



The Weald and Downs Ancient Woodland Survey

Revising the Ancient Woodland Inventory in Kent and Sussex

Since 2003, there has been an ongoing project in the South East to revise the Ancient Woodland Inventory, first produced by the Nature Conservancy Council and its successor English Nature on a county-by-county basis in the mid-1980s to mid-1990s.

The first new survey, in Wealden District, was supported by the local authority, English Nature (now part of Natural England), the Forestry Commission, the High Weald AONB, and the Woodland Trust. The aims of the survey were to completely revise and update the Ancient Woodland Inventory for the district, and to include, for the first time, ancient woodlands smaller than two hectares.

The survey has continued to expand to become 'The Weald and Downs Ancient Woodland Survey', a partnership of organisations revising the Ancient Woodland Inventory across much of Kent and Sussex.

As well as local authorities, additional partners in the survey now include Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre, Sussex Wildlife Trust, the South Downs Joint Committee, Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre, and West Sussex County Council.

The aims of the survey are:

- To carry out a revision of the Ancient Woodland Inventory for local authorities in the Weald and Downs of Sussex and Kent including woodlands under two hectares.
- To provide a robust evidence base to help inform planning decisions affecting ancient woodland.
- To raise awareness of and increase protection for ancient woodland, and promote a wider revision of the Ancient Woodland Inventory in the South East.
- To help identify threats to the resource, areas for improving habitat connectivity, and opportunities for the strategic management of key woodlands.

To date, surveys have been completed in Wealden District (East Sussex), Mid Sussex District (West Sussex), and Tunbridge Wells Borough (Kent). The table below shows the results from the completed surveys, comparing the revision to the areas of ancient woodland recorded in the original Inventories for Kent and Sussex.

Summary of Ancient Woodland Inventory revision progress up to October 2007 (areas in hectares)

	Wealden District	Mid Sussex District	Tunbridge Wells Borough	Total ancient woodland gain since original Inventories
Local authority area	83,631	33,402	33,133	
Original ancient woodland area	9,754	3,835	4,719	
Revised ancient woodland area	11,710	5,282	5,391	
Overall ancient woodland area gain	1,956	1,447	672	4,075
Revised ancient woodland areas as a % of each local authority's area	14.0	15.8	16.3	

The project is now working to complete the remaining surveys in Kent and Sussex in a two year project from October 2007 to October 2009. A wider aim is to extend the survey across the South East, and discussions are already taking place to establish similar surveys in Berkshire, the Chilterns, and Surrey.

A map of the surveys that have been completed, and the local authority areas currently being targeted is shown below. Two new survey officers have recently been appointed, with the East Sussex and Kent surveyor based at the High Weald AONB Unit, and the surveyor for West Sussex based at Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre.

For further information, contact:

Survey co-ordinator: Patrick McKernan
South East Native Woodlands Officer
Forestry Commission
Tel: 01273 475498
e-mail: patrick.mckernan@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Survey in East Sussex and Kent:

Philip Sansum
Ancient Woodland Survey Officer
Based at the High Weald AONB Unit
Tel: 01580 879962
e-mail: p.sansum@highweald.org

Survey in West Sussex:

Victoria Hume
Ancient Woodland Survey Officer
Based at Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre
Tel: 01273 497570
e-mail: victoriahume@sussexwt.org.uk

Additional GIS and technical support:
Matthew Grose
Habitat Mapping Officer
High Weald AONB
e-mail: m.grose@highweald.org

Ancient Woodland Inventory revision surveys completed and in progress - October 2007

