

Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty  
Management Plan 2019 – 2024  
Summary Document

**A vibrant, dynamic, living landscape**



## Our 20-year Vision...

...guides the general direction of the Management Plan and remains unchanged from the 2014 - 2019 Plan.

“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.”

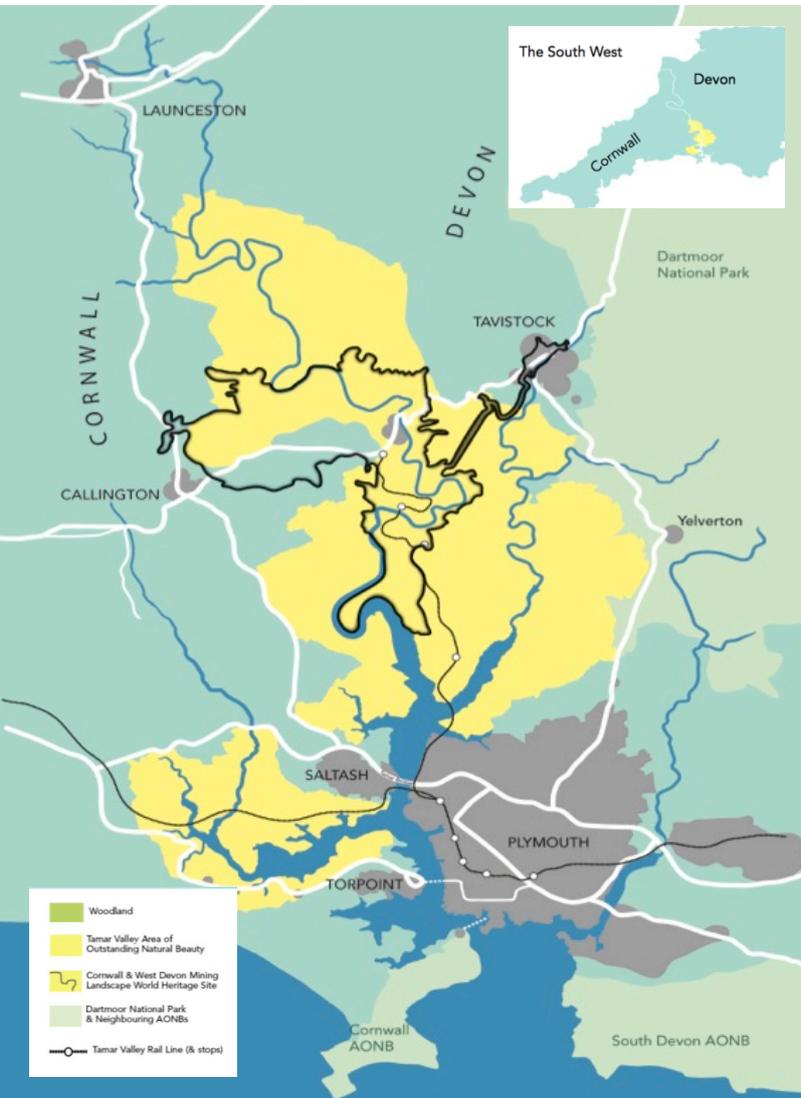
**The Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)** is a protected landscape of national importance and natural beauty. Those factors, which contribute to the Tamar Valley's outstanding status in a national context, relate to its completeness, cultural development and human scale.

The Tamar Valley landscape has survived better than most, partly because of its steepness, difficult access and relative geographical isolation and as a consequence retains many small intricate features. Much of the medieval structure of the farmed countryside is still intact, with its small fields, high hedgerows, deep narrow lanes, small farmsteads, great estates and remarkable 15<sup>th</sup> century stone bridges. The survival of this heritage is nationally important, but increasingly rare and currently more threatened than ever before.

Review of the Management Plan has coincided with a time of change in the midst of the uncertainties around Brexit. However, there are opportunities through the government's 25 Year Environment Plan and the vision to ensure that protection and enhancement of the natural environment is a central priority with the aim to "be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we inherited it". The Landscapes review of the National Parks and AONBs has also provided a platform for discussion around the future of protected landscapes. Responses from the Tamar Valley community have indicated engagement and debate with the review process and the feedback received has informed the Tamar Valley AONB's official response.

It is important to emphasise that although the Plan is split into sections, for ease of reference, these do not work in isolation. The interconnectedness and cross over of these themes is key to taking the vision of the Tamar Valley AONB forward and conserving, protecting and enhancing this very special place.

The challenge for the AONB Partnership is to recognise and protect the unique qualities that the past has endowed us with, but to find new and meaningful ways to sustain the landscape, protecting our heritage and supporting vibrant communities for the future.



## Where is the Tamar Valley AONB?

The Tamar Valley AONB is located on the border of Cornwall and Devon, and includes the lower valleys of the Tamar, Tavy and Lynher. The larger section, around the rivers Tamar and Tavy, extends north from the broad estuary at Plymouth to the intricate, deeply incised river meanders just below Launceston and Tavistock. It borders Dartmoor National Park to the east and takes in Kit Hill to the west. The section around the River Lynher stretches west from Saltash and Torpoint to St Germans in south-east Cornwall.

## Special Qualities of the Tamar Valley AONB

### Why we are outstanding...

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

#### 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.

#### 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.

### 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 provide habitats to support them. 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.

### A remarkable heritage

The unspoilt pattern of settlement dating mostly from medieval and post-medieval enclosures, lanes, fields, woodland and hedgebanks is an outstanding landscape legacy. Extensive mining activity from the late 18th century throughout the Valley, exploited mineral reserves. 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.

### 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 Tamar 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.

## Summary of our key themes

### Theme 1

#### Place

Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Tamar Valley AONB.

- Landscape Character
- Historic Environment and Local Distinctiveness
- Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Rivers and Estuaries
- Environmental Quality and Climate Change

### Theme 2

#### People and Prosperity

Encourage and support sustainable economic development, social engagement and recreational activity where this is compatible with the purposes of AONB designation.

- Farming, Forestry and Land Management
- Access, Recreation and Tourism
- Planning and Development
- Communities and Culture
- Communications, Education and Awareness

### Theme 3

#### Partnership

Recognise and value the national, regional and local importance of the AONB.

- The AONB Partnership



## Landscape Character

### We aim to

- Conserve and enhance the landscape character and local distinctiveness of the AONB.

### by focussing on

- Maintaining, reviewing and updating baseline evidence; reviewing and developing best practice in applying this information effectively to enhance and conserve the AONB.
- Reinstating and enhancing landscape features identified as missing, fragmented or at risk, and identifying opportunities that are in keeping with the landscape character of the AONB.
- Responding appropriately to planning applications, seeking solutions to visually intrusive and noisy developments and activities that impact adversely on tranquillity and dark skies.
- Reviewing the Landscape Character Assessment for the whole of the AONB to provide consistent approach across administrative boundaries.
- Encouraging a consistent cross-boundary approach to protecting areas of tranquillity.



## Historic Environment and Local Distinctiveness

### We aim to

- Improve co-ordination and influence in the management and protection of the distinctive landscape and historic environment features of the AONB to conserve, protect and raise awareness.

### by focussing on

- Promoting the development of Vernacular Design Guides for the AONB.
- Working with partners to ensure that the historic environment is considered in development proposals and land management initiatives, particularly on unrecorded and undesignated sites.
- Reviewing the designed landscapes (designated and undesignated) and their contribution to the character and heritage of the AONB landscape. Identifying opportunities and priorities for action.
- Promoting traditional skills in the management of the built heritage and natural environment to sustain the local distinctiveness of the Tamar Valley AONB.
- Supporting projects that increase awareness and understanding of undesignated local heritage, and encouraging inclusion in the Historic Environment Record.
- Working with Historic England, landowners and funding bodies to target the protection of assets on the Heritage at Risk register.
- Ensuring a legacy for past heritage projects, including mining heritage and market gardening, and continuing collaboration between the AONB and WHS partnerships and teams to achieve the purposes of these areas.
- Supporting work to maintain mine infrastructure and provide access to sites providing links to learning and the health and wellbeing agenda.

## Biodiversity and Geodiversity

### We aim to

- Support the conservation and enhancement of priority habitat and reverse the general decline in biodiversity within the AONB, securing increase in the population of associated priority species, and improvements in ecological connectivity through habitat creation and restoration, focussing on natural capital and ecosystem services.
- Ensure that geological sites in the AONB are identified, protected and actively conserved and their conditions monitored and that geodiversity is given a higher public and educational profile.

### by focussing on

- Contributing to recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes through the delivery of priority habitat targets and landscape scale initiatives.
- Contributing to recovering nature targets through supporting initiatives to support priority species.
- Supporting initiatives to promote and value the benefits and services provided by the natural environment.
- Identifying opportunities to raise awareness and improve access to the geological and earth heritage.
- Identifying biodiversity and geodiversity sites that are suitable for public access and seeking to provide high quality educational interpretation and sustainable transport links where appropriate.
- Supporting projects that reverse the decline in native pollinators and encouraging farmers and landowners to adopt pollinator-friendly practices.
- Reviewing landscape management advice in the face of climate change.
- Reviewing non-native plant and animal threats in terms of pests and diseases and ecological impact in the Tamar Valley and prioritise deliverable actions.

## Rivers and Estuaries

### We aim to

- Help to maintain high quality river systems and habitats, support sustainable opportunities for recreation and tourism and increase awareness of the river and estuarine environment and the opportunities they present for sustainable development, taking into account the needs of local communities.

### by focussing on

- Identifying and implementing the role of the rivers and estuaries in creating solutions for floods and habitat resilience and developing riparian and coastal habitat improvement and restoration projects.
- Promoting increased use of, and access to, the river system and its cultural heritage as a focus for education such as 'river schools' and 'floating' or 'outdoor' classrooms.
- Working with Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum (TECF) to support and make appropriate management responses in relation to the European Marine Site – Managing Recreational Impacts Programme.
- Supporting initiatives to undertake additional baseline recording along the rivers and estuaries to identify management needs and opportunities.
- Helping to support and deliver catchment scale initiatives or projects.
- Continuing to record, conserve, enhance and interpret the historic quays and river-based historic features.
- Supporting the treatment of invasive species (especially giant hogweed) through the Tamar Invasives Project.
- Promoting sustainable eco-moorings which minimise impact on the substrate using established best practice models.

## Environmental Quality and Climate Change

### We aim to

- Ensure effective conservation and management of the AONB's natural resources and features, its landform and landscape setting, water, mineral and soil resources, through the encouragement of sustainable land management.
- Respond to climate change effects across all areas, as appropriate, and in particular will investigate renewable energy sources, opportunities and impacts.

### by focussing on

- Promoting activities that enhance the value of ecosystem services and natural flood management, such as riparian tree planting, by exploring the role of the Tamar Valley AONB Partnership in furthering the work identified in the Tamar Catchment Partnership project and supporting delivery of future environmental land-management schemes.
- Reviewing the approaches available for the Tamar Valley AONB landscape to contribute to options for a low carbon economy.
- Undertaking research to better understand the implications of climate change and increasing weather extremes for farming practices and the potential impacts of such on communities, landscape and built heritage.
- Undertaking research to better understand the implications for sea level rise, and consequent habitat loss and mitigation proposals, and exploring the Tamar Valley AONB role in delivering sustainable solutions.
- Seeking solutions to reduce mine pollution and risk of future events whilst meeting landscape and biodiversity targets including supporting rare and specialist species that require bare soil heap habitats.

# Farming, Forestry and Land Management

## We aim to

- Support sustainable systems of land management that conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB and contribute to a green and prosperous local economy.

## by focussing on

- Supporting and developing landscape-scale integrated initiatives and projects and piloting environmentally and landscape sensitive farming, sustainable land management and forestry approaches.
- Supporting initiatives to improve water resource management and water quality, and helping to deliver Water Framework Directive (WFD) targets. Exploring ecosystem services and natural capital approaches to farming and land management.
- Seeking opportunities to enhance and increase biodiversity and creating nature networks.
- Influencing priorities and supporting the delivery of post-Brexit environmental schemes working with landowners and managers to help target and co-ordinate local partnerships to deliver landscape-scale programmes such as the Tamara Landscape Partnership.
- Encouraging and supporting the re-connection of communities with farming and food and seeking opportunities to support a circular economy with respect to produce from the AONB.
- Continuing to explore and promote sustainable management of woods and hedges for timber and options for woodfuel.
- Promoting management practices for road verges and small vernacular details such as granite gateposts and traditional hedgebanks within the farmed landscape.
- Supporting the restoration of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) to broadleaved or mixed systems and supporting silvicultural systems that provide a more stable ecosystem for biodiversity, water and carbon.
- Encouraging woodland owners to move towards more species and age diversity to make their woodlands more resilient in the face of extreme weather and increasing prevalence of pests and diseases and promoting improved biosecurity particularly in relation to proposed tree planting schemes.

## Access, Recreation and Tourism

### We aim to

- Promote the development of integrated access, recreation and tourism facilities and services which are compatible with the purposes of the AONB designation, and that contribute effectively to the local economy.

### by focussing on

- Leading the development of a spatial strategy for access, recreation and tourism in the Valley compatible with AONB special qualities and designation, working with public and private partners.
- Developing and promoting a series of 'days out' in the Valley, paying attention to opportunities to promote local attractions and services and to the use of sustainable transport options where available.
- Promoting the value of the landscape to local businesses including supporting TAVATA and growing the visitor gifting initiative of Tamar TLC.
- Maintaining and promoting existing and new opportunities for all forms of recreation within the Tamar Valley AONB, with particular focus on joining up existing routes, providing easy access routes for all user groups, creating circular routes and promoting heritage assets where possible.
- Continuing to work with key local bodies such as TAVATA, Tamar Community Trust, CoaST and the National Trust, among others, to maximise opportunities for sustainable tourism and recreation, promoting the AONB as a destination to provide economic integrity and support living communities.
- Developing the Valley as a resource for promoting people's health and wellbeing, including developing new 'Walking for Health' and outdoor activity groups, and exploring the potential for horticulture as a therapeutic approach.
- Exploring options for accommodating some additional responsible boat use to support the local economy as long as this does not impact on the biodiversity and tranquillity of the AONB.
- Supporting digital technology infrastructure delivery to provide new opportunities to businesses and residents while reducing the need to travel.

## Planning and Development

### We aim to

- Ensure that the Tamar Valley AONB's purpose and objectives are fully recognised in the planning decision-making process and local planning policies.

### by focussing on

- Providing guidance and supporting toolkit to planning officers, elected Members and developers as to how the statutory duty should be exercised through the planning system.
- Providing locally relevant guidance to supplement the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) with reference to planning in protected areas.
- Contributing to pre-application discussions on major developments within and in the setting of the AONB.
- Responding to planning consultations and offering technical advice where appropriate, in line with our planning processes and any prescribed timescales.
- Promoting the importance of the AONB landscape to Parishes developing Neighbourhood Plans and to provide technical advice to ensure AONB priorities are included in these plans.
- Supporting Local Planning Authorities to ensure that developments are sustainable in their design, construction, technology and landscaping, protecting the AONB's natural resource and enhancing its special qualities.
- Ensuring that development outside the AONB boundary respects its setting.
- Ensuring that ancient woodlands and ancient and veteran trees are afforded sufficient protection in line with revised NPPF in planning applications.
- Promoting the development of design guides for residential and agricultural buildings within the AONB.
- Promoting the use of 2016 Campaign to Protect Rural England dark skies data and the Environmental Zones and associated design guidance promoted by the Institution of Lighting Professionals.
- Encouraging the development and use of Landscape Sensitivity Assessments based on Landscape Character Areas across the AONB.

## Communities and Culture

### We aim to

- Encourage and support communities in understanding and appreciating cultural identity and traditional practices within the AONB, and to maintain and enhance these.
- Support initiatives that contribute to a sustainable future for communities within the AONB, consistent with the AONB's purposes.

### by focussing on

- Exploring opportunities and priorities for continuing the Tamar Valley AONB's practice of community-led activities.
- Developing and building on the Heralds of Spring project to link communities with the cut flower growing heritage and their landscape today.
- Continuing to promote creativity and traditions inspired by the landscape.
- Investigating the status of the sustainability of community services within the AONB and what role the AONB Partnership can best play to address the issues identified.
- Supporting the Connecting Actively to Nature Project in Devon and deliver local activities.
- Celebrating 10 years of the Tamar Valley Centre in 2019 and 25 years of the AONB designation in 2020.
- Continuing to grow and expand the range of walks and regular outdoor activities offered in the AONB such as Walking for Health and the Walk and Talk groups and a broad range of opportunities for volunteering for new and existing volunteers.
- Assisting and encouraging communities in the development of Neighbourhood Plans to ensure that the landscape character and special qualities of the AONB are taken into account in the planning process.

## Communications, Education and Awareness

### We aim to

- Promote a greater understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the AONB landscape and wider recognition of the designation and purpose.

### by focussing on

- Communicating key messages and information via a range of media to local and national audiences.
- Investigating how the Tamar Valley AONB and local businesses can work together for mutual benefit and to promote the unique qualities of the Tamar Valley landscape.
- Providing and maintaining high quality interpretation of the AONB.
- Providing high quality volunteering opportunities through Valley Volunteers in partnership with Tamar Community Trust, Friends of Tamar Valley, Tamar TLC and other groups.



## The AONB Partnership

### We aim to

- Maintain an effective, responsive, relevant and respected AONB Partnership that will sustain and promote the core purposes of the AONB.

### by focussing on

- Reviewing the Partnership governance and future funding opportunities in order to support and maintain an effective core AONB Team and Partnership.
- Reviewing and negotiating a future Memorandum of Agreement between the constituent Local Authorities in order to ensure delivery of the five-year Plan.
- Monitoring and reporting back on the Defra agreed Key Performance Indicators to measure the impact of the work of the AONB Partnership and to contribute to national figures.
- Ensuring that the AONB continues to have a host body that will enable delivery of the Management Plan.
- Providing focused input and support to the continued development of the Tamar Community Trust and Tamar TLC.



## Facts about the Tamar Valley AONB

When did the area become an AONB and how big is it?	The Tamar Valley AONB was designated in 1995 and covers 190 square kilometres (square miles) of rivers, estuaries and countryside. It is one of 38 AONBs in England Wales.
Administrative areas	The boundary crosses 5 local authority areas, Cornwall Council, Devon County Council, Devon Borough Council, South Hams District Council and Plymouth City Council. It also partly borders Dartmoor National Park. The AONB incorporates 24 parishes.
Rivers	The AONB includes the lower reaches of three rivers and their tributaries: the Tamar, Plym and Lynher.
Farmland	67% of the AONB is farmed.
Woodland	There are 3,668 hectares (22%) of woodland, significantly above the regional average.
Public rights of way	There are 127km of public rights of way.
Nature conservation	11% (1,688 hectares) of the AONB is nationally designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), there are 7 SSSIs including 1 Special Protection Area (SPA). There are also 33 County Wildlife Sites (CWS) (13.3% of the AONB). Rivers are designated as the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC), the Tamar Estuaries Complex Special Protection Area (SPA) and Tamar Estuary Conservation Zone (MCZ).
Heritage designations	27 Scheduled Monuments, 649 Listed Buildings, 4 Registered Parks & Gardens 14 Conservation Areas 16.5% of the AONB is within the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site 3,961 entries on the Historic Environment Records of Devon and Cornwall
People	From the 2011 census data the population is 12,466 people mostly in the 30-50 age range. The next census is due in 2021.
Landscape	IUCN Category V protected landscape.

The full Management Plan and supporting documentation is available online  
[www.tamarvalley.org.uk](http://www.tamarvalley.org.uk)

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