



Blackdown Hills National Landscape

State of the National Landscape Report 2023

Craggatak Consulting



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¹ Jeffreys K, Olney S, Foster J, Collins P (2021): Blackdown Hills AONB State of Nature Report, Geckoella Ltd.

Location of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape

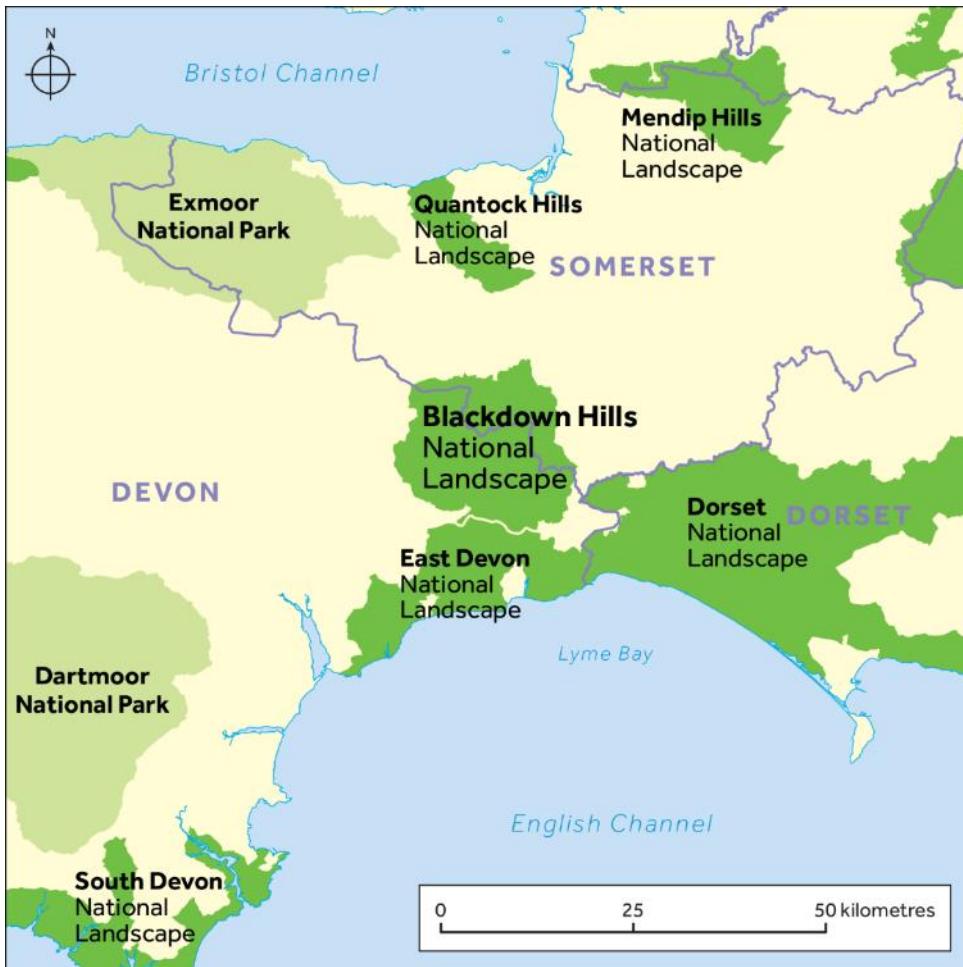


Figure 1: National Landscape and location: Source GIS data obtained from OS Open data and www.data.gov.uk – October 2023.

Vital statistics (summary of findings)

Topic	Notes
Landscape	
Light pollution	Satellite images suggest that there is very little light pollution in the National Landscape. A noticeable increase of light spillage from Chard and Taunton conurbation. Increasing spillage from some communities within the area, noticeably Dunkeswell, Hemyock and around Yarcombe.
Noise pollution	National noise mapping suggests that the extent of traffic noise from major roads is limited in the National Landscape. Most recent data is for 2017.
Land use	Agriculture is the dominant land use within the National Landscape and there is no recorded change in land cover since 2012.
Historic environment and cultural heritage	
Number and condition of heritage assets	There are 770 Listed Buildings and 26 Scheduled Monuments. Of these, 8 assets are at risk; this is a minor improvement since 2019.
Conservation Areas	There are ten Conservation Areas within the National Landscape. None are deemed as at risk.
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	
Number of SSSIs	There are 17 designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the National Landscape, occupying 640 ha (1.73%) of its area.
Percentage of SSSIs in a favourable or unfavourable but recovering condition	94% of its SSSIs are in a favourable or unfavourable but recovering condition. This is an improvement from 2017. Then, only 90% of its SSSIs met the target.
Area of priority habitats	There are 4,724.43 ha of priority habitats covering 12.8% of the National Landscape.
Area of woodland	There are 5,380 ha of woodland covering 14.5% of the National Landscape
Area of ancient woodland	There are 867 ha of ancient woodland covering 2.3% of the National Landscape
Percentage of woodland in active management	45%
Ecological status of rivers and lakes	0% in good or high status
Locally protected sites	Non-statutory designated sites cover around 8.5% of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape. Otterhead Lakes Local Nature Reserve covers 0.1% of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape.
Natural Capital and ecosystem goods and services	
Greenhouse gases	A 10% reduction in total greenhouse gas emissions across the local authority areas between 2017 and 2021.
Air quality	Particulate matter (PM2.5) levels low in the area but with a hotspot around Hemyock.

	Sulphur dioxide (SO ₂) levels are low in the area but with hotspots at Hemyock, Dunkeswell and near to Axminster.
Change in weather patterns	9-millimetre increase in annual rainfall and a rise of 0.3°C in annual temperature over the last 30 years.
Soil organic carbon stock	5% increase in carbon accumulating in the soils and vegetation between 2017 and 2021.
Surface water flood risk	Low risk
Farming and Land Management	
Agricultural land-use	Currently, 78% of the National Landscape is under agriculture.
Change in farm number and size	During the last ten years the number of holdings has remained at around 625 42% are less than 20 hectares in size and 44% are between 20-100 hectares in size. 48% are recorded as lowland livestock grazing.
Livestock numbers	Poultry (1,006,928 animals), a 7% increase since 2016. Sheep (22,573 breeding ewes), a 6% decline since 2016. Cattle (17,965 animals), with a 5% decline since 2016.
Employment	9.8% of the resident population employed in farming.
Land in agri-environment schemes	The area has decreased from 11,793 ha in 2017 (27% of the National Landscape) to 8,246 ha in 2021 (22.8% of the National Landscape)
Total annual values of agri-environment agreements	£2,113,434 (2021); up from £1,017,856 (2017)
Settlements	
Settlement size	All settlements within the area each have less than 1,500 residents
Access and Enjoyment	
% of area that is publicly accessible	2% of the area
Planning and Development	
Number of development plans with Spatial Strategy and allocations	4 adopted plans with policies relevant to the National Landscape
Number and change in Neighbourhood Plans	8 made Neighbourhood Plans (all in East Devon)
Number of new dwellings	Approval given for one affordable housing scheme since 2017
Renewable energy	3 operating renewable energy generation sites.
Transport and Highways	
Access to a car or van	94% of the resident population have access to at least one car or van (no change since 2011)
Traffic counts	Busiest to quietest combined average daily traffic flows (2017-22):

- A303 (an average of 14,404 vehicles);
- A35 (10,497 vehicles);
- A30 (3,485 vehicles); and A373 (3,198 vehicles).

Rural Economy and Tourism

Employment status	56% employed (down 11% from 2011) 2% seeking work (down 1% from 2011) 42% not seeking work (up 12% from 2011)
Employment profile by industry	Transport & Communication the same 2011-2021 Decline in industry since 2011: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • -7% in land-based employment • -1% in distribution, hotel & restaurants • -1 other Increase in industry since 2011: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • +6% in manufacturing & construction • +3% in professional & public sector
Employment profile by occupation	2011 to 2021: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • +5% in managerial & professional occupations • -5% in skilled trade, administrative and caring occupations All other occupational sectors remain the same

Community and Culture

Population	14,130
% of population of working age (20-74 years old)	68% (down from 71% in 2011)
General health of the resident population (%)	83% have good or very good health (no change since 2011) 4% have bad or very bad health (no change since 2011)
Disability status of resident population (%)	17% disabled under Equality Act 8% with long-term physical or mental health conditions 75% with no long-term physical or mental health conditions

Introduction

The Blackdown Hills National Landscape

The Blackdown Hills National Landscape covers 370 square kilometres (143 square miles) of unspoilt countryside straddling the Somerset and Devon border. The Blackdown Hills are a distinctive, diverse rural landscape stretching from the prominent scarp above the M5 in the north to Honiton and Axminster in the south, and from Chard in the east to Culmstock in the west. Ranging from around 50 to 310 metres above sea level, the area is characterised by a sense of relative remoteness and tranquillity and was formally designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1991.

Purpose of document

This is a timely update of the state of the area and many of its special qualities and will help to inform the statutory review of the current Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan (2019-24) and support the preparation of a new plan.

This report pulls together the data and information gathered by the National Landscape team, with its partners including Natural England, for the Blackdown Hills National Landscape; and from other sources as indicated. It presents data collated in the autumn of 2023 alongside comparable data from the previous report published in 2017, where such exists, or to alternative baselines against which there are comparisons and trends.

Data considerations

There were difficulties in securing some data for this report. Several of the data sets collated for the 'State of AONB' Report (2017) are no longer in use or are otherwise no longer available. In such cases the

data collated here should become the new baseline for future comparison purposes.

Where original data from 2017, or before, was absent or not available, we have attempted to extract useable figures from graphs or visuals. As a result, some of the comparative data used are estimates and there is a degree of error.

Defra and its agencies do provide some recent environmental data cut to the National Landscape boundary. This is through the national framework for monitoring environmental outcomes (MEOPL) in National Parks and National Landscapes. Natural England leads in this work, in close partnership with Defra, the English National Park Authorities Association, Historic England and the National Landscapes Association.

There was only time to use data held by the Partnership or others; it was not feasible to commission any new studies. Many partners take actions that secure the Management Plan's objectives but generally do not report these to the National Landscape. Partners do not cut their data to the National Landscape boundary; it is not easy to disaggregate.

Census statistics help paint a picture of the nation and how we live. They provide a detailed snapshot of the population and its characteristics, and the 2021 Census has been used for this report.

It is worth noting that the official Census figures may be described as estimated because:

- a. there is not a 100% response (Maximising the quality of Census 2021 population estimates - Office for National Statistics ([ons.gov.uk](https://www.ons.gov.uk)); and
- b. output areas do not correlate exactly with parish boundaries.

Additionally, and crucially, Census data is not cut to the National Landscape boundary. There is a need to identify the best-fitting smaller

area data to give a reasonable estimate for the National Landscape area. We have created our own best fit and we exclude some parishes where only a very minor part of the parish is within and/or much of the population of that parish are outside the National Landscape. This means that our census presentations should be seen as estimates of the likely position.

For these reasons, where we have used Census data, we do not show the numeric values recorded in the census results, rather, we use the percentage results for each topic. The exception is the overall

population and age profile of the National Landscape. This data is supplied directly by the ONS as Census 2021 population estimates for National Landscapes based on the best-fitting of population-weighted census output areas to the National Landscape.

Data in this report has been obtained from a range of official publications and public sources. Errors and omissions can occur: always check the original source for data limitations and explanation of methodologies.

Place

Topics related to the primary purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty:

- [Landscape](#)
- [Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage](#)
- [Biodiversity and Geodiversity](#)
- [Natural Capital and ecosystem goods and service](#)
- [Farming, Forestry and Land Management](#)



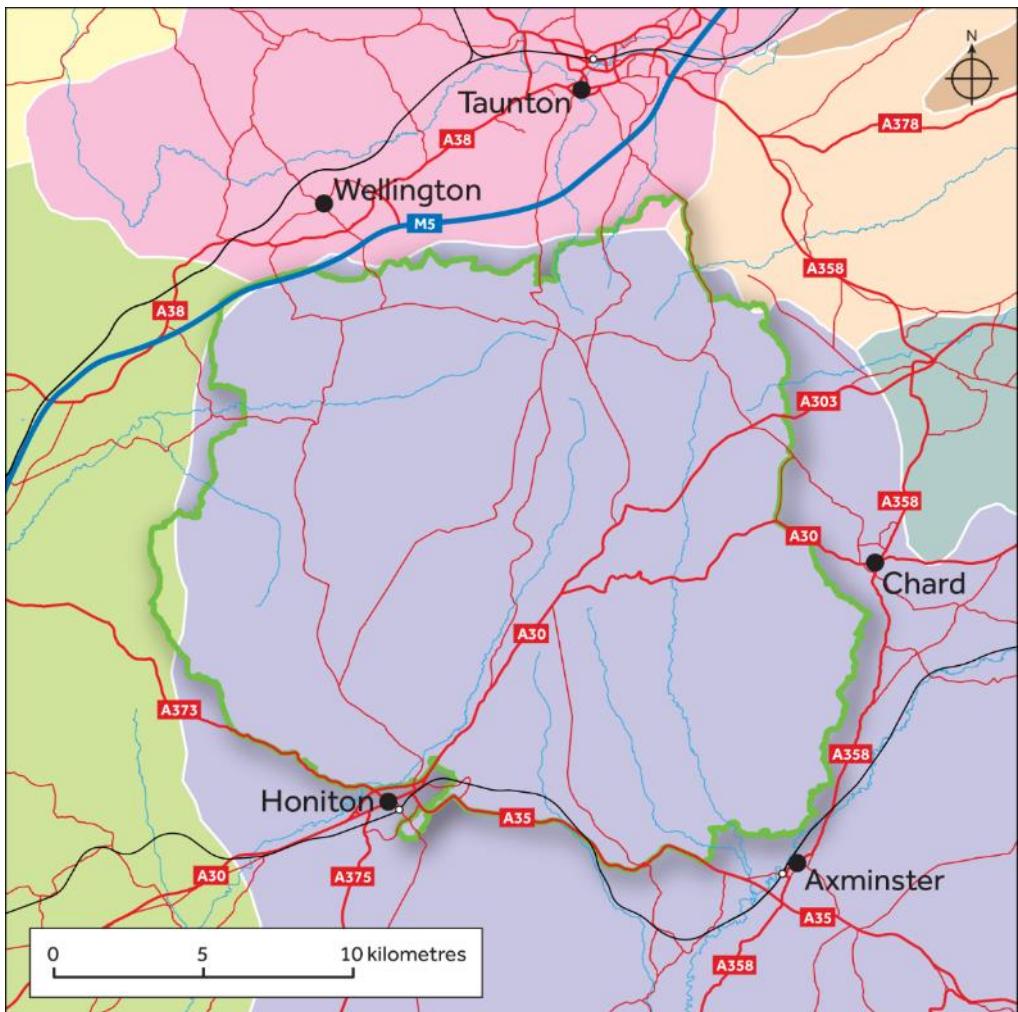
Landscape

- Landscape Character
- Light pollution
- Noise pollution
- Land use map



Landscape Character

National Character Areas



Legend

Blackdowns
Devon Redlands
Exmoor
Mid Somerset Hills
Somerset Levels and Moors
Vale of Taunton and Quantock Fringes
Yeovil Scarplands

At national level, Natural England defines National Character Areas (NCA). The National Landscape lies mainly in the Blackdowns NCA but its boundary does encompass slivers of three other NCAs, as shown on the map. Natural England publishes a profile for each NCA (Blackdown updated in 2014). Natural England wishes to protect:

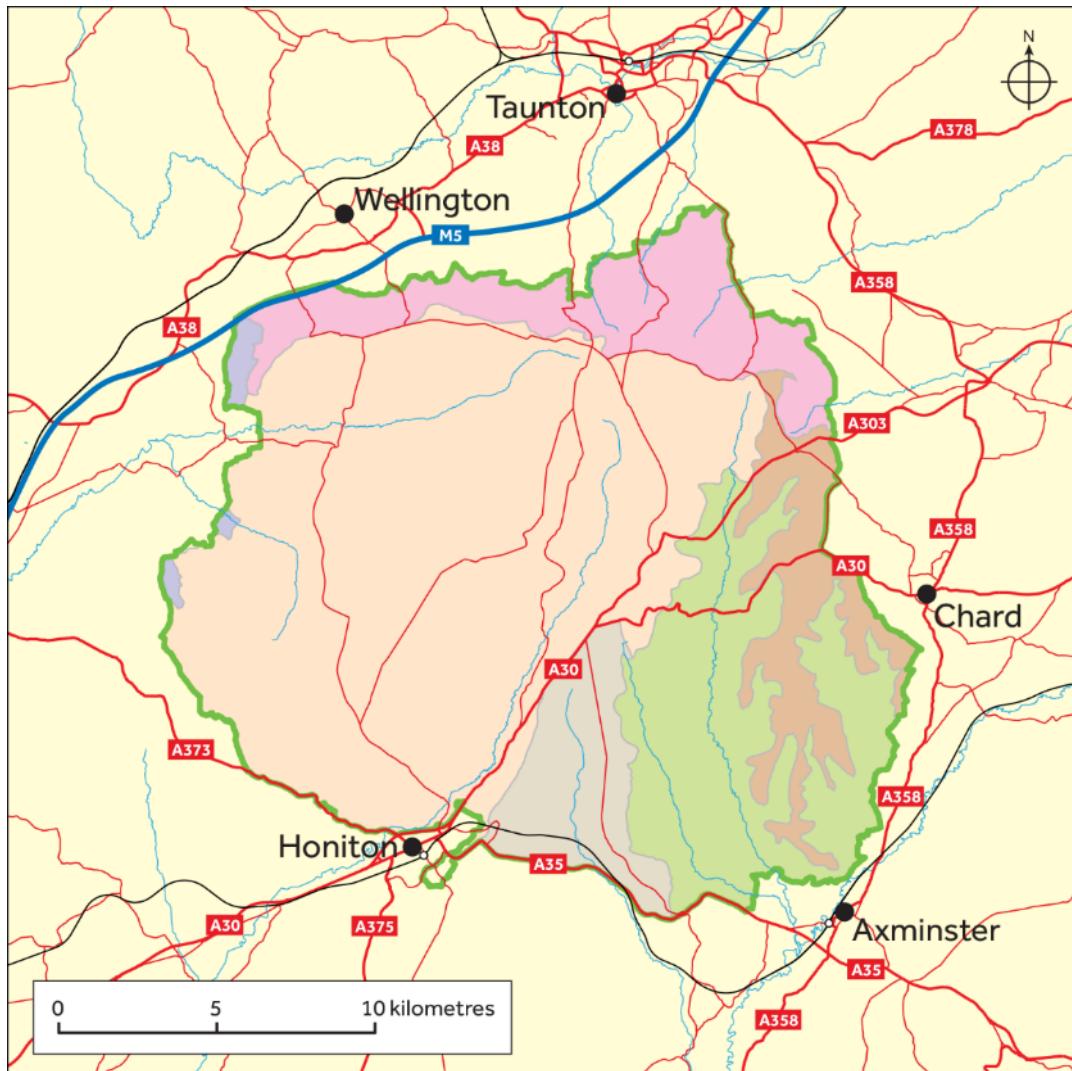
- the tranquil, enclosed valleys and the network of streams, springs and associated semi-natural habitats set within a farmed landscape;
- the open, exposed character of the ridgeline plateaux and the associated rich cultural heritage; and
- the relatively unsettled, rural character of this landscape, maintaining open skylines and historic settlement form.

Policies should reflect the local vernacular and geodiversity in new development and encourage provision of high-quality green infrastructure.

Source: For the National Character Areas visit - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles#ncas-in-south-west-england>

Landscape Character Areas

Map that sets out the landscape context by showing the six unique Devon Character Areas found within the National Landscape.



Devon has a comprehensive suite of Landscape Character Assessments, which include all of the National Landscape, even though a part of it lies in Somerset. These assessments define a series of *Landscape Character Types* (LCTs) and *Devon Character Areas* (DCAs).

Landscape Character Types are generic types of landscape that can occur in different places. They have similar characteristics wherever they occur, and are called by a descriptive name (e.g. Estuaries, Moorland Edge Slopes, Settled Valleys).

Devon Character Areas are geographically unique areas, each with a distinctive 'sense of place'. They are often formed of groups of LCTs, and are called by a descriptive place-based name (e.g. Axe Valley; Blackdown Hills). Their descriptions within the Devon Landscape Assessment emphasise local identity and visual and perceptual influences.

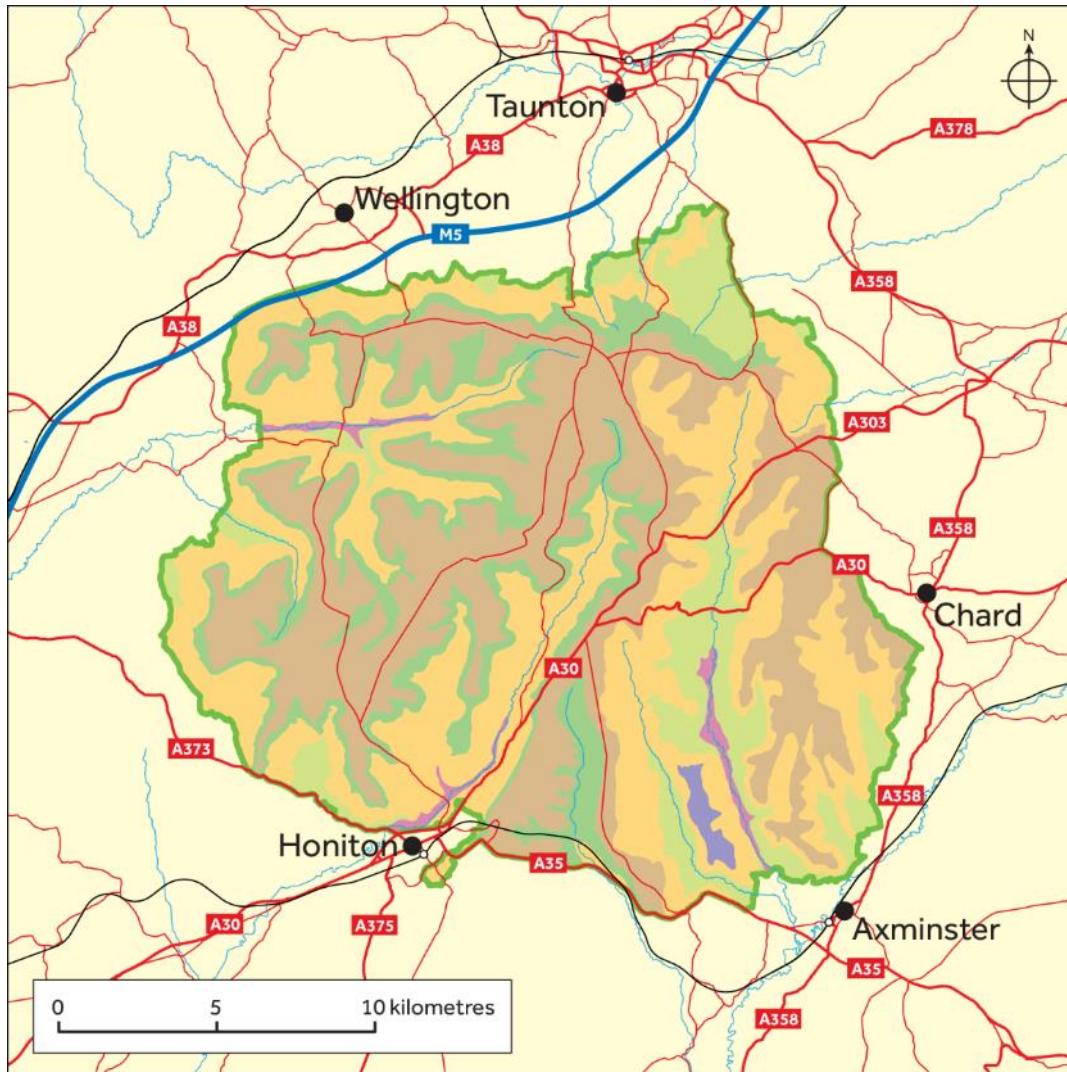
There are six DCAs in the National Landscape (see map), though only a very small area lies within the Culm Valley Lowlands.

Legend	
Axe Valley	
Blackdown Hills Scarp	
Blackdown Hills	
Culm Valley Lowlands	
East Devon Central Ridge	
Eastern Blackdown Ridge	

Source: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/planning/planning-policies/landscape/devons-landscape-character-assessment/>

Landscape Character Types

Map that sets out the landscape context by showing the six generic Landscape Character Types (LCTs) found within the National Landscape.



The East Devon and Blackdown Hills Landscape Character Assessment 2019 sets out a profile for each of the six LCTs in the National Landscape (see map). Each profile presents:

- A description
- Key characteristics
- What makes this landscape special
- Forces for change
- Landscape aims
- Landscape guidelines

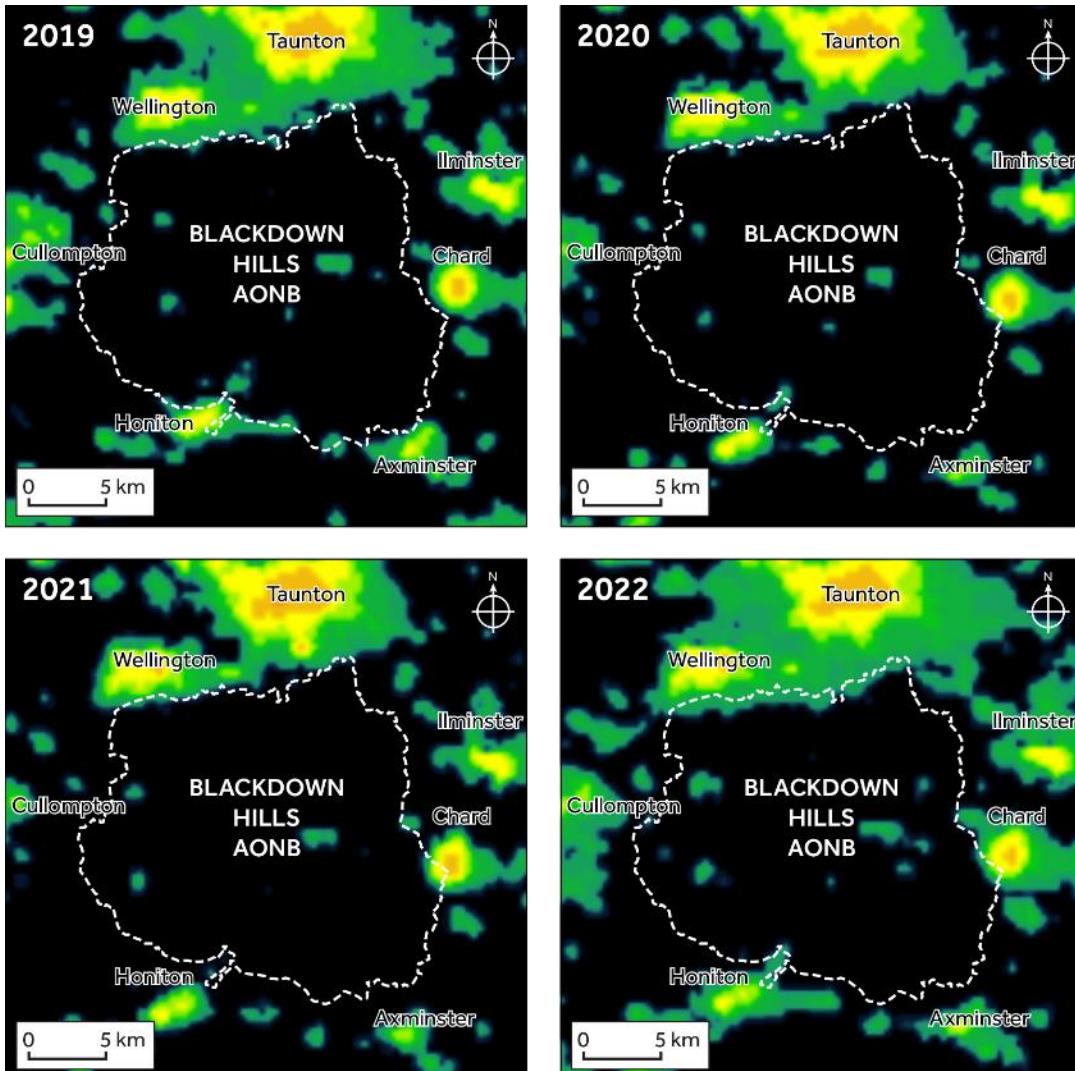
Legend

- Lower rolling farmed and settled valley slopes
- Open inland planned plateaux
- Sparsely settled farmed valley floors
- Steep wooded scarp slopes
- Upper farmland and wooded valley slopes
- Wooded ridge and hilltops

Source: <https://eastdevon.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/environment-and-green-infrastructure/landscape/the-2019-landscape-character-assessment/>

Light pollution

There is very little light pollution in the National Landscape but there is a slow incremental growth.



The 2017 State of the AONB Report considered tranquillity using data published by Natural England. That data was old then (based on analysis of the 2006 Council for Protection for Rural England Tranquillity Mapping study). The data has not been updated.

We replace the 'tranquillity' reporting with data for light and noise pollution.

The light pollution maps show four satellite images comparing zenith sky brightness (magnitude/arc second²) between 2019 and 2022.

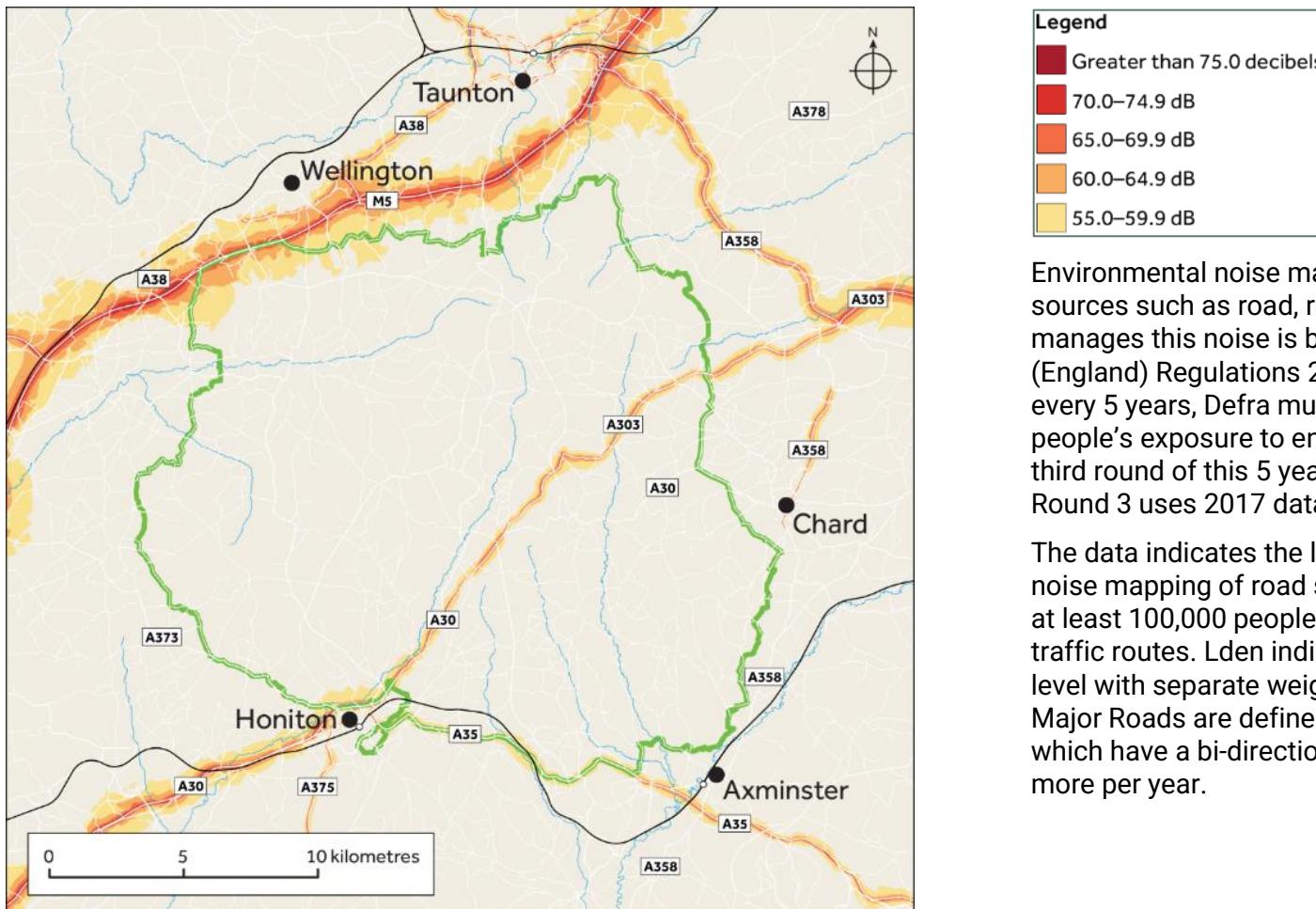
Comparing 2019 with 2022, the images show that though very little light spills out of the National Landscape, it does appear to be increasing. There is a noticeable increase of light spillage coming from Chard and the Taunton conurbation. And there is an increase in spillage from some communities with the area, noticeably Dunkeswell, Hemyock and around Yarcombe.

Light pollution is less during 2020 and 2021. This is most likely due to the lockdowns during the Covid pandemic but may also reflect actions to reduce the use of electricity.

Source: www.lightpollutionmap.info

Noise pollution

Defra has published strategic noise map data that give a snapshot of the estimated noise from major road and rail sources across England in 2017. Noise from major road traffic affecting the Blackdown Hills comes mainly from the M5, and parts of the A35 and A30/303.



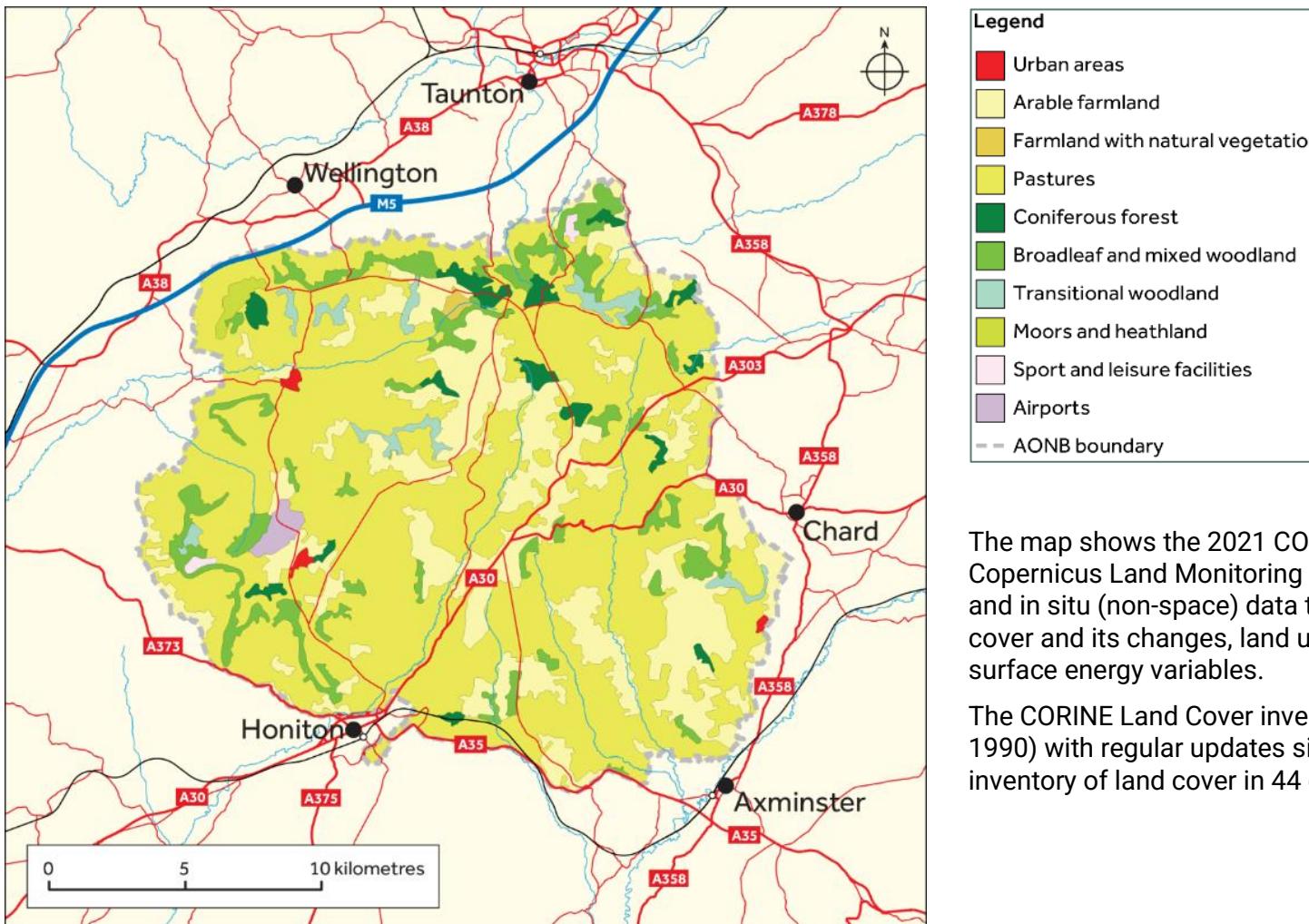
Environmental noise mainly consists of noise from transport sources such as road, rail and aviation. One of the ways Defra manages this noise is by implementing the Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended). These require that, every 5 years, Defra must adopt noise maps which show people's exposure to environmental noise; this map is for the third round of this 5 yearly cycle (referred to as "Round 3"). Round 3 uses 2017 data.

The data indicates the level of noise according to the strategic noise mapping of road sources within areas with a population of at least 100,000 people (agglomerations) and along major traffic routes. Lden indicates a 24-hour annual average noise level with separate weightings for the evening and night periods. Major Roads are defined as regional or national sections of road which have a bi-directional flow of 3 million vehicle passages or more per year.

Source: Defra - Road Noise - Lden - England Round 3 <https://environment.data.gov.uk/dataset/fd1c6327-ad77-42ae-a761-7c6a0866523d> as a part of the Strategic Noise Mapping programme: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-noise-mapping-2019>

Land use map

Agriculture is the dominant land use within the National Landscape and there is no recent recorded change (last recorded change was in 2012 - felling of conifers).



The map shows the 2021 CORINE land cover data from the EU Copernicus Land Monitoring Service. It uses satellite earth observation and in situ (non-space) data to provide geographical information on land cover and its changes, land use, vegetation state, water cycle and earth surface energy variables.

The CORINE Land Cover inventory was initiated in 1985 (reference year 1990) with regular updates since, the latest being 2018. It consists of an inventory of land cover in 44 classes.

Source: © European Union, Copernicus Land Monitoring Service 2021, European Environment Agency (EEA). <https://land.copernicus.eu/pan-european/corine-land-cover> - CORINE Land Cover uses a Minimum Mapping Unit (MMU) of 25 hectares (ha) for areal phenomena and a minimum width of 100 m for linear phenomena.

Historic environment and cultural heritage

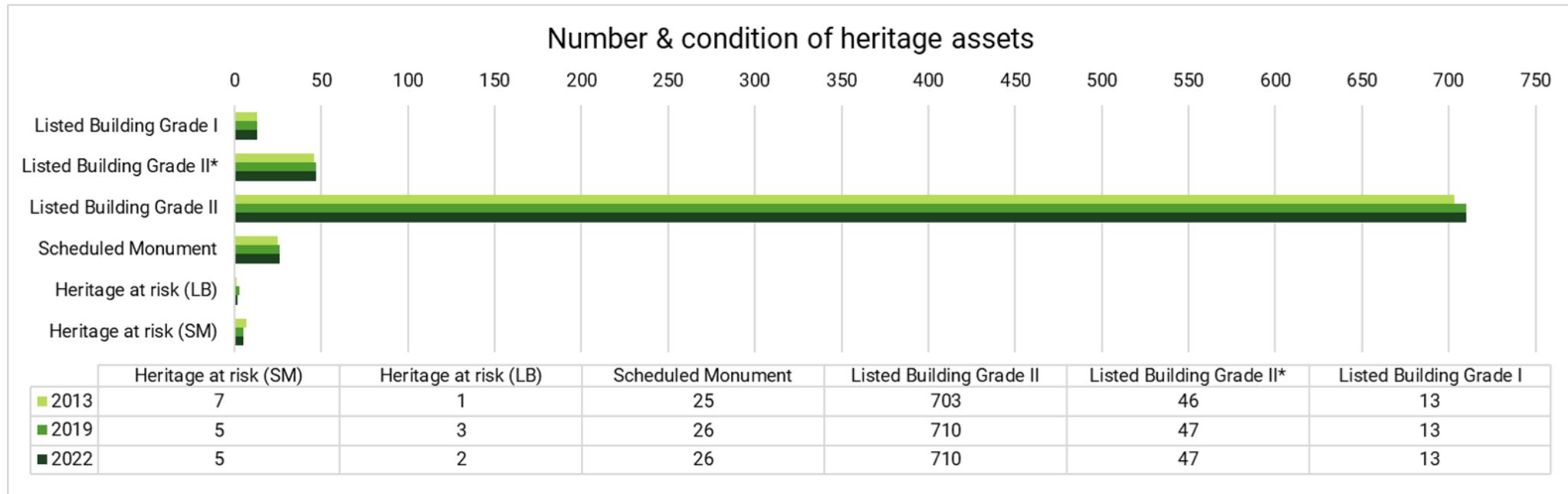
- Number and condition of heritage assets
- Location of scheduled monuments
- Location of Grade I listed buildings
- Location and condition of conservation areas



Number and condition of heritage assets

There are 770 Listed Buildings and 26 Scheduled Monuments. Of these, 7 assets are at risk; this is a minor improvement since 2019.

The most important historic places in England are 'listed' by Historic England. 'Listing' is the term given to the practice of identifying historic assets of national importance (including buildings, scheduling monuments, registering parks, gardens and battlefields, and marine wreck sites). This allows Historic England to highlight what is significant about a building or site and helps to make sure that any future changes to it do not result in the loss of its significance.



Percentage of Heritage Assets at risk:

Listed Buildings	0.3%
Scheduled Monuments	19.2%

Source: © Historic England 2022. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2022. The most up-to-date publicly available Historic England GIS Data can be obtained from www.HistoricEngland.org.uk

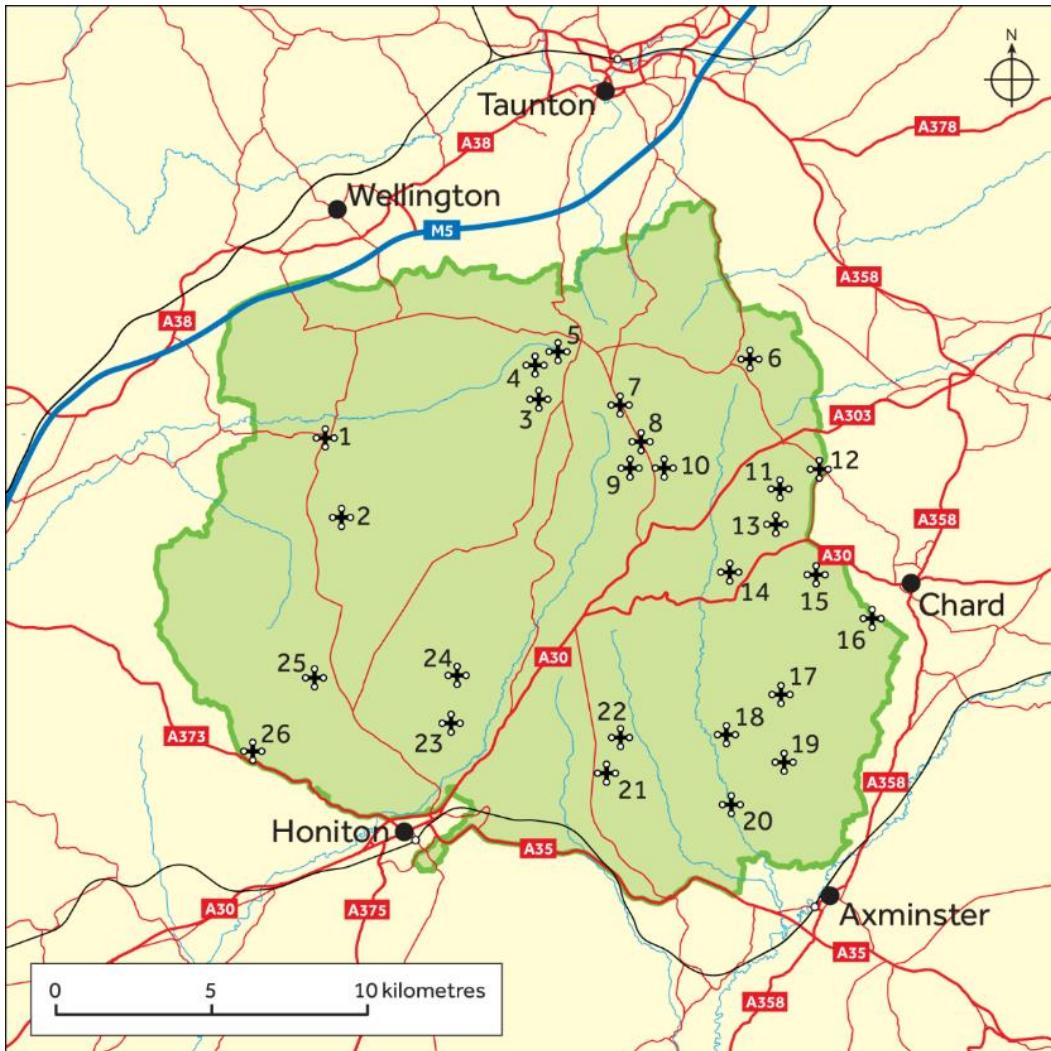
The condition and trend of Heritage Assets at risk in the Blackdown Hills National Landscape

Asset	List n°	Site type	Condition	Vulnerability	Trend	Parish
Church of St Michael and All Angels Listed Place of Worship grade I	1098097	Religious ritual and funerary > Church	Fair	Further work is planned to the unstable southern boundary wall and to deal with minor localised water ingress.	Slow decay; solution agreed but not yet implemented	Awliscombe
Church of St Michael Listed Place of Worship grade II*	1306112	Religious ritual and funerary > Church	Poor	Metal corroding internally in arcaded capital heads. Leaking due to blocked valley gutters.	Slow decay; no solution agreed	Honiton
Two bowl barrows 210m and 600m northwest of Brown Down Cottage	1016414	Religious ritual and funerary > Barrow	Extensive significant problems	Arable ploughing	Declining	Otterford
Membury Castle	1017951	Defence > Hillfort	Extensive significant problems	Plant growth	Declining	Membury
Stockland Great Castle	1017952	Defence > Hillfort	Extensive significant problems	Arable ploughing	Declining	Stockland
Stockland Little Castle	1017953	Domestic > Settlement	Extensive significant problems	Other	Declining	Stockland
Dumpdon Camp	1018851	Defence > Hillfort	Generally satisfactory but with significant localised problems	Scrub / tree growth	Declining	Luppitt

Source: Historic England (2022): Heritage at Risk Register 2022 South West

Location of scheduled monuments

There are 26 scheduled monuments in the National Landscape.



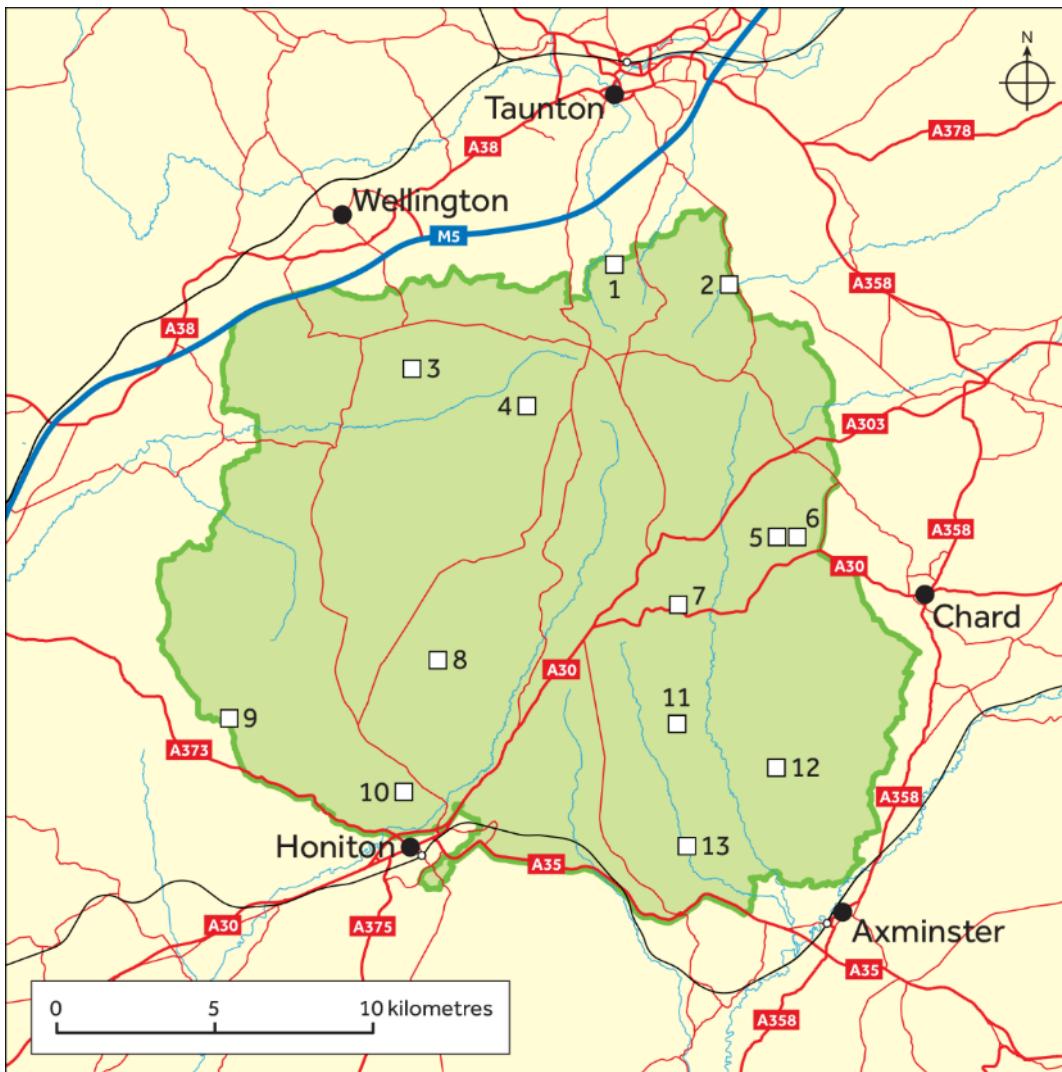
Scheduled monuments

- 1 Hemyock Castle
- 2 Dunkeswell Abbey
- 3 World War II fighter pens and other airfield remains and defences of the former airfield of RAF Culmhead, at Trickey Warren Farm
- 4 Two World War II air traffic control buildings, WSW of Whitewall Corner, on the former airfield of RAF Culmhead, Trickey Warren
- 5 Two groups of World War II pillboxes in the north eastern and north western sectors of the former airfield of RAF Culmhead, Trickey Warren
- 6 Castle Neroche: a motte and bailey castle above Castle Plantation
- 7 Round barrow cemetery 100m south of School Farm
- 8 Two bowl barrows, north west of Beech Croft
- 9 Two bowl barrows, north west of Brown Down Cottage
- 10 Two bowl barrows, east of Brown Down Lodge
- 11 Two bowl barrows, north west of Northay Farm
- 12 Combe Beacon barrow
- 13 Roman villa N of Whitestaunton
- 14 Hillfort, south of Howley Farm
- 15 Bowl barrow, south west of Spittle Pond Cottages
- 16 Hillfort, SE of Four Gates
- 17 Auxiliary Unit OUT-Station (Chirnside 1)
- 18 The below ground remains of the former chapel at Membury Court
- 19 Membury Castle
- 20 Beckford Bridge
- 21 Stockland Great Castle
- 22 Stockland Little Castle
- 23 Dumpdon Camp
- 24 Bowl barrow on Hartridge, east of Shelves Farm
- 25 Row Barrow
- 26 Hembury Fort

Source: MEOPL © Historic England 2022. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2022. The most up-to-date publicly available Historic England GIS Data can be obtained from www.HistoricEngland.org.uk

Location of Grade I listed buildings

There are 13 Grade I listed buildings in the National Landscape, 11 of which are churches (85%).



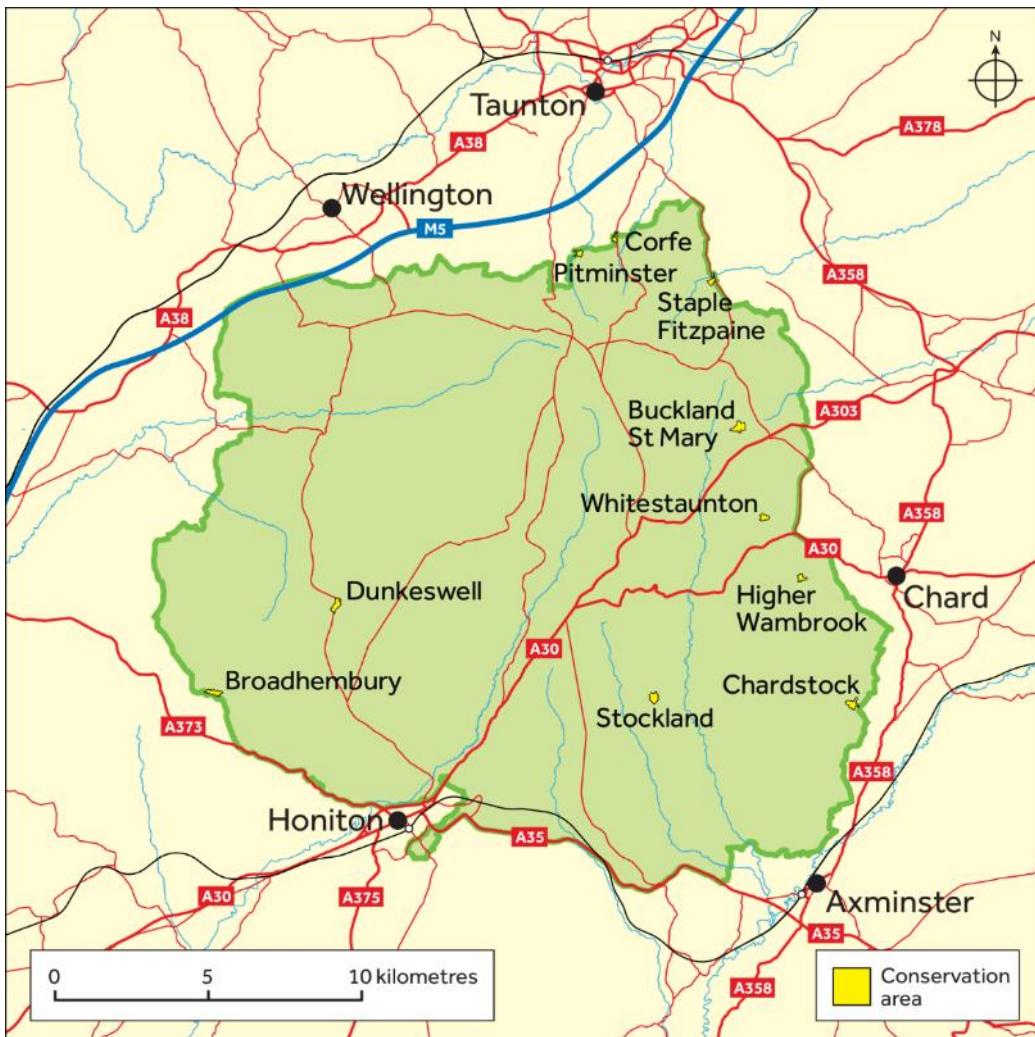
Grade I listed buildings

- 1 Church of St Andrew and St Mary – Pitminster
- 2 Church of St Peter – Staple Fitzpaine
- 3 Parish Church of St Andrew – Clayhidon
- 4 Church of St Peter and St Paul – Churchstanton
- 5 Whitestaunton Manor – Whitestaunton
- 6 Church of St Andrew – Whitestaunton
- 7 Church of St John the Baptist – Yarcombe
- 8 Church of St Mary – Luppitt
- 9 Church of St Andrew – Broadhembury
- 10 The Chantry – Combe Raleigh
- 11 Church of St Michael – Stockland
- 12 Church of St John the Baptist – Membury
- 13 Church of St Peter – Dalwood

Source: MEOPL © Historic England 2022. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2022. The most up-to-date publicly available Historic England GIS Data can be obtained from www.HistoricEngland.org.uk

Location and condition of conservation areas

There are ten Conservation Areas within the National Landscape; none are at risk.



Historic England states that none of the conservation areas in the National Landscape are at risk.

The local planning authorities designate most conservation areas. A conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest; preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of these areas is an important part of local planning policy. Change in conservation areas can be negative either through poor quality new development, neglect, or even deliberate damage.

The best way to define the local character is through the production of a conservation area appraisal. This provides an understanding of the history of an area and its special qualities.

Only four of the 10 conservation areas have a published appraisal (all in East Devon):

- Broadhembury, published 1999
- Chardstock, published 1999
- Dunkeswell, published 2011
- Stockland, published 1999

In Somerset there are published maps (but no appraisals) for:

- Corfe, mapped 1998
- Pitminster, mapped 1988
- Staple Fitzpaine, mapped 1988

MAP Source: © Historic England 2022. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2022. The most up-to-date publicly available Historic England GIS Data can be obtained from www.HistoricEngland.org.uk.

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

This section is best read in conjunction with the Nature Recovery Plan prepared for the National Landscape.

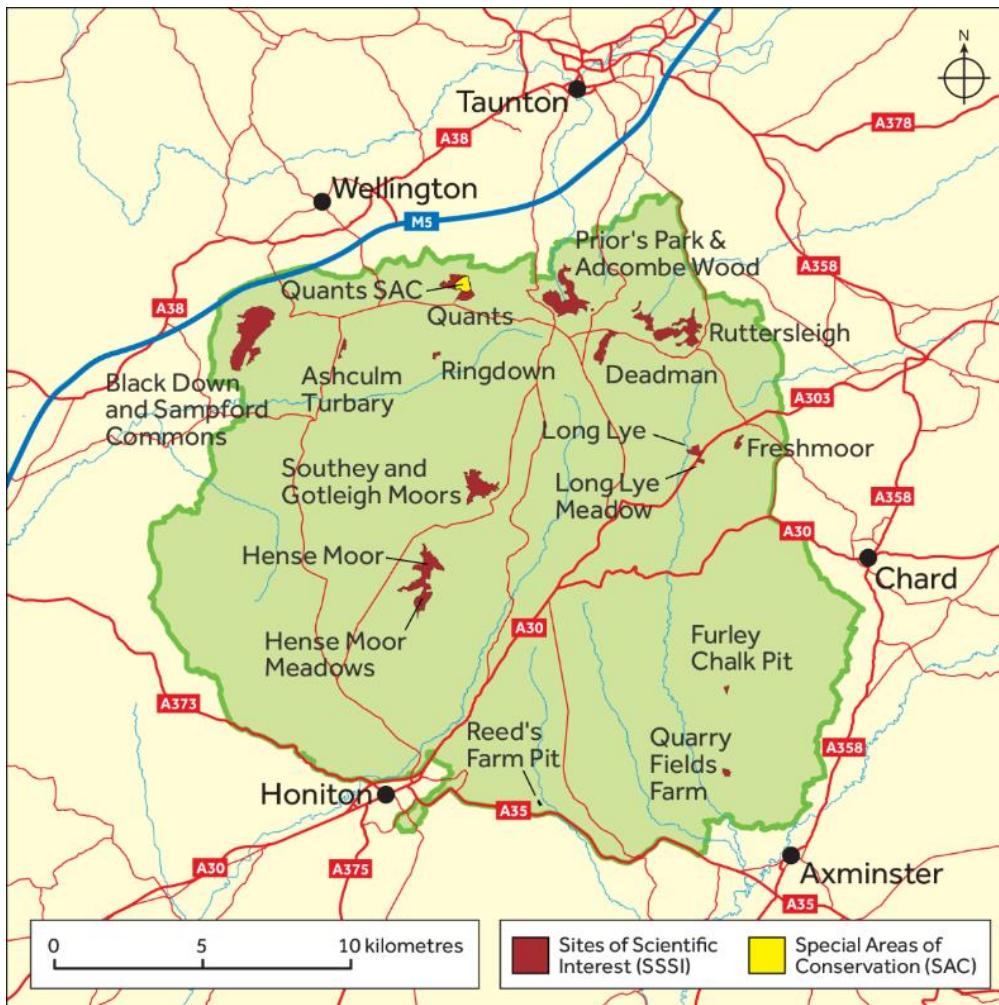
(<https://blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk/project/nature-recovery-plan/>). This includes the Blackdown Hills State of Nature Report, visualisations and several working documents to address the biodiversity emergency. (State of nature Report - Jeffreys K, Olney S, Foster J, Collins P (2021): Blackdown Hills AONB State of Nature Report, Geckoella Ltd. & Saunders G, Maben J (2021): Blackdown Hills AONB Nature Recovery Plan - Nature recovery areas: Definition and delivery plan.)

- Location and condition of SSSIs and SAC
- Area of woodland (by NFI types)
- Area of Ancient woodland
- Area of priority habitats
- Locally protected areas

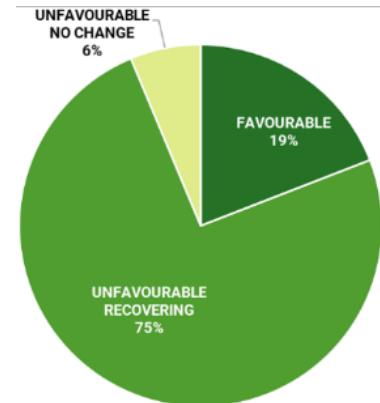


Location and condition of SSSIs and SAC

There are 17 designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the National Landscape, occupying 640 ha (1.73%) of its area. Quants Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is 20.3 ha, which equates to 0.1% coverage of the AONB.

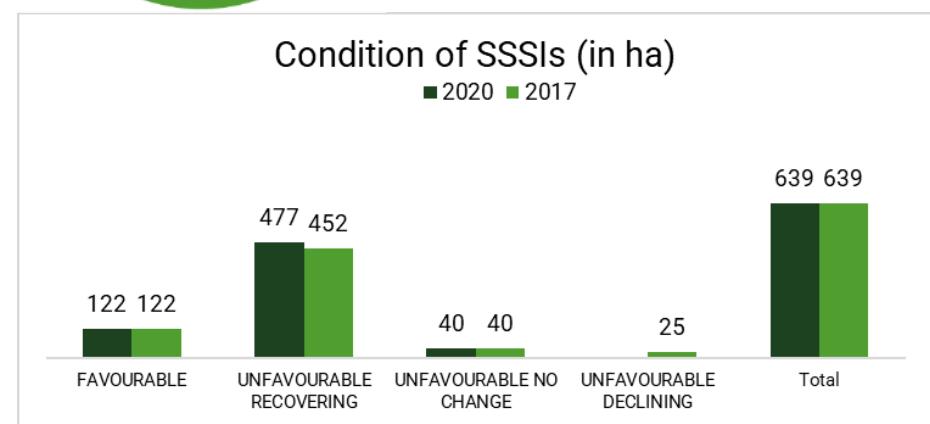


SSSIs designation is for their national importance for nature conservation or earth heritage. Natural England assesses the condition of all SSSIs using a common standard methodology. There is a national target for **95%** of SSSIs (by area) to be in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition.



The pie chart shows that the National Landscape does not quite meet this target. **94%** of its SSSIs are in a favourable or unfavourable but recovering condition.

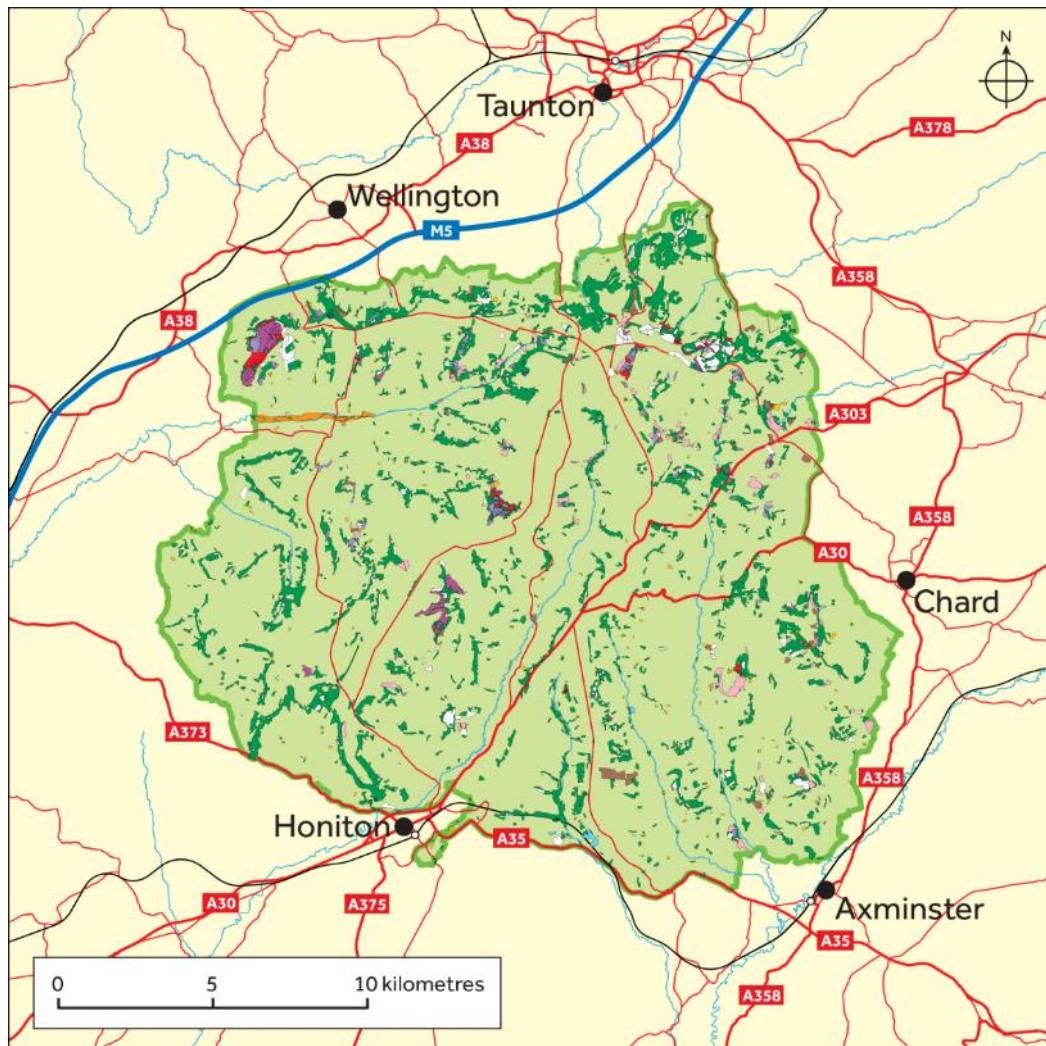
This is an improvement from 2017. Then, only 90% of its SSSIs met the target. 4% of the SSSIs were classified as unfavourable and declining. This has been reversed.



Source: GIS data 'Sites of Special Scientific Interest Condition Units England Natural England' obtained from www.data.gov.uk, 22 March 2022. Note: almost all the SSSIs were last assessed more than eight years ago and the condition of many SSSIs may have changed since then. Natural England is embarking on a new round of assessments from 2022.

Area of priority habitats

There are 4,724.43 ha of priority habitats covering 12.8% of the National Landscape. Priority habitats and the ancient woodland Inventory combined, cover approximately 15.1% of the National Landscape.



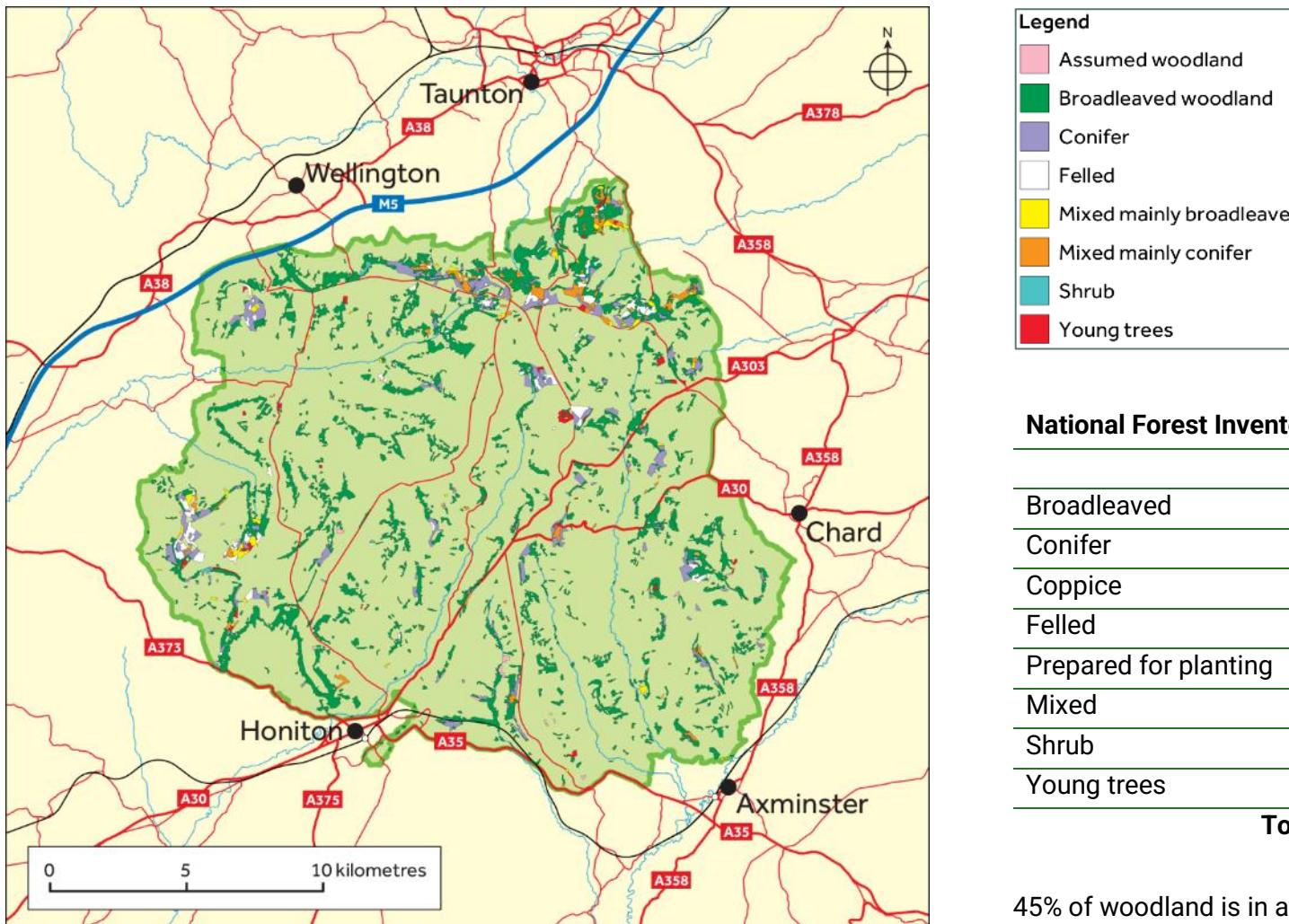
(Click to go to stocks Area)

Priority Habitat	ha
Coastal & floodplain grazing marsh	60.04
Deciduous woodland	3,536.57
Lowland calcareous grassland	23.81
Lowland dry acid grassland	33.31
Lowland fens	87.87
Lowland heathland	162.48
Lowland meadows	128.85
Purple moor grass & rush pastures	186.95
Traditional orchard	81.57
No main habitat	422.97
Total	4,724.43

Source Data: Priority Habitat Inventory v2.3 2020, SSSI Condition April 2021, © Natural England copyright. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2021.

Area of woodland (by National Forest Inventory types)

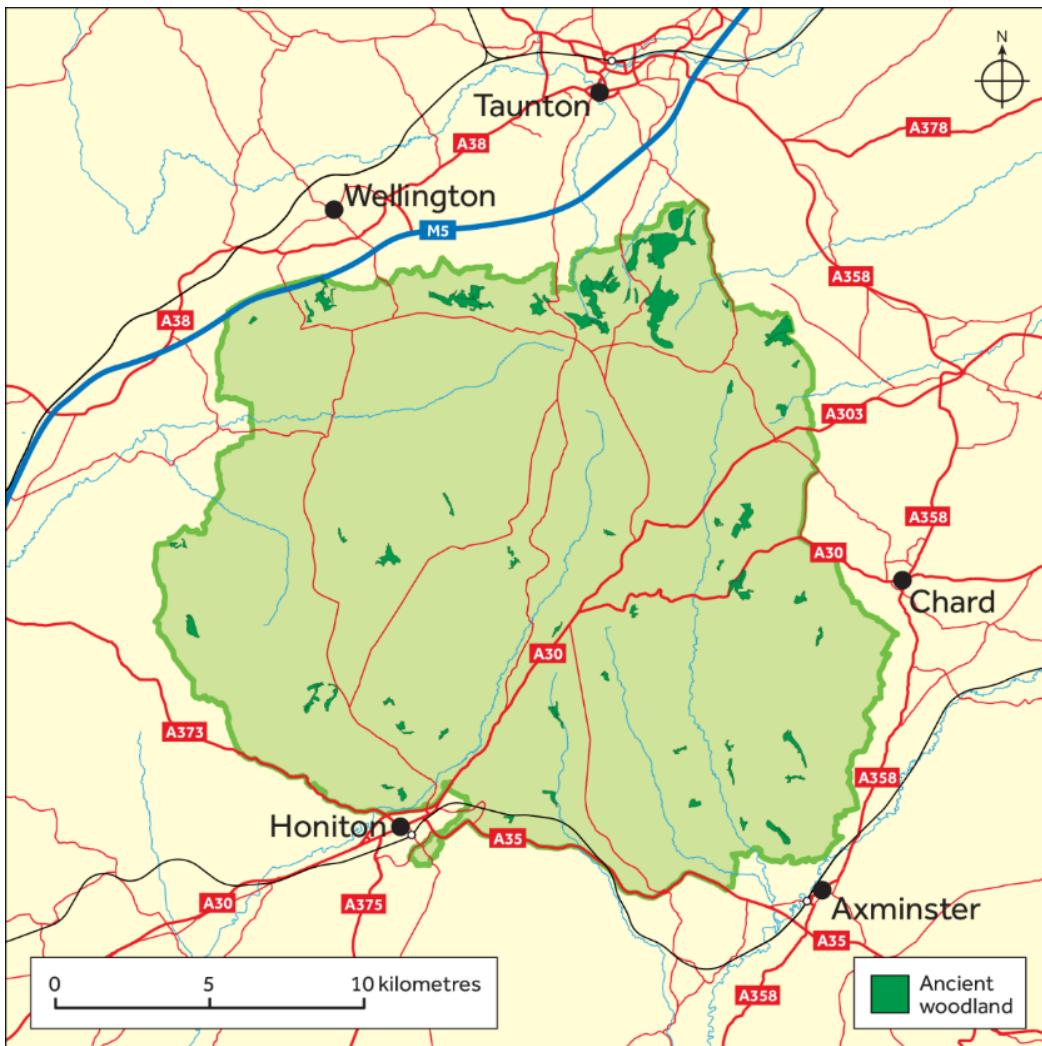
There are 5,380 ha of woodland covering 14.5% of the National Landscape with the distribution of National Forest Inventory types.



Source: © Forestry Commission copyright (2022). Taken from the Natural England Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (England) dataset, dated September 2020.; and the FC National Forest Inventory dated March 2019. Additional information at: <https://www.forestryresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/national-forest-inventory/about-the-nfi/>

Area of ancient woodland

There are 867 ha of ancient woodland covering 2.3% of the National Landscape



Ancient woodland is divided into ancient and semi-natural ancient woodland (ASNW) and plantations on ancient woodland Sites (PAWS):

Ancient woodland by theme		Area in Ha
Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland	ASNW	426.7
Ancient Replanted Woodland	PAWS	440.5
		867.2 ha

Source: Natural England-OS Open Government Licence July 2022. M:\Geo-Data\Habitats_Species\Habitats\Habitat_Inventories_Ancient_Woodland\Ancient_Woodland_NE\Ancient_Woodland.gdb\Ancient_Woodland (June 2022)

Locally protected sites

Non-statutory designated sites cover around 8.5% of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape. In addition, the statutory Otterhead Lakes Local Nature Reserve covers 0.1% of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape.

County/Local Wildlife Sites are non-statutory sites designated for their local nature conservation value and important habitats and/or species. These sites are selected at a county level and meet local selection criteria. In Devon they are referred to as County Wildlife Sites, and in Somerset they are known as Local Wildlife Sites. They cover around 8.5% of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape.

Statutory designated sites for nature conservation account for around 1.8% of Blackdown Hills National Landscape; this is mostly the SSSIs but also includes the Otterhead Lakes Local Nature Reserve which covers 0.1% of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape. A Local Nature Reserve is a statutory designated site, featuring locally important wildlife and/or geological interests. Otterhead is designated for semi-natural habitats surrounding the two lakes, including wet woodland priority habitat, and the protected species these habitats support.

The Blackdown Hills are also home to 14 Wildlife Trust nature reserves, totalling 146 ha.

Type	Cover	Area (Ha)
Otterhead Lakes Local Nature Reserve	0.1%	21.5
County Wildlife Sites & Local Wildlife Sites	8.5%	3161.0
	8.6%	3,182.5

Detailed mapping and condition data for local sites is not readily accessible at the National Landscape or finer scale.

Natural Capital and ecosystem goods and services

- Greenhouse gases
- Air quality
- Ecological status of rivers and lakes
- Changes in weather patterns
- Soil organic carbon stock
- Area of priority habitats within the highest level of organic carbon stocks
- Area at risk of flooding

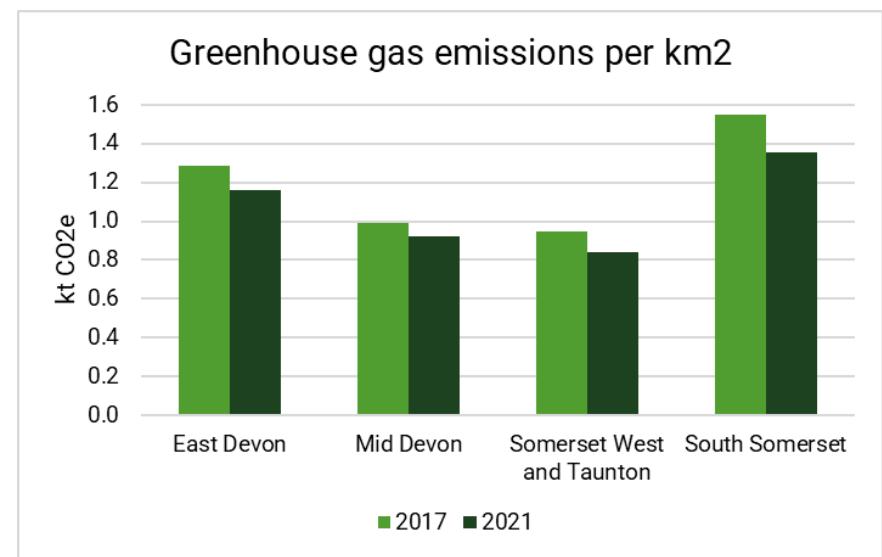
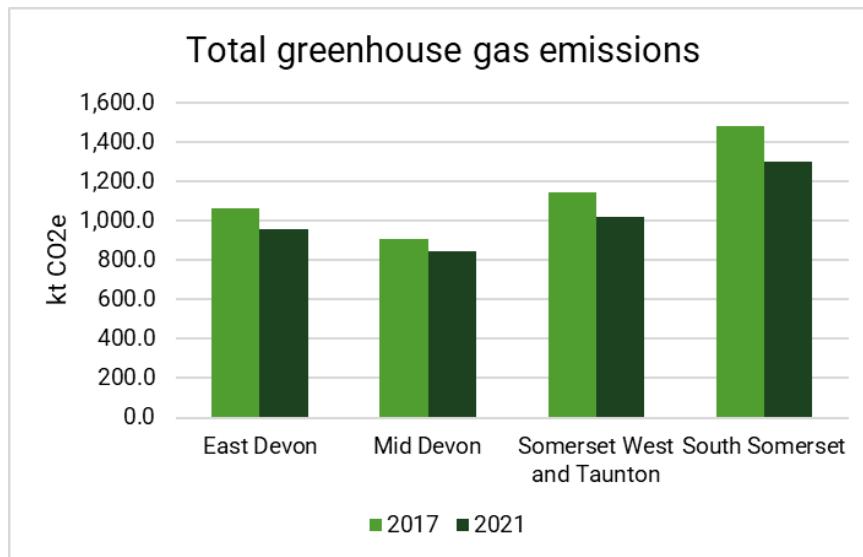


Greenhouse gases

Trend data for the local authority areas

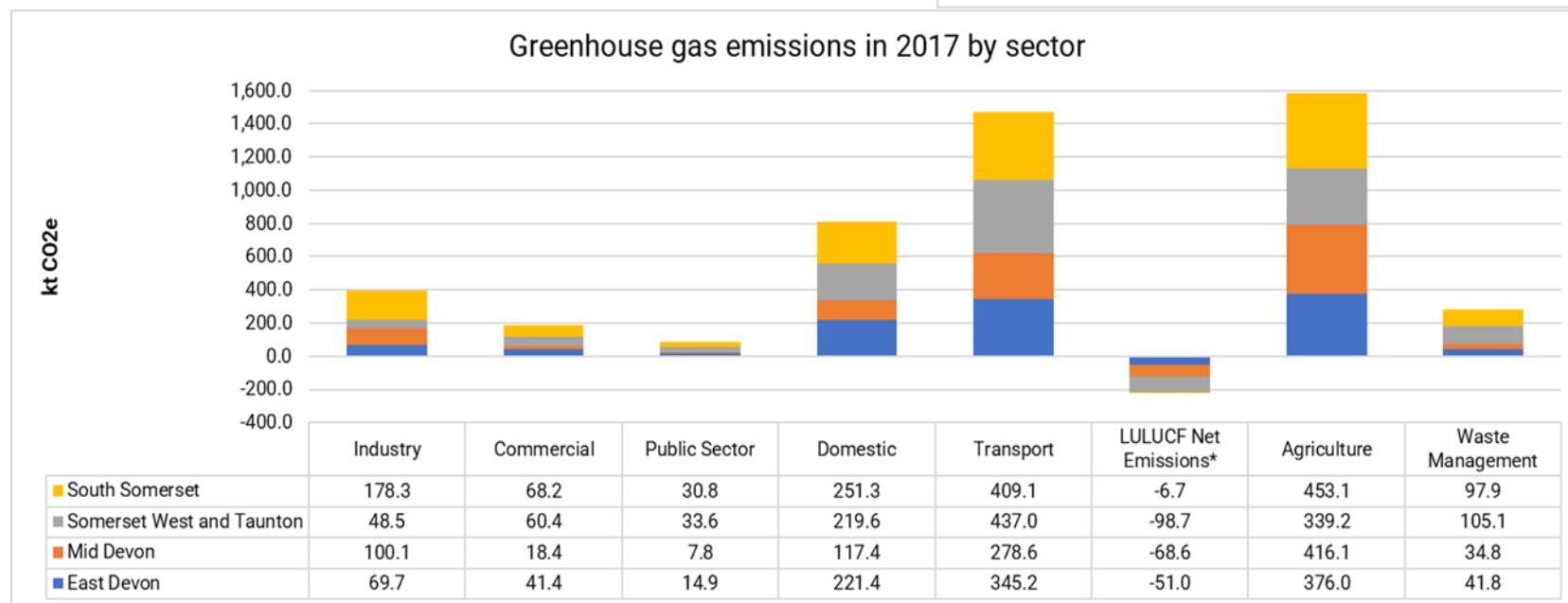
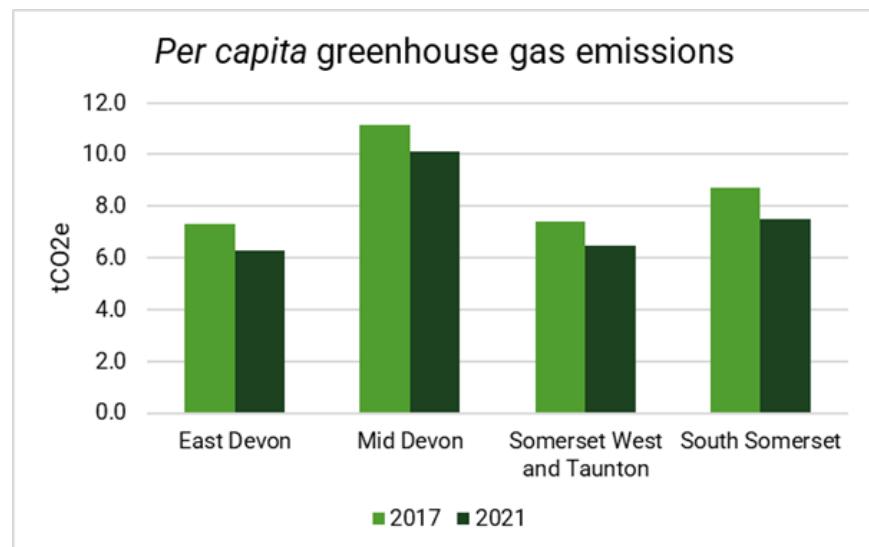
A series of tables showing levels of the combined greenhouse gases at the local authority level.

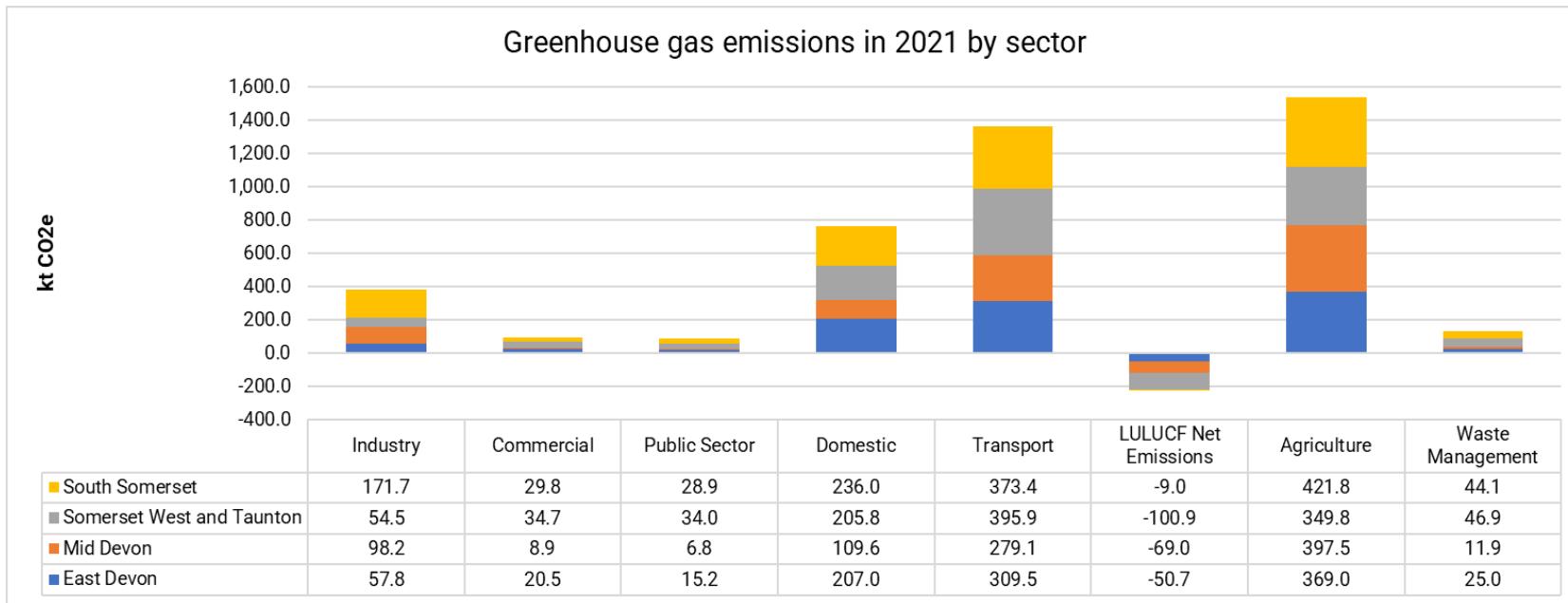
Trend data is only published down to the local authority area level. The trend shows that there is a reduction in the greenhouse gas emission across all the local authority areas between 2017 and 2021.



South Somerset produces the most greenhouse gas and Mid Devon the least. But the local authority areas are not the same size. Plotting greenhouse emissions by km², South Somerset still produces the most greenhouse gas, but the lowest emissions come from Somerset West and Taunton.

Also, each local authority area has a different size of population. The *per capita* rates show that Mid Devon produces the most greenhouse gas emissions, followed by South Somerset. East Devon and Somerset West and Taunton have similar lower rates.





* **LULUCF = Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry.** The rate of build-up of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere can be reduced by taking advantage of the fact that atmospheric CO₂ can accumulate as carbon in vegetation and soils in terrestrial ecosystems. Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change any process, activity or mechanism that removes a greenhouse gas from the atmosphere is referred to as a "sink". Human activities impact terrestrial sinks, through land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF). Consequently, the exchange of CO₂ between the terrestrial biosphere and the atmosphere is altered.

The greenhouse gases covered in this data are carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide. Each of these gases is weighted by its global warming potential (GWP), so that total greenhouse gas emissions can be reported on a consistent basis. The GWP for each gas is defined as its warming influence relative to that of carbon dioxide. Reporting is in kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (kt CO₂e) unless otherwise stated.

This shows:

- A **10% reduction** in total greenhouse gas emissions between 2017 and 2021.
- Agriculture is the greatest producer of greenhouse gases in both years, producing 1,585 kt CO₂e in 2017 and 1,538 kt CO₂e in 2021 (**3% reduction**).
- Transport is also a large producer of greenhouse gases. It produced 1,470 kt CO₂e in 2017 and 1,358 kt CO₂e in 2021 (**8% reduction**).

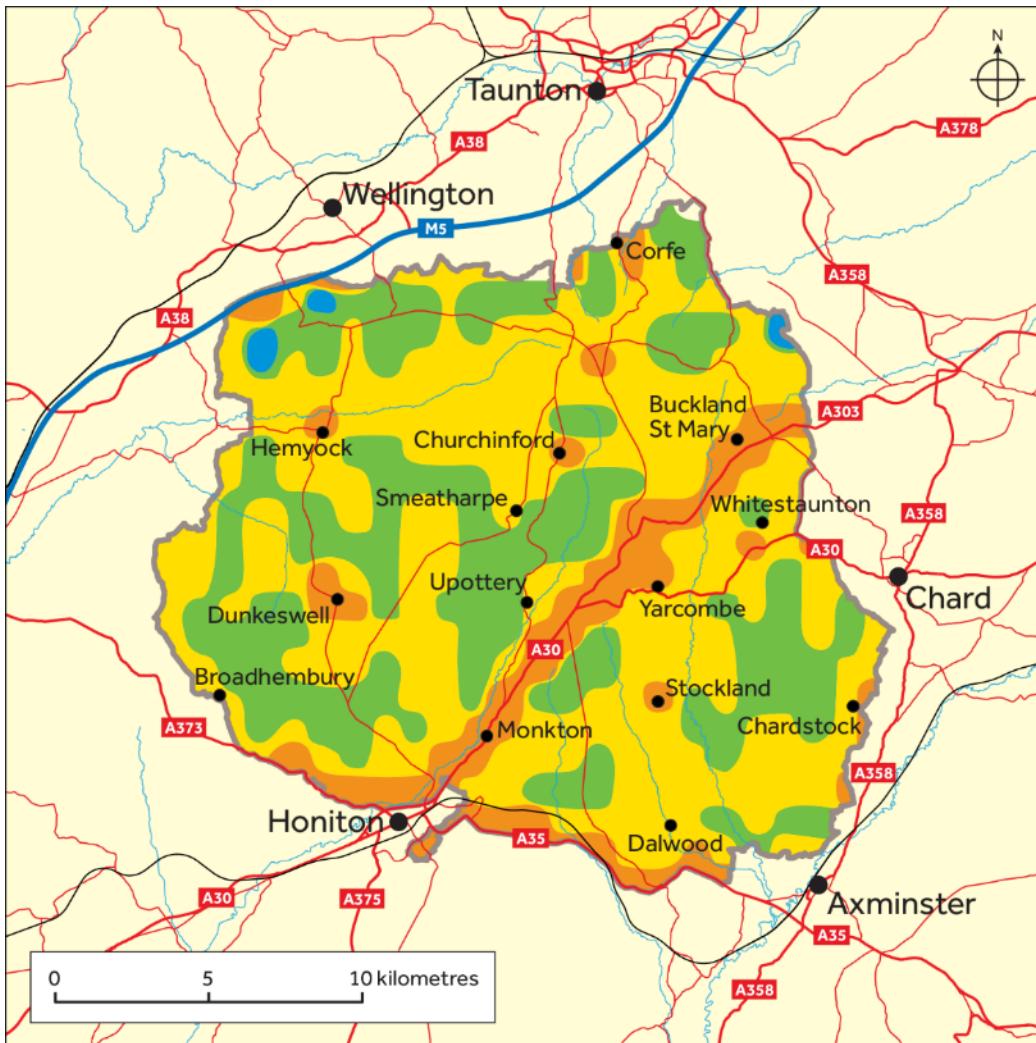
- The next highest source of greenhouse gas emissions is domestic at 810 kt CO₂e in 2017 and 758 kt CO₂e in 2021 (**6% reduction**).
- There has been a **54% reduction** in emissions from waste management, and a **50% reduction** from commercial operations between 2017 and 2021.
- The amount of carbon accumulating in the soils and vegetation **increased by 5%** between 2017 and 2021.

Source: Department for Energy Security & Net Zero; a nationally consistent set of greenhouse emissions estimates at local authority level from 2005 to 2021, published 6th July 2023. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64a67b3a4dd8b3000f7fa546/2005-21-uk-local-authority-ghg-emissions-update-060723.xlsx>

The maps that follow show the presence of emissions within the National Landscape during 2022. Refer to the **Land use map** (ctrl+click) to match emissions to land use activity.

Carbon dioxide in the National Landscape

Showing carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels in 2022. The highest emissions are found around the centres of population and lie along the motorway and trunk roads.



Legend

CO ₂ emissions – tonnes
100 – 1995
32 – 100
10 – 32
3 – 10

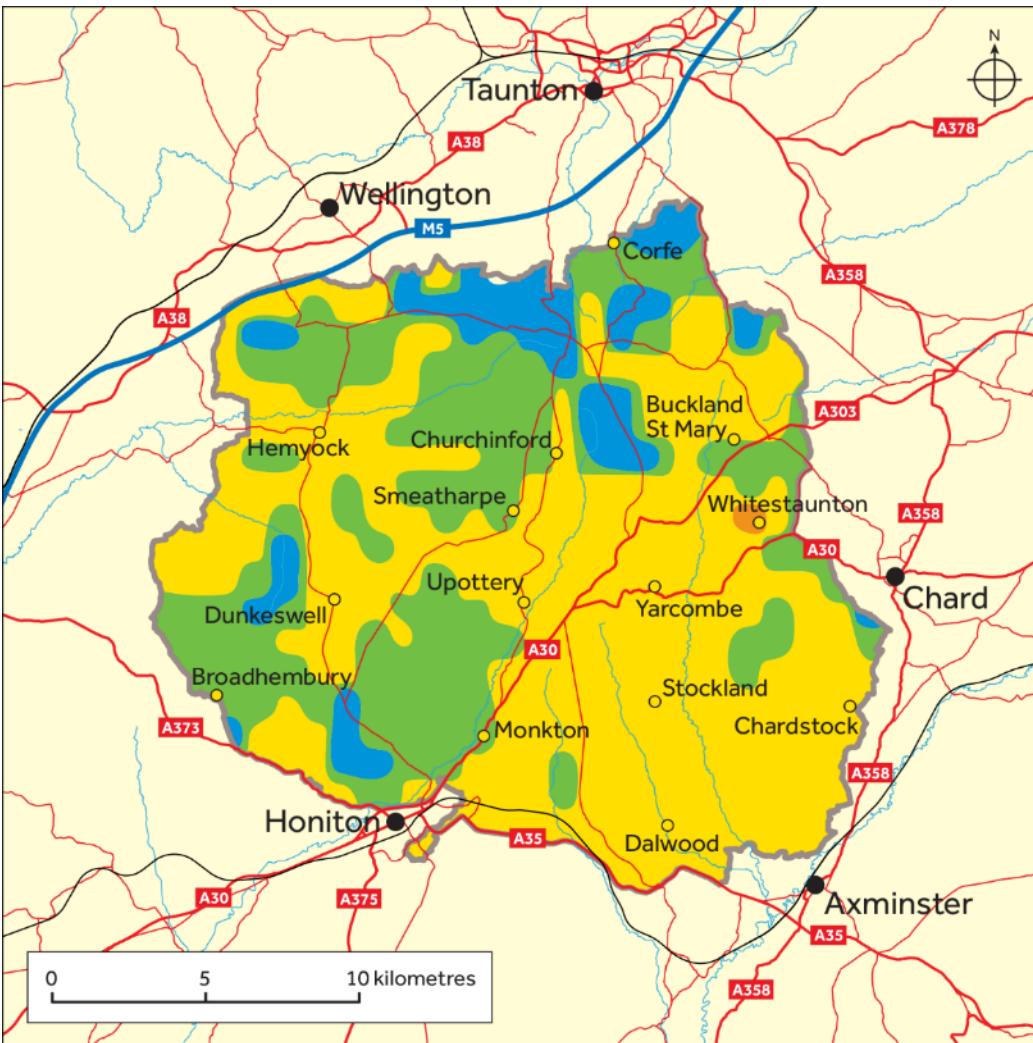
Carbon dioxide (CO₂) enters the atmosphere through burning fossil fuels (coal, natural gas, and oil), solid waste, trees and other biological materials, and also as a result of certain chemical reactions (e.g., cement production). Carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere (or "sequestered") when it is absorbed by plants as part of the biological carbon cycle.

The main human activity that emits CO₂ is the combustion of fossil fuels (coal, natural gas, and oil) for energy and transportation. Certain industrial processes and land-use changes also emit CO₂. Therefore, it is no surprise that highest emissions are found around the centres of population and lie along the motorway and trunk roads.

Source: National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory (NAEI) 2022 (<https://naei.beis.gov.uk/data/mapping>). The NAEI receives detailed data on individual point sources regulated by the Environment Agency and Local Authority Pollution Control.

Methane in the National Landscape

Showing methane (CH_4) levels in 2022. There is a hotspot around Whitestaunton.



Legend

CH_4 emissions – tonnes

50 – 100
10 – 50
5 – 10
1 – 5

Methane (CH_4) is emitted during the production and transport of coal, natural gas, and oil. Methane emissions also result from livestock and other agricultural practices, land use, and by the decay of organic waste in municipal solid waste landfills.

Across the four local authority areas in 2021, 86% of the methane came from agriculture, and a further 10% came from waste management.

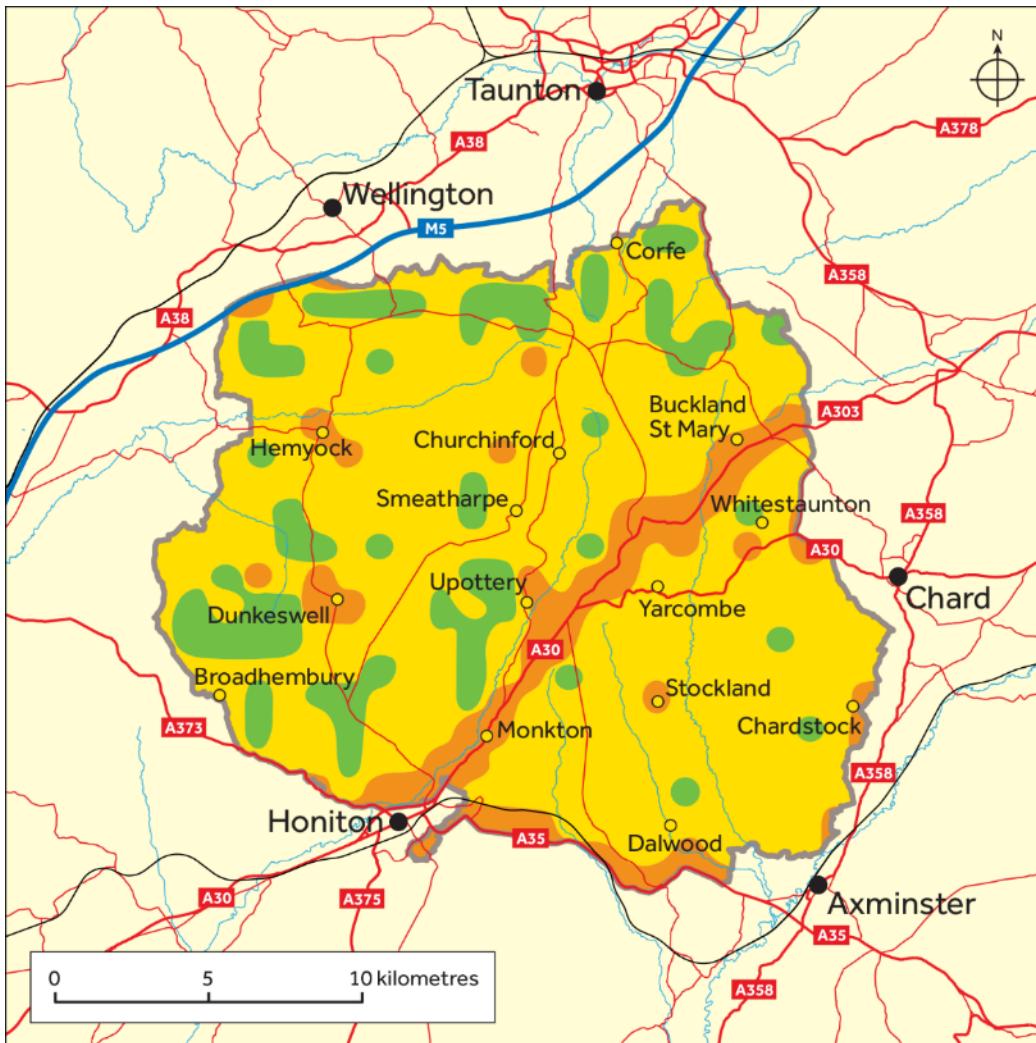
The highest emissions (50-100 kt CO₂e) are found around Whitestaunton. This is a dairy area and there is also a biogas plant here, which may be contributing to the high emissions. The emissions of 10-50 kt CO₂e relate to pasture land.

Land used for arable and woodland generally emit less than 10 kt CO₂e of methane.

Source: National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory (NAEI) 2022 (<https://naei.beis.gov.uk/data/mapping>). The NAEI receives detailed data on individual point sources regulated by the Environment Agency and Local Authority Pollution Control.

Nitrous oxide in the National Landscape

Showing nitrous oxide (N_2O) levels in 2022. The highest emissions lie along the motorway and trunk roads.



Legend

N_2O emissions – tonnes
1 – 25
0.3 – 1
0.1 – 0.3

Nitrous oxide (N_2O) is emitted during agricultural, land use, and industrial activities; combustion of fossil fuels and solid waste; as well as during treatment of wastewater. It is associated with vehicle engines. Therefore, it is no surprise that highest emissions lie along the motorway and trunk roads.

Most agricultural emissions result from nitrogen fertilization of agricultural soils and management of animal waste.

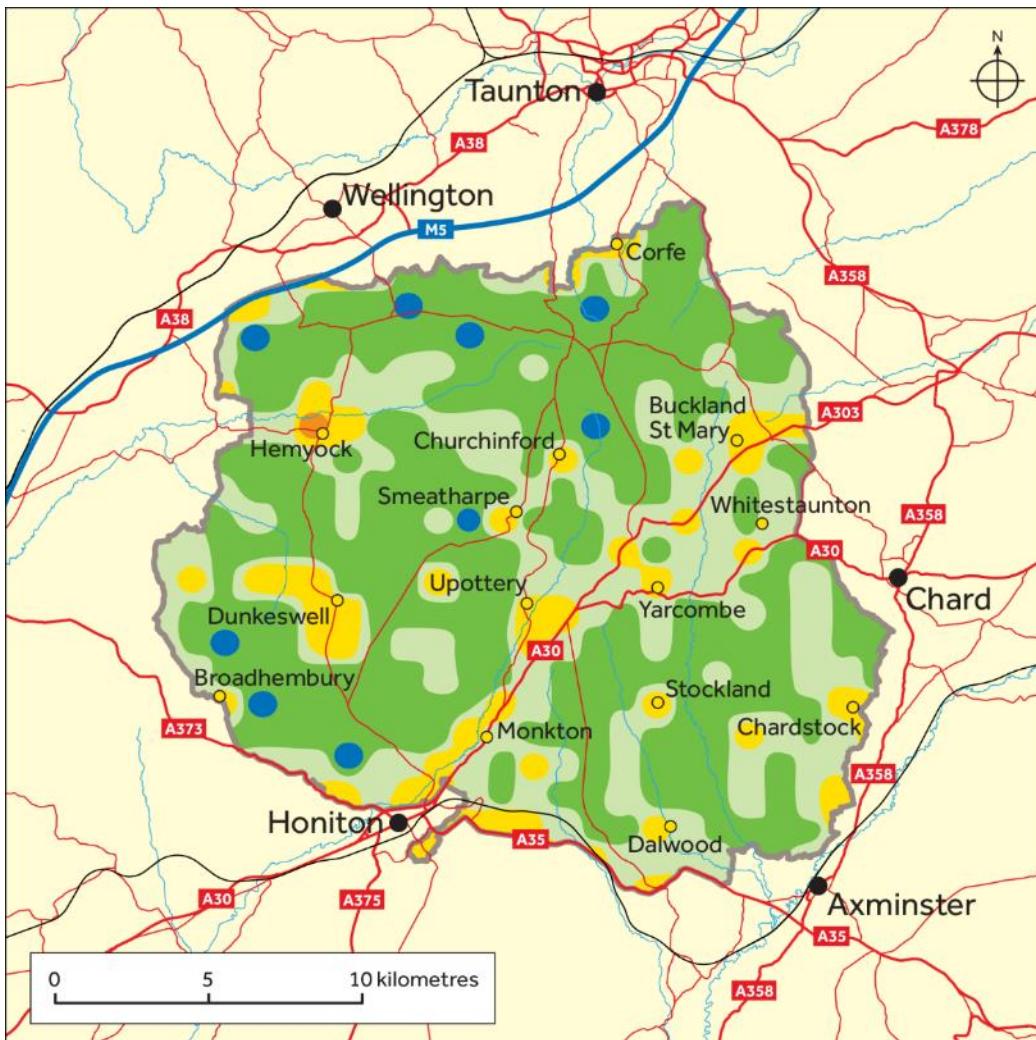
The lowest rates are in areas of woodland.

Source: National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory (NAEI) 2022 (<https://naei.beis.gov.uk/data/mapping>). The NAEI receives detailed data on individual point sources regulated by the Environment Agency and Local Authority Pollution Control.

Air quality

Particulate matter in the National Landscape

Showing PM2.5 levels in 2022. Levels are low in the area but with a hotspot around Hemyock.



Legend

PM 2.5 emissions – tonnes

1 – 4
0.2 – 1
0.1 – 0.2
0.03 – 0.1
0.003 – 0.03

The areas with the higher emissions are generally associated with the road network but also around Dunkeswell and Hemyock.

Particulate matter (PM) is everything in the air that is not a gas and consists of a huge variety of chemical compounds and materials, some of which can be toxic. PM2.5 is matter that is less than 2.5 micro gram in diameter. Due to the small size, some of these toxins may enter the bloodstream and be transported around the body, lodging in the heart, brain and other organs.

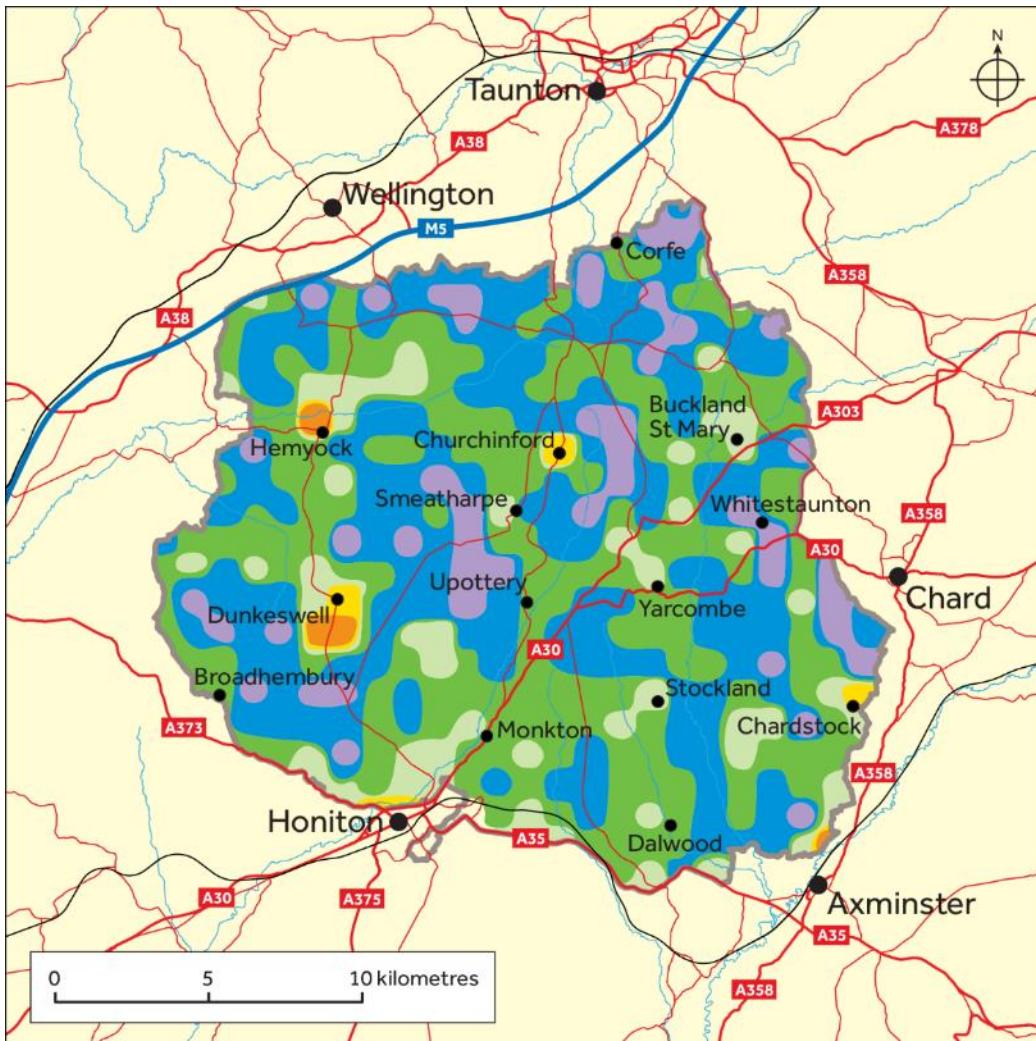
Note on UK emissions: Because of measures in place during the COVID-19 pandemic, PM2.5 emissions from road transport, aviation and railways in 2020 were 23%, 61% and 28% lower than they had been in 2019 respectively.

There are now increasing levels generally, due to increased use of wood as a fuel for homes. Industrial use of biomass fuels is also increasing and has become a more significant contributor to UK emissions.

Source: National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory (NAEI) 2022 (<https://naei.beis.gov.uk/data/mapping>). The NAEI receives detailed data on individual point sources regulated by the Environment Agency and Local Authority Pollution Control. Emissions of PM10 and PM2.5 from agricultural sources are distributed using agricultural census data 2014.

Sulphur dioxide in the National Landscape

Showing sulphur dioxide (SO_2) in 2022. Levels are low in the area but there are hotspots.



Legend

SO ₂ emissions – tonnes
Above 0.8
0.5 – 0.8
0.1 – 0.5
0.03 – 0.1
0.01 – 0.03
Below 0.01

The principal man-made source of sulphur dioxide is the combustion of fossil fuels.

There are high levels of sulphur dioxide (SO_2) ($> 0.8 \text{ kt CO}_2\text{e}$) at Hemyock, Dunkeswell and near to Axminster; and Churchinford and Chardstock lie in an area with 0.5-0.8 $\text{kt CO}_2\text{e}$ of SO_2 .

Sulphur dioxide contributes to aerosol formation which can either warm (through absorption of solar radiation on dark particles) or cool (from forming cloud droplets and reflecting radiation) the atmosphere.

Source: National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory (NAEI) 2022 (<https://naei.beis.gov.uk/data/mapping>). The NAEI receives detailed data on individual point sources regulated by the Environment Agency and Local Authority Pollution Control.

Ecological status of rivers and lakes

The overall ecological quality of the majority of rivers in the National Landscape is moderate though a few are poor. The water quality of Luxhay reservoir is poor.



The Water Framework Directive monitors waterbodies for a range of issues, including pollution from chemicals and excess nutrients, as well as the health of wildlife communities such as plants and fish. Rivers are then rated as high, good, moderate, poor or bad status. Only the rivers that are described as 'good' or 'high' are in a sustainable and healthy condition; the rest all need a greater level of protection and management if they are to improve to a good level of health.

The overall ecological quality of the majority of rivers in the National Landscape is **moderate**. The assessment of both the River Otter and its contributors, the River Tale, the River Ding, Broughton Brook and Sheldon Stream is that they have a **poor** overall ecological quality; as does Luxhay Reservoir.

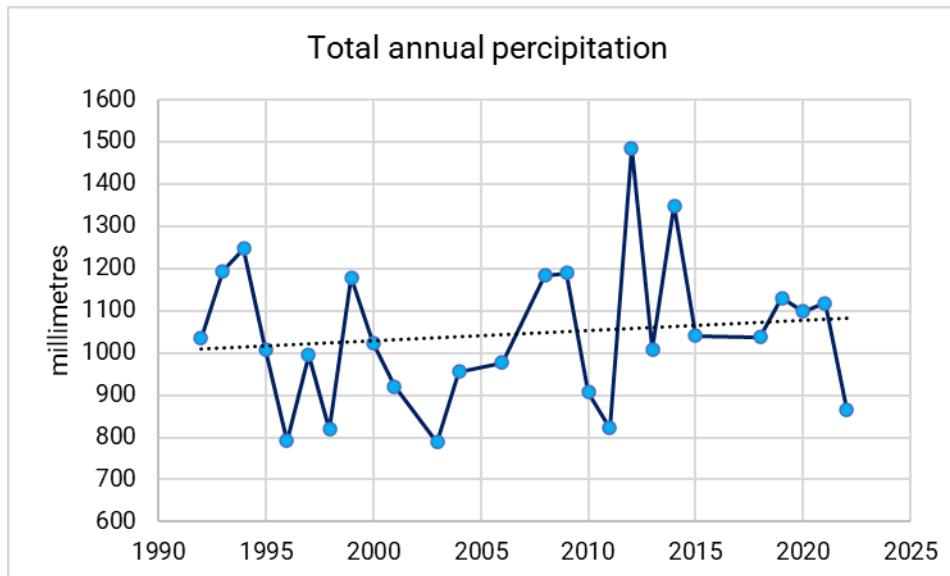
	Length of rivers (Km)	Nº of lakes & SSSI	Nº of ground water bodies
High	0	0	0
Good	0	0	6
Moderate	119	3	0
Poor	26.4	1	1
Bad	0	0	0
TOTAL	145.4	4	7
% with High or Good status	0%	0%	85.8%

However, 85.5% of groundwater bodies are in a **good** condition. Groundwater is water that is below the surface of the ground in the saturation zone and in direct contact with the ground or subsoil.

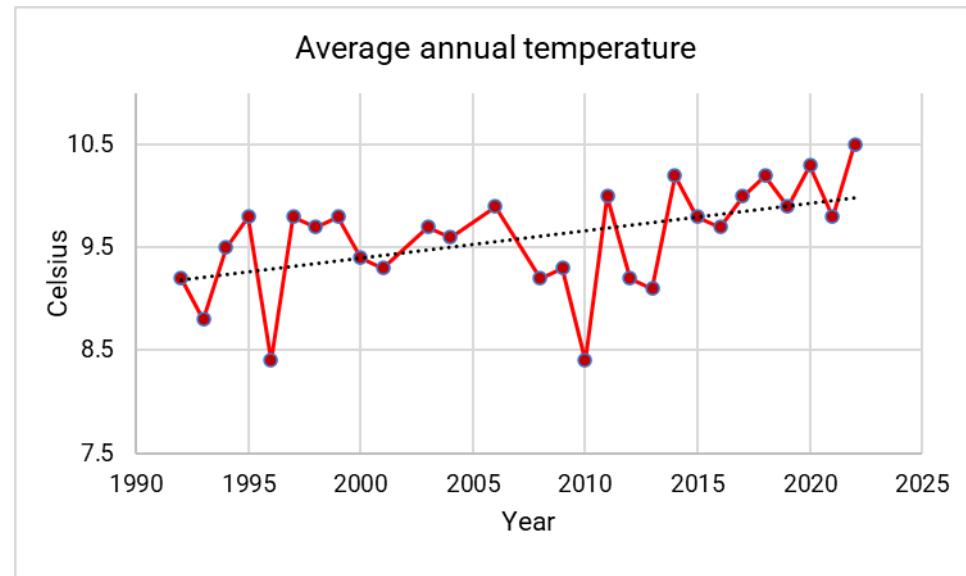
Source: © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2015 & 2016. All rights reserved. WFD Groundwater Bodies Cycle 2, derived in part from 1:50,000 and 1:250,000 scale digital data under permission from British Geological Survey. ©NERC. © Crown copyright and database rights 2013 Ordnance Survey 100024198. © Natural England copyright 2021, reproduced with the permission of Natural England. www.gov.uk/natural-england © Crown Copyright and database right 2021.

Changes in weather patterns

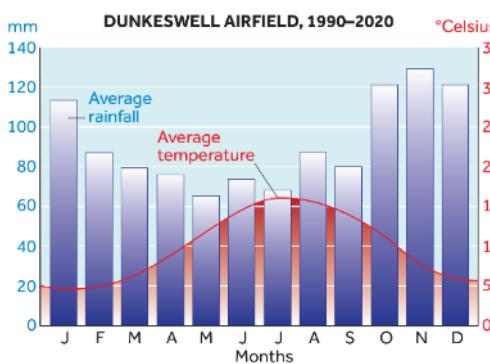
The chart, based on Metrological Office data for Dunkeswell Aerodrome, shows a 9-millimetre increase in annual rainfall and a rise of 0.3°C in annual temperature over the last 30 years.



The trend line shows a slight but steady increase in annual precipitation from approximately 1000 mm in 1992 to approximately 1100 mm in 2020 (9 millimetres).



The trend line shows a steady rise in annual temperature from approximately 9.2°C in 1992 to 9.5°C in 2022; and rise of 0.3°C



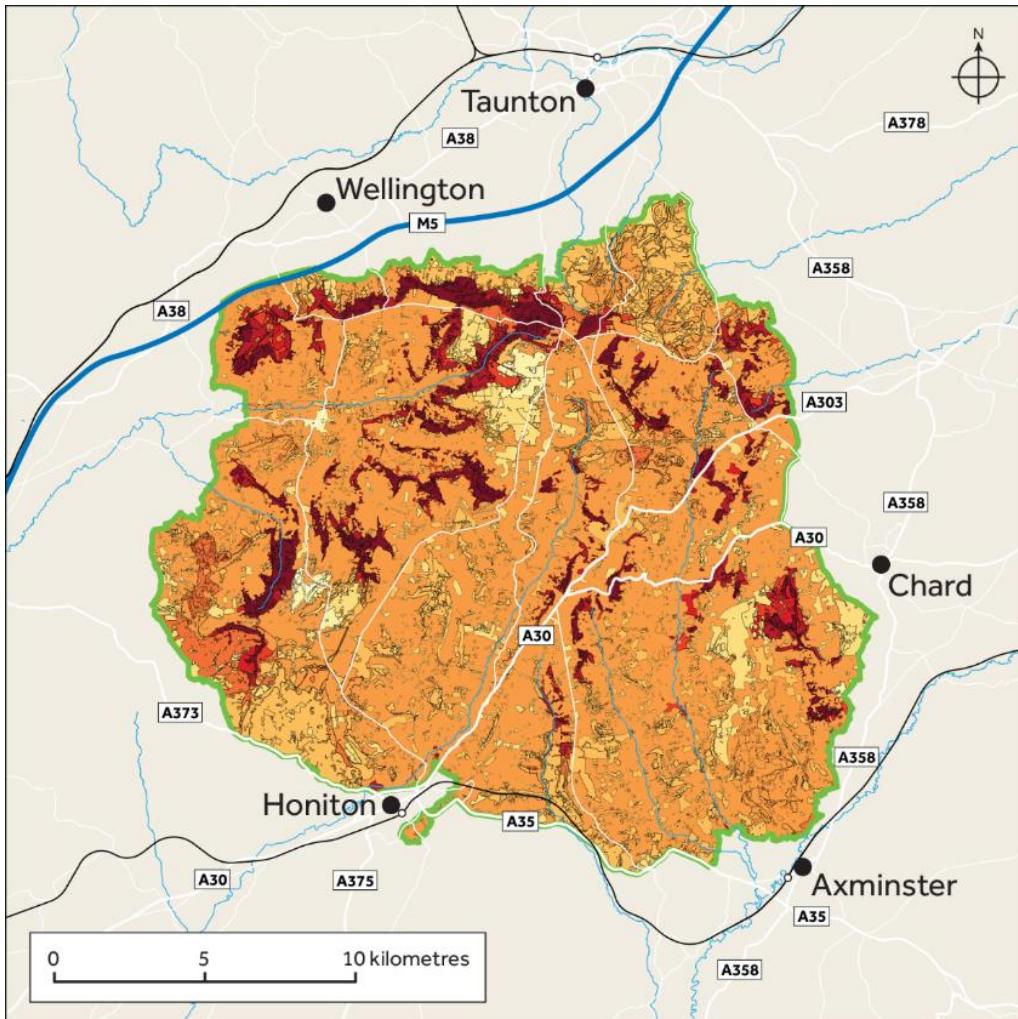
Monthly average rainfall and temperature data for Dunkeswell Aerodrome 1990-2020.

Source: Metrological Office data for Dunkeswell Aerodrome (Latitude: 50.86 Longitude: -3.23, Altitude: 252 metres amsl) <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/>

See also <https://en.tutiempo.net/climate/ws-38400.html#lnkglqzaeaa3kq5ag1>

Soil organic carbon stock

A baseline assessment of organic carbon storage capacity of and fluxes from habitats present within the National Landscape.



Derived from the National Association for Areas of Outstanding National Beauty (supported by Natural England) National Landscape Carbon Audit and Metric project delivered by Cranfield University.

Legend

Soil C stock – tonnes per hectare
Soil organic carbon stock at 0–150cm depth – tonnes per hectare medium estimate
0.00
0.01–100.00
100.01–150.00
150.01–175.00
175.01–200.00
200.01–225.00
225.01–250.00
250.01–300.00
300.01–500.00
500.01–650.00

The term **carbon stock** refers to the amount of carbon contained within soils or biomass at a given time described in terms of mass per standardised unit area (tonnes per hectare) and are often referred to as carbon density (see Zawadzka, J.E., et al 2022).

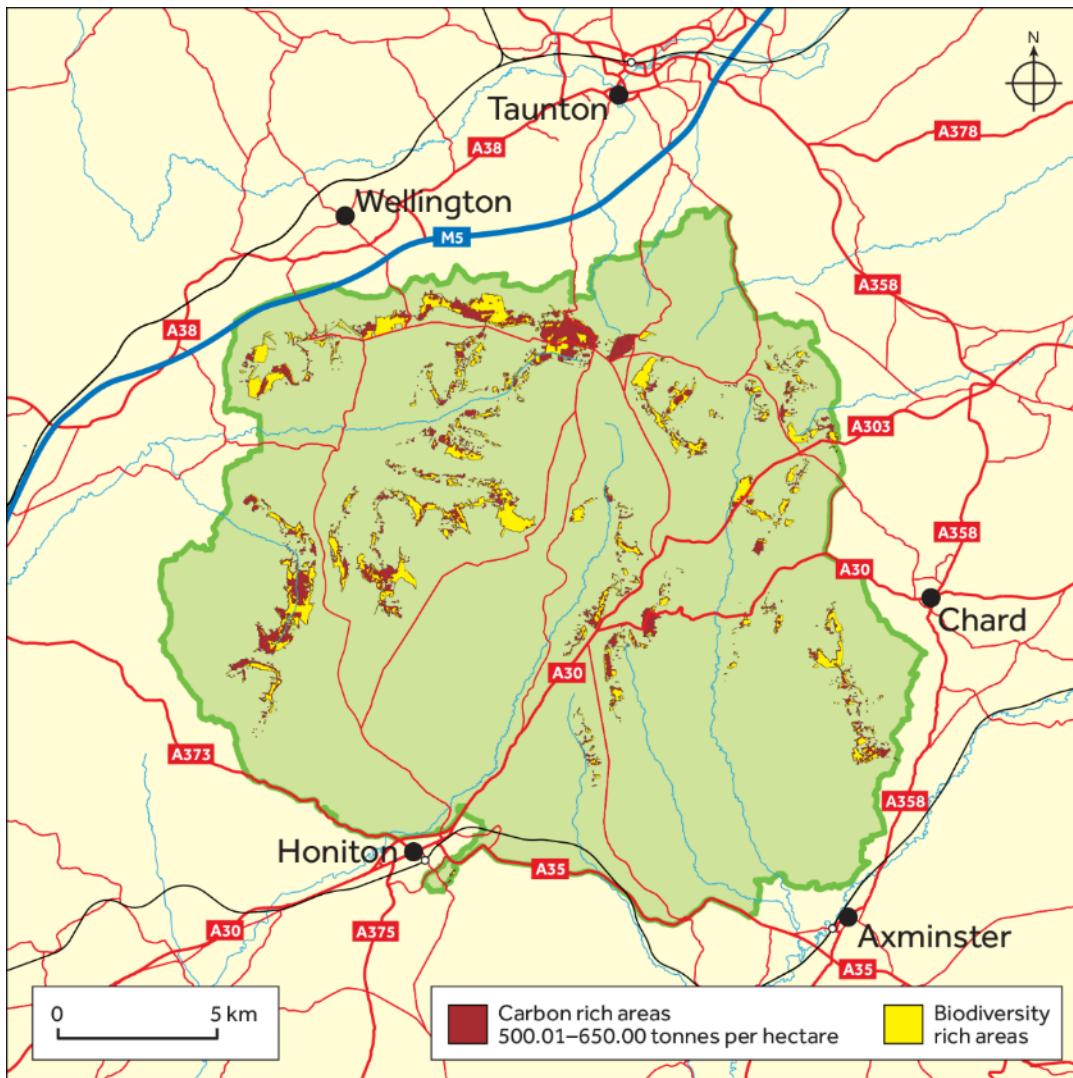
Much of the soils in the National Landscape hold the equivalent of 200-225 tonnes of carbon per hectare. There are areas holding considerably more. These equate to the areas of Priority Habitat, as shown on the next map.

Greenhouse gas data show a 5% increase in carbon accumulating in the soils and vegetation between 2017 and 2021.

Source: Non-priority habitats: data owned by UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology © Database Right/Copyright UKEH; Priority habitats: Ordnance Survey MasterMaps ® (OSMM); Natural England; Soil data: © Cranfield University (NSRI) and for the Controller of HMSO (2022). Backdrop: © Crown copyright and/or database right 2022 OS

Area of priority habitats within the highest level of organic carbon stocks

There is a very close match between Priority Habitats and high stocks of organic carbon.



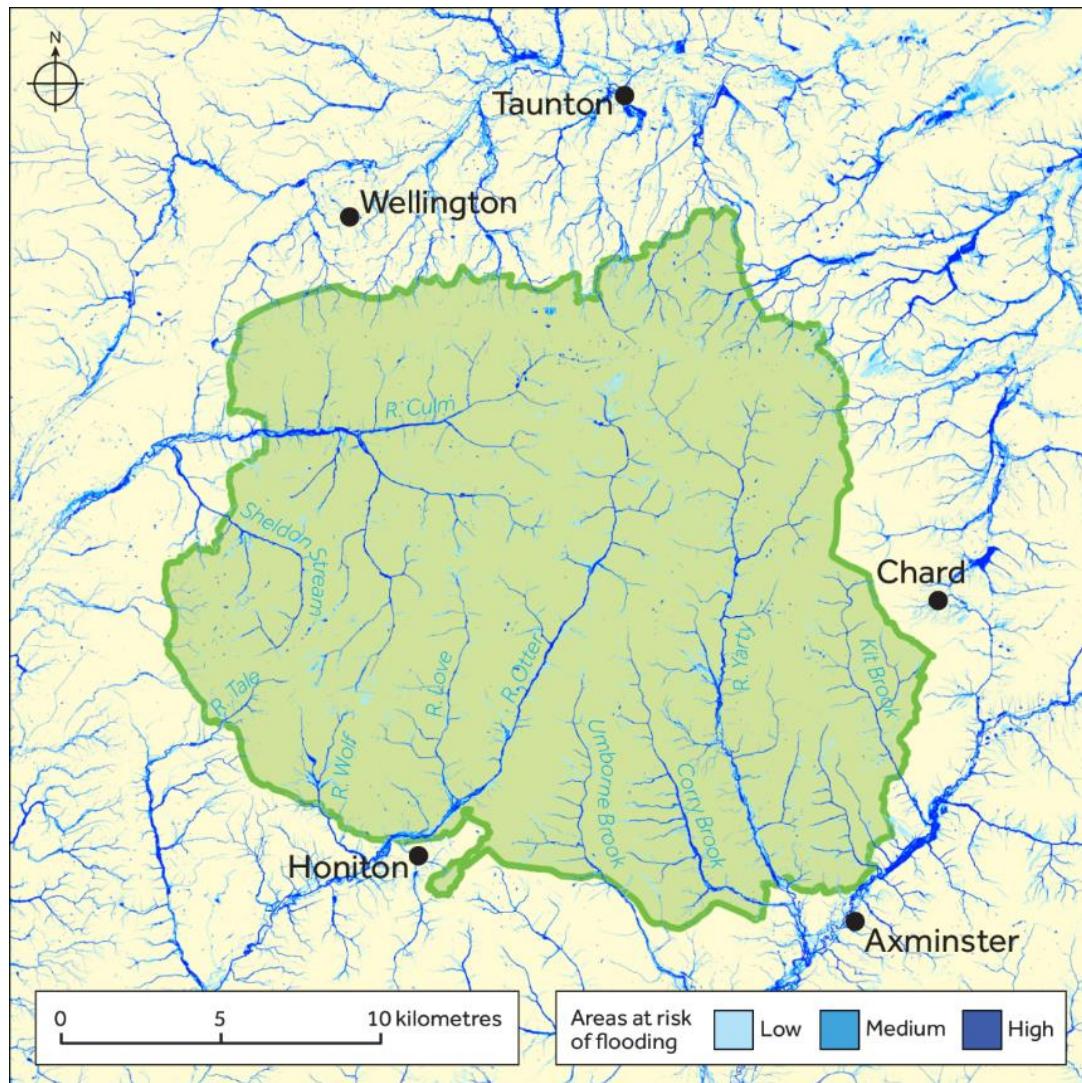
The areas in yellow (labelled biodiversity rich areas) refer to the combined areas of priority habitat (ctrl+click to go to [Area of priority habitats](#) map) that fall within the highest level of organic carbon stocks (500 – 650 tonnes/ha at a depth of 0-150 cm).

Informed by the National Landscape Carbon Audit and Metric project, commissioned to Cranfield University by the National Association for Areas of Outstanding National Beauty supported by Natural England. The audit provides a baseline assessment of organic carbon storage capacity of and fluxes from habitats present within the National Landscape, with emphasis on priority habitats.

Reference: Zawadzka, J.E., Keay, C., Hannam, J., Burgess, P.J., Corstanje, R. (2022). AONB Carbon Audit & Metric (land management), Bedfordshire: Cranfield University

Area at risk of flooding from surface water

The majority of the National Landscape is at very low risk of flooding from surface water.



Although a large majority of the National Landscape is at very low risk of flooding from surface water, there are many localised areas of surface water flooding that affect both property and infrastructure across the Blackdown Hills. This surface water flooding is most likely to be associated with the rapid response type of catchments of the Rivers, Culm, Otter and Yarty. The lowlands surrounding the National Landscape are generally also at a low risk of flooding from surface water, with the greater risk being closely associated with watercourses.

Note:

Very low risk means that this area has a chance of flooding of less than 0.1% each year.

Low risk means that this area has a chance of flooding of between 0.1% and 1% each year.

Medium risk means that this area has a chance of flooding of between 1% and 3.3% each year.

High risk means that this area has a chance of flooding of greater than 3.3% each year.

Source: Environment Agency © Crown copyright and database rights 2019 OS 100024198. <https://check-long-term-flood-risk.service.gov.uk/risk>

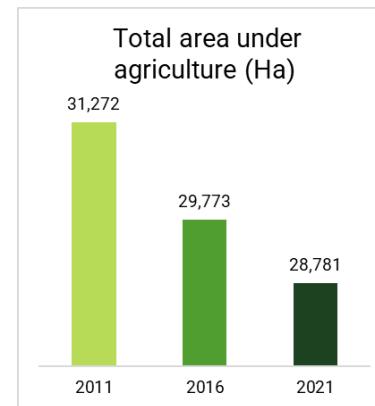
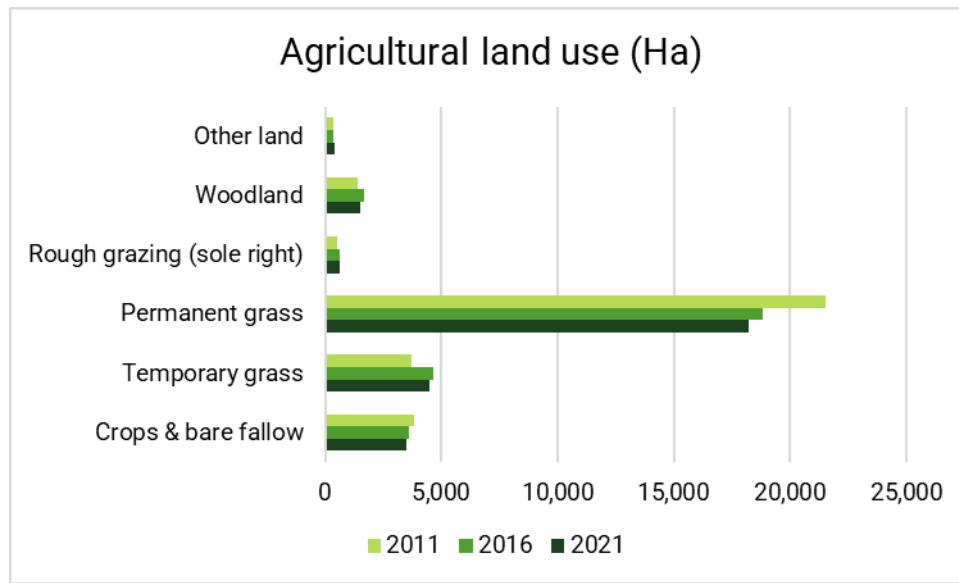
Farming and Land Management

- Agricultural land-use
- Agricultural holdings
 - Size
 - Number
 - Type
- Livestock numbers
- Employment in farming
- Land in agri-environment schemes

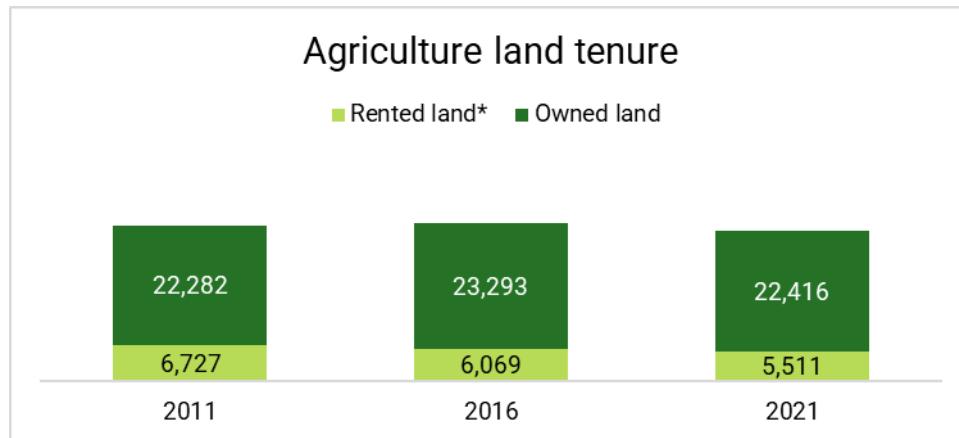


Agricultural land-use

Currently, 78% of the National Landscape is under agriculture.



There has been a steady decline in the total area of agricultural land during the last ten years. In 2021, there were 28,781 ha of land under agriculture. This is a decline of 8% from 2011 (31,272 ha) and a decline of 3% since 2016 (28,781 ha). This is primarily due to a decline in permanent grass.



In 2021, 80% of the agricultural land was owner occupied, 20% rented.

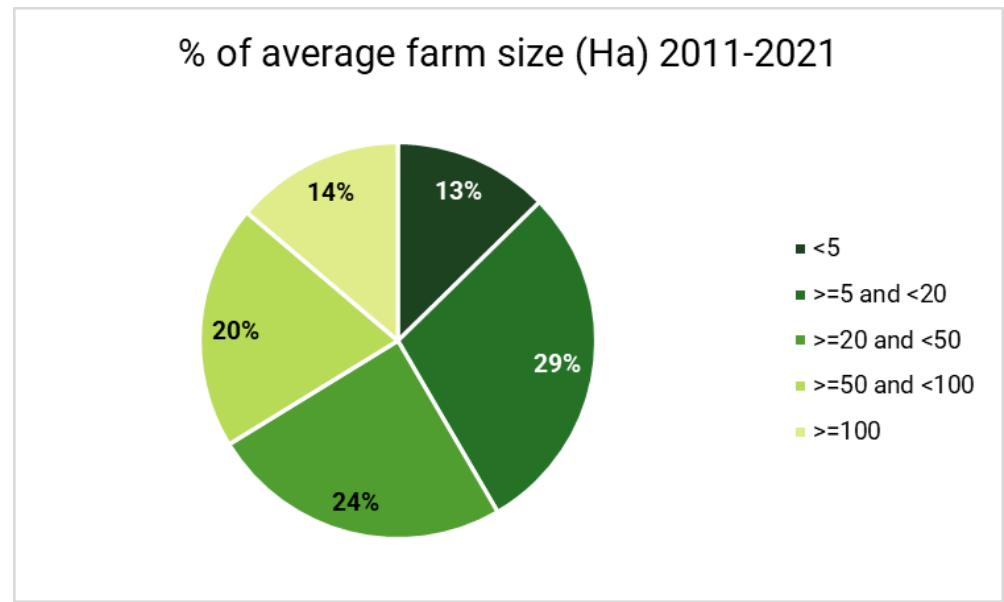
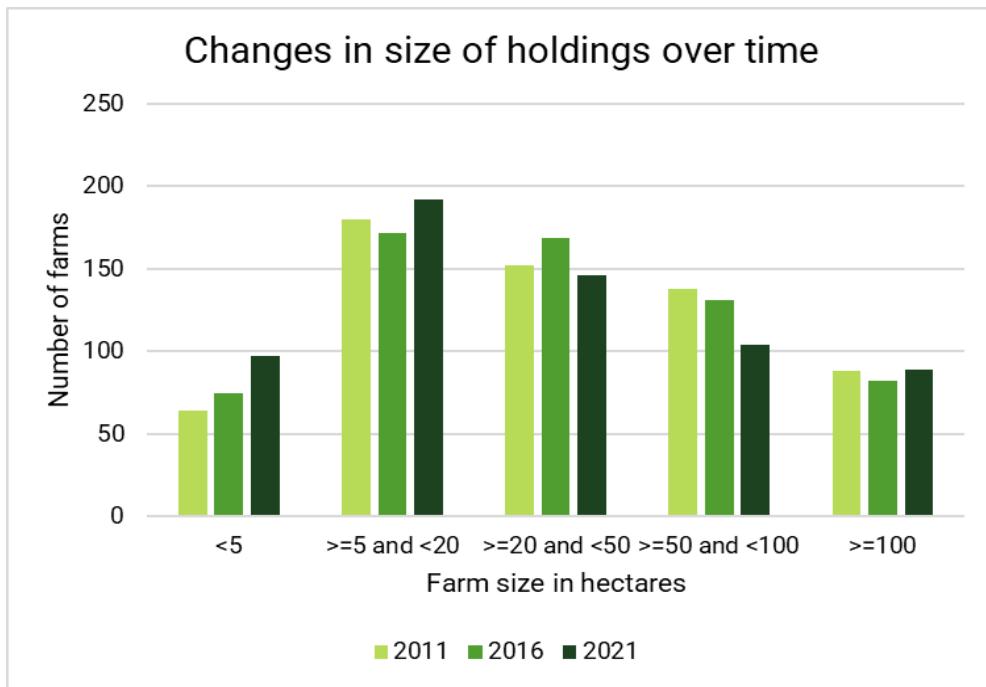
* Rented land means land rented for at least 365 days on either a Full Agricultural Tenancy, Farm Business Tenancy, or other long-term agreement.

Note: The Defra June Survey of Agriculture is a large sample survey sent to a representative sample of holdings across England. As the results are based on a sample survey, they are subject to a degree of sampling error and do not take into account other sources of survey errors, such as non-response bias or administrative data errors.

Source: Defra June Survey of Agriculture <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/structure-of-the-agricultural-industry-in-england-and-the-uk-at-june>

Agricultural holdings

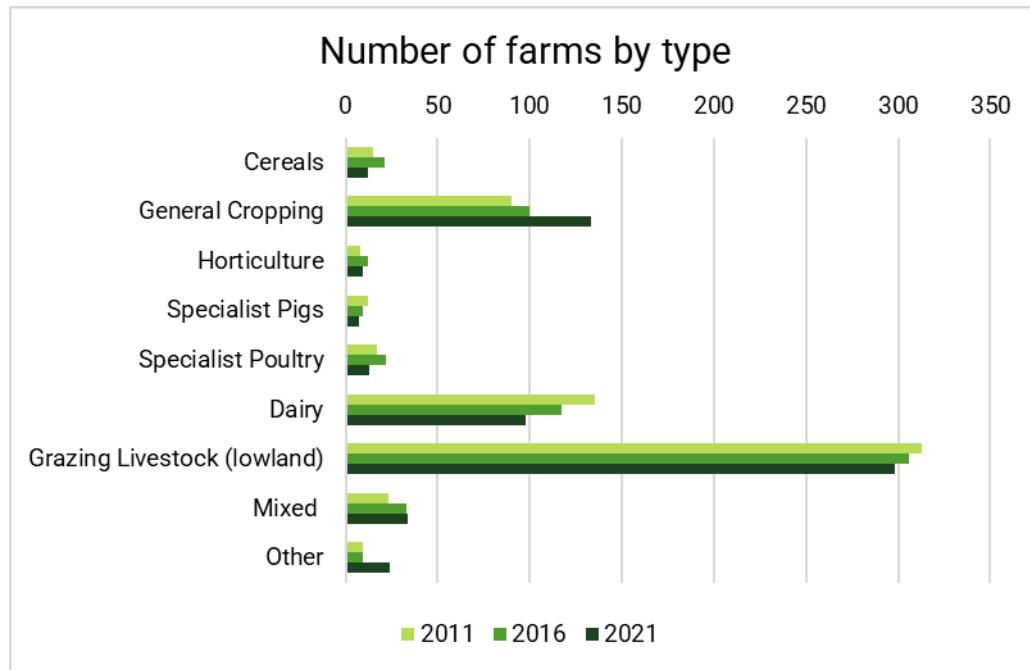
During the last ten years the number of holdings has remained at around 625. 42% are less than 20 hectares in size and 44% are between 20-100 hectares in size. 48% are recorded as lowland livestock grazing farms.



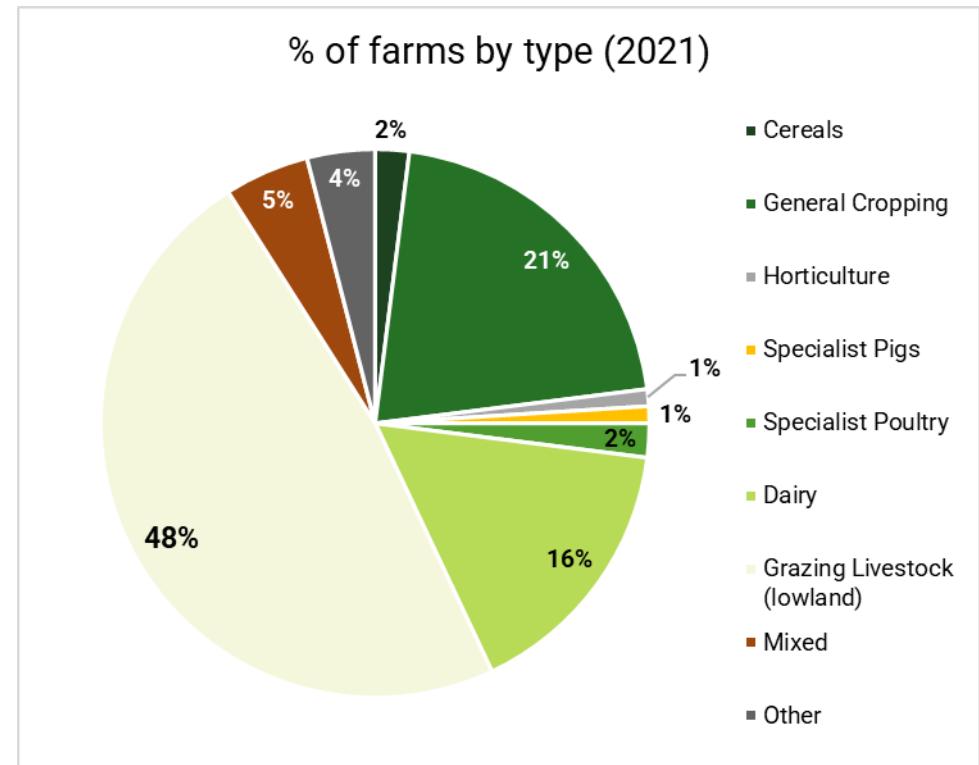
During the ten years from 2011 to 2021 the number of holdings has remained generally the same (622 to 628).

The relative size of agricultural landholdings has been static during the last ten years.

Since 2016, there is an increase in the smallest units (less than 5 ha) matched by a fall in those between 50 and 100 ha.



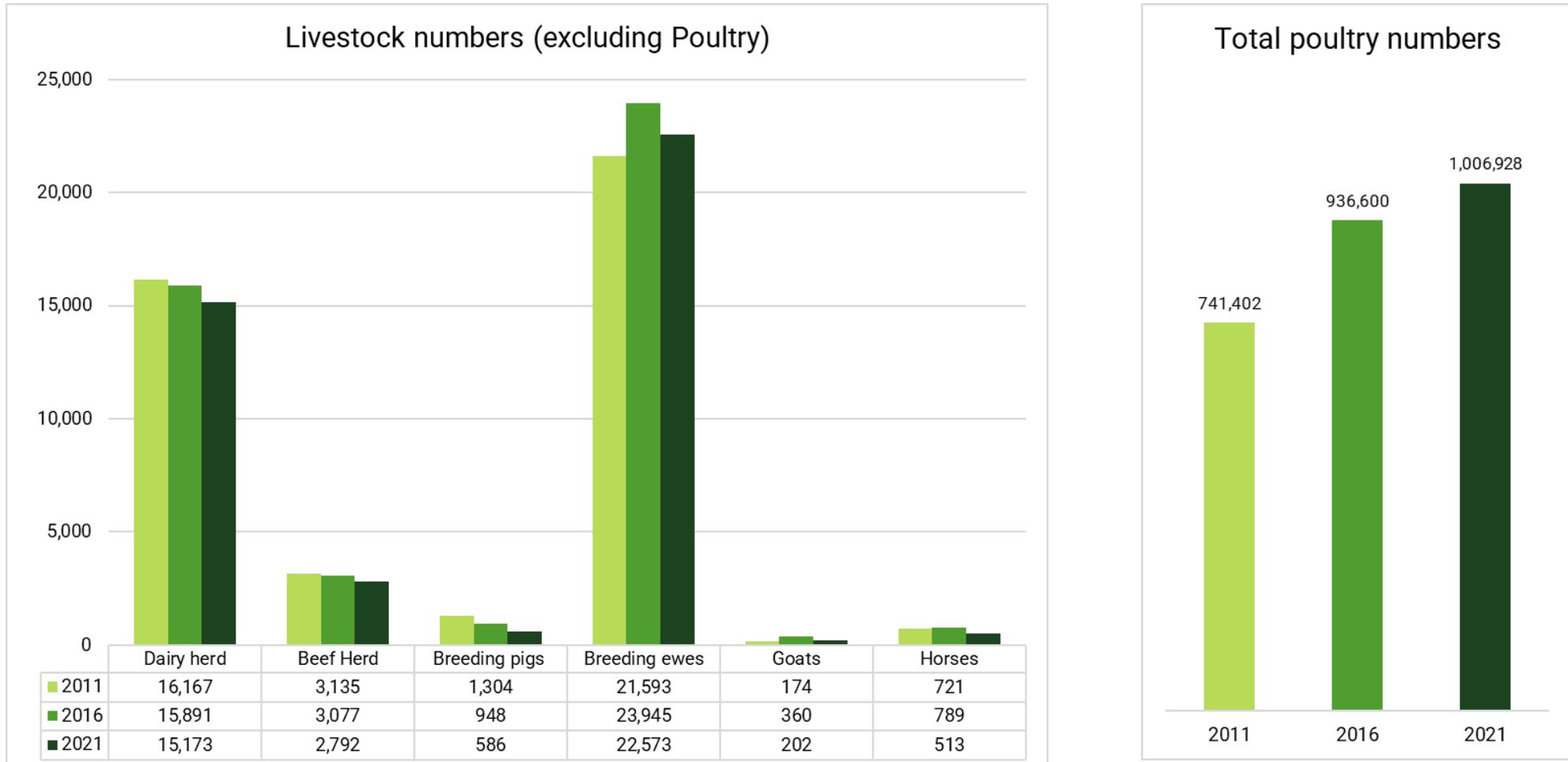
Grazing livestock is, and has constantly been, the predominant holding type. In the last five years, there has been an increase in general cropping and 'other'.



Source: Defra June Survey of Agriculture <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/structure-of-the-agricultural-industry-in-england-and-the-uk-at-june>

Livestock numbers

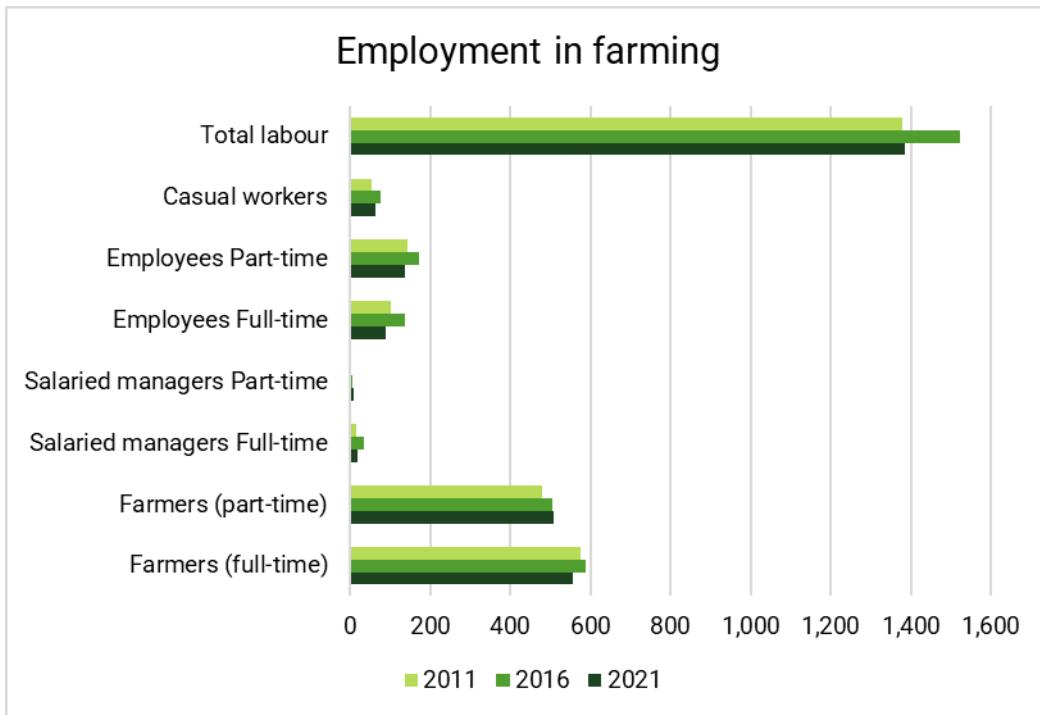
Poultry is the largest group of livestock (1,006,928 animals), a 7% increase in numbers since 2016 (the trend from 2011 is an increase of 26%). However, sheep (22,573 breeding ewes) and cattle (17,965 animals) are the most dominant livestock in the landscape. There is a 6% decline in sheep and a 5% decline in cattle since 2016.



Source: Defra June Survey of Agriculture <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/structure-of-the-agricultural-industry-in-england-and-the-uk-at-june>

Employment in farming

Employment in farming has remained fairly constant during the last 10 years. In 2021, 9.8% of the resident population was employed in farming.

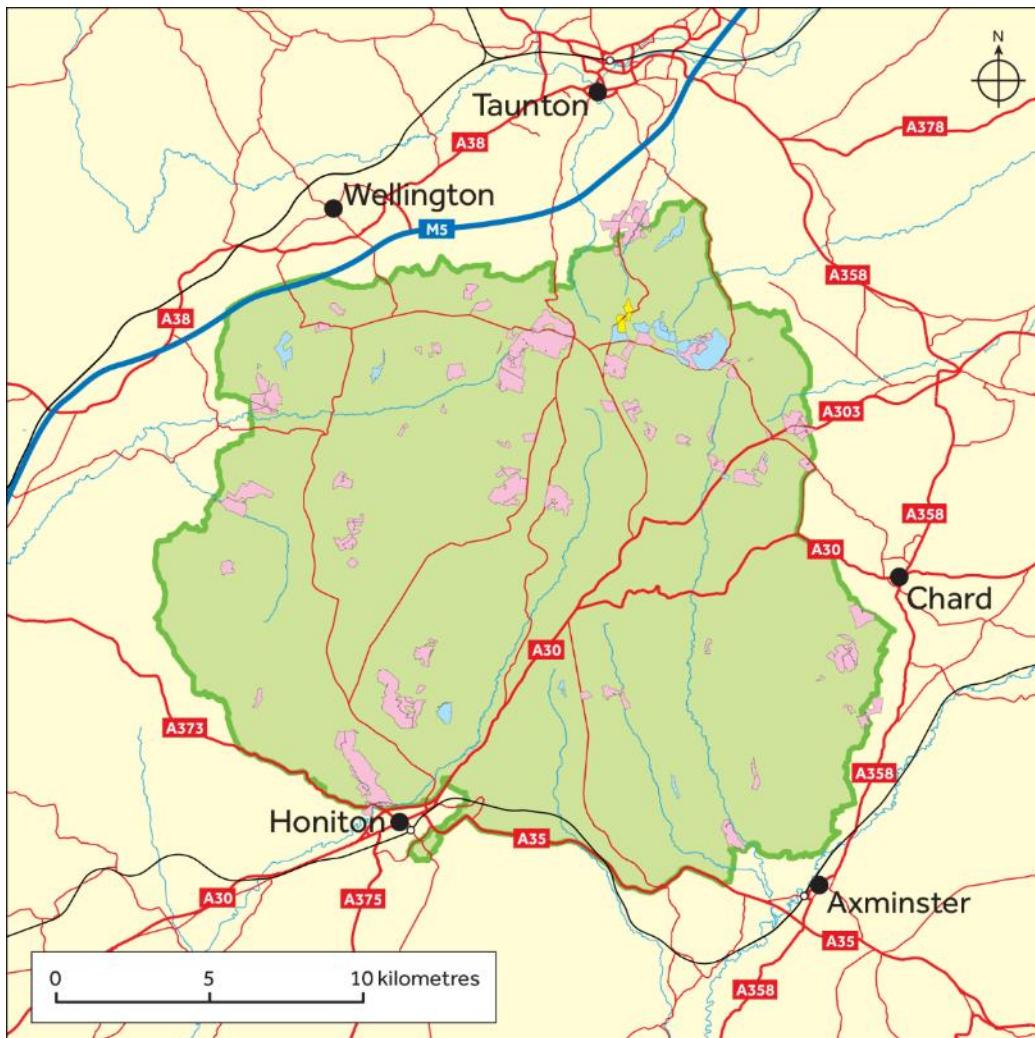


For most of the period, the number of people employed on farms in the National Landscape has remained consistent, at around 1,300 people, though there was a peak of 1,522 in 2016.

Source: Defra June Survey of Agriculture <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/structure-of-the-agricultural-industry-in-england-and-the-uk-at-june>

Land in agri-environment schemes

As of 2021, there are 8,246 ha entered into agri-environment schemes, covering 22.8% of the National Landscape. The map shows those areas in the Higher Level Stewardship schemes that cover 2,550 ha or 6.9% of the National Landscape.



Legend

- Entry Level plus Higher Level Stewardship
- Higher Level Stewardship
- Organic Entry Level plus Higher Level Stewardship

Running since 2005, the Environmental Stewardship (ES) scheme has two levels:

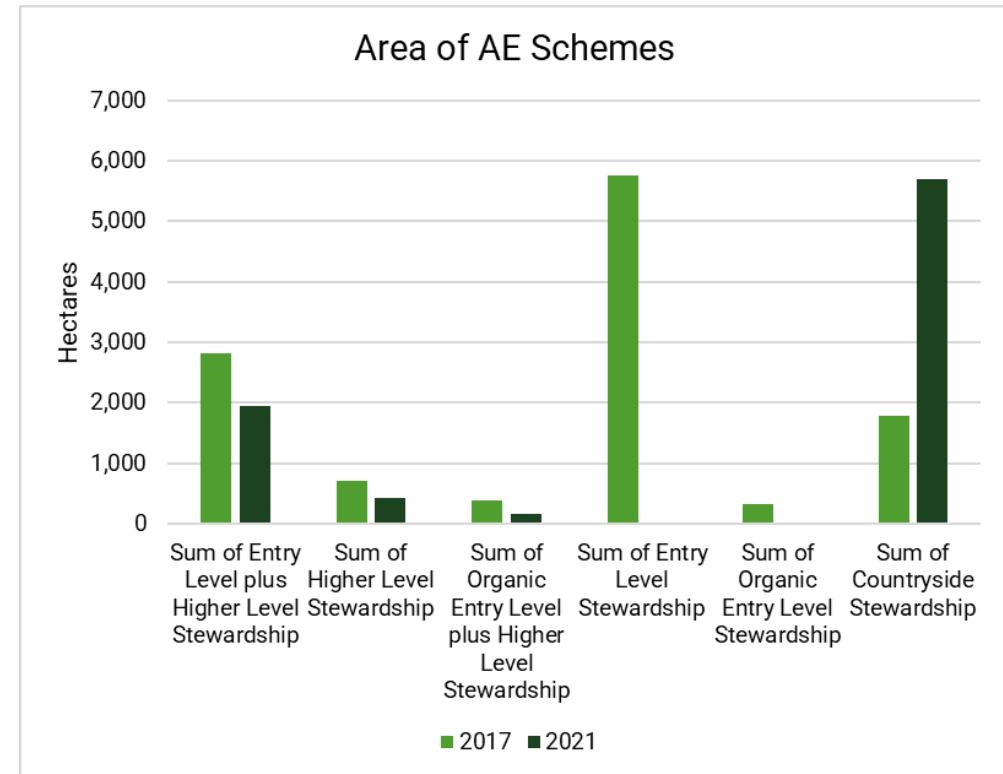
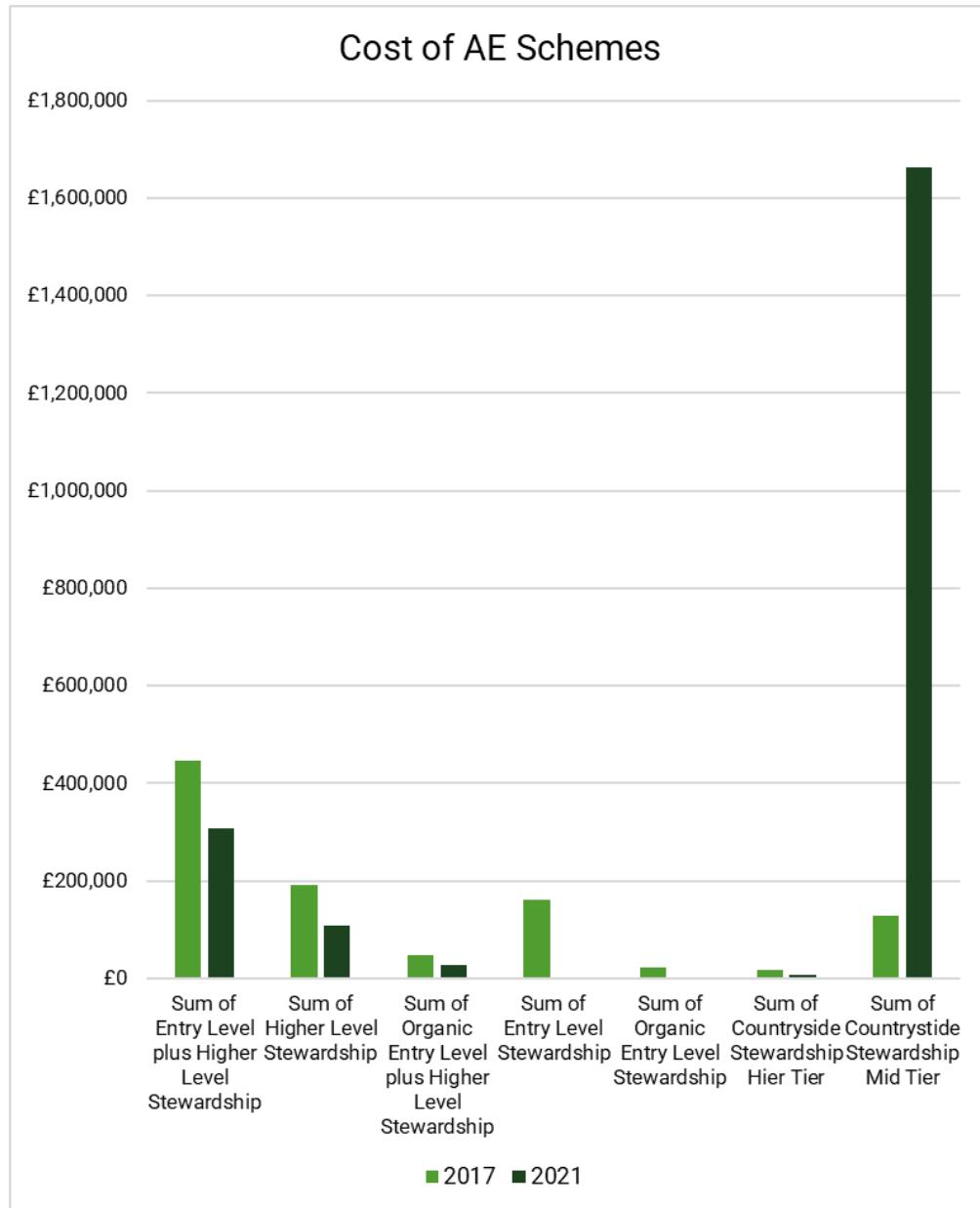
- Entry Level Stewardship; and
- Higher Level Stewardship.

Countryside Stewardship superseded the ES scheme in 2015 although many of the later ES agreements are continuing until 2024.

The total annual values of agri-environment agreements in the National Landscape are £2,113,434 (2021), with Countryside Stewardship Mid Tier payments accounting for around 4/5 of that. That total value is up from £1,017,856 (2017). The area has decreased from 11,793 ha in 2017 (27% of the National Landscape) to 8,246 ha in 2021 (22.8% of the National Landscape).

The cost and area of the various schemes are set out in the charts that follow.

Source: © Natural England copyright. Environmental Stewardship Scheme holdings agreement polygons (includes farm business and payment info) Attribution Statement: © Rural Payments Agency. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2023. <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/df5e865d-51a0-4d24-9dfc-6540b959c26c/environmental-stewardship-scheme-agreements-england/>



(note: in these charts AE used as shorthand for agri-environment)

People

Topics related to the secondary purposes of recognising the economic and social needs of the local community, promoting sustainable development and recreation:

- Settlements
- Access and Enjoyment
- Planning and Development
- Transport and Highways
- Rural Economy and Tourism
- Community and Culture



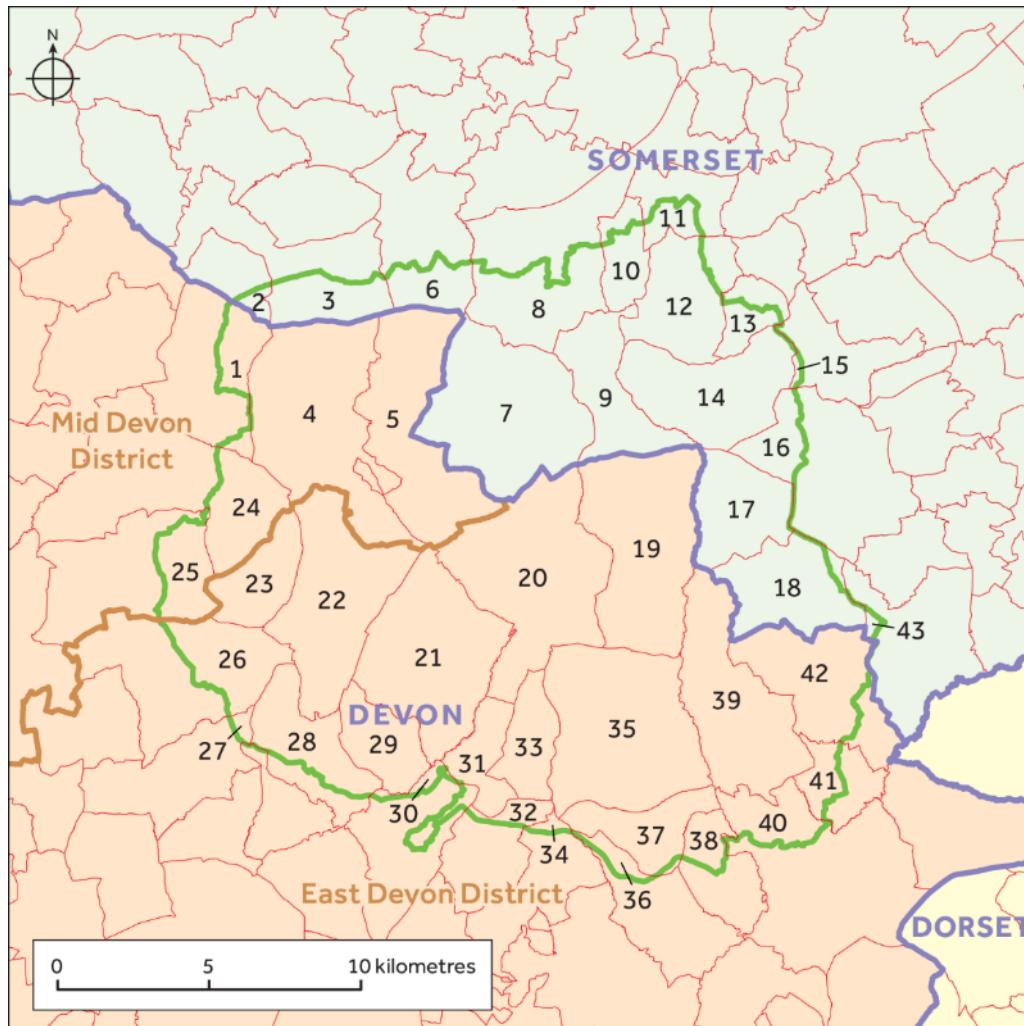
Settlements

- Administrative boundaries
- Comparative size of settlements



Administrative boundaries

The National Landscape lies within the areas of Devon County Council, Mid Devon and East Devon District Councils, and Somerset Council (unitary). There are 43 parish and town councils.



Civil Parishes / Town councils

1 Culmstock	29 Combe Raleigh
2 Sampford Arundel	30 Honiton
3 Wellington Without	31 Monkton
4 Hemyock	32 Offwell
5 Clayhidon	33 Cotleigh
6 West Buckland	34 Widworthy
7 Churchstanton	35 Stockland
8 Pitminster	36 Shute
9 Otterford	37 Dalwood
10 Corfe	38 Kilmington
11 Orchard Portman	39 Membury
12 Staple Fitzpaine	40 Axminster
13 Curland	41 All Saints
14 Buckland St Mary	42 Chardstock
15 Broadway	43 Tatworth and Forton
16 Combe St Nicholas	
17 Whitestaunton	
18 Wambrook	
19 Yarcombe	
20 Upottery	
21 Luppitt	
22 Dunkeswell	
23 Sheldon	
24 Uffculme	
25 Kentisbeare	
26 Broadhembury	
27 Payhembury	
28 Awliscombe	

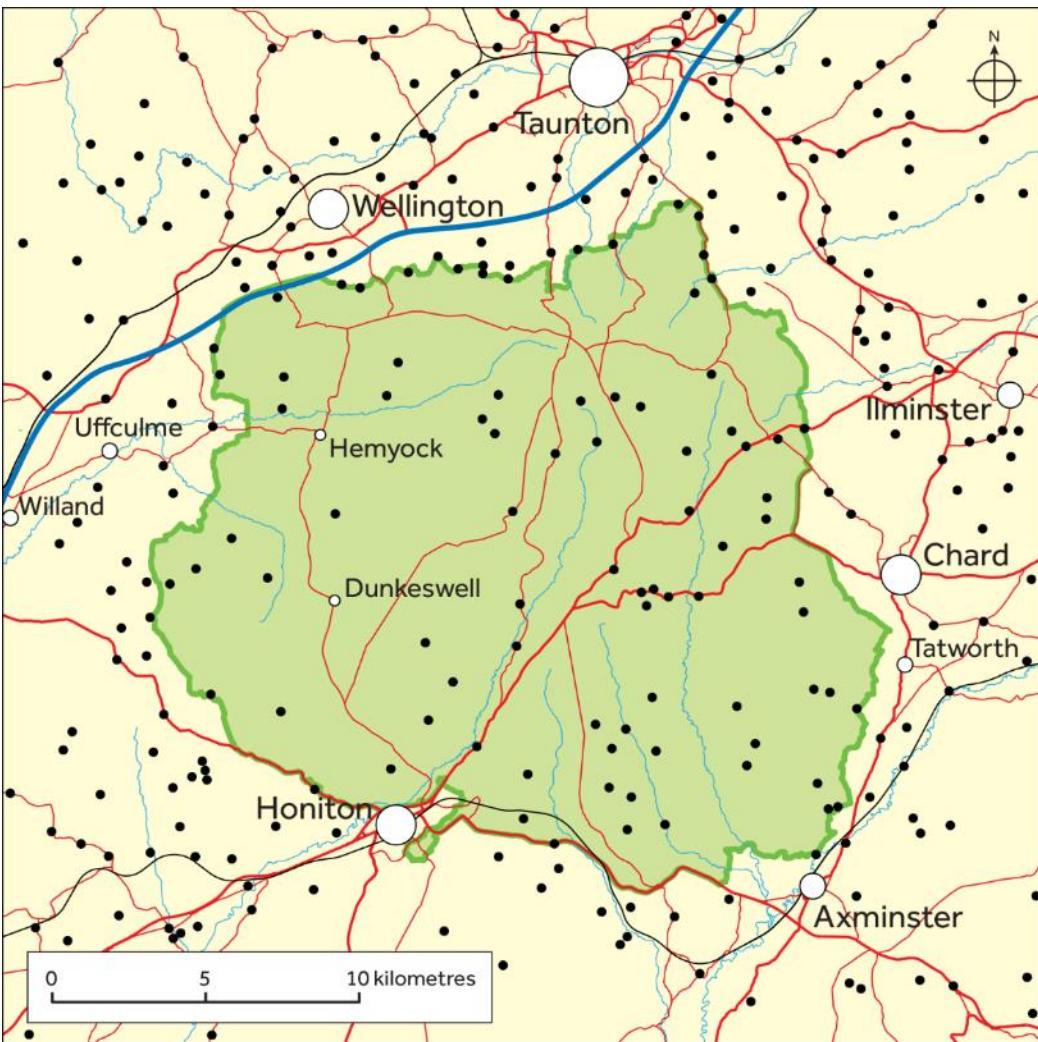
Legend

- County boundary
- District boundary
- Parish boundary
- Blackdown Hills AONB boundary

Source: GIS data obtained from www.data.gov.uk

Comparative size of settlements

There are no large settlements within the National Landscape. Only Dunkeswell and Hemyock have over 1,000 residents.



Legend	
Size of population	
●	50,000+
○	10,000–50,000
○	5,000–10,000
○	2,000–5,000
○	1,000–2,000
●	Under 1,000

Most settlements within the National Landscape have a population of less than 1,000 people. There are two exceptions. Dunkeswell and Hemyock each have approximately 1,500 residents.

Across the unitary and district council areas, 30% of the population lives in small communities; 100% of the National Landscape's residents are in such communities.

There are larger settlements close to the area. Chard has a population in the order of 14,000 residents, Honiton 12,000 residents, and Wellington 15,000 residents. Axminster and Ilminster are smaller, each with approximately 6,000 residents.

Taunton's population is around 70,000 residents.

All these settlements lie within the 30-minute travel area for the National Landscape. (Click here to see the [Travel areas to Upottery](#) map).

The estimated total resident population for the National Landscape is 14,130 people, equivalent to the population of Chard.

Source: Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership - OpenStreetMap data is available under the Open Database License

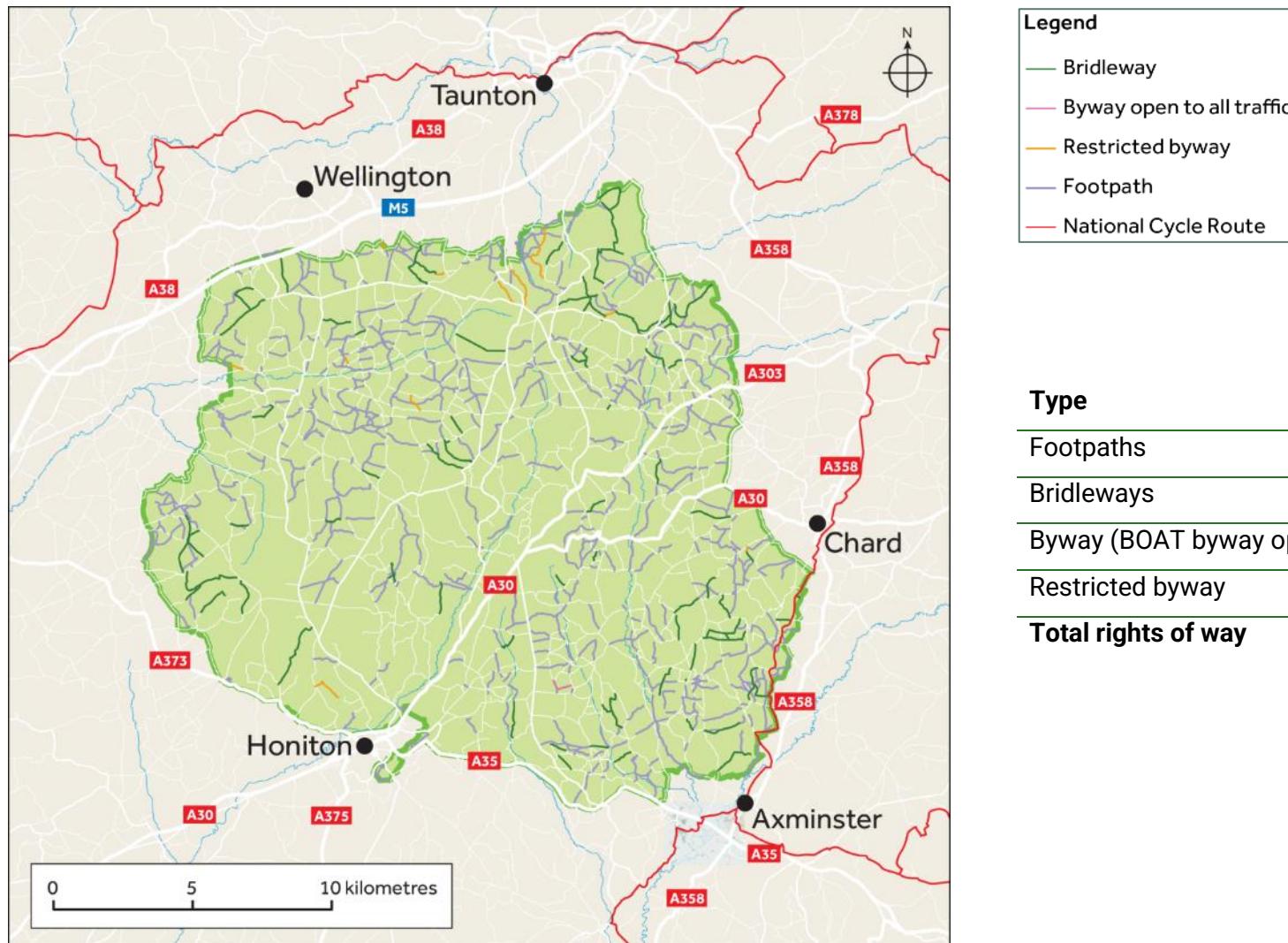
Access and Enjoyment

- Rights of Way
- Open Access land and Accessible green infrastructure



Rights of Way

There are 436.5 kilometres of rights of way recorded in the National Landscape; this is comparable to 2017.



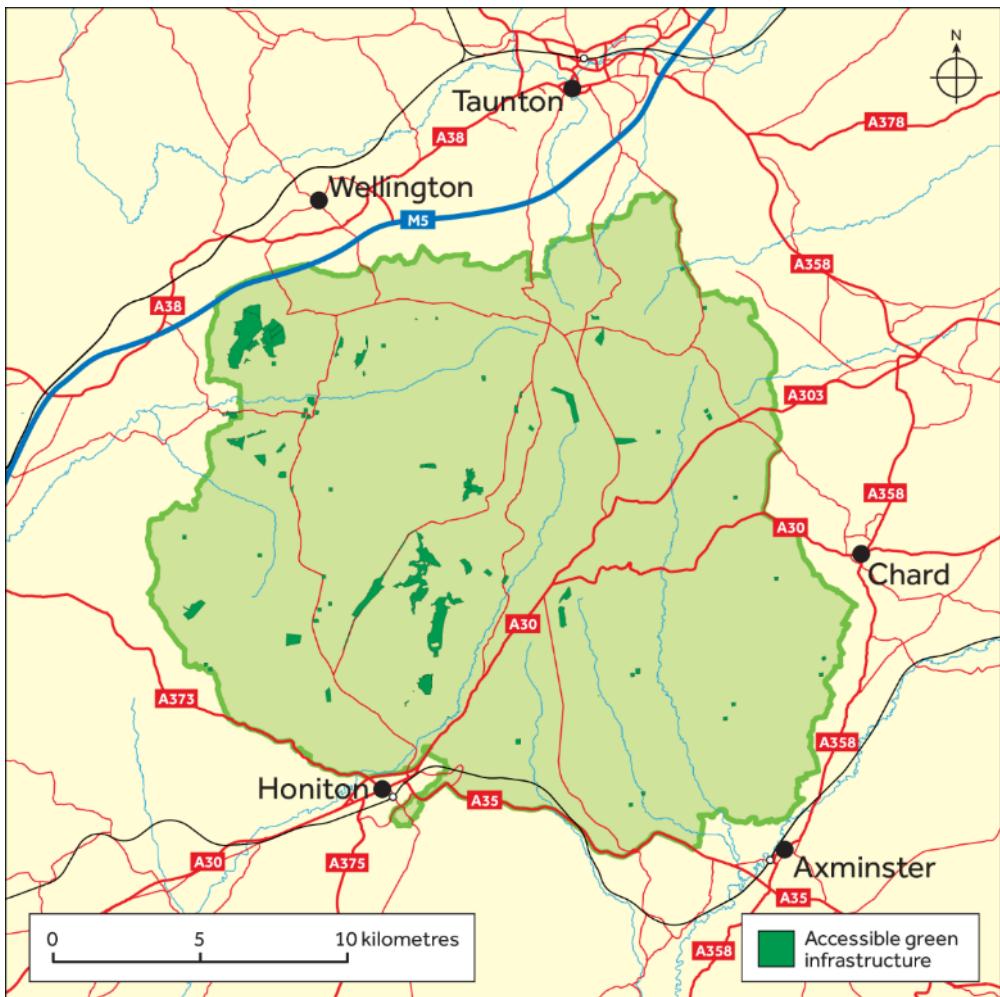
Legend	
Bridleway	green
Byway open to all traffic	pink
Restricted byway	orange
Footpath	purple
National Cycle Route	red

Type	Length (km)
Footpaths	340.6
Bridleways	86.1
Byway (BOAT byway open to all traffic)	0.9
Restricted byway	8.9
Total rights of way	436.5

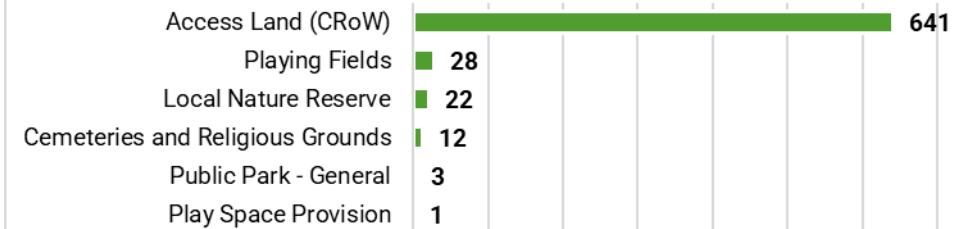
Source: Devon County Council / Somerset County Council, 2019. Each of the local authorities, with links provided through <https://www.rownmaps.com> and Magic Map <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

Open Access Land and Accessible green infrastructure

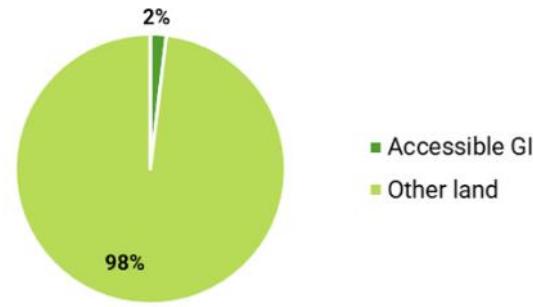
The map shows the location of 'Accessible Green Infrastructure', as defined by Natural England, covering 2% of the National Landscape.



Area (ha) of Accessible Green Infrastructure by type



Percentage of AONB recorded as Accessible Green Infrastructure



There are likely to be other 'accessible sites' within the National Landscape, not captured in this national data.

Source: Data extracted from the England Green Infrastructure Mapping Database GIS data. © Natural England 2021. Contains, or is derived from, information supplied by Ordnance Survey. © Crown copyright and database rights 2021. Ordnance Survey 100022021. The typology includes double counting of areas in the data. Some land will lie in more than one category. <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/UserGuide/Section01.aspx>

Planning and Development

- Development plans
- Housing
- Renewable energy



Development Plans

Local Plans

Planning Authority & status of plan	Date adopted	Spatial Strategy and allocations
East Devon		
Adopted Local Plan	East Devon Local Plan 2013 to 2031 Adopted – 28 January 2016	<p>Strategy 7 - Development in the Countryside</p> <p>The countryside is defined as all those parts of the plan area that are outside the Built-up Area Boundaries and outside of site specific allocations shown on the Proposals Map. Development in the countryside will only be permitted where it is in accordance with a specific Local or Neighbourhood Plan policy that explicitly permits such development and where it would not harm the distinctive landscape, amenity and environmental qualities within which it is located, including: 1. Landform and patterns of settlement. 2. Important natural and manmade features which contribute to the local landscape character, including topography, traditional field boundaries, areas of importance for nature conservation and rural buildings. 3. The adverse disruption of a view from a public place which forms part of the distinctive character of the area or otherwise causes significant visual intrusions.</p> <p><i>(entirety of AONB covered by this policy – no allocations)</i></p>
Emerging Local Plan	East Devon Local Plan 2020 to 2040 Preferred Options Reg. 18 Consultation Draft Plan Current draft - autumn 2022	<p>Spatial Strategy:</p> <p>Allow limited development to meet local needs at the Service Villages of Beer, Branscombe, Broadhembury, Chardstock, Clyst St Mary, Dunkeswell, East Budleigh, Exton, Feniton, Hawkchurch, Kilmington,, Payhembury, Plymtree, Sidbury,</p> <p>Settlements not listed above are considered to be 'open countryside' for the purposes of the Local Plan, where more restrictive planning policies apply.</p>
Mid Devon		
Adopted local plan	Local Plan Review 2013 - 2033 Adopted July 2020	<p>Rural areas Policy S13 Villages</p> <p>The following rural settlements will be designated as villages suitable for limited development: Bampton, Bow,, Culmstock, Halberton, Hemyock, Holcombe Rogus, Kentisbeare, Lapford, Thorverton, Uffculme, Willand and Yeoford. Development will be limited to proposals within their</p>

		defined settlement limits and to allocations for: a) Small scale housing, employment, tourism and leisure; b) Services and facilities serving the locality; and c) Other limited development which enhances community vitality or meets a local social or economic need. (No site allocations in Hemyock.)
Somerset		
Adopted local plan	Taunton Deane Borough Council Adopted Core Strategy 2011-2028	<p>Policy SP 1</p> <p>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT LOCATIONS</p> <p>Minor Rural Centres are identified as Cotford St Luke, Creech St Michael, Milverton, North Curry and Churchinford. New housing development at these locations will include an appropriate balance of market and affordable housing together with some live-work units and will be small scale allocations, sites within the development boundary (primarily on previously developed land) and sites fulfilling affordable housing exceptions criteria outside of development boundaries.</p> <p>For these settlements a total allocation of at least 250 new net additional dwellings will be made through the Site Allocations and Development Management DPD.</p> <p>The villages of Ashbrittle, Ash Priors, Bishopswood, Blagdon Hill, Bradford-on-Tone,, Combe Florey, Corfe, Fitzhead, Halse,, Oake, Pitminster, Ruishton, Sampford Arundel,, West Buckland and West Monkton will retain settlement boundaries, as shown on the Proposals Map insets, and have no further allocations made through the Site Allocations and Development Management DPD, but some scope for small scale proposals within settlement limits.</p> <p>Outside of the settlements identified above, proposals will be treated as being within Open Countryside.</p>
	Taunton Deane Adopted Site Allocations and Development Management Plan December 2016	<p>Policy MIN8: Ford House Farm, Churchinford Land at Ford House Farm, Churchinford, as indicated on the Policies Map, is allocated for around 20 dwellings. Justification:</p> <p>This site already benefits from outline planning consent for 20 dwellings. The site will deliver 25% affordable housing and associated planning obligations.</p>
	South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) Adopted March 2015	<p>POLICY SS2: DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL SETTLEMENTS</p> <p>Development in Rural Settlements (not Market Towns or Rural Centres) will be strictly controlled and limited to that which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides employment opportunities appropriate to the scale of the settlement; and/or • Creates or enhances community facilities and services to serve the settlement; • and/or • Meets identified housing need, particularly for affordable housing.

	<p>Development will be permitted where it is commensurate with the scale and character of the settlement, provides for one or more of the types of development above, and increases the sustainability of a settlement in general.</p> <p>Proposals should be consistent with relevant community led plans, and should generally have the support of the local community following robust engagement and consultation.</p> <p>Proposals for housing development should only be permitted in Rural Settlements that have access to two or more key services listed at Paragraph 5.41(para 5.41 lists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local convenience shop; • post office; • pub; • children's play area/sports pitch; • village hall/community centre; • health centre; • faith facility; and • primary school. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(Buckland St Mary meets this criteria)</i></p>
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Made Neighbourhood Plans

Parish	Date approved
Chardstock	2017
Dalwood	2022
Dunkeswell	2017
Kilmington	2022
Luppitt	2023
Membury	2020
Stockland	2017
Yarcombe	2017

Housing

Major applications for residential development (10+) and applications for affordable housing within the AONB since 2019

Planning application reference	Site	Details	Status
19/00038/MOUT	Land and Buildings at Culmbridge Farm, Culmbridge Road, Hemyock	Outline for a mixed use development of approximately 40 dwellings, 600 sq. m. of B1 employment space, public open space, access, and associated works, following demolition of existing poultry sheds	Withdrawn
20/01698/MARM	Land at Culmstock Road Hemyock	Reserved Matters for the erection of up to 40 dwellings (including affordable housing), public open space and associated infrastructure following Outline approval	Approved
18/00423/MFUL	Land at Former St Ivel Station Hemyock	Erection of 11 dwellings with garages	Permitted 2021
20/2241/FUL	Land South Of The Flintlock Inn Marsh Honiton	Erection of 6 affordable dwellings, creation of a means of access to a highway, parking and landscaping	Approved subject to S106 agreement (2023)

Source: Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership

See individual local authority websites for details of development plans and planning applications.

Renewable energy

Solar photovoltaics is the dominant source of current electricity generation capacity in the National Landscape; a battery plant is under construction.



There are three renewable energy generation sites operating within the National Landscape, and one awaiting construction.

Solar Photovoltaics

1. Anesco Culmhead Solar Farm 7.5MW since 2014
2. Lumicity Dunkeswell Airfield 2MW since 2015
3. Anesco Trickey Warren 4.8MW since 2015

Battery- Stand-alone Storage

- Conrad (Tiddlywink) Ltd., Dunkeswell Airfield - Awaiting Construction for 6.5MW

In addition, there is a 4.1MW Solar Photovoltaics array in the immediate setting of the National Landscape associated with Wambrook Farm, near Chard.

The Renewable Energy Planning Database tracks the progress of UK renewable electricity projects over 150 kW through the planning system. It provides as accurate and comprehensive a snapshot as possible of projects, and of progress across the technology sectors through planning, construction, operation and decommissioning.

Note: the minimum threshold for installed capacity was 1MW until 2021, at which point it was lowered to 150kW. This means that projects below 1MW that were going through planning system before 2021 may not be represented in the Renewable Energy Planning Database.

Source: <https://www.mygridgb.co.uk/map/> See also Department for Energy Security & Net Zero <https://data.barbour-abi.com/smart-map/repd/desnz/?type=repd>

Transport and Highways

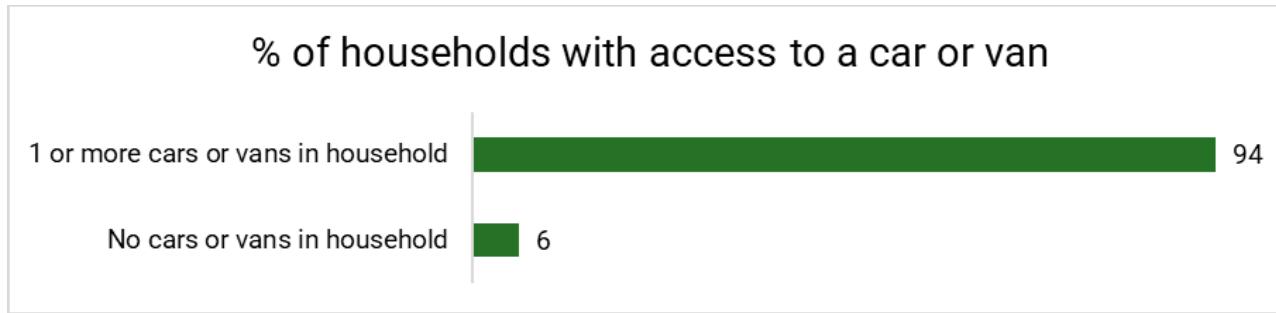
- Access to a car or van
- Road traffic counts
- Access to public transport
- Travel areas to Upottery



Access to a car or van

According to the Census in both 2011 and 2021, 94% of the resident population own or have access to at least one car or van.

This is a higher percentage than the overall figures for the component local authority districts, where the percentage of those without access to a vehicle is 12-16%.

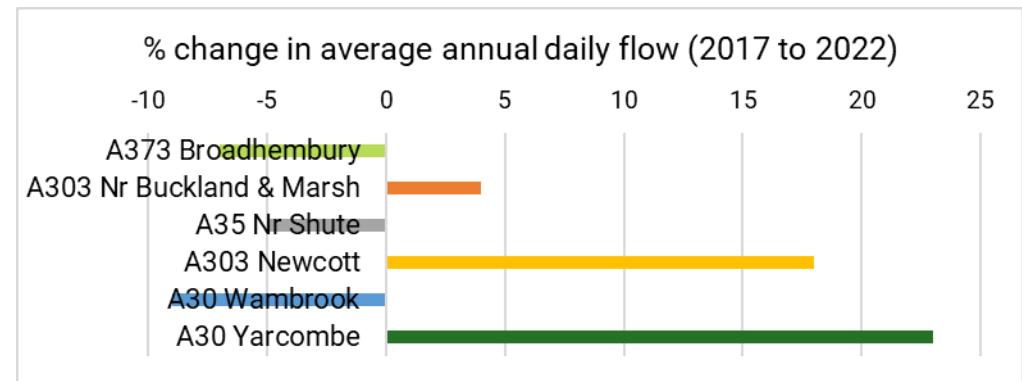
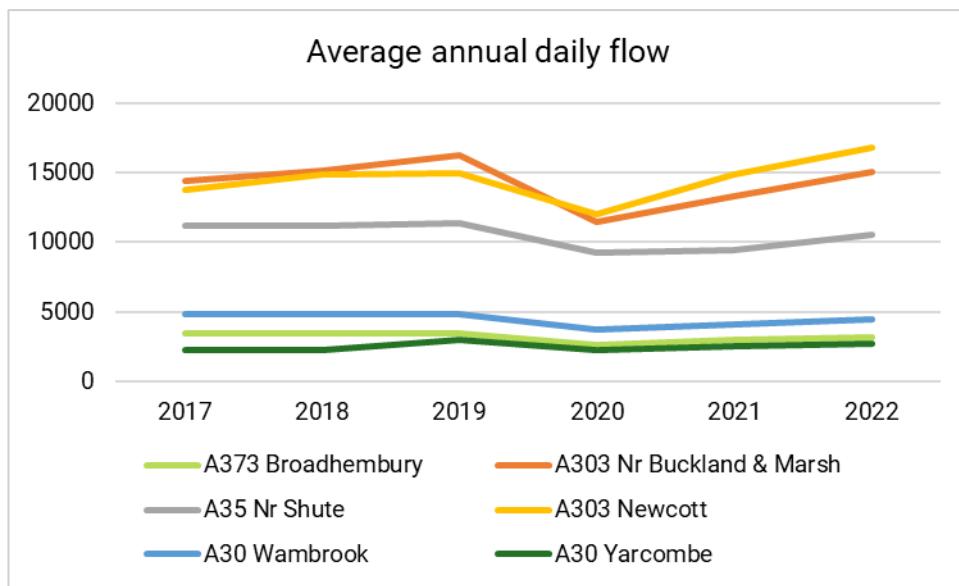


Source: ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 25 October 2023] Tables KS404EW & PP010

Road traffic counts

Combined daily traffic flows for 2017-22 show the busiest road is the A303 with an average of 14,404 vehicles, the next busiest is the A35 (10,497 vehicles), followed by the A30 county-road section (3,485 vehicles). The quietest road is the A373 (3,198 vehicles).

The A30 between Honiton and the A303 is not included in these figures because there are not monitoring figures for the same period. However, figures for 2019-22 show that to be the busiest road in the National Landscape with an average of 15,403 vehicles.



There are several traffic count monitoring points on main roads within the National Landscape, which are reported on by the Department for Transport. The effects of Covid-19 show with a dip for the 2020 figures. The A30 recorded both the biggest increase and the biggest drop in flow between 2017 - 2022 (at Yarcombe +23% / at Wimbrook -9%). The monitoring points at Buckland St Mary and Marsh, on the A303, recorded identical flow numbers.

Survey monitoring point references

Road	Location	DfT Site N°	Road	Location	DfT Site N°
A373	Broadhembury	47039	A303	Newcott	6878
A303	Nr Buckland	26897	A30	Wimbrook	56281
A303	Nr Marsh	73394	A30	Yarcombe	48236
A35	Nr Shute	99085			

Source: Dept for Transport Road traffic statistics <https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/#/6/55.254/-6.053/basemap-regions-countpoints>

Access to public transport

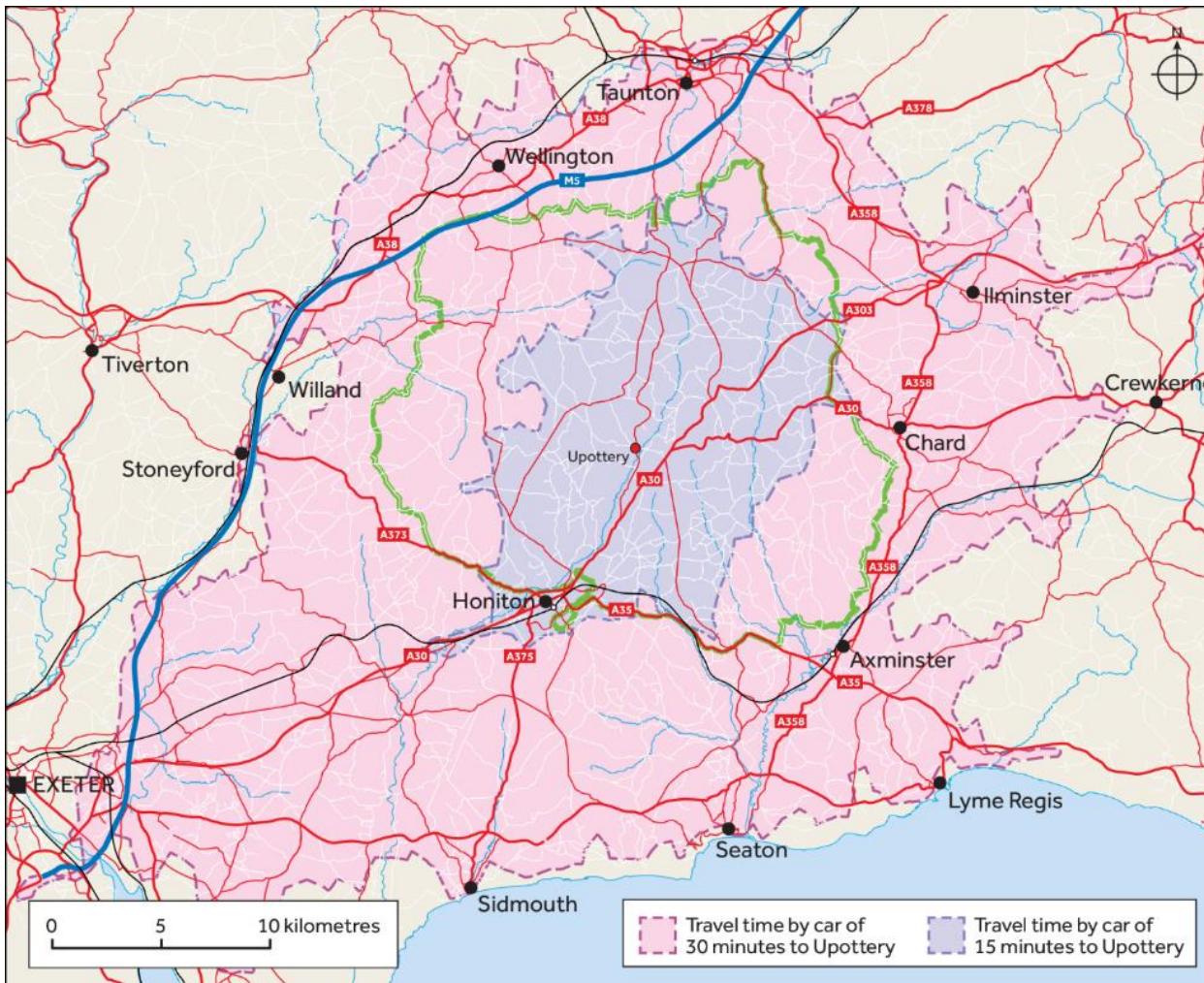
Dartline, First and Stagecoach buses provide a good level of service at least 5 days a week. Hatch Green and Redwoods are much more limited at once or twice a week, except for the 98 which provides 1 journey a day for college/commuting. Sunday bus services are extremely limited.



Source <http://www.busatlas.uk/> checked against the latest timetables October 2023 <https://bustimes.org/> (Routes correct at time of search but services change – check the websites for current information)

Travel areas to Upottery

The 15 and 30-minute travel time by car to Upottery (chosen as it is close to the centre of the National Landscape); the average trip-time for a day trip is 33 minutes.



The Department for Transport states that the basic unit of travel in the National Travel Survey is a trip, defined as a one-way course of travel with a single main purpose. Outward and return halves of a return journey are two separate trips.

Nationally, people made 862 trips on average in 2022, or 17 trips a week. This includes 24 minutes per cycling trip, 21 minutes per car driver trip and 18 minutes per walking trip.

In 2022, the average trip length for a day trip in England was **12.1 miles** (12.8 in 2017 but only 10.4 in 2021); and the average trip time for a day trip was **33 minutes** (33 mins in 2017, 31 mins in 2021).

The map shows the approximate boundary of the 15-minute and 30-minute car journey areas.

(Click here to see the [Comparative size of settlements map](#))

National Travel Survey 2022 - Published 30 August 2023

The National Travel Survey is a household survey of personal travel by residents of England travelling within Great Britain, from data collected via interviews and a seven-day travel diary, which enables analysis of patterns and trends

Travel Time areas created using the Open Route Service plugin on QGIS based on Open Street Map data. Day trip intelligence from National Travel Survey Table NTS0403 , Department for Transport 2022 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2022/national-travel-survey-2022-introduction-and-main-findings>

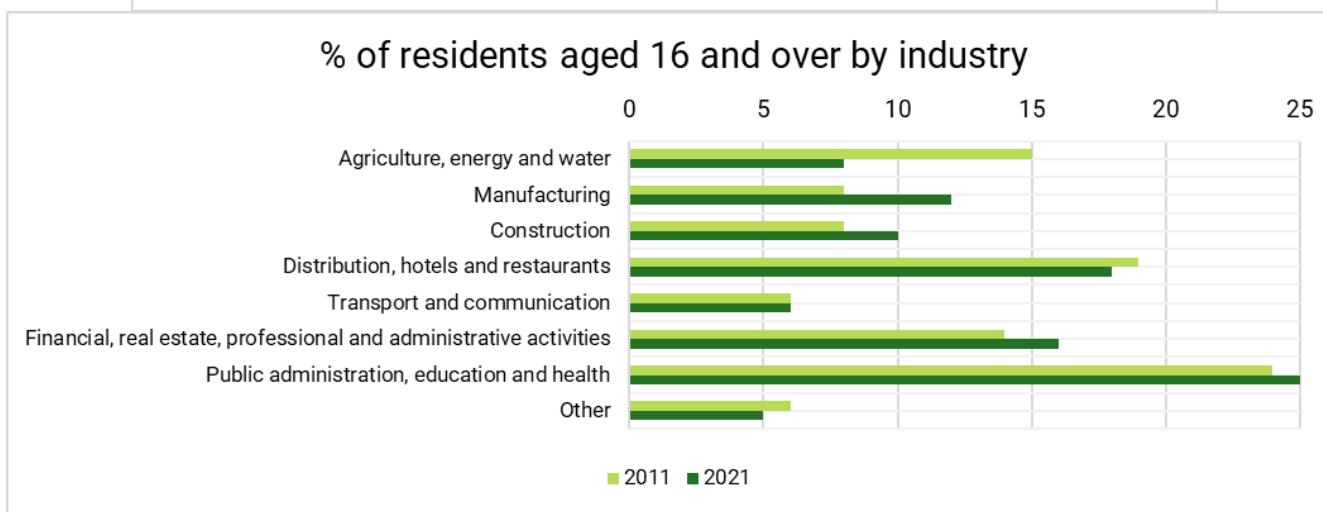
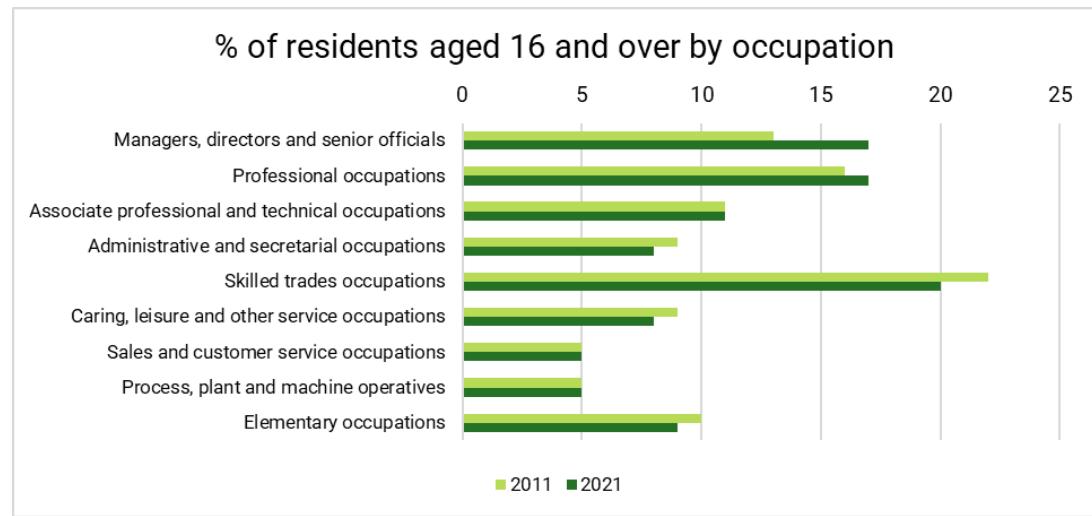
Rural Economy and Tourism

- Employment profiles of resident population



Employment profiles of resident population

Between 2011 & 2021: there has been a 12% swing from those residents seeking work to those not seeking work; a 9% decline in land, distribution and catering industries; a 9% rise in manufacturing, construction professional and public sector industries; a 5% growth in managerial and professional occupations; a 5% decline in the skilled trades, administrative and caring/leisure occupations.



Employment status

	2011	2021
Employed	67%	56%
Seeking work	3%	2%
Not seeking work	30%	42%

Transport & communication has remained the same between 2011-2021

Employment in the land-based industries has declined while manufacturing, construction and finance and the public sector has increased.

Decline since 2011:

- 7% in land based employment
- 1% in distribution, hotel & restaurants
- 1 other

Increase since 2011:

- +6% in manufacturing & construction
- +3% in professional & public sector

Between 2011 and 2021, there has been a 5% growth in managerial and professional jobs set against a 5% decline in the skilled trades, administrative and caring/leisure occupations. All other sectors remain the same.

Source: ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 25 October 2023] Tables 2011: KS608EW to KS610, EWKS605EW to KS607, EWKS601EW to KS603EW 2021: PP004, PP009 & PP011

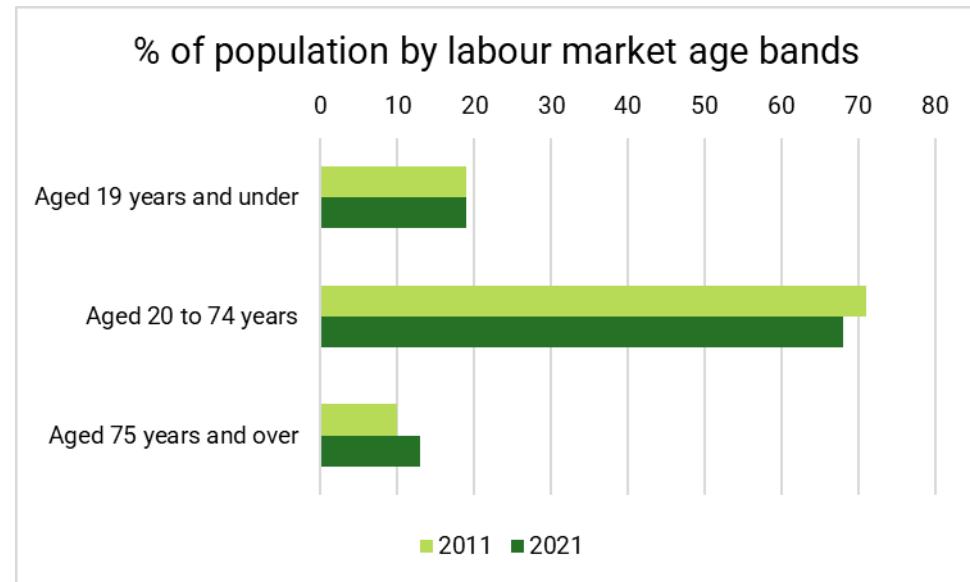
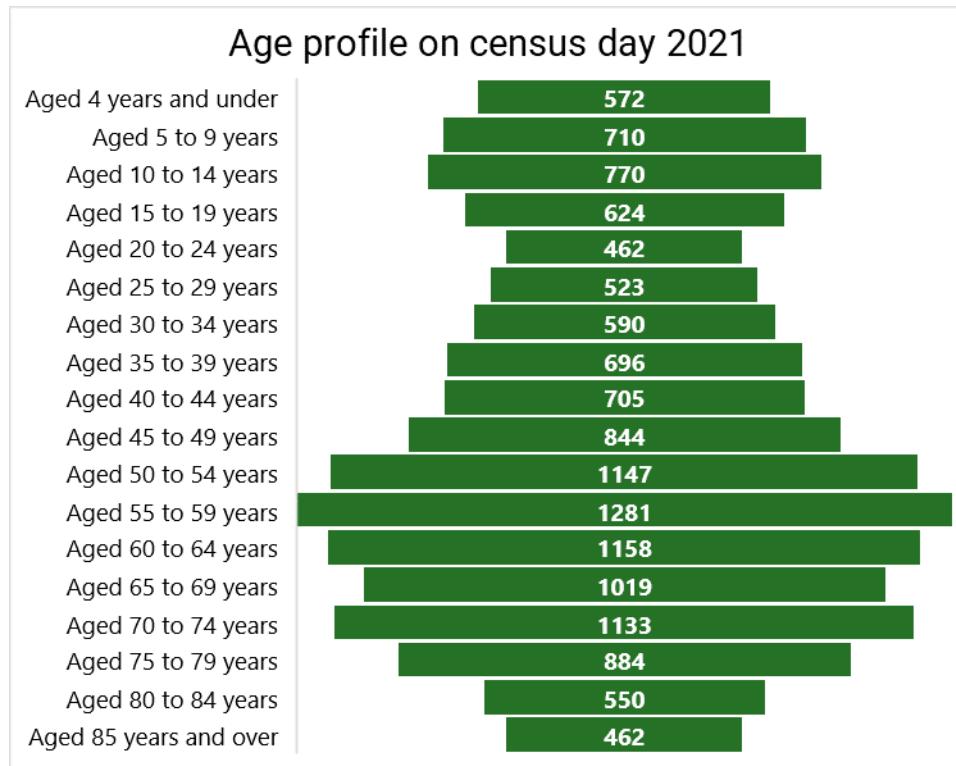
Community and Culture

- Population numbers and age profile
- Health of resident population
- Nearby populations with significant levels of deprivation



Population numbers and age profile

The estimated total population on Census day 2021 for the National Landscape was **14,130**.



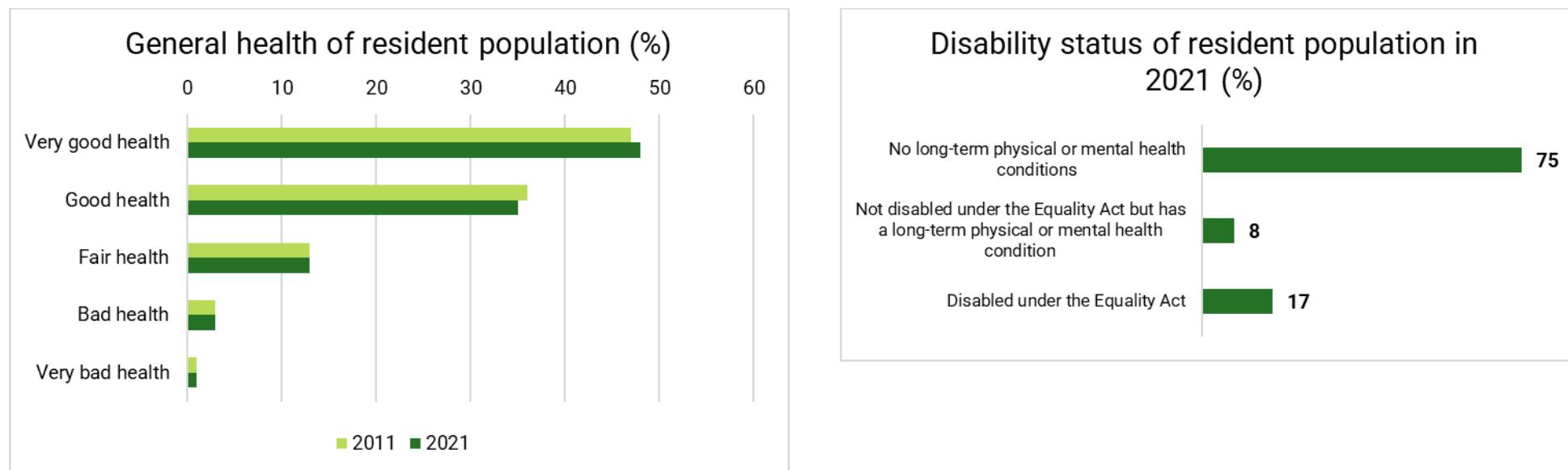
Population numbers have remained stable since 2011 but with a small increase in the proportion of residents over the age of 75. The numbers of children and teenagers has remained the same. Generally, there is a greater number of older people than young. Most of the population is over 50 years of age.

Source: Population estimates by output areas, electoral, health and other geographies, Office for National Statistics © Crown Copyright 2022. These estimates are based on National Landscape boundaries as of 2022. Output area population estimates have been allocated to National Landscapes on a best fit basis. ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 29 October 2023] Table KS102EW

Health of resident population

In 2021, 48% of the resident population enjoy very good health; only 1% suffer very bad health. There is no material difference with the 2011 data.

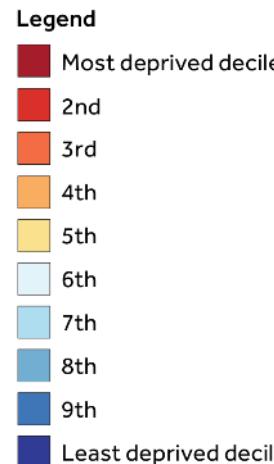
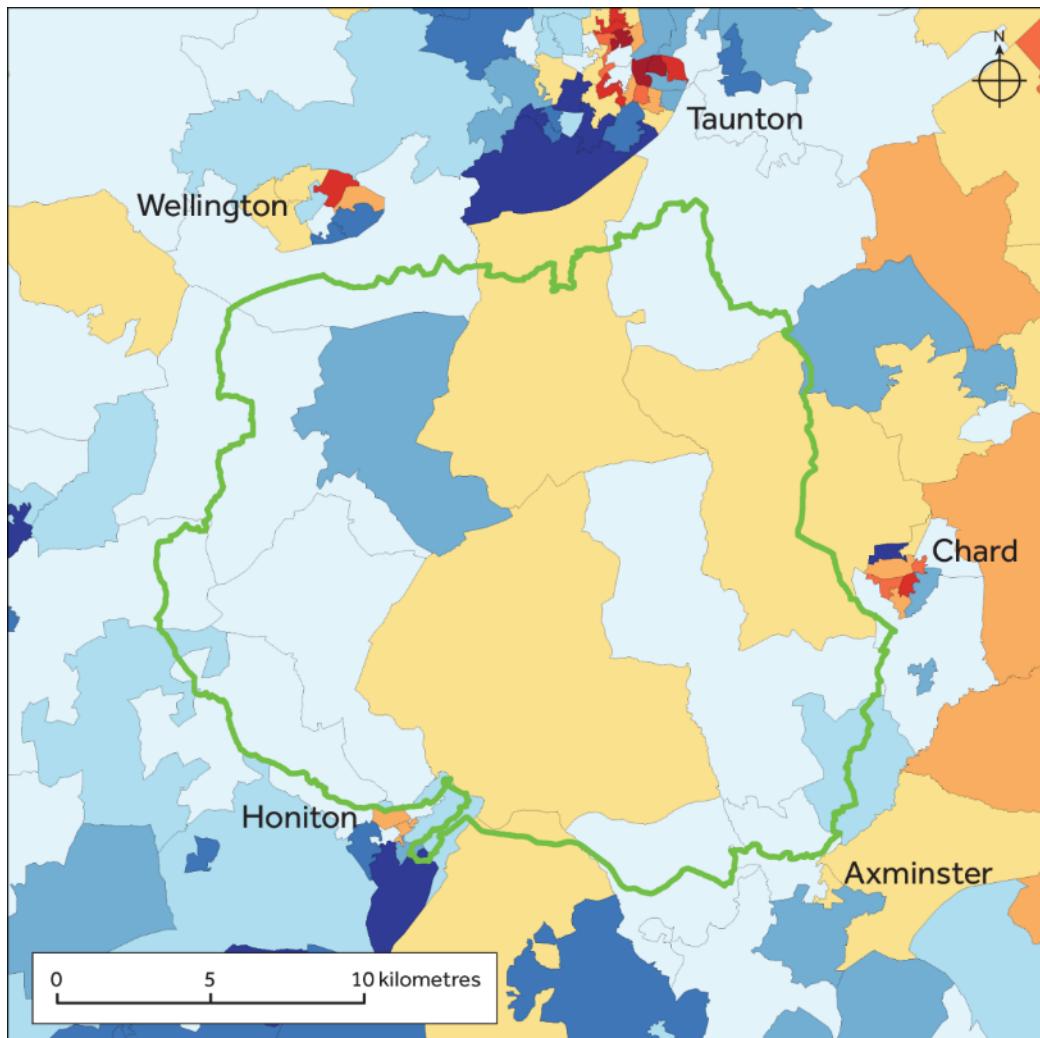
Disability data was not recorded in 2011 but in 2021, 75% of the resident population suffered no long-term health conditions. Of the 25% who did have long-term health condition, 17% considered themselves as disabled under the Equality Act.



Source: ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 25 October 2023] Tables 2011: KS301EW, 2021: PP003 & PP006

Nearby populations with significant levels of deprivation

Communities within the National Landscape are not particularly deprived, they lie in the middle of the national average. There are pockets of deprivation in Chard, Taunton and Wellington.



The Indices of Deprivation provide a set of relative measures of deprivation for small areas (Lower-layer Super Output Areas) across England, based on seven different fields of deprivation:

- Income Deprivation;
- Employment Deprivation;
- Education;
- Skills and Training Deprivation;
- Health Deprivation and Disability;
- Crime;
- Barriers to Housing and Services; and
- Living Environment Deprivation.

Source: <https://data.cdrc.ac.uk/dataset/index-multiple-deprivation-imd>

Glossary

Access land

Any land that is shown as open country on a map issued by Natural England for the purposes of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; is shown on such a map as registered common land; is registered common land in any area outside Inner London for which no such map relating to registered common land has been issued; is situated more than 600 metres above sea level in any area for which no such map relating to open country has been issued; or is dedicated as access land under the Act.

Accessible Natural Environment

Natural England define it as all Green Infrastructure (GI) (see below) assets identified as accessible green spaces for the development of the England GI Mapping database. It includes places that are available for the public to use free of charge and without time restrictions and includes:

- a) Play space provision
- b) Millennium or Doorstep Green
- c) Cemeteries and religious grounds
- d) Playing fields
- e) Local Nature Reserve
- f) Public park – general
- g) Country Park
- h) Access Land

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

(Also known as a National Landscape) An area of landscape that is of such outstanding natural beauty that it merits designation under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949. Together, AONBs represent 18% of the finest countryside in England and Wales. The

designation helps to protect their special character, for example, through enhanced planning regulations.

Agri-environment schemes

Provided by Defra, these schemes offer payment to farmers and land managers who give an undertaking, or enter into an agreement, to manage their land for biodiversity, landscape, the historic environment, public access or amenity objectives.

Biodiversity

The term given to the variety of life and the natural processes of which living things are a part. The term includes living organisms, the genetic differences between them and the communities in which they occur.

Climate change

Change in global climate patterns apparent from the mid- to late 20th century onwards, attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced using fossil fuels.

Common land

Areas where people who do not own the land have rights to use it for livestock grazing or other purposes. See also registered common land.

Conservation Area

Designated by the local planning authority as an area which they consider has special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which they consider is desirable to preserve or enhance.

Distinctive Characteristics

The unique components that give an area its sense of place.

Earth heritage

The rocks, soils and landforms that reveal our geological history, determine the diverse habitats in which wildlife can thrive and create the rich landscapes that we all enjoy.

Ecosystem

Natural unit consisting of all plants, animals and micro-organisms (biotic factors) in an area functioning together with all the non-living physical (abiotic) factors of the environment.

Ecosystem services

Ecosystem services (sometimes called environmental services) are the essential services and benefits that are derived from a fully functioning natural environment, including the management of basic resources such as water, and the sequestration of carbon.

Environmental capital

Environmental capital is the environmental assets, such as soils, from which beneficial services flow supplying resources to the economy. Four basic categories of environmental capital are generally recognised: air, water (fresh, groundwater and marine), land (including soil, space and landscape) and habitats (including the ecosystems, flora and fauna which they both comprise and support).

Environmental services

See ecosystem services.

Geodiversity

The term geodiversity incorporates the variety of rocks, minerals and landforms, and the processes that have formed them through geological time. The breadth of geodiversity gives insight to past climates, earlier environments and life on earth.

Green infrastructure

Strategically planned and delivered network comprising the broadest range of high-quality green spaces and other environmental features. It should be designed and managed as a multi-functional resource capable of delivering those ecological services and quality-of-life benefits required by the communities it serves and needed to underpin sustainability.

Heritage Asset

A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

Key Features

The landmarks, locations or landscape features that are regionally distinctive.

Landscape

An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)

The LCA is a method for identifying, understanding and expressing the different patterns and elements of the landscape. These elements include the woodlands, hedgerows, building styles and historic artefacts that give a place a distinctive character. It seeks to identify the distinct and recognisable patterns of physical, cultural and perceptual elements in the landscape that make one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.

Listed building

Listed buildings are structures considered to be of high architectural or historic interest that are placed on a statutory list to help protect their important features. The list is compiled by the secretary of state for Culture, Media and sport on advice from Historic England.

Local Geological Sites

Previously known as Regionally Important Geological Sites, sites that are selected by voluntary geo-conservation groups, according to nationally agreed criteria.

Local Wildlife Sites

There are several different terms in use to describe Local Wildlife Sites, including Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Sites of Nature

Conservation Importance and County Wildlife Sites. National advice is to use the term, Local Wildlife Sites. Local Wildlife Sites are usually selected within a local authority area through Local Nature Partnerships. They support both locally and nationally threatened wildlife, and many sites will contain English priority habitats and species.

Monitoring environmental outcomes in protected landscapes (MEOPL)

A national framework for monitoring environmental outcomes in National Parks and National Landscapes. Natural England leads in this work, in close partnership with Defra, the English National Park Authorities Association, Historic England and the National Landscapes Association.

National Heritage List

The National Heritage List for England is the only official and up to date database of all nationally designated heritage assets including: Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments, Protected Wreck Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields, World Heritage Sites, applications for Certificates of Immunity, current Building Preservation Notices.

National Landscapes

The new name for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (see Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

Natural Capital

Those elements of the natural environment that provide valuable goods and services to people, such as the stock of forests, water, land, minerals and oceans.

Natural Character Areas (NCAs)

Areas defined at the national level, which describe the geographical, ecological and historical variations in landscape character that make one area different from another. Their boundaries follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision-making framework for the natural environment.

Natural Character Area (NCA) profiles

Total of 159 distinct profiles produced by Natural England to make environmental evidence and information easily available to a wider audience.

National Cycle Network (NCN)

The National Cycle Network is a UK-wide network of signed paths and routes for walking, wheeling, cycling and exploring outdoors. Ideally, the route, will be traffic-free. If it is not, it should either be on a quiet-way section of road or be fully separated from the adjacent carriageway.

Nature recovery

Nature recovery is about building resilient landscapes through natural restoration and creation of habitats to provide the greatest opportunity for wildlife to flourish and to promote the wider economic and social benefits that healthy habitats offer. It looks at where healthy wildlife habitats already exist and how they can be improved, expanded, and connected.

Nature Recovery Network (NRN)

A national ecological network of wildlife-rich places. Central to the government's goal of improving nature, it benefits wildlife and people by increasing, improving and joining-up these places across England.

Protected landscape area

Defined by the IUCN as a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.

Renewable energy

Natural energy that can be used repeatedly and will not run out. Sources of renewable energy include wind, water and solar power.

Scheduled Monument

A Scheduled Monument is defined in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and the National Heritage Act 1983 as a protected archaeological site or historic building of national importance. Nationally, they range from prehistoric standing stones and burial mounds

to more recent structures such as collieries and wartime pillboxes. The scheduling of a monument means that permission is required for works affecting that monument.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

SSSIs are the best examples of our natural heritage of wildlife habitats, geological features and landforms. An SSSI is an area that has been notified as being of special interest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Special Characteristics

The unique components that give the area its sense of place.

Special Features

The physical elements in the landscape that are regionally distinctive.

Special Qualities

The combination of distinctive characteristics and key features that make an area important and valued (see Distinctive Characteristics and Key Features).

Strategic Nature Areas (SNAs)

SNAs are areas of Devon's countryside that contain higher than average concentrations of existing wildlife habitats such as native woodlands, flower-rich grasslands, bogs and heathland (many of these habitats will have an international, national or local designation).

Sustainable development

Sustainable development means meeting four objectives at the same time: social progress that meets the needs of everyone; effective protection of the environment; prudent use of natural resources; and maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

State of the National Landscape Report 2023

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