



THE COLCHESTER DECLARATION

Our commitment to nature

An outline of our approach to delivering the Colchester Declaration in East Devon AONB



The Colchester Declaration 2019

Set against a backdrop of unprecedented concern for the future of the natural world and intergovernmental reports that the current global response to the effects of human impact on nature is insufficient, the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty believes that now is the time to significantly increase the scale and pace of nature conservation activity in AONBs.

Using our unique network and partnership model, we are making a collective Declaration on Nature in AONBs, setting out our strategy for change.

With many AONB host authorities having taken the step of declaring a Climate Emergency we are demonstrating our readiness to act to redress declines in species and habitats within the context of a wider response to climate change.

We believe

1. Natural Beauty has intrinsic value and means so much to people
2. AONBs should be places of rich, diverse and abundant wildlife
3. Nature recovery is central to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty
4. Climate change is the biggest threat to humanity and one of the greatest threats to biodiversity.
5. Designated landscapes offer some of the most powerful solutions to the challenges of climate change
6. The network of AONBs and National Parks, their teams, partnerships, authorities and stakeholders offer a unique solution to tackling environmental challenges

We call on Westminster and Welsh Governments to provide the power and resources to make these targets achievable.

We pledge

By July 2020

- To enable an approach that creates opportunities within AONBs for people to make an emotional connection with nature.
- To prepare a Nature Recovery Plan for each AONB

By 2024

- To embed an ecosystems services approach into all AONB Management Plans
- To ensure all AONB management plans include meaningful measures around climate change mitigation and adaptation, including clear, measurable targets to support Net Zero

By 2030

- That at least 200,000 ha of SSSIs in AONBs will be in favourable condition
- That at least 100,000 ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected sites will have been created/ restored in AONBs to further support the natural movement of plants and animals
- That at least 36,000 ha of new woodland will have been planted or allowed to regenerate in AONBs following the principle of the right tree in the right place
- That, by each AONB immediately adopting a species on the threatened list and by preparing and delivering a Species Action Plan, at least thirty species relevant to AONBs will be taken off the list by 2030.

Introduction

The Colchester Declaration was launched at the NAAONB 2019 Conference at a time when Julian Glover was undertaking a review of landscapes on behalf of the government.

The review was revealing a range of issues within AONBs and National Parks that were likely to make for uncomfortable reading; namely that these 'National Landscapes', the highest-level landscapes designation in the country, were not achieving for nature what should be expected of them given their status.

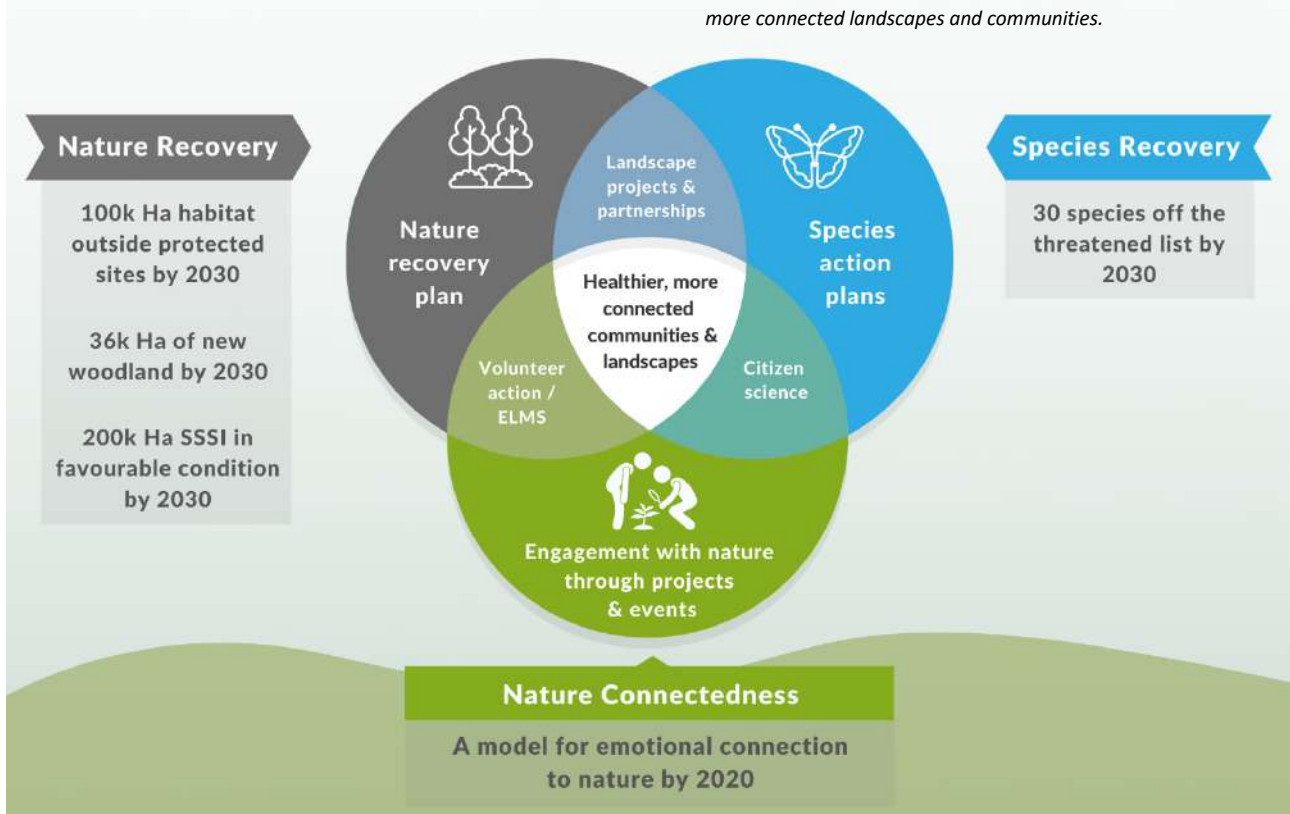
The NAAONB worked closely with the review panel and was aware that AONBs would be put under the microscope. It was also aware that much had already been achieved for nature in these areas, with extremely limited resources and powers in comparison to National Parks.

It presented a challenge: to lay out a commitment, coinciding with the landscape review, that given the appropriate power and resources would address climate change, restore nature and threatened species and connect people to their landscapes - The Colchester Declaration was born.

This paper outlines East Devon AONB Partnership's commitment to delivering the key pledges in this Declaration. *We recognise this will be an iterative process and this document will therefore be regularly updated as things move on.* We also recognise the Declaration will only be achieved with the support and collaboration of many others, not least our landowning and farming community.

Critically, as the Colchester Declaration stated in its closing lines, change can only be achieved with the necessary power and resources. If the powers and resources are not provided, our actions, no matter how well we plan, will be limited.

The diagram below outlines the relationships between three key pledges within the Declaration and the connection to healthier and more connected landscapes and communities.



Nature Connectedness

As part of the National Association for AONBs **Colchester Declaration (2019)**, AONBs have collectively committed to further engaging people in nature.

Nature connectedness, built on an understanding that human connection with nature increases a sense of care for our environment and provides benefits to our wellbeing, is the motivation for our pledge:

To enable an approach that creates opportunities within AONBs for people to make an emotional connection with nature, by July 2020

What we've done so far

The AONB team has delivered and supported a wide a range of projects and activities since 2002 that have enabled people to make a connection with nature.

These have ranged from work with schools and local groups on wildlife projects, habitat works and heritage initiatives, to support through our Sustainable Development Fund for community projects that have encouraged wider engagement in our natural environment.

Our programme of Heritage Lottery Funded activity has engaged communities across our area through natural and cultural heritage activities.



Bat event, Beer Quarry Caves

More recently, we have been developing our links with the Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG), using the medium of art and creative activity to inspire and engage others, from children and students, to adults and the partially sighted.

Through a supported agreement with THG, we have celebrated 25yrs of the East Devon Way with an **arts engagement programme** and developed follow-on work between 2018-19.

This relationship has continued into 2020/21 with a **Climate/Culture 2020** programme linked to the growing climate change agenda, developed by THG with the Tate and Exeter University.

We will build on our existing work and that of others such as the National Association for AONBs '**Art in the Landscape**'. This programme is seeking to improve the understanding and relationship between the arts sector and AONBs in creating opportunities for emotional engagement in nature.



As part of the programme, the AONBs have collectively made a statement of Intent.

Art in the Landscape

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are cultural landscapes of local and national value. They are the product of people and place. They are an important element of our collective and individual identity and always represent much more than can be easily expressed.

We have a history of expressing the value of AONBs through the language of policy, by which the emotions of place are inadequately distilled into the tools of protection, but the reality is that we experience landscape; it triggers emotion. To describe landscape to others without invoking an experience is to fundamentally ignore our relationship with place and miss what it is to be human.

The beauty of these areas is often intangible and always vulnerable. Whether your spirits are lifted by a lone walk along a grassy hillside or refreshed by the intimacy of a woodland walk with a friend, their special qualities are experienced, felt, and ultimately understood. To recognise the experiential element of landscape and create opportunities for others to access the value this can bring to their lives is part, of their effective curation.

The arts are a central mechanism for helping this happen. The creative exploration of place, through music, painting, poetry, and dance opens up the experience of landscape beyond the world of science and policy and helps us better understand our place in the world. With better understanding comes better stewardship; the basis of a more sustainable future.

The NAAONB therefore, commits to a deeper exploration into the relationship between arts and landscape. We will actively promote the relationship between landscape and art and optimise our engagement with artists and producers in order to ensure our most precious landscapes are more accessible and more widely understood and appreciated by the nation.

Our commitment

- We will continue to explore opportunities with a wide range of partners, with an emphasis on activity and emotional engagement in nature and the great outdoors. Our emphasis will be on partnerships that can reach new audiences and enable those less engaged or harder to reach groups, to experience nature and wherever possible, to experience it first-hand, in the great outdoors.
- We will develop projects and programmes that serve to raise awareness, understanding, inspire and engage people in nature.
- In providing these opportunities, we aim to foster people's relationship with nature in a way that nurtures long-term behaviour supportive of our environment and nature; to grow understanding, awareness, appreciation and action.
- We aspire to helping create new ambassadors for the landscape, nature and natural beauty.

Nature Recovery

Our proposed approach to nature recovery has come about as a result of the National Association for AONBs Colchester Declaration (2019), where AONBs have collectively committed to doing more for nature and pledged:

That each AONB will prepare a Nature Recovery Plan, by July 2020

What we have done so far

Since its establishment in 2002 the AONB Partnership has delivered and supported a variety of habitat and species-related activity across the AONB, but we have never adopted a particular species to champion.

During 2019/2020 the NAAONB has outlined a framework for Nature Recovery Plans and is developing a project proposal, through which a series of approaches to nature recovery planning will be piloted in five distinct AONB clusters.

Projects will encompass landscape-scale restoration planning, targeted species recovery, citizen science approaches to monitoring/research and engaging new audiences. These will be agreed in mid-2020 and funding sought to enable delivery, starting ideally in 2020.

East Devon, Blackdown Hills and Dorset AONBs will be one of the proposed pilot areas, focusing on the land contiguous to the three AONBs in the Axe valley as part of a 'fragmented landscape' pilot.

We expect to learn different lessons from each cluster, enabling us to better understand both the challenges to nature recovery and the ability of protected landscapes to engage a diverse range of people.

Our commitment

- We will work with a range of partners as part of our approach; it is important that local action complements the developing Devon-wide Local Nature Recovery approach that Devon LNP is developing with Devon Wildlife Trust and the Devon Biodiversity Record Centre.
- Our approach to nature recovery will integrate with our Species Action Plans and our Nature Connectedness approaches.
- As part of our approach to nature recovery planning, we will address further pledges made in the Colchester Declaration to:
 - Embed an ecosystems services approach into all AONB Management Plans **by 2024**
 - Ensure our AONB management plan includes meaningful measures around climate
 - change mitigation and adaptation, including clear, measurable targets to support Net Zero **by 2024**
 - Get our proportion of SSSIs in East Devon AONB in favourable condition by 2030
 - Get our proportion of 100,000 ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside protected sites created/ restored to further support the natural movement of plants and animals **by 2030**
 - Get our proportion of 36,000 ha of new woodland planted or allowed to regenerate
 - following the principle of the right tree in the right place **by 2030**

A Nature Recovery Plan Framework – a work in progress

Nature Recovery Plans are a key commitment of the [Colchester Declaration](#), made by the country's AONBs in 2019. They aim to engage partners and inspire and inform positive action, to conserve what remains and reinstate what's been lost.

The plans will relate to AONB Management Plans as a spatial expression of our shared vision for resilient landscapes, rich in wildlife. The AONB family will strive to ensure incentives such as the new Environmental Land Management Scheme are a key part of resourcing these plans.

AONB Nature Recovery Plans will relate to land outside the protected landscape boundaries where appropriate and where AONBs share a boundary, they will link. Their compilation will relate to the development of county-scale Local Nature Recovery Strategies, which will be a statutory duty on Local Authorities arising from the Environment Act.

AONB Nature Recovery Plans will be developed through collaboration with our partners and stakeholders.

Key purposes of AONB Nature Recovery Plans

- Set out a strategic and spatial approach to nature recovery within the AONB
- Encourage engagement of agencies and communities
- Integrate with the National Nature Recovery Network and Local Nature Recovery Strategies
- Help direct / target investment in nature

Guiding principles

- Nature recovery first - but where possible achieving wider ecosystem services e.g. carbon capture, flood management, pollination, climate change resilience, enhanced landscape character, improved connection between people and nature
- Designed around Lawton's principles of bigger, better and more joined up landscapes
- Collaborative approach at the core
- Inclusive – aiming to move all land managers along a spectrum of positions

Draft Plan structure

It is expected that AONB Partnerships will develop their Nature Recovery Plans at different paces.

We will make a start on our framework in 2020/21 with a view to having a plan to feed into the next review of the AONB Management Plans in 2024.



A framework of the plan is shown below based on an outline proposed by the NAAONB.

Section	What needs to be done	Process
Context, scope and purpose	Define the rationale for the plan, its scope, how it fits with the AONB Management Plan. Cross reference to key documents e.g. LNP NE, 25YEP	Develop through AONB Team/Partnership/NAAONB Pilots
Vision	Define a vision for nature recovery	Develop through AONB Team/Partnership/NAAONB Pilots
State of nature in the AONB	Status/condition of sites, habitats and species within the AONB; their significance within regional, national and international contexts; trends and pressures. Highlight data and evidence issues and gaps that need to be addressed.	Use existing AONB Mgt Plan data/ monitoring + confirm data/info with NE, EA, FC, Wildlife Trusts and Local Record Centres.
Statement of priorities for nature	Agree sites, habitats and species to prioritise linking to existing species action plans where established	Confirm through advisory panel drawn from NE, EA, FC, Wildlife Trusts, Local Record Centres and inc. neighbouring AONBs.
Strategy	Strategic model for expanding and linking priority areas for nature including spatially mapped areas required to create functioning and resilient ecosystems within the landscape	Confirm through advisory panel.
Delivery Plan	Process, priorities, targets, timelines, partners, resources, funding	Liaise with partners over mechanisms for delivery – NE, FC, EA, LNP, Local authorities, landowners.
Monitoring & evaluation	Key metrics and mechanisms	Link to existing/developing monitoring frameworks for AONB Management Plans, Local Nature Recovery Strategies, ELMs, 25YEP.

*This is a work in progress, and we will develop our approach and plans iteratively with our partners and stakeholders.



Sid Valley

Species Recovery

Devon is rich in wildlife and important for the conservation of many species. At least 16000 species that occur here are considered to be either threatened with extinction in the British Isles or are nationally scarce.

In committing to the National Association for AONBs [Colchester Declaration](#) (2019) we and other UK AONBs have collectively pledged:

That, by each AONB immediately adopting a species on the threatened list and by preparing and delivering a Species Action Plan, at least thirty species relevant to AONBs will be taken off the list by 2030

What we have done so far

Since its establishment in 2002 the AONB Partnership has delivered and supported a variety of habitat and species related activity across the AONB, but we have never adopted a particular species to champion.

The process for shortlisting species proposed by the NAAONB mirrors that undertaken by the Devon Local Nature Partnership (LNP) for its Special Species using a criteria-based approach. They are special because they are rare and are regarded as being in danger or threat of extinction or loss.

For more details of the Devon Special Species process see [HERE](#).



Bechstein's Bat



Pearl bordered fritillary © Butterfly Conservation

We sifted the key species on the Devon Special Species list for those with particular relevance to East Devon and presented them to the AONB Partnership for consideration.

At its 27 April 2020 meeting the East Devon AONB Partnership completed a survey ranking each species between 1-5. The result of the ranking is shown below.

The list indicates partnership opinion regarding which priority species should be targeted for conservation efforts within the East Devon AONB.

Species	Rank	Score
Devon Whitebeam (and allied species) <i>Sorbus devoniensis</i>	1	21
Heath potter wasp <i>Eumenes coarctatus</i>	2	19
Eurasian beaver <i>Castor fiber</i>	3	17
Scaly cricket <i>Pseudomogoplistes vicentae</i>	4	16
Cirl Bunting <i>Emberiza cirius</i>	4	16
Greater horseshoe bat <i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i>	5	15
Southern damselfly <i>Coenagrion mercuriale</i>	5	15
Hazel dormouse <i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>	5	15
Bechstein's bat <i>Myotis bechsteinii</i>	6	13
Grey long-eared bat <i>Plecotus austriacus</i>	6	13
Brown hairstreak <i>Thecla betulae</i>	7	10
White spot <i>Hadena albimacula</i>	8	8
Wood white <i>Leptidea sinapis</i>	8	8
Pearl-bordered fritillary <i>Boloria euphrosyne</i>	9	7
Zipperback hoverfly <i>Chrysotoxum elegans</i>	10	5
Spanish long-snouted crane fly <i>Helius hispanicus</i>	10	5
Bracket fungus <i>Fuscoporia wahlbergii</i>	11	4
Oak polypore fungus <i>Piptoporus quercinus</i>	11	4
Brown-banded carder-bee <i>Bombus humilis</i>	11	4
Apple Lace Bug <i>Physatocheila smreczynskii</i>	12	3
Mediterranean oil beetle <i>Meloe mediterraneus</i>	12	3
Marsh fritillary <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>	12	3
Morris's wainscot <i>Photedes morrisii</i>	13	1
Devonshire wainscot <i>Leucania putrescens</i>	14	0
Least cigar-gall fly <i>Lipara similis</i>	14	0
A rove beetle <i>Actocharis readingii</i>	14	0
Black mining bee <i>Andrena pilipes</i>	14	0
Broad-faced furrow bee <i>Lasioglossum laticeps</i>	14	0
Willow Tit <i>Poecile montana</i>	14	0

This ranking is a starting point for us to consider our approach to developing species recovery in the AONB.

As part of the feedback, two additional species were suggested by partner's for consideration: Heath Lobelia and Yellowhammer.

Furthermore, the Devon Local Nature Partnership recently completed a review of the Devon Special Species list, on which our shortlist was based.

This data will assist us further in refining our approach which will focus on considering the top 10 ranked species opposite.

Our commitment

- We will work with colleagues and partners locally, regionally, and nationally to confirm our approach to species recovery using a landscape scale/ assemblage approach.
- Our approach will enable us to play a key role and will encourage action, public engagement, and influence change.
- We cannot target activity on all species listed in our initial survey and because some species are already priority species for partner organisations operating in our area, we will focus our activity appropriately, supporting partners activities wherever possible. There is a role for us to raise awareness and promote action for species at risk more broadly alongside any targeted action we take.