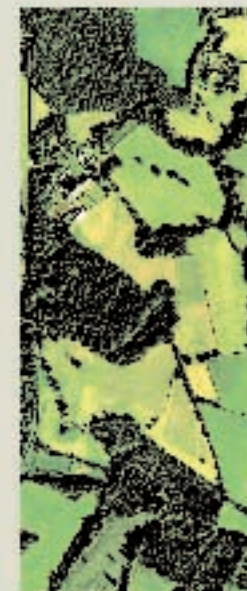


The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Land Manager's Pack



www.highweald.org

One of England's Finest Landscapes

Acknowledgements and copyright

This Pack is an adaptation of the Kent Downs Land Manager's Pack which was produced by the following Kent Countryside Management Partnerships:



With support from:



It has been adapted by the Kent High Weald Partnership under contract to the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee with support from Natural England/Defra's Sustainable Development Fund and Kent County Council.



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Welcome

The High Weald's distinctive countryside arises from a long history of human interaction with the natural environment. Its special character was established by the 14th century and has survived major historical events and social and technological changes. As a result the High Weald is considered to be one of the best surviving, coherent medieval landscapes in Northern Europe.

The pack aims to help you understand both the 5 landscape features that give the area its character and the habitats associated with the features. It sets out practical actions that can be taken to maintain the features and their associated habitats for future generations to enjoy.

Our Cultural Landscape Adviser is currently offering a free visit for landowners interested in finding out more about the High Weald landscape features on their land - please e-mail info@highweald.org for details. For information on other advisers who may be able to offer you assistance, visit www.highweald.org. (guidance) where you can search for contacts by area of interest and location



View of Sandhurst, Kent

Please note that the pack often refers to the archaeology associated with the 5 landscape features. More detailed advice on identifying and managing archaeology can be found in separate guidance *The Cultural Heritage of Woodlands in the South East*. Although this guidance is woodland-focused it is applicable to other habitats.

The High Weald's Landscape Features

The 5 key landscape features that give the High Weald its character, and the habitats closely associated with them, are set out below. To find out more about these features please view the Story of the High Weald video.

1 Geology, landform, water systems and climate

The High Weald is characterized by a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone. The ridges tend east-west and from them spring numerous gill streams that form the headwaters of rivers. Wide river valleys dominate the eastern part of the AONB. The landform and water systems are subject to, and influence, a local variant of the British sub-oceanic climate.

Click on the bookmarks for guidance on the following associated habitats

- Ponds
- Rivers
- Sandrock

2 Settlement

The High Weald is characterized by dispersed historic settlements of farmsteads and hamlets, largely developing from temporary dwellings in the wooded areas or 'dens' where farmers from the Downs grazed their pigs. Late medieval villages, founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries, are found on the area's ridge-tops.

Click on the bookmarks for guidance on the following associated habitats

- Ponds
- Boundaries (Hedgerows)

3 Routeways

The area is characterized by ancient routeways (now roads and Rights of Way) in the form of ridge-top roads and a dense system of radiating droveways arising from pannage – the movement of animals from the Downs to the High Weald in the autumn to graze on mast in the area's woodlands or dens. The droveways are often narrow, deeply sunken and edged with trees, hedges, wildflower-rich verges and boundary banks.

Click on the bookmarks for guidance on the following associated habitats

- Wildflower grasslands
- Boundaries (Hedgerows)
- Sandrock

4 Ancient Woodland

There is a great extent of ancient woods, gills and shaws in small holdings, the value of which is inextricably linked to long-term management.

Click on the bookmarks for guidance on the following associated habitats

- Woodland
- Heathland
- Rivers
- Ponds
- Boundaries
- Veteran trees/parkland

5 Field and Heath

The High Weald is dominated by small, irregularly-shaped and productive fields, often bounded by (and forming a mosaic with) hedgerows and small woodlands and typically used for livestock grazing. Most holdings are small and agriculture is non-dominant. There are distinctive zones of heaths e.g. Ashdown Forest and inner river valleys e.g. around Rye.

Click on the bookmarks for guidance on the following associated habitats

- Wildflower grasslands
- Heathlands
- Ponds
- Boundaries (Hedgerows)
- Orchards
- Veteran trees/parkland

Why Manage?

The High Weald's 5 landscape features have withstood the test of time, surviving major historical events and social and technological changes. However over the last 30 years, the High Weald, like many rural areas, has been facing unprecedented pressures. Farming and forestry, always difficult on the heavy clays and infertile sands of the area's ridges has been pushed to the economic margins by soaring land values, competition from cheaper products from abroad and changing consumer preferences. All over the High Weald economic activity has declined. As a result, although the area's 5 landscape may look the same, many are no longer managed in a traditional way and in some cases no longer managed at all. As a result their habitat and its associated biodiversity is very much under threat.



High Weald woodland stream and bluebells

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