

"I wanted to say how very much we appreciated you and your colleagues giving us such a splendid insight to the fabulous difference you are making for the environment and residents of Dedham Vale and beyond"

Dr Helen Phillips, Chief Executive Natural England (following her visit to the area in September 2009)

The Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Stour Valley are protected areas as they have so many of the features that people look for when describing the English countryside. The River Stour and its tributaries gently winding their way to the sea; the fragments of semi natural ancient woodland filled with wildflowers; beautiful villages with imposing church towers and village greens; sunken lanes; ancient hedgerows and just beneath the surface evidence of human habitation from many thousands of years ago.

The area continues to attract visitors who seek a glimpse of rural England at its best. A recent regional study estimated that 678,900 visitors come to the AONB annually. Some come to amble in the footsteps of the artists that made their name in the area, some come to challenge themselves along the River Stour navigation or along the 60 mile Stour Valley Path.

For many people it is not just an area to visit but one where they make their living. The farming community has made the landscape that we enjoy so much today through years of toil on the

land, and today many are encouraged financially to farm with wildlife and landscape in mind. In the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley we have been fortunate that many of the landowners have always farmed to help wildlife and look after the land.

Today many community groups help maintain the natural beauty of the area by looking after small areas of land for the benefit of us all or help individual wildlife species.

The Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley is a place to work and enjoy. The landscape and tranquility continues to be a source of pleasure and inspiration for many.

The Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Partnership continue to work together to help conserve the natural beauty of the area. The sometimes conflicting demands of all those with an interest in the area can only be resolved by the continuation of partnership working and ensure that the interests of the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley are put first for present and future generations to enjoy.

Vital statistics:

- The Dedham Vale AONB is 90 sq km. There are 21 parishes that have at least part of their area within the AONB
- The Project area is 302 sq km. There are 56 parishes with some or all of their area within the Project boundary
- It is estimated that 45,000 people live in the Project area

Managing the environment:

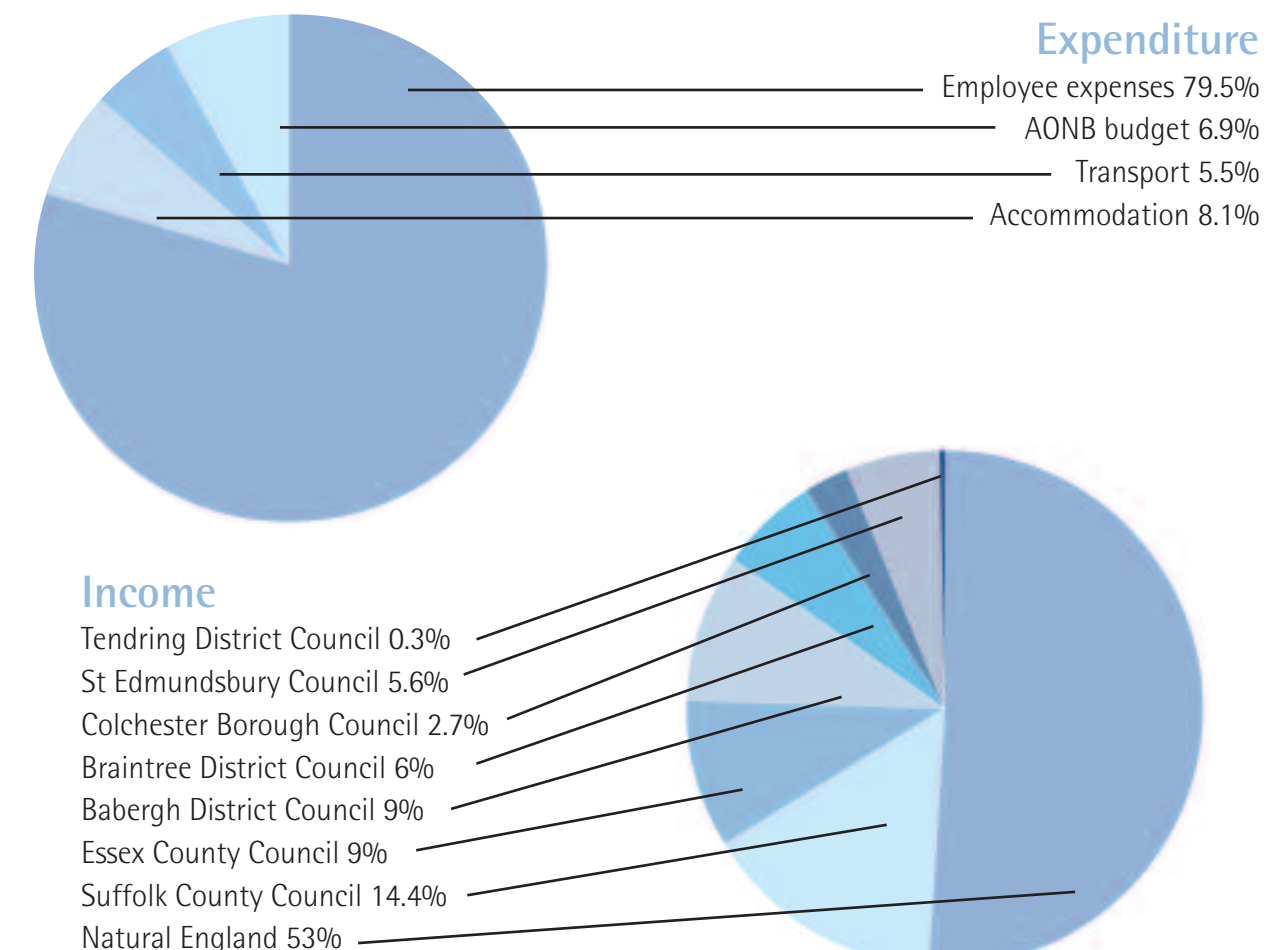
- The Dedham Vale AONB is one of 50 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949
- The Dedham Vale AONB was designated in 1970 to protect a typical lowland river valley and the quintessential English countryside for the nation.
- The Project began in 1981 as the Dedham Vale Landscape Project; by 1992 it had been extended to include the Stour Valley, when the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project published the first management plan
- There are seven Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in the Project area - Cattawade Marshes, Arger Fen, Cornard Mere, Glemsford Pits, Lineage Wood, Kentwell Wood, and Trundley Wood

Working in Partnership

Good working partnerships are so important to the continuing success of the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley activities.

The Project is core funded by Natural England, Suffolk County Council, Essex County Council, Babergh District Council, Braintree District Council, Colchester Borough Council, St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Tendring District Council.

The total budget for 2009-2010 was £265,605 (not including the Sustainable Development Fund)



The Partnership consists of representatives from Natural England; Suffolk County Council; Essex County Council; Babergh District Council; Colchester Borough Council; St Edmundsbury Borough Council; Tendring District Council; Campaign to Protect Rural England; National Trust; Environment Agency; National Farmers' Union; Country Landowners and Business Association; and East of England Development Agency.

The wider Forum includes all the parish councils in the Project area; the Royal Society for Protection of Birds; Essex Wildlife Trust; Suffolk Wildlife Trust; River Stour Trust; River Stour Boating; local conservation societies; local community groups; Field Studies Council; Otley College; University of Essex; University Campus Suffolk; Diocese of Ipswich and St Edmundsbury; Diocese of Chelmsford; English Heritage; local businesses; history societies; Colchester and Ipswich museum services; East of England Tourism; Rambler's Association; Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group; Suffolk ACRE; Rural Community Council of Essex; British Horse Riding Society and many other individual farmers and landowners.



The Stour Valley relies on the dedication of many individuals and organisations to maintain and enhance the quality of the area.

This table outlines the structure of the partnership:



The Project Team:

Project Manager - Simon Amstutz/Katherine Blake (job share)
Operations Manager - Paula Booth
Landscape and Biodiversity Officer - Neil Catchpole
Communications Officer (part time) - Catherine Smith
Community Officer (part time) - Emma Black
Transport and Tourism Officer (part time) - Elaine Bryce
Ranger (part time) - Jem Adams
Support Officer (part time) - Jasmin Hicks

Contact Details:

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