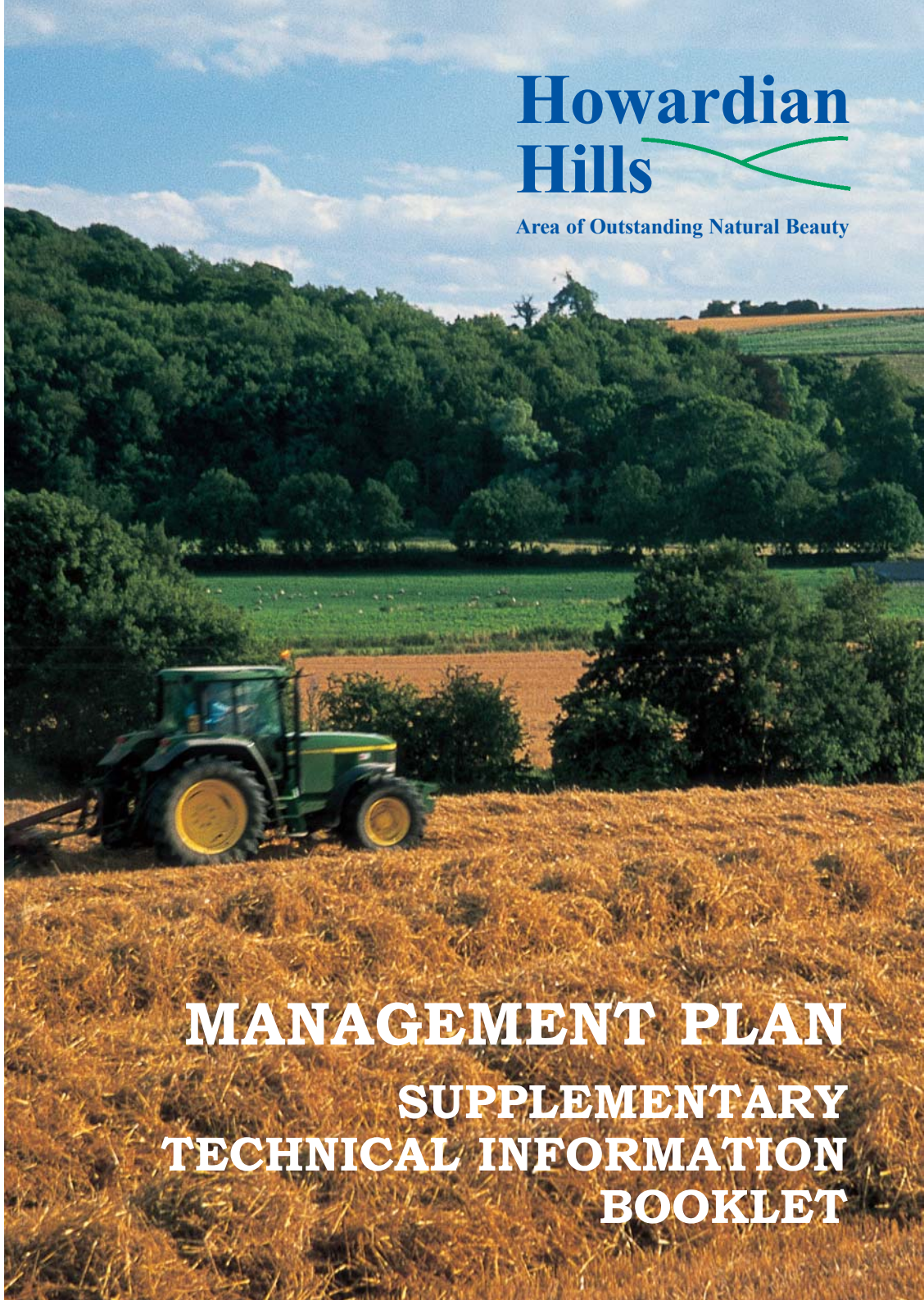
The Countryside Agency

Produced on behalf of

North Yorkshire County Council,
Ryedale District Council and Hambleton District Council by:

HOWARDIAN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
The Mews, Wath Court, Hovingham, York. YO62 4NN

*Artwork prepared by: Hambleton District Council*



# Howardian Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

# MANAGEMENT PLAN

## SUPPLEMENTARY TECHNICAL INFORMATION BOOKLET

# SUPPLEMENTARY TECHNICAL INFORMATION

This booklet contains additional details and information about the Howardian Hills, as referred to in the main sections of the Management Plan

# CONTENTS







# NATURE AND BIODIVERSITY

## Wildlife resources

The wildlife of the Howardian Hills has fascinated ecologists for centuries. There is a strong cultural tradition of plant surveying in the area, with Richard Spruce (1817 – 1893) being perhaps the most famous local botanist. Robert Teesdale before him documented the flora of the AONB in the 1780's and '90's and pioneered scientific botany in Yorkshire. These historical plant records give an insight into the exceptional quality of habitat that was once present in the AONB.

More recently, separate surveys of woodlands (1) and all other habitats (2) in 1992 provided important baseline data on habitats within the Howardian Hills. They showed the extent to which formerly extensive areas of semi-natural woodland had been modified by restocking with non-native species, as well as the relative scarcity of remaining semi-natural grassland and fen habitats. The results of the surveys are illustrated in Figure 1, which shows that nearly 80% of the habitats in the AONB are either farmland or are associated with human settlement (urban and amenity). The remaining 20% of habitats are less intensively managed, but nonetheless have been substantially modified by management practices such as woodland plantation and agricultural improvement of pastures. Those wildlife habitats that show the strongest semi-natural characteristics probably represent only about 4% of the total area of the AONB and are therefore extremely precious.

Further information about the extent, occurrence and quality of these semi-natural habitats was gained from a survey of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and other key habitats in 1999 (3). This involved detailed survey of specific sites known to be of high wildlife value and has subsequently been used to target management action.

The work of the AONB Unit has also led to the discovery of smaller areas of semi-natural habitat. These are not perhaps significant on a regional basis but are still important within a Howardian Hills context.

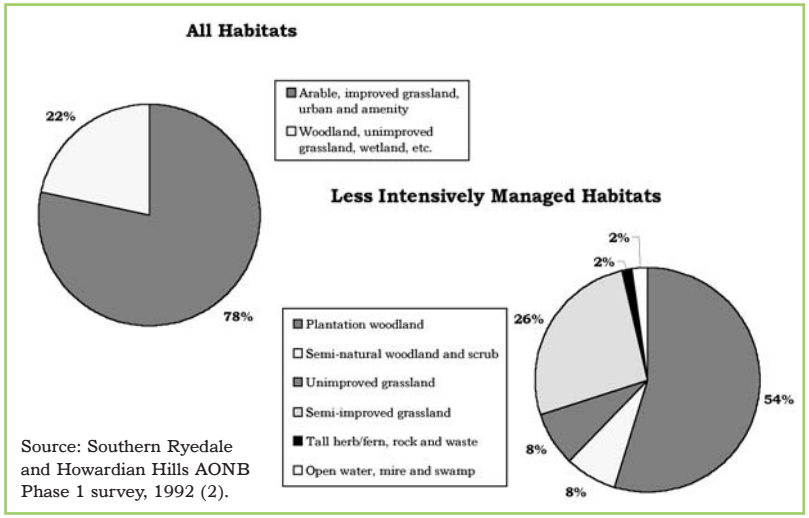
The JAC recognised the botanical importance of road verges in the previous Management Plan and commissioned a survey of the AONB in 1998 (4). The opportunity was also taken to survey roadside hedgerows at the same time. This provided valuable information on both the biodiversity value of road verges and also management issues affecting them (see Grassland below). A total of 92km of species-rich roadside hedge was recorded, in 195 separate stretches. This equates to approximately 18% of the roadside

boundaries in the AONB (96km out of 515km), although it should be borne in mind that not all roadside boundaries are hedged.

Apart from the above, recent survey work commissioned by the JAC has concentrated on specific sites, largely as part of the Biodiversity Action Planning process. Invertebrate surveys have been carried out on the River Rye, at the Castle Howard Arboretum and on fen habitats in the Coulton and Scackleton area. Some farmers and land managers are now recording the occurrence of farmland bird and mammal species, as part of the application process for the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. There is a need for these diverse sources of information to be collated and compiled, in order to improve knowledge of the distribution of scarce species.

It is unlikely that another comprehensive survey of all habitats within the AONB will be carried out in the foreseeable future. The 1992 surveys pinpointed those areas of high value and, whilst small additional areas have subsequently been discovered, it is not felt that there are large gaps in our knowledge of habitat *quantity*. The main priority for the future is to ascertain the *quality* of these important areas of habitat, together with more information on the distribution of scarce species, so that future planning and management decisions are adequately informed.

**FIGURE 1: WILDLIFE HABITATS**




Source: Southern Ryedale and Howardian Hills AONB Phase 1 survey, 1992 (2).





Such information is likely to arise from a variety of sources, including small surveys commissioned by the JAC or partner organisations. Another useful source will be whole-farm environmental audits, compiled as part of the application process for Defra's Higher Level Environmental Stewardship Scheme.

## Woodland

The total area of woodland is extensive, comprising 3,017ha or 15% of the land area of the AONB in 1992 (2). Further more detailed information can be found in the ***Forestry and Woodland*** section of this booklet. Ecological surveys (1) have shown that 50% of the woodlands are of Ancient origin, in that they are thought to have had continuous woodland cover since at least AD 1600. This, together with woodland in the south western corner of the adjacent North York Moors National Park, represents one of the largest concentrations of Ancient woodland in northern England.

## Grassland

In comparison with woodland, high quality grassland habitats are few in number and small in scale. The 1992 Phase I survey (2) found that the best nature conservation sites, i.e. those which have been little altered by ploughing, re-seeding, fertilising or herbicide treatment, total only 362ha (1.8% of the area of the AONB). These are concentrated mainly in the Derwent Valley, where several fields are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, with a scattered distribution of sites throughout the rest of the AONB. A further 761ha of botanically much poorer semi-improved grassland was also recorded during the survey, although much of this is of very low quality indeed and is mainly of importance for 'landscape' rather than nature conservation reasons. The floristic diversity of calcareous (limestone) grassland tends to be much higher than that of neutral grassland. Although the underlying rocks in the North Ridge and Caulkleys Bank landscape character areas are strongly calcareous, only 11.5ha of unimproved grassland was recorded during the Phase I survey. Thirty percent (3.5ha) of this occurs at one site, showing the high fragility of this habitat within the AONB. Areas of acidic grassland and lowland heath would once have been common in the Plateau landscape character area, but are now confined largely to rides within forestry plantations.

The road verge survey (4) revealed the importance of verges as a remnant of formerly much more extensive unimproved grassland. Nearly 38ha of unimproved grassland habitat was discovered on 132 separate stretches of verge.

This equates to 10% of the road verge length in the AONB (46km out of 515km). Whilst the majority of the Special Interest Road Verges identified are neutral grassland habitat, significant new areas of both calcareous and acid grassland were also discovered. The most botanically diverse verges occur mainly in the eastern half of the AONB, in the Slingsby and Kirkham areas.

## Wetlands

Wetland habitats in the Howardian Hills include rivers/streams/open water and their associated waterside habitats, spring-fed mires and fens and areas dependent upon a high water table or seasonal flooding.

The habitat survey in 1992 (2) recorded 14.5ha of mire. These sites include flushes, which occur as small wet areas along seepage lines on sloping ground, often within woodland. Most of the mire habitat is however found along streams and rivers, particularly in the Derwent Valley and near Coulton, and is a particularly valuable habitat for wetland plants and invertebrates.

85ha of open water was recorded, with the largest water bodies being the lakes at Castle Howard, Wiganthorpe, Newburgh Priory and Pond Head (Oulston) Reservoir. A number of farm and village ponds are also important, although these are relatively scarce. Relatively few of the open water bodies are high quality mesotrophic (low nutrient level) habitat, with the majority being adversely affected by management practices to some degree. The River Derwent is considered to represent one of the best national examples of an unpolluted lowland river with a 'classic' river profile, supporting diverse communities of aquatic flora and fauna. It is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC). Stretches of the Holbeck and the Rivers Rye and Foss, together with their minor tributaries, also provide valuable habitat.



## Key species

Hambleton and Ryedale BAP Local Priority species, for which the Howardian Hills is important:

- Lapwing
- Tree sparrow
- Redshank
- Spotted flycatcher
- Song thrush
- Bullfinch
- Yellow wagtail
- Farmland birds
- Wetland birds
- Baneberry
- Knapweed broomrape
- Cowslip
- Orchids
- Arable flowers
- Otter
- Water vole
- Brown hare
- White-clawed crayfish
- Bat species
- Great crested newt
- Bumblebees
- Giant bellflower Gall-fly

UK BAP Priority species also found in the AONB:

- Skylark
- Linnet

NATURE AND BIODIVERSITY

# CULTURAL HERITAGE

The following is a brief description of the historic development process and features found in the Howardian Hills. A fuller description can be found in the Historic Environment Study report (5).

The earliest known man-made structure in the AONB is the Neolithic long barrow near Grimston Grange, which dates from approximately 4000BC. Bronze and Iron Age monuments, dating from 2500BC to AD50, are more common. Round barrows (tumuli) and earth boundary ditches are scattered throughout the Howardian Hills but are more common on the higher ground of the Plateau and Ridges, which in the Iron Age would have been open heath or grassland.

The majority of the villages in the AONB would have become established during the 9th and 10th centuries, setting out the parish boundaries, village layouts and churches that we still see today. The Norman invasion introduced new ideas on land management and also introduced features such as Crayke Castle into the landscape. This was originally a timber motte-and-bailey castle that was later rebuilt in stone. The ploughing of the common fields resulted in the well-known 'rigg and furrow' pattern, much of which has now been lost except in pasture fields too steep or poorly drained to be ploughed. At the other end of the social spectrum, lords of the manor established deer parks for hunting – examples are known from Henderskelfe (Castle Howard) and Sproxton. The Black Death in 1348 will have been a factor in the abandonment or shrinkage of several villages in the Howardian Hills, with remains still being visible at Crambe, East Newton and Thornton-on-the-Hill.

In the late Medieval period large monasteries such as Kirkham and Newburgh established sizeable estates, managing the land through farmsteads known as granges. Many Grange Farms still survive today, even though the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1538 broke-up the great church estates. Newburgh Priory converted from a monastic estate into a private estate and is still in existence, although much reduced in size.

One of the key defining features of the Howardian Hills is its extensive designed landscapes, with their magnificent houses and parklands. The building of Castle Howard, for example, started in 1699, completely removing the village of Henderskelfe with its church and earlier castle. Other parklands and large country houses were established at Howsham, Kirkham, Whitwell, High Hutton, Ganthorpe, Swinton, Hildenley, Wiganthorpe, Hovingham, Gilling, Dalby, Sproxton, Nunnington and Brandsby. These are all still recognisable today, to a greater or lesser degree. Rural manufacturing industries such as stone quarrying, lime burning and the new industry of brick and tile making also increased correspondingly at this time, to provide the materials for these buildings. Extensive remnants from these industries can still be found throughout the area.





CULTURAL HERITAGE

# AGRICULTURE

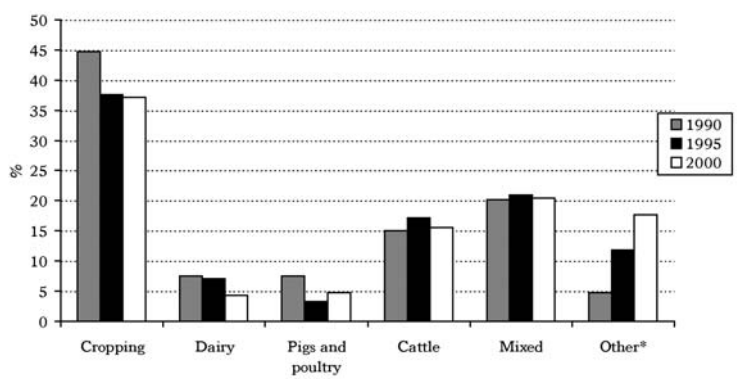
## Agriculture in the Howardian Hills

A report in 2003 by Defra (6) has provided a valuable appraisal of the farming systems operating in the AONB and the patterns of cropping, farm structure, income and employment. Although the information is approximate, it does provide a 'snapshot' of the general composition of the agricultural industry, as well as an indication of trends between the years 1990 and 2000.

## Farm types

The percentage of farms in different categories is illustrated in Figure 2.

### FIGURE 2: PERCENTAGE OF FARMS OF DIFFERENT TYPES




Source: The Howardian Hills AONB Agricultural Issues Report, Defra, 2003 (6).
*'Other' includes farms where either no particular sector dominates or specialist cropping e.g. horticulture, takes place.

Farming patterns are strongly influenced by soil types, which are graded between 1 (excellent) and 5 (very poor). In the Howardian Hills these are variable but mainly of good quality. 83% of the land is categorised as Grade 3, with much of the remainder being equally split between Grade 2 and non-agricultural/urban land. Only 1.1% of the land area is categorised as Grade 4. The best farmland occurs on the deeper soils over limestone along the North Ridge, where nearly 70% of the land is devoted to arable cropping. In contrast, grass pasture dominates the steep ground on the southern flank of the Howardian Hills.

## Agricultural land use

The pattern of variable soil quality creates a landscape typical of mixed lowland agriculture, where land versatility allows some flexibility in cropping and stocking. Figure 3 shows the trends in agricultural land use and stock numbers over the last 10 years. The most significant trends include decreases in the areas of winter barley and grassland, with increases in the areas of potatoes and horticultural crops. The dairy herd has contracted whilst the number of pigs has increased significantly. All these changes have been driven primarily by the Common Agricultural Policy's support mechanisms and hence the profitability of certain crops and livestock.

### FIGURE 3: AGRICULTURAL TRENDS 1990-2000.

| | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | % change 1990-2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AGRICULTURAL LAND USE (ha)** | | | | |
| Wheat | 4,408 | 3,944 | 4,415 | - |
| Winter barley | 2,112 | 1,767 | 1,495 | -29% |
| Spring barley | 438 | 509 | 451 | - |
| Other cereals | 137 | 116 | 112 | -37% |
| **All Cereals** | **7,096** | **6,336** | **6,474** | **-8.7%** |
| Potatoes | 553 | 745 | 812 | +47% |
| Sugar beet | 327 | 267 | 255 | +22% |
| Oilseed rape | 1,017 | 735 | 750 | -26% |
| Beans & Peas | 167 | 206 | N/A | N/A |
| Horticulture | 16 | 30 | 42 | +160% |
| Other Crops and Fallow | 157 | 227 | 545 | +250% |
| **All Crops and Fallow** | **9,333** | **8,546** | **8,878** | **-5%** |
| Short-term grassland | 1,520 | 1,154 | 755 | -50% |
| Long-term grassland | 3,437 | 2,972 | 2,720 | -21% |
| Rough Grazing | 144 | 195 | 92 | -36% |
| **All Grassland** | **5,101** | **4,321** | **3,567** | **-30%** |
| Farm Woodland | 484 | 570 | 591 | +22% |
| Set-aside | 136 | 1,257 | 1,126 | +728% |
| Other land on farms | 250 | 304 | 297 | +19% |
| **All Agricultural Land** | **15,304** | **14,998** | **14,459** | **-5.5%** |

| | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | % change 1990-2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **LIVESTOCK (No.)** | | | | |
| Dairy herd | 2,144 | 2,053 | 1,591 | -26% |
| Beef herd | 621 | 709 | 688 | +11% |
| Other Cattle and Calves | 4,775 | 4,311 | 3,999 | -16% |
| Sheep and Lambs | 37,811 | 33,510 | 33,128 | -12% |
| Pigs | 36,969 | 49,508 | 60,846 | +64% |
| Fowls | 134,713 | N/A | 127,690 | -5% |

Source: The Howardian Hills AONB Agricultural Issues Report, Defra, 2003 (6).

### Farm incomes and employment

Over the last 10 years, the most marked trend has been in farm incomes, which for arable farms have seen a decrease from 29% Return on Capital in 1995 to a –6% Return in 2000. The knock-on effect of this has been that, although the number of farms has remained almost constant, agricultural employment has fallen by 13%. See Figures 4 and 5.

## FIGURE 4: FARM INCOME 1990-2000, PERCENTAGE RETURN ON TENANTS CAPITAL*

| Type of Farm | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Arable Farms with Cash Roots | 16.5 | 29.5 | -6 |
| Mixed Arable and Cereal Farm | 14.5 | 26.5 | -6 |
| Dairy Farms | 12 | 16 | -6 |
| Arable with Intensive Livestock | 3 | 20 | 2 |
| Arable with Grazing Livestock | -2 | 10 | -6 |
| Average Bank Borrowing Rate (%) | 17 | 9 | 8 |

Source: The Howardian Hills AONB Agricultural Issues Report, Defra, 2003 (6).

* Tenant's capital is the estimated total value of capital on the farm (other than land and fixed equipment) and is used here so that tenanted and owner-occupied farms are assessed on an equal basis.





## FIGURE 5: AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT 1990-2000.

| | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | % change 1990-2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Full-time Workforce | 435 | 395 | 386 | -11% |
| Part-time Workforce | 37 | 34 | 27 | -27% |
| Seasonal or Casual | 44 | 45 | 38 | -13% |
| **TOTAL WORKFORCE** | **516** | **474** | **451** | **-13%** |

Source: The Howardian Hills AONB Agricultural Issues Report, Defra, 2003 (6).

### Land tenure

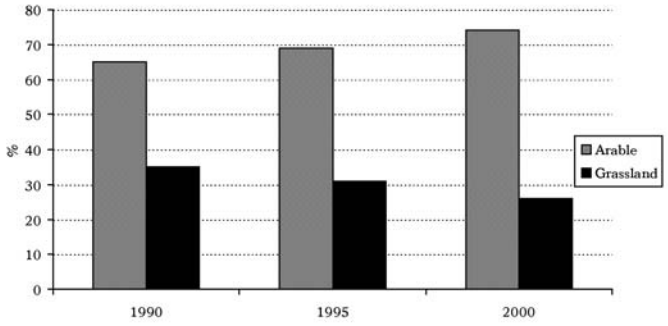
This is an important factor affecting both future farm management and cultural structure in the AONB. The amount of rented land has decreased (-14%) since 1990, probably as a consequence of landlords taking land back 'in-hand' when it becomes vacant, rather than re-letting it. Owner/occupiers have greater flexibility (and often incentive) to diversify their farm business into a range of new enterprises. Farm amalgamations are increasingly likely in the current agricultural climate, involving both owner/occupied and tenanted land. When a farm business closes, the land is likely to be amalgamated with a neighbouring farm (either via sale or tenancy), to create a larger and more efficient enterprise. The farmhouse is either sold or let separately, with a small parcel of land. This process can lead to a reduction in the number of full-time farm holdings, as well as the loss of employment and change to the social fabric of parishes. Although the large Estates are now farming more of their land 'in-hand', they are not selling land and this would therefore allow the future 're-assembly' of tenanted farms, should the agricultural climate become more favourable for both owners and tenants. The large number of Estates in the Howardian Hills does mean that this fragmentation process could potentially be significantly reversed in the future.

### The agricultural landscape

The Howardian Hills landscape is special because of its mix of lowland agriculture and extensive woodland. The significance of the woodland resource is described in the ***Forestry and Woodland*** section of this booklet, but the pattern of farmland use also has a significant impact on the character of the landscape. One of the simplest indicators of this is the relative balance between grassland (both long-term and short-term) and arable cropping, although it is often the relative location of these uses within the landscape that

re-inforces its character. Figure 6 shows how this balance has changed over the last 10 years.

### FIGURE 6: BALANCE BETWEEN ARABLE LAND AND GRASSLAND




Source: The Howardian Hills AONB Agricultural Issues Report, Defra, 2003 (6).

The decline in the area of grassland is unlikely to be due to the extensive conversion of long-term grassland to arable cropping. A cut-off date was set in 1992 for the registration of land eligible for Arable Area Payments and therefore any subsequent conversion is ineligible for these payments. In addition, the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (2002) should now largely prevent the intensification of agricultural activity on areas of important semi-natural habitat. Much of the change would therefore appear to have come about through the reduction in the area of short-term grassland (see Figure 3), possibly in response to the relative returns available from cereal crops as opposed to sheep production. Future fluctuations in the balance are likely to again be affected by market forces, although agri-environment schemes will have an important role to play in restoring grassland on marginal (particularly very wet) arable land. Much of this was created during the 1960's and 70's by the ploughing-out of permanent grassland, but is now unviable for arable crops in the current economic climate.

## Policy change

Agriculture is currently going through radical re-structuring. A number of new initiatives and policies have been developed, including:

- The EU's **Agenda 2000** proposals. These have already started the process of reforming support for different types of production. They include reducing the linkages between payments and production (decoupling) and increasing funding for rural development (including farm diversification).
- **The England Rural Development Programme (ERDP)**. This is an EU and Government funding programme which aims to support projects which benefit the rural environment, economy and the people who live there. Some of the funding is derived from reducing direct payments to farmers (modulation). The ERDP contains funding initiatives including the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS), Rural Enterprise Scheme (RES), Processing and Marketing Grant (PMG) and the Vocational Training Scheme (VTS). Defra's existing agri-environment schemes are being reviewed, with the aim of rolling out a revised scheme (Environmental Stewardship) in 2005. ES will include a new Entry Level Scheme and a Higher Level Scheme that will replace the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.
- **The Government's Rural White Paper (2000)**. This sets out Government policy for rural areas in general, but also includes sections on agriculture.
- **The Government's Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food (2002)**. This aims to ensure a long-term future for farming, based around diverse, modern and adaptable businesses which are integrated with the rest of the food chain and take into account the needs of the environment and rural economy.
- **The Mid-Term Review of the Common Agricultural Policy**. This aims to further decouple support payments to farmers and increase funding for rural development and agri-environment schemes. It proposes a new Single Farm Payment, to replace many of the existing individual crop and livestock payments. Farmers are likely to be freer to farm their land in response to market demands, be these for specialist crops or enhanced landscape and biodiversity value.

AGRICULTURE

# FORESTRY AND WOODLAND

## The woodland resource

The percentage of woodland cover is one of the defining features of the Howardian Hills landscape and was quantified as 3,017ha or 15% of the AONB in 1992 (2). No comprehensive habitat survey work has been carried out since then, although the Native Woodland Development report (7) roughly estimated woodland cover as 3,900ha (19%). Data from the Forestry Commission's National Inventory of Woodland and Trees (8) indicates 3,051ha of woodland over 2ha, equating to 15% of the AONB land area. The true figure for total woodland cover is estimated to be in the region of 16-17%, when woods under 2ha are also included.

Information supplied by the ecological appraisal of woodlands in 1992 (1) provided a valuable insight into their biodiversity significance. This information was updated for some sites in 1999, during the survey of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) (3). The 1992 survey provided a useful basis for analysing the various woodlands present, based upon their historical origins, main tree species and National Vegetation Classification category.

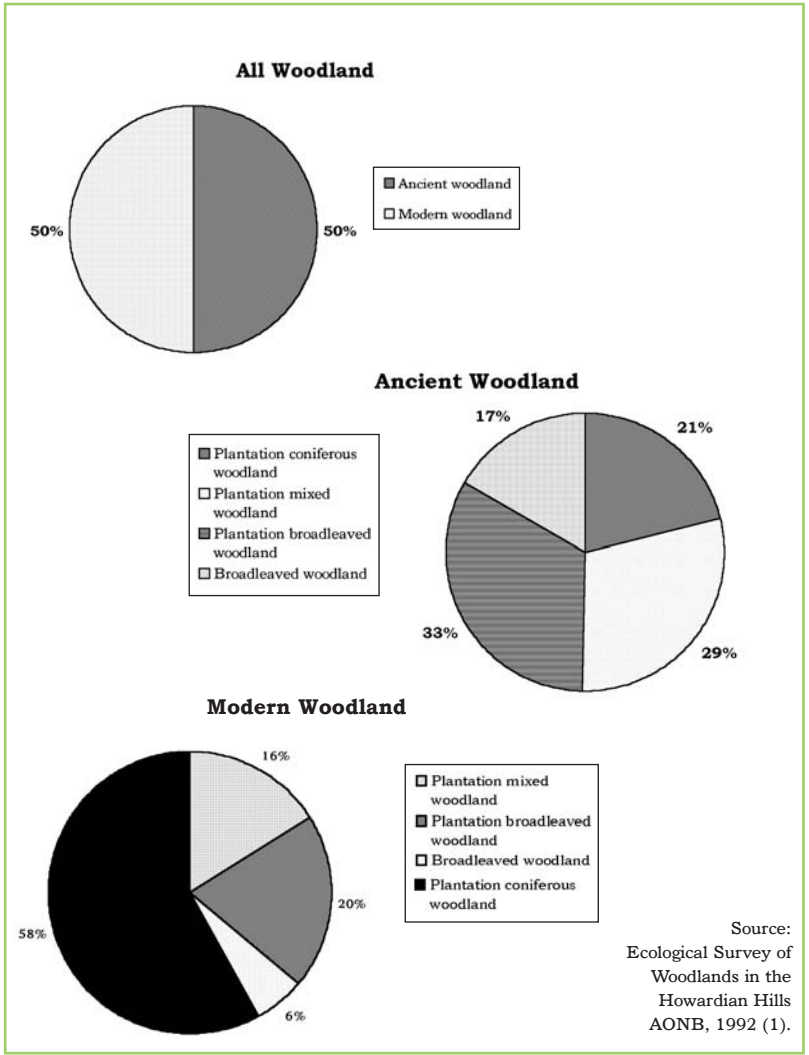
The proportions of woodland in the different categories are illustrated in Figure 7. The data shows that:

- 50% of the woodland is of Ancient origin, of which:
  - 16.6% retains a semi-natural character.
  - 83.4% is replanted, mainly with broadleaf or broadleaf/conifer mixes.
- 50% of the woodland consists of more recent plantations, of which:
  - 73.8% contains conifers or a conifer/broadleaf mix.
  - 26.2% is broadleaved.

Further information from the National Inventory of Woodland and Trees (8) indicates the following species composition:

- Of the 3,051ha of woodland larger than 2ha in size:
  - 12% is coniferous.
  - 23% is broadleaved.
  - 39% is mixed.
  - 26% is open space (including felled land).
- In the 2,261ha of 'high forest' the principal species are:
  - 61% broadleaved.
  - 39% conifer.

**FIGURE 7: WOODLAND TYPES**




Source: Ecological Survey of Woodlands in the Howardian Hills AONB, 1992 (1).

Although the original survey data is now 12 years old, it provides a comprehensive baseline position against which trends in woodland composition and management could be judged. It is possible therefore that the survey may be repeated at some time in the future.

In addition to the continuous tree cover of woodlands, the Howardian Hills also contains a large number of field trees and designed historic parklands, both of which contribute significantly to the well-wooded appearance of the landscape. Many of these trees are 'veteran' (i.e. ancient) trees and are an important habitat for rare invertebrates (9 & 10).

## Land tenure

The National Inventory of Woodland and Trees (8) indicates that 80% of woodland in the AONB is in private ownership, with the remaining 20% owned/leased by the Forestry Commission. Ownership of private woodlands is divided between large estates or landowners (who tend to have multiple objectives for their woods) and individual farmers. In small farm woodlands, pheasant shooting may often be the primary objective of any management carried out. For larger estates and landowners, the objective is likely to be pheasant shooting in combination with commercial timber production. There are a number of large conifer plantations, many on Ancient Woodland Sites, which were formerly owned by the Forestry Commission. These are now in private ownership, having been sold during the Commission's now-suspended Disposals programme. Many of these woods were not thinned during their first thirty years, resulting in restricted management options for their new owners. It must be accepted that some large-scale felling may be necessary in order to return them to sustainable management.



# DEVELOPMENT



## Economic situation in the AONB

No information has been gathered about the economic situation within the specific AONB area. Work has however been undertaken for the Malton and Norton Area Partnership and as part of the preparation of the Community Investment Prospectuses for Easingwold, Malton/Norton and Helmsley. Census data also provides some indication of employment categories and the size of the labour market. The primary focus of local economic activity is the market towns of Malton, Easingwold and Helmsley, all of which are outside the AONB. They act as the main centres for employment, shopping, leisure and health services, with smaller facilities located throughout the AONB.

The Amion Report (11) for the Malton and Norton Area Partnership gives some baseline information that is considered to be fairly indicative of the situation as a whole in the AONB.

- Unemployment is low (1.8% in Malton, Norton and hinterland), although there is a high level of out-commuting.
- The majority of businesses are small (less than 10 employees), with few large employers of 200+ (Castle Howard is one example). This is typical of a predominantly agricultural area, with a high level of self-employment.
- The workforce has a higher than average number of skilled blue-collar staff (twice the national average), due to the high percentage employed in the manufacturing and agricultural industries.
- Although the area is perceived to be relatively prosperous, its economic base is largely built on those industries forecast to decline further over the next decade. For example, Census statistics (12) indicate that 29% of the working population within the AONB is employed in the Agriculture, Forestry or Fishing sector.
- The population decline in the 20-29 age group is of concern, indicating a potential future lack of local labour to sustain economic growth.

The Amion Report forecasts a slow-down in the decline in agricultural employment, perhaps as a result of extensive business re-structuring. Employment in the construction and manufacturing industries is predicted to fall sharply. Major growth is forecast however in the retail and tourism sectors, as well as in financial and business services.

## Housing

The AONB has a relatively high proportion of rented housing (40%), when compared to North Yorkshire as a whole (30%) (12). Much of this is provided by the Estates, with properties ranging from terraced cottages through to large farmhouses. The availability of these is likely to remain fairly constant in the long-term, as Estates are generally not disposing of property at the current time. One of the main issues however, as highlighted in the Ryedale Housing Needs Survey (13), is the low income of many local people and hence the affordability of accommodation, whether to buy or rent. This situation has worsened markedly in recent years, due to large increases in house prices throughout the AONB and the wider area.

Government policy encourages the majority of new housing to be located close to services, e.g. within market towns, to reduce the need to travel. Current Local Plan policies echo this, but also recognise that limited housing development could take place in villages, particularly those with a good range of services. Policies within the Local Plans also stipulate the percentage of low-cost affordable housing that should be included within new housing developments. Ryedale District Council is currently reviewing its Local Plan policies on affordable housing, whilst the Hambleton District Council policies will be considered during their forthcoming Local Plan review. Currently proposed amendments to the Ryedale Local Plan suggest that the threshold for affordable housing provision in rural villages should be sites where 5 or more new houses are to be built. Alteration No.1 of the Hambleton Local Plan revised its thresholds for affordable housing, to cover development sites of 3 or more houses in villages. Ryedale District Council is seeking a target of 35% affordable housing on suitable residential developments, although this percentage will be kept under review. At the time of writing, only one such allocated housing site exists within current village Development Limits in the AONB. Other 'windfall' sites of this size could however come forward for re-development.



# RECREATION, ACCESS AND TOURISM

The AONB is an important area for quiet recreation for both local people and visitors. It caters for a wide range of activities, from the more traditional such as walking, horse riding, cycling and country sports, through to occasional events like motor cycle scrambling and hot-air ballooning. These activities are generally adequately dispersed or at low frequency, so that serious or prolonged conflict is rare. Touring by car along the quiet country lanes is popular, as is visiting the attractive stone-built villages such as Coneysthorpe, Terrington, Hovingham and Brandsby. These generally cope well with the number of visitors they receive, although parking problems do occur during busier periods. One of the assets of the Howardian Hills is its network of public footpaths and bridleways, which offer extensive opportunities for exploring the unspoilt beauty of the AONB away from main roads.

The area is rich in heritage and the five main historic houses open to the public attract large numbers of visitors. Castle Howard is the main draw, with more than 200,000 visitors per year. Nunnington Hall attracts more than 55,000 and the ruined Kirkham Priory more than 10,000. Other popular historic houses include Newburgh Priory and Hovingham Hall, although these have limited opening times. A number of smaller visitor attractions e.g. Yorkshire Lavender and Farming Flashback, are dotted around the AONB and there is a 9-hole golf course at Gilling Castle.

Current facilities for staying visitors are relatively limited, with accommodation available in village hotels/pubs and bed-and-breakfast in farmhouses and guesthouses. There are a number of small farm-based caravan and camping sites, with larger sites for both static and touring caravans at Coneysthorpe, Slingsby, Sproxton and Welburn.

A Visitors and Users Survey conducted in 2002 (14) provided detailed information on the source of visitors and their reasons for visiting the Howardian Hills. The survey results should be treated with caution, as they reflect the sampling pattern used rather than the whole AONB, but they do tend to confirm established theories about the origins and motivations of visitors. Just under half of all visits to the AONB (45%) were made to visit a particular attraction/place and the majority of visitors (64%) had come from the Yorkshire area. 82% of them were repeat visitors, indicating that the area is attractive and that people are willing to return. The majority (63%) appeared to be day visitors, although those who stayed did so for an average of 4.4 days and used serviced accommodation. The majority of people surveyed were in

the over-45 age bracket and from the higher social groups. Feedback from visitors and focus groups with local tourism providers indicated that people are attracted by the unspoilt landscape, the peace and tranquillity and the sense of 'discovery'.



# AWARENESS AND PROMOTION



The following text is a summary of the AONB Interpretation Strategy prepared by the Joint Advisory Committee in 2000.

## Target audiences

One of the major problems is considered to be the general lack of awareness of the Howardian Hills AONB. This applies to residents of the area, visitors and staff at the three local authorities.

- Many residents are unaware of the nationally important landscape in which they live and may only come into contact with it in relation to the planning system, e.g. the design of house extensions, etc. Other residents are better informed but are confused about the role that the Joint Advisory Committee plays.
- Many visitors come to the area to see the historic properties, e.g. Castle Howard or Nunnington Hall. Many of them are unaware that they are in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and that special care needs to be taken to look after the landscape. They also may not know that there are other attractions, both man-made and natural, to be seen nearby.
- Many staff in the local authorities seem unaware of the AONB designation and the involvement of their authority in a management project. Much of the work of the AONB Project involves encouraging partner organisations to give a higher priority to work in the AONB, and therefore awareness of its national importance is critical.

## Suggested Actions

### Raising awareness

#### Local authority Liaison Groups

Internal co-ordination procedures within each local authority, to feed back information to the Officers Working Group and JAC.

#### AONB Website

The production of a website is now considered to be an important means of raising awareness of the area. As well as providing information on the AONB it could also be used to promote locally produced products and accommodation facilities available in the AONB.

#### Leaflets

There are two key priorities. Firstly, to produce a general information leaflet on the AONB. The second priority would be to produce information leaflets on selected topics of interest to the public, e.g. the historic environment of the AONB. The leaflets will be distributed via local visitor attractions and through local shops and pubs. Leaflet dispensers, carrying a range of AONB information, would be sited in as

many local shops as possible, thereby making the information accessible to both local residents and tourists and also encouraging spending within the shops.

**AONB Newsletter**

A simple annual newsletter could be produced, highlighting the work of the JAC and achievements over the past year. This newsletter could be distributed to all households as a mailshot and sent to all Parish Councils for display on village notice boards.

**Threshold signs**

Many AONBs have signs on major roads, marking the point of entry into the AONB. This can be carried out in an unobtrusive way if sympathetic designs and materials are used. The Howardian Hills has a historic network of roads, many of which skirt the fringes of the AONB rather than crossing it. The scope for threshold signs is somewhat limited therefore, but it is felt that there are a number of sites that might be suitable.

**Footpath and bridleway markers**

The AONB logo could be incorporated onto public footpath/bridleway waymarkers and fingerposts. A simple way of doing this would be to design and produce a new waymarker that could be used to replace existing waymarkers. This measure would be an unobtrusive way of letting both local residents and visitors know when they were in the AONB.

**Media coverage**

This method is considered an important tool for publicising some of the more unusual work that the AONB undertakes, e.g. the scrub clearance on Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Interesting stories initially run in the local media can sometimes make their way into the regional newspapers, thus increasing their impact. The current method and frequency of News Releases is considered to be sufficient to achieve its aims.

**AONB Information boards**

The main car park at Castle Howard was identified in the Management Plan as a possible trial location for a signboard, providing information about the AONB and its purpose. Other possible locations would include Kirkham, Nunnington Hall and Newburgh Priory, where large numbers of visitors would see them.

**Site boards**

These would be used to advertise practical conservation work that has been assisted in some way by the AONB Project. Boards have already been produced and are currently deployed in selected locations, usually where work has taken place near to well-used Public Rights of Way or roads. Site boards will continue to be put up in those locations that offer the maximum potential for publicity.

## On-site interpretation

**Information boards**

These will be sited in quiet locations that allow appreciation and enjoyment of the AONB's landscape. One such example is the City of Troy turf maze, which was provided with a small new information board in 1998. Only two other sites have been identified initially, interpreting the geological and wildlife features visible at Kirkham and the view from the top of Caulkleys Bank.

**Circular walks and rides leaflets**

There are a number of locations in the AONB where interesting circular walks or rides could be developed, using existing Public Rights of Way and/or the increasing number of permissive links. Possible locations include the River Derwent/Howsham Wood, Nunnington and Caulkleys Bank, the Coulton area, Yearsley/Oulston Reservoir/Peel Park and the Ampleforth/Gilling area. Local communities would need to be consulted before publicising any new routes, as parking problems can arise in villages at the start/end of the route. Simple leaflets explaining the route and any features of interest could be prepared and distributed via the leaflet dispensers located in local shops.

**Guided walks**

A programme of guided walks should be developed, perhaps using recurring annual themes, e.g. summer dawn chorus, bat walks and fungi, fruit and nuts in autumn. Another option would be to centre walks on the historic houses of the AONB, looking at the parkland from views perhaps not seen from public footpaths. The preferred method of delivery would be to use a local expert, to ensure accuracy and in-depth knowledge of the subject.

## Influencing land management

Information leaflets – There is a need to produce simple leaflets, covering a maximum of two sides of A4, on a number of topics. The priorities are considered to be the management of semi-improved grassland, the management of wet grassland and the planting or restoration of hedges. Leaflets on a number of these topics already exist, produced by a number of different organisations, including some of the JAC partners. The production of new leaflets is time consuming and therefore, subject to obtaining permission from the originators, existing information will be re-packaged to incorporate the AONB logo.

AWARENESS AND PROMOTION

**Farm walks**
A number of these have already been held in the AONB and they are a useful method for discussing land management practices. It has become clear that events are more successful if they are open to land managers from outside the AONB area as well. It is therefore preferable to organise these events in partnership with organisations such as the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) or Yorwoods, who can draw on a wider catchment area. Smaller 'workshop' events could also be organised, specialising in a particular habitat type and targeted specifically at those land managers known to have important sites.



# MONITORING



## Nature and Biodiversity

### Possible Performance Indicators

- Number of SSSIs in Favourable Condition.
- Percentage of Special Interest Road Verges in Favourable Conservation Management.
- Total area of new native woodland created 2004 – 2009.
- Total length of riparian woodland/grassland corridors created 2004 – 2009.
- Total area of grassland habitat recreated 2004 – 2009.
- Total area of lowland heath habitat restored 2004 – 2009.
- Number of 'best practice' events/promotions held.
- Number of sites managed by local groups.
- Length of new hedge and hedge gaps replanted.

## Cultural Heritage

### Possible Performance Indicators

- Historic Landscape Characterisation survey completed.
- Number of research studies completed.
- Histories of individual parklands completed.
- Number of community management schemes set up.
- Number of parkland management plans completed.
- Number of Conservation Plans for SAMs completed.
- Grant aid scheme for rural structures At Risk developed.
- Number of LHI grants to local communities.

## Local Communities

### Possible Performance Indicators

- Number of village plans prepared.
- Number of community projects completed with AONB input.
- Village Forum established.

## Agriculture

### Possible Performance Indicators

- Number of farms accessing ERDP funding.
- Area of land in organic or energy crops schemes.
- Number of 'best practice' events/promotions held.
- Annual turnover of farm ownership/tenancy?

## Forestry and Woodland

### Possible Performance Indicators

- Percentage of woodland managed to the UK Forestry Standard.
- Percentage of ASNW under management.

- Percentage of woodland managed to UKWAS standard.
- Total area of PAWS restored to native broadleaves 2004 – 2009.
- Total area of new woodland created 2004 – 2009.
- Number of best practice events/promotions held.

## Development

### Possible Performance Indicators

- Number of developments determined in accordance with JAC advice.
- Number of successful appeals in AONB as a percentage of the total number of appeals.
- Number of building improvement schemes.
- DAPA Project continuing.
- Rural Design Guidance completed.
- Number of Conservation Area appraisals completed.
- Number of features repaired/ restored.
- Number of planting schemes implemented for visually intrusive developments.

## Roads, Transport and Traffic Management

### Possible Performance Indicators

- A64/B1257 junction completed.
- Weight restriction placed on Castle Howard Avenue.
- Something on bus services.
- Number of companies approached to re-route HCVs.
- Number of villages where traffic speed monitored by automated counters.
- Number of villages where speed checks carried out by police.
- Number of 'speeding' and 'driver behaviour' events held.
- Number of relevant LTP/RTP projects implemented.
- Number of AONB information points giving information on bus services, etc.
- Extended Moorsbus service for Howardian Hills.
- Highway Authority liaison/consultation arrangements established.
- Design protocols prepared and adopted.
- Projects implemented by Safer Ryedale and Hambleton Community Safety Partnerships.
- Number of historic roadsigns/mileposts maintained.
- Number of historic roadsigns/mileposts repaired or restored.



## Recreation, Access and Tourism

### Possible Performance Indicators

- Rights of Way survey and improvement programme completed.
- Quantity of information provided to District Council Tourism Guides, TICs, tourism providers in the AONB.
- Number of car park improvement schemes completed.
- Number of Parish Councils participating in Community Paths Initiative.
- Definitive Map Review for Ryedale District completed.
- Number of 'missing' or 'lower status' route anomalies rectified.
- Length/area of new access routes/areas established.
- Number of circular routes established and guides written.
- New Tourism, Recreation and Access Forum established.
- YTB occupancy surveys/trend data.

## Awareness and Promotion

### Possible Performance Indicators

- Number of gateway signs installed.
- Number of AONB Information Points established.
- Number of site information boards erected.
- General information leaflet produced.
- Number of AONB Information Boards installed.
- Number of AONB 'parish leaflets' produced and distributed.
- Number of school projects carried out.
- Number and duration of 'hits' on the AONB website.
- Number of 'media mentions' per year.
- Number of guided walks and talks held per year.
- Interpretation Strategy reviewed.
- Number of volunteer hours on conservation or recreation work.

# REFERENCES


1. **Ecological Survey of Woodlands in the Howardian Hills AONB**, A Weston, North Yorkshire County Council, 1992.
2. **Southern Ryedale and Howardian Hills AONB Phase I Survey**, A Weston, University of York/English Nature, 1992.
3. **The North Yorkshire SINCs and Key Habitats Survey (BioDat)**, Bullen Consultants, North Yorkshire SINC Survey Steering Group, 1998.
4. **Howardian Hills AONB Roadside Verge and Hedgerow Survey**, Bullen Consultants, Howardian Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee, 1998.
5. **Howardian Hills AONB Historic Environment Study**, M McElvaney, North Yorkshire County Council, 1993.
6. **The Howardian Hills AONB Agricultural Issues Report**, Defra, Howardian Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee, 2003.
7. **Native Woodland Development in the North York Moors and Howardian Hills**, G F Peterken, Forestry Commission/ NYMNPA/HHAONB/English Nature/Royal Forestry Society, 2002.
8. **The National Inventory of Woodland and Trees**, Forestry Commission, 2002.
9. **Invertebrate Survey of Veteran Trees**, A Drane, Howardian Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee, 2003.
10. **Invertebrate Survey of Veteran Trees**, A Godfrey, Howardian Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee, 2003.
11. **Economic Impact and Needs Analysis**, Amion Consulting, Malton and Norton Area Partnership, 2002.
12. **1991 Census of Population, Small Area Statistics (SAS), 10% Sample,** ONS, Crown Copyright.
13. **Housing Needs Study**, DCA, Ryedale District Council, 2002.
14. **The Howardian Hills AONB Visitors and Users Survey**, Bowles Green Ltd, Howardian Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee, 2003.

# REFERENCES