



**Suffolk & Essex  
Coast & Heaths**  
National  
Landscape



**Dedham Vale**  
National  
Landscape  
& Stour Valley

## News Release

Strictly embargoed until 0.01am Wednesday 22 November 2023

# Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Renamed National Landscapes

**New name and brand underpin ambitious targets for nature**

**Today, [Wednesday 22 November] all designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in England and Wales are becoming National Landscapes, including two in Suffolk and Essex.**

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB will become the Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape, reflecting the extension into Essex and the Stour estuary in 2020. Likewise, the Dedham Vale AONB is now the Dedham Vale National Landscape. Both were designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1970.

The new name reflects their national importance; the vital contribution they make to protect the nation from the threats of climate change, nature depletion and the wellbeing crisis, whilst also creating greater understanding and awareness for the work that they do.

This is a significant milestone for the UK and the next step in fully realising the National Landscapes' vision to be the leading exemplars of how thriving, diverse communities can work with and for nature in the UK: restoring ecosystems, providing food, storing carbon to mitigate the effects of climate change, safeguarding against drought and flooding, whilst also nurturing people's health and wellbeing.

National Landscapes teams have been at the forefront of delivering natural solutions to the main challenges facing the nation for many years. The new brand underscores their commitment to redoubling their efforts and engaging with a wider audience. In 2019, teams set themselves the most ambitious targets for nature in the sector and continue to work to meet them.

By 2030, National Landscapes aim that, within their boundaries: at least 200,000 hectares of the most valuable natural areas (Sites of Special Scientific Interest or SSSIs), which equates to 1 ¼ times the size of London, will be in favourable condition; 100,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat outside of SSSIs will be created or restored, which is roughly nine times the size of Manchester; and 36,000 hectares of woodland, which is a little smaller than the Isle of Wight, will have been planted or allowed to regenerate.

National Landscapes Partnerships will also focus on habitat restoration to ensure the protection of some of our most endangered species and increase their work to help more people to enjoy time spent in beautiful places.

Because of their size and scope, National Landscapes are ideally positioned to address the environmental issues the UK is facing. There are 46 National Landscapes in the UK, covering 14% of England, Wales and Northern Ireland including moorland, farmland, coast, forests, including UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves, a Geopark and International Dark Sky Reserves. They are the UK's nearby countryside - 66% of people in England (44 million) live within 30 minutes of a National Landscape and at least 170 million people visit them every year.

**CLlr James Finch, Chairman of the Dedham Vale National Landscape Partnership says:**

“AONBs in Suffolk and Essex have helped to conserve and enhance our special landscape and skyline for more than 50 years, benefitting nature and the people who live, work, and visit the area.

The new National Landscapes brand reflects the national significance of the area and recognises the importance of the work undertaken across the Dedham Vale. As a result of this national recognition, we look forward attracting even more visitors to this beautiful area. To achieve this, we commit to maintaining the balance between environment, people's enjoyment, and economic growth by collaborating with all our partners.”

**Nick Collinson, Chair of the Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape Partnership says:**

“National Landscapes are for everybody and can play a significant part in delivering gains for wildlife, support activity to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, benefit human health and wellbeing, and drive economic prosperity.

The Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths is a nationally important area and our new National Landscapes brand now reflects that. This is a fantastic day and this change will help us to conserve and enhance the area for future generations to cherish and enjoy.”

**John Watkins, Chief Executive of the National Landscapes Association says:**

“For decades, AONB teams have convened powerful partnerships which have placed them at the forefront of the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss, but since their initial designation, our country has changed immensely, as have the needs and pressures on the environment and communities.

However, we have great ambition as well as the commitment and readiness to care for and protect these important places, whilst also extending a welcome to more people. Our ambitious aims build on AONB teams' long track record of successful delivery for nature and people and we are confident that we will achieve them. National Landscapes are the landscape designation for the 21 Century and beyond.”

**Tony Juniper, Chair of Natural England says:**

“For decades the AONBs have helped protect the beauty of our finest landscapes. Today though we need so much more from these wonderful places, helping us adapt to climate change, catching carbon, restoring depleted wildlife and encouraging more people outside, at the same time as producing food, sustaining local communities and enhancing historic environments.

Modern challenges require new approaches and today marks the beginning of a new phase for our National Landscapes, as they strengthen their existing partnerships, and forge new ones that will secure in perpetuity the huge range of benefits that come from these special places. Big change has taken place during the past 75 years and bigger changes still can be expected during the decades ahead. Uniting the National Landscapes in this way is very welcome and spells immense opportunity and great hope for the future.”

**-ENDS-**

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**Notes to editors:**

- In Suffolk and Essex, the two National Landscapes are the Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape and the Dedham Vale National Landscape.
- The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 is the Act of the Parliament that provided the framework for the creation of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England and Wales, and also addressed public rights of way and access to open land. In the immediate wake of the second world war, the nation had the forethought to designate Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty as sisters to the NHS – one to look after the nation’s health, the other its nature and wellbeing.
- The first AONB to be designated was in 1956, Gower Peninsula, and the last the most recent, designated in 1995, is the Tamar Valley AONB, which spans Devon and Cornwall.
- An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is an area of countryside in England, Wales, or Northern Ireland, that has been designated for conservation due to its significant landscape value. Areas are designated in recognition of their national importance by the relevant public body: Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency respectively. In place of AONB, Scotland uses the similar national scenic area (NSA) designation.
- National Landscapes offer a uniquely integrated perspective in decisions about land use: convening conversations, bringing people together, and enabling a sustainable balance of priorities for nature, climate, people and place.
- The National Landscapes Association is the membership organisation representing the UK’s National Landscapes.
- The work of small (average four members of staff), expert National Landscapes teams is guided by the democratically derived Management Plan, developed through consultation with partners and members of the public through an open process every five years. The Management Plan covers the entirety of the landscape, considering how to protect and regenerate its special features: geology, species, heritage, industry, culture; balancing the

needs of the local community to keep pace with the latest infrastructure, through a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities of these distinct and special places.

- National Landscape Partnerships own no land, so their work is delivered by convening strong networks with landowners, farmers and partner organisations, working together to plan projects, and secure funding to deliver them.
- Since 2000 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnerships have:
  - coordinated habitat restoration projects across many thousands of hectares,
  - restored peatland twice the area of Birmingham,
  - provided free educational opportunities for many thousands of children of all ages and needs,
  - delivered many wellbeing programmes: from weekly walks for people with dementia and brain injuries and their carers to friendship cafes.