



2.3 Designated and defined landscapes

While all of England's landscapes are considered to have their own distinctive qualities, this section describes how some are afforded additional recognition and protection through national and international designations. These landscapes are rich in natural and cultural heritage.

2.3.1 National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

2.3.1.1 Protection

National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (together termed protected landscapes) are designated under the provisions of the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act in order to preserve a number of the finest landscapes in England and Wales for the nation’s benefit (Figure 2.6).

National Parks have two statutory purposes:

- To conserve and enhance their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.
- To promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of these special qualities.

Policies and decisions that could have an impact upon National Parks have to take these purposes into consideration. If there is conflict between the two purposes, then the first purpose takes precedence – this is known as the Sandford Principle. National Park authorities also have a duty to foster the economic and social wellbeing of communities in pursuit of these purposes.

The Broads in East Anglia was designated through its own Act of Parliament, but is included within the family of National Parks. As well as the two statutory purposes of National Parks listed above, the Broads has a specific third purpose: to protect the interests of navigation. The Broads is not bound by the Sandford Principle.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are areas outside National Parks that, in Natural England’s opinion, merit designation in order to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of their landscapes.

The overall purpose of AONBs is complemented by two aims:

- Recreation will not be an objective of designation but AONBs should be used to meet the demands for recreation as far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other users.
- In pursuing the purpose of designation, account should be taken of the need to safeguard agriculture, forestry and other rural industries, and of the economic and social needs of local communities.

National Parks are already required to produce and implement management plans. Now, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) requires AONB managing authorities to prepare management plans setting out their policies for conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area, and how they will carry out their functions.

2.3.1.2 Extent of National Parks and AONBs

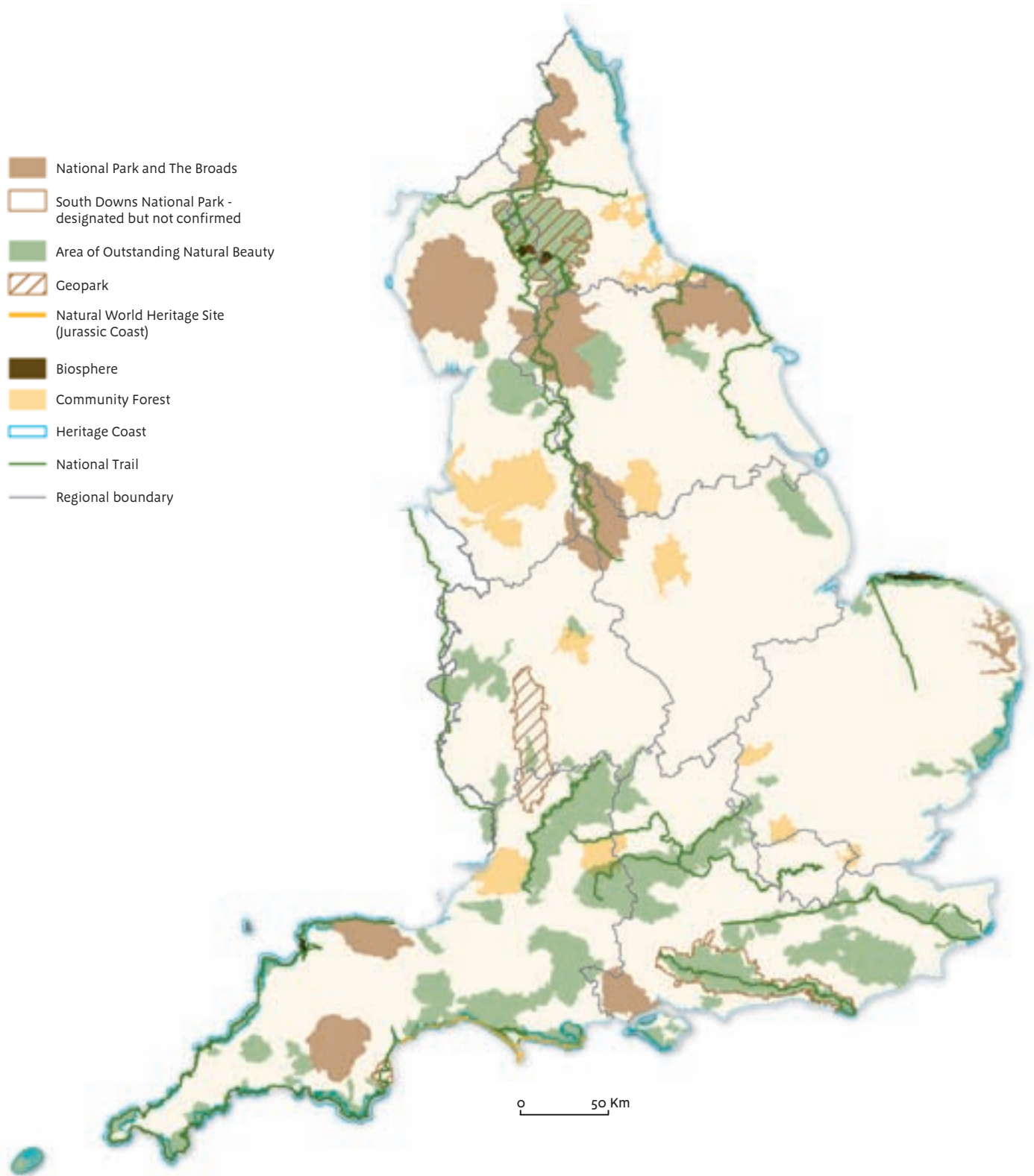
Twenty three per cent of England is designated as National Parks or AONBs, with 18% of these designated landscapes also being notified as SSSIs (Table 2.1). Conversely 51% of the area of SSSI is designated as National Park or AONB. England has eight National Parks (of which the Lake District is the largest (Figure 2.7)) plus The Broads, which is of equivalent status. Together, they cover an area of 1,050,886 ha and account for 8% of England’s total land area. The majority (92% by area) of our National Parks are in the upland areas of northern and south western England, although only 41% of designated landscapes rise above the 300 m contour.

Table 2.1 Overlap of landscape designation with SSSIs

Designation	Area (ha)	Area in SSSIs (ha)	% of AONB, NP that is also SSSI	% of SSSI that is also AONB, NP
AONB	2,042,832	264,601	13	24.6
National Park (NP)	1,050,886	286,767	27	26.7
AONB/NP	3,093,718	551,368	18	51

(Source: Natural England, 2008)

Figure 2.6 Designated and defined landscape interests



Source: Natural England, 2008

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Welcome aboard for car-free exploring

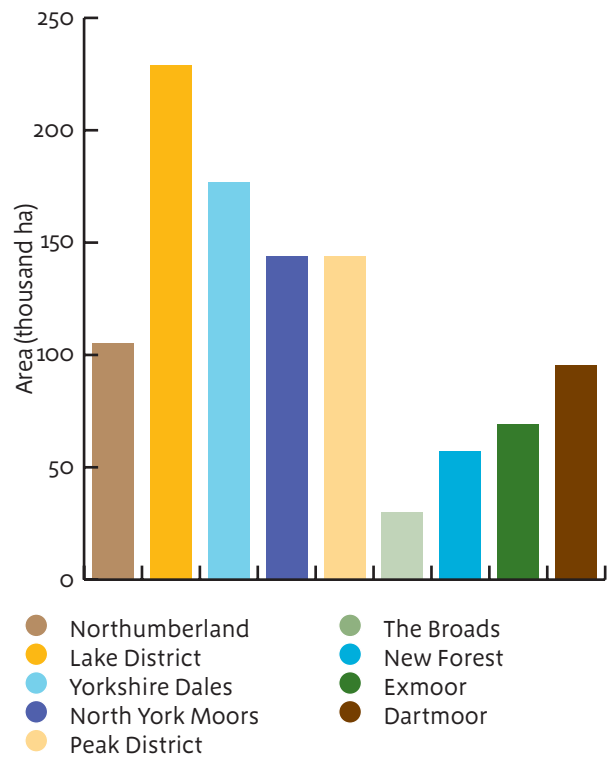
The Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is even more beautiful when someone else is doing the driving, and the Shropshire Hills Shuttles enable visitors to leave their cars behind.

There are three separate shuttle routes through three distinctly different landscapes – Long Mynd, Stiperstones and the Secret Hills. The routes meet at a central point so that visitors can hop off one shuttle and onto another. Each stop along the route is a chance to get out and explore. The easy-access offered to these areas by shuttle routes means that more visitors will get a chance to appreciate these stunning landscapes, increasing awareness of the need to protect, conserve and enhance them. Reducing the number of cars using these routes also reduces congestion and cuts carbon dioxide emissions and air pollution.



© Transport for Everyone in South Shropshire (TESS)

Figure 2.7 Size of National Parks



(Source: National Parks Portal, 2008)

The New Forest is the most recent National Park, confirmed in 2005. In addition, the South Downs was formally proposed as a National Park in 2002, but its designation has not yet been confirmed and has recently been the subject of a further public inquiry. Natural England is currently working on proposals for extensions to the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks in the area of Cumbria between the two Parks.

There are 36 AONBs, covering 2,042,832 ha or 15% of England's total land area. The smallest AONB is the Isles of Scilly (1,600 ha) and the largest the Cotswolds (204,142 ha). Only 11% of the area of AONBs is in the uplands, comprising just four AONBs.

Information on the condition of habitats within National Parks and AONBs is presented in Section 3.2 and on the overall condition in Section 6.3.

2.3.2 Heritage Coasts

2.3.2.1 Protection

England's coastline is attractive and popular, and provides some of our most distinctive landscapes. Heritage Coasts are special coastlines managed so that their natural beauty is conserved and, where appropriate, the accessibility for visitors improved. They are a non-statutory landscape designation, unlike the formally designated National Parks, and are defined by agreement between the relevant maritime local authorities and Natural England. Most local authorities have tended to transfer their funding and management interests in Heritage Coasts to AONB teams (where they exist) who take a strategic role in their management.

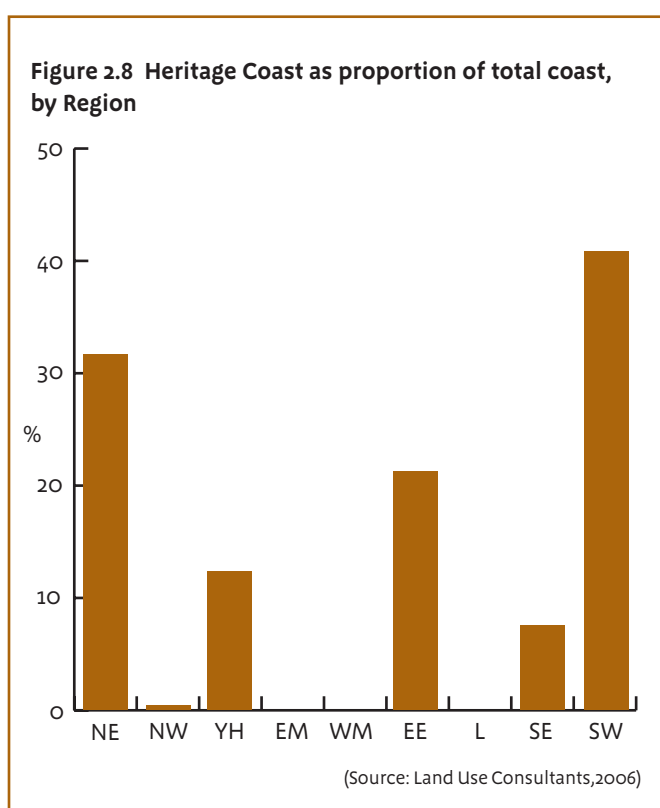
The summarised national purposes of Heritage Coasts are:

- To conserve, protect and enhance the natural beauty of the coasts, their marine flora and fauna, and their heritage features.
- To facilitate and enhance their enjoyment, understanding and appreciation by the public.
- To maintain and improve the health of inshore waters affecting Heritage Coasts and their beaches through appropriate environmental management measures.
- To take account of the needs of agriculture, forestry and fishing, and of the economic and social needs of the small communities on these coasts.

(Source: Countryside Commission, 1992)

2.3.2.2 Extent

The first Heritage Coast to be defined was the famous white chalk cliffs of Beachy Head in Sussex, the most recent the Durham Coast. Now, 1,611 km of the English coastline, comprising 32 stretches, is conserved as Heritage Coast (Figure 2.6). Eighty nine per cent is within 12 AONBs and a further 5% is within two National Parks. The South West and North East Regions have the greatest proportion of their coastline designated as Heritage Coast (Figure 2.8).



2.3.3 Biosphere Reserves

2.3.3.1 Protection

Biosphere Reserves are areas nominated by national governments and designated under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme.

They seek to fulfil three complementary functions:

- To contribute to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems & species;
- To foster economic & human development; and
- To provide support for research, monitoring, education & information exchange.

2.3.3.2 Extent

England has three Biosphere Reserves: Branton Burrows (north Devon coast), Moor House/Upper Teesdale (north Pennines), and on the North Norfolk coast (Figure 2.6). They are areas of terrestrial and coastal/marine ecosystems where, through zoning and tailored management approaches, the conservation of ecosystems and their biodiversity is combined with the sustainable use of natural resources for the benefit of local communities.

All three reserves are of importance for both landscape and biodiversity values, as shown by the overlap between designations (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Area of Biosphere Reserves and overlap with SSSI and NNR

Reserve name	Area (ha)	% is SSSI	% is NNR
Branton Burrows	1,351	100	0
Moor House/Upper Teesdale	7,149	100	99
North Norfolk Coast	5,418	95	94
Total	13,918	98	88

SSSI = Site of Special Scientific Interest

NNR = National Nature Reserve

(Source: Natural England, 2008)