



DEDHAM VALE

AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB)
AND STOUR VALLEY

Management Plan 2016-2021
Executive Summary

The Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley

The Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Stour Valley Project area make up around 117 square miles of the Essex/Suffolk border in the East of England. The AONB is part of a suite of nationally protected landscapes that include National Parks and Heritage Coasts. The Dedham Vale AONB is the fourth smallest AONB of the AONBs in England and Wales. It was designated to ensure the natural beauty and special qualities of the area are conserved and enhanced for future generations. Much of the eastern end of the AONB is associated with the celebrated landscape artist, John Constable, and many of the views he painted remain recognisable today. Much of the middle section of the Stour Valley is associated with the nationally recognised artist Thomas Gainsborough. The wildlife and landscape views of the AONB and Stour Valley ensure that the area remains a nationally important asset.



The Mill Stream (1814–15) by John Constable (1776 – 1837) With kind permission of the Ipswich Borough Council Collection (Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service)

The Management Plan

The plan is drawn up by a partnership of organisations that have an interest in the area. These are drawn from the environmental; agricultural; business; community sectors and local authorities.

The plan guides the work of these organisations and seeks to balance the need of the different sectors and ensuring that the AONB and Stour Valley remains an example of the finest landscape in the country. It is a statutory duty on local authorities with part of an AONB in their area to produce and review a management plan every five years.

The plan sets out a vision for the area and topic areas offering guidance on how the area should be managed.

The Partnership

It is an aspiration of the Partnership to work together to secure a high quality landscape in the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley underpinned by sustainable economic growth.

The Partnership is made up of 15 organisations and is the only body responsible for co-ordinating work to conserve and enhance the AONB and Stour Valley. The Partnership is co-ordinated by the AONB team, which is employed by Suffolk County Council and funded by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and Local Authorities. Much of the project work undertaken by the AONB team is funded by external grants, sponsorship and work in kind. The Partnership meets at least twice a year, to consider important issues related to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in the AONB and Stour Valley.

Front cover image: *A Suffolk Landscape (1936)* by John Nash (1893 – 1977)

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Back cover images: SPRING: *Kentwell Hall* | Anthony Burch, SUMMER: *Bales and Balloons* | Anthony Burch, AUTUMN: *Misty landscape between East Bergholt and Dedham* | Simon Davis, WINTER: *Snowy Stour Valley* | Val Weavers



Management Plan Topics

The plan has a series of strategic topics that outline the key issues and offer management objectives and policies to secure the vision for the area:

1. The Countryside

The plan seeks to conserve and enhance the AONB and Stour Valley by ensuring that land use decisions and development proposals reflect the special qualities of the area.

2. Residents and Villages

The plan seeks to encourage residents to contribute to the high quality environment they live in through engagement in projects and the planning system to ensure development is appropriate.

3. Enjoying the Area

The plan seeks to encourage visitors and residents to enjoy the landscapes, natural heritage and historic nature of the area without compromising its special qualities for future generations.

4. The River and Its Tributaries

The plan recognises that the Stour and its tributaries play an important part in the natural beauty of the area and in providing opportunities for quiet informal recreation. It also recognises the importance of flood risk management.

5. Climate Change

The plan recognises a wide body of evidence suggesting changes to the global climate. The plan seeks to highlight the potential impact of climate change on the area and how negative impacts can be reduced or mitigated against.

6. Working Together

The plan sets out how different organisations can work together to ensure the best for the AONB and Stour Valley. A Partnership made up of representatives of the environmental; agricultural; business; community sectors; amenity societies and local authorities, including parish councils, provide a forum for discussion on the best way to manage the area for the widest possible positive outcome.



Willy Lotts House, Flatford – scene of *The Hay Wain* by John Constable



A 'John Constable' landscape art workshop during HLF Managing a Masterpiece



Visitors at Flatford, with Stour Trusty II

A Vision for the Area

The Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Stour Valley Project area is a distinctive landscape with agriculture and wildlife at its core that retains its natural beauty and special qualities, which is conserved and enhanced by a wide ranging partnership. It is an area where residents feel a strong sense of belonging, visitors are welcomed to enjoy the countryside and the heritage is understood and appreciated by all.



'Silent Night' at Arger Fen (2014) by Clare Curtis

