



# NCA 133: Blackmoor Vale & the Vale of Wardour

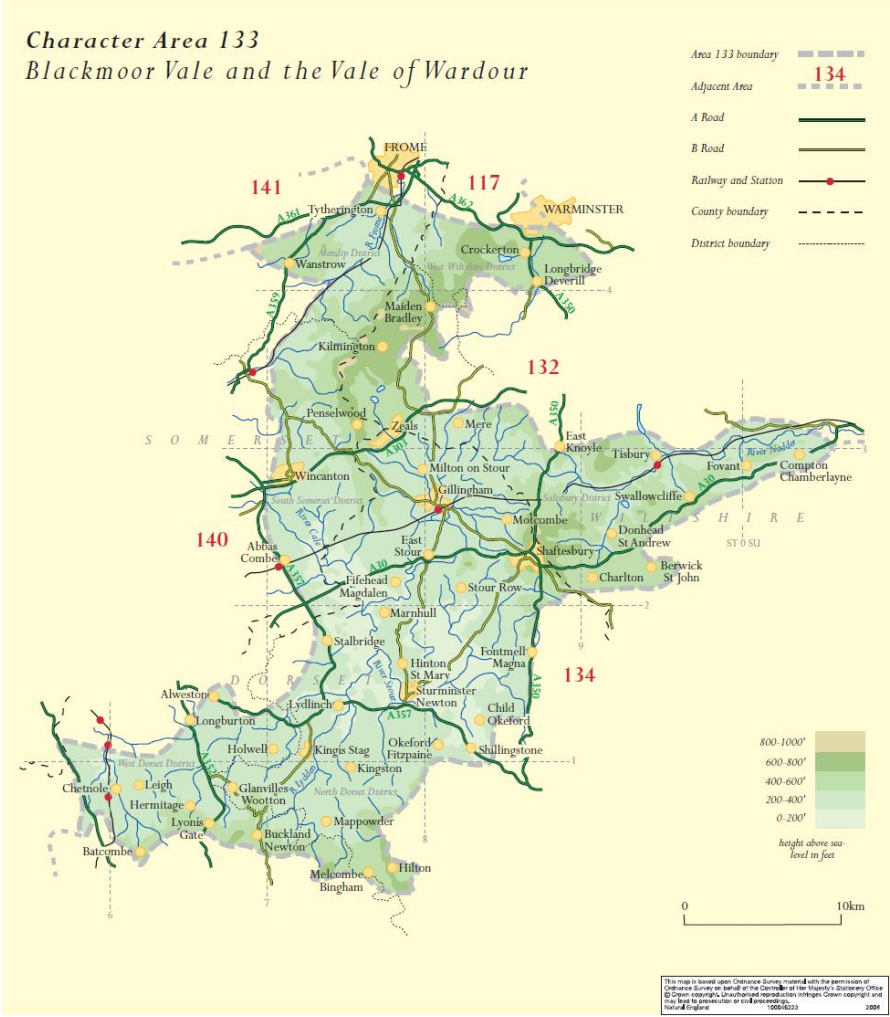
## Key Facts & Data

This document provides a summary of environmental data collected for the NCA. It is intended to help guide anyone making decisions that may affect the local environment. The information contained here is collated from the best available national datasets. It is recognised local information may provide additional detail and that this will not always

correspond to national data. If you have any questions about the Key Facts and Data, please contact: [ncaprofiles@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:ncaprofiles@naturalengland.org.uk). Your feedback will help shape the content of the full NCA profiles, which will be published from September 2012 onwards.

# Map of Blackmoor Vale & the Vale of Wardour Total Area: 78,414 ha

Character Area 133  
Blackmoor Vale and the Vale of Wardour



The above map is provided from the Countryside Character Area description pending completion of NCA maps. It is recognised that the content of this map may now be out of date in some cases and is included for general reference only. New maps will include updated content and be provided within the full NCA profiles, due to be completed by 2013.

## 1. Landscape and Nature Conservation Designations

The Blackmoor Vale & the Vale of Wardour NCA contains 21,710 ha of the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and 6,096 ha of Dorset AONB. In total AONBs cover 35% of the NCA area.

Management Plans for the Protected Landscape(s) can be found at:

- <http://www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk/>
- <http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/>

Source: Natural England (2011)

### 1.1 Designated nature conservation sites

The NCA includes the following statutory nature conservation designations:

Tier	Designation	Designated Site(s)	Area in NCA	Proportion of NCA
International	n/a	n/a	0 ha	0%
European	Special Protection Area (SPA)	n/a	0 ha	0%
	Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Rooksmoor SAC; Fontmell & Melbury Downs SAC; Holnest SAC;	193 ha	<1%

		River Avon SAC; Chilmark Quarries SAC; Cerne & Sydling Downs SAC		
National	National Nature Reserve (NNR)	Hambledon Hill NNR	40 ha	<1%
National	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	A total of 34 sites wholly or partly within the NCA	977 ha	1%

Source: Natural England (2011)

*Please Note: (i) Designated areas may overlap (ii) all figures are cut to Mean High Water Line, designations that span coastal areas/views below this line will not be included.*

The SACs are also designated as SSSIs.

There are 410 Local sites in Blackmoor Vale & the Vale of Wardour NCA covering 4,885 ha which is 6% of the NCA.

Source: Natural England (2011)

- Details of individual Sites of Special Scientific Interest can be searched at:  
<http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/sssi/search.cfm>
- Details of Local Nature Reserves (LNR) can be searched  
[http://www.lnr.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/lnr/lnr\\_search.asp](http://www.lnr.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/lnr/lnr_search.asp)
- Maps showing locations of Statutory sites can be found at  
<http://magic.defra.gov.uk/website/magic/> -select 'Rural Designations Statutory'

### 1.1.1 Condition of designated sites

SSSI Condition Category	Area in NCA	Percentage of NCA SSSI Resource
Unfavourable declining	4 ha	<1%
Favourable	224 ha	23%
Unfavourable no change	181 ha	18%
Unfavourable recovering	576 ha	59%

Source: Natural England (March 2011)

- Details of SSSI condition can be searched at:

<http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/sssi/reportIndex.cfm>

## 2. Landform, Geology & Soils

### 2.1 Elevation

The topography of the Blackmoor Vale and the Vale of Wardour ranges from a minimum elevation of 36 m to a maximum of 267m.

Source: Natural England 2010

### 2.2 Landform & Process

The Vales are formed mainly of Upper Jurassic clays which have been eroded to their present low-lying form by rivers.

Source: *Blackmoor Vale and the Vale of Wardour Countryside Character Area description*

### 2.3 Bedrock Geology

Vales of fossiliferous marine Upper Jurassic clays are fringed by Cretaceous Upper Greensand hills and scarps and low limestone hills. There are many important exposures here. Many landslips have occurred where water has undermined the Greensand where it meets Gault Clays.

*Source: Wessex Vales Natural Area Profile, Blackmoor Vale and the Vale of Wardour Countryside Character Area description, British Geological Survey Maps*

## 2.4 Superficial Deposits

Gravels, sands, silts and clays have been deposited by rivers as terrace deposits. Head has been formed in valleys from the freezing and thawing of scree and soil under tundra conditions.

*Source: Wessex Vales Natural Area Profile, Blackmoor Vale and the Vale of Wardour Countryside Character Area description, British Geological Survey Maps*

## 2.5 Designated Geological Sites

Designation	Number of Sites
Geological Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	6
Mixed Interest SSSIs	0

There are 16 Local Geological Sites within the NCA.

*Source: Natural England (2011)*

- Details of individual Sites of Special Scientific Interest can be searched at

<http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/sssi/search.cfm>

## 2.6 Soils and Agricultural Land Classification

The heavy, but fertile, clay soils are generally poorly-drained stagnogleys.

*Source: Blackmoor Vale and the Vale of Wardour Countryside Character Area description*

The main grades of agricultural land in the NCA are broken down as follows (as a proportion of total land area):

Agricultural Land Classification	Area in NCA	Proportion of NCA
Grade 1	605 ha	<1%
Grade 2	7,964 ha	10%
Grade 3	46,535 ha	60%
Grade 4	19,564 ha	25%
Grade 5	669 ha	<1%
Non-agricultural	311 ha	<1%
Urban	66 ha	<1%

*Source: Natural England (2010)*

## 3. Key Water Bodies & Catchments

### 3.1 Major Rivers/Canals

The following major rivers/canals (by length) have been identified in this NCA.

River Name	Length in NCA
River Stour	43 km
River Nadder	21 km
River Cale	19 km
River Lydden	19 km
River Frome	11 km
River Brue	7 km
River Wylde	5 km

Source: Natural England (2010)

*Please Note: other significant rivers (by volume) may also occur. These are not listed where the length within the NCA is short.*

The great majority of the rivers within the NCA drain to the south.

### 3.2 Water Quality

The total area of Nitrate Vulnerable Zone is 24,621ha, 31% of the NCA.

Source: Natural England (2010)

### 3.3 Protected Areas

- to be completed in consultation with the Environment Agency (full document only).

### 3.4 Water Framework Directive

- to be completed in consultation with the Environment Agency (full document only).



## 4. Trees and Woodlands

### 4.1 Total Woodland Cover

The NCA contains 7,379 ha of woodland (9% of the total area), of which 3,821 ha is Ancient Woodland.

*Source: Natural England (2010)*

### 4.2 Distribution and size of woodland and trees in the landscape

Scattered woodlands, dense hedgerows and common hedgerow trees.

*Source: Natural England 2010*

### 4.3 Woodland Types

A statistical breakdown of the area and type of woodland found across the NCA is detailed below.

Area and proportion of different woodland types in the NCA (over 2 ha)

Woodland Type	Area in NCA	Proportion of NCA
Broadleaved	4,007 ha	5%
Coniferous	2,410 ha	3%
Mixed	253 ha	<1%
Shrub / young trees	509 ha	1%
Felled/land for prepared planting	198 ha	<1%
Coppice	3 ha	<1%

*Source: Natural England (2010)*

## Area and proportion of Ancient Woodland and Planted Ancient Woodland within the NCA

Woodland Type	Area in NCA	Proportion of NCA
Ancient semi-natural woodland	1,554 ha	1%
Ancient re-planted woodland (PAWS)	2,267 ha	1%

*Source: Natural England (2004)*

## 5. Boundary Features & Patterns

### 5.1 Boundary Features

On the clay vales the regular hedgerow pattern is an essential part of the landscape character. Many of the characteristic hedgerow oaks are mature to over-mature with stag-headed crowns, and there are few naturally-regenerated replacements. More than 1000 km of boundaries are under Environmental Stewardship at present.

*Source: Blackmoor Vale and the Vale of Wardour Countryside Character Area description; Countryside Quality Counts (2003), Natural England (2011)*

### 5.2 Field Patterns

Field patterns include both rectilinear Parliamentary enclosures and small Medieval irregular enclosures, both bounded by hedgerows

*Source: Blackmoor Vale and the Vale of Wardour Countryside Character Area description; Countryside Quality Counts (2003)*

## 6. Agriculture

The following data has been taken from the Agricultural Census linked to this NCA.

## 6.1 Farm Type

The majority (55%) of holdings in this Character Area are based on livestock farming. The number of dairy farms decreased by one third from 349 to 231 between 2000 and 2009. The number of specialist poultry farms increased by 57% during the same time.

*Source: Agricultural Census, DEFRA (2010)*

## 6.2 Farm Size

The number of holding is fairly evenly distributed among the size bands, save that there were only 161 holdings of <5 ha in 2009 in this NCA - 43 fewer than the 204 that had existed in 2000.

*Source: Agricultural Census, DEFRA (2010)*

## 6.3 Farm Ownership

2009: Total farm area = 69,040 ha; owned land = 48,356 ha  
2000: Total farm area = 62,440 ha; owned land = 47,452 ha

*Source: Agricultural Census, DEFRA (2010)*

## 6.4 Land Use

The majority of land in this Character Area is used as grass/uncropped land. Beyond this, small changes in the area of some types of agriculture in this NCA equate to large percentages because the given farm type e.g. cash roots or fruit, is small-scale. The area of land used for oilseed increased from 826 to 1582 ha between 2000 and 2009. The area of land used for arable crops increased from 3,990 to 5,350 ha, an increase of 26%.

*Source: Agricultural Census, DEFRA (2010)*

## 6.5 Livestock Numbers

Cattle and sheep farming greatly outweigh the number of pigs farmed here, which dropped from 16,400 in 2000 to 4,400 in 2009 – a 73% drop. Cattle numbers dropped by nearly 7% whilst the number of dairy farms dropped by 33% from 300 to 200. The total number of sheep in the NCA rose slightly during the same period – from 60,400 to 61,600.

*Source: Agricultural Census, DEFRA (2010)*

## **6.6 Farm Labour**

Labour numbers in all categories dropped between 2000 and 2009. The number of Principal Farmers dropped by 11% from 1,832 to 1,626. There were 26 fewer casual/gang workers in 2009. Conversely, the number of salaried managers increased from 41 to 69 – a 68% increase.

*Source: Agricultural Census, DEFRA (2010)*

*Please Note: (i) Some of the Census data is estimated by Defra so will not be accurate for every holding (ii) Data refers to Commercial Holdings only (iii) Data includes land outside of the NCA belonging to holdings whose centre point is within the NCA listed.*

## **7. Key Habitats and Species**

### **7.1 Habitat distribution / coverage**

The Blackmoor Vale and the Vale of Wardour NCA supports a range of BAP habitats. These include broadleaved mixed & yew woodland, lowland meadows and floodplain grazing marshes. A high proportion of the woods are associated with the extensive network of stream valleys and seepage zones and these wet woodlands contain important invertebrate assemblages, notably soldier flies, crane flies, snail-killing flies and beetles. There are significant areas of wet woodland in the clay vale along the county boundary in the north of the NCA from near Longleat House to near Wincanton, much of it in the Cranbourne Chase

and west Wiltshire Downs AONB. The calcareous grasslands are found almost entirely along the geological boundary with NCA 134 Dorset Downs and Cranbourne Chase where the Greensand meets the Chalk – again within the AONB. Grazing marsh is very limited in extent to the flood plains of the rivers Stour and Lydden. Purple moor grass and rush pastures are present locally in small areas.

*Source: Natural England (2011), Wessex Vales Natural Area Profile*

## 7.2 Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority habitats

The NCA contains the following areas of mapped priority habitats (as mapped by National Inventories). Footnotes denote local/expert interpretation. This will be used to inform future national inventory updates.

UK BAP Priority Habitat	Area in NCA	Proportion of NCA
Broadleaved mixed & yew woodland (Broad Habitat)	4,074 ha	5%
Lowland calcareous grassland	338 ha	<1%
Lowland meadows	278 ha	<1%
Coastal & floodplain grazing marsh	207 ha	<1%
Purple moor grass & rush pasture	96 ha	<1%
Lowland dry acid grassland	17 ha	<1%
Lowland heathland	9 ha	<1%

*Source: Natural England (2011)*

Maps showing locations of UK BAP Priority Habitats are available at

- <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/website/magic/> select 'Habitat Inventories'

### **7.3 Key species and assemblages of species**

- These are listed in Annex 1 (full document only)
- Maps showing locations of S41 species are available at <http://data.nbn.org.uk/>

## **8. Settlement and Development Patterns**

### **8.1 Settlement pattern**

Blackmoor and the Vale of Wardour has an intensely rural character with a scatter of modest settlements; Small nucleated villages and hamlets are located in sheltered valleys and on the low limestone hillocks within the clay vale.

*Source: Blackmoor Vale and the Vale of Wardour Countryside Character Area description; Countryside Quality Counts (2003)*

### **8.2 Main Settlements**

The main towns within the NCA: include Gillingham, Shaftesbury, Wincanton, Frome and Sturminster Newton. The total estimated population for this NCA (derived from ONS 2001 census data) is: 69,859.

*Source : Blackmoor Vale and the Vale of Wardour Countryside Character Area description; Countryside Quality Counts (2003), Natural England (2012)*

### **8.3 Local vernacular & building materials**

A wide variety of local building materials and techniques, including half timbering. Todber Freestone ( a limestone) and Upper Greensand (a Cretaceous sandstone) are widely used for building in the east.

*Source: Blackmoor Vale and the Vale of Wardour Countryside Character Area description; Countryside Quality Counts (2003)*

## **9. Key Historic Sites & Features**

### **9.1 Origin of historic features**

Neolithic activity is evident on the limestone hills and at prominent sites on the Chalk. By late Saxon times there was certainly occupation of the clay vales and much of the land was divided up into estates, some of which can be traced along parish boundaries. Around the edge of the area, large estates were developed in the 16th and 17th centuries and large landscape parks were laid out at Wardour, Longleat, Marston Bigot, Stourhead and other places in the following centuries.

*Source: Draft Historic Profile, Blackmoor Vale and the Vale of Wardour Countryside Character Area description*

### **9.2 Designated Historic Assets**

This NCA has the following historic designations:

- 11 Registered Parks and Gardens covering 2,300 ha
- 0 Registered Battlefield/s covering 0 ha
- 100 Scheduled Monuments
- 2,422 Listed Buildings

*Source: Natural England (2010)*

More information is available at the following address:

- <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/heritage-at-risk/>
- <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/protection/process/national-heritage-list-for-england/>

## 10. Recreation and Access

### 10.1 Public Access

5% of the NCA 3,945 ha is classified as being publically accessible.

The table below shows the breakdown of land which is publically accessible in perpetuity:

Access Designation	Area in NCA	Proportion of NCA
National Trust (Accessible all year)	57 ha	<1%
Common Land	190 ha	<1%
Country Parks	0 ha	0%
CROW Access Land (Section 4 and 16)	785 ha	1%
CROW Section 15	39 ha	<1%
Village Greens	5 ha	<1%
Doorstep Greens	0 ha	0%
Forestry Commission Walkers Welcome Grants	2,936 ha	4%
Local Nature Reserves (LNR)	7 ha	<1%
Millennium Greens	<1 ha	<1%
Accessible National Nature Reserves (NNR)	40 ha	<1%
Agri-environment Scheme Access	40 ha	<1%
Woods for People	3,042 ha	4%



Sources: *Natural England (2011)*

*Please Note: Common Land refers to land included in the 1965 commons register; CROW = Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; OC and RCL = Open Country and Registered Common Land.*

## 10.2 Rights of Way

There are 1,579 km of Public Rights of Way at a density of 2 km per km<sup>2</sup>.

There are no National Trails within the NCA

Sources: *Natural England (2010)*

## 11. Experiential Qualities

### 11.1 Tranquillity

Based on the CPRE map of Tranquillity (2006) the north of the NCA, just south of Frome is the most tranquil area; the lowest scores are adjacent to main transport routes.

A breakdown of tranquillity values for this NCA are detailed in the table below:

Tranquillity	Tranquillity Score
Highest Value within NCA	49
Lowest Value within NCA	-71
Mean Value within NCA	6

Sources: *CPRE (2006)*

- More information is available at the following address:  
<http://www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-do/countryside/tranquil-places/in-depth/item/1688-how-we-mapped-tranquillity>

## 11.2 Intrusion

The 2007 Intrusion Map (CPRE) shows the extent to which rural landscapes are 'intruded on' from urban development, noise (primarily traffic noise), and other sources of visual and auditory intrusion. This shows that the most disturbed area is around the settlements of Frome, Warminster, Gillingham and Shaftsbury; apart from here and along transport routes, the whole of the NCA is still undisturbed land. A breakdown of intrusion values for this NCA are detailed in the table below.

Intrusion Category	1960s	1990s	2007	Percentage change (1960s-2007)
Disturbed	2%	12%	26%	24%
Undisturbed	98%	88%	73%	-25%
Urban	<1%	<1%	1%	1%

Sources: CPRE (2007)

Notable trends from the 1960s to 2007 are that although the area of undisturbed land has decreased by 25%, 73% of the area remains undisturbed

- More information is available at the following address:  
<http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/tranquil-places>

## 12 Data Sources

- *Wessex Vales Natural Area Profile, Natural England (English Nature )*

- *Blackmoor Vale and the Vale of Wardour Countryside Character Description, Natural England (Countryside Commission/Countryside Agency 1998/1999)*
- *Countryside Quality Counts, Natural England (Countryside Agency 2003)*
- *Agricultural Census June Survey 20002009, Defra (2010)*
- *Intrusion Map, CPRE (2007)*
- *Tranquillity Map, CPRE (2006)*
- *Draft Historic Profiles, English Heritage (2004)\**
- *For further information on Natural England data sources please see the [Key facts and data interpretation note](#)*

Please note all figures contained within the report have been rounded to the nearest unit. For this reason proportion figures will not (in all) cases add up to 100%. The convention <1 has been used to denote values less than a whole unit.

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