

High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Annual Review 2001-2002



Working together to care for a nationally valued landscape



A message from the Chair

It gives me great pleasure as the new Chair of the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) to introduce the committee’s 2nd annual review. During 2001/2002 the partnership has continued to go from strength to strength, seizing the opportunities for the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty presented by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW).

This year I had pleasure in attending the Weald Heathland Initiative launch on a glorious August day on the Ashdown Forest, one of the most significant heathland sites in the country and to visit the famous Battle Abbey – venue for the Countryside Exchange presentation. The events were both reminders of the wonderful heritage of the High Weald AONB, and of the value of working together to develop strategic and practical solutions to issues within the area.

The value of working together is also exemplified by the decision made by local authorities to work together, through the High Weald JAC, to produce a new AONB management plan. Work on the plan, which represents a major new Initiative for the JAC and it’s dedicated Unit, has now begun. The plan provides an exciting opportunity to formulate local authority policies for the management of their Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it; and to set out the policies of other partners for managing the AONB.

Progress has also been made on securing a stronger voice for the area; this is much needed as the pressures on the AONB continue to grow. A comprehensive independent study on the options available, including a new style Conservation board, a unique new entity created by the CRoW, has now begun.

Nationally the AONB Association is working hard to raise the profile of AONBs and find national solutions to the issues they face. Locally, the second edition of the High Weald Anvil has significantly raised our AONB’s profile and the numerous networking, training and information opportunities set up by the projects has encouraged the development of local solutions to land management issues.

I look forward to the year ahead: a decision on a new governance structure which will help support and develop work within the AONB, the opportunity to feed-in and hear views about the care of the AONB as part of the management process, and to see project ideas turned into reality.

Liz Kitchen

Councillor Mrs Elizabeth Kitchen
July 2002



Councillor Mrs Elizabeth Kitchen



Weald Heathland Initiative launch

“The partnership has continued to go from strength to strength”

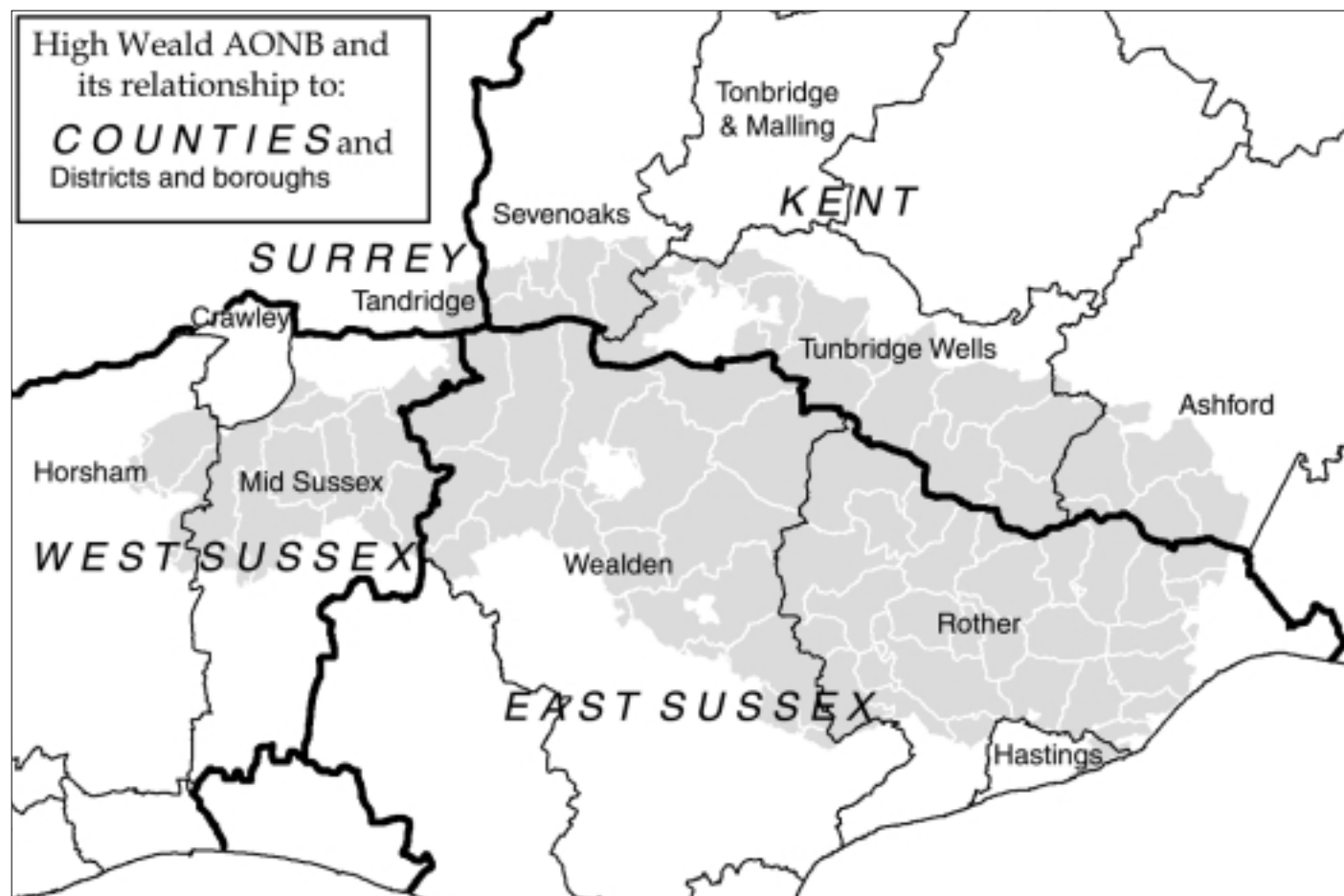
The Area

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

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 fourth largest 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 121,344 people live in the AONB. At 0.8 people per hectare this makes the High Weald one of most densely populated protected landscapes.



Local Partnerships

High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)

In recognition of the need for a stronger voice for the AONB, debate and decisions at the JAC meetings in 2001 largely focused on the opportunities that might be presented by setting up a new AONB governing body. In December the JAC employed consultants KPMG to fully investigate the options for a new structure. This was made possible through financial support from the Countryside Agency.

Over a 3 month period, KPMG interviewed key partners about the current arrangements and future functions of a future governing body. Early stage findings were presented to the JAC in February. These made it clear that there is a powerful and imperative incentive for change and that an 'evolved' JAC and a new-style Conservation Board, a unique new governance option created by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, are the two potentially viable governance options. KPMG are expected to present details on the structure, legal status and costs of setting up each option in Summer 2002.

At the JAC meeting in July 2001 Vice-Chairman, Councillor Mrs Elizabeth Kitchen, leader of Horsham District Council, was elected to serve as the JAC chair for a period of two years. Councillor Tom Veitch, of Kent County Council, was elected as JAC Vice-Chair. Ex-chair, Councillor Dr Angela Chapman continues as the JAC's representative on the national Association of AONBs. In September 2001 West Sussex County Council took over the clerking service for the JAC and the Forum from East Sussex County Council.

High Weald AONB Forum

Forum members were provided with a number of opportunities to meet and participate in High Weald AONB JAC activities including the Weald Heathland Initiative launch, Countryside Exchange presentation and annual High Weald AONB Forum meeting held in April 2002.

In May, AONB Forum President, the Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, awarded a prize to the winner of the High Weald Anvil 2001 photography competition; a family day out at Penshurst Place. Later in the year the President was active in setting up a working group of residents – selected to represent agriculture, new and established landowners, and local businesses – to explore the concept of formalizing public support for the AONB.

“There is a powerful and imperative incentive for change”



Sir Geoffrey Johnson-Smith awarding prize to the winner of the High Weald Anvil photo competition

“The Kent High Weald Project submitted a successful funding bid to the Countryside Agency with guidance from the High Weald AONB Unit”

Land Management Services

In recognition of the raised profile of High Weald AONB and its role as test bed for rural development, the High Weald FWAG project now functions as an independent entity, separate to, but working closely with, Sussex and Kent FWAG. The Unit continues to host the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) Officer for the High Weald under a newly developed service level agreement and to sit on the steering group. Alexandre Harper has replaced Ralph Hobbs as the area officer and the close working relationship that has been developed between the two organisations has continued.

The AONB Unit has continued to offer advice and support to Countryside Management Services (CMS) in the area, encouraging them to bid for Countryside Agency funds for new projects. Funding available for CMS activity is now largely tied to the Countryside Agency’s Finest Countryside theme. The Agency is emphasising that funding bids under this theme must clearly meet AONB objectives, with Unit support being gained for projects before bid submission. In 2001/2002 the Kent High Weald Project submitted a successful funding bid to the Countryside Agency with guidance from the High Weald AONB Unit.

South East Walks Partnership

The Unit continues to work with the South East Walks Partnership, a nationally unique partnership between countryside managers, tourism officers and AONB representatives. The Partnership promotes the region as a walking destination, focusing on the promotion of long-distance walking routes in the South East and the circular walks linked to them. Three of the nine South East Walks cross the High Weald AONB – the High Weald Landscape Trail, 1066 Walk and the Weald Way.

The third annual South East Walking Festival was held in Bexhill and Hastings on the edge of the AONB. Despite the foot and mouth crisis the festival attracted 189 participants – more than previous years – and many participated in the walks though the High Weald AONB.

Twenty-one businesses within the High Weald AONB attended the Walkers Welcome course following targeted promotion in the area. The course, developed in partnership with the South East England Tourist Board, encourages accommodation providers to add value to their service by developing facilities that meet the needs of walkers e.g. drying rooms.



Regional Partnerships

Unit officers met quarterly with other members of the South East AONB Officers Group to co-ordinate regional approaches to issues created by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. For example, how to encourage Government offices and statutory agencies to discharge their CROW Act duty and to have regard for AONB purposes and how to involve them in AONB Management Plans across the region. A working group has prepared a programme of events with each agency in turn to build commitment to the management planning process, develop a working relationship between officers, and to discuss strategic issues likely to be relevant across the region’s protected areas.

This work follows on from the success of other joint projects including the South East AONB branding study and South East AONB Farm tourism study. Other projects are underway e.g. South East AONB local product boards, photography contract and Sustainable Tourism Project and others e.g. the employment of a South East AONB Forestry Officer are in the pipeline.

National Partnerships

Councillor Dr Angela Chapman has continued to represent the Joint Advisory Committee on the Association of AONBs (AAONB) executive committee, whose focus over the last year has been strengthening contacts with Ministers and Parliamentarians and working with the Countryside Agency on AONB funding formulae, guidance and projects. It has developed a new website, produced the bi-annual national AONB magazine *Outstanding* and held its 3rd national annual conference on *Today's Solutions, Tomorrow's Problems?* attended by the High Weald President and AONB Unit staff. A new AAONB activity, the organisation of national technical seminars e.g. on telecommunications masts, have provided an opportunity for information sharing and joint working amongst AONBs.

The AONB Unit contributed to national activity through representation on the National AONB Management Plan Steering Group on behalf of the AONB Staff Forum and the National Branding Protected Landscapes Forum and the through the provision of information to support the forthcoming national Protected Landscapes Campaign, which will be targeted at influential figures in politics, business, education, the media and the community and aim to promote the environmental, social and economic value of designated landscapes.



“The Unit has been active in developing the thinking nationally and locally as to the most effective processes for developing the new generation of plans”

Management plan process

During 2001 the Unit was successful in securing funds from local authorities and the Countryside Agency to deliver a new AONB management plan under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000.

The Act requires local authorities with an AONB within their boundary, acting jointly where appropriate, to publish and adopt an AONB Management Plan by 31st March 2004 and review the plan at not less than five yearly intervals.

The plans offers a major opportunity to work with partners to develop their policy with respect to the AONB. The Unit has been active in developing the thinking nationally and locally as to the most effective processes for developing the new generation of plans.

In recognition of the JAC’s role and expertise, in July 2001 the 15 local authorities whose areas are covered by High Weald designation, requested that the Committee produce the plan on their behalf.

The plan represents a significant new project for the AONB unit and is being prepared by existing AONB Unit staff with support from a part time consultation officer and consultants. In accordance with the project business plan, work on the structure and content began in October.

Rural Characterization

As part of developing understanding of the AONB, the Unit was the first designated landscape to complete a research project that has used an understanding of history to identify the character of the area. In March 2001 a draft of the *The Making of the High Weald*, a review of the natural and human colonization of the area since the last Ice Age, was circulated for comment.

Using a historical approach, the report identifies the fundamental character of the High Weald today in terms of the area’s geology, landform, water systems, and climate; settlement; routeways; woodland; and non-wooded land (or enclosed agricultural landscape of irregularly-shape fields and small-scale holdings). Identifying the key characteristics by an objective approach is critical to the preparation of the management plan.

Wide-ranging data sets continue to be acquired from partner authorities and other agencies and new data sets synthesized to assist future condition monitoring of the High Weald. Examples of data sets include satellite-derived landcover map data (Landcover Map 2000), local climate data (from the UK Climate Impact project and local weather stations),

agricultural data e.g. June census and countryside stewardship, and Unit-generated data e.g. sandrock, former marshland, and settlement. Research using these datasets will also be valuable in underpinning and informing the Management Plan.

To assist with the significant amount of research that is needed as part of the management plan process a research assistant working on part-time basis assisted with gathering background information and collating relevant policies for each of the plan’s topic sections. Research areas included climate change data; the Ticehurst pilot project landholding survey; archaeological monuments; historic buildings; and ancient woodland.

Visual representations of High Weald AONB datasets (left to right): Location of medieval churches; Roman ironworking sites; Landform; Geology; Minepits; Aerial photos; Iron Age hillforts; Roman roads and droves near Ripe; -den and -fold place names; Early routes.





The High Weald AONB awareness campaign continued to be unfolded across the AONB by the Unit and its Initiatives during 2001, supported by a number of communication projects.

High Weald Anvil 2001

In 2001, the Unit produced the second edition of the *High Weald Anvil*, following positive feedback from the first pilot edition. Using its integrated AONB-wide distribution network, 65,000 copies were cost-effectively dispatched to residents' homes and visitor outlets. Feedback from 'repeat' and 'first-time' readers, show high satisfaction with its style and content.

South East AONB local products display

To support local products initiatives across the South East, the Unit co-ordinated the production of a large, portable, local products display. The display is composed of four frames made from locally coppiced timber in which are hung posters promoting the South East AONBs and the purchase of local products, in particular fruit, meat and wood. It will be available to all AONB teams and their partners to use at indoor and outdoor events such as county shows and farmers' markets.

Made in the High Weald, the Unit's local products directory, was featured on Countryside Agency's new *Eat the View* website as a best-practice example. A further 10,000 copies of the directory have been distributed by the Unit to producers and farmers' markets in 2001.

High Weald images

In recognition of the demand both within the Unit and from external partners for good quality images of the area (particularly those showing people working in and enjoying the area) the Unit commissioned a series of 'people' photographs in the spring. These photographs have been supplemented by images taken under a regional AONB photography contract let by the Countryside Agency in November. As a result, images of village shops, walkers, farmers markets, sunken lanes, local producers, orchards, woodland have now been added to the High Weald AONB image library and are available for partners use.



New 'people' photos have been added to the High Weald image library

AONB feature leaflets

A new landscape feature leaflet *Orchards in the Weald of Kent and Sussex: a guide to an outstanding feature and its unique culture and wildlife* was published in October and launched on Apple Day. The *Hedges* and the *Ponds in the Weald* leaflets were reprinted following requests from countryside management advisors in the area plus the demand generated by promotion of the leaflets in the High Weald Anvil and on the website.

Presentations

Horsham District Council officers and councillors were the first local authority partner to receive an illustrated presentation by the Unit to familiarize them with the AONB and the management partnership. The presentation covered the CRow Act, the AONB landscape, land management initiatives, the governance structure, management planning, and the actions stakeholders can take.

Events

The Unit attended East Sussex County Council's Food and Wood Fairs, and the Kent Agricultural Show with a High Weald local products display of timber furniture, trugs and baskets, apples, juice and wine and freshly picked hops. The display attracted lots of interest, raised the profile of the AONB and provided an opportunity to discuss land management issues with High Weald residents and land managers, particularly local producers.

A media familiarization trip to promote the South East Walks Partnership and the High Weald Landscape Trail, attended by 4 journalists from national papers and magazines, was held in May.

Media Liaison

Media releases and photocalls on the *High Weald Anvil 2001*, the JAC chairman's election, the Weald Heathland Initiative, and international Countryside Exchange were released and received good coverage.

Contacts database

The Unit has worked with marketing consultants to create a new database of all AONB contacts within and beyond the High Weald. This will assist the Unit to effectively disseminate information to its target audiences.



The fifth in the series of six feature leaflets has been published

“Made in the High Weald, the Unit's local products directory, was featured on Countryside Agency's new Eat the View website as a best-practice example”

Weald Meadows Initiative

Action for valued grasslands, for now and for the future



Examining wildflower plant plugs on a WMI training course

The Weald Meadows Initiative (WMI) has continued to provide farmers, landowners and other clients with cost-effective, site-specific and practical support to sustainably manage, create and enhance wildflower grasslands.

Reader feedback on *Daisy Chain*, the first-ever WMI annual newsletter, was excellent. Almost 50 meadow owners, and others who care for the Weald's outstanding grasslands, responded to a mailing of 350. All respondents thought it 'interesting', and most said the balance of information was 'about right'.

An independent customer review of WMI took place in April 2001 to examine its progress since 1996. The contract's aim was to evaluate the achievements and effectiveness of WMI from the customer's viewpoint. It also wished to identify the gaps in the service currently provided and provide a test for future developmental ideas.

It concluded that: 'The results make it clear that the WMI is providing an excellent service to many customers, both meadow owners and those who want to create or enhance meadows'. Some suggestions for future developments included crop-growing seed for harvest, development of an advisory website, and a grazing scheme for the Weald.



Around 100 people and organisations have telephoned the WMI and received detailed technical advice for management, creation or enhancement of grassland. 58 sites were visited; 23 in relation to for management, monitoring, grassland management plans, Countryside Stewardship scheme (CSS) applications and planning guidance and advice; 35 for surveys in relation to creation and enhancement work or with a view to harvesting Weald Native Origin Seed.

Throughout the harvesting season, 17 operations were carried out for harvesting seed on 12 sites. This resulted in approximately 225 kg of Weald Native Origin Wildflower and Grass seed. Forty landowners have purchased 435kgs of seed (including seed stocks from 2000) for 92.7 ha of existing grassland enhancement and 71 ha of creation.

Courses run by the WMI over the summer included an Organic Wildflower Gardener's Course (organised for Kent Wildlife Week and attended by nine people, at Bore Place); and 17 advisers attended the two-day specialist course 'Meadows in the Landscape'.

“The results make it clear that the WMI is providing an excellent service to many customers, both meadow owners and those who want to create or enhance meadows”

Towards the end of the financial year the main aim of WMI was to secure financial support for its continued development over the next three years. A business plan for 2002-05 was produced to support a bid to the Rural Enterprise Scheme under the England Rural Development Programme.

Weald Heathland Initiative

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

The Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith launched the Weald Heathland Initiative (WHI) at the Ashdown Forest Centre in August. Over 60 people attended, including many site managers and individuals representing farming, forestry and nature conservation interests. A guided walk by the project officers and forest rangers followed a 'heathland' products lunch and programme of talks headlined by ethno-botanist Chris Howkins, author of *Heathland Harvest*.

In their first year the two heathland project officers concentrated on developing relationships with the site managers of both public and private sites and local community groups. Site management plans were produced, match funding sought, and two community consultation exercises completed on the introduction of grazing to local commons; Chailey Common in East Sussex and Southborough Common in Kent.

Foot and mouth, and the subsequent delays in offering grants under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, unfortunately delayed most of the proposed heathland management work. However with the help of volunteers, equating to 734 days, restoration work began on 10 sites; Ashdown Forest, Chailey Common, Limekiln Wood, Isenhurst, Cinderhill Wood, Tilgate Forest Lodge, Forrester's Cottage, St Leonard's Forest, Buchan Country Park and Tilgate Forest.

A significant amount of time was spent developing the monitoring, reporting and financial systems that are required by the Heritage Lottery Fund contract; systems that can be used should future bids to the Funds be successful.



Volunteers from Kings Mill Golf Course staff cutting heather at Cinderhill Wood



Besom broom making at a heathland open day

Land Management Initiative

Developing integrated rural support for a lowland pasture landscape



Alun Michael MP enjoying High Weald produce

This five-year programme was set up to help the land management industry prepare for policy and funding changes. Notable Land Management Initiative (LMI) results include:

- A High Weald fact-finding mission by Rural Affairs Minister Alun Michael, who was particularly interested in integrated farm appraisals (IFAs)
- Promotion and facilitation events to support farm diversification
- Organic, Meat, and Tourism Product Evaluation Groups running ‘leading-to-producer’ groups, and working on adding value and developing new markets in meat, equestrian, organic milk and parish-level tourism
- 50 IFAs current or in-train, resulting in changes on farms, such as diversification, tenancy and reduced inputs.

In January Alun Michael announced a successful LEADER+ bid for £2.2 million. This will support the Wealden and Rother rural renewal scheme in the High Weald AONB until 2008.

Unfortunately, the LMI had completed 21 months’ work on activity to be delivered over 60 months, when both officers decided to move on before Christmas 2001. Director David Stewart returned to the North of England and Assistant Director, Diana Locke, moved to a new job with Kent County Council.

These staff changes triggered a review of the LMI’s progress against the targets set out in the Project Design Document (or business plan).

High Weald Furniture

Quality furniture from sustainable British Woodlands



A bus shelter developed by High Weald Furniture in a new partnership with the Highways Authorities

High Weald Furniture (HWF), the independent company arising from the AONB Unit’s High Weald Design (HWD) project, suffered a reduction in orders as a result of foot and mouth but has steadily rebuilt its business and continues to grow.

As its objectives had been fulfilled and the criteria for winding up the company were met, HWD will cease operating as a company in Summer 2002.

Remaining assets will be transferred, in accordance with the Memorandum of Association, to other institutions having the same objectives as HWD.

High Weald Countryside Exchange

Encouraging sustainable visits to the AONB

An eight-day exchange between North American and UK rural tourism experts in October, focused on sustainable visits within the AONB, has led to joint working between farmers, B&Bs and other services and has assisted with the appointment of a dedicated High Weald AONB Rural Tourism Officer.

The AONB Unit, in partnership with tourism officers and countryside managers from Kent and Sussex, hosted the exchange as an opportunity for local residents, community groups and businesses to consider ‘Sustainable Visits’ with advice from an independent, specialist team. The six-team members met parish councillors and small business owners in Cranbrook (Kent), Sedlescombe and Rotherfield (both East Sussex), local council tourism and countryside officers, visitor attraction managers and local farmers.

Conclusions of the Countryside Exchange (CE) were that a number of commendable tourism and community initiatives are taking place throughout the High Weald, but that individual local authorities, agencies and tourism enterprises were working in a fragmented and un-coordinated manner. They recommended that everyone should work together to develop local interpretation plans, a ‘green’ tourism conference and themed packages for the area.

The CE final report was distributed to all exchange participants and AONB Forum partners, after the team had presented its findings at a Battle Abbey event. The report recommended how partners can improve co-operative working, develop tourism marketing, and promote public transport.

Following the Exchange the AONB Unit worked to secure commitment and resources for a High Weald Rural Tourism Officer from the Countryside Agency, South East Economic Development Agency, South East England Tourist Board (SEETB), Southern Tourist Board and Kent Downs.

In March 2002 Tristan Lavender, formerly of SEETB, was appointed as the High Weald/Kent Downs Sustainable Tourism Officer, under the umbrella of the South East AONB Tourism Initiative.



Cyclist using local services close to the Cuckoo Trail

“An eight-day exchange has led to joint working between farmers, B&Bs and other services”



Discussing visitor access at Bedgebury Pinetum



Memorandum Of Agreement (MOA)

In recognition of the value of the AONB, the JAC and its dedicated Unit local authority partners agreed to a new Memorandum of Agreement. Under the agreement all partners have committed, in principle, to financial support for the JAC for the next 6 years, a significant increase on the current commitment of 3 years. The commitment will help to attract 75% CA funding towards the costs of delivering Unit core functions, developing a new governance structure, and preparing the AONB Management Plan 2004.

High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee Budget

The Joint Advisory Committee core budget, which excludes costs associated with the new Management Plan and projects, continues to fall below the Countryside Agency's recommended budget of £279,000 for the High Weald AONB. The recommended budget is an indication of the costs of running a lean and efficient Unit staff to deliver nationally-defined core functions. It takes into account the staff and operational costs and the impact of the AONB's size and complexity on the delivery of core functions.

In recognition of the positive progress that the JAC has made towards a new governance structure, the MOA and Management Plan production during 2001/2002, the Countryside Agency agreed to increase grant aid core costs for the High Weald AONB Unit from 49% to 68% for 2002/2003.

Project Budgets

During 2001 funding was secured from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, the Environment Agency and visitor attractions (through the sale of advertising space in the Anvil) for the High Weald awareness campaign; from countryside management and tourism partners for the Countryside Exchange and from regional partnership and local partnership (in principle) for the AONB tourism project.

AONB Unit staff changes

At the end of 2001-2002 a number of staff changes were imminent. In January new staff were recruited to support the communications and management plan work; a part-time Information Officer Janina Holubecki, to help interpret the AONB, and a part time consultation officer, Yvonne Riedel, to devise and implement the Management Plan Consultation Strategy. In March, it became apparent that existing staff were also on the move; Richard Clarke – to become the AONB Director for the North Wessex Downs AONB Partnership and Ian Spindley – to become the first-ever Community Development Officer for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in North Wales.

Project Activity

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

AONB Management Plan

A total of £29,285 was spent on the management plan, with 75% of the funding coming from the Countryside Agency and the remainder from local authorities.

High Weald Governance Structure

A total of £14,786 was spent on consultants to consider options for a new governance structure in the area. The work was 100% funded by the Countryside Agency.

High Weald Special Initiatives Fund

The following projects were developed and managed by the High Weald AONB Unit with contributions from the following partners: Rother District Council, Agrifactors (Southern) Ltd, English Nature, RSPB, Surrey Hills, Kent Downs, Hampshire and Sussex Downs AONB teams, the Rye Bay Project, Kent High Weald Project, South East England Tourist Board, 1066 Country Marketing, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Wealden District Council, East Sussex County Council.

- Ticehurst Rural Characterisation Project
- High Weald Countryside Exchange
- Weald Meadows Initiative
- Weald Heathland Initiative
- Local Products Display Boards
- Orchards, Hedgerows and Pond leaflet production
- Kent coppice cutters skills project

The Countryside Agency contributed £31,367 towards these projects.

Carry Forward

Project income in advance includes income from the sales of the High Weald Landscape Trail guidebook. This income is being held to fund future reprints and development of the Trail. Other upfront income includes contributions from local authority partners for promotional activity 2001-2004 and the management plan.

Core activity

Expenditure	
Employee costs	151097
Office costs	33075
ESCC employment overheads	62550
Joint Advisory Committee	6321
Minor works	23528
Total	276571

Income	
Countryside Agency	128055
East Sussex CC	76837
Kent CC	10665
West Sussex CC	7426
Surrey CC	2228
Wealden DC	5537
Rother DC	5537
Mid Sussex DC	4285
Tunbridge Wells BC	5160
Horsham DC	3684
Sevenoaks DC	2864
Ashford BC	743
Hastings BC	1198
Tandridge BC	1591
Other	20760
Total	276570

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

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

Office accommodation and support services of £67837 were provided in kind by ESCC.

The local authority contributions reflect the balance of their land area within the AONB.

JAC Co-optees

Nature Conservation

Mr J. Patmore (until summer 2001)
& Mr K Hewitt (English Nature)

Recreation/Leisure

Mr B. Jupp
(Ramblers' Association, Sussex)

Community/Economy

Mr J. Leggett
(Sussex Rural Community Council)

Landowners

Mr J. Biron (Country Land and
Business Association)

Farming

Mr J. Siggs (National Farmers Union)

Contact

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Membership of the Joint Advisory Committee
and Steering Group Officers

As at 31st March 2001

Chair – Councillor R. Tidy (until June 2001) & Councillor Mrs E. Kitchen

Vice-chairs – Councillor Mrs E. Kitchen (until June 2001)

& Councillor Tom Veitch

OSG Chair – Mr Graeme Kerr

Countryside Agency – Mr Ed Rowsell

East Sussex County Council

Councillor R. Tidy & Mr Simon Hickmott

West Sussex County Council

Councillor Ms A.Chapman

Elizabeth Mitchell (until late 2001) & Ms Lisa Creaye-Griffin

Kent County Council

Councillor T. Veitch & Mr Tony Atkinson

Surrey County Council

Councillor Mrs E. Sampson & Ms Katherine Harrison

Wealden District Council

Councillor Mrs S. Tidy & Mr David Phillips

Rother District Council

Councillor B. Kentfield & Mr Les Robinson

Hastings Borough Council

Councillor Ms D. Kent

Mr Robert Davidson (until summer 2001) & Ms Sarah Mills

Mid Sussex District Council

Councillor C. Hersey (until summer 2001) & Cllr A MacNaughton
Mr Ian Burton; Ms Alma Howell

Horsham District Council

Councillor Mrs E. Kitchen

Ms Barbara Childs (until July 2001) & Ms Louise Gibbons

Crawley Borough Council

No member representative & Mr Aidan Booth

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Councillor T. Veitch & Ms Gill Harris

Sevenoaks District Council

Councillor M. Whitehouse & Mr Dennis Stevenson

Ashford Borough Council

Councillor J. Kemp MBE

Ms Stella Bandu (until winter 2001) & Mr Richard Alderton

Tonbridge & Malling District Council

No member representative & Mr Phil Linskey

Tandridge District Council

Councillor Mrs M. Weston (until summer 2001)

Councillor Mrs J. Maylam & Ms Zoe Legg

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 and is not bound by formal local government rules on membership, political balance, and access to the public etc.
- 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.
 - iv) Encourage, where appropriate, quiet enjoyment of it.

Forum Organizations
and their representatives

Government Office for South East – Mr C Drew (until 2001) & Ms S Element; South East England Development Agency – Ms V Carter; English Heritage –Mr P Kendall and Mr P Roberts; Sport England – Mr J Wilkinson; South East England Tourism Board – Mr F Cubbage; DEFRA – Mr P Owens; National Farmers' Union – Mr P Fermor (until 2001) & Mr S Leavey; Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group – Mr Ralph Hobbs (until summer 2001) & Miss A Harper; Kent Rural Community Council – Mr T Walton (until November 2001) & Mr J Boot; National Trust – Ms Sue Forster & South East Region – Mr P Griffiths; CPRE – Mr P Mumford (Sussex) & Mr H Barton (Kent); Ramblers' Association – Mr Peter Skipp (until November 2001) & Mrs J Bomber (Kent) and Mr G Butler (Surrey); Wildlife Trusts – Mrs J Simpson (until summer 2001) & Mrs E Hayes (Sussex), Mr J Bennett (Kent) and Mrs J Barton (Surrey); Association of Local Councils – Mrs C Swann (Sussex) and Mr C Davies (Kent) (until November 2001) & Mr R Williamson; Southern Water – Mr P Hughes; Federation of Amenity Societies – Mr C Harris (Sussex) and Mr R Pennells (Kent); Ashdown Forest Conservators – Brigadier M Constantine; Uckfield/Crowborough Bridleways – Mrs J Bramwell; Wakehurst Place – Mr D Hardman; Environment Agency – Ms B Buckley (Kent) (until summer 2001) & Mr P Midgeley (Sussex); East Grinstead Town Council – Councillor A Brock; Forestry Commission – Mr A Betts; English Nature – Dr C Edwards (Sussex) & Mr Simon Richardson (Kent).

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 three-year business strategy agreed by the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee.

Core staff

As at 31st March 2001

AONB Officers – Sally Marsh/Richard Clarke
Assistant AONB Officer – Gerry Sherwin
Rural Character Adviser – Roland Harris
Communications Officer – Ian Spindley
Office Manager – Kerry Baldwin

Project Staff

Weald Heathland Initiative – Richard Allum and Caroline FitzGerald
Weald Meadows Initiative – Dawn Brickwood
High Weald Land Management Initiative – David Stewart and Diana Locke (until November 2001)

Contact

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