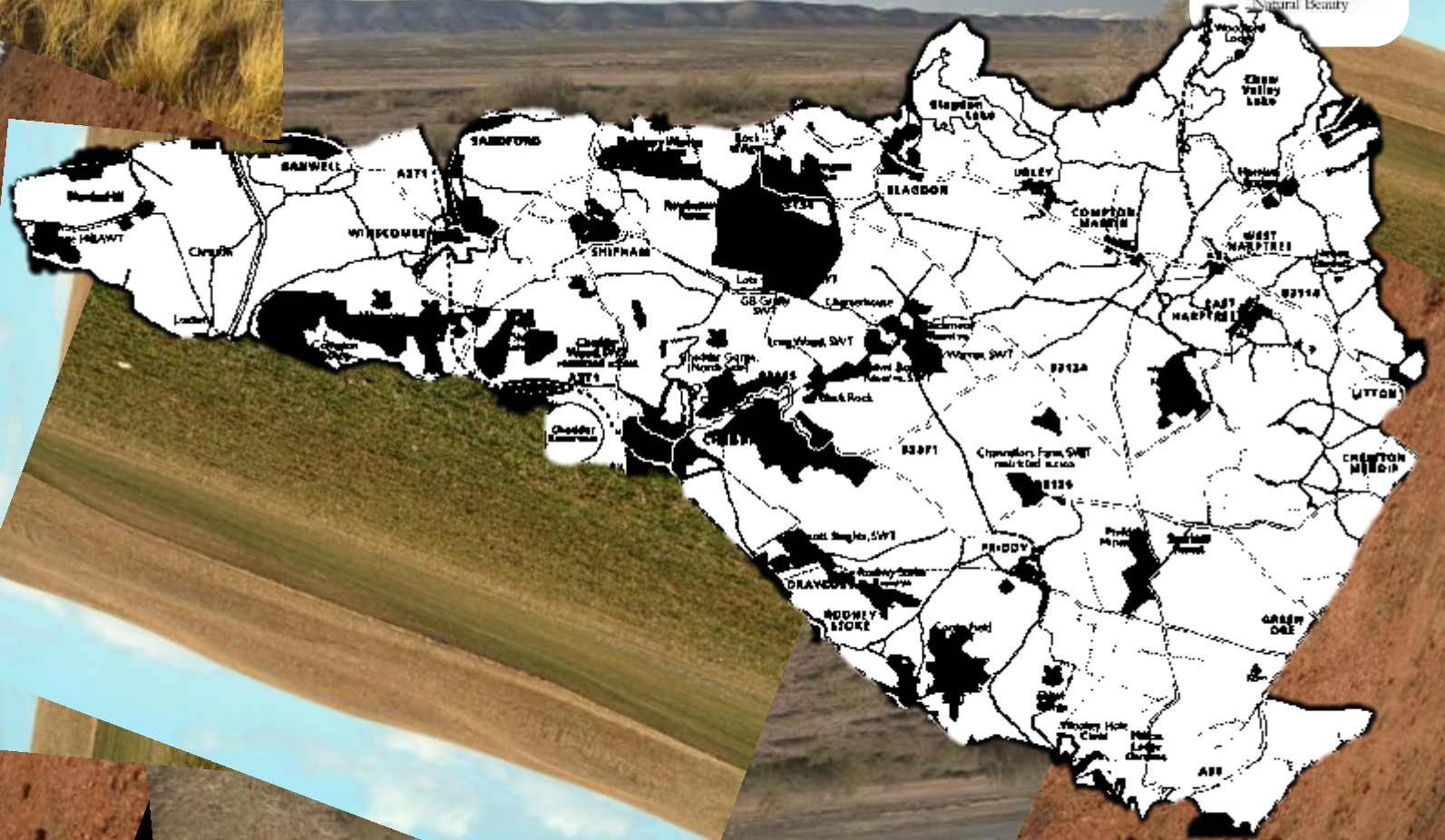




The Future of the Mendip Hills AONB

Jim Hardcastle
Manager, Mendip Hills AONB









Glover Review of Designated Landscapes: National Parks and AONBs

Landscapes Review

We want our national landscapes to work together with big ambitions so they are happier, healthier, greener, more beautiful and open to everyone.

Final Report

Our protected landscapes aren't protected

AONB?



Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Primary purpose = conserve and enhance natural beauty

Account should be taken of the needs of:

- Agriculture
- Forestry
- Rural industries
- Needs of local communities

Promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that conserve and enhance the environment.

Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.

What have AONBs ever done for us?



Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

A designation for the 21st century

Landscape
for

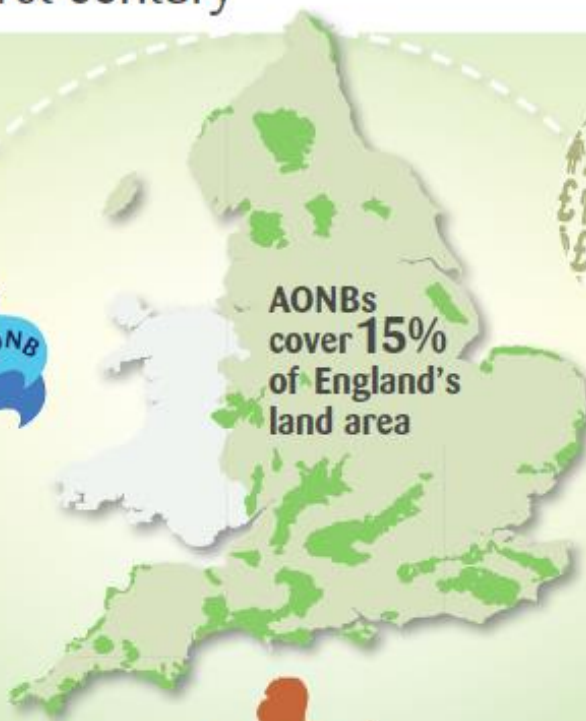


Understanding

>19,312km of footpaths and bridleways pass through AONBs including 10 National Trails

Just under **1/5th** of the English coast is in an AONB

Peat soils in AONBs store millions of tonnes of **CO₂** per year



AONBs cover **15%** of England's land area

Public spending on AONBs is **LESS THAN 20p PER PERSON PER YEAR**



GVA of AONBs is **£16.5BN** – similar to that of the city of Leeds



AONB volunteers put in over **457,000** work days a year, worth **£36.8m** to conserve the landscape and improve access

156m people visit AONBs annually, spending in excess of **£2bn** and supporting thousands of jobs and businesses

AONBs are home to over **1 million** people

256,000 hectares

of SSSIs are in AONBs – protecting some of our **most important wildlife habitats**

x10 AONBs provide excellent VFM. Every public £1 invested is turned into £10 by the AONB partnerships

MORE THAN 66% of people in England live within **1/2HR** travel of an AONB





Mendip Hills AONB: What is **statutory**?

- Mendip Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24
- And that's it!



National Planning Policy Framework

- Paragraph 109 ‘protecting and enhancing valued landscapes ...’
- Paragraph 115 *‘great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty’*
- Paragraph 116 *‘Planning permission should be refused for major developments in these designated areas except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest ...’*

Special Qualities

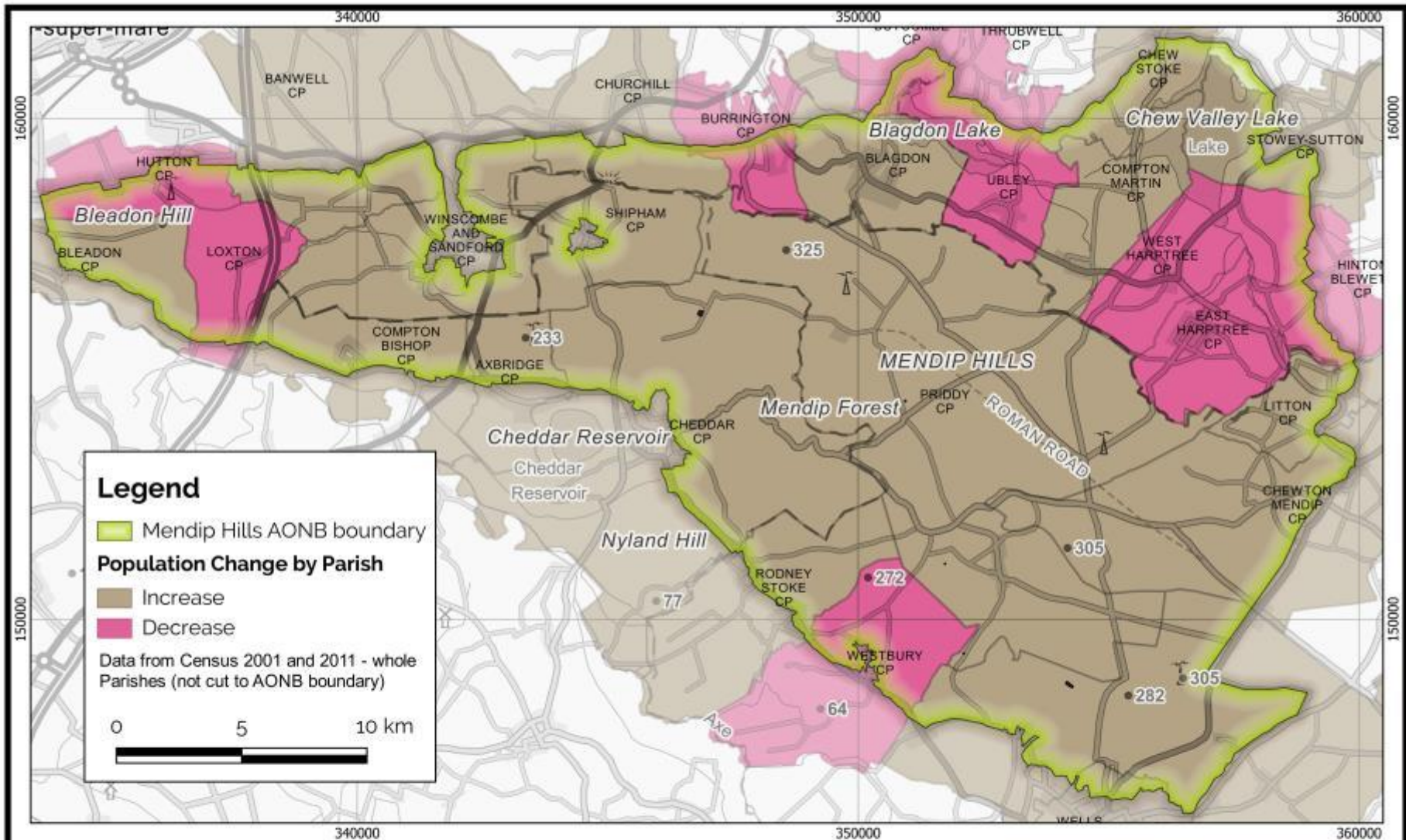
12 'elements' that combined define the Mendip Hills AONB

- Evidence of humans dating back 500,000 years
- Distinctive limestone ridge
- Diverse and visible geology
- Drystone walls
- The limestone aquifer
- Ancient woodland combes
- A landscape enjoyed by many, famous for adventure and nature
- Sparsely populated plateau
- Caves and the karst landscape
- The Chew Valley
- Steep, south-facing slopes of limestone grasslands
- Views in and out

A landscape photograph showing a wide, open field of dry, golden-brown grass. In the center-left, there are several bare, dark trees with intricate branch structures. The background features a range of low hills or mountains under a clear blue sky with some light, wispy clouds. The overall scene is serene and remote.

Remote & tranquil

29 parishes
18 Increased
pop.n 2001-
2011



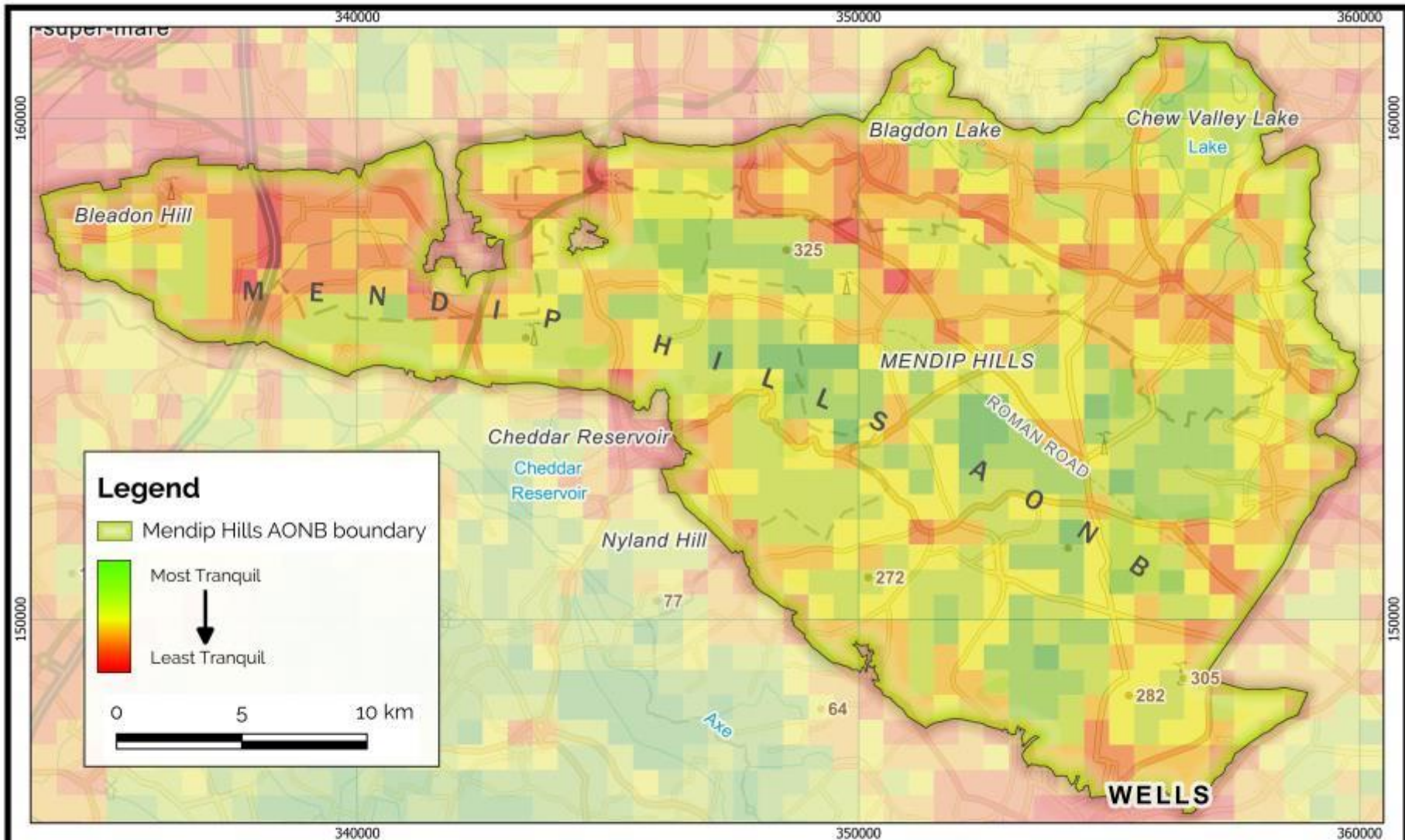
Map 5
Mendip Hills AONB - Population Change by Parish

Scale
 1:100,000

Compiled on
 5/3/2018

Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right
 2018





**A landscape
enjoyed by
many**

**Visitor
figures?**





Scheduled Monuments

169 Scheduled Monuments in 2006,
172 now.
Only 3% AT RISK

A wide-angle landscape photograph showing a deep limestone gorge. The foreground on the left is dominated by steep, layered rock cliffs with patches of green moss and grass. A paved road winds through the valley floor, curving to the right. In the background, a town is visible, followed by a large, circular lake under a cloudy sky. The overall scene is a mix of rugged geology and lush greenery.

Iconic geology

Geological Features
33 designated
Favourable 86%

Recovering 6%
Unfavourable, no change 8%



Views in

Limestone ridge; views in are as important as views out

5500 houses allocated
adjacent to the AONB

Views out

A panoramic view of a lush green valley. The foreground shows a stone wall and a grassy slope. The middle ground is filled with rolling green hills, fields, and scattered trees. In the distance, a town or village is visible, surrounded by more greenery. The sky is bright and hazy, suggesting a clear day. The overall scene is a beautiful, rural landscape.



Chew Valley Farming

2017 £million in farm payments
365Ha 2009 – 2118Ha 2017
under Higher Level

Ancient wooded coombes

A photograph of a forest path with stone steps, surrounded by lush green trees and undergrowth. The path is made of dark gravel and several large, flat stones that serve as steps. The trees are tall and have dense green foliage, creating a canopy overhead. The ground is covered in various green plants and ferns.

2017
Broadleaved
1936Ha (10%)

Conifer 400Ha
(2%)

Flower rich limestone meadows



Sites of Special Scientific Interest 2009

Favourable = 1559 Ha

Unfavourable Recovering = 962 Ha

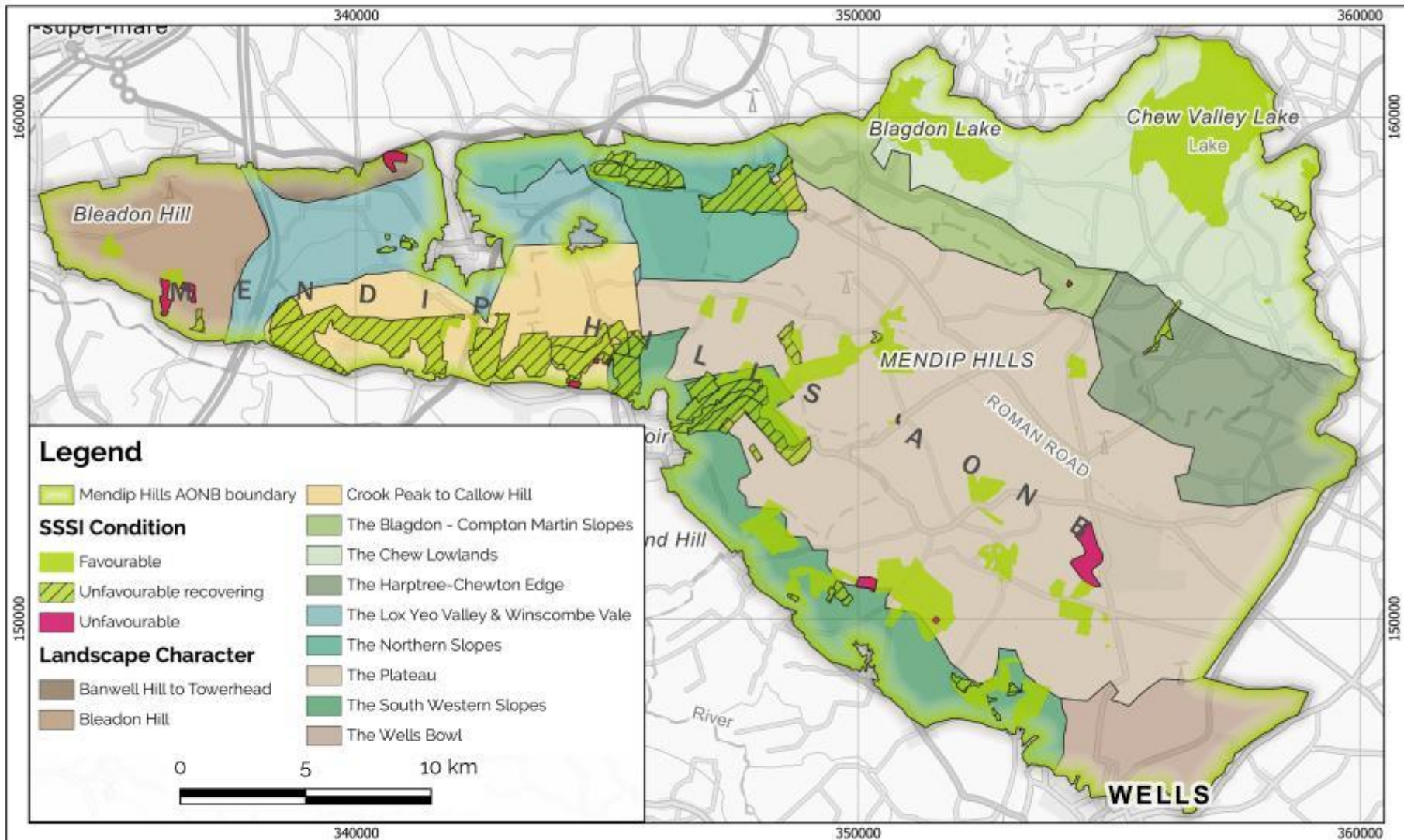
Total = 2521 Ha

SSSI 2017

Favourable = 1596 Ha

Unfavourable Recovering = 1039 Ha

Total = 2635 Ha



Map 9
Mendip Hills AONB - SSSI Condition 2016

Scale
 1:100,000

Compiled on
 5/3/2018

Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2018.

National Tranquillity Mapping Data 2007 developed for Campaign to Protect Rural England and Natural England by Northumbria University. OS Licence number 100018881

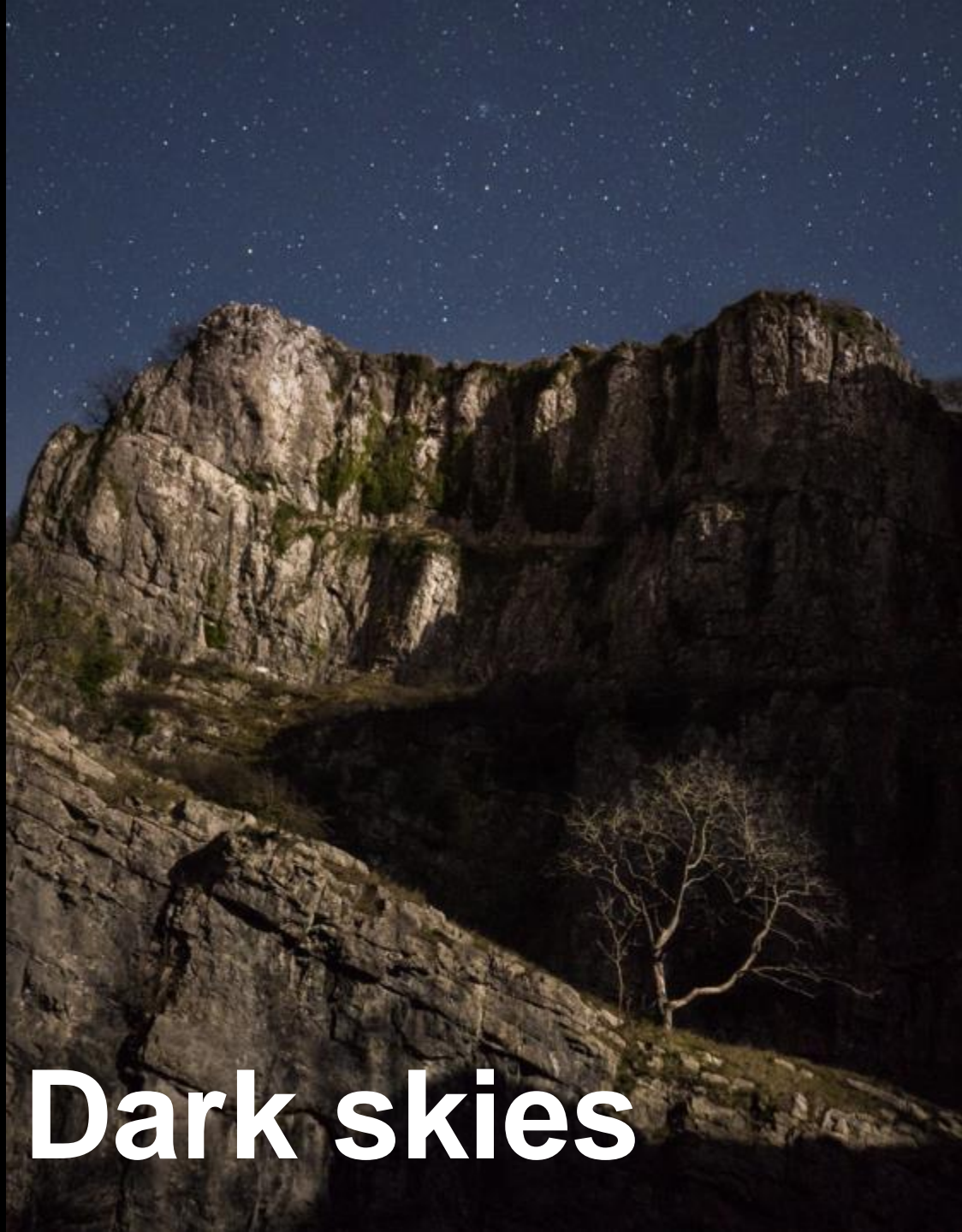


Drystone walls



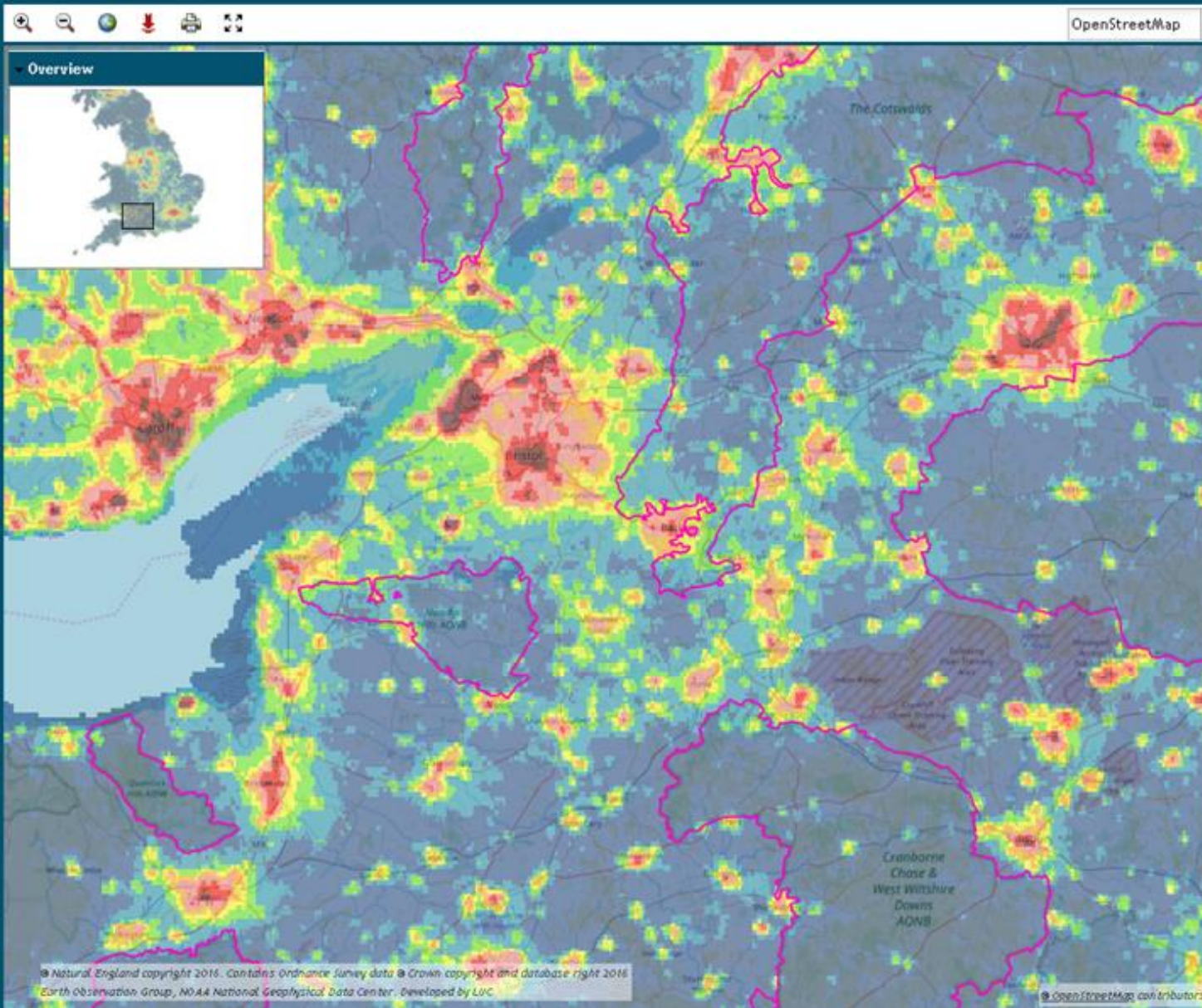
60% of dry stone walls 'not stockproof' and
'derelict' = 150km

Lifelines 2008



Dark skies

England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies



Legend

Search tools

Detailed maps and statistics



Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty -
Mendip Hills AONB



PDF Map

[More information](#)

Name

Mendip Hills AONB

< 0.25 (low) (%)

1.1

0.25 - 0.5 (%)

61.9

0.5 - 1 (%)

27.1

1 - 2 (%)

7.4

2 - 4 (%)

1.8

4 - 8 (%)

0.6

8 - 16 (%)

0.1

16 - 32 (%)

0

>32 (high) (%)

0

Average (Mean) Rank

27

How to use the maps

Credits

NATIONAL PICTURE



- More than half of UK species in decline
- Fragmentation of habitats
- More planning applications for housing within AONBs as well as in the setting (5500 allocated around the Mendip Hills)
- Funding is going down (less local authority specialists)
- Farm payment system will change
- **BALANCING AWARENESS WITH VISITOR PRESSURE**

ALL THE SMALL THINGS



Development pressure is relatively small in the AONB but INCREMENTAL change erodes the quality

Drystone walls collapse gradually, INCREMENTAL change

Open areas scrub up gradually, INCREMENTAL change

Visitor pressure increases slowly, INCREMENTAL change





Glover Review of Designated Landscapes: National Parks and AONBs

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Final Report

Glover Review of Designated Landscapes: National Parks and AONBs



‘Our system of landscape protection has been hampered by having little influence over the things which have done most harm to nature.’

*Farm subsidies,
development, pollution,
climate change*



Glover Review of Designated Landscapes: National Parks and AONBs



A new purpose; **Recover, conserve and enhance natural beauty, biodiversity and natural capital, and cultural heritage.**

- Statutory consultee status
- A new financial model strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, renamed as **National Landscapes**
- Nature Recovery Networks



NOT ALL DOOM AND GLOOM



8 STEPS TO HELP THE MENDIP HILLS AONB



TRANQUILITY & DARK SKIES



Cap your outside lights

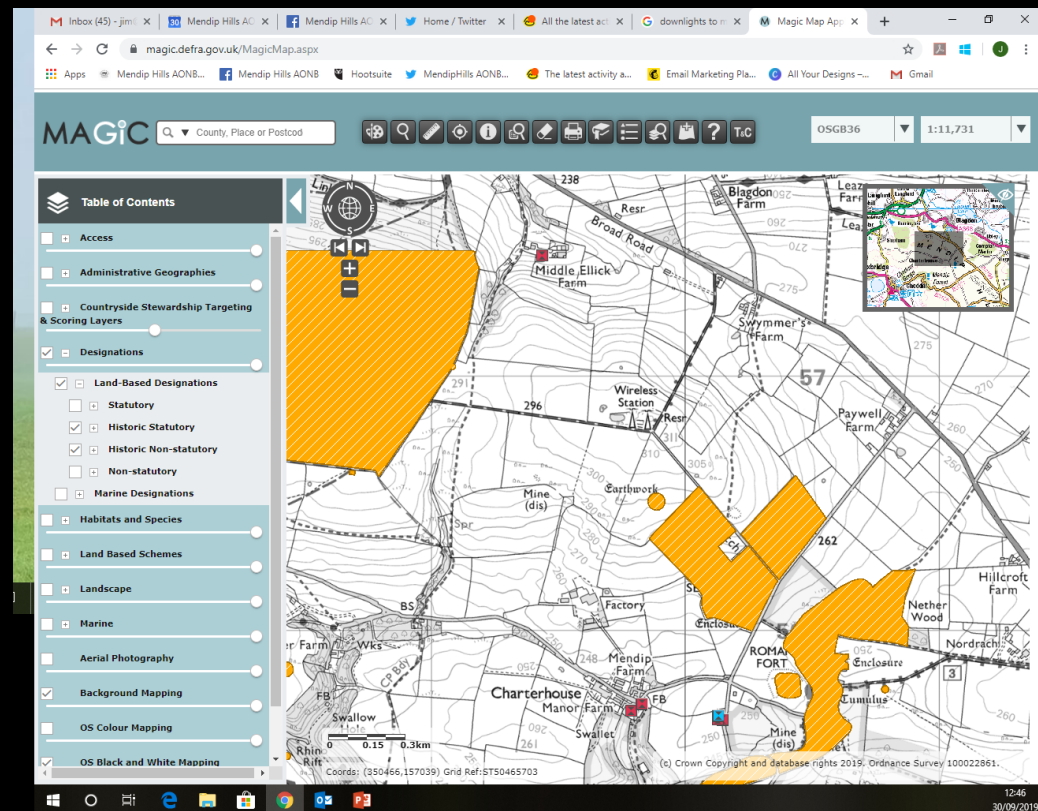




SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

Learn where your local ones are and keep an eye on them

Historicengland.org.uk



MendipHillsAONB.org.uk

GEOLOGICAL FEATURES



Keep the ivy and
cotoneaster off



CHEW VALLEY FARMED LANDSCAPE



Keep the soil in the fields



WOODED COMBES



Plant oaks and beech on
the northern slopes



GRASSLANDS & SOUTH FACING SLOPES



Create nesting sites;
birds, bats and bugs



DRYSTONE WALLS

Put a stone back



VISITORS & VIEWS

?





I Googled my symptoms

Turned out I just needed to go to the

Mendip Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

THANKS

Any questions?



Jim Hardcastle

Mendip Hills AONB Manager

01761 462338

jim@mendiphillsaonb.org.uk

MendipHillsAONB.org.uk