

# Proposed Dorset and East Devon National Park

## Evidence and Sources used to support the Proposal

### Theme: Archaeology and Built Heritage

#### Introduction

The history of Britain and Southern England from the earliest times is evidenced and easily read in Dorset and East Devon's landscapes, villages and towns. Particularly noteworthy features, unique and distinctive to the area, are the prehistoric ceremonial landscapes of the South Dorset Ridgeway, the concentration of hill forts in Dorset and East Devon, good evidence of the Roman period and a very strong and specific industrial heritage based on local building stones (in Purbeck particularly) and rope-making (in Bridport). It is such features which make the area of the Dorset and East Devon AONBs very special and "particularly desirable" for National Park designation.

#### A. Archaeology

##### A.1. Dorset History and Archaeology

###### Pre-Roman



☐  
Maiden Castle (above) is one of the largest Iron Age hill forts in Europe. (Photograph taken in 1935 by George Allen.)

The earliest occupation of Dorset is evidenced by Paleolithic finds from the Axe valley in the Dorset AONB. In the Mesolithic period, Dorset was occupied by people who returned to Britain at a time when it was still attached to Europe by a land-bridge, around 12,500 BC. The population of Britain is thought to have been very small, perhaps only a few thousand across the whole of Britain, and concentrated in particular along the coast: in Dorset, in such places as the Isle of Purbeck, Weymouth, Chesil Beach and Hengistbury Head, and along the Stour valley. There is also Mesolithic evidence at Bincombe on the South Dorset ridgeway. Such populations used stone tools and fire to clear some of the native oak forest for herding prey. Genetic experiments carried out on a Mesolithic skeleton from Cheddar Gorge in

Somerset have suggested that a significant part of the contemporary population of Dorset is descended from these original inhabitants of the British Isles.

This suggests that when a wave of immigrant farmers arrived from the continent in the Neolithic period, the indigenous hunter-gatherers were not wiped out, but instead adapted to hunter-gardener and agricultural practices. Further woodland clearances took place at this stage, and also in the Bronze Age, to make way for agriculture and animal husbandry, although, where the soils were poor and made permanent cultivation difficult, clearance led instead to the creation of heathland. Neolithic and Bronze Age burial mounds are particularly numerous throughout much of the county. The Neolithic Dorset Cursus runs for 10 kms across the landscape of Cranborne Chase.

The South Dorset Ridgeway area is of particular importance. The significance and scale of its prehistoric ceremonial landscape compares with that of the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site, and the barrow density along the South Dorset ridge is even greater than that of its better known Wiltshire neighbours.

Dorset's high chalk hills have provided a location for defensive settlements for millennia, with a large number of late Bronze Age but mostly Iron Age hill forts, such as Maiden Castle, Hod Hill, Badbury Rings and Hambledon Hill. The chalk downs were largely deforested during these times, making way for field and pasture. Some of the steeper slopes and hill tops are inaccessible or impractical for arable farming, and there the archaeology is relatively well preserved; the valley floors and broader hills have usually been ploughed, and hence do not have a good record of pre-Roman archaeology. Some theories postulate that hillforts may not have been the main focus of settlement, but served more as a marketplace-cum-stronghold in times of danger, for a population mainly concentrated in the valleys (where the availability of water would have been a significant consideration.)

By the Late Iron Age, the inhabitants of Dorset were minting their own coinage and thriving on trade with Northern Gaul (Armorica, now known as Brittany). However, after Armorica was conquered by Julius Caesar in 56 BC, trade diminished. The next century or so until the Roman conquest saw a period of economic retrenchment in Dorset, in parallel with a rising population and a decline in soil quality (some of this had been in cultivation for 4,000 years).

The Romans record the name of the native British tribe that lived in Dorset as the Durotriges, who were also the tribe of much of Somerset and possibly the New Forest. It is known that the Durotriges were still occupying their hillforts at the time of the Roman invasion in 43 AD, whereas in most other parts of Britain these had been abandoned around 100 BC. The Durotriges had established an important farming tradition: it is known that they were exporting grain to the Roman Empire in large quantities by the first century BC.

## **Roman**

The Romans landed in Dorset at Poole Harbour and the Fleet and moved inland, while other groups travelled west from Old Sarum and Winchester. At Abbotsbury on the Fleet the Romans quickly took the hill fort, Abbotsbury Castle, before moving on to the hill forts of Maiden Castle, Badbury Rings, Hod Hill, and Spetisbury.

Dorset has many notable Roman artefacts, particularly around the Roman town of Dorchester, where nearby Maiden Castle was taken early in the Roman occupation. In the grounds of the County Council offices is a Roman house with well-preserved mosaic floors and an aqueduct fed by the waters of a tributary of the Frome impounded behind an earthen dam, with a covered timber-lined channel of some nine km; the dam gave way and the aqueduct was abandoned unexpectedly early, in the mid-2nd century. Roman roads radiated from Dorchester, following the tops of the chalk ridges north west to Ilchester near Yeovil, and east to Badbury Rings where the road forked to Winchester, Bath and a particularly well-preserved route running north east to Old Sarum near Salisbury, as well as tracks to the many small Roman villages around the county. In the Roman era settlements were concentrated in the valleys, with Roman finds, such as the famous Hinton St Mary early Christian mosaic [British Museum], being found in the vales. In the Isle of Purbeck a long-settled Iron Age site at Worth Matravers was reorganised late in the Roman period to grow grain for the legion, with a grain-parching granary floor heated with a hypocaust. By the 4th century the hilltops had been abandoned.

### **Post Roman**

In the post Roman period from about 400 AD to 650 AD, the future Dorset was an independent British kingdom. Although there were Jutish and later Saxon people in the Southampton area from the 5th century, the Britons seem to have successfully resisted their expansion into Dorset for a long period. One of the key battles (Mount Badon) between the Britons and Saxons may have been fought at Badbury Rings, though this is disputed. The only historical record of the period, Gildas's *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae*, may have been written in Dorset. There may have been a Saxon raid at Bindon in 614, though the location is not certain.

There is a group of Romano-British inscriptions at Wareham in Purbeck.

### **Saxon**

A large defensive ditch on Cranborne Chase in the north east of the county, Bokerley Dyke, dated to 367, delayed the Saxon conquest of Dorset, with the Romano-British remaining in Dorset for 200 years after the withdrawal of the Roman legions. The inhospitable coastline prevented an invasion from the sea. When the Roman road across Cranborne Chase was rebuilt in the 6th century the Saxons advanced into Dorset. The Romano-British retreated, constructing another defence, Combs Ditch, which also fell within a century. It is thought that the Saxons captured east Dorset in the mid-7th century and west Dorset shortly afterwards, but the details are not known.

Dorset was initially part of Saxon Wessex, with the first record of Dorset being in 841. Coenred, the sub-king of Dorset at the end of the 7th century, was father of King Ine. St Martin's church at Wareham is reputedly the oldest in Dorset but there were many other Saxon foundations including Shaftesbury Abbey and Sherborne Monastery. King Ethelred I (866-871) is buried at Wimborne, while St Cuthberga, abbess of Wimborne, died in 725. Gillingham is first mentioned in a 10th century charter.

St Aldhelm was the first bishop of the Diocese of Sherborne, created in 705 AD.

In 876, legend suggests that King Alfred the Great trapped a Danish fleet at Arne then drove it out, 120 ships being wrecked at Studland. Corfe Castle in 978 saw the murder of King Edward the Martyr, whose body was taken first to Wareham and then to Shaftesbury.

## Middle Ages



During the Middle Ages monasteries like Sherborne Abbey (above) were powerful and influential in Dorset.

The Domesday Book documents many Saxon settlements corresponding to modern towns and villages, mostly in the valleys, and there have been few changes to the parishes since. Over the next few centuries, settlers established the pattern of farmland which prevailed into the nineteenth century. Many monasteries were also established, which were important landowners and centres of power.

A number of military events took place in Dorset during The Anarchy of the 12th century, and this gave rise to the defensive castles at Corfe Castle, Powerstock, Wareham and Shaftesbury. In 1348 the Black Death came to England, probably landing in ports along the south coast, including Melcombe Regis now part of Weymouth. The then busy port was one of the first towns to experience the epidemic which went on to reduce the population of the country by a third. In the 14th and 15th centuries the hilltop villages shrank further, and many disappeared altogether. Throughout the Medieval period, Dorset was popular amongst the nobility, including a number of kings, for its hunting estates, such as Gillingham, Sherborne and Kingston near Corfe Castle. A number of deer parks still remain in the county.

The 12th and 13th centuries saw much prosperity in Dorset and the population grew substantially as a result. In order to provide the extra food required, additional land was enclosed for farming during this time. The quarrying of Purbeck Marble, a limestone that can be polished, brought wealth into the county and provided employment for stonecutters and masons. Large amounts of the stone were used in the construction of Salisbury Cathedral. Many other cathedrals and churches throughout England have interior features, columns, fonts, tombs and sculptures, made of Purbeck Marble.

Another important mediaeval industry was the manufacture of rope. Bridport was particularly famous for its rope, so much so that the phrase 'stabbed with the Bridport

dagger' was commonly used to describe someone who had died at the hands of the hangman. Bridport rope was purchased in large quantities by the Royal Navy. In the 15th century, Henry VII decreed that all hemp within a 5 mile radius of the town was to be reserved for the navy. Bridport lays claim to the longest continuous manufacturing industry in the UK, rope manufacture having been carried out there since mediaeval and perhaps Roman or earlier times.

In the Middle Ages, what are now small harbours like Wareham, Bridport and Lyme Regis were ports engaged in significant international trade.

### **Early Modern**

The Dissolution of the Monasteries closed the abbeys at Sherborne, Shaftesbury, Milton Abbas, Abbotsbury and Cerne Abbas, though both Sherborne and Milton abbeys were saved from destruction. In 1588, eight ships from Dorset assisted in the destruction of the Spanish Armada. The flagship San Salvador still lies at the bottom of Studland bay. Sir Walter Raleigh later settled in Sherborne and served as MP for Dorset.

In the 17th-century English Civil War Dorset had a number of royalist strongholds, such as Sherborne Castle and Corfe Castle, which were ruined in the war. Corfe had already been successfully defended against an attack in 1643 but an act of betrayal during a second siege in 1646 led to its capture and subsequent slighting. The residents of Lyme Regis were staunch Parliamentarians who, in 1644, repelled three attacks by a Royalist army under King Charles's nephew, Prince Maurice. Maurice lost 2,000 men in the assaults and his reputation was severely damaged as a result. The largest civil war battle in Dorset was not fought between Cavaliers and Roundheads however. The Dorset clubmen, a group of angry civilians who were annoyed by the disruption caused by the war, had no allegiance to either side. In 1645 some 5,000 gathered at Shaftesbury to do battle with Parliamentary troops. Armed only with clubs and a variety of farming implements, they were easily dispersed. A smaller force of 2,000 or so regrouped on Hambledon Hill and was again routed. Many were taken prisoner.

In 1685, James Scott Monmouth, the illegitimate son of Charles II, and 150 supporters landed at Lyme Regis. After the failed Monmouth Rebellion, the 'Bloody Assizes' took place in Dorchester where over a five-day period, Judge Jeffreys presided over 312 cases: 74 were executed; 29 were hanged, drawn and quartered; 175 were deported and many were publicly whipped. In 1686, at Charborough Park, a meeting took place to plot the downfall of James II of England. This meeting was effectively the start of the Glorious Revolution.

During the 18th century the Dorset coast saw much smuggling activity; its coves, caves and sandy beaches provided ample opportunities to bring smuggled goods ashore. In 1747 a notorious gang of armed smugglers broke into the customs house in Poole to reclaim their captured contraband. The production of cloth was a profitable business in Dorset during the 17th and 18th centuries. Blandford Forum became famous for its bonelace and Stalbridge for its stockings. Shaftesbury, Sturminster Marshall, Beamister, Burton Bradstock, Gillingham, Cerne Abbas and Winterbourne Stickland produced a wide variety of materials, including sailcloth, linen and silk. The absence of coal however meant that during the Industrial

Revolution Dorset was unable to compete with the large mechanised mills of Lancashire and so remained largely rural. The Tolpuddle Martyrs lived in Dorset, and the farming economy of Dorset was central in the formation of the trade union movement.

## **Modern**

The Industrial Revolution largely by-passed Dorset, which remained largely rural. The farming economy, however, provided the spark for the Trade Union movement when, in the 1820s a group of farm labourers formed one of the first unions. In 1832 unions were outlawed and the six men, now known as the Tolpuddle Martyrs, were sentenced to transportation.

In the 19th century the railways brought increased mobility and communications to the British people. Lines through Dorset include the South Western Main Line, from London to Bournemouth, Poole, Dorchester and Weymouth; the Heart of Wessex Line from Bristol to Sherborne, Dorchester and Weymouth; the West of England Main Line from London to Exeter, with stations at Sherborne and Gillingham; and the now dismantled Somerset and Dorset Joint Railway from Bath to Bournemouth. There were also a number of small branch-lines, closed in the Beeching era, such as those to Bridport and Swanage. The Swanage Railway was reopened as a heritage railway which will be reconnected with the main-line in 2015.

During World War I and II Dorset, located on the English Channel, was both a target and important to the Royal Navy. The large Portland Harbour, constructed in its present form at the end of the 19th century and protected by Nothe Fort and the Verne Citadel, was for many years, including during the wars, one of the largest Royal Navy bases. British, American and Canadian ships gathered in the harbour and nearby in Weymouth bay before the D-Day landings. Training for the landings also took place in Dorset, in particular at the long sandy beach at Studland. Portland Harbour continued to be used as a Royal Navy and NATO training base until the 1990s. It is now a civilian port and recreation area which was used for the sailing events in the 2012 Olympic Games.

Since the early 19th century, when George III took holidays in Weymouth, Dorset's tourism industry has grown, with the seaside resorts of Bournemouth, Weymouth and Swanage, the Jurassic Coast and the county's sparsely populated rural areas attracting millions of visitors each year. Tourism now rivals agriculture as the county's main economic sector.

## **Principal Archaeological sites in Dorset**

The following are some of Dorset's principal archaeological sites of the prehistoric, Roman and medieval periods:

- Abbotsbury
- Ackling Dyke
- Bindon Hill
- Cerne Abbas Giant

- Christchurch
- Coney's Castle
- Cranborne Chase
- Dorset Cursus
- Dorset Ridgeways
- Durnovaria
- Eggardon Hill
- Hengistbury Head
- Hill forts
- Hinton St Mary Mosaic
- Hod Hill
- Jordan Hill Roman Temple
- Lambert Castle Hill-fort
- Monastic houses
- Maiden Castle, Dorset
- Maumbury Rings
- Mount Pleasant henge  
Pilsdon Pen
- Prehistoric and "Celtic"  
field systems
- Ridgeway Hill Viking  
burial pit
- Roman Dorchester
- Roman villas
- Waddon Hill
- Wareham

## **A.2. East Devon Archaeology**

People have been living and working in East Devon for thousands of years, influencing both the natural heritage and how the landscape appears today.

Human activity in Devon became well established from 25,000 BC onwards, at a time when a land bridge existed with the continent and bands of hunters migrated with the seasons and the retreat and advance of glaciers. Many stone hand axes originating from this period were found on the Devon/Dorset border, some of which can be viewed at the Exeter's Royal Albert Memorial Museum.

Around 3500 BC (the Neolithic Period) hunter gatherer lifestyles gave way to settled farming communities and permanent settlements, in addition to ceremonial monuments being built. The present sea level was established at about this time after rising from the much lower sea levels during the last Ice Age.

Thereafter, human activity continued to advance with evidence of Bronze Age ‘tumuli’, Iron Age hill forts, Roman military bases, and architectural features from Saxon, Norman and later periods until modern times, including wartime defences. For detailed information on the archaeology of East Devon, including places of interest, visitors can download the East Devon Time Trails or Beer Head Time Trails leaflets.

### **Archaeological and historical sites which may be visited include:**

#### **Farway Bronze Age Barrows**

Evidence of these ancient burial grounds remains in areas of uncultivated commons within East Devon. The barrows or tumuli at Farway provide some good examples and can be viewed from surrounding footpaths.

#### **Blackbury Camp**

Also known as Blackbury Castle, this small Iron Age hillfort has an interesting and complicated entrance with an impressive rampart built from clay and flint. Straddled on a narrow ridge running eastwards from the plateau, the fort is located in a position that would have provided good access to valley pastures and nearby streams.

#### **Hembury Hill fort**

A massive Iron Age hill fort: the entrances and parts of the interior have been excavated.

#### **Berry Camp**

Another Iron Age hillfort, Berry Camp is situated on the South West Coast Path close to Branscombe along the partially eroded cliffs (OS SY187 882). Evidence of burial mounds and prehistoric field system remain today.

#### **Other hill forts**

Woodbury Castle, Membury, Musbury, Dumpdon, Dolbury

#### **Roman Road at Kilvington**

The quiet unmetalled lane is a section of the Dorchester – Exeter Roman Road.

#### **Dunkeswell Abbey**

Gatehouse and fragments of the C13th Cistercian abbey survive in a tranquil setting. Earthworks nearby include remains of fishponds.

#### **Beer Quarry Caves**



Extractions of the famous 'Beer Stone' first took place in Roman times and continued for centuries. The stone is a very hard chalk and has been used to construct some spectacular structures, including Exeter Cathedral, Westminster Abbey and The Tower of London.

### **Fenny Bridges Battlefield Memorial**

This memorial commemorates the fighting here during the 1549 Prayer Book Rebellion. Hundreds of men died in this conflict involving religion and politics, tradition and language.

### **Shute Beacon House**

Elizabethan Devon preparing for war: a rare example of a beacon structure above ground.

### **The Taunton Stop Line**

Pill boxes are situated along 'The Taunton Stop Line' – a World War II defensive line running from the south coast through Devon, Dorset and Somerset to the Bristol Channel. The line was built and designed to stop potential German advance, should the first line of defence fail. Axe Valley pillbox can be found at OS SY 261926 whilst others can be viewed from footpaths running along the Axe Valley.

### **Museums**

There is a range of museums within East Devon and beyond that provide an insight into the history its towns and villages, their people, traditions and trades, as well as the rich natural and archeological history within the local area. [Please see the Evidence Note on the Cultural Heritage of the proposed National Park area.]

### **Norman Lockyer Observatory**

Norman Lockyer was a Victorian scientist and keen amateur astronomer who eventually became Director of the Solar Physics Observatory in Kensington, London and was knighted in 1897. The observatory was built in 1912 after Lockyer's second wife inherited some land in Salcombe Regis, near Sidmouth. The observatory was built on the hill behind their home and became The Hill Observatory Cooperation in 1916, following donations of equipment from fellow astronomers.

The Norman Lockyer Observatory Society operates from the observatory today, maintaining and developing facilities and opening these to the public.

### **East Devon AONB Archaeology Project:**

#### **In the Footsteps of Peter Orlando Hutchinson 2010-2013**



Born in Winchester in 1810, Peter Orlando Hutchinson spent all his adult life in Sidmouth, East Devon, where he pursued his very diverse range of interests. His geological and archaeological observations are of great value, but above all it is as an artist and tireless recorder of everything he heard and saw that he is remembered, making his diaries an immensely valuable source for Devon landscape studies.

This community heritage project aims to raise awareness of landscape change, help conserve and enhance historical features, and continue the legacy of volunteer study and involvement in landscape heritage that has grown through the AONB Partnership. Drawing on the work of Peter Orlando Hutchinson, it aims to provide a detailed and fascinating account of the Victorian landscape. The AONB project aims to create a further cultural dimension around which to promote and interpret sites and locations within and about this nationally important landscape.

Focusing largely in and around the Sid Valley, the project seeks to revisit many of the historical features of the landscape that Hutchinson recorded, such as hill forts, tumuli, medieval chapels, quarries, etc with a view to their conservation, enhancement, interpretation and to promoting public engagement.

The Project has three main themes which aim to deliver the following actions:

### **Theme 1. To improve learning about the heritage**

- Through a series of guided walks, illustrated talks, special events, workshops and training.
- Making Hutchinson's diaries more readily available for study by putting them on the AONB website.
- Scanning Hutchinson's pictures and making them also available on line.
- Organising a yearly conference featuring outside speakers and local research.
- Working with Sidmouth College to monitor landscape change using POH pictures.
- Fixed point photography - from the exact places POH painted his views.
- Working with local museums and the regional museum hub (RAMM Exeter) to display artefacts collected by POH.
- Mounting exhibitions featuring the work of the project.

### **Theme 2. To improve access to and interpretation of the heritage**

Working with landowners and in close liaison with English Heritage and Devon Historic Environment Service, and aided by volunteers, the project team has been involved with the following sites:

- Farway Castle
- East Hill [Napoleonic Military Sites and a Prehistoric Ceremonial Monument]
- Berry Camp
- Seven Stones
- Broad Down
- Gittisham Hill
- Littlecombe shoot prehistoric field system
- High Peak enclosure
- Blackbury Camp
- Salcombe Hill

### **Theme 3. Helping people to take an active part in their local heritage**

- Organising work parties so that local people can help clear scrub from ancient sites.
- Giving people archaeological field walking opportunities and experience.
- Facilitating local people to lead walks about their heritage.
- Providing training opportunities and surveying and excavation experience.
- Transcribing documents and compiling indexes.
- Working with local and professional artists to revisit Hutchinson's iconic views.

#### **'In the Footsteps of Peter Orlando Hutchinson' outputs:**

“Napoleonic Military Sites and a Prehistoric Ceremonial Monument on East Hill, Ottery St Mary” by Hazel Riley, Consultant in Landscape History, Management and Conservation  
Grazing

Peter Orlando Hutchinson was the first person to identify, map and describe these sites. Volunteers from the East Devon AONB, under the project ‘In the footsteps of Peter Orlando Hutchinson,’ have cleared the three sites of vegetation and surveyed them under the supervision of Hazel Riley.

#### **English Heritage Award to E Devon AONB**

The East Devon AONB Partnership has been awarded a 'Commendation Certificate' in the annual English Heritage Angel Awards.

Through three Culture and Heritage projects, namely 'In the Footsteps of Peter Orlando Hutchinson', 'Unlocking Our Coastal Heritage' and 'Monument Management Scheme' and with the help of local volunteers and the support of local landowners, the AONB Partnership has been working on the following six Scheduled Ancient Monuments at Risk:

1. Farway Castle
2. High Peak

3. Berry Camp
4. Littlecombe Shoot Prehistoric Field System
5. A Barrow on Broad Down
6. A Barrow on East Hill

## **B Built Heritage**

### **B.1. Dorset AONB Built Environment**

**The Dorset AONB has an outstanding quality and quantity of buildings that reflect its history and cultural development. Buildings, other structures and the wider ensembles of villages and towns underpin the value and beauty of the AONB and are an important element in people’s perceptions of the area.**

The AONB’s complex geology has produced a wide range of building materials. The splendid Oolitic limestones of Portland and Purbeck are extensively used, giving the area a strong character. Lower Purbeck stone was also worked from Portesham to Poxwell and exported” inland up the Piddle Valley. The thinner Purbeck beds were used for paving and roofing, whilst Purbeck Marble was used in early Mediaeval ecclesiastical work. West Dorset had a very workable Inferior Oolite, with over 130 local quarries, and a Forest Marble used for paving, roofing and boundary walls. Although not extensively used, Ham Hill Stone (quarried in Somerset) was used to express wealth and status and is more prevalent in west Dorset.

Other materials include the Blue Lias of Lyme Regis and the golden Corallian limestone of Abbotsbury. In the Dorset Downs, dominated by chalk, buildings tend to be made of brick and flint, often in horizontal bands with the flint “knapped” into rectangles. Most chalk is too soft to use for building, but in some areas blocks of lower chalk “clunch” are rendered and used. Other buildings are made from cob - a mixture of mud, chalk and binder material rendered for durability.

Thatched roofs are a potent image of the AONB. In general, Dorset is a transitional area between four or possibly five distinct thatching vernacular styles. Long straw was prevalent, combed wheat reed was used in areas where straw was especially sparse in the west of the AONB, with water reed being confined to small areas near to supplies. Heather was also used around Wareham but this is no longer visible. Dorset thatching is generally softer and more rounded than its eastern neighbours and avoids elaborate ridge decoration, preferring a simple laced finish.

**The built environment of the AONB is a major heritage asset. There are around 3,000 Listed Buildings and 100 Conservation Areas, reflecting the area’s quality and importance. Significant buildings range from the many monastic remains such as Milton Abbey, Forde Abbey and the buildings at Cerne and Abbotsbury, to smaller parish churches from a variety of periods and styles. Manor houses, follies and tithe barns add to the wealth of built heritage. The AONB also contains a number of major country house estates and preserved estate villages that contribute to landscape character with many fine examples of smaller historic manor houses.**

**Dorset also has whole villages that retain their traditional character and the market towns are rich in historic buildings. They vary to reflect the periods in which they were created and the industries that they hosted. Bridport, for example, has a Saxon and early Mediaeval plan, with wide streets and contrasting narrow alleys and ropewalks. There is a great deal of Georgian housing in the town and it has a fascinating industrial history, including rope and net making.**

Whilst the designation of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas has helped to preserve many of our finest built environments, there have been many areas where character has been eroded by modern developments. In recent years, communities have become more involved in the future of their built landscapes through village appraisals and design statements.

There is a great appreciation of the AONB's built heritage. It is part of 'quality of life' and an asset for residents, visitors and for education. The Prince of Wales's Poundbury development, on the edge of the AONB, has stimulated great debate and raised awareness of the importance of new housing design.

### **Current Trends**

Despite the interest expressed by local people in the built environment, it remains low on the national political agenda. Funding is a major issue with very limited resources available for the management and repair of Listed Buildings. The Heritage Lottery Fund is one of the few sources of funds but not all schemes meet the criteria. Local authorities no longer have the resources for repair funds linked to enabling powers. As a result, many heritage assets are at risk.

There is a high demand for 'character properties' but repairs do not always conform to appropriate standards.

While the interest in character buildings may offer a lifeline to some, others are at increasing risk due to lack of use and changing circumstances. Many parish churches, for example, no longer sustain viable congregations and are at risk of closure.

### **The AONB has identified a number of key issues affecting the built environment, including the following:**

- Difficulty in maintaining an up to date 'Buildings at Risk' register to influence future use and management.
- With limited resources for advice and enforcement, local authority staff struggle to prevent poor and inappropriate work. Repairs do not always conform to appropriate standards.

- Inappropriate design, scale and materials of new buildings can degrade the character and distinctiveness of the settlements in the AONB and impact on the wider landscape.
- Permitted developments that do not require specific planning permission can individually and cumulatively impact on the character of the AONB.
- The large scale and design of modern farm buildings and associated uses can appear as industrial elements in the open countryside.
- Infrastructure associated with the built environment (signs, telecommunication masts, pylons and cables etc) is often poorly designed and located, degrading the built environment.
- Sustainability of the built environment needs to be more adequately considered.
- Lack of quality, design and style of boundary features degrades landscape character.
- The creation and management of green space and trees within the built environments of the AONB needs to be better addressed.

**Alongside issues affecting the built environment are opportunities**, with appropriate policies and resources, to further conserve and enhance the built heritage and environment, and to raise awareness and understanding of its importance.

**A National Park in Dorset and East Devon would provide an opportunity for a coherent approach to planning and conservation for the built environment across the area, and for more effective partnership working with a wide range of relevant stakeholders, in the statutory, private and voluntary sectors.**

## **B.2. East Devon Built Environment**

The East Devon AONB has a rich and diverse historic environment in terms of the density of known sites and buildings and the range of periods represented, from early prehistory to modern times. A notable feature of the AONB is how the internationally important geological diversity of the area is reflected in both its archaeological and architectural heritage.

The underlying geology of East Devon and the agriculture it has supported, have ensured an interesting range of local building materials which have been used to give an identifiable built heritage of exceptional quality. Buildings have traditionally been built from the materials that are close to hand and available. The fact that the geology of East Devon varies so much has resulted in a very broad range of materials being used in the construction process. In some cases, availability of materials and therefore their use was very localised, for example Beer stone, and this has meant that settlements can vary greatly in their traditional look and feel.

The Devon County Historic Environment Record (HER) contains information on over 3,200 sites of archaeological and historic interest within the AONB. Recent survey work carried out for the AONB has added to this picture. The quality and significance of this resource is reflected in the high number of statutory designations. There are 58 Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the AONB, 4 Registered Historic Parks and Gardens, 855 Listed Buildings and all or part of 12 Conservation Areas.

East Devon DC area has nearly 4,500 buildings and structures that are formally listed as of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.

The traditional buildings of East Devon bring pleasure to residents and visitors alike, form a key part of the tourism appeal of the District and help define the identity of East Devon.

**Sources include the following:**

Dorset AONB website  
East Devon AONB website  
East Devon DC website  
Dorset History and Archaeology: various websites and publications.  
East Devon Time Trails: The archaeology of East Devon, 2009

**The South Dorset Ridgeway:**

<http://www.wessexarch.co.uk/files/Learning/pdf/south-dorset-ridgeway-teachers-pack.pdf>  
<http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/our-work/south-dorset-ridgeway>

The National Mapping Programme work for the South Dorset Ridgeway:

[http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/nmp-south-dorset-ridgeway/South\\_Dorset\\_Ridgeway\\_NMP\\_web.pdf](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/nmp-south-dorset-ridgeway/South_Dorset_Ridgeway_NMP_web.pdf)

**Dorset and East Devon National Park Group  
June 2013**