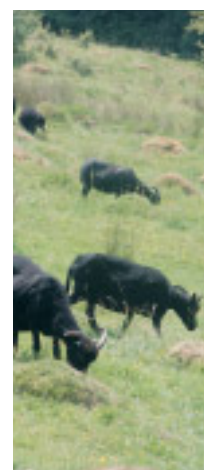


High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Annual Review 2005-2006



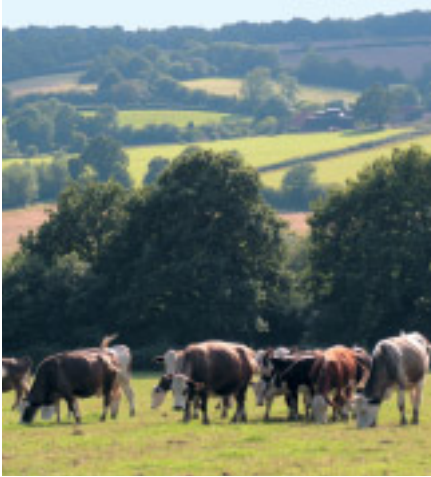
Working together to care for a nationally valued landscape



The High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee is a partnership between East Sussex, West Sussex, Kent and Surrey County Councils, Horsham, Mid Sussex, Tandridge, Sevenoaks, Wealden and Rother District Councils, Tunbridge Wells, Hastings, Ashford and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Councils, the Countryside Agency and organisations representing farming, forestry, community, business and recreation interests.

The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

A nationally valued landscape



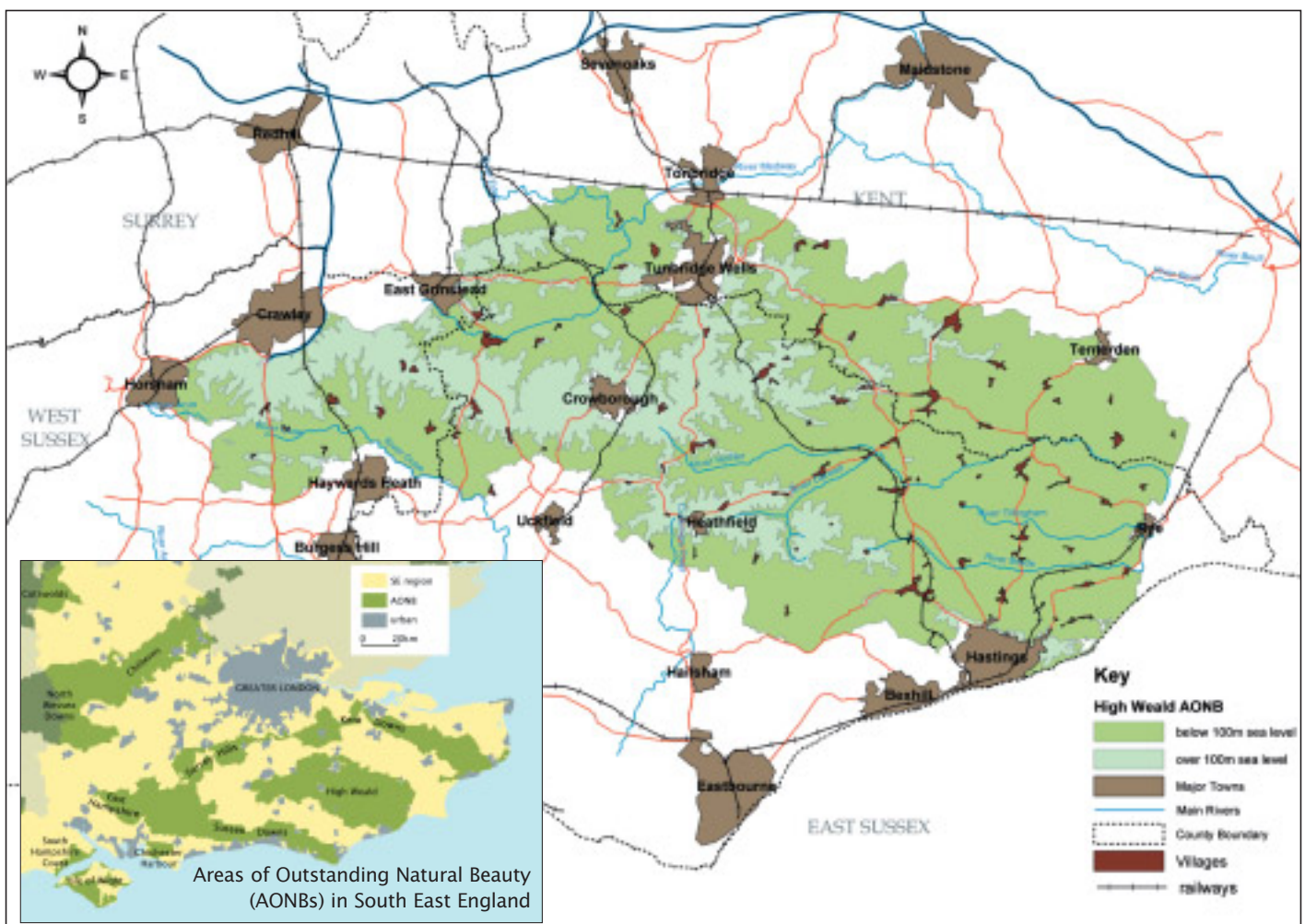
The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a historic countryside of rolling hills draped with small, irregular fields, abundant woods and hedges, scattered farmsteads and sunken lanes.

The High Weald covers parts of 4 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 the most populated protected landscape in the UK.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) were created by the legislation of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949. Since the Act was passed, 50 AONBs have been designated for their landscape quality - the first being Gower, designated in 1956. Whilst the character of these 50 AONBs may be very different, they are all the finest examples of these landscapes in the country.



A message from the Chairman

I am delighted to introduce the Committee's Annual Review for 2005 – 2006. As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of AONB designation, it is timely to consider the contribution these wonderful landscapes make to our well-being and way of life.

Protected landscapes like the High Weald AONB cover 32% of the South East region. Whatever the challenges facing the region in the future – mitigating climate change, healthy living, sustainable development or extending the success of the urban economy to the rural economy – protected landscapes will be crucial to success.

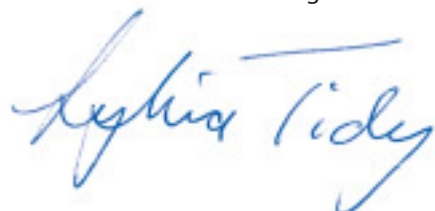
Like their colleagues in Europe, land managers in the High Weald continue to struggle with fundamental changes in how the countryside is utilised and supported. This year we have seen our partnership programme with 5 European countries, *Lifescape – Your Landscape*, go from strength to strength – with partners collaborating to pilot and promote innovative approaches to building sustainable economies in protected areas, based upon natural resources and community skills.

The AONB Unit continues to act as a catalyst, bringing new partners and new ideas together. Our research programme has seen some major successes with the launch of the revised Wealden Ancient Woodland Inventory in March; the setting up of a national pilot to address restoration of planted ancient woodland sites and a region-wide study of accessible natural greenspace.

This year saw the launch of the AONB Sustainable Development Fund, with £100,000 made available by the Countryside Agency to encourage local people, communities and businesses to develop solutions for sustainable living in protected areas. The JAC was pleased to be able to support the installation of a wood boiler for a community of 27 homes in Mid Sussex. An example of how energy can be generated in a near carbon neutral way using a renewable resource on our doorstep.

Many people will have been fascinated to see the cultural origins of the High Weald landscape portrayed on BBC1, Meridian and Radio 4 this year and to realise the central role pigs and droving have played in forming our settlements and distinctive pattern of routeways and roads. During production of the AONB Management Plan, many people identified education of the next generation of High Weald residents, land managers and visitors as the key to secure the long term future of this wonderful landscape. We are delighted this year to see the launch of *High Weald Heroes* – a partnership with schools in the AONB, designed to enthuse children about the special area they live in; encourage interaction with the landscape and provide the understanding necessary for its protection.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our partners – organisations, communities and individuals – who have contributed to the many achievements this year. We look forward to continuing to work with you in the future.



Councillor Mrs Sylvia Tidy
Chairman of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)
July 2006



Councillor Mrs Sylvia Tidy

Effective structures and partnerships

Locally, regionally and nationally



High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)

The High Weald JAC's main purpose is to provide advice and guidance to constituent authorities and other organisations on the AONB objectives. In view of this, during 2005/06 the JAC has continued to consider national and regional issues – largely as a result of a continued input to the Local Development Frameworks (LDFs); the launch of the Environmental Stewardship Scheme (ES) and the amalgamation of the Countryside Agency, the Rural Development Service and English Nature into the new integrated agency Natural England.

The land-use planning system is currently undergoing a series of reforms, requiring all District and Borough councils to prepare new Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). This work will include developing new core strategies and the JAC – believing that a consistent approach to planning issues for the entire AONB is essential – have been working this year with the relevant local authorities to ensure a common policy relating to the AONB is adopted across all authorities and all plans at this critical point of change within the planning system.



The JAC were dismayed to see the ES scheme, which replaced long standing and more familiar agri-environment schemes such as Countryside Stewardship, get off to a shaky start this year. Many farmers and land managers suffered significant delays when attempting to apply for the scheme, due to difficulties with a new computer system. Thankfully, the problems began to resolve themselves toward the end of the year and, by March 2006, approximately 197,000 hectares of south-east England had been entered into the scheme.

Although at this stage it has been too early to tell what the future remit, strategic direction or resources of Natural England are likely to be, the JAC has played a part influencing this process through a number of meetings with the Countryside Agency, the Rural Development Service, and the National Association of AONBs, which have been attended by the Chairman of the JAC, Cllr. Sylvia Tidy and High Weald Unit Officers throughout the year.

Following the completion of the JAC's review of the AONB governance arrangements, a decision was made to form a Management Board. The new arrangements came into effect midway through this year. The Management Board consists of five JAC members, including both the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman. Under its terms of reference, the board will closely assist the High Weald AONB Unit staff with the delivery of the AONB management plan and the JAC business plan objectives. The Board meets three times a year in between the full JAC meetings and other meetings can be arranged at short notice should the need arise.



Local Partnerships

The High Weald Unit has this year been working with 28 local organisations ranging from local authorities and statutory agencies to community groups and charities to prepare the final stages of an ambitious and significant bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The bid for a £2 million grant to benefit the Weald

Forest Ridge – an area of deeply incised and faulted sandstone that runs east-west across the High Weald AONB between Horsham and Tonbridge – will be submitted in September 2006 and if it is successful the grant will be used to deliver a £4.1 million scheme to enable the area to thrive economically, socially, and culturally, while ensuring it retains its beauty, biodiversity and landscape heritage.

High Weald AONB Unit staff devised and led joint training sessions this year to assist land owners prepare Farm Environmental Plans (FEP). Unit staff from the Weald Meadows Initiative, the Weald Heathland Initiative and Habitat Mapping Project plus the AONB Director were involved, together with 15 Rural Development Service (RDS) advisors from the Kent and Sussex team and 8 representatives from English Nature's Sussex and Surrey team. David Hobden hosted the training sessions in his education barn and on his species rich grasslands at St Dunstan's Farm.

Our work with local partners continued this year with the setting up of a number of new projects. These included:

- The Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) Project, which is a national pilot project hosted and managed by the High Weald Unit in collaboration with the Forestry Commission and the Woodland Trust.
- The Ashdown Forest Interpretation Project for a key site within the AONB, hosted and managed by the High Weald Unit in partnership with Tourism South East, the Ashdown Forest Conservators, Wealden District Council and the Ashdown Forest Tourism Forum.
- The Historic Farmsteads Research Project, which identifies historic farmsteads within the AONB, hosted and managed by the High Weald in conjunction with English Heritage.

National and Regional Partnerships

The South East Protected Landscapes Directors and the South East Protected Landscapes Planning and Policy Officers have met on a frequent basis to review existing and emerging policy relevant to both the South East and National AONBs and to co-ordinate regional AONB programmes and projects. Responses have been made to a number of requests for consultations on the South East Plan and the South East Rural Development Plan.

As a first stage in a process to understand how climate change will affect protected landscapes, a joint contract to outline the impact of climate change on the protected landscapes of the South East has been delivered this year. This provides a basis for informing management decisions, partnership and community engagement, as well as education – to help the community and the protected landscapes partnerships adapt to what could be the unavoidable impacts of climate change.

Following last year's review into the capacity of individual AONBs to influence regional and national policy, it was agreed that a South East Regional Co-ordinator was needed to ensure that these nationally important landscapes make a valuable and recognised contribution to the economic, social and



Trainees surveying wildflower grassland



Restored Barn, Beech estate



Weir Wood Reservoir during drought

Effective structures and partnerships

Locally, regionally and nationally



Profile: **High Weald Lifescape – Your Landscape Project**

Purpose

The 'Lifescapes' project, funded by Europe's INTERREG IIIB programme, aims to show how joint working within Europe can lead to new approaches to revitalising rural areas. Project partners are working on a range of schemes to demonstrate how the special features of local landscapes can add value to the products and services within them

Partners

United Kingdom – High Weald AONB, Sussex Downs Conservation Board, English Nature; Netherlands – Provincie Noord-Brabant, Gemeente Boxtel, Innovatieplatform Duurzame Meierij, Alterra, Stichting StuipZand, European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC); Belgium – Vlaamse Landmaatschappij; France – Syndicat Mixte du Parc naturel régional des Caps et Marais d'Opale, Syndicat Mixte du Parc naturel régional de l'Avenois, Syndicat Mixte Espaces Naturels Régionaux; Germany – Orchard Centre

Timescale

May 2003 – April 2008

environmental well being of the region. The position has been filled and the post, hosted by Surrey County Council, is due to begin in the late summer of 2006.

The High Weald Unit and representatives from the Countryside Agency, the South East AONBs and the Anglian AONBs jointly evaluate and select proposals to bury small scale overhead power cables within the AONBs of both regions. This work is made possible by EDF Energy, which has made available a total grant of £7.7 million over the next 5 years, following a special allowance granted by the industry regulator, Ofgem.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill (which received Royal Assent 30 March 2006) will implement key elements of the Government's rural strategy, published in July 2004. The Bill aims to establish flexible new structures, which will result in significant changes to the Unit's current working arrangements and relationships – largely due to the uniting of the Countryside Agency, English Nature, and the Rural Development Service into a new agency called Natural England. To ensure that the needs of the High Weald AONB are met by Natural England, the Unit has been meeting regularly with the RDS and the Countryside Agency. Natural England will be formally established on 1 October 2006.

European partnerships

Trans-national working is the key element of the *Lifescape –Your Landscape* project. Project staff have been working with Lifescape partner staff on developing joint actions, sharing expertise and best practice and using each other for constructive criticism and inspiration. It has been rewarding to see the interest and enthusiasm generated in our Lifescape partners by the AONB Unit's work, as presented at the bi-annual forums and in the project reports.

High Weald AONB Unit staff attended two Lifescape Forums: one in Brussels in June and the other at St Omer in December. In January, following the interest shown in the Unit's work, 16 colleagues from protected areas in Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands visited the High Weald. The visitors were particularly interested in the Historic Farmstead, Ancient Woodland and Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) projects and how the Unit worked with partners on a local and regional level, including the tourism industry and schools. Project staff also visited St Omer in March to work on the development of a joint education project with partners from Syndicat Mixte du Parc naturel régional des Caps et Marais d'Opale.

Management planning programme 2005/06

The first stakeholder survey of the Management Plan was reported to the Joint Advisory Committee in November. In terms of responses to the survey, over 23% of the organisations contacted completed a return. Of general organisations contacted, 30 out of 89 mailouts (33.7%) replied, and 16 of the 99 parish councils contacted replied (16%).

The responses show a wide variety of actions and contributions from a wide range of organisations, including Parish Councils, County Councils, the National Trust, RSPB, utility companies and voluntary/charity bodies. Some actions are very local and specific, while others are more strategic – aimed across an organisation's work. Given that the Management Plan is a very new plan, the variety and range of responses is encouraging.

The report shows how the Management Plan objectives can be used and can influence and support the activities of partner and stakeholder groups. This is especially true of local authorities – who, as public bodies, have a duty under section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) to have regard to the purposes of the AONB designation. The greater the involvement of all these bodies in supporting the Management Plan, the greater will be the benefit to the AONB – and the better will this nationally important landscape be conserved and enhanced.

To assist in promoting the Management Plan, a Members' working group has also been set up to develop further links between the Management Plan and the new Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) being prepared by local planning authorities. The hope is that a consistent approach to AONB matters can be applied across the LDFs affected by the High Weald designation.

Work has also begun on looking forward to the review of the Management Plan. Although adopted for a five year period, it is already over two years into that time and a new plan needs to be ready for adoption by local councils by 2009. As all AONB management plans are in the same position, the Countryside Agency has appointed consultants to look at the process required to review plans. The minimum requirement is for a study and report of changes to update the existing plan and simply roll it forward, but where there have been substantial changes or the Joint Advisory Committee consider it prudent, then a complete redraft and rewrite of the plan can be undertaken. This is necessarily a much bigger area of work involving Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and extensive consultation and survey. The Unit is awaiting the new guidance from the Countryside Agency and will be recommending the best way forward to the JAC next year.



Typical High Weald View



Goudhurst

Communications

Furthering awareness and understanding



Friends visit Hastings Country Park

During 2005/06, the Communications Team continued to promote and explain the High Weald AONB landscape and support the Initiatives in their interpretation and education activities. As 2006 marked the 50th anniversary of the first AONB designation, this provided a focus for promoting the 'family' of 50 AONBs through the year's events and publications.

Friends of The High Weald

By March 2006, Friends membership reached around 250. Recruitment continued to be through events such as the Heathfield Show – and via publications such as the Anvil. Friends received regular updates including the second and third editions of the Friends of the High Weald Newsletter, published in late summer and spring and distributed exclusively to Friends.

Friends Events were carefully designed to help Friends to understand – and care for – the High Weald landscape. Events organised for Friends during the year included a guided evening walk at Hastings Country Park in September, led by Head Ranger Steve Prosser. Topics covered were the geology of the High Weald and management of the Country Park. In March, the Landscape Archaeology Day for Friends proved very popular. Led by Dr Nicola Bannister at the National Trust's Scotney Castle Garden and Estate, the morning was devoted to an introduction to the subject, followed by an afternoon walk round the Estate to spot some archaeological clues to past uses of the land.

Unit events

Once again, the Unit was awarded first prize in its category for the High Weald AONB stand at the Heathfield Show on 28 May. The Show is one of the most important events in the Unit's calendar because not only does it raise the profile of the AONB, it also gives Unit staff the chance to meet and talk with local people, in particular landowners.

As well as delivering clear AONB messages, the aim was to demonstrate the wide variety of Unit projects. Visitors were greeted by a giant bee and ladybird who entertained and educated with a wildflower meadow game, whilst in the Land Management display and surgeries, Unit staff gave out information and advice. A giant map of the AONB – part of the Unit's Forest Ridge Heritage Lottery Fund consultation – generated a lot of interest as people debated their favourite place in the High Weald. A display and product tasting by the Wealden Farmers' Network and a Trug making demonstration emphasised the benefits of purchasing local products.

At Woodfair, held at Bentley in September, the Unit's woodland stand was visited by at least a thousand people over the three days. Six Hundred High Weald Habitat leaflets and 400 Anvils were given out. 'Shedman' took a total of 264 visitors for an imaginary walk through time, encouraging them to think about the High Weald landscape – how it has changed; what is special about it now and how it could change in the future – all the time focusing on the effect people have had on the landscape. Shedman's shed was also used as a raffle prize, with all proceeds donated to the High Weald landscape Trust.



Landscape Archaeology for Friends

Heathfield Show



Publications

80,000 copies of the *Anvil*, the annual guide to the AONB, were printed in February. 55,000 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 village and farm shops, visitor attractions, libraries and TICs. This, the 6th edition, focused on 'Homes and Villages' and was appropriately launched at a village shop: Burgess Stores in Goudhurst.

In March, the Unit published the second edition of *Matrix*, a newsletter aimed at landowners. 2,000 were printed and 1,000 were distributed via direct mail; the remainder via landowner events. Articles included: an Environmental Stewardship Update; a guide to Planning Policy Statement 9; Heathland and Meadows Projects' successes and an introduction to Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites.

Three Unit Briefings were compiled during the year and were circulated via email to JAC and OSG members, plus many other AONB Partners and Stakeholders.

In addition to Unit publications, the Interpretation Officer provided text, photographs and information for East Sussex County Council's *Paths To Prosperity* walk leaflets and *Cycle East Sussex* National Cycle Route 21 Route leaflets.

Media

During the year, the Unit issued the following 7 media releases: 'High Weald Landscape Trust launches Appeal to Save Wildflower Grasslands' (April); 'Sustaining the High Weald' (Heathfield Show – May); 'Meadows Get Pupils' Approval' (June); 'High Weald Gets European Visitors' (January); 'Pigs Return to The High Weald' (January); 'Seventh High Weald Anvil Launched' (February) and 'Uncovering a Wealth of Ancient Woodland in the Weald' (March). The Unit's stand at the Heathfield Show got a good write-up in the Courier newspaper, headed 'New champions promote a message of conservation.'

Kent and Sussex Today magazine's 'In The Country' feature on AONBs concluded, with the final two High Weald articles submitted being 'Bricks and Tiles' (June) and 'High Weald Heaths' (August).

In late December, Radio 4's *Open Country* visited the High Weald to look at woodlands and their uses over the centuries. High Weald AONB Interpretation Officer, Janina Holubecki, took them to a sunken drove near Wadhurst and talked about pigs and pannage. They also interviewed High Weald Local Producer Pete Marden, Trugmaker. The programme was broadcast on 28 January. An hour-long edition of BBC's *Countryfile* (26 March) was also dedicated largely to the High Weald and featured Bewl Water, Water-saving Gardening, Bedgebury Forest and Pinetum and Hops and Oasts.

As a valuable spin-off from the BBC radio and TV programmes featuring the High Weald, links were created to the AONB Website from all their individual programme pages on the BBC Website at www.bbc.co.uk



Trugmaker Pete Marden



Furthering awareness and understanding



Filming the pig droving sequence

In July, work began on a project to produce a digital film archive covering many aspects of the AONB's landscape and heritage, ready for use in future projects. Subjects included: landscape history – in particular the "Pig Droving Story"; wildflower seed harvesting; conservation grazing; woodland management and heathland restoration.

The resulting broadcast-quality digital 'footage' is suitable for a variety of uses – for example website animation, interactive DVD productions – or for TV broadcast. By giving media organisations ready-made footage, there is less risk of essential AONB landscape character and conservation messages being lost or contorted.

The project's potential became apparent when, as a direct result of the project's 'Anglo-Saxon pig droving' footage being made available to TV companies, the High Weald 'Droving Story' featured on both Meridian's *Hidden History* (1 February) and BBC 1's *Inside Out* (6 February).

Enabling partners to interpret the High Weald

On April 12, Susan Cross of *TellTale*, delivered a Basic Interpretation Skills training day for the Unit at Bewl Water Conference Centre. This course was aimed at Tourist Attraction and Site Managers in the eastern part of the High Weald AONB and was then repeated at the Ashdown Forest Centre on November 24 for Tourist Attraction and Site Managers in the western part of the High Weald. The Basic course covered topics such as 'What makes a good day out?' and 'What is Interpretation and where does it come from?' The day also included a site visit and critique exercise. A total of 31 participants attended the Basic course and it received excellent feedback. Most of the participants said they would be interested in further training.

Drawing from the participants of the two Basic courses, a more advanced Interpretation course – *Writing for Visitors* – was held at Ashdown Forest Llama Park on February 9. Again led by Susan Cross, this was attended by 16 participants. The feedback was very positive, with some participants being able to find an immediate use for their new skills.

Ashdown Forest Oral History project

With funding from Tomorrow's Heathland Heritage (via the Weald Heathland Initiative) the Unit's project to record the oral histories of past custodians of Ashdown Forest continued throughout the year. Volunteer interviewers were recruited from the local community. One of the volunteers, Pat Selby – a 'Friend of the High Weald' and experienced Oral Historian – had been of great help in setting up the project and, ultimately, carried out a large proportion of the interviews herself.

Eight volunteers attended the Oral History Training Day on Saturday 23 April at the Forest Row Community Centre. The trainer covered several topics including: Interview Skills; Summaries and Transcripts; Practice Interviews plus the importance of getting consent for future use of the material.

Percy Scott



The project used MiniDisc recorders to capture the interviews digitally. This was the most cost-effective, up-to-date method for getting high quality recordings that would be suitable for a number of uses, for example in future interpretation work on the Forest. The interviewees were asked about topics such as childhood, working life on the Forest, family life and wartime on the Forest. It is heartening to report that several interviewees said the same about certain happenings, which confirms that their testimony is correct. The interviews have yielded very good information on Commoners' dwellings and other details of Forest life not previously recorded.

By the end of the project (February) a total of nine interviews had been completed. Of these, four had been transcribed with the rest awaiting transcription. Due to the enthusiasm of some of the volunteers, the project is effectively ongoing.

A professional portrait photographer was contracted to photograph the Ashdown Forest Oral History interviewees. This resulted in a set of high quality portraits taken on a plate camera – together with digital images of each subject showing them in more natural surroundings. These images will be useful for future interpretation projects that utilise the Oral History recordings.

High Weald Image Library

Many more digital photographs were added to the image collection: particularly of villages, farm buildings, wild flowers and grasses, woodland archaeology, invasive species, the Tourism Cluster areas of Ashdown Forest, Winchelsea and Seven Wonders and the Weald Forest Ridge Project area.

Many photographic images were sourced for both internal and external use. Amongst other things, High Weald AONB Photos were provided for: ESCC's *Paths to Prosperity* walk leaflets; ESCC's *Cycle East Sussex* National Cycle Route 21 Route leaflets; KCC's Magazine *Around Kent*; The WARR Partnership's 2006 Calendar; NAAONB Publications; FWAG Publications; The Ashdown Forest Food Festival Brochure and the Seven Wonders of the Weald Website, banners and leaflet.

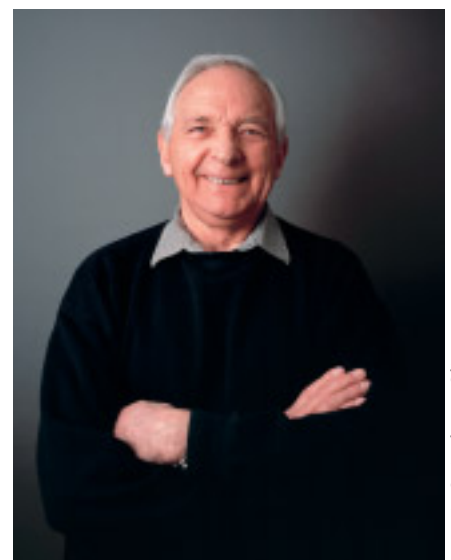
Website

The High Weald website has received an average of 1,000 hits per day since its creation in 2002, hence the decision to revamp it in 2005 and add new sections and enhancements. It now includes three new sub-pages accessed from the homepage: Landowners, Visitors and Partnerships. These pages include information aimed specifically at these groups, for example the Landowner page has direct links to the Weald Grazing Network including a list of sites. Downloadable forms for the Sustainable Development Fund have been added to the website and the Management Plan section has been completely reworked. Also added is a new High Weald Image Gallery, with over 50 images of all aspects of the AONB in categories ranging from General Views to Local Products. The images can be ordered by email and are free of charge to partners and organisations which require images to promote the High Weald.

Most of the interviewees had strong memories of Ashdown Forest being void of trees and scrub. Here, Roy Pipe gives memories of his views of the Forest:

"You could stand down at Nutley on the village green and you could look right across that valley, up to where Colin Wickham lives on the next brow or Henry Osborne lives now and there were not a tree in between, just grass and a bit of heather, a few gorse bushes, but no birch trees as there is now. You try and look across there now and you can't see anything, you can't see any of the houses. But you could look down and see all the houses, with their gardens with their hedges all around them, the chickens running round; but it's all different now."

Roy Pipe



Portrait © Anthony Oliver

Profile:

High Weald Primary Education Programme Profile

Purpose

To enable schools to recognise and value the special features of the High Weald AONB Landscape and to use the landscape as a cross-curricular resource. To use resources effectively in order that we can work in partnership with the optimum number of schools and their communities.

Partners

High Weald AONB Unit, Kent High Weald Project, individual schools, Ashdown Forest Tourism Forum, *Lifescape – Your Landscape*

Timescale

April 2005 – March 2007

High Weald Primary Education programme

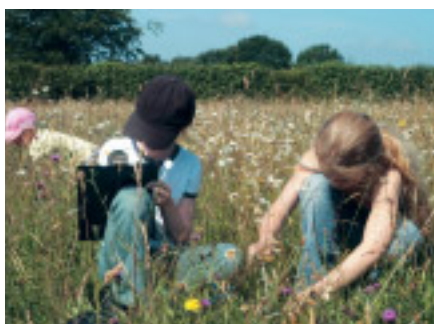
During 2005/06, a new High Weald education programme – *High Weald Heroes* – was developed. In partnership with the Kent High Weald Project, new and more sustainable ways of delivering key messages to schools, such as the meadow play, were trialed. As a result of this – and following consultations with School Headteachers – a strategic review of the opportunities to engage with schools was undertaken. It concluded that by engaging with schools in an active partnership and by providing them with knowledge and resources, the landscape could be successfully used as a cross-curricular resource – distinctive to the individual school and its setting. As a result, the High Weald Hero Project was devised. Within it, the range of activities includes: 1. A series of school assemblies; 2. High Weald view benches and display boards for the outside classroom; 3. High Weald CD of images for display; 4. Classroom sets of maps; 5. A programme of activities for a High Weald topic week; 5. High Weald after schools clubs; 6. Inset training; 7. High Weald Landscape Walks starting from the grounds of the individual schools; 8. Multi-media DVD on the history of the landscape; 9. *High Weald Hero Charter*. Some activities were trialed in 2005/06, but most will be delivered in 2006/07.

The Unit's focus during the year was on delivering the **High Weald View Bench and Display Board Project**. High Weald view seats and display boards made from sustainably managed local timber for the 'outside classroom' were installed at nine schools. Officers also delivered workshops on the landscape. The resulting work was displayed in the boards to help the wider school community learn more about the view they enjoy from the bench.

In partnership with the Kent High Weald Project, activities that enabled school children to understand the landscape, its management issues and action they could take were delivered under the **Green Action Programme** in the Borough of Tunbridge Wells.

In partnership with the Weald Meadow Initiative (WMI), an interactive meadow play, which could be used both out in the field and in school assemblies, was developed as part of the **Weald Meadows Events Programme**. The play engaged the children, made them think actively about conservation issues and stressed the importance of meadows as species rich, irreplaceable habitats. The WMI also ran three school field trips for Y3/4 children to wildflower meadows in Kent, East and West Sussex. The work was cross-curricular and included simple survey techniques.

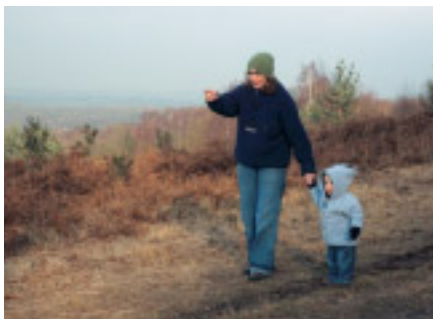
Achievements 2005/06 are listed in the table on the opposite page.



Project Name	Audience		Type of activities undertaken
Weald Meadow Initiative	Year 3/4	121 children 12 adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site visit to a species rich grassland Field work – Identification and survey skills Games with the food chain as the main learning objective Creative activities – Human camera and sculptures Play – ‘The Meadows Play’
High Weald School View Seats and Display Boards	Primary Schools	9 schools bench + display boards 1 school x display board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installation of bench and panel made from local sustainable wood Workshops on the history of man and land use in the High Weald landscape and High Weald habitats
Green Action Farming and Food	Y1/2 Y5/6	54 children 8 adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farm visit – focus on sheep and apple farming Classroom based activities: High Weald Shopping basket; identification of characteristics of the High Weald Landscape; drama based on the farm visit; two DVD chapters – The making of the High Weald and Farming in the High Weald; and a comparison of food miles from locally produced food with different foods from around the world
Green Action Energy for the Future	Y3/4 Y5/6	55 children 4 adults	<p>During the day the children participated in three workshops:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating electricity using wind, water and sun Making a mobile to demonstrate the mechanism of climate change – game to show that electricity can be made in many places i.e. the home as well from single source power stations Energy resources in the High Weald – how they have been used in the past
Green Action Tales From the Weald	Y3–Y10	11 children 6 adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit and tour of Bateman’s Two sessions led by local Kipling expert Puck of Pook’s Hill – High Weald Landscape Walk Visit to the site of the old iron forge, learning about its history and looking for iron slag
Green Action Water – Who needs it?	Y4/5	55 children 7 adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Morning field trip to Hargate Forest – focus on the water cycle, stream habitat, history of ponds and water in the High Weald Afternoon classroom based activities – reviewing the field trip through art and drama based activities
Green Action What a lot of rubbish	Y3 Y5	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom based lesson on the High Weald landscape Field trip to North Farm waste site – guided round by the Contracts Supervisor and shown the hill that is the full landfill site; where the rubbish is taken awaiting for transfer to Essex and the recycling facilities at the site Workshop with a local artist – creation of a High Weald landscape out of rubbish Quiz – Rubbish and the High Weald
Green action The Droving Story	Y2 Y7 (Special Needs)	35 children 5 A Level Students 6 adults Oakley adults?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field trip to a droving route to try to find out the answer to the question: “Why do some footpaths in this area have very steep sides and look like they are sunk into the ground?” Meeting ‘drovers’, hearing their story and helping them to look for and drive their pigs
Green Action Art and Craft in the High Weald	Y12/13	19 children 2 adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field Trip to Standen to show how the High Weald landscape was an inspiration for artists and designers. Afternoon art workshops Investigating the Ha Ha feature to show how it makes the garden look as of it flows into the landscape beyond

Initiatives

Developing strategic and practical solutions



Walking on Ashdown Forest

High Weald AONB tourism initiatives

Three tourism clusters – partnerships of businesses, local authorities and conservation and tourism organisations – have continued to flourish and develop in the High Weald AONB in 2005/06.

Tourism Cluster members were invited to attend the Unit's Interpretation Training events throughout the year. Those who attended found them very beneficial. In addition, an introduction to the *Green Tourism Business Scheme* – a green accreditation scheme – was held at Bewl Water on 9 November. Funded by Tourism South East, it was attended by 4 Tourism Advisors, 8 Tourism Attractions and 4 Accommodation Providers from the High Weald. They were given an introduction to the scheme and were presented with case studies and ideas about how to make their businesses more sustainable.

Ashdown Forest Tourism Cluster

The Ashdown Forest Tourism Forum has continued to work strategically to encourage and support activity that meets the Forum objectives. There were two key fundraising successes which have enabled action in the area: a grant from DEFRA to support development of the Ashdown Forest Business Association; plus grants from Wealden District Council and Tourism South East to match INTERREG IIIB funds and allow the recruitment of a dedicated Ashdown Forest Interpretation Officer.

Profile: **Ashdown Forest Tourism Cluster**

Purpose

To work in partnership with all interested parties to improve the management of visitors in and around Ashdown Forest and the surrounding area in a way that supports the sustainable development of tourism in the area, minimises adverse impacts, raises the understanding and profile of the Ashdown Forest and High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as a unique and valuable landscape and brings benefits to all concerned.

Partners

Wealden District Council, High Weald AONB Unit, East Sussex County Council, Ashdown Forest Conservators, Tourism South East, Ashdown Business Association representatives, Lifescape –Your Landscape

Timescale

Initiated 2003, ongoing

Achievements 2005/06

- Recruitment of Ashdown Forest Interpretation Officer, Matt Pitts, in January. This 15 month project follows on from the publication of the Ashdown Forest Interpretation Strategy in 2005.
- Ashdown Forest Food Festival 23–30 October, including an Anglo-French Farmers' Market held at Ashdown Forest Llama Park on 23 October. This event, attended by the AONB Unit, attracted over 5000 people and introduced local producers to many new customers.
- Production of four interpretation panels, to be installed in prominent car parks on the Forest.
- Creation of five short circular walks guides, aimed primarily at families – starting from prominent car parks on the Forest.
- Creation of new branding for Ashdown Forest, including the design of a new logo
- Development of new entrance signs for the Forest.
- Replacement bye-law signs, using illustrations to interpret key bye-laws to the general public.
- Production of a High Weald wooden prize plaque for the Horticultural Show.
- Operation of the Ashdown Explorer Bus – a one hour guided tour of the Forest.
- Coordination of Ashdown Forest Tourism Forum.

Winchelsea Tourism Cluster

Achievements 2005/06

- Production of an action plan
- Development of Seven 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

Seven Wonders of the Weald Tourism Cluster

Achievements 2005/06

- A new member welcomed (Finchcocks).
- Press campaign, resulting in coverage in Regional, National and targeted newspapers and magazines and on Radio and BBC TV.
- Delivery of 3 press days for over 100 journalists – resulting in 40 A4 page spreads and numerous other smaller articles.
- Representatives from 7 Tourist Information Centres attended awareness days.
- Promotion as guest speaker at Kent Tourism Alliance Conference.
- Logos appeared in the Heart of Kent Brochures, ensuring recognition of Cluster area.
- Photographs of member attractions specially commissioned for use in publications and on website.
- Publication of an updated area promotional leaflet and extensive distribution campaign for 170,000 leaflets.
- State of the art website designed to promote the area, provide a one stop shop for information and create a 'face' for the Seven Wonders.
- Production of five banners, reflecting the Seven Wonders Area – to be displayed at events and on rotation at the attractions.

Profile: Winchelsea Tourism 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



Artist's Reconstruction of Winchelsea's Strand Gate

Rationale

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 principles of sustainable tourism.

Profile: Seven Wonders Tourism Cluster

Partners

Bedgebury Pinetum, Lamberhurst Vineyard, Bewl Water, Marle Place Gardens, Scotney Castle Gardens, High Weald AONB Unit, Finchcocks, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Timescale

Initiated 2004, ongoing

Profile: Weald Ancient Woodland Survey

Purpose

To update and enhance the existing Ancient Woodland Inventory including woodlands under two hectares. The Weald Ancient Woodland survey was initially set up as a pilot project in Wealden District and has now been extended into Mid Sussex District. The project aims to map and document all ancient woodland and to provide a robust evidence base upon which to assign ancient woodland status.

Partners

English Nature, Forestry Commission, Wealden District Council, Mid Sussex District Council, Woodland Trust, East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, High Weald AONB Unit, Sussex Wildlife Trust and Sussex Biological Records Centre, Lifescape – Your Landscape

Timescale

Wealden District: start February 2004, completed March 2006.
Mid Sussex District: start October 2005, to be completed October 2006.

Weald Ancient Woodland Survey

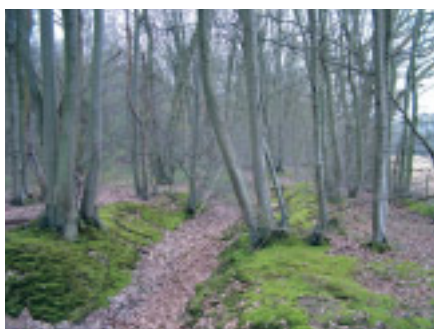
Achievements 2005/06

- Revision of the Ancient Woodland Inventory for Wealden District is now complete.
- The whole of the district's ancient woodland resource was re-examined, including woodlands under 2 hectares (ha) that had not been previously mapped.
- 1374 woodland parcels have been added to the Inventory amounting to approximately 2.5% of the total land area of the district. Overall, the total recorded ancient woodland in Wealden District has increased from 12% to 14% as a result of the revision.
- An actual loss of woodland area of approximately 250ha was recorded since the original Inventory publication in 1989.
- The ancient woodland survey methodology has now been extended into neighbouring Mid Sussex District and the project is being assisted by Matt Grose, who joined the Unit in August 2005.
- The initial base mapping phase of this project is now complete. In consultation with the project partners, targeted survey work has been carried out on a priority set of woodlands. The Mid Sussex project is due for completion in autumn 2006.
- To date, approximately 1300ha of previously unknown potential ancient woodland has been identified in Mid Sussex District for further investigation. This represents an increase in the percentage cover of ancient woodland in the district from 13% to 17%.
- The Wealden project was launched on 31 March 2006 at Wealden District Council's offices in Crowborough. Approximately 100 people attended the launch event. The project has helped to raise the profile of ancient woodland both nationally and within the District.
- The launch generated a significant amount of interest in the survey and work is due to start updating the Ancient Woodland Inventory for Tunbridge Wells Borough in autumn 2006

Rationale

The Weald Ancient Woodland Survey has been working to record all ancient woodland in areas of the High Weald. Digital map data is being used, backed up by historical records and – where possible – 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 are included for the first time. The methodologies developed for the Wealden pilot project have now been extended into neighbouring districts and it is hoped that they will help to inform a wider inventory update in the future.

Woodland boundary feature



Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) Project

Improving and maintaining the ecological condition of plantations on ancient woodland sites

Since December 2005, the High Weald AONB, the Woodland Trust and the Forestry Commission have jointly funded a national demonstration project to restore unmanaged conifer plantations on ancient woodland sites to broadleaved woodland. The project aims to demonstrate how proactive work by a dedicated officer can engage landowners who are currently not involved in woodland management under existing grants schemes.

Achievements 2005/06

- The profile of plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS) both nationally and within the AONB has been raised.
- A database of all the PAWS outside of grant schemes has been developed.
- The database currently includes 179 sites, totalling some 2,200 hectares (ha).
- Of the 179 woodland sites, 30 owners have been contacted.
- 20 woodland owners have responded positively.
- Condition assessments and detailed recommendations have been developed for 6 woodlands, totalling 80ha.

Rationale

Ancient woodland sites in the AONB cover around 22,000ha or approximately 15% of the total land area. The High Weald therefore contains almost 6.5% of the total ancient woodland area in England. Over a third of the High Weald's ancient woodland sites have been replanted with plantations of trees that would not naturally grow on these sites, particularly conifers. Many of these plantations have been abandoned. The resulting dense, unmanaged stands are of limited value for wildlife, yet many still contain the relics of the original semi-natural woodland.

The objective of the High Weald's PAWS (Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites) project is to protect and restore these areas. Project Officer Mike Chapman is working with woodland owners, and will provide expert advice on returning plantations on ancient woodland sites to their original, natural broadleaved tree cover. A gradual approach to transformation is preferred, whereby sensitive woodland plants can adjust slowly to changing light levels as the planted trees are removed. Other important actions are open space management to retain and enhance rides and glades within woods, mapping and protecting relic archaeological and ecological features and controlling invasive exotic species.

Profile:

Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites Project

Purpose

To provide specialist management advice to landowners, land managers and forestry contractors on the restoration of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites in the High Weald AONB.

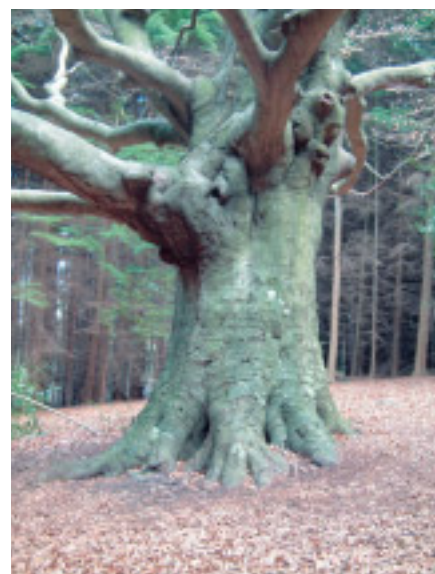
Partners

Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission, High Weald AONB Unit, Lifescape – Your Landscape.

Timescale

December 2005 to 31st March 2008

Ancient beech tree surrounded by western hemlock, Church Wood, Warbleton



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

ICountryside Agency, Weald Heathland Initiative, Weald Meadows Initiative

Timescale

Initiated spring 2002, ongoing

The Weald Grazing Network

During 2005/06, 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 2005/06

- In total, the database contains 876ha of grassland, 622ha of heathland, 143ha of wetland and 141ha of wood pasture.
- 73 site and 29 grazier records have been maintained on the grazing network database held at the High Weald AONB Unit. The network is growing steadily.
- 28 sites were grazed by members of the Weald Grazing Network during 2005.
- In August 2005, a Grazing for Conservation Event was held at Salisbury Plain MOD and members of the WGN were invited to attend.
- The WGN database was re-designed and 10 new contacts were added.
- 4 landowners were supported with SDF grant application specifically aimed at a grassland rescue package for small sites requiring infrastructure to enable them to be grazed. As a direct result of this work, 3 out of the 4 sites were grazed.

Rationale

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 of wildlife sites. It 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 since 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.

Hebridean sheep graze ancient grassland



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 the last year of its 3 year funding package.

Achievements 2005/06

Conserving and enhancing the wildflower grasslands resource

- 33 owners had an advisor session on management and 53 site visits – providing management advice and survey – were carried out.
- 21 harvesting operations on 14 unimproved sites resulted in 229kg of seed and a total income to meadow owners of £2,583.
- 1,000 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

- 45 people contacted the WMI for wildflower creation and enhancement advice.
- The un-cleaned weight of all harvested Weald Native Origin Seed (WNOS) was 572kg and the clean-out percentage (once the chaff and unwanted species were removed) was 45% for machine harvested seed and 72% for hand harvested seed. Therefore, the final dry, clean seed weight was 229kg of WNOS.
- 146kg of dry, cleaned and packaged Weald Native Origin Seed (WNOS) was replanted on 28 suitable sites, totalling 35.5ha of creation and enhancement. All landowners received technical advice and seed labelling to assist their sowing.
- Purchasers of WNOS included 13 Countryside Stewardship agreements landowners, 1 Parish Council, 1 consultant and 13 private individuals.
- The WMI purchased a seed storage cooler unit, for storing quantities of seed in optimum conditions over a number of years. This will help lengthen the period of time WNOS seed can be stored. The cooler unit comprises a freezer, an incubator and a relative humidity unit.

Wildflower grasslands research

- The single species wildflower and grass seed trials were extended to include 2 phases of sowing and comparative sowing methodologies and will run until June 2006 in partnership with Great Dixter and Andy Hughes. 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 & the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
- Contact was made with approximately 20 meadow owners to discuss use of their sites for various project briefs, to assist research into invertebrate assemblages in meadows. The WMI is working with invertebrate specialists, a student and landowners. Results concluded that unimproved and semi-improved grasslands sites hold a huge amount of fauna and the resulting 6 site records will be useful for grassland owners as information for the new Environmental Stewardship Schemes.

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 & Dennis Curry Charitable Trusts

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 & 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

Applying seed, Great Dixter trial



Initiatives

Developing strategic and practical solutions



Banner

Wildlife gardening event



Publications and promotional material

- 600 copies of *Matrix* (High Weald Land Management Newsletter) were sent to meadows owners in April.
- 1224 copies of the *Wildflower Grasslands in the Weald* leaflet were distributed at events and in response to information requests received by the Meadows Officer.
- 4394 hits were received on the meadow pages of www.highweald.org
- Articles and contributions to a number of publications including: 2x articles written for *Matrix* land management newsletter; Sussex Biodiversity Network article written on funding for Phase 4 of the WMI; A High Weald AONB JAC (Joint Advisory Committee) paper and presentation incorporating digital footage showing “A Year in the Life of High Weald Meadows” and the seed harvesting process; contributions to the *High Weald Anvil* and to Yvette Verner’s book on the social history of the English meadows.
- Three new high impact 2m x 1m banners depicting the wealth of wildlife in Weald Meadows: 1. Flora; 2. Animals and 3. Insects.
- Development of promotional material for meadows products that support ongoing management – such as *Weald Wildflower Hay* for pets.

Media

Meadows filming began with the aim of raising public awareness, as well as involving a number of landowners. This footage will look at all aspects of meadows through the year and will include management, seed harvesting, enhancement and creation diversification works and single species sowing.

Events

Nine public events, involving over 200 adults and 500 children were held. These events included: a programme of activities for Primary school classes (detailed in Education Programme). The WMI attended 2 family events to promote the area’s wildflower meadows, play the interactive game and hold Meadows surgeries. These were the Sussex Wildlife Trust’s *Plovers Meadows Family Day* at Blackboy’s near Uckfield in June and *Heathfield Agricultural Show*. In addition, a Meadows theme was used at *Weald Woodfair* as part of the history of the High Weald landscape. Finally, the WMI hosted a Christmas *Wildlife Gardening* event, including an illustrated talk on wildlife gardening plus stalls from wildlife organisations and local producers – with the emphasis on produce from wildflower meadows. Displays included wildflower meadows, local produce snacks and beef tasting from cattle grazed on wildflower meadows.

Seven specialist events targeted at landowners and advisors involved a further 128 people. These specialist events included: *Wildflower Grassland Enhancement and Creation for Landowners in Countryside Stewardship* in partnership with Mid Kent training (2 separate days in March and June covering both theory and practice); *Horse Pasture Management workshop*; *Spider and Reptile Monitoring and Recording* (2 events); *Farm Environmental Plan and Environmental Stewardship* joint training for High Weald AONB Unit, English Nature and Rural Development Service officers; and, in its 7th year, the 2-day *Wildflower Grassland Management and Creation* course for land management advisors (June).

Rationale

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. It 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.



Pot germination, Great Dixter

Weald Heathland Initiative (WHI)

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

The Weald Heathland Initiative, one of the Unit's long standing projects finished on 4th February 2006. The 5-year project was successful in achieving its aims –

- To encourage over 1 million local residents and visitors to celebrate the heathland heritage and understand and appreciate its wildlife, historical, cultural and social importance.
- To restore 1500 hectares (ha) of heathland mosaic to achieve suitable habitat for 20 key biodiversity species as detailed in the Sussex and Kent biodiversity action plans, and to contribute to national and European biodiversity targets
- To put in place infrastructure works (fencing, fire breaks, access tracks and paths, water supply, cattle grids etc.) on 1500 hectares of heathland to encourage long-term sustainable management.
- To link areas of heathland across the Weald to create a significant and extensive landscape feature and wildlife habitat.
- To identify sustainable solutions to heathland management including the development of heathland products.

Over 5 years the WHI partners achieved:

- A contribution by volunteers of 6408 days of heathland management work.
- Control of invasive vegetation including 356ha of scrub and 879ha of bracken.
- The restoration of 48 heathland ponds.
- Construction of 10,109 metres of fencing to enable management through grazing.

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

Funding partners

Heritage Lottery Fund, English Nature, RSPB, West Sussex County Council, East Sussex County Council and the Countryside Agency

Additional partners

Hastings Borough Council, Forestry Commission, DEFRA and landowners

Timescale

2001–2006

Initiatives

Developing strategic and practical solutions



Heathland restoration,
St. Leonards



Cutting Bracken

- Purchase of eight major items of capital equipment to enable heathland maintenance during and after the project.
- Successful re-creation of 149 hectares of heathland from former arable land and forestry plantation – meeting 2.5 % of the National Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) target for the re-creation of 6000ha of heath by 2010 and 53 % of the Sussex heathland re-creation target of 280ha by 2005.
- The establishment of the Weald Grazing Network, enabling the introduction of grazing to 10 heathland sites and 708ha of heathland being grazed overall.
- Direct benefits to a range of Biodiversity Action Plan species including: nightjar, hobby, woodlark, Dartford warbler and silver-studded blue butterfly.
- Better understanding by the public of heathlands and their management through the involvement of 7384 local residents and visitors in 107 community events, walks, talks and celebrations and the Ashdown Forest Oral History project.
- Better understanding by site managers and policy makers of heathlands and their management through 13 expert workshops, 4 regional training events, a three day national conference and 3 machinery demonstrations.
- The creation and installation of interpretive signs and the production of leaflets, newsletters, web pages and a mobile exhibition.
- Visitor management through surfacing and repair of 40 car parks, ride management and footpath cutting and the development of a new 9-mile heathland access trail.
- A raised profile for heath wood pastures and open woodlands on acid soils as a result of commissioning and publishing research and arrived at a new vision for the Forest Ridges of the High Weald as a matrix of intricately mixed, dynamic and shifting heaths, heath woods and ancient woodlands
- GIS layers of the historical extents of the Weald heathland habitat and of the surviving heathland fragments enabling map production to demonstrate heathland decline over time.
- The injection of over £1 million into the local economy through the employment of local contractors.

The WHI was also involved in advising and encouraging heathland restoration on a further 32 sites that it did not fund directly – another 2900ha. This demonstrated the added value of having proactive project officers.



Rationale

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 2933ha 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.

SE AONBs Woodlands Programme

This successful programme concluded in March 2006 with a series of regional launches in June – planned to promote achievements and signpost future direction of the work. The Programme Officer, Patrick Mckernan (originally seconded from English Nature) has moved to the Forestry Commission to continue to develop support for ancient woodlands with an ongoing remit to address protected area woodland issues. Final year targets were met, including:

An analysis of accessible greenspace in the South East: SE AONBs Woodland Programme carried out a major analysis of accessible natural greenspace across the Government Office South East region, launching the results in June 2006. Natural greenspace is an informal area where people can wander freely and feel welcome. These areas are vital components of the Government's sustainable communities and healthy lifestyle agendas.

Outputs from the study include:

- Analysis of provision and quality
- Identifying areas of deficiency and opportunities for new provision to meet national standards
- Impacts of housing development and new growth areas
- Identifying population pressure and possible mitigation

Some key statistics from the findings:

- 41% of greenspace in the region is in AONBs even though AONBs account for only 32% of the region.
- 57% of all greenspace in the region is woodland.
- The Forestry Commission is the single biggest provider on greenspace in the region.
- 80% of people in the region do not have access to greenspace within 300m i.e. within easy walking distance.

Outputs of the study are available by administrative area to inform local development frameworks (LDFs).

Cultural value of woodlands: Woodlands in the High Weald have a wealth of archaeological and cultural features, often overlooked and under surveyed. Valuable features include earth banks, stubs, saw pits and the remains of the iron and charcoal industries. The project has compiled information about these features and will make this available to woodland owners, managers, visitors and public bodies.

Support for woodfuel: The project provided information on supply to woodfuel initiatives throughout the South East including support for a feasibility study and demonstration wood fuel installation at Hoathly Hill, a housing co-operative based in the High Weald.

Demonstration projects: The project was instrumental in setting up – and supporting – two further partnership projects to conserve the woodlands of the High Weald – The Weald Ancient Woodland Survey (see page 14) and the Plantation on Ancient Woodlands Sites (PAWs) Project (see page 15).

Profile:

SE AONBs Sustainable Woodlands

Purpose

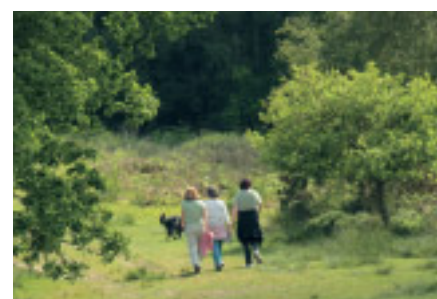
To identify important woodlands and their management needs at a landscape scale and promote understanding to influence strategic policy and the targeting of resources

Partners

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

Timescale

February 2003 – March 2006



Rationale

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. The SE AONBs Sustainable Woodlands Programme comprised data gathering, mapping and analysis to underpin and take forward AONB management plan objectives aimed at enhancing the ecological functioning of this woodland at a landscape scale.



Robertsbridge High Street

Research 2005/06

Sustainable Settlements in the High Weald

The major project to assess the sustainability characteristics of rural settlements in the High Weald has progressed throughout the year. Land Use Consultants were appointed to undertake the project and have run a doorstep survey of residents in three case study areas: Wadhurst, Sedlescombe and Barcombe. These surveys were followed up by face to face consultation meetings with invited representatives of the communities from each case study area, as well as local planning authority representatives. The final report has been through a number of revisions and additional consultation and is now available from the Unit or on our website.

EDF Energy Underground Cabling scheme

EDF Energy is working with environmental groups from the South East to remove overhead power lines in some of the most beautiful landscapes in the region. The energy firm will invest £7.7million over the next 5 years in projects to install underground cables in place of overhead power lines in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The scheme has a Steering Group, which includes members from the Countryside Agency and the High Weald AONB Unit. The Unit will be responsible for recommending schemes to be put forward to EDF Energy so that the company can draw up detailed plans and costs for individual projects to remove overhead power lines.

The scheme allows for a number of small scale schemes and applies to low voltage, 11kV (telegraph pole mounted), 33kV and 132kV (small pylons) lines only. It is not intended to replace national grid, high voltage power pylons. The expectation is that the scheme will focus on the smaller telegraph pole mounted 11kV lines, which are the most cost effective to underground.

This is a major investment by the power company (EDF) to secure environmental benefits for AONBs, and is welcomed. The funding may allow for 2-3 small scale schemes per year to replace telegraph pole mounted lines in very sensitive areas. Suggestions for schemes should be put forward to the High Weald AONB Unit, who will assess schemes to be put forward to the regional steering group.

Farmstead near Burwash



Historic Farmsteads Project

Consultants undertaking an analysis of the character of historic farmsteads in the High Weald have discovered that the local farmstead layout style is far more widespread than previously thought. Dispersed or unplanned farmsteads were generally built without creating a formal yard and the house and barn (often the only early buildings in the group) were set close together. The work has identified a need for guidance on the impact of development on the whole farmstead group – not just individual buildings – if the particular nature of High Weald farmsteads and their crucial contribution to the overall character of this protected landscape is to be maintained.

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

A programme of farm visits will take place over summer 2006, leading to the preparation of technical guidance and tool kits to assist owners of farm buildings, architects and planning authorities to understand the relationship between the buildings and the surrounding landscape – and identify parameters for change that will allow continued use of these buildings without lasting damage to the much valued character of the High Weald.

Planning consultations

Consultations relating to the new Local Development Frameworks are increasing as more authorities begin producing their first documents under the new system. Mid Sussex held a further consultation event regarding the East Grinstead urban extension, where the issue of a relief road would severely affect the AONB to the south of East Grinstead. Crawley, Horsham and Mid Sussex have all produced further documents and Sevenoaks held a one day consultation event regarding their issues and options.

The Unit attended the following:

- Sevenoaks LDF workshop, issues and options stage
- Cuckmere Haven flood management plan consultation
- Hastings LDF Core Strategy workshop
- A21 Baldslow link road, Highways Agency consultation
- SE Plan part 2, consultation on new homes in the South East
- East Grinstead Area Action Plan, consultation
- Kent Minerals and Waste local development framework
- Local distinctiveness study, West Sussex CC

The Unit was also invited to speak to Wealden District Council development control officers, and gave a presentation on the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its relationship to planning applications and the development control process.

The Unit responded to a number of minor planning application consultations, and made fuller responses to proposals to alter the Rother Local Plan to develop a new school, community facilities and housing on the edge of Etchingham. The Unit also commented on proposals to develop phase 2 of the Woodland Enterprise Centre, and on an application to extend workings at the Freshfield Lane Brickworks.

A number of major research reports that have consequences for the High Weald have been received including: guidance on rural issues in the planning system; a study by LUC of the impacts of rural housing in Wales (particularly as relates to local occupancy conditions); a report on the economic effects of AONBs in Wales; and Wind Power in the UK, which has a section on the impacts of wind turbines on protected landscapes. These are all large reports and further details are available on request from the Unit.



Rationale

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.

Resources

Securing financial support to deliver the High Weald AONB business strategy

Duration on Student Dashboard: 1995-			
PC spend	19.1		
Person spend	3.4		
Total spend	22.5		
PC spend		0.4	
Community Agency		0.4	
Primary Commission		2.0	
Local Authority Network		0.0	
Other Networks (Outside Dashboard)		4.0	0.0
Primary Commission			
PC spend	20.1		
Person spend	0.0		
Total spend	20.1		
PC spend		0.0	
Community Agency		0.0	
PC Network/Enabling Fund/Other		0.0	
Local Authority Network		0.0	
Other		0.0	0.0
Local Authority Network			
PC spend	10.0		
Person spend	0.0		
Total spend	10.0		
PC spend		0.0	
Local Authority Network		0.0	
English Network		0.0	
Primary Commission		0.0	
Other		0.0	0.0
Local Authority Network			
PC spend	10.0		
Person spend	0.0		
Total spend	10.0		
PC spend		0.0	
Community Agency		0.0	
PC Network/Enabling Fund/Other		0.0	
English Network		0.0	
Primary Commission		0.0	
Other		0.0	0.0
Primary Commission			
PC spend	10.0		
Person spend	0.0		
Total spend	10.0		
PC spend		0.0	
Community Agency		0.0	
PC Network/Enabling Fund/Other		0.0	
English Network		0.0	
Primary Commission		0.0	
Other		0.0	0.0
Primary Commission			
PC spend	10.0		
Person spend	0.0		
Total spend	10.0		
PC spend		0.0	
Community Agency		0.0	
PC Network/Enabling Fund/Other		0.0	
English Network		0.0	
Primary Commission		0.0	
Other		0.0	0.0
Primary Commission			
PC spend	10.0		
Person spend	0.0		
Total spend	10.0		
PC spend		0.0	
Community Agency		0.0	
PC Network/Enabling Fund/Other		0.0	
English Network		0.0	
Primary Commission		0.0	
Other		0.0	0.0
Primary Commission			
PC spend	10.0		
Person spend	0.0		
Total spend	10.0		
PC spend		0.0	
Community Agency		0.0	
PC Network/Enabling Fund/Other		0.0	
English Network		0.0	
Primary Commission		0.0	
Other		0.0	0.0
Primary Commission			
PC spend	10.0		
Person spend	0.0		
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PC spend		0.0	
Community Agency		0.0	
PC Network/Enabling Fund/Other		0.0	
English Network		0.0	
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Primary Commission			
PC spend	10.0		
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Community Agency		0.0	
PC Network/Enabling Fund/Other		0.0	
English Network		0.0	
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Other		0.0	0.0
Primary Commission			
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English Network		0.0	
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Primary Commission			
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Community Agency		0.0	
PC Network/Enabling Fund/Other		0.0	
English Network		0.0	
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Primary Commission			
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Primary Commission			
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Primary Commission			
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English Network		0.0	
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Primary Commission			
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Community Agency		0.0	
PC Network/Enabling Fund/Other		0.0	
English Network		0.0	
Primary Commission		0.0	
Other		0.0	0.0
Primary Commission			
PC spend	10.0		
Person spend	0.0		
Total spend	10.0		
PC spend		0.0	
Community Agency		0.0	
PC Network/Enabling Fund/Other		0.0	
English Network		0.0	
Primary Commission		0.0	
Other		0.0	0.0
Primary Commission			
PC spend	10.0		
Person spend	0.0		
Total spend	<		

Securing funds

The year was a busy one for those involved in financial management, with 3 large projects requiring a team input to enable appropriate forecasting, monitoring and claims systems to be put in place. A significant amount of time was spent on:

1. Setting up financial systems to enable management of the £270,000 grant secured in 2004/2005 from INTERREG IIIB under the *Lifescape – Your Landscape* programme.
2. Developing systems to enable collation and management of the financial information needed to underpin the £4 million Landscape Partnership Scheme being developed as a result of securing Heritage Lottery funds in 2004/2005 for a Partnership Scheme planning phase.
3. Setting up financial and administrative systems to manage the High Weald Sustainable Development Fund – an unforeseen but welcome grant of £100,000 from DEFRA via the Countryside Agency, confirmed in May 2005.



High Weald *Lifescape Your Landscape* Programme

The profile of the project is detailed under **Partnerships**. The overall programme has received an INTERREG IIB grant of £1,900,000 – equating to 48% of total costs of approximately £4,000,000. Of this grant, approximately £270,000 is available to the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee to deliver two *Lifescape – Your Landscape* programmes within the High Weald AONB, one focusing on achieving the public understanding and enjoyment objectives of the High Weald AONB management plan 2004 (The Ashdown Forest Interpretation Project, the High Weald Interpretation Project and Weald Forest Ridge Access and Audience Strategy) and the other on achieving the conserving and enhancing objectives of the plan (Weald Ancient Woodlands Project, Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites Project and Historic Farmsteads Project).

As a consequence of the number of projects being supported by the programme, a significant amount of staff time has been spent on developing project management, administration and finance systems that allow INTERREG IIB reporting requirements to be met. The project requires bi-annual financial claims and activity reports and attendance at two forum and steering group meetings, in addition to exchanges focused on technical matters.



Securing financial support to deliver the High Weald AONB business strategy

The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)

The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) is a new initiative made available from the Countryside Agency and DEFRA (Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs). All AONBs have a Sustainable Development Fund to support projects that deliver their management plans and bring sustainable benefits to these protected areas.

The High Weald Sustainable Development Fund is administered by the High Weald SDF Grants Panel on behalf of the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee, which received £100,000 in 2005/06 to fund local projects that bring social, environmental and economic benefits to the High Weald and help to achieve a more sustainable way of life

It is anticipated that the High Weald SDF will have a further £80,000 in 2006/07 to support more projects that care for the High Weald AONB landscape both now and in the future. Further details on SDF are available on our website www.highweald.org

Achievements July 2005 – March 2006

- Established a High Weald SDF application process and grant panel, promoted the scheme and distributed all the funding within 8 months.
- In its first year, the High Weald SDF was over-subscribed. We received 40 enquiries and 34 applications requesting approximately £165,000 in funding
- The High Weald SDF awarded over £96,000 in grants to a wide range of organisations – helping the delivery of projects worth £468,785.
- The 28 projects funded included: coppice worker apprentices; fencing traditional hay meadows for conservation grazing; community events; supporting a farmers' market to encourage people to buy local produce; and working with schools to plant mini orchards or install locally made wooden view seats.
- Attended a 'meet the funder' day on 21st January 2006, attended by 8 different funding bodies and 38 different organisations and community groups. The day covered how to apply for funds and how to plan a project – and gave local people the opportunity to talk directly to funders about their ideas.



Making a hazel hurdle

Farmers' market



Profile:

Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme

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

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.

Ashdown Forest maiden



Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme

Twenty six organisations are involved in the Weald Forest Ridge Partnership, including local authorities, statutory agencies, charities and voluntary organisations.

Achievements

- The first Forest Ridge Partner Forum was held on 24 October 2005 and 58 organisations attended. The day consisted of presentations by key partners and workshops – and gave partners a chance to meet face to face and discuss projects.
- Over 60 projects, covering habitat restoration, public events, training and archaeological research have been developed by the Partnership.
- Extension of the project planning phase by 6 months with agreement from HLF advisors and High Weald JAC. The extension has allowed the development of a more comprehensive bid.
- Research into the distinctive features of the Forest Ridge has been completed. This work identified a historic connection between the four medieval forests on the Forest Ridge and Drayton's famous 1611 poem *Polyolbion*, which describes the importance of these four medieval forests and depicts each forest as a maiden. Leading on from this research, linocut artwork was commissioned to illustrate each maiden's distinctive character in a clearer style.

Rationale

The High Weald AONB Unit on behalf of the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) has continued to develop a large bid, known as the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme, to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). This significant bid, if successful will secure £2 million in additional resources to conserve the Forest Ridge, a sandstone ridge that runs east-west between Horsham and Tunbridge Wells and covers a large part of High Weald AONB.

The Forest Ridge is a special part of the High Weald AONB because of its historic medieval forests, unique sandrock outcrops and proximity to urban settlements – which make it one of the most important recreational resources in not just the High Weald, but the South East.

During 2005/06, over 20 organisations formed the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership and have developed projects to safeguard the Forest Ridge's natural beauty in line with High Weald Management Plan objectives.

High Weald Landscape Trust

With Unit support, the High Weald Landscape Trust continued to develop in 2005/06, producing a business plan and recruiting an additional trustee. Its most significant achievement was a successful bid to the Tubney Trust for a grant for delivery of Phase IV of the Weald Meadows Initiative. The Trustees felt that the project was extremely valuable and should be a focus for its fundraising efforts.

In addition to fundraising, the Trust took on a lobbying role and achieved an agreement from Kent County Council to tackle a number of overgrown roadside verges. This project represents another key area of interest for the High Weald Landscape Trust and is a great example of how the Trust can use awareness raising of the landscape and natural area to achieve action.

Achievements 2005/06

- Recruitment of an additional trustee in July 2005 – a former JAC member and Chair, Angela Chapman – bringing the total number of active members to 4.
- Production of a business plan.
- £121,380 grant offer from the Tubney Trust to support phase IV of the Weald Meadows Initiative.
- £3,000 grant secured from the Will's Trust for a Primary School Conservation Award to a High Weald School taking the most innovative approach to conservation of water or energy within their structures and grounds.
- £1,441 achieved through donations from Friends, Shedman and members of the public at events since the Trust's creation.
- Service Level Agreement between the High Weald Landscape Trust and High Weald AONB Unit for delivery of Weald Meadows Initiative phase IV agreed.
- Kent County Council agreement to increase management on a number of overgrown roadside verges.

AONB Unit Staff Resource

Gerry Sherwin, AONB Business Manager, was on maternity leave from August to January. The absence highlighted the need to fill the vacant element of the AONB Director post. Jason Lavender joined the Unit in September, job sharing with Sally Marsh, with both officers working 3 days a week. In December Mike Chapman joined the Unit to lead on the Plantations on Ancient Woodlands (PAWS) Project. In January Matthew Pitts was appointed to lead on the Ashdown Forest Interpretation Project. Matthew Grose (habitat survey work and GIS analysis) and Simon Turk (data entry and GIS mapping) joined the Unit in August to support the Unit's developing research and policy programme.

As the Weald Heathland Initiative began to draw to an end, inevitably staff departures were a result. One of the Project Officers, Richard Allum, left at the end of November to join the Ashdown Forest Conservators.

Patrick McKernan's secondment to the South East AONB Woodland Officer post came to an end in March 2006, with his return to English Nature.



Betony

Orchids growing by the A229 near Cranbrook



New staff

Jason Lavender,
Mike Chapman, Matthew Pitts,
Matthew Grose, Simon Turk

Financial summary

1st April 2005 to 31st March 2006



Core activity

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

Expenditure	
Staff costs	194,800
Accommodation/Office Equipment	38,500
Communication costs	36,300
Partnership costs	11,300
ESCC support costs	24,500
Partnership Enabling Fund	61,100
Total	366,500

Contributions	
Countryside Agency	229,100
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	46,100
Total	369,200
(Surplus)	(2,700)

Office costs included rent, rates, utility bills, office equipment including IT purchases, stationery, photocopying, postage and telephones.

Communication costs included publication production and distribution costs (primarily for the High Weald Anvil and annual review), event attendance and other miscellaneous promotional expenses.

ESCC support costs included charges for IT, personnel and finance services.

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 2005-2006. In addition to core expenditure of £366,500 a further £886,000 was spent on project activity

1st April 2005 to 31st March 2006

Project activity

The following projects were developed and managed by the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee:

Outturn 2005/06

	Exp £000	Income £000	Net £000
Self Funding Projects			
	1000	1000	1000

Sustainable Development Fund			
JAC spend	99.8		
Partner spend	221.4		
Total spend	321.3		
Countryside Agency /DEFRA		-99.8	
JAC Partnership Enabling Fund 06/07		0	
Local Partnership		-221.4	
Other		0.0	0.0

Ashdown Interpretation Project			
JAC spend	18.0		
Partner spend	0.0		
Total spend	18.0		
INTERREG		-7.3	
Countryside Agency		-0.8	
Local Authority Partners		0.0	
SDF fund		-8.8	
Other (primarily Ashdown Forest Conservators)		-1.1	0.0

High Weald Interpretation Programme including KHWP activity			
JAC spend	92.1		
Partner spend	0.0		
Total spend	92.1		
INTERREG		-38.3	
Countryside Agency		-38.6	
JAC Partnership Enabling Fund 05/06 & 06/07		-5.4	
Sustainable Development Fund		-7.5	
Local Authority Partners		0.0	
Other		-2.3	0.0

Weald Forest Ridge Partnership Scheme Development (INTERREG funded)			
JAC spend	25.0		
Partner spend	0.0		
Total spend	25.0		
INTERREG		-10.1	
Heritage Lottery Fund		-5.7	
Countryside Agency		-8.6	
JAC Partnership Enabling Fund 06/07		-0.5	
Other			0.0

Financial summary

1st April 2005 to 31st March 2006

Plantation on Ancient Woodlands (PAWS)			
JAC spend	13.3		
Partner spend	0.0		
Total spend	13.3		
INTERREG		-5.4	
Countryside Agency		0.0	
Forestry Commission		-2.9	
Local Authority Partners		0.0	
Other (primarily SEAONB Woodlands)		-5.0	0.0

Historic Farmsteads			
JAC spend	28.5		
Partner spend	0.0		
Total spend	28.5		
INTERREG		-11.6	
Countryside Agency		-10	
JAC Partnership Enabling Fund 05/06		-6	
Local Authority Partners		0	
Other		-1	0.0

Weald Ancient Woodland Project			
JAC spend	37.5		
Partner spend	0.0		
Total spend	37.5		
INTERREG		-15.3	
Local Authority contributions		-14.0	
English Nature		-5.0	
Forestry Commission		-3.2	
Other		0.0	0.0

Weald Meadows Initiative *			
JAC spend	65.9		
Partner spend	4.6		
Total spend	70.5		
INTERREG			
Countryside Agency		0.0	
JAC Partnership Enabling Fund 05/06		0.0	
English Nature			
Heritage Lottery Fund		-22.3	
Leader+		-22.7	
DEFRA – Rural Enterprise Scheme		-13.9	
Rausing Trust		0.0	
Tubney Trust		0.0	
Local Partnership		-4.6	
Other		-7.0	0.0

Financial summary

1st April 2005 to 31st March 2006

Weald Heathland Initiative *			
JAC spend	165.4		
Partner spend	121.5		
Total spend	286.9		
Heritage Lottery Fund		-131.4	
English Nature			
Other		-155.5	0.0

Weald Forest Ridge Partnership Scheme Development (non INTERREG funded)			
JAC spend	23.5		
Partner spend	0.0		
Total spend	23.5		
Countryside Agency		0.0	
Partnership Enabling Fund (JAC) 06/07		-10.0	
Local Authority Partners		0.0	
Heritage Lottery Fund		-12.2	
In kind support			
Other		-1.3	0.0

South East AONB Forest Programme			
JAC spend			
Total spend	47.0		
Countryside Agency	47.0	-39.9	
Forestry Commission		-7.1	0.0

South East AONB Regional Co-ordinator			
JAC spend			
Partner spend	0.0		
Total spend			
Countryside Agency	0.0	0.0	0.0
JAC Partnership Enabling Fund 05/06& 06/07			
Other AONBs			

SDF funds allocated to Unit projects	-16.3	16.3	0.0
Spend/contributions from Partnership Project Enabling Fund Used	-21.9	21.9	0.0
Spend/contributions from Partnership Project Enabling Fund C/fwd	-39.2	39.2	0.0

TOTAL	886.0	-886.0	0.0
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High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Working together to care for a nationally valued landscape

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 R Ashby, Country Land and
Business Association

Farming

Mr R Froggatt, National Farmers
Union

Clerk to the High Weald AONB JAC

Penny Murray

High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Membership of the Joint Advisory Committee and Steering Group Officers

As at 31 March 2006

Chair – Councillor Mrs P Stockell (until July 2005) **Councillor Mrs S Tidy**

Vice-chair – Councillor Mrs S Tidy (until July 2005) **Councillor B Acraman**

OSG Chair – David Phillips

Countryside Agency

Adam Wallace

Nicola Davies

East Sussex County Council

Councillor R. Tidy

Simon Hickmott

West Sussex County Council

Councillor Dr A Chapman (until summer 2005) **Councillor B Acraman**

Jackie Lewis

Kent County Council

Councillor Mrs P Stockell

Dr John Williams (until summer 2005) **Judith Feline**

Surrey County Council

Councillor K Rimington (from summer 2005)

Katherine Harrison (until summer 2005) **Mike Dawson**

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 (until winter 2005) **Councillor M Lock**

Dick Harman (until summer 2005) **Tim Cookson; Murray Davidson**

Mid Sussex District Council

Councillor C Hersey

Ian Burton; Ms Alma Howell

Horsham District Council

Councillor Mrs E Kitchen

Louise Gibbons (until winter 2005) **Catherine Howe**

Crawley Borough Council

No member representative (until early 2006) **Councillor Mrs C Denman**

No OSG representative

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Councillor R Bullock (until summer 2005) **Councillor E Thomas**

Gill Harris

Sevenoaks District Council

Councillor Ms J Davison

Maggie Williams (until summer 2005) **Caroline Lingham**

Ashford Borough Council

Councillor R Taylor

Rebecca Stott (until autumn 2005) **Daniel Carter**

Tonbridge & Malling District Council

No member representative

Phil Linskey

Tandridge District Council

Councillor M Sydney

Paul Newdick

JAC 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.

High Weald AONB Unit

Advising on the management of a nationally valued landscape



Contact

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

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 2004 and in accordance with a 3 year business strategy agreed by the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee.

Staff (As at 31st March 2006)

Core

Director (job share) – Sally Marsh (0.6 FTE)/ Jason Lavender (0.6FTE from Sept 2005)
Business Manager – Gerry Sherwin (maternity leave August 2005 – January 2006)
Interpretation Officer – Janina Holubecki
GIS and Habitat Mapping Officer – Sally Westaway (0.4FTE)
Administrator (job share) – Kerry Baldwin (0.5 FTE)/John Hill (0.8 FTE)
Policy and Research Officer – Andrew Shaw

Project

Weald Heathland Officers, Weald Heathland Initiative – Richard Allum (until December 2005) and Caroline FitzGerald
Weald Meadows Officer, Weald Meadows Initiative – Dawn Brickwood
GIS and Habitat Mapping Officer, Wealden Ancient Woodlands Project – Sally Westaway (0.6 FTE)
Project Officer, INTERREG and Education – Gemma Swallow
HLF Project Development Officer – Janet Whitman
GIS Access and Habitat Mapping Officer – Matt Grose (from August 2005)
GIS Access and Habitat Mapping Officer – Simon Turk (from August 2005)
Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites Officer – Mike Chapman (from Dec 2005)
Ashdown Forest Interpretation Officer – Matt Pitts (from January 2006)
SEAONB Woodlands Officer, SEAONB Woodlands Project – Patrick McKernan (working on behalf of the High Weald, Kent Downs and Surrey Hills AONBs)