

Isles of Scilly AONB Management Plan Review

Consultation Draft: Strategic Plan

June 2009

ISLES of SCILLY



Area of
Outstanding
Natural Beauty

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The Special Qualities of the Isles of Scilly AONB

At 16km² the Isles of Scilly are the smallest AONB designation in the UK and possess a diversity of scenery that belies their small scale. Panoramas of sea and sky are punctuated by lenses of low-lying land. The archipelago combines rugged granite cliffs and headlands, sparkling sandy bays, hidden coves, shifting dunes and saline lagoons. Human occupation since later prehistory has led to the development of lowland heath, enclosed pasture, hedged bulb strips, scattered rural settlement punctuated by tiny townscapes, and small harbours and quays.

The underlying geology of Scilly is granite. Carved by wind, rain and tide, granite forms striking outcrops and dominates the natural landscape. Granite has also been used to build field boundaries and has strongly influenced the character of the Islands' historic architecture.

Distinctive coastlines and an exceptional seascape

The outer coasts of the island group are wild and untamed with rock formations exposed to the full force of the Atlantic. By contrast the shoreline fronting the shallow lagoon that was once a low-lying plain linking St Mary's, Samson, Bryher, Tresco and St Martin's is sheltered and features broad, gently shelving beaches. The submerged remains of prehistoric hut circles and field boundaries are evidence that the Islands were once a much larger landmass which in Scilly's dynamic coastal environment has changed significantly since prehistoric times.

The sea surrounding Scilly is remarkably clear with translucent azure and turquoise shallows and darker blue and green hues in deep offshore waters. The sea always dominates life, whether giving the Islands a sub-tropical feel on calm summer days or lashing the land in the full force of Atlantic winter storms.

Significant Wildlife Resources

- 26 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) cover 34.7% of the Islands' landmass
- the Islands' seabirds and their terrestrial habitats are designated as a Ramsar site of global importance and a Special Protection Area of European importance
- the seas around Scilly to a depth of 50 metres are designated as a Marine Special Area of Conservation and a Voluntary Marine Park
- the entire coastline is designated as a Heritage Coast
- rare arable weeds survive in the Islands' small bulb-strips where modern farming techniques have limited impact.
- Scilly is an important staging post for migrating birds and is often the first landfall for rare species blown off course

Exceptional heritage

- Scilly has the UK's greatest density of Scheduled Monuments¹
- some Islands such as Samson are scheduled as a whole in order to conserve complex historic environments in their entirety

¹ 238 Scheduled Monuments including over 900 archaeological sites

- Scilly has 130 Listed Buildings of which 10% are Grades I or II*
- the entire archipelago is a Conservation Area

Environmental Qualities

- The quality of air in Scilly is exceptionally high due to a lack of dust and pollution. The resulting quality of light enhances colour and allows many varieties of lichen to thrive
- Scilly generally enjoys a high level of tranquillity² characterized by the sounds and rhythms of sea, wind and birds
- Dark night skies are visible from virtually all parts of the Islands³

Island diversity

While many aesthetic and experiential qualities are common to all the Islands, the distinctiveness of each Island is engrained in the psyche of Islanders and captures the imagination of visitors. Although difficult to quantify, the character of each Island as defined by participants at the consultation workshops for the first management plan gives a flavour of the Islands' diverse special qualities.

St. Agnes – population 73

- The deep water channel separating St Agnes from the other Islands plays a role in confirming St Agnes' discrete and separate identity
- The Island has few trees although the small fields are bounded by green hedges
- Tamarisk, once a common fencing plant, is still very much in evidence
- There are spectacular views to Bishop Rock Lighthouse and the Western Rocks from which St Agnes derives some shelter during westerly storms
- Low key tourism supplements farm incomes within the small community (the Islands' second smallest population), as it seeks to maintain its traditional farming activities
- For many residents and visitors St Agnes is Scilly as it was 20 or 30 years ago

Bryher – population 92

- Bryher ('land of the hills') is the smallest of the inhabited Islands and supports the smallest population
- Bryher promotes its quiet isolation and rugged scenery as its main assets
- With the exception of Hell Bay Hotel, tourism is low-level and draws heavily on the Island's sense of remoteness and natural beauty
- Today there is relatively little farmed land on Bryher
- The northern end of the Island is exposed to the full force of westerly storms with the fetch of waves crashing on the shores being up to 2000 miles across the Atlantic Ocean
- The southern end of the island is sheltered by the Norrard Rocks and has large sweeping bays with sandy beaches and sand flats stretching out towards Samson and Tresco

² Campaign to Protect Rural England tranquillity mapping:
<http://www.cpre.org.uk/campaigns/landscape/tranquillity>.

³Light pollution levels are not formally recorded for Scilly (Campaign to Protect Rural England light pollution mapping: <http://www.cpre.org.uk/campaigns/landscape/light-pollution>.)

- On some low tides it is possible to walk the channel between Bryher, Tresco and Samson

St Martin's – population 142

- St Martin's is a long narrow Island with a central ridge
- The exposed north-eastern side of the Island forms a crescent around Great Bay, the longest beach in Scilly
- The heath and rugged coast of the wild north side of the Island contrast with the more sheltered southern and western slopes with their characteristic small enclosed fields
- Almost all of the cultivated land and compact settlements lie on the western slopes, overlooking the large areas of sand flats exposed at low tide. The Island's campsite and hotel are also on these western slopes
- There is a range of self-catering accommodation including several 1970's wooden chalets

St Mary's – population 1,666

- The largest and most populated Island, St Mary's is the administrative, commercial and service centre of the Islands
- The Island's longstanding role as the centre of administration is clear from the remains of the medieval Ennor Castle at Old Town and the fortifications of the Tudor Star Castle and surrounding 17th century Garrison Walls
- A range of shops, pubs and restaurants are supported by seasonal visitors, with many closing or operating reduced hours in the winter
- A wide range of accommodation is on offer including hotels, self-catering accommodation and camping
- St Mary's has higher levels of traffic than any other island
- A high proportion of the Island's fields are cultivated, producing flowers and bulbs
- There are places on St Mary's where it is not possible to see the sea
- At the northern end of the Island the disparate farmsteads are connected with a network of narrow lanes, some overarched by interlocking elm trees
- In addition to the habitats managed for conservation on each Island, St Mary's has two dedicated nature trails

Tresco – population 186

- Tresco is run as an Estate, leased from the Duchy of Cornwall by the Dorrien-Smith family
- Tresco is world renowned for the Abbey Gardens, listed Grade I in English Heritage's Historic Parks and Gardens Register
- Many exotic species from Tresco Abbey Gardens have become naturalised and are now part of the Islands' distinctive flora
- Tresco has a distinct brand which the Estate uses to market its high quality hotel, gardens and timeshares, most of which are contained in traditional cottages and the new Abbey Farm development
- The southern end of the Island is particularly wooded with trees having been planted to protect the Abbey Gardens

- The northern end of the Island is open heathland surrounded by steep granite cliffs and featuring prehistoric settlement and ceremonial monuments as well as two late medieval castles

Uninhabited Islands

- There are innumerable uninhabited islands, islets and rocky reefs in Scilly, all virtually treeless but supporting important heathland habitats
- Some uninhabited Islands, such as Samson and Tean, once supported small resident communities
- Occupation spanning prehistory to the 19th century has left archaeological remains such as Bronze Age settlements and ceremonial monuments, a Roman shrine, early medieval chapels, an isolation hospital and post-medieval settlements, many of which are in need of consolidation and public interpretation
- Many of the uninhabited islands provide valuable habitats for wildlife, supporting rare species of animals, plants such as the Dwarf Pansy, internationally important populations of seabirds both resident and migratory, and Atlantic grey seals
- Annet is a particularly significant island for breeding birds and is, as a result, closed except by permit

Scilly's distinctive and exceptional landscapes, seascapes, habitats and historic features are individually valuable but within the unique setting of Scilly they collectively represent one of the country's finest landscapes worthy of national designation and protection as an AONB.

Nature and purpose of the AONB designation

The Isles of Scilly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is designated for the primary purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Islands⁴. The designation supports the sustainable needs of agriculture, forestry, rural industries and traditions, and the social and economic needs of local communities. In Scilly close attention is paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment. The designation recognises that people are an important part of the landscape, ensuring that its resources are protected, managed and capable of evolving in a sustainable way.

While AONB is a landscape designation that only extends to low mean water, in the case of Scilly the maritime character of the designated landscape is an essential component of the area's natural beauty. Islands and their communities of flora, fauna and people are defined by the sea. The special qualities of the Isles of Scilly AONB include the Islands' maritime context, character and history. The AONB management plan acts as an overarching plan for the area⁵, which in Scilly includes the non-statutory Heritage Coast designation.

⁴ *Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, Section 82, Paragraph 1.*

⁵ *Guidance for the Review of AONB Management Plans* (Countryside Agency, 2006, CA221), Section 7.1

Recreation is not an objective of the AONB designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and the social and economic needs of sustainable local communities.

What is natural beauty?

Natural beauty is essentially the landscape's material qualities, such as geology, flora and fauna. Ethereal qualities, such as tranquillity and aesthetic value, and the impacts of human settlement from prehistory to the present, are also important and add richness and nuance to the physical landscape. Landscapes are working environments that are the unique and characteristic result of a rich history of human settlement and culture. Landscape is inherited from the past and requires management for the future.

People shape and are shaped by their surroundings. Natural beauty is 'an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere' and is 'a key element of individual and social well-being'⁶. Landscapes of natural beauty also have great economic importance as they provide the foundation for tourism, agriculture and other rural industries.

The context and significance of protected landscapes and the AONB family

The term, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), is a landscape conservation designation that is part of an international group known as IUCN Category V (The World Conservation Union or International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources). The management guidelines for Category V Protected Areas define this category as:

"Area of land, with coast and sea as appropriate, where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural value, and often with high biological diversity. Safeguarding the integrity of this traditional interaction is vital to the protection, maintenance and evolution of such an area"⁷

There are 40 AONB's in England & Wales and a further 9 in Northern Ireland. The natural beauty and distinctive character of each of these areas is of national importance. AONB's represent the nation's finest countryside and the designation seeks to safeguard them for future generations.

South West England's high quality environment is recognised as a great strength and economic asset. More than one-third (37%) of the region is covered by twelve AONB's and two National Parks. The environment is recognised as a significant economic asset, especially through tourism, and also contributes to the social and cultural well-being of resident communities and visitors.

⁶ Preamble to *The European Landscape Convention* (Council of Europe Treaty Series no. 176, adopted October 2000, in force from March 2004).

⁷ *The Management Guidelines for IUCN Category V Protected Areas Protected Landscapes/Seascapes*, World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 9, IUCN – The World Conservation Union, 2002, p.9.

The importance of improving regional communications and partnerships is recognised as a critical objective by Natural England, DEFRA and the South West Protected Landscape Forum. These organisations work together to:

- Develop the contribution that Protected Landscapes make to the quality of life in the wider region
- Increase joint working in delivery of common objectives
- Improve communication between partners
- Promote best practice in partnership working to deliver rural regeneration

Purpose of the management plan and its relationships to other strategies and plans

Every AONB in England and Wales is required by law to have a management plan. Sections 89 and 90 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 created a statutory obligation for Conservation Boards and relevant local authorities to prepare AONB management plans and also, once adopted, to review them at intervals of not more than five years.

The purpose of the plan is to act as a strategic guidance over all other relevant plans. Natural England guidance states that “[a]s statutory plans for nationally designated protected landscapes, AONB management plans should act as the overarching plan for the area”⁸. This guidance reflects Section 85 of the CRoW Act 2000 which requires relevant authorities⁹ to have due regard to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in AONB’s in performance of the authorities’ functions. The plan provides essential guidance to help them comply with this requirement.

In Scilly the AONB management plan interfaces with a broad range of plans and policies. The importance and implications of these synergies and interrelationships are discussed in Sections 2 and 3 of this consultation draft.

Who is responsible for the AONB management plan?

While it is the responsibility of the local authority – the Council of the Isles of Scilly – to produce and review an AONB management plan, its implementation is in the hands of the AONB Partnership. The Partnership comprises organisations and individuals who work together to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB. The Partnership’s work is overseen by the AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) comprising representatives of government agencies, the local authority, public bodies, businesses and the local community. The JAC is charged with co-ordinating implementation of the management plan by stimulating and facilitating collaborative work that delivers the policies and objectives of the management plan.

Processes for production of the first management plan

The Isles of Scilly AONB Partnership published *Planning a Bright Future: The Isles of Scilly AONB Management Plan 2004-2009* in April 2004. It was developed through a complex consultation programme involving the local community and other groups,

⁸ *Guidance for the review of AONB management plans* (Countryside Agency, 2006, CA221), Section 7.1

⁹ Under Section 85 of the CRoW Act 2000 relevant authorities include Ministers of the Crown; public bodies such as county, borough, district, parish and community councils; statutory undertakers; and persons holding public office.

organisations and individuals with a stake or interest in the Islands. The programme consisted of 'open surgery' sessions for residents and visitors and a series of workshops. In the open surgeries participants expressed their opinions on the key assets of the islands, the key themes and issues affecting the landscape and future aims and actions. The later workshops focused on shared visions, objectives and priority actions. The consultation process helped to foster collective commitment to the AONB and the objectives of the management plan.

A public consultation draft of the management plan was circulated to each stakeholder and householder together with a response form. Response levels were higher than those achieved by any previous consultation process on the Islands. 87% of respondents were satisfied with the draft.

The Countryside Agency, the statutory consultee at the time of plan production, also provided guidance and feedback including detailed comments on the consultation draft. The extent to which the Countryside Agency's views were accommodated by the published plan is reviewed in the next section of this document.

Stakeholder Perceptions

The responses from the stakeholder consultations during the preparation of the first management plan were wide ranging, identifying issues of concern and opportunities for action. These responses are summarised below.

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Issues

- The environment's guardian organisation, the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, is under-resourced.
- Overgrown areas prevent full access and enjoyment by visitors and therefore potentially damage the Islands' economy.
- Gorse is part of the landscape, it is an attractive plant valued for its perfume and it should not all be taken away.

Opportunities

- Increased co-operation between farmers and conservationists will deliver integrated management and improve cross sector understanding.
- Sustainable management will deliver better habitats so highlighting the Islands' environment as the central plank for eco-tourism.
- The development of Scilly as a marketing brand so adding value to the local natural produce and products.

Marine and Coastal Environment

Issues

- High levels of marine-borne litter particularly plastics and small scale oil pollution on Island beaches.
- Recognition of the threat of coastal erosion and sea level rise to low-lying areas of the Islands.
- The islands are not well placed to cope with a marine or coastal emergency.

Opportunities

- Improve monitoring of natural communities, interest features and the coastal processes affecting the Islands.
- Increase eco-friendly tourism.
- Coastal erosion provides opportunities to learn more of the Islands' buried archaeological heritage.

Historic Environment

Issues

- The overgrown state of some sites and difficulty in accessing them.
- Lack of maintenance of listed properties leading to serious structural problems that are expensive to resolve.
- Insensitive conversions detract from the character of the landscape and destroy the history and tradition of the buildings.

Opportunities

- Greatly increase the profile of Scilly's archaeology. It is a resource currently much underused.
- Potential for heritage-led regeneration projects – restoration of character buildings and their contribution to the distinctiveness of the Islands.
- Design of new buildings could be significantly improved.

Agriculture and Land Management

Issues

- The large number of disused and unmanaged fields and the effect this is having on the integrity of ancient systems.
- Disrepair of boundary walls and shelter fences, and the removal of hedges.
- Shortage of farm labour and some skills, such as livestock husbandry

Opportunities

- Make farm management more economic through an increase in stewardship uptake and payment levels for some areas.
- Diversify farm income by broadening out into food crops to enable the Islands to become more self-sufficient.
- Improve locally available traditional skills e.g. dry stone walling.

Tourism, Recreation and Access

Issues

- Cost of travel to, from and around the Islands may discourage visitors.
- Negative impacts of the tourism industry, including increase in waste, footpath erosion, wildlife disturbance, and demand on water supply.
- Overgrown footpaths, and the need to give careful consideration to the routing of paths to protect sensitive locations.

Opportunities

- Good youth/backpackers accommodation – could attract out of season visitors for educational purposes.
- Improve camping standards

- Improve availability of cycle routes to allow people to see and enjoy the environment.

Community and Business

Issues

- High living costs and limited housing and employment opportunities deter local youth from staying within the community.
- Viability of maintaining traditional skills.
- Poor business recognition of the importance of the environment to their operations.

Opportunities

- Stimulate an interest in the environment in school children that may encourage them to live in a more environmentally sensitive manner.
- Increase awareness of how the environment is managed.
- Climate change may bring more opportunity for alternative energy methods.

Development and Regeneration

Issues

- Development could reduce the amount of open landscape and potentially have a negative impact on the Islands' conservation interest and value.
- The quantity and quality of water and the lack of uniformity in its treatment, particularly on St Agnes and St Martin's.
- Age and adequacy of the Islands' sewage system, particularly ageing septic tanks and the potential risk posed to potable and marine water quality.

Opportunities

- Make any new build or 'start from scratch' renovation subject to energy and resource efficiency regulations
- An improved water supply for the off-islands would help crop diversification, increase local food production and assist in the introduction of grazing animals.
- An efficient and inexpensive waste management and recycling system will encourage the reduction of 'dumping' and threats to the environment.

Transport

Issues

- The current unregulated/disorganised operation of buses is causing a nuisance.
- A faster more comfortable mainland link boat would encourage more sea passengers.
- It is vital to have an affordable, reliable freight transport system for the import-export of goods, including flowers going to market.

Opportunities

- Encourage inter-island transport providers to work together and reduce the cost to travellers.
- Bus and private hire vehicle operators should be encouraged to work together and coordinate their timetables and frequencies.
- Good transport links will provide better access for visitors strengthening the long-term prospects of the tourism industry and health of the general economy.

Processes for review of the first management plan

Natural England (formerly Countryside Agency) and DEFRA guidance on the review of AONB management plans¹⁰ identifies a Scoping Report as the first stage in the review process. The Scoping Report collates and analyses evidence identifying and defining the nature and extent of the proposed review and the need for changes.

Evidence for the Scoping Report was harvested in two ways:

- Assessment of existing information on the state of the AONB and the relevance, accuracy and usefulness of the existing management plan e.g. guidance from statutory consultees, business plan, annual reviews, progress against action plan targets
- Evaluation of new evidence collected specifically for the review process e.g. interviews with AONB Partners, community consultation

A copy of the Scoping Report accompanies this consultation draft of the revised management plan.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was undertaken in compliance with SEA Directive (2001/42EC)¹¹ to evaluate the potential 'significant' environmental impacts of implementation of the management plan. The Environmental Report resulting from the SEA accompanies this consultation draft of the revised management plan.

SEA analysis confirms that there is little conflict or likelihood of adverse environmental impact since the plan is primarily concerned with conservation and enhancement of the landscape. Consequently, the Environmental Report notes that there is an opportunity to focus on maximising benefit across SEA objectives rather than the mitigation of adverse impacts.

The Scoping Report, revised management plan consultation draft and Environmental Report are available for consultation leading to amendments and publication of a revised management plan in August 2009. The consultation process includes engagement with statutory consultees, interviews with AONB Partners and major island stakeholders.

Headline Achievements since 2004

The first management plan identified objectives and policies for the AONB and an action plan for their delivery. Headline achievements measured against either specific actions or the attainment of objectives through other means include:

- Adoption of Design Guide by the Council of the Isles of Scilly (2006) and a planning protocol by the AONB JAC (2006)
- Scilly businesses join the Green Tourism Business Scheme
- Publication of Isles of Scilly AONB Interpretation Strategy (2008)

¹⁰ *Guidance for the review of AONB management plans* (Countryside Agency, August 2006, CA221) *Protocol for the involvement by Natural England and DEFRA in AONB Management Planning* (Natural England, July 2007)

¹¹ European Directive 2001/42 on the assessment of effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (the 'SEA Directive')

- Adoption of Sustainable Energy Strategy (2007) by the Council of the Isles of Scilly
- Off-island quay refurbishments by the Duchy of Cornwall and Tresco Estate completed in 2008
- Walk Scilly festival, established in 2007, extends the tourism season and champions healthy activity through which people experience and appreciate the AONB without adverse impact on the landscape
- AONB Landscape Monitoring Project initiated in 2007 in partnership with Cornwall and Tamar Valley AONB's
- Isles of Scilly AONB Sustainable Development Fund has supported 37 community projects worth £306,385.75
- Scilly Waste, a collaborative initiative between the AONB, Council of the Isles of Scilly and ReZolve Kernow, was established in 2005 with £122,505 funding from DEFRA, the Countryside Agency and the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP)
- AONB Partners are part of the Isles of Scilly Local Action Group that has secured £2.25 million through the Rural Development Programme for England. The LAG funds will be invested during 2009-2014 in projects and initiatives designed to address economic under performance and to improve provision and access to services within sustainable environmental parameters.

Common Issues

A number of cross-cutting issues run through the management plan and are central to its implementation.

Sustainability

Sustainability is about ensuring that actions taken today do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The management plan supports economic development that is commensurate with conservation and enhancement of the environment and that leads to sustainable resident communities and social well-being in the AONB.

Climate Change

It is widely acknowledged that climate change is the most significant challenge facing humanity. Meeting the challenge of climate change requires adaptation and mitigation at international, national and local levels. Protected landscapes have an important yet proportionate role to play in championing sustainable energy and waste management strategies and in highlighting threats to landscapes that are of immense cultural, social and economic importance. Scilly's low-lying Islands are especially vulnerable to some of the known effects of climate change, including sea-level rise, increased frequency of storm surges, drought and saline intrusion. There has been a significant step-change in managing climate change since publication of the first management plan in 2004. Adaptation to, and mitigation of, the effects of climate change have become central motifs in the revised management plan.

Awareness of the AONB

Visitor surveys indicate that 90% of respondents are aware of the Islands' AONB designation. However, it is not proven that visitors, or indeed residents, fully understand and appreciate the purpose of the designation. The management plan

seeks to raise awareness of the value of the AONB designation and the importance of conserving and enhancing Scilly's natural and cultural environment.

Rural land management

Field boundaries, field patterns, woodland and heath are important landscape features of the AONB that have been produced through generations of farming activity. As farming practices change so traditional features of the rural landscape and associated habitats may also be subject to change. The management plan acknowledges that some change may be necessary and indeed beneficial, though traditional features and habitats will wherever practicable be conserved and enhanced in the context of modern land management and stewardship.

ICT and the knowledge-based economy

Investment in ICT skills and infrastructure will be crucial in enabling Scilly's businesses to be competitive in a national and international market. Home working, video conferencing and on-line marketing are significant opportunities for the Islands' community in the context of a developing 'knowledge based' economy.

A Shared Vision for the Isles of Scilly AONB

The purpose of an overarching vision is to look 20 years ahead to the ideal state of the AONB as it is envisaged by all those organizations and individuals with a stake in the conservation and enhancement of the area's natural beauty¹². The vision is therefore inspirational, aspirational, future-orientated and shared¹³.

The Vision

The Isles of Scilly AONB:

- retains the special qualities of landscape and seascape that form the essence of the AONB: unspoilt views of the sea, rugged undeveloped coasts and sweeping sandy bays; a rich mosaic of coastal heathland, pasture and fenced bulb strips; a unique mix of plants and animals; internationally important archaeological and historic sites; and a peaceful, relaxed and friendly atmosphere
- is recognised, understood and conserved for all to appreciate, enjoy and respect in a manner that is socially and economically sustainable
- responds to forces for change, including climate change, tourism, agriculture and development by integrating the needs of local communities and visitors with the conservation and enhancement of a nationally important landscape

¹² *Guidance for the Review of AONB Management Plans* (Countryside Agency, 2006, CA221), Section 4.2.4

¹³ The vision in the first management plan is a sound legacy. AONB Partners, statutory consultees and other stakeholders in Scilly believe that the vision published in 2004 galvanizes all interested parties in their commitment to conserve and enhance the special qualities that define the Isles of Scilly AONB. Therefore, the 2004 vision is both inspirational and specific to the circumstances of Scilly. However, it is appreciated that parts of the 2004 vision lack clarity. The revised vision statement therefore retains the essence of the original vision and expresses that vision with greater clarity. The revised vision also identifies new challenges for the AONB, its community and visitors during the lifetime of the revised management plan (2009-2014) and, indeed, during the medium term time-scale of the next 20 years.

- welcomes visitors who contribute to the sustainable economy of the Islands without compromising the special qualities of the AONB
- supports a farming community that is successfully adapting to changing economic circumstance through sustainable diversification and strategic resource management that respects and conserves the AONB's traditional landscape features
- supports a population with a strong sense of community, working in partnership to achieve social, economic and environmental sustainability
- supports a diverse community that enjoys a good quality of life, with opportunities for young people to remain on the Islands and with access to fulfilling employment and a wide range of services

Section 2: The Natural and Historic Environment

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Vision for the future

The management of wildlife habitats is secure throughout the AONB, with nature conservation integrated into farming, development and land management practices. Thorough recording leads to better understanding of biodiversity and targeted initiatives for its conservation and enhancement in the context of climate change.

Setting the Scene

The location of Scilly on the extreme south-western fringe of the British Isles and warmed by the Gulf Stream provides it with a unique set of environmental conditions. The resulting habitats, and their remarkably rich flora and fauna, reflect the Islands' geographical location, their isolation from the mainland, and their geological substrate.

The natural environment of the Islands includes coastal and agricultural grasslands and heaths, cliff tops and faces, wetlands and small areas of woodland. There are also important habitats in hedgerows and walls, and in road verges. The grasslands and heathlands in particular have a high diversity of flowering plants, while arable fields, including those used for commercial flower production, have uncommon and rare arable plants. Throughout the Islands there are also many species of Mediterranean or Southern Hemisphere plants, introduced as flower crops or as garden plants that have escaped and grow profusely in stonewalls, hedgerows and coastal heaths.

Designations

Scilly's rich array of wildlife habitats and geological formations is recognised through international and national nature conservation designations. The Islands' seabirds and their terrestrial habitats are classified as a Ramsar site of global importance¹⁴. The boundaries of the Ramsar site coincide with a Special Protection Area of European importance¹⁵. Many of the Islands' 26 nationally important Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) significantly contribute to Scilly's internationally important designated areas. SSSI's - the nation's best wildlife and geological sites – cover 34.7% of the Islands' land mass as opposed to 7% throughout England. The Government's Public Service Agreement (PSA) target requires that 95% of SSSI's are in 'favourable' or 'unfavourable recovering' condition. All of Scilly's SSSI's meet the Government target, with 24 sites in 'favourable' condition and only two sites in 'unfavourable recovering' condition¹⁶.

¹⁴ Ramsar Convention 1971.

¹⁵ Special Protection Areas are classified under the EC Directive on the conservation of wild birds (79/409/EEC), April 1979 ('the Birds Directive')

¹⁶ Gugh (Unit 1 – Dwarf shrub heath – lowland) and Tean (Unit 1 – Neutral grassland – lowland) (Natural England SSSI Condition Report, March 2009)

Geology

Five of the Islands' SSSI's are designated for their geological as well as biological interest. These SSSI's illustrate the Islands' underlying geology, a mixture of fine and coarse grained granite. The drift geology is Head (locally known as Ram), a fine grained material formed by the denudation of granite. This sandy, iron-cemented deposit was traditionally used as building mortar and in road construction. Large areas of the Islands, especially on St Martin's and Tresco, are cloaked in blown sand. Soil quality is variable throughout the Islands, ranging from leached and podsolised soils of low fertility to brown earths that support flower growing and horticulture. In the coastal strip there are a number of raised beaches indicating historic fluctuations in sea level and, together with archaeological remains exposed at low tide and in the cliff face, demonstrating the dynamism of Scilly's coastline.

Flora

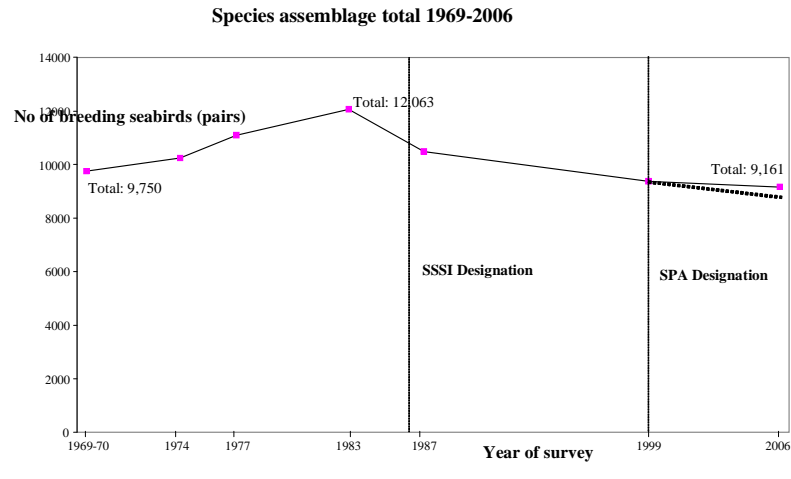
Scilly has its own distinct flora, some of which are confined almost totally to the archipelago. Traditional farming practices within small fields have limited the impact of modern agriculture on wildlife communities leading to an unusual abundance of specialised wild plants. The magnificent displays of arable/bulb-field 'weed' plants, such as the globally threatened Red Data Book species Western Rampion-Fumitory (*Fumaria occidentalis*) are now a rare sight on the mainland due to intensive agriculture. The Islands' clean air supports two species of lichen identified as targets within the UK Biodiversity Action Plan: (*Heterodermia leucomelos*) or Ciliate Strap-lichen and (*Teloschistes chrysophthalmus*).

Seabirds & Water birds

The Islands support 18,800 individuals of 13 species of seabird¹⁷. Since the Islands were designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest the population of seabirds has declined by 24%, close to unfavourable status. There are a range of factors that affect seabird populations and the Isles of Scilly Seabird Conservation Strategy¹⁸, produced by RSPB/NE/IOSWT/IOSBG, sets out various issues that need to be tackled. These include work on rat abatement by IOSWT that has been supported by NE/RSPB as well as the AONB, and population monitoring work carried out by a partnership of the RSPB and NE through the Action for Birds in England Programme, in collaboration with IOSWT and IOSBG. In 2009 the strategy was under review and will set out a programme of action for the period 2009-2014. This will include increased research to better understand bird species' use of the marine environment.

¹⁷ Heaney, V, Brown A, Lock L, St Pierre P. 2007. The status of seabirds breeding on the Isles of Scilly in 2006

¹⁸ Lock L, Brown A, Clitherow J, Mawer D, St Pierre P, 2006. Isles of Scilly Seabird Conservation Strategy



The Islands support regionally important breeding populations of both ringed plover and oystercatcher. In winter, over 6,000 water birds have been recorded. Populations of ringed plover, sanderling greenshank and little egret are potentially of national importance. Ringed plover (26.3%), purple sandpiper (45%) and turnstone (66.9%) have all experienced significant declines¹⁹. Although disturbance is a potential risk during the summer months for breeding at specific sites, the threat is less in winter. Whilst beach cleaning is known to have an impact on beach invertebrates, there are still significant areas where strand line communities are allowed to develop so beach cleaning is thought not to be an issue. Short stopping, as a result of mid winters, or changes at breeding grounds affecting chick rearing are potential issues which require further investigation.

Farmland and Woodland Birds

Far from suffering the general decline in population observed elsewhere since the mid-1970s, farmland and woodland birds are thriving in Scilly. For example, the Scillonian Song Thrush, a UK Biodiversity Action Plan species, has a very high population of breeding birds, possibly 12 times higher than anywhere else in the UK²⁰. For nesting these birds rely heavily on dense green hedge and shelterbelts and feed in 'arable plant rich' fields associated with flower and bulb growing, as well as poorly drained grazed permanent pasture.

The role of the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust

The Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust manages the Islands' untenanted land which the Duchy of Cornwall leases to the Wildlife Trust on a 99-year agreement. The Wildlife Trust is therefore effectively responsible for driving forward management policy on 60% of the Islands' landmass. The Wildlife Trust's principle role is to:

- Conserve terrestrial and marine wildlife and their habitats
- Conserve the landscape of Scilly
- Conserve the Islands' archaeological and historical remains
- Further public understanding of the Islands' wildlife, landscape and seascape, including the promotion and co-ordination of research and interpretation

¹⁹ Lock L, 1999. Assessment of the Importance of Winter Water Fowl / Wader Populations on the Isles of Scilly, RSPB unpublished report.

²⁰ Chown, D & Lock L. 2002. Breeding Birds on The Isles of Scilly, RSPB unpublished report

Special features

- A mix of fine and coarse grained granite with areas of blown sand
- Frequently changing coastline with raised beaches and drowned landscapes
- Distinctive flora and fauna with some species confined totally to the archipelago
- Coastal and heathland habitats
- High diversity of breeding and passage birds
- High population of farmland and woodland birds

Issues and challenges

The management role of the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust

For many years the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust has been severely restrained in its activities and effectiveness through being under-resourced. In 2008 the Trust entered into a joint management scheme with the Cornwall Wildlife Trust. By drawing down expertise from Cornwall the Wildlife Trust is now more easily delivering projects, competitively pursuing new funding streams and delivering major projects such as heathland management through conservation grazing. Since 2008 the Wildlife Trust's stewardship of the landscape has also been enhanced through a Higher Level Stewardship agreement.

Supported by a Heritage Lottery Fund grant, the Trust implemented the Waves of Heath Project designed to reverse the progressive encroachment of bracken, gorse and scrub into heathland through a programme of vegetation clearance and the introduction of a small conservation grazing herd. The Project has helped significantly to conserve biodiversity, to support tourism by maintaining public access to heathland and to Scilly's exceptional historic environment, and to enhance opportunities for archaeological research, management, interpretation and public presentation. Crucially, conservation grazing is also a much needed branch of economic diversification for the Islands' farming community. These initiatives are now being carried forward through the Higher Level Scheme (HLS) of Environmental Stewardship.

There have been concerns raised, however, by some residents and visitors about negative impacts of conservation grazing. The main concerns are:

- fences that interrupt traditional routes of access through the landscape
- water bowsers and feeding areas that are considered to be unsightly
- cattle perceived as a potential threat to the safety of people and dogs

These concerns need to be balanced against the considerable benefits of clearing bramble and gorse from sites of biodiversity and archaeological interest and enhancing access opportunities for residents and visitors.

The measurable impact on tourism of conservation grazing has yet to be established. Data may already reside in annual tourism surveys, or the commissioning of new data capture may be required. This work is a priority for the AONB team in partnership with the Council's Tourism Officer.

The AONB Partnership will continue to liaise between different interest groups with the specific aim of:

- improving all parties' understanding of the needs of other interest groups in relation to conservation grazing
- mediating resolution of tensions regarding the implementation of conservation grazing e.g. siting of fences and feeding areas
- providing information to residents and visitors about the relative merits of conservation grazing and the challenges faced in its implementation in Scilly

Understanding and appreciating Scilly's biodiversity

The Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (ERCCIS) maintains a record of Scilly's flora and fauna. ERCCIS is affiliated to the Cornwall Wildlife Trust which established a formal partnership with the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust in 2008. The Wildlife Trusts have expressed an interest in establishing a satellite records centre in Scilly, though identification of an appropriate site and funding remains problematic. However, the principle of establishing a research and educational facility in Scilly, one function of which could be to host a satellite of ERCCIS, remains an initiative that would have significant benefit for biodiversity conservation by strengthening the research base on which conservation policy is grounded and by enhancing public understanding and appreciation of the Islands' biodiversity.

Habitat management

The heathlands of the Islands, once an important source of food for cattle, have gradually become abandoned as livestock farming has declined. Over the years vigorous species such as gorse and bracken have become dominant, shading out other plants and fixing nitrogen in the soil which encourages bramble. The Conservation Grazing programme described above has helped considerably to improve the management of heathlands and has opened up many coastal areas for more diversified habitats and better access. There is concern, however, that conservation grazing is inadequately tackling some neglected heathlands, particularly on some of the off-Islands and more isolated areas. A significant issue is the lack of staffing to oversee the cattle and the poor supply of water in some areas.

Wetlands on the islands area also neglected in some areas and have become overgrown with scrub which causes them to gradually dry out. In some areas there are '*Juncus* beds', areas of sea rush which were traditionally cut regularly as a fodder crop, which have been left uncut and are drying out. Management by the Wildlife Trust to cut or burn vegetation in wetlands is helping to control scrub, but the work is labour intensive and can cause nuisance to nearby residents.

There are small areas of woodland on the Islands, together with pine shelter belts and individual trees associated with hedgerows. A particular characteristic is elm which has escaped Dutch elm disease that has never, so far, been introduced to the Islands. Although some of the woodlands are managed with support from HLS many of the shelter belts and individual trees are overmature and are vulnerable to windblow in storms. The Duchy of Cornwall is preparing a Woodland Management Plan which will help to identify work needed to address management issues.

Non-native invasive species

Many non-native plant species have been introduced to the Islands as commercial flower species, garden plants or as hedgerow shrubs to protect crops from poor weather. New Zealand flax, *Crococsmia*, rhododendron and Hottentot fig are widespread throughout the Islands and occur in fields, heathland areas and along walls and hedgerows. Some of these plants, including *Crococsmia* and flax are becoming dominant in places and need active control. A common shrub used for hedgerows is the evergreen Pittosporum which has invaded heathland and wetland areas and again needs management to protect native habitats.

Landscape management

Economic diversification, sustainable tourism, public access, and conservation grazing are likely to be the major motifs that inform the development of land management policy in Scilly during the next five years. Environmental stewardship, as exemplified by Natural England's Higher Level Stewardship agreements with the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust and Tresco Estate, represents further significant context for land management on the Islands. Natural England's *Proposed Landscape Management Project Using Environmental Stewardship on the Isles of Scilly* and the Mainland Marketing-led *Specific Project for Agriculture on Scilly* are key strategic documents that will be published during the early part of the 2009-2014 cycle and will inform the direction of livestock farming, meat processing and environmental stewardship in Scilly. Coordination of land management through farming and wildlife conservation will be essential to ensure optimum management of the landscape for environmental and economic purposes. The establishment of a land management focus group with a remit to foster sustainable relationships between farming, forestry, biodiversity, historic environment, tourism and recreation would help to achieve consensus and to embed biodiversity and geological conservation in developing landscape management policy.

Sustainable tourism

Sustainable landscape management will deliver better habitats so highlighting Scilly's environment as the central plank for the Islands' tourism industry. Environmentally-aware visitors who appreciate the value of sustainable environmental management are also likely to support green tourism business on the Islands, as well as a Scilly marketing brand designed to add value to local natural produce and products.

Education

The Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust has conducted a number of educational projects in the Islands including working with school groups, developing a bird feeding area at St Mary's primary school and developing 'early years' projects. The AONB has run a programme of enrichment sessions while the RSPB has produced a series of events with the LEA as part of the after schools club promoting wildlife awareness.

Despite these projects, the potential of Scilly's natural environment as an educational resource has not been fully realized. The Islands' biodiversity and geology, the latter being especially undervalued as an intrinsic element of the Islands' landscape, can be used to inform both formal education (primary, secondary, tertiary, life-long learning) and informal learning through tourism. The Isles of Scilly AONB Interpretation Strategy promotes enhanced appreciation of the Islands' environment

by different interest groups within the local community, amongst visitors and in the context of formal education.

Awareness and interpretation

Many organisations, including the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, the AONB and Natural England, produce interpretation leaflets, brochures and websites that help to interpret the biodiversity and geodiversity of Scilly. There are guidebooks, such as ‘Scilly’s Wildlife Heritage’ available at outlets on the Islands and interpretation panels that explain special features. A number of organisations and individuals also provide guided walks and public talks about heritage and wildlife.

Interpretation of the Islands is described in detail in the Isles of Scilly AONB Interpretation Strategy. The Strategy identifies gaps in the provision of interpretation and recommends a programme of enhanced interpretation for different audiences.

Climate change

Sustainability in the context of climate change is a central motif in the management plan. Scilly’s biodiversity is already being compromised by sea-level rise and increased storminess, with additional potential threats including saline intrusion and drought. The value of the natural environment as an economic resource in the context of eco-tourism must also be a significant consideration in the development of a revised Shoreline Management Plan for the Isles of Scilly.

Funding opportunities

Investment in training and education will aid sustainable management of the Islands’ natural resources. The successful drawing down of funding from regional, national and international sources is therefore imperative. The Isles of Scilly Local Action Group has secured £2.25 million through the Rural Development Programme for England. The LAG delivery plan identifies projects that enhance management of the natural environment, including improved strategic management of the landscape with an increase in the amount of land actively managed in an environmentally sensitive manner and improved access to the terrestrial and marine environment including enhanced interpretation of biodiversity.

Biodiversity Conservation Policy and Guidance

The Management Plan is informed by the following national legislation and local guidance:

- The Natural Environment & Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, which requires all public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions
- Biodiversity and Geological Conservation: Planning Good Practice Guidance for the Isles of Scilly (2008), which advocates best practice in biodiversity conservation. The Guide was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in 2008 and is used as a material consideration in determining planning applications in Scilly
- The Isles of Scilly Biodiversity Audit (2008), which assesses the status and trends in Scilly’s biodiversity and makes recommendations for its conservation

The objectives of this plan reflect the requirements and recommendations of these documents. The plan also wholly supports the key recommendations of the Good

Practice Guidance in protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity through development control, and of the recommended actions of the Biodiversity Audit.

Strategic documents due to be published during the early part of the 2009-2024 cycle which will further guide the direction of livestock farming, meat processing and environmental stewardship in Scilly include:

- Proposed Landscape Management Project Using Environmental Stewardship on the Isles of Scilly (Natural England)
- Specific Project for Agriculture on Scilly (Mainland Marketing)

Guiding principles

- Development control decisions should be informed by the recommendations of the Planning Control Guidance, and should protect, or positively enhance, biodiversity and geodiversity
- Biodiversity and geological conservation should be firmly embedded in developing landscape management policy

Objectives

- Improve public understanding and appreciation of the AONB's natural environment, and their need for protection and management
- Ensure all designated nature and geological conservation sites attain or maintain favourable status by the end of the plan period (2014)
- Protect or restore non-designated sites or habitats of wildlife importance and rebuild their wildlife value
- Maintain the seabird population in favourable condition
- Ensure that comprehensive baseline data on the condition of the Islands' biodiversity and geological resources are gathered, managed and made available for state of the AONB monitoring
- Co-ordinate research that informs future management of the AONB's natural environment, including an understanding of opportunities and challenges

Actions

- Establish a land management focus group charged with fostering sustainable relationships between farming, forestry, biodiversity, historic environment, tourism and recreation
- Implement the recommendations of the Interpretation Strategy to raise awareness of the AONB and its natural resources
- Secure funding for training and skills enhancement in the field of biodiversity management
- Develop a research programme to gather comprehensive baseline data about the extent and condition of important habitats and species
- Conduct a repeat SPA survey in 2012
- Support research into the effects of climate change in Scilly, disseminate research results to the Islands' community and stakeholders and foster strategies for sustainable adaptation and mitigation of the effects of climate change

Marine and Coastal Environment

Vision

The Islands' diverse marine and coastal resources are a clean, healthy and safe environment for wildlife and people. Research fosters understanding of the marine and coastal environment in the context of climate change and evaluates the sustainability of economic activities such as fishing and tourism. The contribution of the Islands' outstanding seascape to natural beauty, including the sea's concealed archaeological and heritage resources, is recognised and celebrated by the local community and by visitors.

Setting the scene

Although outside the AONB boundary the sea is the dominant influence that both unites and divides the Islands and contributes to the AONB's character. The landscape changes every few hours with the ebb and flow of the tide. At low tide the larger inhabited Islands appear greater in size. Rising high out of the water they stretch across newly exposed expanses of sand flats towards their neighbours, making it easy to see that the Islands were once a single landmass. At high tide, by contrast, the Islands are half submerged and the sense of separateness and isolation is marked.

The Islands' clear waters support a unique mixture of marine flora and fauna, a wealth of colourful life from anemones, soft coral, sea fans, fin and shellfish to eel grass beds, kelp and thong weed forests. The resident population of Atlantic Grey Seals can frequently be seen, as well as visiting pods of porpoises and dolphins and occasionally exotic species such as sunfish. The waters hide many wrecks (approximately 700-1000) and evidence of the drowned landscape of prehistoric Scilly with the submerged remains of boundary walls and other structures being evident, particularly at low tide.

Specialist baseline information focuses on interest features of the SAC and SPA such as seabird breeding areas, eelgrass beds and seal populations. Seabirds have the longest running biodiversity datasets on the islands with over 30 years of data, and are a good indicator of the health of the marine environment. Research has been undertaken on productivity and foraging to determine potential impacts on bird populations, and surveys on breeding and wintering waterbirds have been conducted throughout the islands.

Since 2004 a number of initiatives have significantly enhanced baseline information on the marine environment:

- Various seabird SPA surveys and research projects carried out by RSPB, Natural England, Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, Isles of Scilly Bird Group and universities
- Marine audit of 100 dive sites funded through the Isles of Scilly AONB SDF (2007-2008)
- Isles of Scilly Biodiversity Audit 2008
- Survey of Scilly's seal populations by the Cornwall Seal Group funded by the Isles of Scilly AONB SDF (2008-2009)

The appointment of an Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust Marine Officer in 2008 is a further significant development that will lead to enhanced understanding of the marine environment. The production of a SAC Management Scheme in 2009 will form the context for future research into the Islands' biodiversity. The seabird strategy is currently being reviewed to identify future actions to benefit the Islands' SPA/Ramsar including increasing our understanding of the marine environment for birds.

Under the National Heritage Act 2002, English Heritage's remit to protect sites of archaeological value has been extended to include UK territorial waters. Since 2004 significant research has been carried out on wreck sites such as the HMS Colossus, where a dive trail is also being established. In 2009 Cornwall County Historic Environment Service and partners will begin the three-year *Lyonnesse Project* designed to evaluate the nature and status of Scilly's drowned prehistoric and historic landscape.

Designations

In recognition of the European importance of marine and shoreline habitats and associated species the seas around Scilly to a depth of 50 metres are designated as a Marine Special Area of Conservation and a Voluntary Marine Park. A Special Protection Area (SPA) supports a seabird breeding assemblage of European importance. However, the major feeding, preening and loafing areas for these seabirds lie outside the SPA and are poorly understood. There is also one Site of Special Scientific Interest – St Martin's Flats.

Two species of particular note, both of which are cited as features of interest in the Special Area of Conservation, are the resident breeding population of Atlantic Grey Seal and Shore Dock. Shore Dock is a Red Data Book species and is listed as globally threatened and declining. In addition to the seals, several UK Biodiversity Plan Marine Mammals are regularly seen in Scilly's waters, including Common Dolphin, Risso's Dolphin, Harbour Porpoise and several species of Whale. There are about 60 marine species listed in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan that are found in the waters around the Islands.

Scilly has four priority habitats listed in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan – seagrass beds, tide-swept channels, inter-tidal boulder communities and fragile sponge and anthozoan communities on sub-tidal rocky habitats.

Together with terrestrial habitats the marine and coastal environment provides important feeding and breeding grounds for both resident and migratory birds. There are at least 15 species of breeding seabird in and around the Islands, more than at any other site in England or Wales, with seven of these having Red Data Book status. A Seabird Strategy produced by RSPB, NE, IOSWT and the IOSBG sets out a programme of works to support the delivery of favourable conservation status of the Islands' seabirds. A programme is now in place, recommended by the Strategy, to encourage the UK Biodiversity Plan target species, Roseate Tern, to resume breeding in the Islands.

Quay Refurbishment

During the lifetime of the first AONB management plan the Duchy of Cornwall completed the refurbishment of four off-Island quays and the Tresco Estate refurbished Carn Near Quay. Of critical importance in maintaining sustainable communities on each of the five inhabited islands, Scilly's quays are used daily year round (weather permitting) and more frequently during the summer. The refurbishments were completed with due regard to the character of the marine environment, both natural and built, and have significantly improved freight and passenger handling operations. Refurbishment of St Mary's Harbour, which will be carried out during the lifetime of the revised management plan, will require an equally sensitive approach to the AONB's marine habitats and heritage.

Special features

- Clear waters supporting a unique mix of flora and fauna
- Drowned landscapes that reveal prehistoric field systems
- Feeding and breeding grounds of national importance for resident and migratory birds
- Resident population of Atlantic grey seals
- Visiting pods of dolphins and porpoises
- The coast supports infrastructure for a maritime community including quays, jetties, moorings and winter boat parks

Issues and challenges

Contribution to the Economy

Scilly's once thriving fishing industry has been reduced to approximately 30 boats, many operating on a seasonal basis, with only two working 12 months of the year. A further thirty boats fish for home consumption. There are also some mainland-based boats potting and trawling in the waters around Scilly, mainly operating between April and November. A recent bylaw has limited the number of scallop dredges that any boat may operate in Scilly's waters. Locals and visitors undertake artisanal shrimping, generally on a spring tide between July and September. Shrimping does occur at other times outside these permitted months but only in a limited way.

Tourism is now the main source of income derived from the marine environment. Specialist boat trips include sea safaris, seal and bird watching, fishing and archaeological tours, diving, fishing and pelagic bird trips, and yachting. An issue needing research is the potential for some of these activities, particularly yachting, to bring non-native species to the Islands such as *Sargassum muticum*, limpets and sea squirts.

Renewable Energy

Due to the high energy levels in the waters surrounding the Islands there is increasing interest in Scilly as a location to trial wave energy technology. Whilst the development of renewable energy sources is supported in principle there is a need to carefully consider the environmental and visual impact any such development may have on the Islands.

Coastal Erosion

The Islands' coasts are subject to erosion, some continuous and some due to winter storm events or high spring-tide storms, when up to two metres of soft coastal cliff can be lost. A revised Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) will be adopted by 2010. The SMP will be the context in which the tradition of small-scale *ad hoc* sea defence work will be addressed. Such works are often carried out without sufficient appreciation of the potential impacts on other locations along Scilly's coastline.

Climate change and sea level rise

Climate change can have a direct impact on the marine environment in a number of ways. Rising sea levels will affect intertidal zones and the species and habitats that are found here, and increase the risk of flooding in lower lying areas. Increased sea temperatures are likely to alter the distribution and range of plankton and higher predators, and, in fact, some warmer water species have been found in the area. There is also the issue of increased acidity of sea water caused by absorption of higher levels of carbon dioxide. Increased acidity threatens a wide range of marine organisms, particularly corals and molluscs which need calcium carbonate to make shells and plates.

Recreation and Access

The Islands' beaches and coastal footpaths are a crucial recreational resource, supporting activities such as walking, sailing, diving and recreational fishing. A significant proportion of the Islands' annual visitors arrive by yacht, mooring either on dedicated moorings within St Mary's Harbour and Tresco Channel or anchoring in sheltered bays and coves around the Islands. The quality of the seascape and the undeveloped nature of the majority of the Islands' coastline add greatly to Scilly's appeal; although lack of facilities for yachts not on official moorings does result in difficulties relating to waste disposal. There are also difficulties with the anchors of yachts mooring away from mooring sites damaging sea bed habitats. A Harbour Users' Guide produced by the Duchy of Cornwall, Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust and AONB includes guidance for yacht owners on waste management at sea and moorings. The proposed development of St Mary's Harbour will also improve facilities for visiting yachts.

The Islands' beaches are a valuable habitat for wildlife and a great recreational asset. As a rule this dual purpose does not cause any significant problem. A number of areas are important for wildlife, particularly breeding seabirds and there is restricted access, either seasonally or throughout the year. The populations of breeding ringed plover have declined. Both these and oystercatchers are sensitive to disturbance during the breeding season, particularly by dogs. Seals are also sensitive to disturbance at their breeding and 'haul out' sites.

Some tourism businesses are concerned that seaweed on Porthmellon and Porthcressa beaches may detract from visitor enjoyment of these beaches. Beaches provide good feeding ground for birds but large amounts of decaying drift seaweed can detract from people's enjoyment because of the smell and impeded access. It is important that a balance is achieved to meet the needs of tourism and biodiversity.

Marine borne litter and pollution incidents

Marine borne litter, especially plastic, is regularly deposited on the Islands' beaches, particularly those with a more exposed aspect. The management of this waste material is proving difficult. The Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust's limited resources mean that it is impractical and unreasonable to expect the Trust to systematically clear all of the beaches for which it is responsible. Collaboration with the Environmental Awareness Coordinator²¹ has allowed significant progress to be made. However, material cleared from beaches is not easily handled by the Islands' waste management system which was not designed to deal with this particular source of waste. Care needs also to be taken to avoid beach cleans during nesting periods.

Beaches are also subject to small-scale oil pollution incidents resulting from passing ships flushing their tanks, and occasional incidents resulting from cargo lost at sea. As a small community Scilly is not in a position to fund expensive 'clean up' operations. Those involved in the operations following the last major wreck are still owed significant sums of money. As an entirely coastal location with high levels of shipping movement in the surrounding sea this is not a sustainable situation and funding support for such operations from central government would be most welcome. The failure of the waters around the islands to be identified as a Mhera puts added pressure on the islands to deliver this service locally.

Removal of beach sand

A Coast Protection Order prevents the extraction of sand and shingle from the Islands' coasts. The Isles of Scilly Local Plan amplifies the illegality of removal of beach sand for building or other purposes.

Sustainable tourism

The potential of the marine and coastal environment as a sustainable tourism resource has not been fully explored. The AONB Partnership will support tourism initiatives that draw on the Islands' natural and cultural marine resources in a sustainable manner.

St Mary's Harbour development

Refurbishment of St Mary's Harbour during the lifetime of this management plan will require a sensitive approach to the AONB's marine habitats and heritage. The AONB Partnership views the development as an opportunity to enhance the quality of the built environment and to secure the infrastructure required for a sustainable local community without adverse effects on marine resources and the historic environment.

Sustainable energy

Scilly has been identified as a possible site for the testing of wave energy technology. The AONB Partnership supports projects that mitigate the effects of climate change through development of renewable energy provided that such development does not adversely affect the character of the AONB designation and takes into account any impacts on biodiversity.

²¹ The Environmental Awareness Coordinator is co-funded by the AONB and Council of the Isles of Scilly.

Awareness and interpretation

There is currently little interpretation of the marine environment, though coastal ecology is covered in general guides and more specific interpretation panels on the natural environment of the Islands. The increase in the number of people diving around the islands provides an opportunity to enhance interpretation materials on marine ecology. The Isles of Scilly AONB Interpretation Strategy recommends a programme for interpretation provision which includes coastal and marine habitats.

Marine and Coastal Environment Policy and Guidance

Marine and Coastal Access Bill

This Bill sets out the Government's policy for delivering sustainable management of marine and coastal environments. Aspects of the Bill that could have a direct impact on the AONB include developing a marine planning system, the introduction of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) and other conservation tools, strengthening arrangements for fisheries and researching the effects of climate change. The AONB Partnership will evaluate the impact of different aspects of the bill, supporting initiatives that conserve and enhance the designation and lobbying against negative impacts.

One proposal in the Bill is to replace the Sea Fisheries Committees (SFCs) with Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authorities (IFCAs). Currently Scilly has its own SFC, but it is possible that the replacement IFCA may also cover Cornwall. There would be resistance to this proposal from conservation and fisheries organisations.

Consultation work has already started in 2009 to identify potential sites for marine protected areas in Scilly. Finding Sanctuary, a partnership project that is designing a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) in South West England, has begun the process on the Islands. The Cornish Fish Producers Association is also mapping the activities of commercial fishing in order to prepare sustainable fishery plans within the context of the Marine Bill.

Shoreline Management Plan

During consultation on the Isles of Scilly Shoreline Management Plan the AONB Partnership will ensure that proposed policies and actions are commensurate with conservation and enhancement of the AONB designation.

Natura 2000 Sites

The government is committed to delivering a series of internationally important marine sites through a programme running outside the Marine Bill. The outcome of this programme may happen within the lifetime of this strategy and may include extensions to SPAs for the protection of breeding seabirds on their loafing grounds

Guiding principle

- Development control decisions should ensure that wherever possible the integrity of the coastal environment is maintained

Objectives

- Improve public understanding and appreciation of the AONB's marine and coastal environments, and their need for protection and management

- Ensure that comprehensive baseline data on the condition of the Islands' marine and coastal habitats are gathered, managed and made available for state of the AONB monitoring
- Protect the AONB's healthy, clean and safe marine and coastal environments for the benefit of wildlife and people
- Ensure that designated marine and coastal habitats and species attain or maintain favourable condition status
- Ensure the sustainable use of the AONB's marine and coastal environment as an economic resource bringing benefit to the Islands' communities
- Adopt land and waste management practices that minimise the discharge of nutrients, wastes, soil sediments and toxins into the water environment.

Actions

- Produce interpretive/educational materials, guided by the Isles of Scilly AONB Interpretation Strategy, that highlight conservation and enhancement of the marine environment
- Establish and maintain a research programme that informs future management of the AONB's coastal and marine environments, including an understanding of opportunities and challenges such as the potential impacts of, and adaptation to, climate change.
- Prepare sustainable fishery plans within the context of the Marine Bill, establish Marine Conservation Zones, and Natura sites and undertake consultation on Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority boundaries
- Maintain coastal litter collection activities, avoiding bird nesting times, and explore enhanced means of disposing of marine-borne litter

Historic Environment

Vision

Scilly's internationally important historic environment, including terrestrial, marine and intertidal archaeology and historic buildings, is thoroughly understood and contributes to a sustainable Island economy through heritage tourism. Imaginative interpretation and presentation enhance residents' and visitors' appreciation of Scilly's heritage. Research and strategic planning underpin policy and practice for managing heritage resources in the context of climate change and sea-level rise.

Setting the scene

Archaeology

The terrestrial, marine and intertidal archaeology of Scilly is an internationally important cultural resource that is remarkable in its richness and diversity. The Islands have the greatest density of statutorily protected terrestrial sites in Britain. Scilly's 238 Scheduled Monuments represent at least 4000 years of social, economic, cultural and religious activity. Many Scheduled Monuments cover extensive areas such as the entire island of Samson. Statutory protection therefore extends beyond the narrow bounds of individual archaeological sites. Indeed, Scilly's scheduled areas protect over 900 individual sites and the landscape context that underpins our understanding of Scilly's archaeology.

Built Heritage

There are 130 Listed Buildings in Scilly including late medieval and post-medieval castles and fortifications, lighthouses and navigation aids, parish churches and non-conformist chapels, domestic dwellings, public buildings and farm buildings. 10% of Scilly's Listed Buildings are in the top two categories (Grade I or Grade II*) compared with an average of 6% on the mainland. Important historic buildings without a listing designation are also common in Scilly. The close relationship between the Islands' built and natural environments resulted in the whole of Scilly being designated as a Conservation Area in 1975.

Special Features

- Exceptional Bronze Age settlements, field systems and ceremonial landscapes
- Cliff castles and a high status burial on Bryher link the Islands to the family of Atlantic communities in later prehistory
- A rare Romano-British shrine at Nornour connects Scilly to the Roman world
- Early medieval cist cemeteries, chapels and settlements are of national importance
- Medieval castles and earthworks are of international and national importance
- Post-medieval industrial archaeology including evidence for kelp-burning and ship-building; industries that indicate economic adaptation through time
- An estimated 700-1000 historic shipwrecks including 3 Protected Wreck Sites
- Conservation Area featuring vernacular, religious and public architecture

- Scilly's maritime history is of international importance, including the 1707 wreck of the British naval fleet on the Western Rocks leading to the parliamentary prize for resolution of the longitude dilemma
- The modern archipelago is the remnant of an ancient drowned landscape

Issues and Challenges

Deterioration of buildings

While many historic houses, agricultural buildings, glasshouses and gig sheds are still in use, a significant number are not used and are in danger of being lost as economic and cultural resources. Appropriate uses are required for these buildings if they are to continue to make their important contribution to the character of the Scillonian landscape.

The cost of repairing and maintaining historic buildings poses a challenge in Scilly. The English Heritage-funded Isles of Scilly Grant Scheme that operated between 1999 and 2007 provided much needed financial support to islanders and organisations. There is now a need to identify alternative funding for repair to key historic buildings in Scilly.

Designations and Heritage Management Policy

It is likely that legislation on scheduled monuments, listed buildings and historic parks and gardens will be amended during the period 2009-2014. Heritage Protection Reform initiated by English Heritage advocates an integrated register of historic assets along with a more prominent role for local expertise and public engagement in heritage management. While the Heritage Protection Bill may not now proceed in its planned form²², it is likely that existing core principles such as sustainability will underpin historic environment management in England and will be enshrined in proposed reform of Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment and Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning. In Scilly partnership work on landscape monitoring, on English Heritage's Heritage at Risk Register and in pursuit of key objectives identified in the South West Archaeological Research Framework exemplify two essential principles of heritage management: namely, collaboration between stakeholders and the monitoring of heritage resources.

The National Heritage Act 2002 extended English Heritage's management remit to include protection of all archaeology from mean low water to the 12 nautical mile off-shore limit. English Heritage's policy document *Taking to the Water*²³ outlines mechanisms for researching and recording designated and non-designated sites. As a first step English Heritage commissioned a Rapid Coastal Zone Assessment that characterised Scilly's coastal and marine archaeology and the challenges raised by its management. In 2009 Cornwall County Historic Environment Service and partners will begin the three-year *Lyonesse Project* designed to further evaluate the nature and status of Scilly's drowned prehistoric and historic landscape.

²² As economic recession deepened during 2008 the draft Heritage Protection Bill lost its place on the parliamentary schedule.

²³ *Taking to the Water: English Heritage's Initial Policy on the Management of Maritime Archaeology in England* (English Heritage 2002)

English Heritage and the Council of the Isles of Scilly jointly employ a Historic Environment Field Adviser (HEFA). The HEFA monitors the condition of Scheduled Monuments and is therefore instrumental in implementing English Heritage's programme of evaluating monuments at risk.

Trinity House maintains its own buildings which include the Islands' lighthouses and daymarks. Installation of photovoltaic panels on the Bishop Rock Lighthouse in 2008 is a welcome sign of the spreading renewable energy agenda, yet is also a reminder of the need to conserve the Islands' historic environment including Scilly's lighthouses, all of which are listed buildings.

Land Management

Management of the historic environment in the context of environmental stewardship schemes will be a significant factor during the next five years. More specifically, land management in Scilly must accommodate habitat management, economic diversification, tourism, public access and management of the historic environment. In this context conservation grazing has helped significantly to conserve and enhance biodiversity, to support tourism by maintaining public access to heathland and to Scilly's exceptional historic environment, and to enhance opportunities for archaeological research, management, interpretation and public presentation.

Planning and Development Control

The impact of development on the historic environment is robustly monitored in national planning policy (most notably Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning and Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment) and through local planning frameworks (for example, in Policies 1 and 2 of The Isles of Scilly Local Plan and through definition of a local design palette in The Isles of Scilly Design Guide). The Local Planning Authority values very highly the consultation advice of the AONB Planning Consultative Panel, especially in relation to development that would impact on traditional buildings or that would adversely affect the AONB, Conservation Area and Heritage Coast. The Local Authority and English Heritage co-fund a Historic Environment Adviser with responsibility for conservation planning and archaeological management in Scilly.

The Cornwall and Scilly Urban Survey charts the development of Hugh Town and identifies opportunities for heritage-led regeneration. One area where such an approach would make a significant difference to the character of the AONB would be redevelopment of Hugh Town's streetscape, reintroducing some of the character details that have been superseded through unsympathetic development. Implementation of the Porthcressa Regeneration Masterplan is an immediate context in which heritage-led regeneration can be tested.

Sustainable Heritage Tourism

Support for sustainable tourism is essential as the Islands' communities work to ensure that tourism retains its prominent position within the local economy. The historic environment has significant visitor appeal and stakeholders have the opportunity to develop heritage tourism on the Islands. Heritage tourism projects are also supported by the Isles of Scilly Local Action Group which has secured £2.25 m funding through the Rural Development Programme for England.

Awareness and interpretation

Interpretation of the historic environment of Scilly is extensive and includes guidebooks, such as 'Scilly's Building Heritage' and 'Scilly's Archaeological Heritage', leaflets and interpretation panels. Hugh Town's Museum has a large collection of artefacts and acts as an indispensable guide for both visitors and residents. The Longstone Heritage Centre also interprets some aspects of Scilly's heritage. On Tresco the Abbey Garden Visitor Centre features recently installed displays on the garden and its history.

The AONB Interpretation Strategy acknowledges the diversity of interpretation available on the heritage of Scilly, and identifies gaps in coverage and a programme of enhancements to provide a more comprehensive and integrated approach to interpretation of its historic environment.

Education

The historic environment is well-established as an educational resource, both in terms of formal education (primary, secondary, tertiary, life-long learning) and in terms of day-to-day understanding of place, tradition and culture. The Isles of Scilly AONB Interpretation Strategy promotes enhanced appreciation of the Islands' historic environment by different interest groups within the local community, amongst visitors and in the context of formal education.

Island Identity

The historic environment is a significant reference point in the formation of island identity. Local communities draw on the richness and diversity of the Islands' archaeological and historical resources in expressing their identities both within the context of relations across the archipelago and also in communicating a sense of belonging and cultural well-being to the wider world.

Climate change

Scilly's historic environment is already threatened by sea-level rise, storm surge and saline intrusion, and coastal loss is likely to accelerate in the medium- and long-term. AONB Partners such as English Heritage will play a lead role in monitoring the pattern and rate of coastal erosion and devising measures for mitigating impact on the historic environment. One of the objectives of English Heritage's *Defending the Isles of Scilly Project* (2008-2010) is to evaluate the threat to scheduled military monuments of coastal retreat. The research agenda established by such projects must be pursued if the Islands' historic environment is to be conserved or at least preserved by record in the event of inevitable coastline loss. The value of the historic environment as a cultural resource, as a touchstone of island identity and as an economic resource in the context of heritage tourism must also be a significant consideration in the development of a revised Shoreline Management Plan for the Isles of Scilly.

Funding Opportunities

Capital expenditure is required to maintain the quality and character of the historic environment, while investment in training and education will aid sustainable management of the Islands' heritage resources. The Isles of Scilly Local Action Group delivery plan identifies projects that enhance management of the historic environment, including improved strategic management of the landscape with an

increase in the amount of land actively managed in an environmentally sensitive manner and improved access to the terrestrial and marine environment including enhanced interpretation of historic resources.

Guiding Principle

- The development control system and land management practices should be used effectively to protect, conserve and enhance Silly's historic environment.

Objectives

- Improve public understanding and appreciation of the AONB's historic landscape and seascape.
- Secure sustainable management of the AONB's historic environment including its scheduled monuments, listed buildings and non-designated sites and landscapes.
- Ensure that comprehensive baseline data on the condition of the Islands' archaeological and historical resources are available for state of the AONB monitoring.
- Promote the sustainable use of the AONB's historic environment as an economic resource bringing benefit to the Islands' communities
- Ensure that development of St Mary's Harbour is sensitive to the historic landscape of the AONB

Actions

- Produce an archaeological research framework for the Isles of Scilly
- Secure an implementation of the Porthcressa Regeneration Masterplan that enhances the historic character of the AONB
- Establish a land management focus group charged with fostering sustainable relationships between farming, forestry, biodiversity, historic environment, tourism and recreation
- Produce interpretation that explains the historic environment to residents, farmers and visitors, guided by the Isles of Scilly AONB Interpretation Strategy
- Secure funding for training and skills enhancement in the fields of heritage tourism and historic landscape management
- Map and assess the state of Scilly's farmed land including boundaries

Agriculture and Landscape Management

Vision

The Islands support a sustainable farming industry that identifies opportunity and manages change especially in the context of agri-environmental stewardship schemes and business planning. Land management practices and stewardship are characterised by conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and the historic environment.

Setting the scene

Introduction

Farming is the dominant land use in Scilly and continues to provide income for farmers on all the inhabited Islands. Flower farming is the main agricultural activity and the most economically advantageous for farmers. There is also a small amount of livestock farming, including cattle and pigs. Farming is supported by the Single Payment Scheme, which greatly simplifies the CAP mechanism, and by the Rural Development Programme for England which provides funding through agri-environment schemes. However, in contrast to many EU farmers, Scillonian agriculture has survived for many decades with little or no market based intervention. This has had the effect of making local farmers very responsive to changes in the market and less vulnerable to the removal of subsidies.

The Islands are designated as Severely Disadvantaged Land²⁴ within a Less Favoured Area (LFA)²⁵. LFA status led to the development of the Isles of Scilly Special Project, a DEFRA funded project through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) with additional measures to accommodate the particular conditions found in Scilly. Take-up of this stewardship project was good with 60-70% of eligible land covered by an agreement - mainly the larger farms with cultivated fields.

In 2008 a Natural England proposal set out the case for a landscape management project in Scilly under the Higher Level Scheme (HLS) of Environmental Stewardship (ES)²⁶ to succeed the expiring agreements under the Isles of Scilly Special Project. The Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust and Tresco Estate have already entered the Higher Level Scheme in advance of the development of any proposed Scilly-specific stewardship scheme expected during 2009/2010.

²⁴ Severely Disadvantaged Land means land;

- Which is, in the opinion of the appropriate Minister, inherently suitable for extensive livestock production but not for the production of crops in quantity materially greater than that necessary to feed such livestock as are capable of being maintained on such land, and
- Whose agricultural production is, in the opinion of the appropriate Minister, severely restricted in its range by, or by a combination of soil, relief, aspect or climate, or
- Land situated in the Isles of Scilly

(source: DEFRA: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/uplands/land-classification.htm>)

²⁵ Scilly is classified as a Less Favoured Area in accordance with Article 20 of *EC Regulation 1257/1999* (the Rural Development Regulation - RDR)

²⁶ *A Proposed Landscape Management Project under Environmental Stewardship on the Isles of Scilly*, Natural England, 2008.

The Objective One funded Specific Project for Agriculture on Scilly focused on flower marketing, improving the image and profile of Scilly's flower products, management of a capital grant scheme (especially encouraging enhanced supply chain, training and research), management of a shared machinery scheme, increasing the use of ICT in farming in Scilly and a red meat and dairy feasibility study. Ongoing studies commissioned under the auspices of the Specific Project for Agriculture on Scilly²⁷ seek to establish:

- the baseline condition of farming in Scilly
- branding of Scilly produce
- feasibility of an abattoir and meat processing on the Islands

Remnant Flower Crops

Remnant flower crops such as Whistling Jacks, Arum Lilies and Belladonna Lilies create wonderful displays of colour in lightly managed non-commercial fields, hedgerows and scattered in disparate locations around the Islands. They make a positive contribution to the character of the farmed landscape and preserve, in a vital manner, aspects of Scilly's farming heritage.

Contribution to Economy

The farming industry still plays an important economic role in Scilly, although now accounting for a much smaller percentage of the economy than in its heyday. The cropping patterns of the flower industry complement those of the Islands' main economic activity, tourism, with 'picking' providing winter season work. However, there is an increasing demand for higher level skills in web marketing and call centre work.

The Islands' farming community currently consists of approximately 20-30 active farms, all tenanted from the Duchy of Cornwall. A survey of agricultural employment patterns in 2001 /02 revealed that there are 72 people employed on a full time basis in agriculture, 44 on a part time basis and 101 seasonal employees²⁸ (source *Pers comm* A. May – Mainland Marketing *check if this needs updating*).

Sales point for flowers & bulbs	Estimated value (in millions) in 2001/02
Mainland markets	£1.3 - £1.4
Farm gate	£0.1 - £0.4
Local sales/farm shop	£0.1

These figures do not include sales figures for 'Scent from the Islands', a direct sales flower bouquet company who distribute 60,000 units per year. There is also a small

²⁷ *Specific Project for Agriculture on Scilly. Studies to investigate the capacity for change in farms on the Isles of Scilly, Draft interim report, August 2008.*

²⁸ *Pers Comm Andrew May, Mainland Marketing*

market for locally produced food crops, but there are no available figures for this *(check if this needs updating)*.

Increasingly, tourism is providing the dominant proportion of farm incomes, with most farms having holiday-let accommodation.

Livestock farming

Traditionally, farms on Scilly would have had a diversity of farming activity which included some livestock alongside flowers and other crops. Cattle were important, not just as a source of food, but also to graze the heathlands and grasslands and maintain biodiversity. More recently, livestock farming has declined not least because there is no abattoir on the Islands and the cost of transport to the mainland is prohibitive. Ensuring high quality animal welfare in transit to mainland slaughter is a further disincentive to livestock farming in Scilly. The Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust has reintroduced cattle to heathland areas within its tenanted land to control gorse and scrub, but there is still a lack of infrastructure to market meat products locally.

Capacity for change in farming in Scilly

Current research²⁹ is seeking to establish the baseline condition of farming in Scilly and its capacity for change in relation to flower farming, livestock management (including on-Island slaughter and meat processing), and niche marketing of the Scilly brand (including on-line marketing). The AONB Partnership is committed to supporting transitions in farming that lead to sustainable management of the AONB designation and to stability and security in the farming industry.

Special Features

- Favourable climate for flower farming
- Relatively long growing season
- Support mechanisms through agri-environment schemes
- Varied agricultural landscape with hedgerows and shelter belts providing protection for crops
- Skill and knowledge base on the Islands including significant expertise in both growing and marketing
- Symbiosis with tourism industry

Issues and challenges

Flower Farming

Commercial flower farmers export bulbs and quality scented flowers, mainly narcissi, to mainland business markets and consumers. In a highly competitive market with strong foreign suppliers, Scilly's flower growers are working hard to retain their share of the market. Although most flower farms are now trading profitably, farmers in Scilly are disadvantaged by the burden of high costs incurred when operating from an Island location. The small-scale of farms also means that critical mass and

²⁹ Specific Project for Agriculture on Scilly. Studies to investigate the capacity for change in farms on the Isles of Scilly, Draft interim report, August 2008.

economies of scale are more difficult to achieve. This challenging economic situation is having a negative impact on the character of the Islands' landscape, particularly on the off-Islands where a number of unmanaged fields are reverting to scrub with the loss of habitat for rare arable weeds.

The last 3 years (2005–2008) have seen the prices achieved by local growers for their flowers increase. There are many reasons for this but underlying them is the reversal of the trend seen over the previous 12 -15 years of the consumer's desire for low price 'standard' imports. In demand now are local products, with a unique selling proposition (scent, quality and seasonality in the case of Scilly's flowers)

While the flower industry dominates the farmed landscape, commercial flower growers use break crops and green manure on anything from a 6 month to 5 year rotation, with cattle sometimes used in this rotation. Although most farmers today use chemical fertilisers, seaweed was traditionally used for providing both nutrients and humus to the Islands' predominantly poor acid soil, a practice which continues in a very limited fashion today.

A number of techniques have been developed by Trenoweth Horticultural Centre to improve the profitability of the flower industry. These include recommendations relating to planting depth and density, and the use of plastic sheeting and burning to manipulate crop growth and extend the duration of the picking season. The use of plastic has cost implications for the farmer and has a visual impact on the landscape. Unwanted plastic is also difficult to dispose of in an environmentally sustainable manner. However, in Scilly clear polythene is used for only short periods each season, is reused for up to 10 years and is then sent to Cornwall for re-cycling.

The future of agricultural research post-closure of the Trenoweth Horticultural Centre

The Trenoweth Horticultural Centre has played a pivotal role in researching agricultural techniques that are specifically suited to Scilly. The Centre is due for closure in late 2009 leaving a gap in the management of farming in Scilly. Feasibility studies are being carried out on future uses for the Trenoweth site. While it is important that all redundant infra-structure finds a new use, it is possible that the needs of agricultural research might be better served at another site on the Islands. The AONB Partnership is therefore committed:

- to identifying productive ways of progressing agricultural research in Scilly
- to establishing a future use for the Trenoweth site that is in keeping with the character of the AONB

Availability of land

One of the most challenging issues facing farmers is the lack of available land for adequate crop rotation. Whilst more land would not necessarily expand growth of narcissi it would improve results by allowing the land to rest. The planting of break crops or use for animal husbandry aids diversification efforts and also increases soil fertility. Rotation also reduces crop loss or failure due to disease and eelworm as it has on larger mainland farms. Narcissi from the Islands are on the whole of significantly higher quality than those grown in Cornwall and Lincolnshire; a fact that is widely recognised in many market places.

There is concern over potential pollution of the water supply from agricultural chemicals e.g. eelworm pesticides may affect marine life and may contaminate borehole supply when used in water table collection areas.

Livestock

Small cattle herds are currently managed by the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust through their conservation grazing scheme, Tresco Estate and a number of tenant farmers. Some sheep, pigs and chickens are also kept. Research under the auspices of the Specific Project for Agriculture on Scilly³⁰ is assessing the feasibility and economic viability of expanding commercially farmed stock and the economic case for an abattoir. In addition to broadening the economic base of farming within the Islands this initiative could:

- Bring unmanaged fields back into use as grazing ground
- Improve the condition of the Islands' heathland through grazing
- Support the development of local 'added value' products, and improve the Islands' self sufficiency in meat products
- Improve animal welfare by removing the necessity for travel to the mainland for slaughter
- Improve land for flower production

However, the economic challenges for enhancing livestock infrastructure are considerable. The carrying capacity for cattle in Scilly is approximately 150 head³¹ including those already managed by the Wildlife Trust and other farmers. Split between farms on all Islands, this would average about eight cattle per farmer and even with financial assistance from the HLS there would be minimal profitability per farm with existing values and costs. Currently (2009), cattle are valued at around £800, and this figure would need to increase to around £1500 through adding value to the local product, and supported by enhanced local infrastructure, including an abattoir on Scilly, to make it financially worthwhile for most farmers. With proper support and coordination (through establishing a land management focus group) and the improvement of infrastructure, funded through the LAG, livestock farming could have an economically viable future as part of a diversified land management framework.

The continuing availability of large animal veterinary services will be vital if there is to be an increase in animal husbandry on the Islands. In this respect the formation of the Isles of Scilly Veterinary Support Group and the approval of planning consent for a new veterinary surgery at Old Town on St Mary's are significant recent developments.

Horticulture and specialist crops

The viability of alternative crops and farm products have been explored in the past with the development of a small vineyard, lavender, herbs, asparagus, willow and nettle crops and free range chickens. Trenoweth Horticultural Centre has played a leading role in the development of alternative cultivated crops and in studying environmental issues linked to agriculture in Scilly. The primary focus of its work has

³⁰ *Specific Project for Agriculture on Scilly. Studies to investigate the capacity for change in farms on the Isles of Scilly, Draft interim report, August 2008.*

³¹ Pers comm. Chris Gregory, Duchy of Cornwall.

been the financial return from traditional flower crops. Water shortage also impacts on land use. Despite the availability of land and specialist knowledge, those interested in vegetable growing cannot seriously contemplate this venture until the issue of water supply is addressed. Greater knowledge of market opportunities is also a significant factor. If, in future, alternative crops are to succeed it is likely that an organic soil improver will be needed to improve the humus content and quality of the soil. Alternative crops may also ultimately suffer the same difficulties as the flower industry if they rely on mainland markets.

Biodiversity

To date Scilly's small fields, which limit modern farming techniques, and the land management methods used in bulb and flower farming have resulted in the preservation of important, nationally rare, arable weeds such as Western Ramping-Fumitory. The move away from productive field management threatens the diversity of wildlife that farmland is able to support as less robust species are pushed out by hardy scrub and bracken invaders. Highly valuable locations in which rare arable weeds grow are also under threat. Without frequent cultivation sites will be lost, with the possibility that endemic species will become extinct. **See *Biodiversity and Geodiversity***

Trees

Scilly has largely been a treeless environment since the end of the Iron Age and the relatively open character that this produces is a key feature of the landscape. The Islands' few trees are therefore a distinctive feature in their own right. Monterey Pine and Cypress shelterbelts were planted primarily under the direction of T.A Dorrien-Smith to provide shelter for the flower fields and gardens on Tresco. Many are now in need of replanting due to severe damage inflicted by storms in the 1980s and the age of the trees themselves. Elms continue to thrive thanks to the prevention of the introduction of Dutch Elm disease to the Islands. Elms create attractive covered arches along some of the narrow lanes at the northern end of St Mary's. Traditional pollard management of the elms has stopped, however, leaving trees vulnerable to wind blow. An Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP), and the woodland management plan described below, will help to prioritise action to protect this valuable resource.

Agriculture and the Historic Environment

While there is very limited use of heavy machinery and deep-ploughing in Scilly, the potential for farming to impact on buried archaeology is still real. For example, an Iron Age sword and mirror burial was discovered on Bryher in 1999 when a modern tractor was working the field. A balance must be struck between mitigation of potential damage to archaeological remains and enhancement of knowledge through chance discoveries arising from agricultural activity. **See *Historic Environment***

Field Boundaries

Crops are protected from strong Atlantic winds by stone walls, locally called hedges, and green vegetative hedges, known locally as fences. These boundaries are a particularly characteristic feature of Scilly's farmed landscape and most vegetative hedges are protected under the Hedgerow Regulations. As boundaries account for a high proportion per acre of Scilly's small fields, cropping is generally carried out as close to boundaries as equipment allows. It is possible that some field boundaries

date back to the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age (4000-5000 years ago) and so have historic as well as landscape value. Not only are the Islands' walling techniques believed to be distinct from those used on the mainland but they are also thought to differ from Island to Island. Some field systems are in disrepair. With the progressive loss of traditional dry-stone walling skills, some field boundaries are losing their traditional character.

As well as significantly contributing to landscape character and improving agricultural viability, effectively managed boundaries also prevent soil erosion and provide a habitat for wildlife, contributing to biodiversity and potentially to farm economies by attracting bird-watchers.

Farm Holdings

Over the last 30 years the number and size of farm holdings has changed significantly. There has been a general decline in the number of holdings and any one farming family may now manage an increased number of holdings, whereas previously the same number of holdings would have supported several families. Farmers seeking to increase their holdings or holding size are generally doing so in an attempt to achieve economies of scale.

Year	Number of Holdings
1959	124
1967	105
1971	85
2002	60

Farming families have traditionally been very important in terms of maintaining local services and schools. They have provided labour for Island jobs such as road building and maintenance, and loading of boats at Island quays. This still occurs to some degree, particularly on the off-Islands. However, the future viability of family farms is uncertain due to the changing nature of the Islands' social structure with higher levels of new residents, the dominance of the tourism industry in the Islands' economy, the challenging economics facing Scilly's farmers, and the educational and wider career opportunities available to Scilly's up and coming generation. It is uncertain how these changes in economics, land management and community services will impact on the landscape of the AONB. If farming is to remain profitable it is likely that in future there will be fewer but larger agricultural holdings, or a necessity for small farmers to work together as a co-operative. The future of farming and farm structure in Scilly depends on the vision of the Duchy of Cornwall and its tenants.

Proposed Landscape Management Project using Environmental Stewardship on the Isles of Scilly

Natural England's proposed environmental stewardship scheme for Scilly would establish the conditions in which sustainable management of the environment would be secured during a period of transition in the Islands' farming practices. The proposed stewardship scheme would be the context in which diversification of

horticultural crops, expansion of livestock management, animal slaughter, meat processing, niche marketing and branding of local produce could be delivered in an environmentally and economically sustainable manner.

Development

Traditional agricultural buildings contribute significantly to Scilly's landscape character. Should an agricultural use no longer be available for a building, any proposal for conversion must conserve the historic character of the building and its surrounding area³². In recent years a number of Fingle Farm-style timber barns have been constructed in Scilly. While vertical timber boarding is now accepted as part of the Islands' vernacular³³, there is concern that proliferation of timber barns is eroding the character of the AONB's farming landscape. However, on balance, a carefully sited timber barn of modest proportions and constructed using sustainably sourced timber can meet the needs of the farming community without compromising the AONB designation.

The control of polytunnel development is also important in the AONB. While discretely sited, small-scale polytunnels have been consented in recent years, planning informatives make it clear that such permissions do not set the precedent for consenting larger or inappropriately sited polytunnel developments.

Conservation of historic field patterns is an essential consideration when determining planning applications for new dwellings, extensions and farm buildings.

See *Development and Regeneration*

Management of shelter belts and woodland

Because substantial areas of Scilly are devoid of trees, shelter belts and woodland are often overlooked as essential characteristics of the Islands' landscape. It is therefore timely that the Duchy of Cornwall has commissioned a tree audit and is developing a woodland management plan which should be published during the lifetime of this plan. For their part Tresco Estate and the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust have developed tree planting/management schemes. The AONB Partnership is committed to supporting management of woodland and shelter belts that delivers biodiversity habitat, secure management of archaeological resources, economic opportunity and, where appropriate, recreational access. **See *Biodiversity and Geodiversity***

Integrated land management

The Duchy of Cornwall prepares Integrated Land Management Plans (ILMPs) for its farms and estates on the mainland. So far, no plans have been prepared for farms in Scilly. ILMPs describe the resources of the estate and the actions needed to manage the land and conserve any landscape, biodiversity or heritage features. They are also prepared in partnership with other organisations to ensure compliance with

³² Guidance on sympathetic conversion of farm buildings is provided in *The Conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings: a Guide to Good Practice* (English Heritage 2006) and *Living Buildings in a Living Landscape: Finding a Future for Traditional Farm Buildings* (English Heritage and the Countryside Agency 2006)

³³ *Isles of Scilly Design Guide*, Council of the Isles of Scilly, 2006.

other land management strategies and legislative requirements. The Duchy's long term strategy is to prepare an ILMP for its Scilly estate.

Climate change and water management

Attempts to diversify horticultural crops and to expand livestock herds are hampered by limited water supplies, especially on some of the off-Islands. If the possible effects of climate change in Scilly include saline intrusion and drought, the challenges faced by farmers are set to grow.

Guiding Principles

- Support initiatives that encourage a thriving and sustainable agricultural industry as part of a broad-based local economy.
- Manage the traditional agricultural landscape, its small-enclosed fields, boundaries and the open character of enclosed pastureland that maintain or enhance biodiversity.

Objectives

- Promote a mixed farming economy, based on high quality food production, and extensive livestock rearing with high standards of animal welfare, as a primary mechanism to restore and maintain heathland habitats through co-ordinated local grazing schemes.
- Adopt farm practices that aid conservation of buried archaeology *in situ* and the notification of discoveries of archaeological interest on farmland to the Islands' Historic Environment Field Advisor.
- Undertake research into agricultural practices and diversification, particularly where it benefits the Islands' environment.
- Develop co-ordinated baseline data relating to the state of farmed land, including boundaries and access networks, and support the environmentally sensitive management of Scilly's farmed landscape by helping farmers to access appropriate advice and funding through a farm advisory service.
- Maintain stable populations of Scilly's rare arable/bulb strip weed species within the context of an active flower farming industry
- Establish high quality local food initiatives including processing and product development, working to increase awareness in residents and visitors of the environmental, economic and social benefits of buying local produce.
- Ensure that boundaries of historic, aesthetic and conservation importance maintain their character
- Improve understanding of integrated landscape management and the diverse as well as the shared requirements of conservation, agriculture, tourism and recreation
- Ensure the sustainable management of Scilly's woodland and shelter belts

Actions

- Establish a research programme into the effects of climate change in Scilly, disseminate research results to the Islands' community and stakeholders and foster strategies for sustainable adaptation and mitigation of the effects of climate change

- Establish a land management focus group charged with fostering sustainable relationships between farming, forestry, biodiversity, historic environment, tourism and recreation
- Establish an abattoir in the context of sustainable economic development that conserves and enhances the AONB
- Produce a farm information pack providing information on management of boundaries, cultivation of non-productive flower fields, protection of historic features, etc, and work closely with farmers to achieve higher quality in land management for biodiversity, landscape and historic environment.
- Prepare an Integrated Landscape Management Plan for the Duchy of Cornwall estate with individual plans for each farm.
- Prepare and implement a Woodland Management Plan for the Duchy of Cornwall estate.

Section 3: Sustainable Communities

Community – Living and Working

Vision

All sections of the Islands' diverse community have access to high quality services and facilities, fulfilling employment, and affordable housing, goods and transport. The Islands' community works to derive social and economic benefit from activities that conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB. The benefits that businesses derive from the Islands' exceptional environment are recognized, celebrated and safeguarded.

Setting the scene

The Community

The Islands' permanent population has remained fairly static at around 2000 for the last 20 years with approximately 1600 people living on St Mary's, the largest and most populated island. The 2001 census shows the population as 2153 people.

Many old Scillonian families have been on the Islands since the 17th century when their ancestors came to Scilly during the Civil War. These established families are fiercely proud of their credentials. Scillonians are now in the minority due to the influx of people moving to Scilly to take up employment or to retire.

The population of Scilly is ageing with many of its younger people moving to the mainland and older people retiring to the islands. However, there is a seasonal shift in the demographic profile of the resident population with a summer influx of young seasonal staff to support the tourism industry.

St Mary's acts as the Islands' hub for service provision. While Hugh Town, the centre of administration, is inevitably busier than other parts of the Islands, it retains a sense of tranquillity rarely seen in commercial centres and its historic buildings are a major attribute of the AONB. Although quieter than St Mary's the off-islands are also dynamic and have their own distinct atmospheres.

The Five Islands School comprises four primary bases, one on each inhabited Island except for Bryher, whose pupils travel to Tresco School, and one secondary base on St Mary's. Pupils are educated in Scilly up to the age of 16 after which those wishing to continue in formal education enrol in mainland schools or Further Education Colleges funded through the Learning Skills Council. During term time the Islands inevitably suffer a gap in the 16-18 year age group. However, the 18-25 year age group is also under-represented as a high proportion of the Islands' young people continue into higher education. Funding has been secured for the building of a combined primary and secondary base on St Mary's with a projected completion date of 2011.

Business

Sustainable economic development hinges on three factors: continued prosperity of the tourism sector, the enhancement and diversification of traditional activities such as farming, and the development of new businesses including the knowledge-based economy. Under Priority 4 of the Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Convergence Operational Programme 2007-13 (OP) "Penzance and the Isles of Scilly are identified as areas that require limited, specific actions to unlock significant economic opportunities and thereby realise their potential"³⁴

The values of the AONB would support the reinvigoration of traditional economic activities such as fishing and boat building. It also supports business initiatives that have a benefit to the Islands' natural, cultural or historic resources, for example arts and crafts initiatives using local materials, the production of value added food and drink products, or ventures that improve residents' and visitors' understanding of Scilly's environment. Where areas of economic infrastructure already exist, such as Porthmellon Industrial Estate and Pendrathen Quarry, work to improve their appearance will be supported.

New employment opportunities can be provided in old buildings and the Duchy tries to make these available where need arises, sometimes with accommodation included. There is concern from some artists about oversupply of arts and crafts products but there appears still to be demand from tourists.

Service Provision

The Council of the Isles of Scilly is a Unitary Authority responsible for the majority of services on the Islands including education, highways, waste management and St Mary's Airport. Some Council functions such as housing are delivered through contractual partnership arrangements with mainland authorities. The Islands have also developed links with mainland organisations to assist in the delivery of health care. The Council is the only remaining public water authority in the UK and is responsible for the public water supply, a mixture of borehole and desalinated water on St Mary's and Bryher. On the other Islands water supply is the responsibility of the Duchy of Cornwall and Tresco Estate and their supplies are reliant on borehole water. There are issues of adequacy and quality, particularly on St Agnes and St Martin's.

Concessionary fares scheme

A scheme to help with the cost of inter-island transport for the over 60's has been running successfully since 2008. All over 60's have free use of boat services for essential services such as banking and pharmaceutical services. There is also a health scheme which allows over 60's four free trips a year for health care on St Mary's outside regular boat services. There are also proposals to introduce a transport system for the elderly and disabled on St Mary's which would involve the use of a specially adapted bus.

³⁴ *Penzance and the Isles of Scilly Strategic Investment Framework, Consultation Draft, March 2009*, Penwith District Council and the Council of the Isles of Scilly, p.4.

Education and training

The proposed new school on St Mary's will be an important watershed in the development of sustainable communities in Scilly. The low carbon credentials of the school will set high standards for design on the Islands and the resulting school base will be an educational and cultural resource for the Islands' communities.

The AONB Service, the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust and RSPB work with the Five Islands School to deliver 'enrichment sessions' that highlight environmental sustainability, waste management and local produce. Therefore the Islands' young people are aware of the need to be responsible guardians of the environment.

Special Features

- A close and mutually supportive resident community with varied skills
- Limited land resource with high environmental capital
- A range of businesses providing services to residents and tourists
- A varied workforce including resident family businesses and migrant seasonal workers

Issues and challenges

Affordable housing

Affluent mainland-based buyers are attracted to freehold property in Scilly, largely as retirement or second homes. Consequently house prices are driven beyond the reach of most Islanders, the majority of whom earn wages well below the national average. With around 20% of the housing stock taken up as second-homes, properties are infrequently available on the market and high prices mean that many Islanders will never be in a position to afford their own home.

A lack of affordable housing is a significant factor in dictating the resident communities' demographic profile. As young people move away for education and career development, the population becomes increasingly 'top heavy' with an ageing population that places demand on health care services and affects the viability of the Islands' school.

With limited professional opportunities on the Islands, the majority of people who obtain higher education qualifications find employment on the mainland and may never return to live in Scilly. However, some do return and perform relatively menial jobs in order to stay on the Islands.

Policy 3 of the Local Plan seeks to "ensure that housing is available to meet the needs of the community in perpetuity and to promote sustainable communities on the inhabited islands, no general open market housing will be permitted"³⁵ The Local Plan also contains proposals for thirty new homes for local needs or key workers on St Mary's³⁶, of which 6 have been built at Normandy. Planning consent has also been

³⁵ Policy 3 (1), *Isles of Scilly Local Plan. A 2020 Vision*, Council of the Isles of Scilly, November 2005.

³⁶ Proposals A1-A3, *Isles of Scilly Local Plan. A 2020 Vision*, Council of the Isles of Scilly, November 2005.

granted for two affordable dwellings each on Bryher, St Agnes and St Martin's, again in accordance with the Local Plan³⁷. The AONB Partnership supports development for affordable local needs housing that does not adversely affect the character of the AONB designation.

Business development

Business development on the Islands is severely constrained by their isolation, by the limitations of transport between the islands, and between Scilly and the mainland. There is a desire among many business owners to keep their business static with a steady income, driven largely by tourism numbers that had, until recently, remained constant. The recent decline in tourism signals a need to reconsider this position and explore new business initiatives. The Council of the Isles of Scilly offers support through EU funded schemes to help with business development and to provide training for new skills.

A significant issue for many businesses is the lack of ICT skills, a lack of ICT infrastructure and inadequate bandwidth to support website development. For isolated communities such as Scilly ICT is crucial for the efficient and effective running of business activity and for businesses to be competitive in a national and international market. Home working, video conferencing and more detailed ICT applications such as a coordination system for inter-island boat services, would all help to make businesses more effective and competitive. The Council's ICT training programme is well subscribed and many have taken advantage of courses that help to fill skills gaps. The Convergence Programme will continue to support the development of a more 'knowledge based' economy for the duration of the plan, and other opportunities will be sought to help with business development and integration.

Training programmes also exist for customer care and other visitor and tourism related activity. Visitor surveys have shown that customer care does not always meet expectation which can directly impact on business success. Again, training programmes will continue to be offered during the lifetime of this plan.

It is not always the case that young people want to leave the Islands after their formal education. Many, in fact, wish to stay and help run family businesses such as boat operation and fishing. Again the provision of skills and information to help develop businesses in a competitive environment helps considerably to keep young people in Scilly.

Data collection and the provision of information for business owners are poorly developed on the Islands. A newsletter exists for service providers but there is opportunity to expand this to an information newsletter for all businesses. Very little data is collected on business performance and none is used to help with development and marketing.

The Council of the Isles of Scilly is the major employer on the islands, employing 37% of Islands' workforce, a percentage far higher than most mainland regions, though reflecting the high influx of visitors. With limited accommodation available for

³⁷ Proposal A, Paragraph 60, *Isles of Scilly Local Plan. A 2020 Vision*, Council of the Isles of Scilly, November 2005.

residents this clearly puts pressure on other businesses to attract new staff from the mainland.

A key challenge for all businesses in Scilly is to find ways of 'adding value' to their activities and products in order to enhance competitiveness and to increase profit margins. The use of the Scilly 'brand' is an important component of this, and there is also opportunity for marketing local foods and products and distinctive local services. The Convergence Programme can help to develop a higher value added economy to help with the long term economic regeneration of the Islands.

See Development and regeneration

Guiding principles

- The implementation of planning policy should aim at enabling vibrant communities to prosper sustainably on each inhabited island with access to good shops and services.
- Enable development that ensures the provision of affordable housing which respects the character of the islands and meets local community needs.
- There should be a presumption for the retention and development of traditional employment sectors such as maritime industries, fishing and agriculture, and for business with low environmental impact.

Objectives

- Encourage the development of well-paid year-round employment opportunities, a thriving small business sector and high environmental performance standards in local businesses.
- Support business development initiatives that have beneficial links with the Islands' natural, historic and cultural resources.
- Encourage appropriate economic and cultural development that recognises and respects the character of each of the islands.
- Provide opportunities to develop land management and conservation skills in the local labour force through paid or voluntary schemes that lead to enhanced job prospects and better quality management.

Actions

- Develop a strategy for the promotion of local produce and products, including foods and crafts, and establish and implement a local products marketing scheme.
- Support the sustainable management of Doily's Wood as a teaching and learning resource. Investigate the development of other outdoor learning venues.
- Establish an annual forum and advisory /implementation groups to ensure community involvement in the management of the AONB

Tourism, Recreation and Access

Vision

The benefits and opportunities that tourism derives from the Islands' environment are recognised, celebrated and safeguarded. Tourism remains at the forefront of the Islands' economy by defending and enhancing its traditional strengths and by responding creatively to new challenges and opportunities in the tourism sector.

The extensive network of permissive footpaths within the AONB is managed to allow residents and visitors easy access to the natural and historic landscape. Recreational facilities are enhanced by maximising opportunities arising from developments that conserve the character and qualities of the AONB. Access and recreation encourage participation by all and are sensitive to the needs of all users and interest groups.

Setting the scene

85% of Scilly's economy is tourism-related with 37% of the Islands' PAYE employees working in the tourism sector³⁸. Tourism attracts about 90,000-100,000 visitors per year³⁹, around 50 times the resident population of the Islands. Repeat visitors account for 65%-75% of tourists, the majority of whom are over 45 years old. The main attractions for visitors are walking (95%), inter-island boat trips (85%), eating out (80%), wildlife/bird-watching (60%), arts/crafts (30%) and sailing/water sports (20%). 64% of visitors choose Scilly as their main holiday with 48% staying 5-7 days, 9% for 8-10 days and 25% for 11 days or more.

While the main visitor season has traditionally run from Easter to October, initiatives such as the Walk Scilly festival in April and the promotion of winter breaks have begun to extend the season into the shoulder periods. An increasing number of cruise-liner passengers come ashore on Tresco and St Mary's, and Scilly also attracts thousands of visiting yachts, each contributing to the Islands' economy. In addition to direct economic benefit through visitor spending, tourism helps to sustain a broader range of shops, services and entertainment than Scilly's small resident population could support alone.

The Duchy of Cornwall is the principal landowner on the Islands. The Duchy leases untenanted land on the inhabited Islands and all the uninhabited Islands to the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust on a 99-year agreement. There are only 9 miles of adopted highway (on St. Mary's) and no public rights of way in Scilly. The Islands are also exempt from Part I of the CRoW Act 2000 and therefore, in spite of the presence of heathland, there is no open access land. There is, however, an extensive network of permissive footpaths and bridleways maintained by the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust and tenant farmers. Coastal footpaths are particularly popular with residents and visitors.

³⁸ *Positive Next Steps... Tourism Plan Executive Summary*, Council of the Isles of Scilly, p.15.

³⁹ *Ibid*

Most forms of recreation in Scilly involve direct engagement with the Islands' exceptional landscape and seascape. Walking, running, cycling, horse riding and water sports offer residents and visitors the opportunity to become better acquainted with and to appreciate the AONB's outstanding features. Traditional island activities such as horse riding and pilot gig rowing are kept alive and the majority of recreation in Scilly is environmentally sustainable, though footpath erosion, boat engine noise and boat wake erosion of the coastline are challenges.

Special features

- Distinctive natural environment – an archipelago of islands set in a shallow sea, with beautiful views and tranquil beaches.
- Easy access to a huge number of sandy and boulder beaches
- Varied wildlife and habitats with seasonal bird migrations
- Quiet roads, and trails around the islands' coasts
- Local crafts and activities
- Permissive access around the coast and other permissive access routes
- Opportunities to participate in a wide range of recreational activities including walking, cycling, horse-riding and water sports
- Community / reading rooms on off-islands which provide valuable recreation venues
- Free access to historic sites including English Heritage Guardianship sites.
- Extensive programme of guided walks and public talks

Issues and challenges

Tourism economy

The economy of the islands is highly dependent on tourism, accounting for around 85% of income. Tourism is traditionally low paid work although tourism operators and accommodation owners appear to make a reasonable living. Migrant workers are usually low paid and, combined with the cost and limited availability of rented accommodation, can have difficulty working on the Islands and earning an adequate wage.

Green tourism

Since 2004 the Islands' potential as a green tourism destination has been tapped with a dozen accommodation providers now registered as members of the Green Tourism Business Scheme⁴⁰. Visitors repeatedly highlight the Islands' exceptional environment as the primary reason for choosing Scilly as a holiday destination⁴¹. As the Islands' traditional visitors support conservation of Scilly's fragile environment, there is demonstrable potential for the further development of green tourism in Scilly. Indeed, 90% of visitors feel it is important that Scilly enhances its credentials as an environmentally sustainable holiday destination⁴². Furthermore, high profile 'greening' of the Islands' community through, for example, sustainable waste management, energy efficiency and renewable energy generation, would establish a context in which green tourism could flourish.

⁴⁰ Action 12 of the Management Plan (2004-2009) supported the development of a Green Tourism scheme in Scilly.

⁴¹ Isles of Scilly Visitor Survey 2007, Council of the Isles of Scilly.

⁴² Isles of Scilly Visitor Survey 2007, Council of the Isles of Scilly.

Visitors' commitment to conserving the Islands' environment has also prompted the development of small-scale eco-tourism and heritage tourism with several local businesses providing specialist guided holidays or day-tours that highlight the Islands' terrestrial and marine wildlife and archaeology. The passage of migrating birds in spring and autumn also attracts hundreds of birdwatchers at the end of the traditional tourist season. Activities that enhance understanding of the environment without posing a threat to its conservation have an important role to play in the marketing of Scilly as a green destination.

Considerable challenges remain, however, for sustainable tourism on Scilly. Tourism places pressure on the Islands' environment and infrastructure, and its negative impacts include increase in waste, increased demand for water, footpath erosion, wildlife disturbance, increased moorings, increased transport requirements, discharge of sewage into the sea, limited accommodation and impact on building use. There is also the high carbon cost travelling to Scilly. The aspiration holds, though, to lower the impact of tourism on the Islands and to enhance sustainability of resource use. Scilly's exceptional environment is the main attraction for visitors and must be at the heart of future sustainable tourism on the Islands.

Quality of services

Securing the Islands' share of an increasingly competitive tourism market depends on provision of high quality services that meet visitors' expectations. High costs of travel place Scilly at a disadvantage, as too does the high cost of living. At a time of economic recession the tourism sector must be prepared to compete for its share of a potentially changing market. In the current economic climate tourists will be scrutinizing holiday destinations for quality of experience and value for money. Research is required to establish the capacity and desire of Island businesses to extend the season, looking particularly at the gap in visitor numbers that often exists between Easter and the May bank holiday.

High standards are essential in all accommodation types – top-range hotels, holiday lets, time share, bed and breakfast, camping – especially if the visitor base is to be broadened. There is evidence, however, from tourism surveys that standards of service do not always reach expectations. Training in customer care and business administration is available on Scilly which can help to increase standards and meet accreditation requirements. Other issues raised during consultation include high fuel prices, open tripper boats that provide little protection in rougher weather, and the high costs of inter-island boat travel.

A newsletter is distributed to all service providers with information on tourism related issues. However, an expanded version with a wider circulation might help to focus on challenges and solutions and to raise overall standards of delivery.

Access and erosion

Some of the more frequented paths suffer from wear, as most do not have artificial surface treatment that would be inappropriate in the context of Scilly's traditional rural landscape. On occasion paths are re-routed as a result of coastal erosion. Accelerated coastal retreat due to climate change may lead to more frequent path re-routing in the future. It is currently possible to walk a virtually complete circuit of each inhabited Islands' coastline on the permissive path network. However, this attraction

– that contributes significantly to the tourist experience in Scilly – may be lost as coastal erosion penetrates into tenanted land across which it may not be possible to establish permissive footpaths. However, agri-environment schemes may make provision for the development of permissive access routes.

Awareness and interpretation

Visitors, as well as residents, need information and interpretation to explain Scilly and its wealth of natural and cultural resources. The AONB Interpretation Strategy identifies gaps in interpretation provision and recommends themes, stories and a delivery programme for enhanced interpretation by all agencies with an interest in the islands.

Signs

Visitors, and especially first-time visitors, need sufficient information to allow them to confidently navigate the Islands⁴³. A small number of well-designed and discretely located signs would meet visitor needs without negative impact on the AONB landscape.

Maintenance of the permissive footpath network

The Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust clears and maintains permissive footpaths within the confines of strictly limited human and financial resources. As the Wildlife Trust receives no funding for the specific purpose of footpath maintenance the extent and effectiveness of the programme is remarkable and illustrates the Wildlife Trust's commitment to facilitating public access to its land. There is a belief amongst some residents and visitors that some areas, especially the Islands' heaths, are common land to which there is a public right of access. There is no common land in Scilly; neither are there any public rights or way. Rather, the Duchy of Cornwall, Wildlife Trust and tenant farmers facilitate public access because of the benefits that it brings in terms of tourism and the health and well-being of residents.

The AONB Partnership supports organizations and individuals seeking funding and resources to maintain the Islands' permissive footpath network.

Access to grazed land

The relationship between recreational access and conservation grazing is complex. Some residents and visitors believe that fences limit public access and that cattle are a potential danger to people and domestic pets. However, conservation grazing also removes impenetrable invasive vegetation that would otherwise severely limit access to heathland. On balance, the AONB Partnership supports the principle of conservation grazing, though it notes that management of such schemes must be sympathetic to the needs of all sections of the resident and visiting community. There is a need for mutual understanding of different interest groups' engagement with the AONB landscape. **See *Agriculture, and Biodiversity and geodiversity***

Recreational facilities

Recreational facilities are modest with provision varying between Islands. Paucity of indoor and wet-weather recreational facilities is a concern amongst residents and visitors. In this respect development of the new school base on St Mary's and

⁴³ *Interpretation Strategy. Isles of Scilly AONB*, October 2008, p.36

proposed regeneration at Porthcressa are important opportunities to enhance community and sports facilities.

Dog mess and litter

There is a significant problem with dog mess in Scilly. A local byelaw bans dogs from recreational beaches during the summer and from the Park all year round. The Islands' dog warden also has powers to impose on-the-spot fines. However, despite these important measures the problem remains chronic. A concerted campaign of public information aimed at both residents and visitors is required to address this perennial risk to public health which also detracts from people's enjoyment of the landscape.

Litter, especially on paths, is a concern among some residents and visitors. This issue will be addressed within the context of a broader waste management strategy for Scilly. There is concern within the community about excessive littering of paths.

Guiding principles

- Tourism and recreation should be developed and managed within a framework of sustainability
- Management of access on the islands, and between islands, should not detract from their tranquillity and special landscape qualities

Objectives

- Promote tourism and recreational use that engages with the Islands' exceptional environment in a sustainable manner, provides a quality visitor experience and helps to support the local economy
- Market Scilly as a 'green destination' which respects, protects and capitalises on its natural environment
- Raise awareness and understanding among visitors and residents of the varied resources of the Islands, including their natural resources, historic environment and agricultural use
- Provide a well managed and appropriately promoted network of permissive access routes
- The recreational use of all sites of biodiversity, geodiversity and historic importance is managed appropriately to protect their inherent properties

Actions

- Establish a land management focus group charged with fostering sustainable relationships between farming, forestry, biodiversity, historic environment, tourism and recreation (target – group established and working effectively with positive outputs)
- Develop a strategy to extend the tourism season and to broaden the range of visitors to Scilly (target – strategy complete and implemented)
- To implement the Isles of Scilly AONB Interpretation Strategy by completing the annual programme of actions

- Produce and distribute a code of conduct for resident and visiting dog owners to act responsibly by cleaning up after their animals and keeping them on leads where appropriate

Development and Regeneration

Vision

Rural development and regeneration has, through diversification of the Islands' economic base, delivered positive benefits to an economically sustainable community. Development is seen as an opportunity to enhance the Islands' natural and cultural heritage.

Setting the scene

Planning and Development

The environment is the economic life-blood of Scilly. It is therefore critical that all development conserves and enhances the Islands' natural beauty and safeguards their aesthetic value and tranquility.

The Local Plan recognizes the limits placed on development by shortage of available land, landscape designations and the close relationship between the quality of the Islands' environment and its chief economic activity (tourism). The Local Plan requires that new build residential properties be for 'local needs' only. Consequently, the rate and scale of householder development is generally low in Scilly. However, several major community and infrastructural development projects are ongoing:

- Refurbishment of St Mary's Harbour
- New school build on St Mary's
- Porthcressa Regeneration Masterplan
- Regeneration of Porthmellon area

While all of these projects will deliver significant social, educational and economic benefits to the Islands, their potential impact on the character of the AONB must be evaluated.

Accommodation providers, most notably the Tresco Estate, are also seeking to develop their businesses in order to keep abreast of changing demands in the tourism market. The Abbey Farm Development comprising time-share accommodation is one recent manifestation of this trend. Proposed redevelopment of the Island Hotel on Tresco is a further major project. AONB partners will work to support the changing needs of the tourism industry in Scilly provided that proposed developments conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the character of the AONB.

Water, sewage and waste management

Water supply is the responsibility of the Council of the Isles of Scilly on St Mary's and Bryher, and the Duchy of Cornwall's on St Martin's and St Agnes. The Tresco Estate provides water on Tresco. Waste water is treated in a variety of ways, largely septic tanks and small treatment works, again the responsibility of either the Council or the Duchy. Most water supply is from ground water bore holes though there is also a de-

salination plant on St Mary's that can supplement ground water supplies by up to 30% in peak season.

Since adoption of the first management plan the DEFRA-funded Scilly Waste project and significant investment by the Tresco Estate on pH monitoring plant, boreholes, upgrading water delivery system and repairing antique water-pipes have significantly improved the situation. The Council of the Isles of Scilly has formed a Water and Waste Working Party, and invested heavily in sewage management systems, such as on St Agnes, while the Duchy of Cornwall has invested in water infrastructure.

Other initiatives undertaken since 2004, many as partnership projects between the AONB, the Council of the Isles of Scilly and the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, include:

- Scilly Waste project established in 2005 to secure reduction of consumption and the reuse or recycling of waste
- Regular beach cleans
- Initiative to make composters and food-digesters available to all households on the Islands
- Shipping to the mainland of some waste materials that cannot be recycled on the Islands e.g. batteries, computer, some electrical appliances
- Improved waste management facilities on Tresco
- Refurbishment and screening of the waste collection area on St Agnes

The AONB Service and the Council of the Isles of Scilly also co-manage an Environmental Awareness Coordinator to promote effective waste management. The Co-ordinator conducts 'enrichment' sessions with school children on sustainability issues, waste management and social life skills, and organises beach litter clearances. There have also been many other initiatives such as opportunities to recycle batteries, fluorescent tubes and telephone directories, campaigns to reduce packaging and control waste, and a regular 'green team' show on Radio Scilly to raise awareness of protecting the environment.

Defra funded and commissioned an in-depth study of the water and waste systems in Scilly which it is hoped will result in a system that will be fit for purpose until 2030. The study looks specifically at re-using and recycling locally and converting waster materials where possible into solid fuel

Land Ownership

The Duchy of Cornwall is the principal land-owner in Scilly. The Dorrien-Smith family lease Tresco from the Duchy of Cornwall on a 999-year lease. The Dorrien-Smith family's long-established influence on the Islands includes the foundation of Scilly's flower industry, establishment of Tresco Abbey Gardens and current commitment to quality holiday provision. The remaining enclosed land is let as agricultural tenancies and unenclosed land is leased to the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust which manages it for conservation value. There are areas of freehold property and land on St Mary's including most properties in Hugh Town.

The Duchy of Cornwall and Tresco Estate have brought most of the off-island quays up to modern standards. The Duchy of Cornwall is also responsible for the roads on all the off-islands except Tresco. These off-island roads are in variable condition. The Duchy has a programme to upgrade surfaces over the next few years.

Property Ownership

The leasehold housing stock is managed by the Duchy of Cornwall, Council of the Isles of Scilly and housing associations. Less than 30% of the total housing stock on the Islands is owned by the Duchy. These houses are let in a variety of ways – approximately 20% are on long term ground leases while approximately 33% form part of agricultural or commercial lettings. Of the remainder, 10% are let subject to the Rent Acts at 'fair rents' and 1% let directly by the Duchy as holiday accommodation. Approximately 6% of the Duchy's total housing stock is let to 'key workers' and the bulk of the remainder are let at so called 'local open market rents'

Efficient use of existing buildings helps to retain the character of the built environment and goes some way towards meeting the Islands' housing needs. The Council of the Isles of Scilly and the Duchy of Cornwall are working to achieve this goal but recognise that limited development is required to meet local need and key worker requirements. Affordable housing schemes on St Mary's and the off-Islands are embedded in the Local Plan and are being constructed and administered as housing association schemes. The Duchy of Cornwall, as the largest provider of rented accommodation on the Islands, is also seeking to provide local needs housing within the context of the Local Plan.

Issues and challenges

Quality of design

Community consultation for the first management plan revealed concerns about the quality of design of new-build, renovations, conversions and alterations. The Isles of Scilly Design Guide (2006) now defines the palette of vernacular design and construction materials that will conserve and enhance the character of the AONB and Conservation Area. Furthermore, the Local Plan requires that new development should incorporate sustainability measures such as proportionate renewable energy technologies and rainwater harvesting facilities.

The key challenge for all development on the Islands is for it to be in keeping with the character of the vernacular while providing supply for residents and key workers. Essentially there is inadequate supply for potential employees of businesses on the Islands both for permanent staff and migrant seasonal workers. There are few opportunities for new development on the islands within the Local Development Framework, though there is potential for extensions to existing properties and conversion of farm buildings (see below).

Conversion of traditional farm buildings

In principle, sensitive conversion of existing buildings to meet modern needs is a sustainable development policy. In practice the needs of local housing have sometimes been met at the cost of the character of the agricultural landscape. The value of individual buildings has been diminished and their contribution to landscape character eroded.

Guidance on sympathetic conversion of farm buildings is provided by English Heritage⁴⁴. Retention of agricultural purpose is the preferred option but where this is not possible sensitive conversion to local needs accommodation may strike an appropriate balance between conservation of the historic environment and a sustainable island community.

Climate change and renewable energy

The Council of the Isles of Scilly is in receipt of DCLG funding to facilitate the development of a Climate Change Policy by 2010⁴⁵. The AONB Partnership supports this initiative and the development of policies for sustainable adaptation and mitigation of climate change in the context of Scilly, including articulation with the Council's Sustainable Energy Strategy.

Recent changes in permitted development rights for householder micro-renewable energy installations (solar panels, photovoltaics, ground and water source heat pumps) include special conditions that apply in a Conservation Area⁴⁶. These special conditions plus Scilly's Article 4 Directions mean that many micro-renewable energy installations will still be subject to planning consent. The principle of micro-renewable energy installations proportionate in scale and number to the size of the Islands is approved provided that their siting and design does not affect the character of the AONB.

The AONB Planning Consultative Panel will continue to adopt practices enshrined in the AONB Planning Protocol⁴⁷ including promotion of sustainability measures as recommended in the Isles of Scilly Design Guide.

Water supply

There are concerns about both the reliability and the quality of water supplies on the Islands, including the quantity of supply during peak tourist season, potential contamination between septic tank outlets and ground water and saline intrusion through overpumping. Existing concerns about the reliability of water supplies, especially on St Agnes, may deepen with increasing threat of drought and saline intrusion due to climate change, although investment by the Council in upgrading supplies on Bryher and St Mary's will help to alleviate potential problems. Long-standing concerns remain, however, about the potential for water pollution by nitrates from agricultural chemicals. There could be pressure for more de-salination of seawater which overcomes problems of nitrates, but is an energy intensive and expensive process. Effective water conservation is a more cost effective solution.

⁴⁴ *The Conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings: a Guide to Good Practice* (English Heritage 2006) and *Living Buildings in a Living Landscape: Finding a Future for Traditional Farm Buildings* (English Heritage and the Countryside Agency 2006)

⁴⁵ The Council of the Isles of Scilly is a signatory to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change which pledges signatories to the adoption of a climate change policy by 2010.

⁴⁶ *The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (England) Order 2008*, Statutory Instrument 2008, No.675.

⁴⁷ *Isles of Scilly AONB Planning Protocol*, January 2006.

The AONB Partnership will continue to support initiatives that improve the quality and reliability of water supplies and that emphasise the importance of water conservation. Improved water supply, especially on the off-Islands, would potentially help crop diversification, increase local food production, assist in the introduction of grazing animals, and potentially bring disused fields back into managed use.

Waste and sewage management

Off-island communities are concerned about the adequacy of current sewage systems, mainly ageing septic tanks and the proximity of septic tanks to boreholes and the potential risk posed to potable and marine water quality. These communities are also concerned that current waste management practices, including waste from visiting yachts, may have negative impacts on visual amenity, water supply and health.

The Council run waste treatment facility in Hugh Town is a landfill site for waste materials and the main recycling facility for white goods, other metals and plastics. There is community concern about potential pollution run off, unsightliness, and noise from the treatment processes. The Council is anxious to enhance the facility and find more satisfactory alternatives to waste treatment and recycling.

The AONB Partnership supports further initiatives to improve waste management and recycling including proposed investment through the Isles of Scilly Local Action Group on targeted reduction of landfill. The AONB Service, Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust and RSPB also collaborate with the Five Islands School on 'enrichment sessions' during which pupils learn about sustainability issues including waste management. This fostering of long-term sustainability through education will be supported by the AONB Partnership.

New school build

The existing schools on St Mary's, a primary for the island and the Five Island Secondary, are in poor condition and need substantial upgrading, or replacement, to meet contemporary standards. Through the Building Schools for the Future "One School Pathfinder" Scheme and the Primary Capital Programme funding has been secured for a new combined primary and secondary school base on St Mary's. A site has been identified at Carn Gwaval, Old Town, and it is hoped that the school will be completed during the lifetime of this plan.

The low carbon specifications of the new school will set high standards for design on the Islands. It will incorporate siting and design to optimize energy efficiency, minimize the use of water and the discharge of waste, and provide facilities for the re-use and recycling of materials. It will be designed and landscaped to have minimal impact on the AONB landscape.

Regeneration

The three other major regeneration projects (in addition to the new school) that are proposed for the plan period – St Mary's Harbour, Porthcressa and Porthmellon – will have a major impact in Scilly, providing upgraded facilities for shipping (including the replacement for the Scillonian, *see Transport*), and enhanced facilities for businesses and tourism.

Although generally welcomed by the community these are large building projects that are likely to have a significant impact on Hugh Town with pressures for accommodation for building workers and for related infrastructure. Care will need to be taken to manage this impact appropriately.

Night skies

Since the introduction of mains electricity in 1931 there has been some encroachment on the dark night sky. However, as the South-West Observatory does not monitor dark night skies in Scilly, the evidence is anecdotal and change is not easily defined or quantified. There is a need for systematic monitoring of the dark night skies in Scilly.

Tranquillity

Increasing noise pollution potentially threatens the tranquillity of the AONB. Air traffic is the main source of noise, with motor cross bikes, jet boats, water skiing and pub closing times among the other causes of concern. It is appreciated that air traffic noise needs to be balanced against the service that air traffic provides to the Islands' community and economy. However, other sources of intrusive and avoidable noise which adversely affect the tranquillity of the AONB need to be addressed through public information.

Development policy and guidance

Local Development Framework

The current Isles of Scilly Local Plan (2006) will be replaced by a Local Development Framework (LDF) during the life of this management plan. The LDF will consist of a Core Strategy and accompanying Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). The Core Strategy will set out the strategy for the spatial development of Scilly. The key issue for the Core Strategy will be to strike a balance between protecting and enhancing the high quality environment, whilst ensuring the Islands' communities and economy are sustained through, for example, the provision of affordable housing, local employment opportunities and adequate social and physical infrastructure.⁴⁸

The following Supplementary Planning Documents will form the basis of the Isles of Scilly LDF:

- Development Brief for a new school base on St Mary's (adopted July 2008)
- Porthcressa Regeneration Area Master Plan (due for adoption in mid-2009)
- Biodiversity/Geodiversity Good Practice Guide (adopted in December 2008)
- Development Brief for Land at McFarlands Down, St Mary's
- Development Brief for Land Adjoining Coastguard Cottages, Telegraph, St Mary's
- Development Brief for the enhancement and extension of the Porthmellon Business Area, St Mary's
- Conservation Area Character Statements for St Mary's (with the exception of Hugh Town) and the Off-Islands

⁴⁸ *Isles of Scilly Local Development Framework. Local Development Scheme*, Council of the Isles of Scilly, June 2008.

The AONB Partnership will support the development of the Isles of Scilly LDF, the essential characteristics of which will be conservation and enhancement of the environment and the fostering of social and economic sustainability.

Porthcressa Regeneration Masterplan

The Cornwall and Scilly Urban Survey⁴⁹ identifies Porthcressa Bank (extending from the Town Hall to the quarry at the foot of Buzza Hill) as offering a significant opportunity for a new regeneration development. The purpose of the project is to “provide a detailed and robust Master Plan to guide the redevelopment and regeneration of the Porthcressa Bank area in a comprehensive and co-ordinated manner to the benefit of the community, environment and the economy”.⁵⁰

Guiding principles

- In making development control decisions, opportunities should be sought to positively enhance the special features and character of the AONB.
- Through the development and implementation of consistent statutory land use planning policy the quality of the Islands’ environment should be protected and development kept to the minimum necessary to support a sustainable community and economy.
- High standards of design should be encouraged that sensitively reflects and enhances the beauty of the historic landscape and protects views and minimizes skyline developments.

Objectives

- Ensure effective and appropriate re-use of existing buildings before new development is considered.
- Encourage careful use of Island resources in development of the built environment including re-cycling and re-use of building materials and the use of energy and water.
- Provide continued and enhanced access to basic services such as water supply, waste water management and sewage disposal for all communities, in sustainable and innovative ways.
- Advocate reduced consumption of energy and materials, reuse of resources, recycling and composting, (guided by policy documents such as the Sustainable Energy Strategy for the Isles of Scilly and facilitated by the AONB Partnership’s Environmental Awareness Coordinator).

Actions

- Develop a strategy for the reclamation of Pendrathen quarry that is consistent with the special qualities of the AONB.
- Establish a Landscape Monitoring Project that monitors levels of tranquility and extent of light pollution. Mitigate noise and light pollution through planning process.

⁴⁹ *Cornwall and Scilly Urban Survey. Historic Characterisation and Regeneration. Hugh Town, Cornwall County Council Historic Environment Service, April 2003.*

⁵⁰ *Porthcressa Regeneration Area Masterplan - Project Brief, Council of the Isles of Scilly, 2008, p.3.*

- Establish a collaboration initiative involving the Council of the Isles of Scilly, Tresco Estate, Duchy of Cornwall and other interested parties on water conservation.

Transport

Vision

Residents and visitors to the Isles of Scilly are served by a year-round, affordable and efficient transport system. Travel operators seek to minimise the environmental impact of their services.

Setting the scene

Island-Mainland Transport Links

The Isles of Scilly Steamship Company operates the Scillonian III passenger vessel between Penzance and St Mary's. The Islands' year-round freight vessel, Gry Maritha, is supplemented by limited freight handling facilities on Scillonian III during the latter's sailing season between March and October. It is anticipated that the two vessels will reach the end of their operational lives during the next ten years. Consequently a Route Partnership is being developed to sustain this vital link with the mainland. The Department for Transport has granted provisional conditional approval for funding towards the project on the proviso that additional funding is obtained to meet the costs of the £42 million project. It is anticipated that some of the funding may be available through the EU Convergence Programme⁵¹. The project will include commissioning a new combined passenger/freight vessel and refurbishment of St Mary's and Penzance harbours.

Skybus (a subsidiary of the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company) operates fixed-wing aircraft between Southampton, Bristol, Exeter, Newquay, Land's End and St Mary's, and British International Helicopters fly between Penzance, Tresco and St Mary's. During the winter there are fewer scheduled flights and the Scillonian III service is suspended. Flight cancellations during poor weather introduce an element of unpredictability and unreliability to winter travel services to the mainland. High fares due to fuel costs may deter some visitors from travelling to Scilly and are a constant drain on residents' resources, despite the operation of resident discount fares. Business trips to the mainland invariably involve an overnight stay thereby increasing the financial burden on the Islands' community.

The demand for travel to Scilly is considerable: 90,000 passengers made a return journey between Scilly and the mainland in 2007. Different services appeal to their own clientele: Scillonian III is strong in the day-trip market, helicopters and aircraft are preferred by long-stay visitors, and residents generally favour the helicopters' short flight time.

The Council of the Isles of Scilly manages St Mary's airport, and Tresco Estate the heliport on Tresco. The Duchy of Cornwall is the Harbour Authority for Scilly with the exception of Tresco where the Tresco Estate is the responsible body.

⁵¹ *Sustainable Transport Strategy, Project Brief*, Council of the Isles of Scilly, 2008.

Inter-Island Boats

St Mary's Harbour is the hub for inter-island freight and passenger services as well as mainland sea links. The Islands are well served by inter-island passenger boats during the summer season when there are regular services at comparatively reasonable prices. The majority of local boatmen on St Mary's co-operate through an association, and in the summer season the visitors' and residents' travel needs are satisfied. In winter the tripper boats do not run and only one St Mary's boat, the off-Island launches and the mail boat operate. **See *Community and business*** for information on concessionary fares.

Freight is distributed from St Mary's to the off-Islands by the Lyonnese Lady launch which, despite a modest subsidy, is a loss-making service.

On-Islands Transport

On-Islands transport differs across the islands. The Office of National Statistics recorded over 600 cars and vans registered on the Islands in 2005. The majority of vehicles are on St Mary's and cover both business and domestic uses. They include a variety of buses and private hire vehicles that provide useful services for visitors and residents. Tourist tour buses operate largely through the summer months only. Electric buggies and quad bikes are popular on the off-Islands and due to the scale of the Islands walking and cycling are also strongly supported. There are also some vehicles on the off-Islands, usually associated with businesses transporting freight from the quay or for agricultural use.

Special features

- Three transport operators providing mainland link passenger services by air and sea
- Mainland and inter-island freight services
- Frequent inter-island boat services during the summer and infrequent and costly services in the winter
- Plentiful but uncoordinated and unregulated bus and taxi services on St Mary's in the summer

Issues and challenges

Island-mainland transport

The proposed upgrading of the quays at St Mary's and Penzance and the replacement for the Scillonian III are significant investments and will be a major improvement in transport between the islands and the mainland. They will enable potential expansion of business trade to the mainland and tourist traffic throughout the year. Businesses throughout the islands need to start preparing soon to realise the opportunities this enhancement presents.

The refurbishment of St Mary's harbour also provides opportunities for upgrading of facilities at the harbour.

Inter-island transport

The off-Island boats provide an essential service for residents of the islands and for visitors. There are standard services throughout the year for school children on a Monday and Friday and a weekly shopping run. Residents wishing to travel at other times face paying a far higher 'special' fare of up to £80 return. Some off-island residents employed on St Mary's find it more economical to lease winter accommodation on St Mary's. The boat operators face several challenges including lack of winter business and the high costs of operating boats without subsidy. Recent refurbishment of the off-island quays has reduced boat operators' concerns about safe landing and the risks of damage to boats during bad weather. There is concern also from residents that the quality of services is deteriorating and lack of coordination is seriously affecting reliability of service. An effective networking service using ICT would help considerably to integrate boating activities.

The tripper boats run during summer months and offer a variety of services ranging from ferry trips to the islands and special sight-seeing tours. Many of the boats are open and provide little protection for passengers in poor weather.

On-island transport

The number and size of vehicles, their speed and parking arrangements are all causes for concern. The Isles of Scilly does not have a public transport system, although a seasonal "community" bus and a number of private hire vehicles are in operation on St Mary's. Private hire vehicles are unregulated leading to some concern about the quality and safety of some vehicles and the lack of co-ordination in service. There is also concern, identified in visitor surveys, about the cost of 'taxi' services particularly between the airport and Hugh Town. Tourists are a 'captive market' and there is little competition between services.

Private car use on St Mary's is small compared with the mainland but the number of registered vehicles is increasing. There is a need for more information for residents to reduce private car use, and for initiatives that support sustainable transport solutions.

Guiding principles

- Provide for a transport system that allows residents and visitors to access their desired destinations effectively and efficiently, and that uses, wherever possible, sustainable alternatives to petrol/diesel driven vehicles.

Objectives

- Support initiatives that work to improve and maintain the Islands' mainland transport links, including community transport, with subsidised local rates.
- To support initiatives that seek to reduce levels of car use while maintaining a highway that retains its defining character and provides a safe and convenient route for the use of drivers, cyclists and pedestrians.

Actions

- Produce information and establish an awareness programme on recreational and 'travel to work' options that do not require a car.
- Seek funding opportunities that support the provision of year-round quality community transport for recreation, employment and access to local services.

Section 4: Implementation and Monitoring

AONB Management

The Council of the Isles of Scilly, a Unitary Authority and the only Local Authority responsible for the Isles of Scilly AONB, has chosen to ensure the delivery of its statutory duties in relation to the AONB through the AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC). The JAC agrees an annual Business Plan detailing the operational requirements of the partnership.

The JAC brings together representatives from local and national organisations, community groups and other bodies with a remit in the Islands. All JAC members are committed to working together to implement the management plan, as indicated in the partnership's Memorandum of Agreement, signed in April 2002.

The JAC comprises the following organisations:

- Council of the Isles of Scilly
- Duchy of Cornwall
- Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust
- Island Tourism
- Tresco Estate
- Natural England
- English Heritage
- NFU
- RSPB

Delivery Plan

The objectives of the management plan will be met through the development and implementation of a delivery plan. The delivery plan comprises those actions defined in Sections 2 and 3 of the management plan; each action being a manifest way in which the AONB Partnership can deliver one or more management plan objective. The five-year delivery plan will be updated annually by the AONB Partnership as part of the on-going delivery and monitoring of the management strategy. This will allow consideration to be given to the continuing appropriateness and funding availability for any particular action.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The development of indicators will allow the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of AONB management policy on the state of the AONB. This needs to be undertaken to demonstrate that the policies work for the benefit of the area. The indicators that follow have not been devised to monitor action, but the state of the AONB. Action will be monitored in a more direct target-based manner that corresponds to the delivery plan, and an annual work programme for AONB staff, partnership and implementation partners which is based on this plan. There is therefore a clear difference between condition indicators, which are about measuring the state of the AONB; and performance indicators, which are about measuring management actions.

There is a significant lack of available baseline data against which the state of the AONB can be measured. Therefore, a collaborative monitoring project has been

developed by Cornwall, Tamar Valley and the Isles of Scilly AONB's. The condition indicators that underpin the monitoring project are:

Level 1

- 1.1 Levels of tranquillity
- 1.2 Levels of intrusion
- 1.3 Extent of dark night skies
- 1.4 Coastal change (due to climate change)
- 1.5 SSSI condition

Level 2

- 2.1 Extent of woodland and tree cover/type
- 2.2 Agricultural land use
- 2.3 Biomass planting
- 2.4 Field patterns
- 2.5 Extent of semi-natural habitats
- 2.6 Presence and condition of historic landscape features
- 2.7 Settlement patterns
- 2.8 Transport infrastructure
- 2.9 Vernacular building styles
- 2.10 Development at sea

Level 3

- 3.1 Extent of covered horticultural production
- 3.2 Extent of traditional orchards
- 3.3 Presence of traditional livestock breeds
- 3.4 Field boundary condition and species
- 3.5 Extent and condition of designed landscapes
- 3.6 Extent of bare mining spoil
- 3.7 Presence of navigation marks
- 3.8 Levels of fishing industry activity
- 3.9 Number of moorings
- 3.10 Presence of local car and passenger ferries