

The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

A nationally valued landscape



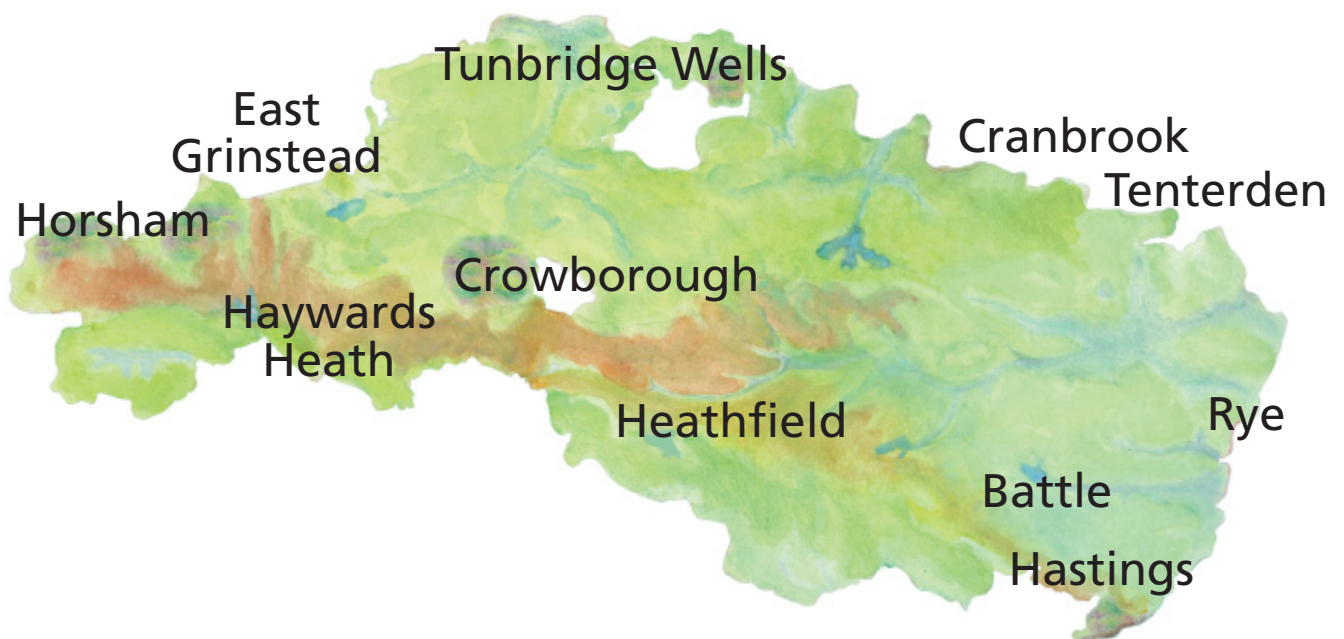
Burwash village

The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a historic countryside of rolling hills draped with small, irregular fields, abundant woods and hedges, scattered farmsteads and sunken lanes.

The High Weald covers parts of four counties – East Sussex, West Sussex, Kent and Surrey, in the rural heart of South East England. It is South East England's largest AONB and the seventh largest protected landscape in England and Wales, covering 563 square miles (1,457 sq km).

It was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) by the Government in 1983 to conserve and enhance its natural beauty.

An estimated 121,000 people live in the AONB. At 0.8 people per hectare this makes the High Weald one of the most densely populated protected landscapes.



It again gives me great pleasure to introduce the Committee's Annual Review. I would like to extend our thanks to all those partner organisations, communities and individuals who have worked with us and helped contribute to the many achievements during the past year.

We were delighted to see so many partners represented at the launch of the AONB Management Plan in May. The themes introduced by the Plan set a welcome and clear steer to assist all of us to focus our activities where they can bring maximum benefit to the AONB countryside and communities. Already we have seen new partnerships and programmes developed to support important but less recognised features, such as historic farmsteads.

Particularly welcome has been the formation of the High Weald Landscape Trust who, together with Friends of the High Weald, bring new enthusiasm and resources to the aid of our threatened landscape. Some of our 'Friends' have become 'landscape detectives' to help us understand better how the High Weald was cared for in the past, recording the spoken memories – oral histories – of farmers and hop growers, charcoal burners and coppice workers.

At the end of this year, the AONB sits in a very different policy landscape than it did at the start, in two significant areas: planning and land management.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act came into force in September 2004, placing the new system of spatial planning on a statutory basis and introducing a new process for preparing local plans. Chairmen of the South East AONBs and AONB Officers and planning staff have all worked hard to ensure that protected areas, which cover 31% of the region, are properly represented in the South East Plan and the emerging Local Development Frameworks.

Out in the countryside, the impact of CAP reform and the introduction of Single Payment and Environmental Stewardship are beginning to be felt. The JAC's research programme and specialist advisors for meadows, heathland and ancient woodland continue to develop expertise and understanding of the AONB's distinctive features and their management needs in order to inform the new schemes and maximise their benefits for the area.

I would particularly like to take this opportunity to thank the Countryside Agency for their ongoing commitment and support for protected landscapes. We look forward to forging new relationships with Natural England, the organisation to be created from the Countryside Agency, English Nature and Rural Development Service following introduction of the Natural Environment Bill later this year.



Councillor Mrs Paulina Stockell

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P Stockell'.

Councillor Mrs Paulina Stockell
Chairman of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee
July 2005

Effective structures and partnerships

Locally, regionally and nationally

High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)



JAC members pledge to care for the High Weald

National and regional issues have featured high on the JAC agenda this year, with the introduction of the new Environmental Stewardship Scheme by Defra; proposed changes to our close partners, the Countryside Agency and English Nature, as a result of the draft Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill; and changes to the planning system with the preparation of Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) and the new regional plan.

The Chairman of the JAC, Cllr Paulina Stockell attended a regional event hosted by the National Association for AONBs in Dorking to consider the proposed changes to the Countryside Agency and to assess opportunities provided by the Bill for enhancing AONB management.

The JAC has continued to consider governance arrangements for the AONB with a workshop facilitated by an outside specialist assisting members in drawing together various strands of the debate into a programme for gradual enhancement of the organisation's structure and systems – to meet the new demands placed upon the JAC by rapidly developing work areas and external funding programmes.

A new planning protocol was approved by the JAC to provide a framework for AONB Unit activity in relation to planning issues.

Local Partnerships



Sussex cattle

Advice to land management services has been provided where requested, in particular to the Kent High Weald Project and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group through their respective steering groups. Guidance on AONB objectives has also been given to land management services seeking grants for delivering AONB objectives from the Countryside Agency's Finest Landscapes programme.

The Unit was involved in the launch of Environmental Stewardship, providing information on the area's special character as part of a programme of seminars run by Defra to launch the new Entry Level Scheme. Approximately 400 landowners were reached through 5 events at Tenterden, Burwash and Ardingly. As a result of proactive work at a regional level by AONBs, Defra and the Countryside Agency advisors were able to distribute guidance to landowners on the those elements of the area's special character that would benefit most from management under the new scheme.



Unit land management staff have attended Defra Single Farm Payment (SFP) and Farm Environmental Plan training events to enable them to offer support to farmers interested in the new Environmental Stewardship Scheme. This Scheme is of particular importance to landowners who require stewardship renewals in 2005 and the Single Farm Payment could potentially be of benefit to the owners of small, species rich, grassland sites who have not been eligible for government support in the past.

The tourism business clusters in Ashdown Forest and Winchelsea continue to grow. AONB Unit officers have provided support and guidance to these groups, particularly focusing on marketing and promotion. A new cluster has been established in the Lamberhurst area with 6 visitor attractions including Bedgebury Forest and Bewl Water promoting themselves, together with the High Weald AONB itself, as *Seven Wonders of the Weald*. (See page 10)

National and Regional Partnerships

Both the South East AONB Officers and South East AONB Planning and Policy officers have continued to meet on a regular basis to review emerging policy relevant to South East AONBs and co-ordinate regional AONB programmes, including responses to the South East Plan and revision of the South East AONBs Statement of Intent with regional agency partners. A review of the capacity of individual AONBs to influence regional policy and the need to develop a better understanding of the role of protected areas in the South East economy has resulted in agreement to appoint a regional coordinator who can undertake this work. A significant joint contract has been delivered this year providing a socio-economic profile of protected areas across the South East, generating vital baseline information for monitoring aspects of AONB Management Plans and underpinning external funding bids.

The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) has signed a Joint Accord with English Heritage, which has been acted upon in the High Weald with the development of a new partnership project with English Heritage and local authorities focusing on historic farmsteads. The NAAONB has also been instrumental in coordinating AONB responses to the draft Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill, ensuring that the needs of protected areas are met through the new arrangements.

A programme of training and exchange visits has provided the High Weald and our closest neighbouring AONB Units, Surrey Hills and Kent Downs, the chance to learn from each other and for all staff to make links in their work area across the region.



Bewl Water



High Weald AONB Management Plan 2004

Developing a 20 year strategy for the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Management planning programme



Near Mayfield



“This is the first full year of the recently adopted management plan, and the results of the first stakeholder survey will show how the plan is being put into action, and what impact it is having on the High Weald. As plan implementation gathers pace, we should start to see the real effect of its aims and objectives on AONB management.”

Sally Marsh, AONB Officer

The High Weald AONB Management Plan is now just over one year old and steps are already in place to begin the process of reviewing and measuring the Plan's progress. The first annual stakeholder review has just been sent out to over 200 stakeholders and partners within the High Weald. This review asks stakeholders and partners to complete a simple form, detailing their achievements and progress towards meeting the Management Plan objectives and targets. The results of the survey will be collected and analysed to show where the Management Plan is being most effective. These achievements are, of course, largely due to the hard work and efforts of the partners.

Results of management plan monitoring will be collected regularly over the next few years and will help inform the forthcoming review of the Management Plan. The plan we have now has been adopted for a five year period, and is due to be reviewed and replaced by 2009 (under the regulations of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). Detailed monitoring is essential to track the Plan's performance over the next few years to show where the plan is succeeding and those areas where action and targets have not been met. The Plan review will then be able to target further action or revisions to its policies and objectives in the light of these successes and achievements. Where the plan has not been successful, or objectives are not being met, the results of the monitoring will inform us as to what needs to be done to improve action or revise objectives as necessary.

The results of the first year's survey will be presented to the JAC in November and the results will be published on the website at the same time. The Management Plan includes an action plan and targets and objectives for several years. Much of the funding and projects currently being undertaken, such as the Lifescapes project, land management initiatives and other funding programs all contribute to the aims and objectives of the management plan. Further research programs are also underway to help improve our understanding of how the High Weald functions – and these will also be very important in supporting the ongoing implementation and development of the Management Plan.

Work has also been underway investigating how the Management Plan can be more closely integrated with the new Planning system Local Development Frameworks (LDF). The Management Plan has already been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by several local authorities. Ways to transfer the Management Plan into a local development document (LDD) within the LDF are being investigated alongside the development of planning policy for AONBs within the LDF system.

During 2004/05, the Communications Team continued to raise awareness of the High Weald AONB and to support the Initiatives in their interpretation and education activities.

Friends of The High Weald

Spring 2004 saw the launch of 'Friends of the High Weald', a group for individuals who have a personal interest in caring for the High Weald AONB. Around 150 members were recruited in the first three months: through direct mailing to specific groups, an Anvil feature and a recruitment drive at the Heathfield Show.

Members are provided with information to help them undertake actions set out in *Caring for the High Weald; a Charter for Residents and Visitors* – developed to enable individuals to understand how they can contribute to achieving the objectives of the Management Plan. There is no joining fee – instead, members are asked to make an annual commitment to one of the Charter's actions. To aid the recruitment process, three High Weald attractions (High Beeches, Great Dixter, Wilderness Wood and Marle Place) offered members a 2-for-1 admission deal.

Throughout the year, Friends were kept up-to-date with activity in the area via mail-outs, emails and a newsletter (produced in-house in October). Through three special summer events, all involving a site visit associated with a guided walk, the Friends learnt about traditional brick making, meadows, wildflower seed harvesting and the countryside which inspired Kipling's "Puck of Pook's Hill" story.

Unit events

In early May, groups of Drovers, Iron Masters, Charcoal Makers, Hop Pickers, Farmers, Royal Hunters and Commoners – alias 45 representatives of organisations with a part to play in implementing the AONB Management Plan – pitted their wits in the High Weald AONB Quiz to mark the plan's launch. The quiz followed enthusiastic presentations from Kate Ashbrook (as a Countryside Agency Board member) and representatives of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee, regional bodies – SEEDA and the Forestry Commission and local organisations – West Sussex County Council and Mid Sussex District Council. Attendees made a personal pledge to take action to care for the area to round off the event.

The Unit was awarded first prize in the Sussex Exhibit category for its High Weald marquee at the Heathfield Show in late May. There was considerable interest from the public (over 500 visitors) who were engaged in recruitment for the new Friends of the High Weald group, completing the High Weald Quiz, tasting local products, making bird nesting boxes, playing a landscape 'Spot The Difference' game and seeking advice from the Unit's land management advisors. The AONB Unit also exhibited at the 3-day East Sussex WoodFair at Bentley Wildfowl and Motor Museum in September.



Visit to Chartwell Brickworks



Meadows visit

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith presents first prize to the AONB Unit at Heathfield Show



Communications

Furthering awareness and understanding



Communications staff led an 11-mile guided walk along a section of the High Weald Landscape Trail – Cranbrook to Tenterden – as part of the South East Walks Festival in September, hosted by Kent.

Publications

70,000 copies of the *Anvil* – the annual guide to the AONB – were published in April. 54,000 were distributed by National Letterbox Marketing – via door-to-door delivery alongside free papers – to households in and around the AONB. The remainder were distributed through visitor attractions, Libraries and TICs. This, the 5th edition, focused on “Caring for The High Weald”.

A set of 17 high quality, photographic pop-up banners was produced in May. These depict the AONB's landscape character elements, the AONB Partnership, the various functions of the WMI and WHI (plus their partnerships) and Friends of the High Weald. Throughout the year, the banners proved invaluable at events and presentations.

Matrix, the first Joint Land Management Projects Newsletter was published in February and distributed to 1500 landowners via direct mail and landowner events. *Matrix* provided information on the area's special features, land management grant schemes, research that will attract and enable the targeting of grant aid, landowners experiences of using local support schemes, seasonal land management advice and advisor contact details. This newsletter aims to complement the *Anvil*, which is aimed at a more general public.



New AONB banners

Media

Taking it in turns with the Kent Downs AONB, the Communications Team continued to write (and provide photographs for) articles for Kent and Sussex Today Magazine's 'In The Country' feature. The articles covered Wildflower Meadows (July); Orchards and their products (September); Ancient Woodland/Coppice cycle (November); Rivers and River Restoration (January); and Sheep and the High Weald (March).

'Friends' discuss meadow management



During the year, the Unit issued seven media releases: “Young Gardeners Make Hay” – the story of Punnett's Town School learning about the Weald Meadows Initiative; “Rain Hampers Meadow Seed Harvest” – how inclement weather restricted the harvesting of valuable species rich meadow seed; “Friends Care For Countryside” – focusing on the valuable work of the Friends of the High Weald Group and the encouragement of new members; and “Confirmed! Heathlands More Rare Than Rain Forests” – the launch of the 8th National Heathlands Conference; “AONB welcomes new members of staff” – recruitment of three new officers; “High Weald Landscape Trust awarded charitable status” and “£300,000 European grant secured” – the successful outcome of the INTERREG bid.

Enabling partners to interpret the High Weald

In March, the Communications Team managed a contract for the renowned Interpretation Trainer Susan Cross of *TellTale* to deliver a Basic Interpretation Training Day at Bewl Water Conference Centre. This course was aimed at Tourist Attraction and Site Managers in the eastern part of the High Weald AONB.

With funding from Tomorrow's Heathland Heritage, via the Weald Heathland Initiative, the Unit commenced a project to record the spoken memories – 'oral histories' of past custodians of the Ashdown Forest area. It is hoped that the oral history project will increase our understanding of how the Forest was managed. It is also envisaged that the recordings will be invaluable material for use in future interpretation projects requiring "real voices" to tell the story of the Forest – for example at the Ashdown Forest Centre.

The volunteer interviewers are mostly local people from the Ashdown Forest area. One of the volunteers – a "Friend of the High Weald" – is an experienced Oral Historian who was of great help in setting up the project and will be able to support the other volunteers. The project is ongoing.

High Weald Image Library

Many more digital photographs were taken by Unit staff and added to the image collection. The Communications Team sourced many photographic images for both internal and external use. (This amounted to least one external request per month – often for multiple images.)

In July, the Unit's image library was sorted onto themed CDs, making it more accessible.

Website

The Wildflower grassland type pages were updated, with technical information sheets added for creation and enhancement. The Grants Information page was updated to show new grants. Several new pages were added in 2004-2005:

- Countryside sites searchable pages
- Training information for professionals and advisors
- Public transport page
- A-Z of local distinctive features



Cyril Walter, Hollybush c1940
Photo by permission of Peter Kirby



Burnet moth on clover

Kent High Weald Project Education Programme



Exploring droves

The High Weald AONB JAC, with Countryside Agency financial support, was able to offer a grant of £10,000 to the Kent High Weald Project to support the development and delivery of an education programme in the Borough of Tunbridge Wells. The programme focused on working with different age ranges within schools and was themed around *Caring for the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – a charter for residents and visitors*. Promotion of the special features and history of the landscape was a component of all projects. The charter actions that the programme focused on were:

- 1 Purchasing local products and services sold by land managers who actively manage their land to benefit the environment – via the Farm Visit project
- 2 Reduce, reuse and recycle, and dispose of all litter responsibly – via the Waste Project
- 3 Get involved – via the Helping the High Weald Project
- 4 Slow down for people, horses and wildlife and avoid using the car where possible – via the Green Transport Project and Green Transport Consultation.
- 5 Use less water – via the Energy Project.
- 6 Manage your land for wildlife and maintain the rural nature of your property – via the Introduction to Conservation event.

Project	Audience	Numbers	Type of activities undertaken
Farm Visit Project	12 – 16 years Year 4 Reception	75 children 6 adults	High Weald Farming Video and poster competition Walk around the orchards and visit to Farm Shop with grower. Trailer ride through the orchards. Apple tasting. Look at typical High Weald views. Tour around the packing facility. Talk in the farmyard looking at hay and straw and other crops, fed the sheep, sat in the tractor (Reception class)
Energy Project	Years 5 and 6	73	Groups of 10 children for 1 hour sessions Renewable energy workshop including: pedal generator for light bulbs and sound system DIY solar cooker, photovoltaic panel, DIY wind turbines. Discovering High Weald natural resources and their uses (wood, water and wind) Energy Quiz Pledges to reduce energy at home
Waste Project	Year 3 Year 6	60 children 10 adults	Groups of 15 children with different activities am and pm. Introduction to the High Weald Landscape and home survey on waste and recycling. Analysing data from home survey, identifying areas for improvement. Guided Visit To North Farm with Colin Lawrence, KCC. Contracts supervisor, looking at waste and recycling. Modelling a typical High Weald landscape and what lives in it, using scrap materials with Redraf Arts. Whole school assembly presented by the class based on the waste project.

Green Transport Project	Years 5 and 6	22 children and 6 adults	Introduction to the High Weald Landscape and the history of drove roads. Coach ride to local footpath. Walk down path looking at the features. Human Camera photographs. Mask making, High Weald Landscape collage. Drove game with local artist, Kate Chitham.
Green Transport consultation	All school	About 80 children and 70 adults	Cycle confidence training for pupils Displays and information from KCC PROW, Forestry Commission, KHWP. Cycle powered generators for pupils to try. Interactive questionnaires. DVD mountain bike presentation.
Helping the High Weald	Year 5 11+ years 14+ years	42 children and 8 adults	Introduction to the High Weald Landscape. Installation of benches for pupils and public to use in the woodland. Removal of old tree guards from growing trees. Footpath and ride clearance. Habitat pile construction from cut timber. Bat box construction and installation, bat walk and help with shrew survey. Heather cutting on the Heathland at Cinderhill wood, Besom broom making.
Introduction to Conservation	Adults	13	A DVD: 'The Making of the High Weald' A site visit to a local landowner already managing land for conservation. Presentations from WMI on meadow management; and Defra on Environmental Stewardship. Group workshops looking at the management of key AONB habitats.
High Weald Archaeology Project	11- 16	30	Drop-in workshops for pupils run all day by East Sussex Archaeology and Museums Project (ESAMP), including Iron age cooking, pot making, charcoal and pottery clamps and fire making. The project gave ESAMP a new opportunity to work with young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD).

Farm visit



Initiatives

Developing strategic and practical solutions

High Weald AONB tourism initiatives

Three tourism clusters – partnerships of businesses, local authorities and conservation and tourism organisations – have continued to flourish in the High Weald AONB in 2004/05. The Tourism South East Officer, dedicated to enabling cluster development in the High Weald, moved abroad in September 2004. However, with financial support from Tourism South East, the Unit's Communications team was able to provide a High Weald input into the clusters.

Ashdown Forest Tourism Cluster

Partners: Wealden District Council, High Weald AONB Unit, East Sussex County Council, Ashdown Forest Conservators, Ashdown Business Association representatives

Timescale

Initiated 2003, ongoing

Achievements 2004/05

- Ashdown Forest Visitor Survey
An information gathering survey has been carried out at car parks across the Forest. Information on who visits the heathland, for how long, from where, and what they value about it has been gathered and collated.
- Publication of the Ashdown Forest interpretation strategy
The strategy is the first within the AONB to set out how a co-ordinated and imaginative approach to the provision of visitor information and interpretation can enhance the visitor experience and enable visitor management. The strategy sets out a mission: *Over the next five years we will use interpretation to capture the magic of Ashdown Forest and its wider area to foster understanding and responsible enjoyment of this special landscape*; a number of projects (in sufficient detail to attract financial support for their implementation) and recommends Ashdown Forest branding for use on literature and signage within the area. The strategy was produced by Interpretation specialists PLB, under contract to the Unit, in consultation with the many organisations involved with visitor management in the area.
- Submission by the Ashdown Forest Business Association of a Defra Rural Enterprise Bid
- Delivery of a Sustainable Tourism/AONB awareness training event for businesses in the Mid Sussex part of the wider Ashdown Forest area
- Delivery of a Sustainable Tourism /"Walkers' Welcome" training event for Ashdown Forest Business Association
- Production of visitor itineraries as part of the regional 'Rural Ways' project



© Countryside Agency/Peter Greenhalf



© Countryside Agency/Peter Greenhalf

Nutley Windmill



Seven Wonders Tourism Cluster

Partners: Bedgebury Pinetum, Lamberhurst Vineyard, Bewl Water, Marle Place Gardens, Scotney Castle Gardens, High Weald AONB Unit

Timescale

Initiated 2004, ongoing

Achievements 2004/05

- Production of an action plan
- Development of 7 Wonders logo
- Delivery of a Sustainable Tourism/AONB awareness training event
- Launch for the area's business sector
- Publication of an area promotional leaflet
- Production of visitor itineraries as part of the regional 'Rural Ways' project
- A local access study in assessment of local people's needs

Winchelsea Cluster

Partners: High Weald AONB Unit, Hidden Britain, Action in Rural Sussex, East Sussex Rye Bay Countryside Management Service, Rye Bay Nature Reserve, Little Shop, Tea Tree tearooms, National Trust

Timescale

Initiated 2002, ongoing

Achievements 2004/05

- Publication of Winchelsea area map
- Publication of Winchelsea town map
- Publication of Walks and Cycle guide
- Production of visitor itineraries as part of Hidden Britain campaign



Marle Place Gardens

The three tourism clusters have developed within parts of the High Weald where it is considered that the concentration of tourism businesses and attractions plus features of landscape and wildlife interest are sufficiently concentrated to enable the development and promotion of tourism 'products'. Integrated management of resources for informal open-air recreation to facilitate 'green' use by residents and visitors is an objective of the management plan. The AONB Unit is a partner in each cluster, assisting the groups to identify and promote the local distinctiveness and visitor resources within their countryside (within the context of the AONB) and understand and put into practice the principals of sustainable tourism.

New Gate, Winchelsea



Initiatives

Developing strategic and practical solutions

Profile: **Weald Ancient Woodland Survey**

Purpose

Purpose To update and enhance the existing Ancient Woodland Inventory for Wealden District (The Weald Ancient Woodland survey aims to map and document ancient woodland within Wealden District and to provide a robust evidence base upon which to assign ancient woodland status.)

Partners

English Nature, Forestry Commission, Wealden District Council, Woodland Trust, East Sussex County Council, AONB Unit, Sussex Wildlife Trust and Sussex Biological Records Centre

Timescale

Start February 2004 to be completed in 2 years

Weald Ancient Woodland Survey

Achievements 2004/05

- The first phase of mapping is now complete. Existing ancient woodland boundaries have been corrected to fit with modern digital map boundaries.
- 1810 hectares of previously unknown potential ancient woodland have been identified for further investigation.
- Some areas of woodland have also been removed from the inventory in light of new evidence.
- The survey has provided support to Wealden District Council's planning department in a number of key planning appeals relating to ancient woodland sites.
- Additional volunteers were recruited and trained to assist with archive research work.

The Habitat Survey and Mapping Officer works closely with Wealden District Council to undertake this project. Digital map data is being used backed up by historical records and where necessary ground surveys of woodland flora, archaeological and topographical features. Existing boundaries are verified and corrected making full use of available technologies, with areas of more recent and secondary woodland eliminated prior to ground survey by examination of historical maps and aerial photographs. Woodlands under 2ha in size will be included for the first time. Both the survey and archive research work is assisted by a small team of skilled and dedicated volunteers. Their time and local knowledge have contributed significantly to the project. The methodologies developed for this pilot project will inform future updates of the Ancient Woodland Inventory envisaged to be carried out in neighbouring districts.

High Weald Ancient Landscapes Project

Achievements 2004/05

- Working with both the WMI and the WHI officers, work has continued – adding new sites to a GIS database and updating site and survey data.
- A pilot methodology has been developed to identify important links between existing meadows dataset. Within a 500 hectare pilot area all potential meadows have been mapped from aerial photographs and ground surveys are currently underway.
- Research has been carried out using a variety of historical map sources to assess the original extent of open unimproved habitats across the High Weald including mapping of forests, common land and park land from c1800 OS Surveyors Draft maps and mapping of rough uncultivated land, heathland and waste from First Series OS maps c1870.

GIS based mapping and analysis of characteristic threatened habitats and features across the AONB is being undertaken to inform land management schemes (particularly ERDP schemes) and spatial plans and strategies

Woodland survey volunteers



The Weald Grazing Network

During 2004/05 the grazing network database has been growing and is showing a need for the service. There is, however, still an unmet need for grazing on sites of importance to biodiversity, particularly on the small fragments of herb rich grasslands.

Achievements 2004/05

- 61 site and 26 grazier records maintained on the grazing network database held at the High Weald AONB Unit. The network is growing steadily.
- 34 sites grazed by members of the Weald Grazing Network
- Holding "Getting Sussex Grazed" Forum, in conjunction with the Downs Board and Plumpton College
- Newsletter produced alerting database members to the forthcoming changes to agricultural subsidy and Environmental Stewardship schemes
- Report on the Weald Grazing Network, with a "costing conservation grazing" spreadsheet produced.

Facts and figures 2004/05

- 34% of sites on the database are SSSIs, 67% belong to lifestyle landowners
- 40% of sites state that the main obstacle to grazing is the lack of available livestock, 27% have no fencing.
- 846 ha of grassland, 632 ha of heathland, 123 ha of wetland and 60 ha of wood pasture are entered onto the database.

The Weald Grazing Network provides advice on conservation grazing; undertakes site visits and puts site managers who have land of high biodiversity interest that needs grazing in touch with livestock owners. The Network is required because there are fundamental problems in getting wildlife sites grazed: pasture of high biodiversity interest is low in agricultural value, post flowering swards may be only half as digestible as ones that have not flowered. Heathlands offer some of the very worst grazing available; sites tend to be too small, scattered and uneconomic to be of interest to hard-pressed livestock farmers. Additionally the ongoing intensification of farming now favours the large continental breeds that will finish fast on highly nutritious swards. In particular the advent of BSE and the ban on cattle aged over 30 months from entering the human food chain has reduced the supply of local, hardy and traditionally reared animals. The Weald Grazing Network is establishing an integrated and partnership approach to provision and supply of livestock, equipment advice and support necessary to secure the required grazing on these wildlife sites.

Profile:

Weald Grazing Network

Purpose

To facilitate the grazing of wildlife sites across the High Weald AONB and surrounding Low Weald areas and support the grazing animal economy of the area

Partners

Countryside Agency, Weald Heathland Initiative, Weald Meadows Initiative

Timescale

Initiated Spring 2002, ongoing

Hebridean sheep grazing Pembury



Profile:

Weald Meadows Initiative

Purpose

To ensure the long term survival of the irreplaceable species rich grassland of the Weald and secure their productive and economic use

Funding partners

It is supported by English Nature, the Countryside Agency, DEFRA- Rural Enterprise Scheme, Heritage Lottery Fund, EU Community Leader+ (EAGGF) fund and the Sigrid Rausing and Dennis Curry Charitable Trusts

Additional partners

The Weald Meadows Initiative is a unique public private partnership between the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Unit, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and Agrifactors (Southern) Ltd.

Timescale

Initiated 1994, ongoing

Adder's Tongue fern



Weald Meadows Initiative (WMI)

Action for valued grasslands, for now and for the future

This nationally acclaimed project was successful in achieving all of the targets set for year 2 of its 3-year funding package.

Achievements 2004/05

Conserving and enhancing the wildflower grasslands resource

- 35 owners had an advisor session on management and 51 site visits – providing management advice and survey – were carried out
- 16 harvesting operations on 12 sites resulted in 266kg of seed and an income to meadow owners of £3000.
- 895 records of existing, restored and newly created sites were maintained on the grasslands sites database held at the High Weald AONB Unit.

Restoration and re-creation projects for landowners

- 53 people contacted the WMI for wildflower advice: 30 for creation advice and 23 for enhancement advice.
- 295kg of Weald Native Origin Seed (WNOS) – dry, cleaned and packaged – was replanted on 37 suitable sites totalling 65ha of creation and enhancement.
- Purchasers of WNOS included landowners with sites in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (13), Parish and County Councils, private/lifestyle owners and businesses.

Wildflower grasslands research

- Trial work undertaken comparing whole crop meadow cuttings and seed sown on a creation site (arable reversion) with enhancement (within an existing pasture) continues. The project is a partnership with the Beech Estate and Centre for Agricultural and Environmental Research (CAER).
- The single species wildflower and grass seed trials are now a year into a two-year contract in partnership with Great Dixter. This project is being part-financed by the European Community WARR Partnership Leader+ 2000-2006 Programme, supported by: The European Agriculture Guidance and Guarantee Fund of the EU and The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Furthering public understanding and enjoyment

- 600 copies of *Matrix* (High Weald Land Management Newsletter) were sent to meadows owners in April
- 687 copies of the Wildflower Grasslands in The Weald leaflet were distributed at events and in response to information requests received by the Meadows Officer
- 1581 hits were received on the meadow pages of www.highweald.org (and new grassland pages launched)
- 1x press release to Kent & Sussex Today, highlighting the problems that the weather has caused us with harvesting WNOS this year.
- Articles in several publications: 3 items in the High Weald Anvil; 1 article promoting WMI as a service assisting landowners to make management choices for their grasslands; 1 article targeted at landowners to stimulate

Developing strategic and practical solutions

interest in the Weald Grazing Network and 1 article from a press release for a new book 'Britain's Wild Harvest' where the WMI is featured as a sustainable harvester and supplier of local seed. The Friends of the High Weald Newsletter featured news items on seed harvesting and weather and the single species contract being funded separately by the Leader+ programme. The project also featured in the Kent Rural Directory as an advisor, surveyor and supplier of WNOS.

- 7 Public events, involving 234+ people and 170 children were held.
- 10 specialist events, targeted at landowners and advisors, involved a further 205 people

WMI specialist events included: *Wildflower Grassland Enhancement and Creation for Landowners in Countryside Stewardship* in partnership with Mid Kent training (two separate days in March and June covering both theory and practice); *An Introduction to Conservation in the High Weald* in partnership with the Kent High Weald Project (March); Guided walks and evening talks for landowners on the theme of *Wildflower Grassland Ecology and Management* (May/June) and, in its 6th year, the two-day *Wildflower Grassland Management and Creation* course for land management advisors (June). Specialist events run jointly with the Weald Heathland Initiative included: *Butterfly Monitoring and Recording* (April) and *Site Management for Invertebrates* (August).

WMI public events included a programme of activities for Primary school classes from St John's, Tunbridge Wells and Punnett's Town, East Sussex – based on the importance of meadows, wild flower identification and habitats. (Delivered with assistance from the Kent High Weald Project in July.)

The WMI attended two family events to promote the area's wildflower meadows: the Sussex Wildlife Trust's *Plovers Meadows Family Day* at Blackboys near Uckfield in June and a *Making Hay* event at Buchan Park, Crawley, West Sussex in September. At both events, children of all ages explored the world of meadows through a range of activities. The WMI also attended an event promoting meadow creation an enhancement at Great Dixter and ran two of the summer events for Friends of the High Weald.



Meadows course



Punnett's Town School

As they are man made habitats, wildflower grasslands require ongoing traditional management (hay cutting and grazing) to maintain their rare flora and fauna. The WMI has been involved with partners Agrifactors since 1996 in a special meadow seed-harvesting project. The product, Weald Native Origin Wildflower and Grass Seed (WNOS) is local provenance seed harvested from the natural meadows resource and not only gives grassland owners an income (to aid traditional management) but also provides appropriately sourced seed for re-sowing projects in the Weald. This protects the genetic integrity of seeds and means the seeds being planted are genetically adapted to this local area. Sites are kindly provided by landowners with the Weald Meadows Officer and Agrifactors carrying out the seed harvesting. Raising awareness of the value of species rich grassland, both with farmers and land managers and the general public, is fundamental to the continuing survival of meadows and pastures.



Punnett's Town School at St Dunstan's Farm

Profile:

Weald Heathland Initiative

Purpose

To secure for the benefit of wildlife and the local community, a heathland matrix across the acid soils of the Weald – to include Ashdown Forest, the largest area of ‘wildspace’ in South East England.

Partners

Heritage Lottery Fund, English Nature, RSPB, West Sussex County Council, East Sussex County Council, the Countryside Agency, Kent High Weald Project, Conservators of Ashdown Forest, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, Defra and landowners

Timescale

2001 – 2006

Ant Monitoring Project,
Ashdown Forest



Weald Heathland Initiative (WHI)

Action for open and wooded heaths, for now and for the future

Achievements 2004/05

Conserving the Weald's heathland heart

- Heathland management supported on 1565 ha.
- National Heathland Conference attended by 198 delegates organised by the Weald Heathland Initiative.
- 1540 person/ days contributed by volunteers to restoring heathland across the AONB.
- 3019m new fencing erected to assist management.
- 15 ponds restored.
- 79 hectares of under-managed heathland cleared of scrub, rhododendron and gorse.
- 176 hectares of invasive bracken managed.
- 625 hectares of heathland restoration assisted by extensive grazing.

Research and policy

- Ashdown Forest Invertebrate Survey
An important invertebrate survey of the Forest has been undertaken during the summer. Over 1000 species have been identified and this Ashdown invertebrate assemblage will be related to the effects of management on the Forest.
- Heathland Mapping Project
The historical and present day extent of heathland habitat within the High Weald AONB has been mapped as GIS layers.

Furthering understanding and enjoyment

- 7 specialist training events were held for advisors and land managers (see below).
- 197 delegates attended the three-day National Heathland Conference, organised by WHI.
- Partners have contributed 29 community events to the Weald Heathland Initiative to help the public enjoy their heathland heritage.

WHI specialist events – for site managers, land management advisors and ecologists – included: *Butterfly Monitoring and Recording* (April); *Silver-Studded Blue Butterfly Ecology and Management* (July) and *Site Management for Invertebrates* (August).

The WHI organised the inaugural *Weald Heathland Forum*, hosted by the Conservators of Ashdown Forest in July. All heathland owners, managers and advisors in the Weald were invited to this exchange of ideas and best practice. The themes of the meeting were grazing management of heathlands and grazing impact assessment for insects and reptiles.

The WHI organised the *8th National Heathland Conference* with support from a national steering group and a dedicated conference administrator employed by the Unit.

Developing strategic and practical solutions

The conference took place at the University of Sussex over 3 days, 7-9 September 2004. This was the first National Heathland Conference to be held in Sussex, giving the area's heaths – and the work that is being undertaken to ensure their sustainable management – well-deserved recognition.

Respected scholars in the fields of cultural landscapes and heathland ecology, products and management shared their knowledge with almost 200 academics and conservationists. Delegates also enjoyed a programme of field visits to important heathland areas such as Ashdown Forest, Ambersham Common (West Sussex), Lullington Heath (Sussex Downs) and Pembury Heath (in the Kent High Weald).

Even though we have lost more than 80% of lowland heathland since 1800, the UK still holds about a fifth of all the world's stock. Open heathland is rarer than rain forest. The High Weald AONB hosts about 2933 ha of this precious habitat. The Weald Heathland Initiative is a partnership between conservation bodies and local authorities which has been set up to achieve a five-year restoration programme of heathland management works and to improve access and interpretation to allow more people to enjoy and appreciate our lowland heathland sites. The project is a part of "Tomorrow's Heathland Heritage" a UK umbrella programme run by English Nature and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.



8th National Heathland Conference
– Sussex University



Heathland Management for
Invertebrates Event
– Ashdown Forest



Extensive felling, Pembury Heath



Profile:

SE AONBs Sustainable Woodlands Programme

Purpose

To identify important woodlands and their management needs at a landscape scale and promote understanding to influence strategic policy and the targeting of resources

Partners

Forestry Commission, Countryside Agency, English Nature, Kent Downs, Sussex Downs, Surrey Hills, East Hants and High Weald AONBs

Timescale

2003 – 2006

SE AONBs Woodlands Programme

The project has continued to work at a regional level providing understanding and information on priorities and targets for the woodland resource across the South East. Vulnerable species populations including the rare pearl-bordered fritillary have been mapped along with information on the woodland industry, and access and recreation issues. The project has supported and provided resource data to a range of wood fuel initiatives including work for Ashford Futures and the Hoathly Hill Community.

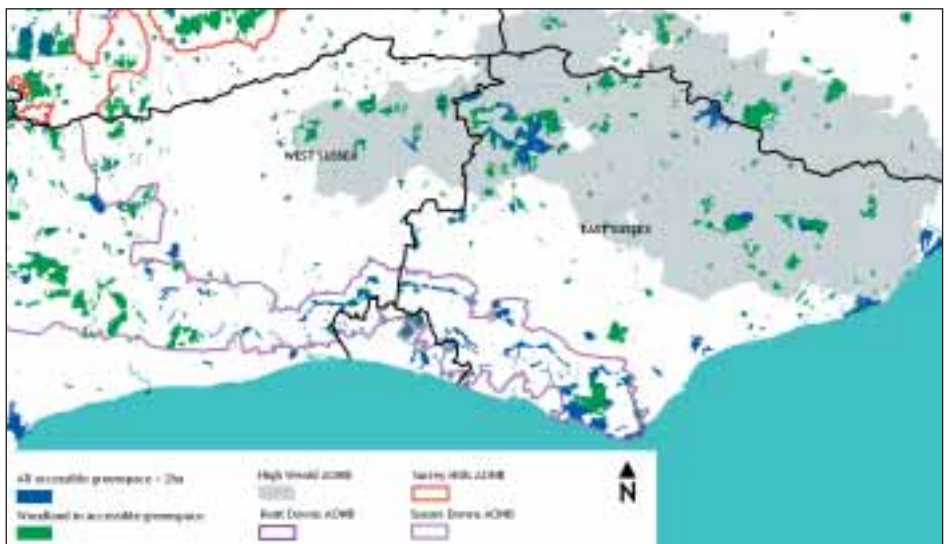
Achievements 2004/05

Second year project targets met, including:

- Regional study looking at the role of woodlands in the provision of accessible greenspace across the South East using ANGST, a national English Nature model. Study considered at a regional and national level to assist targeting of access grants.
- Well-attended seminar held in the High Weald on the practical application of woodfuel technology.
- Support for feasibility study on installing a wood-fired district heating scheme at Hoathly Hill. Likely to go ahead in 2005.
- Technical support for Butterfly Conservation Heritage Lottery Fund application for Fritillary management project in the eastern High Weald.
- Technical support to a partnership bid to ODPM for wood fuel initiatives in Ashford growth area.

Over half of the ancient woodland in the South East region is in AONBs. Much of this is under managed, resulting in the catastrophic decline of some key species. In February 2003 Patrick McKernan, a woodland ecologist, on loan from English Nature, started work on a programme of data gathering, mapping and analysis to underpin and take forward AONB management plan objectives aimed at enhancing the ecological functioning of this woodland resource at a landscape scale.

Provisional map of accessible greenspace in the South East



Research

Sustainable Settlements

A major project to investigate and analyse the characteristics of a sustainable settlement within the High Weald has been running since autumn 2004. Land Use Consultants were engaged under funding from the Countryside Agency to investigate the characteristics of sustainable settlements in the High Weald context and to develop a planning policy approach for use within the new local development frameworks (LDF), to promote and enhance sustainable forms of living and developments within the High Weald.

The project has been examining the definitions and approaches to sustainability and has surveyed local authorities views and studied wider approaches to sustainability, as well as running a detailed statistical study of three case study areas. It has also undertaken a large survey of these case study areas, in Balcombe, Wadhurst and Sedlescombe. These household surveys questioned residents about their behaviour and attitudes against a range of sustainability indicators. The surveys have been followed up with public meetings in the study area meeting local representatives and district planners.

The research has identified a wide range of patterns of behaviour and new evidence of the way people live in the High Weald. The consultants are now collating and analysing all their findings and are expected to report in the autumn, when the JAC will be presented with the findings.

Historic farmsteads

The AONB Unit has commissioned a consultant to undertake a rapid historic farmstead characterisation of the High Weald based on a methodology pioneered by Hampshire County Council and English Heritage. This project is the first stage of a historic farm building research and communication programme being developed for the AONB that will provide a consistent understanding of farmstead character and survival across the AONB, identifying patterns at a landscape scale and providing a framework for more detailed archive and site survey. Partners include FWAG (Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, English Heritage and West Sussex County Council).

Planning consultations

The Unit was consulted on a wide range of matters, the most of significant of which was the South East Plan.

The South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) launched the South East Plan for public consultation in January 05. The Unit has been involved in several meetings to discuss the Plan and a joint response from South East Protected Landscapes is being prepared. The Unit is submitting a response for the High Weald based on an audit of the SE Plan policies against the High Weald AONB Management Plan objectives, which scores the SE Plan in terms of how well it meets the Management Plan objectives (and thus meets its duty to have regard to the purposes of the designation under section 85 of the CRoW Act.)



Butcher's shop, Benenden



Historic farmstead

Policy and research

Understanding and learning about the High Weald, informing its management and future



The Highways Agency consulted the Unit on several plans for future improvements to the A21. They presented the current design plans for the A21 Pembury to Kippings Cross section, and also possible future plans for the Flimwell to Robertsbridge section. However further work on the schemes is delayed pending consultation with the SE Regional Assembly on the Plans.

Mid Sussex District Council has held two major consultation events concerning the urban extension to East Grinstead. This development itself is outside of the AONB but a proposed relief road to serve East Grinstead would impact on the AONB.

The first of the new LDF planning documents has been produced by Horsham District Council. They published their Core Strategy in February and the Unit has submitted formal responses to the consultation. Several other authorities are also now well advanced with their LDF's including Crawley, Sevenoaks and Mid Sussex. The Unit will respond to the various documents as they are produced.



The Unit was also involved in discussions regarding the proposals at Hailsham Market. The impact of the closure of the animal market on the AONB was raised and it has been agreed that the Unit will be consulted on any planning application that comes forward. Wealden District Council also visited the Unit to discuss its HOPE project to provide affordable housing in rural locations, and in particular the opportunities for renewable energy and the use of locally sourced materials was highlighted. A major planning application for the extension and restoration of the brickworks at Freshfield Lane in West Sussex has also been responded to, as well as proposals for a new school and housing at Etchingham within the Rother Local District Plan. The Unit continues to respond to a number of minor planning applications, each of which is assessed against the High Weald AONB Management Plan objectives and components of natural beauty.

The Policy & Research role seeks to promote and disseminate the aims and objectives of the AONB Management Plan, through responses to consultations, policy development, and preparation of guidance specific to landscape issues. This particularly involves responding to planning issues, which are very prominent at present with the introduction of the new Local Development Frameworks. In research terms the aim is to increase the in depth knowledge of the aims and objectives of the management plan by undertaking and guiding research projects into specific areas such as sustainable settlements, routeways, historic farmsteads etc. By increasing the detailed knowledge of the past and present functioning of the High Weald landscape we can further develop targeted and well informed policies to better protect and enhance the landscape.



Securing financial support to deliver the High Weald AONB business strategy

Securing funds

There was a positive outcome to the two funding bids developed and submitted by the Unit in 2003/04. In July 2004 the Heritage Lottery Fund confirmed a grant of £46,100 (76.4% of eligible project cost) towards the project planning phase of developing a High Weald Landscape Partnership Scheme. In November 2004 the INTERREG offered a grant of £1,900,000 towards LIFESCAPES – a programme developed in partnership with representatives from 4 countries in North West Europe to show how joint working between countries can lead to new approaches to revitalising rural areas. In addition to the grants for new projects, the Unit secured a further £445,000 for delivery of existing projects.



High Weald Lifescape Your Landscape Programme

The High Weald AONB Unit worked with 19 partners from four other North West European countries – Netherlands, France, Belgium and Germany, to develop the LIFESCAPE programme.

The LIFESCAPE partner's aim is to address urban-rural issues and contribute to generating income, providing jobs and protecting the environment throughout the region. The programme's focus is on:

- revitalising the rural hinterland of urban areas by introducing landscape identity as a means of adding value to rural products and services
- working collaboratively to achieve better results than if each partners were working on their own.

The INTERREG grant of £1,900,000 equates to 48% of total costs of approximately £4,000,000. Of this grant approximately £270,000 is available to the High Weald JAC to deliver its two programmes.

The INTERREG partnership is implementing projects under 3 poles – pole 1: Connecting People, pole 2: Marketing and Branding and pole 3: Instruments and Measures. The High Weald AONB Unit will be running 2 LIFESCAPES programmes within the High Weald AONB, one under Pole 1, which will focus on achieving the public understanding and enjoyment objectives of the management plan and the other under Pole 3, which will focus on achieving the conserving and enhancing objectives of the plan.



Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme

Profile:
**Weald Forest Ridge
Landscape Partnership
Scheme**

Purpose

Purpose To develop and submit a detailed Heritage Lottery Fund landscape partnership scheme bid, which if successful would secure an additional £2 million in funding for the High Weald AONB to protect the Forest Ridge's unique heritage and safeguard its natural beauty

Partners

Partners A comprehensive list of partner organisations is not available at present. The High Weald AONB Unit is working with various organisations to develop the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme bid

Timescale

Jan 2005 – Jan 2017 Stage 1 submission by April 2006.

Achievements July 04 – March 05

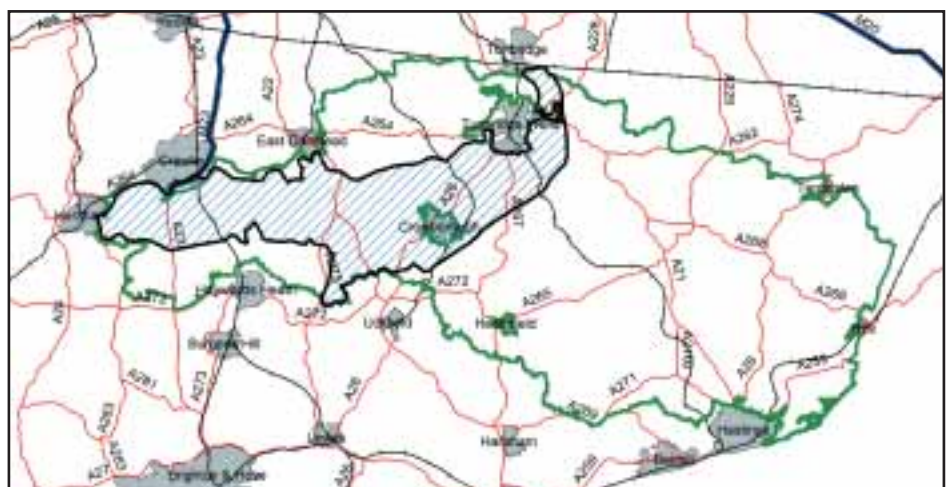
- Being awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund planning grant worth £46,000 to prepare a more detailed Stage 1 application.
- Appointment of a Project Development Officer to manage and deliver the Scheme.
- Selection of a HLF Monitor who will liaise with the Unit on this bid.
- A HLF site meeting took place January 2005 on the scope of the bid.
- A rationale has been set out for the Weald Forest Ridge scheme and a boundary has been identified.
- One to one meetings commenced with organisations that work in the High Weald to discuss their interests and how best these organisations can participate in the Weald Forest Ridge bid.

The Forest Ridge is the principal ridge of faulted sandstone that runs east-west between Horsham and Tunbridge Wells, covering a large part of High Weald.

The Forest Ridge forms the basis of a Heritage Lottery Fund bid because of its unique sandstone rock outcrops, remnants of medieval forests, e.g. Ashdown Forest, ridge top settlements, gill woodland, flower rich meadows and distinctive zones of heathland.

The Forest Ridge has a rich natural, cultural and industrial heritage. Several organisations have formed the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership to apply for Heritage Lottery funding that will safeguard its natural beauty in line with Management Plan objectives.

Weald Forest Ridge Project area



Ashdown Forest – remnant of medieval hunting forest



Securing financial support to deliver the High Weald AONB business strategy

High Weald Landscape Trust

The first ever trust dedicated to the conservation of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), was granted charitable status by the Charities Commission in November 2004.

The Trust has three trustees, who between them live within three of the four counties covered by the AONB designation – East Sussex, West Sussex and Kent.

The Trust aims to fundraise for projects that address some of the issues identified in the AONB Management Plan 2004. In its first year it will focus on fundraising for practical conservation projects on sites where habitat is under threat due to a lack of, or inappropriate, management.

The AONB Unit has assisted the Trust with its development by providing administrative and financial support since it began to establish itself in February 2004.

Achievements 2004/05

- Recruitment of trustees
- Production of Trust Deeds
- Registration with the Charities Commission

AONB Unit Staff Resource

Andrew Shaw joined the team in September as Policy & Research Officer. Andrew is a qualified town planner and was previously working at Eastbourne Borough Council in the policy unit – where he was involved with the planning and management of the Eastbourne Downland.

Janet Whitman, Project Development Officer and Gemma Swallow, Events Officer, joined the Unit in January. Janet was previously working for the Sussex Downs Conservation Board as Community Liaison Officer for the Tourism without Traffic Project. Gemma is an experienced Primary school teacher. She also runs a Bed and Breakfast business and has a strong interest in Sustainable Tourism.

Yvonne Riedel, Consultation Officer, left the Unit in June and Liz Pritchard and Wendy Makin, Events Officers, left the Unit in November and March respectively.



Heathfield Show 2004



Financial summary

1st April 2004 to 31st March 2005



Burwash

The budget for the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee was as follows:

Core activity

Expenditure	
Employee costs	186,600
Office costs	43,800
ESCC support costs	23,600
Partnership costs	12,200
Communication costs	35,900
Partnership Enabling Fund	16,300
Total	318,400

Income	
Countryside Agency	225,600
East Sussex CC*	21,700
Kent CC*	14,100
West Sussex CC *	10,400
Surrey CC	2,500
Wealden DC*	8,300
Rother DC*	8,300
Mid Sussex DC*	6,800
Tunbridge Wells BC	5,900
Horsham DC	4,100
Sevenoaks DC*	5,200
Ashford BC*	2,800
Hastings BC	1,700
Tandridge BC	1,900
Tonbridge and Malling	300
Other	18,900
Total	338,500
(Surplus)	(20,100)

Office costs included rent, rates, electricity, water, office equipment, stationery, photocopying, postage and telephones.

Communication costs included conference expenditure, consultant costs, printing and distribution costs and other promotional expenses.

ESCC support services – IT, personnel and finance services – are charged for.

The local authority contributions reflect the balance of their land area within the AONB. Those marked with * also made a contribution of £2,000 contribution to the Partnership enabling funding 2004-2005.

In addition to core expenditure, the High Weald JAC financially supported the following projects.

1st April 2004 to 31st March 2005

Project activity

The following projects were developed and managed by the High Weald AONB.

Weald Meadows Initiative

A total value of £76,000 was spent on the Weald Meadows Initiative between April 2004 and March 2005.

Expenditure	
Employee costs	43,000
Unit support costs	7,600
Event and Interpretation	6,600
Harvesting and seed trial costs	18,800
Total	76,000



Meadow, Ashburnham

This was with support from:

- English Nature
- The Countryside Agency
- Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs – Rural Enterprise Scheme
- Heritage Lottery Fund – Your Heritage
- EU Community Leader + (EAGGF)
- The Sigrid Rausing Charitable Trust
- Dennis Curry Charitable Trust

Weald Heathland Initiative

A total value of approximately £ 237,000 excluding the value of volunteer time was spent under the Weald Heathland Initiative (February 2004 to February 2005).

Expenditure	
Employee costs	70,000
Professional fees	10,000
Programme promotion	5,000
Project costs	152,000
Total	237,000

The following bodies contributed funding towards heathland activity in the High Weald AONB during 2004-2005, with approximately £107,000 to be contributed from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

- Heritage Lottery Fund
- English Nature
- RSPB
- West Sussex County Council
- East Sussex County Council
- Countryside Agency
- Forestry Commission
- Defra
- Kent High Weald Project
- Conservators of Ashdown Forest
- Sussex Wildlife Trust
- Heathland landowners and managers of the sites

Heathland conservation grazing



Financial summary

1st April 2004 to 31st March 2005



Kent High Weald Project
archaeology workshop

Other Projects

The following projects incurred the following costs for the year from April 2004 to March 2005: Wealden Ancient Woodlands Survey £18,600. The South East AONBs Sustainable Woodland Programme £40,900.

For the Historic Farmstead project there were costs of £1,600. The High Weald Community Interpretation Project (High Weald Tourism Initiatives) had a value of £16,100 and partnership cost of £5,700. The High Weald Community Involvement Project (Kent High Weald Project Education Programme) had a value of £12,400. The Heathland Conference incurred cost of £33,800, which was completely recovered by course fees.

The funding for these other projects came from:

- Wealden District Council
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
- English Nature
- Countryside Agency
- Woodland Trust
- Tourism South East
- JAC Partnership Enabling Fund
- West Sussex County Council

High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Working together to care for a nationally valued landscape

Membership of the Joint Advisory Committee and Steering Group Officers

As at 31st March 2005

Chair – Councillor Mrs P Stockell

Vice-chair – Councillor Mrs S Tidy

OSG Chair – Ms Lisa Creaye-Griffin

Countryside Agency

Mr Adam Wallace (Member)

Ms Nicola Davies (Officer)

East Sussex County Council

Councillor R. Tidy & Mr Simon Hickmott

West Sussex County Council

Councillor Dr A. Chapman

Ms Lisa Creaye-Griffin (until summer 2004) & Ms Jackie Lewis

Kent County Council

Councillor Mrs P Stockell

Dr John Williams

Surrey County Council

Councillor Mrs E Sampson (until January 2005)

Ms Katherine Harrison

Wealden District Council

Councillor Mrs S Tidy

Mr David Phillips

Rother District Council

Councillor B. Kentfield

Mr Frank Rallings

Hastings Borough Council

Councillor B Hart

Mr Paul Lewis (until December 2004) & Mr Dick Harman

& Mr Murray Davidson

Mid Sussex District Council

Councillor C Hersey

Mr Ian Burton; Ms Alma Howell

Horsham District Council

Councillor Mrs E Kitchen

Ms Louise Gibbons

Crawley Borough Council

No member representative & Mr Aidan Booth (until 2004)

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Councillor R Bullock

Ms Gill Harris

Sevenoaks District Council

Councillor Ms G Davison

Mrs Maggie Williams

Ashford Borough Council

Councillor R Taylor

Ms Rebecca Stott

Tonbridge & Malling District Council

No member representative

Mr Phil Linskey

Tandridge District Council

Councillor M Sydney

Mr Paul Newdick

JAC Co-optees

Nature Conservation

Mr K. Hewitt, English Nature

Recreation/Leisure

Mr A Betts, Forestry Commission

Community/Economy

Mr J. Leggett, Sussex Rural

Community Council

Landowners

Mr Rupert Ashby, Country Land and Business Association

Farming

Mr R Froggatt, National Farmers Union

Contact

Clerk to the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

County Hall

Chichester

West Sussex PO19 1RQ

Tel:01243 777642

Fax: 01243 777848

Email:

penny.murray@westsussex.gov.uk

Website: www.highweald.org

Terms of reference

- The JAC, advised by an Officers Steering Group, directs the AONB Unit's work. The JAC chair and vice-chair are elected for two years.
- It is composed of an officer from the Countryside Agency, councillors from 13 local authorities who fund AONB work, and five representatives co-opted from Forum member organisations to represent community, recreation, nature conservation, farming and forestry interests.
- Each local authority may choose to be represented by an officer or anyone else whom it feels appropriate, rather than a councillor, and is entitled to send a deputy. Non-funding authorities may be invited to attend as observers with no entitlement to vote.
- Each member has one vote, although co-opted members cannot vote on the annual budget. The chair has a casting vote. A meeting shall be considered quorate if there are at least seven members present, no fewer than five of which are from local authorities.
- It was established by the Forum in 1996. It has no executive role, is not bound by formal local government rules on membership, political balance, and access to the public etc. Constituent organisations may draw up any set of rules, but there is no clear mechanism for changing or interpreting rules.
- The JAC's main purpose is to advise and guide constituent authorities and other agencies about the achievement of AONB objectives. These were agreed by the Forum in 1996, namely to:
 - i) Conserve its natural beauty
 - ii) Promote its unique identity, recognising and respecting the individual landscape character and habitats of local areas in the implementation of planning and management policies
 - iii) Ensure that development is appropriate and soundly based on the principles of sustainability.
- Encourage, where appropriate, quiet enjoyment of it.

Core functions of an AONB Unit

- Developing a vision and strategy for AONB management
 - Preparing, with constituent local authorities, a AONB Management plan as required by the CroW Act
 - In the early stages of AONB development, promoting the vision and strategy to distinguish the AONB from adjacent countryside
 - Implementing, and co-ordinating implementation by others, the Management Plan
 - Co-ordinating or advising on local authority services in the AONB, to go beyond the normal level of countryside management
 - Monitoring and reporting on progress against management plan targets
 - Accessing resources for undertaking management activities, including external financing, project development and proposals, and providing matching funding for special projects
 - Tapping into advice, and liaison with AONBs at a national level.
 - Providing an internal management role to coordinate AONB protection
 - Promoting the value of the AONB to the community
 - Developing an involvement by the community in the management of the AONB
 - Providing planning advice and related activities
 - Seeking additional funds to assist with delivery of management activity
- Extracted from Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: a guide for AONB partnership members.*

The Unit delivers the core functions in the context of the AONB Management Plan and in accordance with a business strategy agreed by the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee.

Staff (As at 31st March 2005)

Core

AONB Officer – Sally Marsh (0.6 FTE)
AONB Business Manager – Gerry Sherwin
Interpretation Officer – Janina Holubecki
GIS and habitat mapping Officer – Sally Westaway (0.4FTE)
Administrator – Kerry Baldwin (0.5 FTE)
Administrator – John Hill (0.5 FTE)
Policy and Research Officer – Andrew Shaw (from September 2004)
Events Officer – Liz Pritchard (0.5 FTE until November 2004)
Events Officer – Wendy Makin (0.5 FTE November 2004 until March 2005)
Events Officer – Gemma Swallow (0.5 FTE from January 2005)

Project

Weald Heathland Officers, Weald Heathland Initiative – Richard Allum and Caroline FitzGerald
Weald Meadows Officer, Weald Meadows Initiative – Dawn Brickwood
Consultation Officer, Management Plan – Yvonne Riedel (0.5 FTE until June 2004)
GIS and Habitat Mapping Officer, Weald Ancient Woodlands Project – Sally Westaway (0.6 FTE)
SEAONB Woodlands Officer, SEAONB Woodlands Project – Patrick McKernan (working on behalf of the High Weald, Kent Downs and Surrey Hills AONBs)
HLF Project Development Officer – Janet Whitman (from January 2005)
Administrative Assistant – Wendy Makin (0.5 FTE April 2004 until November 2004)



Contact

High Weald AONB Unit
Woodland Enterprise Centre
Hastings Road
Flimwell
East Sussex TN5 7PR
Tel: 01580 879500 Fax: 01580 879499
Email: info@highweald.org
Web: www.highweald.org

The annual review is published by the High Weald AONB Unit on behalf of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC).