

# TamarValley

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

**A vibrant, dynamic, living landscape**





# Our 20-year Vision

The people of the Tamar Valley are stewards of this rare valley and water landscape, of high visual quality, a unique wildlife resource with a remarkable heritage, which is a legacy of thousands of years of human occupation. By supporting a thriving community with a sense of belonging and identity, we will ensure the sustainability of the area as a peaceful, tranquil breathing space; at a time of unprecedented change.

## The Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

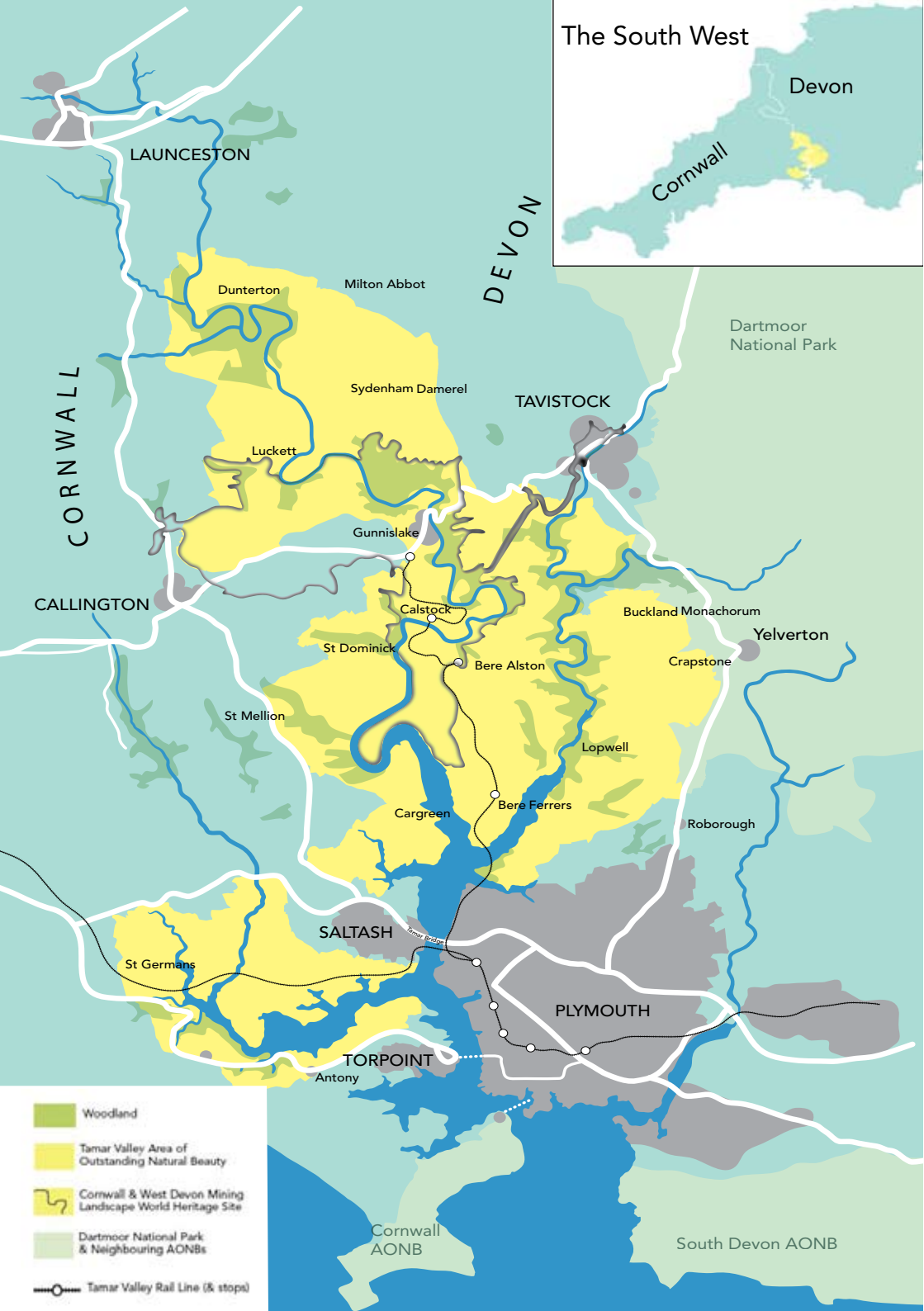
This diverse landscape is defined and shaped by the rivers Tamar, Tavy and Lynher, and by the human activity focused around them. Although for centuries the River Tamar has marked the Celtic border between Cornwall and England, for much longer the rivers have united the area, enabling commerce, powering industry, transporting goods and providing food.

The human imprint upon the area contributes to its sense of place; all around today's tranquil Valley is evidence of episodes of huge historical landscape change. Industrialisation, mining and market gardening form a unique parallel story within the rolling pastoral landscape. These historical legacies have become intermingled within extensive woodland, mostly on the steep valley sides.

Still retained within the formed countryside are medieval structures such as small fields, high hedgebanks, deep narrow lanes, small farmsteads, great estates and remarkable 15th century stone bridges. The survival of these features on this scale is rare and we must be vigilant of future loss.

The AONB Partnership is striving for a delicate balance, to conserve and enhance these historic features and patterns that give the area its sense of place and distinctiveness. It is imperative that we recognise it has to be a vibrant and thriving place to live in, run businesses, enjoy, and share with others. The AONB has to find positive and sustainable ways to respond to our ever-changing environment.

# The South West



- Woodland
- Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Cornwall & West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site
- Dartmoor National Park & Neighbouring AONBs
- South Devon AONB
- Cornwall AONB
- Tamar Valley Rail Line (& stops)



# Facts and Figures

<b>When did the area become an AONB and how big is it?</b>	The Tamar Valley AONB was designated in 1995 and covers 190 square kilometres (75 square miles) of rivers, estuaries and countryside. It is one of 38 AONBs in England and Wales.
<b>Administrative areas</b>	The boundary crosses 5 local authority areas, Cornwall Council, Devon County Council, West Devon Borough Council, South Hams District Council and Plymouth City Council. The AONB also partly borders Dartmoor National Park. The AONB incorporates 24 parishes.
<b>Rivers</b>	The AONB includes the lower reaches of three rivers and their tributaries: the Tamar, Tavy and Lynher.
<b>Farmland</b>	67% of the AONB is farmed.
<b>Woodland</b>	There are 3,668 hectares (20.2%) of woodland which is significantly above the regional average.
<b>Public rights of way</b>	There are 127 km of public rights of way.
<b>Nature conservation</b>	11% (1,688 hectares) of the AONB is nationally designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); there are 7 SSSI sites including four European Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). There are also 33 County Wildlife Sites (CWS) (13.3% of the AONB), and the rivers are designated as the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC), the Tamar Estuaries Complex Special Protection Area, and Tamar Estuary Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ).
<b>Heritage designations</b>	There are 27 Scheduled Monuments, 645 Listed Buildings, 4 Registered Parks & Gardens, and 14 Conservation Areas. 16.5% of the AONB is within the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site. There are 3,320 entries on the Historic Environment Records of Devon and Cornwall.
<b>People</b>	From the 2011 census data the population is 12,466 people, mostly in the 30-50 age group.

## **The primary purpose of the AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.**

The Tamar Valley AONB is a partnership that works together with local communities to support the AONB designation and to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape.

The AONB Partnership was established in 2000 in response to legal duties set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000). It is made up of representatives from the local community, specialist organisations, government agencies, farmers and landowners. This group works together to review and produce a Management Plan every 5 years to guide the work of the team.

The Management Plan identifies the forces for change acting on the Valley and the responses that have been agreed upon to protect its special qualities.

## **We have identified certain forces for change that we will address in the current Management Plan 2014-19.**

These are:

1. Wholesale changes to the planning system, and (piecemeal) development throughout the AONB.
2. A significant increase in development pressure from industrial scale renewable energy proposals (wind turbines and solar arrays).
3. New targets from Government to protect and enhance wildlife.
4. Promotion of the 'ecosystem services' approach to the management of natural resources.
5. Localism, the Big Society and cuts to public funding.
6. The need to support economic recovery by promoting economic growth and job creation.

## **The Tamar Valley's five Special Qualities**

These are the aspects of natural beauty that justify the Tamar Valley's national importance and basis for designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.





## 1. A rare valley and water landscape

The Tamar Valley AONB represents a relatively unspoiled valley and water landscape. The lower tidal reaches of the estuary have dramatic contrasts between extensive low water mudflats and expansive waterscapes at high water. The middle valleys become dramatic with steep fringing woodlands, high cliffs and rocky outcrops juxtaposed with gently meandering stretches through lush pastureland. The higher areas of the AONB possess a more gently rolling pastoral floodplain. The river that was once a major industrial and trading route, busy with waterborne traffic and noise, is now a tranquil place, valued by visitors and locals alike for its peace and quiet, a silence only punctuated by bird calls.

## 2. A landscape of high visual quality

The visual quality of the landscape in the Tamar Valley AONB at an intimate or panoramic scale is exceptional. The landscape contains huge contrasts and surprises. In many places the network of ancient deeply incised lanes, high hedge banks and small fields gives a very enclosed, intimate and sometimes even claustrophobic feeling. This contrasts strongly with expansive estuarine vistas of the river valley and green patchworks of fields and hedges seen from vantage points such as Kit Hill or Weir Quay.



### 3. A unique wildlife resource

The AONB sustains a diversity of wildlife habitats. Wildlife in the estuary is internationally important, especially for wintering waders and wildfowl, mudflats, salt marsh, reedbeds, wet grassland, fen and fringing oak woodland. The rivers support a range of species, including otters and many scarce and endangered fish, such as the Allis shad, salmonids and eels. Woodland includes large tracts of well-managed coniferous forest and equally large areas of broadleaved woodland, much of it ancient semi-natural, supporting important species, including the heath fritillary butterfly and the nightjar. Lowland heathland remains in places. Species-rich hedges are a particular feature, and traditional orchards contain increasingly rare Tamar Valley varieties of apples, cherries and other fruit.







## 4. A remarkable heritage

The dominant landscape structure across much of the AONB results from medieval and post-medieval enclosures. This unspoilt pattern of settlement, lanes, fields, woodland and hedgebanks is an outstanding landscape legacy. Extensive mining activity from the late 18th century throughout the Valley, exploited massive copper and arsenic reserves as well as a wide variety of other minerals and ores. The combination of workers' housing, Methodist chapels, chimneys, engine houses, inclines and associated infrastructure has created a distinctive mining landscape. Evidence of the river's importance can be seen across the landscape by a series of structures, leats, weirs, quays, fords, viaducts, limekilns and bridges. The Valley's unique market gardening industry supplied many crops, via railway and river, to London and elsewhere, and evidence of this activity is still visible in the landscape today.



## 5. A landscape of artistic and public appeal

The area has long been a haunt for artists and travellers. Some notable writers and artists frequented the Valley, such as J.M.W. Turner, and were as fascinated by the industrial environment as by the picturesque landscapes. Today there remains an active community of artists and craftspeople in the Valley. The strong local identity is perhaps most rooted in the traditional land-based industries – farming, forestry, market gardening, mining and traditional salmon fishing. Local celebrations of the environment, such as strawberry and cherry fairs, daffodil and apple days, survive as important links and reminders. This sense of place remains one of the area's great strengths and one that needs careful stewardship.

# Our promise

The actions that the AONB Partnership has agreed to pursue, in response to the pressures identified, are organised into four strategic themes.

## Conserving & enhancing the landscape

### Delivering Landscape-scale Projects

- We will develop landscape-scale projects to deliver improvements in biodiversity status and extent, landscape character, water quality and ecosystem services. This will be delivered through innovative and best practice approaches to land management and habitat creation.
- We will work in partnership with local farmers, foresters and other land managers to deliver this, as well as bodies such as the Environment Agency, Natural England, Forestry Commission and Defra. We will need to identify funding from European Structural Funds and other sources such as Local Enterprise Partnerships.
- As well as environmental improvements, we aim to support farming and forestry diversification and sustainable tourism business opportunities (where this is compatible with the purposes of the AONB designation).

### Providing a Planning Service and developing Design Guides

- We will respond to consultations on significant planning applications, and offer pre-application advice to developers to minimise landscape impacts.
- We will work with parishes to ensure landscape priorities are considered in neighbourhood plans.
- We will develop design guides to protect the local historic environment and maintain landscape character.
- We will consider the implications of housing allocations and other significant developments for the AONB and respond appropriately.







# Supporting the economy & communities

## Supporting the local economy through access, transport and sustainable tourism initiatives.

- We will develop a strategic vision for tourism and recreation in the Valley, developing low impact tourism in areas with appropriate capacity and public transport links.
- We will promote selected 'Days Out' in the Valley.
- We will work with businesses to promote continuous improvement in the quality of the tourism and recreation facilities and services, we will promote local foods, and we will work with Partners to improve the quality of public access and opportunities for enjoying the AONB landscape.

## Involving Valley people

- We will continue to deliver public events, such as the Tamar Trail Festival and other activities.
- We will promote education about the Valley, and encourage people to learn traditional skills.
- We will promote and support Valley Volunteers and Tamar Community Trust, and encourage them to promote, research, record and maintain the Valley's heritage.
- We will promote the Valley as a resource to help improve health and wellbeing, for example through Walking for Health.

# Bringing the Rivers back into focus

## Connecting with our rivers and estuaries.

- We will bring the rivers back into the heart of AONB work.
- Initially, we will focus on understanding more about recreational use, river-related heritage, the implications of sea level rise to help us to identify future activities and how the new Marine Conservation Zone will be of benefit. We will also help to support and develop the new Catchment Based approach (CaBa).

# Working with Partners

## Promoting AONB objectives to strategic bodies

- We will work with partners to improve the environment, by helping to meet national and local policy commitments.
- We will work to influence the priorities of Local Enterprise Partnerships, Local Nature Partnerships, and agri-environment schemes to bring more resources into the AONB to enhance the landscape and benefit communities.
- We will work with the Local Authorities to secure funding for wildlife, countryside and heritage access improvements through the planning system.

## Coordinating the Partnership

- We will review the Partnership structure, review the terms of reference and reporting mechanisms. We will renegotiate the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the Partnership funding bodies.
- We will continue to monitor landscape condition and trends.
- We will report on progress annually and develop impact indicators.







Tamar Valley AONB  
Tamar Valley Centre  
Cemetery Road  
Drakewalls, Gunnislake  
Cornwall, PL18 9FE

01822 835030  
enquiries@tamarvalley.org.uk  
www.tamarvalley.org.uk

