balsam,
Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed can be problematic along watercourses.

A number of marine non-natives have also been recorded on the intertidal rocky shore. Japanese skeleton shrimp was recently recorded on the north shore of Holy Island. The colonial sea squirt Botrylloides violaceus has been found beneath boulders at various sites along the Northumberland coast but the abundance, distribution and impact of this species is unknown. The alga Codium fragile has been recorded at Beadnell for 20 years or more but does not appear to be increasing in abundance or causing any damage. Pacific oyster are also now settling naturally to the north of the AONB in the Firth of Forth, and have been recorded elsewhere around the UK. Water temperatures in the UK were previously thought to be too cold to support natural populations, but warming seas are now providing suitable conditions.

The control of non-native species also needs to be carefully managed to ensure methods do not adversely affect other species and habitats.
Vision Statement

The vision looks ahead to 2034, to describe the type of place that we believe the Northumberland Coast AONB should be in twenty years’ time. The twenty year vision is followed by more detailed vision statements for the three themes that are the priorities for the Management Plan.

A vision for the Northumberland Coast AONB in 2034

A sense of remoteness and wildness is maintained, with wide open coastal and sea views, a naturally functioning coastline rich in wildlife, and a clear distinction between settlements and open countryside. The AONB is a living, working area with a celebrated history and culture, and a vibrant present in which social and economic wellbeing is successfully integrated with the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the area.

Conserve and enhance the special landscape, natural environment and cultural heritage of the Northumberland Coast AONB

The essential qualities of the AONB’s landscape continue to predominate and to define the area. The distinctive wildlife of the coast is thriving under careful stewardship rooted in an ecosystem approach. Important features of the historic environment are being successfully conserved and are widely understood and appreciated.

The Northumberland Coast AONB remains as a living and thriving landscape

Local people are able to sustain livelihoods through economic activity that is not harmful to the special qualities of the area. Food production remains at the heart of rural life, with conservation of soil, water and wildlife integral to agriculture and funded accordingly. Appropriate housing is available to meet local needs. Coastal defences are maintained where needed to protect settlements and in accordance with the Shoreline Management Plan, while elsewhere managed retreat and dune rollback are used creatively and ambitiously to provide natural protection for the land while creating superb habitats in the process.
Celebrate and discover the Northumberland Coast AONB
The area is enjoyed, understood and cherished by local people and visitors in ways that do not harm the special qualities of the area and help to sustain its economy. Full use of the coast is made as an educational asset for people of all ages, and a culture of volunteering helps to sustain high environmental quality and pride in the area.
Part Two – the Policies and Supporting Text

Introduction

This part of the Management Plan sets out the aims and policies with some text to justify these and put them into context. In this revision we have opted to have broad but succinct rather than the lengthy and detailed policies. The document is divided into three themes;

- Conserve and enhance the special landscape, natural environment and cultural heritage of the Northumberland Coast AONB
- The Northumberland Coast AONB remains as a living and thriving landscape
- Celebrating and exploring the Northumberland Coast AONB

For each theme, we have set out our aims (where we want to be) and our policies (what stance we will take to achieve our aims).

We have only written policies where we need them. If there is no threat to natural beauty or the threat is dealt with by ‘higher’ legislation, there is no need for a policy.
Theme 1 Conserve and Enhance

Conserve and enhance the special landscape, natural environment and cultural heritage of the Northumberland Coast AONB

The primary focus of this Management Plan concerns the fabric of the AONB; the landscapes and the natural, cultural and historical features that contribute to these and together make up the special qualities of the area. A complex array of environmental, social and economic forces are constantly acting on these special qualities; sometimes reinforcing them, sometimes weakening them, often acting in ways that are hard to predict with certainty. The main aim of the Management Plan is to help guide and challenge the human impact on the AONB to ensure that its special qualities are conserved and enhanced.

Aims

1. The distinctive character and qualities of the Northumberland Coast AONB are understood by local residents and businesspeople, visitors and statutory agencies.

2. The conservation, enhancement and restoration of the landscape is integrated into all land-use management and development.

3. The setting of the AONB and important views into it and from it are recognised and protected.

4. The diversity and strong sense of place of areas and settlements in the AONB is recognised, valued, conserved and enhanced. Traditional and appropriate contemporary design, informed by past best practice but incorporating the best available technologies creates environmentally sustainable developments that enhance the local area.

5. The rich diversity and importance of habitats, species and natural features is understood and recognised by policymakers. Evidence is available to guide land management and influence decisions concerning future development.

6. Existing high quality or priority habitats are conserved and enhanced. There is no net loss of biodiversity amongst species for which the Northumberland Coast is important.

7. Networks of priority habitats are created, enhanced and expanded to provide resilient ecological networks across the AONB.

8. The AONB’s historic environment is conserved and protected, and the distinctive heritage assets are enhanced such that there is greater understanding of and support for the AONB.
The special qualities of the landscape of the Northumberland Coast AONB are set out and discussed in Part One of this plan, as are some of the main pressures on these. However, a wide range of activities and developments can have adverse effects upon these special qualities. All public bodies and statutory undertakers such as gas, electricity and water companies have a legal duty to have regard to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the AONB in the course of their work. The National Planning Policy Framework clearly sets out importance of the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of AONBs and requires that great weight is given to this. Although the purpose of the Management Plan is to set out the County Council’s policy for the management of the AONB, it will also assist all public bodies to fulfil this statutory duty.

The European Landscape Convention, which was signed by the UK Government in 2006 highlights the importance of developing landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and creation of landscapes. The Natural Environment White Paper (Defra, 2011) affirmed the value of landscape as contributing to our national identity and the local distinctiveness of our communities, and playing a vital role in our wellbeing.

**Policy CE1: Landscape**

*The special landscape and seascape qualities of the AONB will be conserved and enhanced.*

The ecological importance of the AONB is reflected in the large number of designated wildlife sites in the area, highlighted in Part One of this Plan. However, many important habitats and populations of important species occur outside of these special sites, in the wider countryside. In order to focus work to conserve the natural environment where it is most needed, the Government maintains a list of Habitats and Species of Principal Importance in England; this currently comprises 943 species and 56 habitats, a good number of which occur within the Northumberland Coast AONB. All public bodies and statutory undertakers have a duty to have regard to the conservation of these habitats and species in the course of their work. The National Planning Policy Framework makes it clear that sustainable development involves not just halting but reversing the decline in our wildlife. It requires that Local Development Plans identify ways of working towards this, and obliges local planning authorities to carefully assess the impact of proposed developments on important habitats and species and to provide protection for them.

‘Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England’s wildlife and ecosystem services’ was published by Defra in 2011. It sets out the Government’s priorities for nature conservation under an overall vision: *To halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.*

The strategy sets out a range of actions relevant to the conservation of important habitats and species. These seek to improve ways in which different sectors such as development, farming, forestry and water management take account of and
contribute to nature conservation, and to make land management for nature conservation more effective by working at a larger scale, improving the quality of existing areas of priority habitats, increasing the area of priority habitats, and strengthening the connections between areas of priority habitat to tackle fragmentation and isolation.

The importance of geological and geomorphological features in the AONB is reflected in the existence of several geological SSSIs in the area. The AONB’s Geodiversity Action Plan sets out in detail the geological value of the area and actions required to conserve this and to highlight its importance.

**Policy CE2: Important habitats, species and natural features**

*Habitats and species of principal importance, important geological and geomorphological sites and other important natural features will be conserved and enhanced.*

*Development proposals and other land use changes likely to have adverse impacts on these will be opposed unless it can be clearly shown that such impacts will be avoided or adequately mitigated. Appropriate levels of ecological enhancement should also be provided.*

The wealth of the Northumberland Coast AONB’s Historic Environment is set out in Part One of this plan, as are some of the main pressures on the Historic Environment. The settlements and landscape of the AONB are rich in the historical character and the myriad details contribute to a special sense of place. The Historic Environment is a vulnerable non-renewable resource that needs protection and conservation.

**Policy CE3: Historic Environment**

*Important heritage assets including designated and non-designated archaeological sites, and the character and appearance of historic buildings, settlements and the built environment will be protected and conserved.*

Living with a changing coastline presents a wide range of challenges. Sea defences can be essential to protect towns and villages, but can also cause a range of harmful effects. They can increase erosion elsewhere by disrupting the natural patterns of erosion, sediment transfer and deposition; they can cause the loss of important habitats through ‘coastal squeeze’ (loss of intertidal areas due to a combination of fixed sea defences and rising sea levels); they can be a very costly and inefficient alternative to using managed realignment to harness the ability of habitats such as saltmarshes to naturally dissipate the energy from incoming waves; or they can simply lock communities into financially unsustainable and never-ending battles against the forces of nature.

The Shoreline Management Plan provides a large-scale assessment of the risks associated with coastal erosion and sea flooding between Berwick and the River Tyne. It also provides a policy framework to manage these risks to people and the developed, natural and historic environment in a sustainable manner over the next 100 years. The SMP sets out a series of policies for different areas of the coast, which identify whether coastal defences should be provided and maintained, the coast allowed to evolve naturally, or managed realignment should take place, whereby existing
defences are breached or removed, with new defences being provided at a more appropriate location if required.

Local Authorities are required to identify Coastal Change Management Areas (CCMAs) and to include these in their Local Plans. CCMAs are areas of coast identified in the Shoreline Management Plan as likely to experience significant change through erosion, landslip, inundation or accretion over the next century, but where it is inappropriate to use hard defences to try to prevent this. CCMAs will be defined in the Northumberland Local Plan Delivery Document. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out a series of tests that must be met before development is permitted within a CCMA, including that the development is safe over its planned lifetime and will not have an unacceptable impact on coastal change; that the character of the coast and of designations such as AONBs will not be compromised; that the development has wider sustainability benefits; and that it does not hinder the development of an un-interrupted path around the coast.

Coastal change has the potential to impact directly on the Historic Environment, particularly sites and structures and archaeological deposits in the inter-tidal, coastal and marine environments. Flood events can lead to the direct destruction of historic structures such as bridges, mills and other waterside buildings. Recent work at Low Hauxley and Howick has highlighted the potential and highly vulnerable nature of archaeological deposits in the coastal area. In addition the maritime history of the region has resulted in a wealth of marine archaeology from shipwrecks to marine industries on and off shore.
Policy CE4: Development on the coastal slope or in other areas at risk of flooding or erosion

Northumberland Shoreline Management Plan 2 and associated studies are recognised as being of primary importance when land use change on the coast is being investigated, planned or considered, and so must be taken fully into account.

Development on the currently undeveloped coastal slope will be opposed. The use of private sea defences to make a development safe within its planned lifetime will not be supported and will be regarded as evidence of the fundamental unsuitability of that site to accommodate such development.

Housing is an issue of the utmost importance for many people living or working within the AONB. Studies undertaken for the Northumberland County Council’s Local Plan have identified a shortage of housing land in Northumberland to deliver the Council’s strategy to grow the economy, including for communities within the AONB. The AONB Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study includes a section on housing, which identifies areas around settlements most likely to accommodate new housing without causing significant landscape impacts. However, this is a broad guide and it is focused specifically on landscape; it is important that the full range of special qualities is considered when exploring the potential for new development.

Policy CE5: Residential development

The construction of housing for permanent occupation will be supported where it will not adversely impact upon the special qualities of the AONB and conforms with relevant policies within the emerging Northumberland Local Development Plan. The imposition of occupancy restrictions to ensure that such housing is used for permanent residential accommodation rather than tourist accommodation will be promoted.

There are a range of concerns arising from the construction of new housing for visitor accommodation. Most importantly, there is an identified need for further housing for permanent occupation and a limited supply of land suitable for housing, creating a clear priority in favour of housing for permanent occupation. It is also critical to the conservation of the special qualities of the AONB to avoid the suburbanising effects of housing developments outside of settlement boundaries. No matter how good the design of such houses might be, they inevitably bring with them all of the paraphernalia associated with housing including car parking, bin stores, lighting, lawns and formal planting and LPG or oil tanks. Inevitably, the cumulative effect of such developments is to erode the rural character of the area. The emerging Northumberland Local Plan gives priority to locating such development within identified towns and villages.
Policy CE6: New build for tourist accommodation

The construction of permanent housing for occupation as visitor accommodation will only be supported where it can be robustly demonstrated that there is a shortage of suitable buildings for conversion, a demonstrable need for further accommodation of this type, it will not have an adverse effect on the special qualities of the AONB and it conforms with the relevant policies of the Northumberland Local Plan.

Conversion of rural buildings can be beneficial to the rural economy and, in particular, can help support viable farming which may continue to conserve the AONB Landscape. However, inappropriate conversion that significantly alters the original character of the buildings or their setting can lead to a gradual erosion of local distinctiveness, destruction of heritage assets and irreversible decline in the quality of the landscape. Agricultural buildings are also important for a range of species including barn owls, swallows and a number of species of bats, and so it is important that nesting and roosting opportunities for these species are incorporated into building conversions.

Policy CE7: Conversion of agricultural buildings

Conversion of agricultural buildings to residential use or visitor accommodation will be scrutinised particularly in terms of the quality of the design and materials, and the extent to which the original form of the building is respected as set out in the AONB Design Guide for the Built Environment, as well as any impacts on designated sites. Nesting and roosting sites for important species such as barn owls, swifts, swallows and bats should be built in to conversions. Budget accommodation such as bunk barns that is appropriately designed and located will be supported, because of the shortage of such accommodation within the AONB.
Good design and conservation of existing buildings are considered as high priorities to maintain the character of the AONB. In order to conserve the diversity and distinctiveness of the built environment it is important to resist inappropriate development. However it is equally important to ensure that any development, including new, alterations, conversions and maintenance, is of a suitable scale, well designed and relates well to its landscape setting – as set out in the AONB Design Guides for the Built Environment.

In recent decades the individuality of some coastal settlements and traditional building styles have been compromised. Some settlements have expanded rapidly and building styles and materials have been introduced that have limited connection with the local vernacular. The individual and cumulative impact has led to some settlements losing character and form. The AONB Design Guide for the Built Environment provides clear guidance as to what is and is not appropriate within the AONB by referencing the existing historic built environment and advocating the use of high quality materials. The Guide also contains clear guidance relating to landscaping, farm buildings, campsites and sustainable construction and has been prepared to help ensure appropriate design within the AONB.

**Policy CE8 Design standards**

*High quality of design and landscaping in new buildings, conversions, alterations and maintenance work will be sought through advocacy of the AONB Design Guide for the Built Environment.*

New static caravan and chalet sites can have an especially severe landscape impact due to the nature of the structures concerned. By attracting large numbers of visitors to specific locations on the coast they can also cause increased disturbance to important coastal bird populations. The AONB Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study includes detailed advice concerning the landscape implications of both the expansion of existing sites and the construction of new sites.

**Policy CE9: Static caravan and chalet parks**

*New static caravan or chalet sites or extensions to existing sites will only be supported where it can be robustly demonstrated that they will not have a significant adverse effect on the special qualities of the AONB and that they conform with the relevant policies of the Northumberland Local Plan.*
Touring caravan and camping sites are an important element in the range of tourist accommodation available in the AONB, with the potential to support low cost, low impact forms of tourism. Their landscape impact can be limited if they have little in the way of permanent structures on the site; however, impacts can still be significant if sites are large or poorly sited, and so careful consideration needs to be given to factors such as location, scale and landscaping.

Beadnell campsite (Photo: Gavin Duthie)

Policy CE10: Camping and caravan sites

Proposals for new camping and caravan sites or extensions to existing sites will be scrutinised in terms of the amount of permanent infrastructure to be constructed on the site, the nature and extent of the proposed landscaping and the proposed opening season, as well as the overall impact on the special qualities of the AONB.

An increasingly diverse range of renewable energy technologies is becoming available at the farm or domestic scale, including wind turbines, static and tracking solar arrays and anaerobic digestion units that utilise the methane generated by waste organic matter to generate electricity. These vary in the nature and scale of impacts that they have on the special qualities of the AONB, and so it is important that this issue is taken into account in the selection of the most appropriate technology as well as the design and siting of the installation itself. Ground and air source heat pumps can have the lowest impact on the appearance of a building, but the trenching associated with ground-source can be problematic if there is buried archaeology in the vicinity. Photovoltaic panels may be appropriate on some buildings but not those of architectural significance or in areas of particular architectural or conservation areas.
Policy CE11: Domestic/farm scale renewable energy

Proposals for domestic or farm scale renewable energy developments will be supported if they will not have a significant adverse effect on the special qualities of the AONB. Individual wind turbines should be associated with existing settlements or buildings, of a size appropriate to their landscape setting and subject to a landscape and visual impact assessment. A landscape and visual impact assessment may also be required for other forms of renewable energy.

Food production is the most extensive land use within the AONB and is of course of fundamental importance. Agricultural enterprises require the flexibility to respond to changing markets and technologies, and therefore new farm buildings will sometimes be required. It is recognised that these will generally need to be large, and that modern sheet materials are likely to be one of the main materials used. However, choice of location and design should still take account of their situation within a nationally designated landscape. The AONB Design Guide for the Built Environment contains useful advice and design considerations include the use of subdued colours reflecting the local environment, use of wooden boarding where possible instead of sheet materials, and careful design of lighting to avoid light pollution. In addition inclusion of renewable energy technologies such as rain water harvesting and photovoltaic panels should be considered early in the design stage. The construction of new farm buildings provides the opportunity to build in nesting sites for important species such as barn owl.

Policy CE12: New farm buildings

New farm buildings should be located so as to minimise impacts on the special qualities of the AONB, ideally close to existing farm buildings, and careful design and landscaping should be used to minimise their landscape impact. Nesting sites for important species such as barn owls should be included in such buildings.

Northumberland is recognised as having some of the darkest skies in England. Maintaining and improving the quality of dark skies within the AONB requires action on a number of different fronts by a range of organisations and individuals. Street lighting is perhaps the most obvious form of light pollution and the replacement of traditional sodium street lighting with lower energy LED bulbs is programmed to take place as part of a county-wide initiative. However, lighting from commercial premises and houses can also be very significant. This is an area where very effective results can be achieved through good design, both of lighting schemes and of buildings, for example by avoiding the use of rooflights.

Policy CE13: Dark skies

The quality of the dark sky will be maintained and improved through advocacy and advice. All development proposals will be assessed concerning their impact on the dark skies of the AONB.

The special qualities of the AONB have already been significantly affected by the Middlemoor and Wandylaw Wind Farms, visible over much of the AONB as a line of 28 turbines sitting prominently on the skyline. It is imperative that proposals are subject to the most
rigorous landscape assessment so that further harmful schemes can be avoided. The AONB Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment together with the Northumberland Key Land Uses Impact Study highlight the lack of capacity for commercial wind farms throughout the AONB and across much of its hinterland.

**Policy CE14: Commercial scale renewable energy**

*Proposals for commercial scale wind farms within the AONB will be opposed. Commercial schemes outside of the AONB but visible from it will also be opposed unless it can be clearly demonstrated that they will not have an adverse effect on the special qualities of the AONB. Other forms of commercial-scale renewable energy schemes within, visible from or affecting important views into the AONB will be opposed unless it can be clearly demonstrated that they will not have a significant adverse effect on the special qualities of the AONB.*

Alnmouth roundabout before signage rationalisation

Signs, road markings, waste bins and other street furniture within the public realm can have a profound and urbanising effect on the quality of the environment within towns and villages and along transport routes and in the open countryside. Work undertaken through the Bamburgh Pilot Project has shown how successfully the impact of highways infrastructure throughout a village can be reduced, while still maintaining road safety and the regulation of issues such as parking. Similarly, rationalisation of road signs at the Alnmouth War Memorial has illustrated the improvements that can be made at individual locations.

**Policy CE15: Highways and the public realm**

*A strategic approach to the maintenance of highways and the public realm that conserves and enhances local character and distinctiveness will be pursued through the implementation of the AONB Highways Design Guide. Conservation of the landscape and townscape character will be through the careful placement of signs and other street furniture that ensures visual clutter is minimised in the public realm.*
Car parking presents many challenges within the AONB, with acute problems at specific locations during the peak tourist season. However, it is essential that a strategic and collaborative approach is taken to addressing such problems. For example, addressing a parking problem at one location by providing more capacity can actually simply draw more cars in, soon resulting in exactly the same capacity problem, and equally addressing a parking problem at one location by introducing measures to prevent parking can have impacts elsewhere by displacing the demand for parking. Consequently it is important that a collaborative approach to parking issues is taken, involving all relevant departments within the County Council working with local communities and businesses to manage these problems as effectively as possible.

Parking problems at Low Newton-by-the-Sea (Photo: Iain Robson)

Policy CE16: Parking

Where the parking of cars, in villages or open countryside, detracts from the quality of life of residents or the natural beauty and tranquillity of the AONB, a collaborative approach will be taken to design and implement an appropriate solution. The development of new car parks will only be supported where it can be clearly demonstrated that there is local support, demand can be demonstrated outside of peak times and the scheme achieves a net reduction in impact on the special features of the AONB.

Statutory undertakers are the providers of key services; water, sewage treatment, electricity, gas and phone lines and signals. In providing their services they have to work in as cost-effective a way as they can, but they are also bound by the same legal duty as public bodies; to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB.

The provision of broadband to rural areas is increasingly important for businesses and householders, and is currently being rolled out across Northumberland. This is very welcome, but will inevitably bring with it a certain amount of new infrastructure such as telecoms cabinets. It is important that the development of this programme takes account of the special qualities of the area.

The AONB Partnership will continue to work with Northern Powergrid to deliver landscape enhancement through the current undergrounding programme as well as put forward new projects for RIIO-ED1.
Policy CE17: Infrastructure Schemes

Statutory undertakers should take all reasonable measures to conserve and enhance landscape character, local distinctiveness and tranquillity of the AONB, and through programmes such as undergrounding and the prompt removal of redundant infrastructure achieve a net reduction in their impact on the special features of the AONB.

As a narrow coastal strip within a wider area of low lying coastal plain, the character and setting of the AONB can be greatly compromised by development outside of the Plan area. Inappropriate development along the boundary, in key gateway areas and in the wider coastal plain can negatively impact on the special landscape character of the AONB. In addition developments that have the potential to affect the long and short range views into and out of the AONB need careful scrutiny. However, the benefits of seeking to extend the AONB are not considered to be justified at a time of rapidly reducing resources, given the considerable costs and resources that this would entail. Consequently, a boundary review will not be sought during this plan period unless external resources are provided which would cover both the costs of the review and the cost of additional On-going work arising from the designation of further areas of land.

Policy CE18: Landscape adjoining the AONB

The AONB Partnership, County Council and partners will work in ways which will strengthen the integrity and identity of the Northumberland Coast AONB and the North Northumberland Heritage Coast as an area of exceptional landscape value. The Partnership will focus its work strongly on the designated AONB area, but will work in a flexible and pragmatic way in relation to the AONB boundary, to secure the maximum benefit for the Northumberland Coast. Responses to planning applications will be made by the AONB Partnership on land that is considered suitable for inclusion in the AONB or where the development has the potential to impact on the special qualities of the AONB landscape.

A wide range of species from all over the world have become established in the British countryside, having been transported to this country either deliberately or inadvertently. The vast majority of these cause no ecological problems at all; however a small proportion does cause very significant problems, for example by displacing native species, carrying diseases which native species are susceptible to or creating predation pressures that native species are not adapted to. Such species are referred to as non-native invasives.

Pirri-pirri bur, the seeds of which were imported from New Zealand on wool fleeces, is the most significant non-native invasive plant species within the AONB. It forms dense mats within dune grasslands, excluding the species that form the internationally important plant communities within the North Northumberland Dunes. Its abundant and very sticky burs also cause problems for ground-nesting birds, for visitors and for their dogs. Research is
On-going to find a way of controlling this plant without causing an unacceptable impact on the native plant community.

**Policy CE19 Non-native invasive species**

*Control strategies will be developed, implemented and promoted for non-native species recognised as posing a significant threat to important habitats and species in the AONB, or which are likely to be transported to pose such a threat in other areas. Enforcement action will be undertaken in response to the fly tipping of garden waste.*
Theme 2 Living and Thriving

The Northumberland Coast AONB remains as a living and thriving landscape

This section of the Management Plan considers in more detail the needs and aspirations of people within the AONB, and the ways in which these can be met whilst avoiding or minimising harm to the special qualities of the area. It also examines specific problems that human activity is causing within the AONB and the space that must be given to allow nature to adapt to changing circumstances, for example through coastal change.

Aims

9. Thriving and vibrant communities recognise and value the special qualities of the AONB in which they live or on which their businesses depend. They play an active role in the conservation and enhancement of the AONB.

10. There is an appropriate level of well-designed and located housing and community facilities available to allow local people to live near to where they work, reducing the need for transport and supporting the development of sustainable rural communities.

11. Sensitive land management and the reduction, mitigation or control of local sources of pollution conserves unpolluted soils, high quality water resources and clean air.

12. There is a strategic overview of tourism, and its future development and management is planned to support its role in the local economy whilst contributing to rather than detracting from, the special qualities of the AONB.

13. Farm diversification and development activities conserve and strengthen landscape character and local distinctiveness, and provide benefits to the farm and local economy and rural communities.

14. Farmers are supported to produce high-quality food whilst conserving the landscape and historic features, enhancing wildlife habitats and providing opportunities for people to enjoy the countryside.

15. The high quality environment and landscape of the AONB is recognised and valued as an asset to local businesses and the Northumberland economy, which in turn contribute to the conservation of the landscape through the use of local sustainable goods and labour.

16. The quality of land, sea, rivers, streams and the air meet or exceed legislative standards.

17. There is less reliance on private cars to travel to and around the AONB.
Policies

The tourism economy is clearly of great importance within and around the AONB; however, it also bring a range of pressures that affect the vitality of local communities, as well as potentially impacting upon the special qualities of the area. The loss of housing stock from the residential market to the holiday letting market, the economic and social impacts resulting from a high proportion of the houses within a settlement lacking permanent residents and the combination of high house prices and often comparatively low wages all affect local communities. Consequently, support for the tourism economy must be balanced with support for local communities and the needs of local people, of which housing is one of the most pressing.

Policy LT1: Community Vitality

The provision of affordable housing within the AONB will be supported where there is a demonstrable need and where its location and design will ensure that it will not adversely affect the special qualities of AONB. Disproportionately large extensions to small properties will be resisted to ensure that there is a supply of affordable first time homes and smaller properties. The retention of permanent residential properties will be supported, and the subdivision of properties to create holiday home and holiday annexes will be resisted.

The Localism Act 2011 introduced a power for parish councils to develop Neighbourhood Development Plans, which establish general planning policies for the use and development of land in the parish. They can also establish Neighbourhood Development Orders, which permit certain developments without the need to obtain planning permission. However, Neighbourhood Development Plans and Orders must be approved by a majority of the residents who participate in a referendum, and must have regard to national planning policy and be in conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. As parish councils are public bodies, they must also have regard to the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of AONBs when preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan or Order that may impact upon an AONB. Ensuring consistency with AONB Management Plan policies will help to ensure this, and the AONB Partnership is keen to advise and support parishes as they prepare their Neighbourhood Plans.

Policy LT2: Neighbourhood Planning

The AONB Partnership will support communities preparing Neighbourhood Plans to ensure that they conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB and are integrated with the AONB Management Plan.

Tourism in the AONB is heavily reliant on its landscape, natural environment and cultural heritage. It is for this reason that the AONB Partnership has promoted the concept of sustainable tourism, which seeks to develop modes of tourism that conserve and enhance that environment, not detract from it.

It is important that the organisations who are responsible for pre-arrival marketing of the Northumberland coast convey responsible and positive information about the tourism offer in the AONB. A
sustainable tourism strategy for the AONB is appended to this management plan.

Seahouses is a popular destination for tourists (Photo: Gavin Duthie)

**Policy LT3: Tourism**

*The Sustainable Tourism Strategy will be implemented, and the continued development of activity linked to the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas will be supported.*

The villages and settlements along the Northumberland Coast are one of its most distinctive and important features, with a wealth of historic buildings. However, their quality and character can easily be degraded by unsympathetic or inappropriate renovation, repair, extension, redevelopment, or simply by neglect. The historic character of settlements is also easily eroded by small changes over time as well as by new development and insensitive modernisation. The retention of traditional materials and building techniques is important to maintain local distinctiveness and historic character, but this requires the knowledge and skills of traditional craftsmen to be carried on and an adequate pool of suitably qualified and experienced practitioners to carry out maintenance and other works.

**Policy LT4: Traditional building skills**

*Standards of traditional building skills and craft will be maintained through advocacy, working in collaboration with local colleges and builders and encouraging the use of the Building Design Guide.*

The ever-changing nature of the coast and the massive natural forces that drive these changes present a range of challenges to people living and working on the coast. There is growing recognition that simply trying to resist change through the use of hard sea defences is not a viable or cost-effective option in many places, and even if it is effective can cause unintended consequences for other stretches of coast. At the same time, there is growing understanding of the role of natural coastal features and habitats such as sand dunes and saltmarshes in protecting areas from erosion and flooding. However, given the sea level rise that is anticipated to occur over the coming decades, these habitats will naturally ‘migrate’ inland in response to the rising sea level. If they are prevented from doing this because the land behind them is developed, they will be diminished or lost, as will their role as natural sea defences and as a habitat for a wide range of wildlife.
Consequently, where the immediate hinterland to these habitats has not already been developed, it is imperative that this issue is taken account of and appropriate areas are protected so that they remain available for the landward migration of coastal habitats.

Active intervention to create new areas of saltmarsh has an important role to play in coastal management in some locations, and has the additional benefit of establishing new areas of an important habitat.

**Policy LT5: Coastal Change**

*Land that has the potential to accommodate the landward migration of coastal habitats that are importance for nature conservation or for providing natural sea defences, for example dune rollback or saltmarsh creation, is recognised as having a special value as coastal communities seek to manage coastal change in a sustainable manner. Accordingly:*

- The potential value of land to accommodate the landward migration of important coastal habitats either through natural processes or planned habitat creation will be accorded a high priority when investigating, planning or considering land use change.
- Opportunities for managed retreat will be sought and promoted, and appropriate managed retreat schemes will be supported.

There is increasing awareness of the need to recognise the diverse range of vital services that nature provides for us, such as the following:

- **Provisioning services** eg water, timber, energy, food, fibres.
- **Regulating services** eg pollination, carbon storage, flood management, water quality, air quality, soil quality.
- **Cultural services** eg psychological and spiritual enrichment, recreation, aesthetic and cultural experience.
- **Supporting services** eg soil formation, nutrient cycling.

These are known as ecosystem services, and are things that we often take for granted or which we fail to make best use of. When new development or land use change is being considered, it is important that the impact on ecosystem services and the opportunities to protect and enhance ecosystem services are fully considered.

**Policy LT6: Ecosystem services**

*Impacts on ecosystem services and opportunities to protect and enhance them will be given appropriate weight when proposed development and land use change is being considered. Opportunities to enhance ecosystem services will be sought through project work and by influencing land management initiatives.*

Much of the AONB and its immediate hinterland has high grade soils suitable for the production of a range of arable crops, and consequently is of great importance for food production. However, it is very important to integrate intensive agriculture with measures to support wildlife and the functioning of ecosystem services, funding for which is directed primarily through Defra’s agri-environment schemes.
Important semi-natural grasslands such as whin grassland and dune grassland benefit from light grazing, which helps to maintain a balance between large, tussocky grasses and the finer grasses and wild flowers that are such a special feature of these habitats. Marshy grassland, important for breeding waders such as curlew, snipe, lapwing and redshank, and as high tide roosts for wintering waders such as curlew and golden plover, also has specific grazing requirements. However, this light grazing tends to be inconsistent with modern production methods utilizing fast-maturing breeds of livestock, and so agri-environment funding can be essential to making such work viable.

Policy LT7: Farming and wildlife

The AONB should remain a priority area for agri-environment funding. Farmers and landowners will be actively encouraged and supported to take up options that promote mixed farming and positively contribute towards the maintenance and enhancement of a characteristic and diverse mix of habitats for all species and particularly supporting the conservation of lowland farmland birds.

Individuals, organisations and businesses that buy locally produced food and other products add significant value to the local economy and help to reduce food miles. Local products can help to reinforce local distinctiveness.

Tourism businesses buying locally keep more of the income generated by tourism in the local economy for longer. This increases the overall value of tourism to the local economy without increasing the number of tourists.

Policy LT8: Local produce

The use and sale of local produce and products will be encouraged and promoted, particularly those that contribute to the conservation, enhancement and understanding of the special qualities of the AONB.

Traditionally, fishing was at the heart of economic activity along the coast, and there is a rich cultural heritage within the AONB associated with it. Fishing boats continue to operate from Holy Island, Beadnell, Boulmer and Craster, with fishing activity focussed mainly on crabs, lobsters and prawns.

Policy LT9: Commercial Fishing

The continuation of a viable and sustainable fishing industry will be supported where it does not impact upon the special features of the AONB. The sale of locally caught seafood will be promoted in food outlets.

The River Basin Management Plan for the Northumbria River Basin District shows that many of the coastal streams flowing through the AONB are assessed as being of moderate ecological status, although significant lengths are classified as poor, while a few are good. Both the River Aln and the River Coquet are classified as moderate in the reaches that pass through the AONB. The Holy Island and Budle Bay coastal waterbody has been classified as being of poor ecological status; the main pressures are nutrient and microbiological contamination from agricultural run-off and sewage.

Proposed actions to improve the ecological status of these water courses and waterbodies include reducing diffuse pollution and
sediment from agriculture via Catchment Sensitive Farming, tackling mine water pollution and tackling barriers to fish migration. Action to address diffuse pollution in the Solway Tweed River Basin is also very important to water quality within the coastal waters of the AONB due to inputs from the River Tweed.

Catchment Sensitive Farming supports farmers and land managers to take voluntary action to reduce diffuse water pollution from agriculture to protect water bodies and the environment, and agri-environment schemes also include land management options that will reduce diffuse pollution. A range of activities led or funded by the Environment Agency under the Water Framework Directive are under way or planned.

**Policy LT10: Water quality**

*Measures to improve water quality in the watercourses and coastal waters of the AONB will be supported by working with the Environment Agency, Natural England and Northumberland Rivers Trust.*

Local people generally need to use private motor vehicles for work and other essential trips. Most visitors to the AONB also arrive in a private car, which causes parking problems in villages, congestion on rural roads and air pollution, making the AONB a less pleasant place to live in or to visit.

There are opportunities to encourage visitors to use their cars less during their stay by encouraging and promoting the use of public transport, this also has the advantage of securing a more frequent bus service for residents of the AONB.

There is also an opportunity to promote some settlements in the AONB as places to stay without needing to bring a car.

**Policy LT11: Public transport**

*Initiatives that increase the attractiveness of public transport over the private car will be supported and promoted.*
Celebrate and Discover

Celebrating and discovering the Northumberland Coast AONB

High quality natural and cultural environments are of the utmost importance to all of us; enriching our lives through psychological, artistic and spiritual inspiration, rewarding educational pursuits and increasing our understanding of the world around us and our relationship to it. Residents, day visitors, holiday-makers and businesses all benefit from these, often in different ways. This section of the Management Plan considers how to ensure that people benefit from this special landscape, and considers how to avoid or resolve the conflicts that may inadvertently arise in the process.

Aims

18. More people are aware of the designation of the AONB, why it is special, the issues it faces and the need to invest in and sensitively manage the special qualities of the area.

19. People have a wide range of opportunities to explore, learn about and enjoy the AONB and to be able to participate in activities which contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the area.

20. The AONB, its villages, beaches, facilities and open countryside are clean and welcoming places to visit.

21. More local children and adults are using the AONB as a classroom, as barriers to schools’ abilities to teach outdoors are removed.

22. The local traditions, culture and ways of life along the Northumberland Coast are celebrated and maintained.
Policies

The purposes of AONB designation are not always well understood by policy-makers, local residents or visitors to the AONB. Improving awareness and understanding of the special qualities of the AONB will help people to understand why it has been designated. Helping people to understand the benefits (ecosystem services) provided by the landscape will encourage their support for the careful management and protection of the area.

Residents and visitors need high quality information and interpretation in a range of formats about the special qualities of the area and opportunities for enjoyment such as walking, cycling and wildlife-watching to enable them to make the most of what the area has to offer and to enable them to help support its conservation.

Policy CD1: Awareness

*Increase understanding and appreciation of the purposes of AONB designation and the benefits of helping to conserve and enhance the AONB amongst businesses, landowners, policy- and decision-makers, local residents and visitors.*

The majority of visitors to the coast undertake recreational pursuits as part of their visit with walking, beach activities, cycling and birdwatching being the most popular. These pursuits can bring physical and mental health benefits, enable people to enjoy a beautiful landscape and reconnect with nature, and provide support to the local economy.

However, recreational visits can impact upon the natural beauty of the coast, and on the important habitats and species that it supports. Some of this impact can be mitigated through the careful management of visitor infrastructure. Other impacts occur as a direct result of the actions of the visitors themselves such as litter, dog fouling, bait-digging and disturbance to wildlife.

Policy CD2: Responsible use

*To ensure that recreational use of the coast does not impact negatively on the special qualities of the AONB or on the lives of people who live or work there, responsible behaviour will be promoted.*

Access to attractive coastline, particularly for walking, cycling and horse riding can bring physical and mental health benefits, enabling people to enjoy a beautiful landscape and reconnect with nature, and provides support to the local economy.

The AONB is well served by a good network of public footpaths, bridleways and quiet roads. Walking is the most popular activity undertaken by visitors with 72% taking a short walk (up to two hours) as part of their trip and 26% taking a long walk (over two hours). The Northumberland Coast Path provides a linear route along the Northumberland coast and continues to be well used.
Cycling is an increasingly popular activity in the AONB. Although the 2013 visitor survey showed only 6% of visitors undertook a cycling trip as part of their visit, this figure is undoubtedly an under-estimate because cyclists were often reluctant to stop to participate in the survey.

Policy CD3: Access

Support the retention and maintenance of existing walking, riding and cycling routes unless these are adversely affecting the special qualities of the AONB and encourage initiatives that provide more opportunities where they are appropriate.

Part 9 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 aims to improve public access to, and enjoyment of, the English coastline by creating clear and consistent public rights for open-air recreation on foot. It allows existing coastal access to be secured and improved and new access to be created in coastal places where it does not already exist.

The resulting England Coast Path will be a well-waymarked walking trail around the whole of the English Coast. The project is also creating secure public rights of access for the first time to popular coastal areas such as beaches, sand dunes and cliff tops. Such areas of spreading room are part of the coastal margin identified alongside the trail.

The legislation governing the project introduces the principle that the coast path can roll back which means that a replacement route can be quickly put in place when the original line is lost through erosion.

There is already very good access alongside most of the Northumberland coast and as such, the AONB will be one of the last sections to be implemented. The creation of new access rights, particularly adjacent to the Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve will need to be carefully implemented to avoid negative impacts on priority habitats or species.

Policy CD4: Coastal Access

The development of the England Coast Path will be supported, whilst ensuring that the impacts on the special qualities of the AONB are fully assessed and any negative effects are adequately mitigated.

At the heart of enjoyable countryside recreation is high quality information that helps visitors and local residents plan their use of the Northumberland Coast, and increases the understanding and satisfaction of their experience. Information is currently available in a variety of forms but tends not to be coordinated.

Policy CD5: Interpretation

Information about the special features of the AONB and how to enjoy the area in a responsible way will be conveyed in a co-ordinated and consistent way.

It is well recognised that young people's connection with nature is diminishing. The National Trust's Natural Childhood Inquiry identified barriers preventing children and young people experiencing a connecting with nature in the outdoors. The Forest and Beach Schools that have operated in the AONB and the Young
Rangers on the Coast are excellent examples of initiatives that can provide these experiences.

Opportunities for lifelong learning and formal or informal adult education are important. Such opportunities can provide social and health benefits as well as increasing the understanding of the special qualities of the AONB.

The ‘Our Coast Our Sea’ website (www.ourcoastoursea.org) was developed by eight organisations on the coast and was designed to be the main portal for people to find out about education and learning opportunities in the AONB and EMS. However, few organisations have used it to its fullest potential.

Policy CD6: Education and lifelong learning

*Initiatives for children, schools and youth groups and adult education which encourage interest in and learning about the AONB and reconnection with nature will be supported. Barriers preventing educational coast visits will be identified and removed wherever possible.*

Local people, as individuals or in groups, as communities of place or interest, already play an important role in looking after and celebrating our natural and cultural heritage. Participating in the conservation and enhancement of the AONB through practical tasks, monitoring and data gathering or supporting AONB staff brings many benefits for the individuals and for the AONB. These include tackling social isolation, providing health benefits and opportunities to learn new skills, as well as an increase in activity to conserve and enhance the AONB.

Policy CD7: Participation

*Increased opportunities for the general public to support and participate in the conservation and enhancement of the AONB through volunteering or other forms of involvement will be developed.*

The local traditions, culture and ways of life along the Northumberland Coast should be celebrated and maintained. Culture needs to live, but records of cultural activities must be kept in order to ensure their survival; this is especially true at a time when rural communities face the most uncertain and challenging future. A greater knowledge of, and participation in looking after, the cultural heritage of the Northumberland Coast will increase the extent to which it is valued. The stunning coastline and surrounding countryside continues to provide inspiration for creative arts, as it has done for generations. There is a need to support cultural events and activities which bring communities together. This can build on the wide range of traditional events and celebrate the Northumberland Coast and provide a boost to the local cultural life and economy.

Policy CD8: Cultural Heritage

*Greater understanding of the AONB’s historic environment and cultural heritage will be promoted and the cultural heritage of the coast will be celebrated, through research, events and outreach.*
Part Three – Action Plan

*Part three is the Action Plan. It sets out a series of actions designed to achieve the aims stated in part two.*

The Action Plan sets out, for each theme:

- Actions to achieve the aims
- Specific targets
- The timescale for implementation
- Who will be involved to make them happen (the lead is in bold where there is a lead)
- The role of the AONB Partnership
- A reference to relevant policies

The Action Plan sets out initial actions proposed to achieve the aims set out in part two, it will be reviewed annually. The annual review will show progress towards achievement of the aims and allow for the insertion of new actions which might implement the aims more fully. A more comprehensive review will be undertaken when Northumberland County Council has adopted its Local Plan.

It is acknowledged that financial resources will be required for successful implementation of the Action Plan. In the context of the current period of austerity, priorities for actions have been carefully assessed and the Plan is considered to be realistic. However, it may be that over the five year period of the Management Plan, some flexibility is required to accommodate changes in funding and financial circumstances and this will be done through the annual review.
### Theme 1 Conserve and Enhance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref.</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Our Role</th>
<th>Policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Ensure that forward planning and development management decisions conserve and enhance natural beauty</td>
<td>Respond to all develop management applications</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CE1, CE5, CE6, CE7, CE8, CE9, CE10, CE11, CE12</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Organise training for development management staff</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Catalyst</td>
<td>CE1, CD1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Organise training for elected members</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Catalyst</td>
<td>CE1, CD1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Review Design Guide for the Built Environment</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CE8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Include advice on protecting dark skies in development management responses where appropriate</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CE13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Continue to support Dark Sky Working Group</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CE13</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Provide advice on new and existing lighting schemes to protect dark skies</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CE13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Ensure that highway management policies reinforce landscape character and</td>
<td>Revise AONB Highways Design Guide</td>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CE15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disseminate guide to highways staff at staff briefings</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Catalyst</td>
<td>CE15, CD1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>maintenance actions enhance rather than detract from their setting</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete the 'Bamburgh Pilot' traffic management plan</strong></td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Catalyst</td>
<td>CE15, CE16, CE3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Implement two of the most important projects in the Bamburgh Plan</strong></td>
<td>By 2017</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Catalyst</td>
<td>CE15, CE3</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design parking and traffic plans for Beadnell, Newton-by-the-Sea, Craster, Alnmouth and Warkworth</strong></td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Catalyst</td>
<td>CE15, CE16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implement at least two village traffic and parking plans</strong></td>
<td>by 2017</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Catalyst</td>
<td>CE15, CE16</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Review the brown tourism signs policy to ensure the AONB is protected from urbanising clutter</strong></td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>CE1, LT3</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consult the AONB Partnership on the Local Transport Plan at the earliest opportunity</strong></td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>LT10</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1.3 Identify utility infrastructure that negatively impact on the landscape and promote undergrounding with utility companies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Contribute to the Price Control Review scheme for Protected Areas</strong></th>
<th>On-going</th>
<th>NPG</th>
<th>Advocacy</th>
<th>CE1, CE17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work with BT to remove prominent overhead cables wherever possible</strong></td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>BT</td>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>CE17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td><strong>Ensure funded land management schemes reinforce landscape character</strong></td>
<td>Work with Natural England to develop landscape specific management options and agreements for the new Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS)</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>NE/FC</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Respond to felling licence applications</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>FC</td>
<td>Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td><strong>Identify indicators of landscape change and establish monitoring project</strong></td>
<td>Identify indicators and methodology for measuring change</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Establish two monitoring schemes</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td><strong>Deliver the Lindisfarne Peregrini Landscape Partnership Scheme</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>2014-18</td>
<td>HIDT, NE, NT, EH, LC, PCs,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7</td>
<td><strong>Continue support and funding for Life+ Little Tern Recovery Project</strong></td>
<td>Lead on communications for the project</td>
<td>2014-18</td>
<td>RSPB, NE, NT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support the co-ordinator in their day-to-day work</td>
<td>2014-18</td>
<td>RSPB, NE, NT</td>
<td>Partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8</td>
<td><strong>Assess and map invasive species and put a plan in place to deal with them</strong></td>
<td>Develop research project with Natural England and Newcastle University to identify options for control of pirri-pirri bur in dune grasslands.</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>NE, Uni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop and deliver action plans for other priority species of concern</td>
<td>2016-19</td>
<td>NE, NEWG,</td>
<td>Catalyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Run an awareness raising campaign about the problems of garden waste and prosecute offenders wherever possible</strong></td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>NCC, LC</td>
<td>Lead</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ensure that protected species are accommodated in development schemes</strong></td>
<td>Provision for bats and nesting swifts are included in all suitable new developments</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>NCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Provision for barn owls is made in the conversion or construction of agricultural buildings</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>NCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.10</strong></td>
<td><strong>AONB advice on the management of woodlands, hedgerows and hedgerow trees is reviewed, published and disseminated</strong></td>
<td>Review and publish online revised advice</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>FC, NE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disseminate advice</td>
<td>2015-19</td>
<td>FC, NE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.11</strong></td>
<td><strong>Develop and support initiatives that contribute to the conservation and enhancement of farmland bird communities</strong></td>
<td>Develop systematic monitoring programme for farmland birds based on a sample number of farms</td>
<td>2015-19</td>
<td>NE, BTO, LWGs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.12</strong></td>
<td><strong>Develop and support initiatives that contribute to the conservation and enhancement of coastal grassland communities</strong></td>
<td>Provide advice and managers to support conservation of important grassland communities, particularly whin grasslands and dune grasslands</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>NE, NT, NWT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.13</strong></td>
<td><strong>Provide targeted advice to golf courses and caravan sites to encourage good environmental management</strong></td>
<td>Develop advisory scheme</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>NWT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Implement advisory scheme</td>
<td>2015-19</td>
<td>NWT, NE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.14</td>
<td><strong>Continue to monitor the 4Shores sites at Goswick, Alnmouth and Warkworth and seek to extend the SSSI when appropriate</strong></td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>EA, NE, UNI</td>
<td>Catalyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.15</td>
<td><strong>Participate in the Northumberland Lowland and Coast Local Nature Partnership</strong></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>CE2, CE19, LT4, LT5, LT6, LT9, CD1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.16</td>
<td><strong>Use the results of the wading bird disturbance project to seek appropriate management and raise awareness of important breeding, feeding and roosting areas for shorebirds</strong></td>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>RSPB, NE, NT, NWT</td>
<td>Catalyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify and map areas suitable for improvement as wet grassland for breeding waders and wintering waders and wildfowl</td>
<td>2015-19</td>
<td>BTO, LWG</td>
<td>Lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use results from disturbance project as a baseline and compare to WeBS data to monitor population change</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>NE, NT</td>
<td>Lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raise awareness of sites with recreational users through codes of conduct and 'taking your dog' campaign</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.17</td>
<td><strong>Implement the Geodiversity Action Plan</strong></td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CE1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review actions in the GAP and prioritise those for action 2014-2019</td>
<td>2014-19</td>
<td>U3A</td>
<td>Catalyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.18</td>
<td><strong>Conserve and enhance the Historic Environment through advocacy,</strong></td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Catalyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>providing advice, disseminating information and engaging partners</strong></td>
<td>Establish Landscape change project – through fixed point photography</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CE3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review the Design Guide for the Built Environment in light of NPPF and management plan</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CE3, CE7, CE8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to provide historic environment advice in development management and forward planning responses where required</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CE3, CE7, CE8, LT3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to give advice relating to and raise awareness of designated and non-designated Heritage assets</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>NCC, EH</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CE3, CE7, CE8, LT3, CD8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conserve and repair heritage assets through agri-environmental schemes where there is an opportunity</td>
<td>2014-19</td>
<td>NE, EH</td>
<td>Catalyst</td>
<td>CE3, LT3, LT6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.19 Increase understanding and protection of the Historic Environment</strong></td>
<td>Complete Heritage at Risk Survey of Grade II Listed buildings</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CE3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertake a Heritage at Risk Survey of all Scheduled Ancient Monuments</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CE3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to work on positive conservation and enhancement of settlements and settings</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>NCC, EH</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CE3, LT3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-going condition monitoring of historic assets</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CE3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with EH to remove Heritage Assets on the Heritage at Risk register</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>EH, NCC</td>
<td>Catalyst</td>
<td>CE3, LT3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a network of volunteer coastal HE monitors</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CE3, LT4, CD8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertake a review of intertidal area at extreme low tide for areas of archaeological interest</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CE3, LT4, CD8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify areas at risk from coastal erosion and assess potential impact on the Historic Environment</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CE3, LT4, CD8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review WWII structures report and Limekilns report – review management recommendations</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CE3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Ref</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Targets</td>
<td>Timescale</td>
<td>Who</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Support communities through the neighbourhood planning process to ensure that neighbourhood plans conserve and enhance the AONB</td>
<td>Provide advice to and support all Neighbourhood Planning groups</td>
<td>on-going</td>
<td>LC, NCC</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Support the delivery of agri-environment schemes, providing advice to farmers, agents and advisors</td>
<td>Provide on-farm advice throughout the lifetime of schemes</td>
<td>on-going</td>
<td>NE, LOs</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deliver at least two on-farm events demonstrating best-practice</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>NE, CFE, LOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Support and encourage the development, production, marketing and sale of local</td>
<td>Continue to provide information about local food in Coastal Views and Visitor Guides</td>
<td>on-going</td>
<td>TBs, DMO, NCC</td>
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<td>Develop the Northern Lands food trail</td>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>Northern Lands</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2.4</strong> Promote Catchment Sensitive Farming Schemes to reduce diffuse pollution and resource depletion</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>products, especially where they benefit the landscape or the continuation of a viable, sustainable, fishing industry</strong></td>
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<td>Support the Amble seafood village initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015-19</td>
<td>ADT</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>LT7</td>
<td></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>2.5</strong> Implement the AONB tourism strategy and pursue the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support Tourism Working Group</td>
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<td>on-going</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implement the tourism strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2104-19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hold an annual tourism forum</td>
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<td>2014-19</td>
</tr>
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<td>2.6</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ensure that AONB Management Plan and Tourism Strategy policies are incorporated into the forthcoming Destination Management Plan for Northumberland</strong></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.7</th>
<th>Support, promote and improve public transport provision</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support, promote and improve public transport provision</strong></td>
<td>Develop initiatives to encourage the use of public transport by residents and visitors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work with accommodation providers to improve their knowledge of public transport through familiarisation sessions and advice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ensure public transport information is provided for all AONB events.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ensure timetables are available for bus services into and around the AONB</td>
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<td>Recruit public transport champion for each Parish Council</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide up-to-date bus information at main stops and online via PCs</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td><strong>Continue to support local sustainable development projects through the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Provide annual grant allocation and promote scheme among local communities</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Theme 3 Celebrate and Discover

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Ref</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Our Role</th>
<th>Policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Increase the awareness of the importance of the designation of AONB with decision makers, politicians, businesspeople, local people and visitors and the value of the ecosystem services it provides.</td>
<td>Brief senior NCC staff and elected members at least annually</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CD1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Attend a meeting of every Parish Council at least annually</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>PCs</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CD1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Partnership PC reps meet with PC Chairs twice per annum</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>PCs</td>
<td>catalyst</td>
<td>CD1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Issue e-newsletter monthly</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>lead</td>
<td>CD1, CD5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hold an annual forum</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CD1, CD5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refresh AONB website</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CD1, CD5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Use the AONB website, social media and local press to provide information</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>lead</td>
<td>CD1, CD5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Continue to produce and supply AONB Guidebooks</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CD1, CD5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Produce new guidebooks about dark skies, wrecks and beaches</td>
<td>2015-17</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CD1, CD5, CD8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Organise a series of events to celebrate Cultural Heritage</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>TAs, TBs</td>
<td>Catalyst</td>
<td>CD8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Continue to provide a series of Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage themed walks and talks</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CD6, CD8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3.2 | **Establish programmes of events, walks and festivals that highlight the special qualities of the AONB and provide information on reaching them by public transport** | Continue to promote events in the AONB on Our Coast Our Sea and via social media | On-going | Lead | CD5, CD7  
| | | Continue to support the Dark Skies Working Group to raise awareness of, and celebrate dark skies | | | CD1, CE13  
| | | Establish at least four dark sky discovery sites | 2016 | Lead | CD1, CE13  
| | | Deliver a series of Dark Sky events | 2014 -16 | Lead | CD1, CE13  
| | | Develop educational resources for use with young people and tourism business | On-going | Lead | CD1, CD6, CD8  
| 3.3 | **Continue to manage the Northumberland Coast Path and advise on the management of other long-distance routes** | Continue to represent St. Oswald's Way and St Cuthbert's Way management meetings | On-going | support | CD3, CD4  
| | | Develop passport scheme to strengthen link between the Coast Path and businesses. | 2014/15 | TBs | lead | CD3, CD4  
| | | Wherever possible, remove stiles and other barriers that impede access along the Coast Path | 2015 | NCC/LOs | Support | CD4  
| 3.4 | **Support the establishment of the England Coast Path whilst addressing any negative impacts** | Seek discussions with NE at the earliest opportunity | 2015 | NE/NCC | joint-lead | CD4  
| 3.5 | **Support and develop initiatives that contribute to horse-riding and cycling in the AONB** | Develop a pilot 'quiet lanes' project in one location | 2015-16 | NCC/PCs | Catalyst | CD1, CD3  
| | | Support appropriate infrastructure schemes such as cycle racks at attractions and route improvements | On-going | NCC | support | CD3  

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Support projects that improve the accessibility of routes, access points, facilities and attractions</strong></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop and promote more circular routes</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>NT/CyclePad</td>
<td>catalyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop a scheme to create a traffic-free route for NCN1 nearer to the coast between Embleton and Beadnell</td>
<td>2015-19</td>
<td>NCC/Sustrans</td>
<td>catalyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop and promote an E-Bike network</td>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>NPAP</td>
<td>joint-lead</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>3.6</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Allocate resources to ensure higher standards of maintenance on strategic routes</td>
<td>on-going</td>
<td>NCC/Sustrans</td>
<td>Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promote the health benefits of walking and other recreational activity</td>
<td>on-going</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prioritise and implement three improvements schemes from the AONB Accessibility Audit</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Catalyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wherever possible, remove stiles and other barriers that impede access on the rights of way network</td>
<td>on-going</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>support</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>Encourage responsible recreational visits to the AONB</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Continue to produce and distribute 'taking your dog to the coast' leaflet and generally promote responsible dog-ownership</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>lead</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Revise all codes of conduct, publish them online and promote them to visitors and user-groups</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>lead</td>
<td>CD2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support the retention of Beadnell Bay boat launch as a place to launch motorised craft but undertake regular monitoring and review</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td><strong>Provide opportunities for people to get involved in the conservation and enhancement of the AONB</strong></td>
<td>Continue to monitor the recreational use of, and adherence of by-laws at, Budle Bay</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>NE, NIFCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Investigate development of a 'Friends of the Northumberland Coast' or similar body of supporters</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>lead</td>
<td>CD7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Continue to provide information about how to get involved in the conservation, enhancement and celebration of the Northumberland Coast on websites and in the media</td>
<td>on-going</td>
<td>lead</td>
<td>CD1, CD5, CD7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Continue to provide staff and funding to support Young Rangers on the Coast</td>
<td>on-going</td>
<td>SYP</td>
<td>joint-lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Seek funding to encourage and enable to people to survey, monitor and get involved in conservation tasks</td>
<td>2014-17</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CD7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td><strong>Support the development of arts and culture based projects and events with local artists and craftspeople to raise awareness and promote understanding of the</strong></td>
<td>Develop opportunities to promote volunteering as part of corporate social responsibility programmes</td>
<td>2015-19</td>
<td>NT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Develop 'Artists on the Coast' project – outcomes to include new guide booklet</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>CD8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Organise a series of events to celebrate Cultural Heritage</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>TAs, TBs</td>
<td>Catalyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td><strong>Increase opportunities for outdoor environmental education for schools and groups in the AONB</strong></td>
<td>Develop enhanced links with local schools, colleges and universities, establishing the AONB as a focus for curriculum-based activities and information and facilitating high quality research in the area.</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Uni</td>
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<td>Incorporate resources for teachers and educational groups currently on ‘Our Coast Our Sea’ into new AONB website.</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>NCC</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Continue to support and promote the Beach Schools Programme.</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>OLiN</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Offer outreach and school visits based on Historic Environment.</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Catalyst</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.11</th>
<th><strong>Ensure that beaches and open countryside are safe and clean places to visit</strong></th>
<th>Provide bathing water quality signage at bathing beaches that does not detract from its setting.</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>NCC</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>CD1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Continue to support groups taking part in MCS Beachwatch and Big Beachwatch Weekend and encourage more voluntary activity.</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>MCS, NCC, EMS</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>CD7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Continue to provide a secretariat and support to the Beach Managers Group.</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td></td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>CD7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Support activity that ensures all bathing waters in the AONB are classified as good or excellent.</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>EA, NWL, NCC</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>LT9, CD2, CD3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Start</td>
<td>Lead Agency</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Code</td>
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<td>Work with angling groups to raise awareness of sensitive locations and promote good practice, particularly regarding litter</td>
<td>2015-19</td>
<td>NAT, NIFCA, EMS</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>CD2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Run a campaign to raise awareness sewage related debris and the impacts of placing inappropriate items into the sewerage system</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>NWL</td>
<td>Catalyst</td>
<td>CD2, LT9</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to produce and distribute 'taking your dog to the coast' leaflet and generally promote responsible dog-ownership</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>lead</td>
<td>CD2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Target areas that have a dog-fouling problem with sensitive signage and enforcement</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>support</td>
<td>CD2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensure that amenity beaches are kept free of litter during the summer months using non-mechanical methods.</td>
<td>on-going</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>advocacy</td>
<td>CD2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Complete review of public rescue equipment and revise signage, ensuring new signage is designed in a way that it is sympathetic to its location</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>CD1, CD2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Abbreviations

ADT Amble Development Trust
BTO British Trust for Ornithology
CFE Campaign for the Farmed Environment
DMO Destination Management Organisation
EA Environment Agency
EH English Heritage
EMS Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast European Marine Site
FC Forestry Commission
HIDT Holy Island Development Trust
LEP North East Local Enterprise Partnership
LNP Northumberland Lowlands and Coast Local Nature Partnership
LWGs Local Wildlife Groups
MCS Marine Conservation Society
NAT Northumberland Angling Trust
NCC Northumberland County Council
NE Natural England
NPG Northern Powergrid
NIFCA Northumberland Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
NPAP North Pennines AONB Partnership
NT National Trust
NWL Northumbrian Water Ltd
NWT Northumberland Wildlife Trust
OLiN Outdoor Learning in Northumberland
PCs Parish Councils
RDPE Rural Development Programme for England
RSPB Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SYP Seahouses Youth Project
TAs Tourism Associations
TBs Tourism Businesses
TWG Tourism Working Group
Uni Universities
U3A University of the Third Age