

# Annual Review

## 2019-2020







## We have had a busy year working to conserve and enhance the AONB and connect people with the landscape.

A highlight for me was participating in the National Moment at South Down Farm when we and other AONBs celebrated the 70th anniversary of 'The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act.' The South Hams Vintage Machinery Club created an enormous heart with old tractors, combines and machinery from the previous 70 years at this iconic coastal location. We were extremely grateful to the National Trust and support of the tenant Mike Wakeham for accommodating us. The timing was perfect since the Designated Landscapes Review reported that day and our Patron Jonathan Dimbleby commented on the potential for the report to be groundbreaking for AONBs. The Review calls for us to work together so that our national landscapes are happier, healthier, greener, more beautiful and open to everyone. We have big ambitions for the coming year covering all of these aspects.

Many hours of staff time have been invested in funding applications to help us achieve these ambitions, including a new Heritage Lottery Funded application called 'Life

on the Edge.' It aspires to work with multiple partners to achieve large scale habitat restoration and opportunities for recreation. We were also successful with a Heritage Lottery Funded application that is enabling us to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the designation of the South Devon AONB.

This report provides an insight into the huge amount of work delivered over the past year. The collaboration and cooperation of our partners is essential to the work we do, as is the funding that we receive from Devon County Council, South Hams District Council and Defra. I hope you enjoy reading it and I welcome hearing your insight into what is important to you.

### John Green

Chairman, South Devon AONB Partnership

**Above:** Left to right - Roger English, Lord Cameron of Dillington and John Green at the Annual Community Conference

**Cover photo:** The National Moment - South Down Farm Malborough credit @ David French BBC Spotlight

# Our year in numbers

**£5420**

Total equivalent value of volunteer time in non cash contributions (as specified by HLF) to these activities -

- Pacific Oyster Control
- Walk checkers
- Event volunteers
- Photography



**volunteer time**

**22 events**

staged for our Facilitation group helping to deliver landscape scale benefits in the Avon valley

**Avon Valley Farmers group**  
**6 farmers**

assisted with Mid-Tier Countryside Stewardship applications worth

**286K**

**NATURAL ENGLAND**



**£10K grant**

Awarded to celebrate the diamond anniversary of AONB designation

**£14K grant**

from South Devon Coastal Local Action Group for online walks, filming and interpretation panels



**15,000**

copies of the Explorer guide were printed and distributed listing events, AONB info and ideas for days out.



**£7.5K grant**

Pacific Oyster Control

**£2.5K grant**

Leading over 55s nature walks



**557**

logged visits this year

**20**

Geocaches



**73 planning application responses**

Several of these were major including housing developments, marina and shipyard development and telecommunications masts.



**3505**

Twitter followers

**113,058**

tweet impressions



**80**

attended our Annual Forum

**2088**

attended events organised and led by the AONB team



**people**

**799**

engaged through community networks

**1127**

partners, supporters and friends received our news and events bulletins



**1116**

Instagram followers

**1535**

Facebook followers

**76.543**

reach over the year





# Highlights in 2019-2020

## Lord Cameron of Dillington keynote speaker at Annual Community Forum

We welcomed Ewen Cameron - Lord Cameron of Dillington as guest speaker to the Annual Forum held at The Tap House, Stokeley Barton Farm Shop near Kingsbridge. The cross bench peer was part of the **Designated Landscapes review panel** which reported in September. He spoke about the key recommendations of the report and how they would impact on the work of AONB Partnerships.



Lord Cameron explained how the Review proposes that AONBs and National Parks become a positive force for the nation's wellbeing, with the establishment of a new National Landscapes Service, with them playing a key role in nature recovery and the national response to climate change. They are also set to become priority areas for new environmental land management systems. Planning is dealt with in detail with a recommendation that AONBs become statutory consultees and a focus on delivery of affordable housing through a new national landscapes housing association.

A lively discussion followed and it was acknowledged that the proposed National Landscape Service would be very welcome to build on relationships with Dartmoor National Park and other AONBs in the County.

## South Devon Estuaries Partnership

We have continued our work with some fantastic local volunteers to survey and map the invasive & non-native Pacific oyster and trial their management around the shores of our estuaries. A few areas of estuary shoreline are likely to remain problematic and we don't truly understand why those areas support such prolific reefs of the Pacific oyster; we are very optimistic that the rest of the shores might be managed with continued local support.

We were very excited to discover at least one significant new meadow of the larger 'common' seagrass within the Salcombe - Kingsbridge Estuary and possibly a second within the mouth of the Erme Estuary but this has to be verified. Whilst all our soft sediment marine habitats are highly important as long term carbon sinks, seagrass meadows trump them all ... and they're pretty incredible for our wildlife too.

The Erme, Avon and upper Dart Estuary have all been confirmed as new 'Marine Conservation Zones' meaning that all of the estuaries within the South Devon AONB and much of our coast, are at least in part designated as Marine Protected Areas. Areas to be understood, used and enjoyed responsibly and sustainably.



Briefing volunteers,  
Pacific Oyster survey

## South Devon Catchments Partnership

The South Devon AONB Unit co-hosts the South Devon Catchment Partnership with the Westcountry Rivers Trust in bringing groups, organisations and individuals together across South Devon. Working together we aim to ensure our waterways and coastal waters are healthy and full of life, now and in the future. Projects improve the health and quality of our water environment for people and for wildlife, help build on our understanding of wider water quality matters and bring people closer to nature whilst meeting our water quality obligations under the Water Framework Directive.

As part of the national Catchment Based Approach movement the Partnership covers the rain catchment areas of our streams, rivers, lakes, estuaries and coast surrounding catchments across the South Devon area from the Yealm to Teign Estuaries. It includes the work of our own South Devon AONB Estuaries Partnership.

The partnership website ([south-devon.org](https://south-devon.org)) has news, resources, and information to supplement regular emails, newsletters and telecoms.

Volunteers Pacific Oyster survey







Pollinator farm walk

## Avon Valley Farmers Group

The objectives of this five year programme are to link large scale areas to improve the quality of habitats, feeding and commuting territory for our area's priority species, such as greater horseshoe bats and cirl buntings. A range of workshops were delivered for the group including sessions on arable margins, offsetting carbon emissions, pollinators and herbal leys. Six members were assisted in applying for Countryside Stewardship Mid-Tier schemes.

## Bantham Estate interpretation project

We have been working with the Bantham estate, as part of their Higher Level Countryside Stewardship grant, to produce a set of 3 interpretation panels to help explain important features on the site. One is about the Scheduled Ancient Monument and tells the story of the history dating back to prehistoric times. Archaeology has shown that the site was an important post Roman trading port and settlement. The Hay meadow board shows how part of the site will be managed to encourage wildflowers and wildlife.



## Wembury Corridors and Connections

### Focus on landscape enhancements for nature recovery

We have completed a draft set of project plans which will be developed with the parish council and local communities and delivered, subject to funding being secured, from 2020. The project will be developed. Some community projects have been completed including habitat enhancements at Wembury primary school playing fields and wildlife meadow and habitat improvements at Wembury allotments.



Habitat enhancement with Wembury Primary School pupils



Prawle Point walk

## Explore South Devon Coast and Countryside



In partnership with the South West Coast Path Association we delivered a project across the coast of the AONB which encouraged people to explore further from the main visitor hubs, spend longer in the area and support local businesses and facilities. This work was funded by a grant from the South Devon Coastal Local Action group (with funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development).

We know that the downloadable walks pages are the busiest ones on our website and felt that it would be good to overhaul them. A band of amazing volunteers went out and checked every one of the 48 walks, making amends and submitting changes to the information. With their help all of the walks are now easy to follow and clearly explained.

We developed a series of 19 self-guided walks with enhanced content including digital route maps, audio guides and video, along with a set of 12 information panels which were sited at busy visitor hubs along the coast.

The first set of 19 updated walks was completed by October 2019 and the panels installed. We secured a further grant to do another 22 walks and 10 more panels, which will be completed during Summer 2020.



## Brixham and Kingswear Peninsular project

### Focus on access and recreation

As part of the Explore South Devon project, we made this part of the AONB a focus and have now installed 3 information panels and a set of 6 downloadable guided walks, enabling local communities to better explore the landscape and make connections across the area.







Left to right: Kingsbridge Strollers; Mobile Planetarium; Lambing and Kidding Live at Daynes Farm

## Kingsbridge Strollers

### Connecting Actively with Nature

The Unit organised a special series of short walks in Kingsbridge as part of *Connecting Actively with Nature*, a Devon wide project which has secured funding through the National Lottery, from Sport England. The short walks helped participants to discover the wildlife on the Kingsbridge estuary in a series of easy strolls to take in the view and look for wildlife, followed by a cup of tea or coffee and a chat. The walks took place every Wednesday during June and July, and were led by Project Officer Adam who was able to share his knowledge of local wildlife and birds, plants and animals along the way.

These walks were particularly aimed at anyone 55 or over, who wanted to get more active in the amazing landscape of South Devon and to meet a few like-minded locals. The walks were a great success, with participants, the eldest being 87 and all with a range of health issues, sharing that they had gained a lot from the walks, met new friends, discovered newfound confidence and increased levels of physical activity.

The CAN project, delivered by Active Devon, through the Local Nature Partnership will continue until March 2023 and we plan to run more projects with them over the next 3 years.

## Events

Of the larger events Open Farm Sunday and Lambing and Kidding Live were really popular and provided valuable opportunities for educating young people about food and farming. The food and craft fair at Stokeley Farm Shop was a further chance to promote locally produced food with children (and some adults) enjoying making their own butter. The mobile planetarium event was a sell out, followed by a bat walk in perfect conditions.

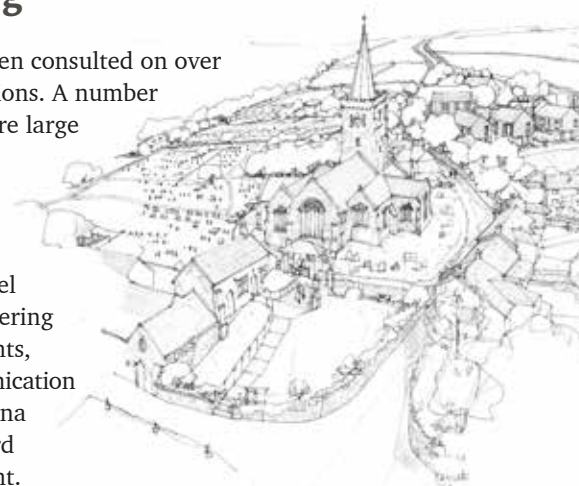
## New Website

Our brand new website went live during March just as lockdown commenced. It aims to provide a more interactive resource that is easy to navigate especially from tablets and smartphones. Early figures from google analytics have shown strong interest in the news and walks pages.



## Planning

We have been consulted on over 70 applications. A number of these were large complex proposals including housing estates, hotel and self-catering developments, telecommunication masts, marina and shipyard development.



Housing development Holbeton, artist impression

## National Moment

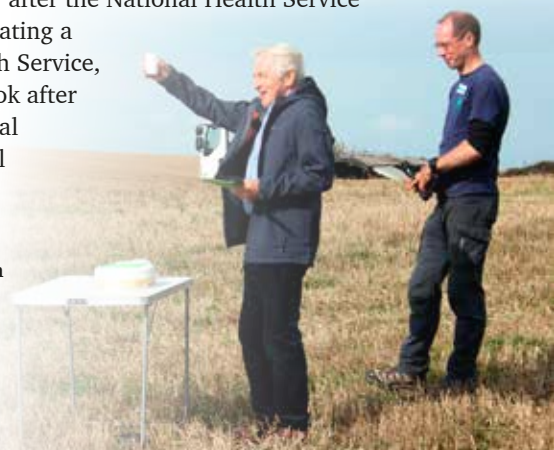
We joined other AONBs across the country to create a heart in the landscape on 21st September. The initiative marked the start of Landscapes for Life week and the 70th anniversary of the legislation which created AONBs and National Parks.

The heart was ploughed in a field at the iconic coastal location of South Down Farm Malborough by kind permission of the National Trust. It was surrounded by tractors from the last 70 years with a 1949 Fordson and a 2019 Massey Ferguson on either side of the tip of the heart.

Our Patron Jonathan Dimpleby joined the AONB Partnership Committee and representatives from various partner organisations and read the poem especially commissioned by the National Association of AONBs from Poet Laureate Simon Armitage entitled 'Fugitives'.

The National Moment was marked to demonstrate how much people love and care for these special landscapes. **The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949** the year after the National Health Service was about creating a Natural Health Service, that would look after physical mental and emotional wellbeing by being outside.

Patron Jonathan Dimpleby raises a glass to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the 1949 Act



# AONB Partnership financial profile

## 2019-2020

### Core costs & income

The **core costs** of the AONB Partnership were jointly funded.

#### AONB Partnership core income

Defra	£124,140	74.2%
Devon County Council	£18,500	11.1%
South Hams District Council	£20,749	12.4%
Torbay Council	£3,000	1.8%
Plymouth City Council	£1,000	0.6%
Income earned	£6	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£167,395</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### AONB Partnership core expenditure

Direct staff costs incl. travel, training, etc.	£141,409	84.5%
Office costs and support services	£13,367	8.0%
Communication costs	£1,699	1.0%
Commissioned specialist work	£240	0.1%
Partnership Committee support costs	£4,726	2.8%
Other core expenditure	£5,953	3.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£167,395</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Contribution to partnership programmes

In addition to the direct project expenditure run through the AONB Partnership, the AONB Unit also manages the budget for the Slapton Line Partnership.

#### Slapton Line Partnership

Total spend for 2019-20 was £8,164 mainly focused upon the Adaptation Plan and community consultation. This activity is funded by a variety of partners, with the budget held by South Hams District Council.

**The total AONB Partnership expenditure on core, direct and indirect projects during 2019-20 was £321,933.**

### Direct project costs & income

The **project costs** directly incurred by the AONB Partnership in support of AONB Management Plan priorities were funded by a wider range of sources:

#### AONB Partnership direct project income

Defra	£35,419	24.2%
South Hams District Council	£10,200	7.0%
National Trust	£2,000	1.4%
Environment Agency	£7,500	5.1%
SW Coast Path Association - South Devon Coastal Local Action Group	£28,427	19.4%
SW Coast Path Association	£1,750	1.2%
Bantham Estate - Natural England	£5,600	3.8%
Pacific Oyster Project - Natural England	£3,906	2.7%
Facilitation Farmers Group - Natural England	£16,000	10.9%
Devon County Council	£3,000	2.0%
Other income	£3,639	2.5%
Section 106 - South Hams District Council	£1,984	1.4%
Salcombe Harbour Authority	£10,900	7.4%
Dart Harbour and Navigation Authority	£5,000	3.4%
Duchy of Cornwall	£7,150	4.9%
Active Devon - Sports Council	£2,400	1.6%
Devon Landscape Policy Group	£1,500	1.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£146,375</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### AONB Partnership direct project expenditure

Estuary project costs	£45,788	31.3%
Community projects staff costs and associated work	£33,272	22.7%
"Explorer" publication, events programme and outreach work	£1,914	1.3%
National promotion - 70th Anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act	£3,842	2.6%
Interpretation and ferry panels	£6,326	4.3%
Explore South Devon project	£11,739	8.0%
Facilitation Programme	£16,000	10.9%
Wild Wembury	£690	0.5%
Community orchard project	£2,593	1.8%
AONB Gateway signs	£232	0.2%
Connecting Actively to Nature	£185	0.1%
Other expenditure	£287	0.2%
Upfront project funds for activity in future years	£23,508	16.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£146,375</b>	<b>100%</b>





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The AONB Unit is funded by:

