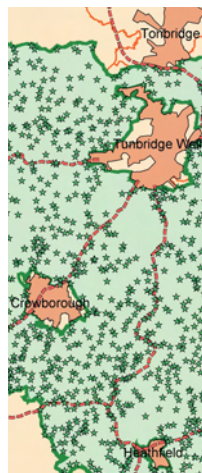


High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Annual Review 2006-2007



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, Tonbridge and Malling and Crawley Borough Councils; Natural England and organisations representing farming, forestry, community, business and recreation interests.

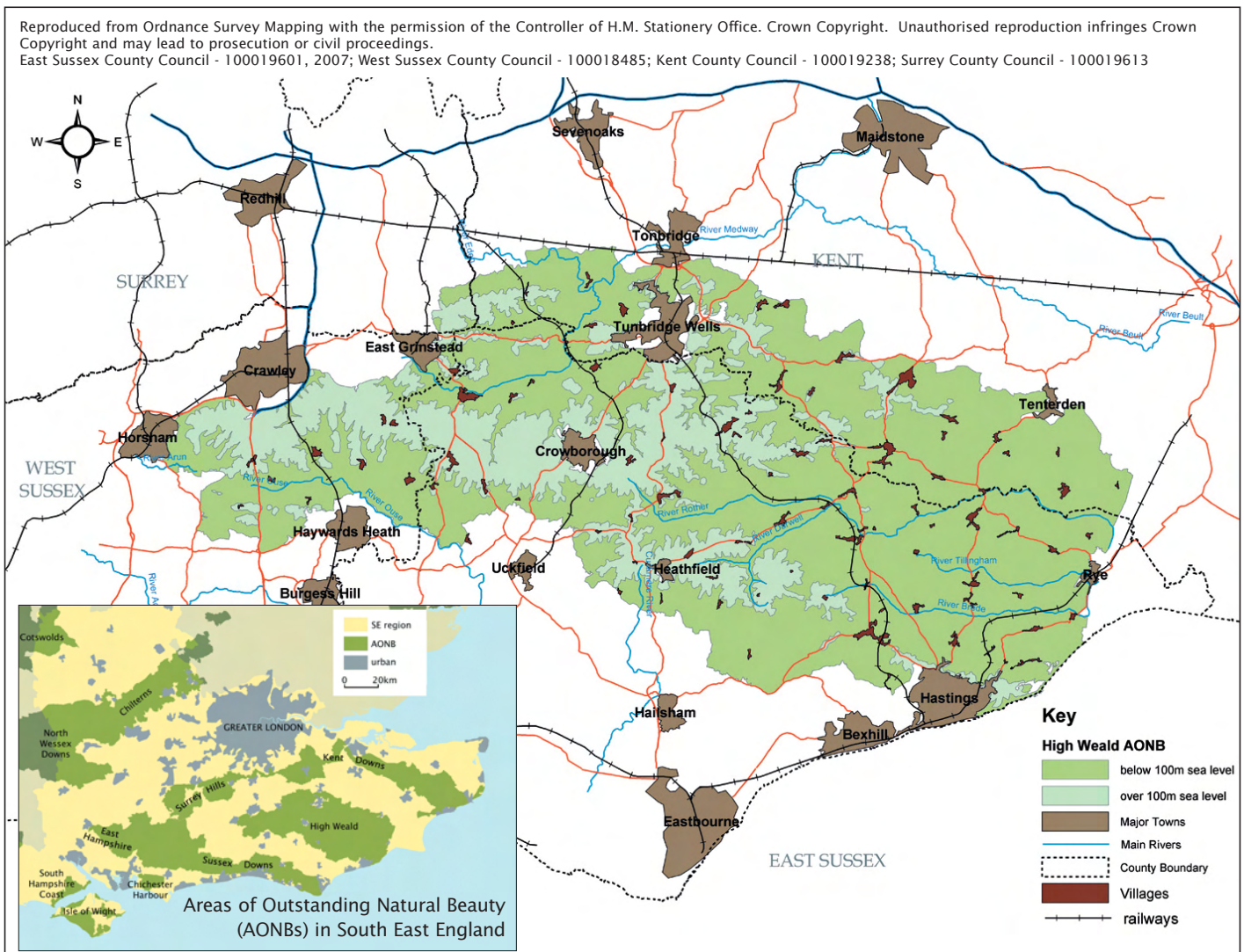
The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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 it one of the most populated protected landscapes 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 landscapes in the country.



A message from the Chairman

It is my pleasure to introduce the Annual Review for 2006-2007. This was a year in which climate change finally established itself as an issue that we all have to deal with urgently. For the High Weald and all the landscapes that we value, change is inevitable – both through a more unpredictable climate and through the changes that we will need to introduce to reduce our carbon emissions. Renewable energy technologies, including wind turbines and wood boilers, will increasingly be an essential component of any sustainable rural community.

Our Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) has assisted several carbon-reducing projects within the High Weald. It has trained thirty local foresters and wood suppliers in woodfuel production and contributed towards wood processing machinery to produce locally sourced logs, fence posts and woodchips for fuel. It has also supported a new Farmers' Market in Horsmonden to help to reduce food miles and funded elements of the Netherfield Centre's new sustainable classroom.

Looking back at the past reminds us that change is constant in our landscape. But climate change is the next big change that will affect the High Weald and we must be ready in all our programmes to respond to its challenges. The High Weald Primary Education Programme 'High Weald Heroes' is already showing hundreds of schoolchildren across the AONB how to take care of our landscape – including how to research, calculate and reduce their carbon footprints. Perhaps our role is to guide change in the future so that we can meet the needs of the next generation without losing our landscape's ancient features and the natural beauty that we enjoy and value.

In March, our work on historic farmsteads with English Heritage culminated in a seminar hosted by Tunbridge Wells in the wonderful setting of Finchcocks. How we conserve and find new uses for these valuable buildings – and retain them in the future – is a vital aspect of the work of the AONB Unit that can also help to build sustainable local communities.

I cannot write about the past year without extending a huge thank you to all of our partners for their continued support and inspiration. In particular, our European INTERREG partners from France, Holland, Belgium and Germany who share our enthusiasm for the wonderful landscapes around us – and who share our passion for understanding them better and learning from each other how to celebrate them and care for them.

Finally, what could be a better end to the year than confirmation of Heritage Lottery funding for the Weald Forest Ridge project, a £3.2million scheme to restore the ancient forests and ensure that we can all enjoy them. We look forward to working with our partners to make this new scheme a reality and bring positive change to this part of the High Weald.



Councillor Mrs Sylvia Tidy
Chairman of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)
July 2007



Councillor Mrs Sylvia Tidy

Effective structures and partnerships

Locally, regionally, nationally and across Europe



Bluebells – under threat from Climate Change



Weirwood Reservoir in drought conditions



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 much the same vein as last year, the JAC has continued to consider national and regional issues as a result of the launch of the new integrated agency Natural England; the increasing general interest in and concern with climate change; and the continued need to provide an input to the Local Development Frameworks.

Natural England was launched in October 2006 and the first few months have seen them follow what has been termed a 'transition programme' to ensure the complete integration into one agency of the three founding organisations. Natural England's Executive Board have stated that they aspire to be an evidence-based organisation with a regional and local focus to their relationship with the English AONBs, all of which will be set within a nationally determined framework. Whilst there have been some inevitable and minor difficulties following their launch, the High Weald JAC, by working closely with Natural England generally – and the Weald and Pevensy team specifically – feel confident that the organisation's movement towards the Executive Board's aspirations are progressing well. The High Weald JAC has continued to promote to Natural England a consistent case for the work the JAC undertakes and also to influence and inform Natural England of the special qualities of Protected Landscapes and the High Weald in particular.

The High Weald JAC has not failed to notice throughout the year the extensive media coverage and widespread political emphasis on global climate change and its predicted impacts on many different aspects of our lives. And, although the implications of climate change for the High Weald remain far from palpable, what is clear is that the Protected Landscape sector, in common with every sector of society, is being urged to consider how it will adapt to an uncertain future of unprecedented change. The High Weald JAC has this year started work to build its expertise on, and refine its approach to, climate change with the aim of sharing this knowledge and developing a consensus on protected landscape policy responses. In addition, the JAC has begun to consider the role Protected Landscapes may have in response to Peak Oil (declining fossil fuel availability) to ensure continued economic, social and environmental stability.

The land-use planning system has undergone a series of reforms requiring all district and borough councils to prepare new Local Development Frameworks, which have over the last year included the development of new core strategies. Believing that a consistent approach to planning issues for the entire AONB is essential, the JAC has continued to work with the relevant local authorities to ensure that a common policy relating to the AONB is adopted across all authorities and all plans at this critical time.

Local Partnerships

The High Weald Unit continued throughout the year to work with 28 organisations – ranging from local authorities and statutory agencies to community groups and charities – in the preparation of an ambitious and significant bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, a bid which if successful will allow continued partnership working to help the area to thrive economically, socially, and culturally; while ensuring that it retains its beauty, biodiversity and landscape heritage.

Our work with local partners continued this year with the continuation and expansion of a number of partnership projects. These included:

- The Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) Project
- The Ashdown Forest Interpretation Project
- The Weald Ancient Woodland Survey, which was expanded into Mid Sussex and Tunbridge Wells
- The Historic Farmsteads Research Project
- High Weald Heroes.

During the last year, the High Weald Unit has worked closely with many local organisations, businesses, interest groups, charitable trusts, and individuals in the administration and awarding of grants from the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF). The Unit has also provided in-depth advice and specialist guidance to projects seeking SDF grants and has assisted them with project reporting.

The High Weald Unit has continued to work closely with – and provide support to – the High Weald Landscape Trust during the last year. The High Weald Landscape Trust have followed last year's great achievement in securing a significant grant from the Tubney Trust for the Weald Meadows Initiative by securing funds for a High Weald Schools' Award; recruiting an additional Trustee; and by developing a website to raise awareness of the organisation and the landscape and its special qualities.

National and Regional Partnerships

The Directors of the South East Protected Landscapes 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.

This work has been considerably enhanced by the recruitment, in September 2006, of Laura Garrod, the South East Protected Landscapes' Regional Lead Officer. By working in close consultation with the SE AONBs, Laura has already been effective influencing both regional and national policy to ensure others recognise and value the important contribution to the economic, social and environmental well being of the region made by these nationally important landscapes. The Regional Lead Officer has also contributed to the work of the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) and Association of National Park Authorities (ANPA).



SDF-funded PAWS project



Gregory Barker MP visits a High Weald farm

"The High Weald AONB Unit do some excellent work maintaining the beautiful landscapes in our area. The staff are tremendously enthusiastic about the unique qualities of the High Weald and I am impressed by their expertise and hard work."

Gregory Barker
MP for Battle and Bexhill

Effective structures and partnerships

Locally, regionally, nationally and across Europe



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 Joint Advisory Committee, Sussex Downs Conservation Board, English Nature; Netherlands – Provincie Noord-Brabant, Gemeente Boxtel, Innovatieplatform Duurzame Meerij, 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

The High Weald Unit has continued to work jointly with Natural England, the other South East AONBs and the Anglian AONBs to 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 High Weald AONB Unit and the Chilterns Conservation Board wished to see Mike Taylor, the Chief Executive of the National Association for AONBs, formally honoured and recognised for his unfailing commitment over many years to protected landscapes. Mike has consistently brought foresight and imagination to this sector, ensured governmental institution recognition of the work of AONB Units and, importantly, lobbied for and secured major policy changes to enhance and strengthen the status of protected landscapes. The High Weald and the Chilterns put together the nomination papers, which were subsequently submitted by the National Association of AONBs to Defra for the Queen's Birthday Honours 2007. Mike Taylor was, as a result, awarded an OBE in recognition of his work.

Gregory Barker, the Battle and Bexhill MP and a Shadow Environment Minister, has shown considerable enthusiasm for, and interest in, the High Weald AONB and the work of the AONB Unit. Gregory has worked closely with the Unit to help raise the profile of protected landscapes generally and to promote the interests of the High Weald AONB specifically.

European partnerships

As the Lifescape your Landscape project has progressed, Partner 'Pole' meetings have increasingly focused on joint working and looking at the added value of working together. Time has been spent devising an effective mechanism for communicating the final project results to a wider audience. The construction of the Lifescape "toolbox" was the primary focus of the October Pole 1 meeting, hosted by the Unit at The Salomons' Centre and the November Pole 3 meeting, hosted by the Flemish Land Agency in the Merode Forest.

At the Merode meeting, Officers also discussed the various social and economic studies on the role of the forest and its links to local communities and economy; made visits to see work in action and attended a colloquium of the Flemish Land Agency. Also in October, Unit Director Sally Marsh attended the Steering Group meeting in Brussels.

In December, four members of the Unit attended the Partner Forum in Oisterwijk, the Netherlands. The theme for this forum was "Exploring the Rural-Urban Interface" and the full programme included workshops, presentations and field trips based on this theme.

Two Unit staff attended the March Pole 1 meeting hosted by Parc naturel régional des Caps et Marais d'Opale. The agenda focused on the role of education in protected landscapes and the use of volunteers.

Management plan review

The Management Plan was adopted in 2004, but is due to be reviewed by 2009 (i.e. every five years). During the autumn, Natural England produced additional guidance and advice on undertaking management plan reviews. This advice advocated a range of possible responses to a management plan review, from meeting the requirements of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (to review and report any amendments), through to a full redrafting and preparation of a virtually new plan.

Given the structure and approach of the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2004, Officers recommended that only a basic review of the plan should be undertaken. This approach was endorsed by the Management Board and Joint Advisory Committee, which felt that the plan was working well and only needed a general revision process at this stage.

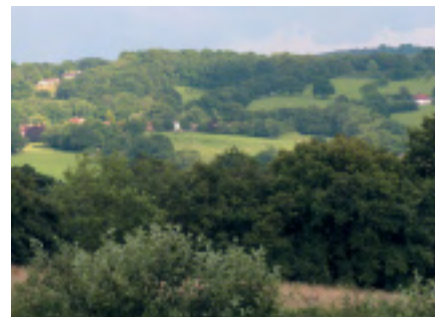
The Plan was originally designed and 'future proofed' in such a way that the five critical components of Natural Beauty and the public understanding and enjoyment sections are essentially fixed for the 20-year life of the Plan. The Unit is actively involved in researching and understanding these features and, until the research is complete and we fully understand the features, it would be premature to review their role and status. Any review will therefore be a 'maintenance' review to update the background information that supports the central key components of the plan. It is also recognised that the plan has only been in place for 2-3 years and that not enough data is available to inform a thorough review at this time.

Advice is also pending on the need and scope of any Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) that may be required to accompany the plan. Initially, it was thought that an SEA would be required, but it has since been confirmed that a revision of the High Weald plan as proposed would not include an SEA. What is required for an SEA and what procedures should be followed are still being decided and the Unit is awaiting advice from Natural England in this respect.

The review process is expected to take 18 months to 2 years to complete, with a revised plan and report on changes being available by early 2009.

Rationale

The Management Plan is a statutory requirement under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and part of the core duties of the High Weald AONB Unit. The High Weald plan details the primary components of Natural Beauty and forms the basis of the Unit's direction in conserving and enhancing Natural Beauty. The plan also underpins the Unit's research programme, which explicitly aims to understand the components of Natural Beauty, and provide guidance on the care and management of them.



Typical High Weald View



High Weald sunken routeway



Burwash High Street

Communications

Furthering awareness and understanding



Friends' Archaeology Course

Total number of Friends
as at 31 March 2007 **247**

New members in 2006/07 **26**

Value of Friends' donations
to the High Weald Landscape
Trust in 2006/07 **£800**
(of this, £500 from
one large donation)

During 2006/07, the Communications Team continued to promote and explain the High Weald landscape, both directly through Unit projects and by enabling partners to interpret the special qualities of the AONB.

Friends of The High Weald

The first Landscape Archaeology Day for Friends – held in March at the National Trust's Scotney Castle Garden and Estate – proved so popular that we had to run the event again on 25 April. Afterwards, the Friends were invited to join the volunteer group undertaking an archaeological survey of Bedgebury.

Friends received 2 newsletters – October and March. The March newsletter highlighted several local exhibitions and other events taking place in the AONB: supporting High Weald Tourist Attractions being one of the many ways in which Friends can help to care for the AONB. Friends continued to receive requests for help with the Unit's work in caring for the AONB. For example, three Friends were recruited to join the Sustainable Development Fund Panel via the newsletter and a request for feedback on the High Weald Anvil resulted in one Friend writing a short article for the 2007 edition.

Unit events

Despite the bad weather and extremely poor ground conditions, the Unit's stand at the Heathfield show (27 May) received many visitors and won 2nd prize in the Trade Stand category. The High Weald Quiz, displayed on a giant plasma TV screen, proved very popular. Many people said it made them realise how beautiful the area was and that there were many High Weald places they did not know very well or had not yet visited.

The Weald Meadows Initiative's *Weald Wildflower Hay*, designed for small pet use and packaged in attractively designed re-usable jute bags, was launched at the show and was served up in the restaurant "Le Meadow aux Quat' Saisons" by a giant rabbit waitress.

The Unit also promoted the gourmet hay on their stand at Sussex Wildlife's event at Plover's Meadow (11 June), which also included a poster version of the quiz and a High Weald information display.

The Unit had a successful and busy three days at Woodfair (15-17 September), the event pulling in record crowds. As well as the general aim of raising awareness of the High Weald, its special features and the actions people can take to preserve it, the displays and activities were also designed to promote particular Unit projects. A number of new Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites owner contacts were established; the Weald Meadows Initiative was able to use the event to assess interest in the wildflower meadow hay (the hay sold out completely, with people keen to find out where they could buy refills) and the Ashdown Forest Interpretation Project promoted the 2006 Food Festival and the new series of circular walks. The *High Weald Hero* Education Programme and School of the Year Award were promoted through a display plus the showing of the newly-developed education resource, the 'My High Weald' DVD.

Heathfield Show



Furthering awareness and understanding

In September, the Unit produced a large pop-up banner designed specifically for public and schools' events. This shows a map of the AONB and highlights its special features. The banner received its first airing at Woodfair.

Publications

In May, 10,000 copies of the new introductory leaflet about the AONB were distributed via visitor attractions and events. The A5 format leaflet explains how our landscape has been formed and folds out to an A2 centre map, showing the area's special features. The emphasis is on human interaction with the natural environment and it includes a section on 'Caring for the High Weald'.

Aimed at AONB residents and visitors, **Anvil 2007**, with the theme of 'Enjoying the High Weald' was published in March with a print run of 95,000. Using National Letterbox Marketing, 67,000 were distributed with free papers to households within the AONB. A further 11,000 were distributed directly to local tourist attractions plus village and farm shops. This, the eighth edition, featured articles on the changing image of the High Weald; Country Parks and Five Historical Characters in search of enjoyment. It also included an Extraterrestrial's Guide to the High Weald.

Aimed specifically at Land Managers, **Matrix 2007** (March) focused on Climate Change and its effect on the AONB Landscape, as well as giving updates on Unit initiatives and reporting on the success of the High Weald Sustainable Development Fund. Of a print run of 2,000, the majority were mailed directly to AONB landowners and land management advisors, plus AONB Partners.

All High Weald AONB publications are available to download as PDFs from the AONB website's Library page.

Media

During the year, the Unit issued the following 6 media releases: **"Golden Anniversary – Golden Opportunities"** – to promote the 50th Anniversary of the first AONB designation (May); **"Grants enhance the High Weald landscape"** – highlighting 2005 SDF successes (May); **"A brighter future for our woodlands"** – SE AONB partnerships and Forestry Commission Accord signing (June); **"Apply now for South Downs and High Weald sustainability grants"** – jointly, with the SDJC (June); **"Outstandingly beautiful – and sustainable"** – SDF Success in SE AONBs, jointly with Natural England (February) and **"Wrap Artist in the High Weald"** – Tunbridge Wells Museum Exhibition (March).

Enabling partners to interpret the High Weald

Throughout the year, the Unit continued to run communication training workshops with TellTale. Building upon the previous 'Basic Interpretation Skills' and 'Writing for Visitors' workshops, these were again offered free to businesses and partners involved in communicating about the High Weald's attractions and special qualities to visitors.



New AONB Banner



Communications

Furthering awareness and understanding



Working with Designers

On 24 May, the **'Is Our Interpretation Working?'** evaluation workshop looked at how we can justify the time and money spent on interpretation. Twenty-one trainees attended: site and attraction managers, tourism officers and people involved in community tourism projects. Hosts Wakehurst Place provided an excellent setting for studying visitors and TellTale trainer Susan Cross made extensive use of their site and interpretation during the day.

Course feedback was excellent. Comments included: *"Some very useful pointers to evaluating interpretation – avoiding dangers of wasting resources on unnecessary materials/displays."* *"The exercise of watching the public is something I will certainly practice in our museum."* *"Very interesting, well organised."* *"Susan was brilliant as always."*

On 23 November, the **'Working with Designers'** workshop was delivered by TellTale trainers Peter Phillipson and Omar Sattaur at the Ashdown Forest Llama Park. Twenty trainees attended: staff from National Trust properties, Forestry Commission sites, Country Parks and other countryside attractions; Museum Officers plus AONB Unit staff. Peter and Omar drew on many years experience of working with designers in print and in exhibitions.

Once again, feedback from delegates was extremely positive. Comments included: *"I will now be able to get more out of our designers and understand their needs and point of view better."* *"I now have a clearer understanding of how to approach a designer, the importance of a brief and how to manage production of interpretive material."* *"Excellent day. Very good presentation. Good interactive, informal approach."*



Beware the Jabberwock

On 8 March, the **'Beware the Jabberwock – Writing for your Readers'** workshop was delivered by Susan Cross at the Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell. There were 15 participants – 9 of whom were from Natural England's Weald and Pevensey Team. In contrast to previous courses, this workshop was targeted at participants who had not elected to be in a communications role, but increasingly found themselves having to use communications skills.

Feedback was excellent. When asked whether the workshop would be of benefit in their work, many participants said they would find an immediate use for this helpful course. Participants made the following comments: *"I am now more confident in tackling new subjects and in evaluating a finished article's success."* *"I will now think about the message and how to structure it."* *"I now have better skills for writing for a non-technical audience."*

Wondrous Rocks and Valleys



Like the other courses before it, this course should result in more effective communication about the landscape of the High Weald AONB.

Two museum exhibitions about the High Weald opened in March. Museum Officers had worked in partnership with the AONB Unit to produce the exhibitions and both exhibitions benefited from images from the Unit's Image Library and advice from Unit staff. Officers and JAC Members attended the Openings.

Furthering awareness and understanding

Wondrous Rocks and Valleys at Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery (3 March – 28 April) was the very first major exhibition about the High Weald AONB. It explored the area through historical and contemporary objects and images. In particular, it aimed to illustrate how the underlying fabric of the High Weald has influenced its wildlife and people. As a focal point, the Museum commissioned a special installation by local artist Nicholette Goff. The High Weald Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) contributed 50% towards the cost of this artwork. The art installation took the form of a huge 'artist's palette' – filled with the many colours and textures of High Weald substances, including some of today's local products – bricks, timber, charcoal, cheese, hops, fruit, wildflower seeds and hay. The AONB Unit also provided an audio-visual display for the exhibition, featuring the six 'My High Weald' characters.

Nearly ten thousand people visited the exhibition. Of a total of 116 comments received, 100 were positive.

Ashdown Animals at East Grinstead Museum (3 March – 3 June) explored the relationship between animals and people on Ashdown Forest, from Norman times to the present day. These animals include mythical and fictional creatures such as Winnie the Pooh and his friends.

High Weald Image Library

Images continued to be added to the Unit's Image Library throughout the year. These included a set of images by Anne-Katrin Purkiss – an outcome of the Action in Rural Sussex SDF Project *Sussex Producers in the Landscape*.

To help explain and promote the special qualities of the subtle High Weald landscape, the Unit commissioned some very high quality aerial footage of its characteristic features. A helicopter with gyroscopic camera mount was used – the technology employed for the latest David Attenborough programmes. A valuable addition to the Unit's Digital Media Archive, the resulting hour of aerial footage shows the High Weald's small, irregular fields and ridge top villages particularly well – and there are some stunning shots of some of our castles and other important buildings. The aerial footage will be used in the production of a 20-minute DVD introducing the High Weald's history and character and will no doubt be of immense value in other AONB communications projects.

Website

The High Weald website continued to receive an average of 1,000 hits per day – a constant figure since its creation in 2002. An average of 3,000 downloads of AONB documents were made each month during the year. The top downloads consistently each month were the High Weald Anvil, followed by various Habitat Leaflets and the general AONB leaflet. An online education resource was started with the addition of **My High Weald**: six video clips of past High Weald residents telling their stories. A page was also added for the High Weald Landscape Trust, including a link to their own website.



High Weald Materials installation

Photo by Anne-Katrin Purkiss



Furthering awareness and understanding

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, INTERREG IIIB *Lifescape – Your Landscape*

Timescale

April 2005 – March 2008

High Weald Primary Education programme

Throughout the year, the High Weald Primary Education Programme 'High Weald Heroes' was rolled out across the High Weald and its surrounding urban areas. An invitation to join the partnership was sent to all schools within this area, with 15 schools responding. These 15 schools received their partnership plaque in a special assembly and have committed to delivering the 'child friendly' version of the High Weald charter – The High Weald Hero Actions.

A significant part of the High Weald Hero programme is the continuing development of high quality and relevant education resources, which schools can then draw upon. During the year, Unit staff, in partnership with The Kent High Weald Project, have created:

- High Weald Hero assembly
- High Weald Landscape workshop – classroom based
- High Weald Landscape awareness – staff training
- Classroom map pack
- 'My High Weald' DVD.

'My High Weald' is a collection of short stories told by characters from the past, with an introduction from a present day narrator. Each character tells their story within the context of the High Weald landscape and compares what they would have known with the present landscape. To further illustrate the stories, footage of the High Weald, historical re-enactments and artist illustrations are used. The periods of history were chosen to tell particular key stories in the history of the High Weald landscape and to fit in with popular school topics such as the Romans and the Tudors. The six stories created so far are available on a DVD and on the High Weald website and were filmed using actors from the Archway Theatre Company.

The classroom map pack consists of 10 sets of 3 laminated images at A3 size. These images are: an aerial photograph of the school's location within its surrounding landscape; map versions of exactly the same area in a modern Ordnance Survey Map and the hand drawn Surveyor's Map (C.1800). Schools also receive a map showing known Roman sites in the High Weald and another one highlighting known Droving routes.

Officer time has also been given to support the High Weald Landscape Trust in developing and promoting their Award Scheme – High Weald Hero School of the Year. Seven schools entered for the 2007 award, to be judged in July.

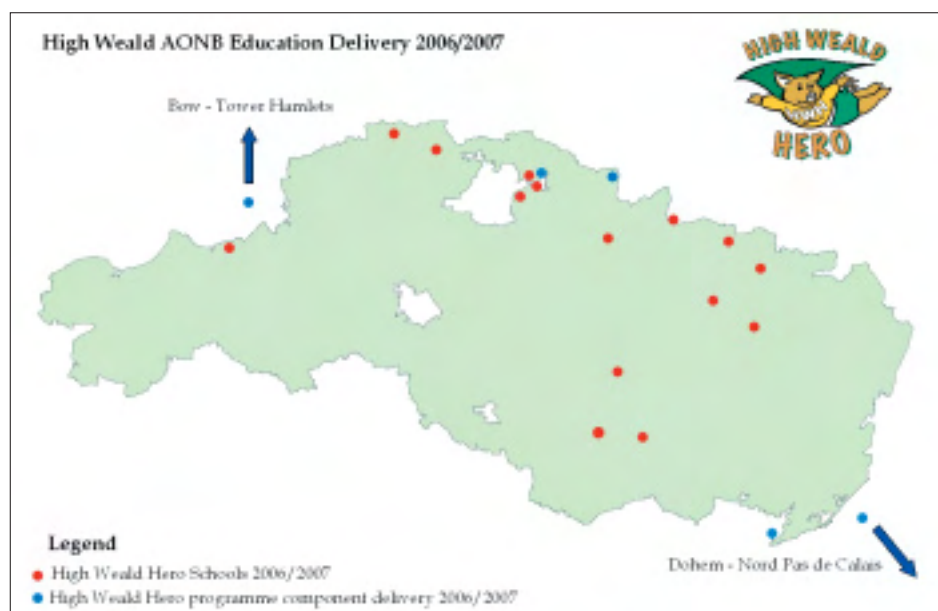
The lessons learnt in the development and delivery of the High Weald Hero Programme have been shared through meetings with South East AONBs and the Unit's partners in the INTERREG IIIB *Lifescape your Landscape* programme.

My High Weald character Maximillius



Furthering awareness and understanding

High Weald Hero Programme Component	Output
High Weald Hero School Partnership Assembly	15 schools received a High Weald Hero Partnership Plaque. 2,572 children received a High Weald General Leaflet and High Weald Hero bookmark.
Story of The High Weald Landscape – classroom based workshop	20 classes in 8 schools (396 children) took part in the High Weald landscape workshop. Each workshop was themed to reflect the landscape character around each specific school and any particular topic the class were studying, such as The Tudors or Habitats. The Power Point presentations were left with the school as an education resource.
High Weald Landscape Awareness – staff training	Project Officers were invited to 6 schools' staff meetings (52 staff members) to develop staff knowledge and understanding of The High Weald landscape and raise awareness of the support and education resources available to schools through The High Weald Hero partnership.
The Meadows Play	The Meadows Play was performed in 5 schools (758 children).
Assembly – Droving Theme	This was piloted in 1 school (113 children).
Accessing Local Green Space	5 schools (190 children) took part in Officer-led field trips. The trips are now set up for schools without further need for officer support.
Advisory Visit – Developing the potential of the outside classroom	3 schools received advice on projects specific to their school.
School High Weald Map Sets	10 schools received class sets of maps.



Bow Schoolchildren visit the AONB



Initiatives

Developing strategic and practical solutions



Ashdown Forest welcome sign

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, INTERREG IIIB *Lifescape Your Landscape*.

Timescale

Initiated 2003, ongoing.

High Weald AONB tourism initiatives

Three tourism clusters – partnerships of businesses, local authorities and conservation and tourism organisations – continued to flourish and develop in the High Weald AONB in 2006/07. Some Tourism Cluster members attended the Unit's *Is Our Interpretation Working?* and *Working with Designers* training workshops and found them very beneficial.

Ashdown Forest Tourism Cluster

Achievements 2006/07

This year, the Ashdown Forest Interpretation Officer has delivered the following work on behalf of the Ashdown Visitor Management Partnership.

- 5 short circular walk leaflets were produced. These walks, aimed at families, start from popular car parks spread across the Forest.
- Installation of a new welcome sign at the Ashdown Forest Centre car park.
- 3 short DVD films were produced introducing Ashdown Forest, its history and its management – for use in the Ashdown Forest Centre.
- Creation of an information sheet on the Ashdown Forest Visitor Management Partnership's work.
- 1 marketing workshop for local tourism and hospitality businesses. This successful event provided 20 local businesses with the skills to interpret, promote and market Ashdown Forest and the wider High Weald landscape to visitors.
- The second Ashdown Forest Food Festival took place between 22-26 October 2006. The festival included an Anglo-French Farmers' Market, Champagne tasting and cookery demonstrations.
- Preparatory work for the *Ashdown Forest: Past & Present* exhibition in May 2007. This exhibition will use old and new images from 3 local artists to reveal Ashdown Forest's special qualities to residents.
- Contributing to the development of a sustainable marketing strategy and action plan for the Ashdown Forest Tourism Association.
- On-going coordination of Ashdown Forest Visitor Management Partnership, which met 4 times in 2006/07.

Winchelsea Tourism Cluster

Achievements 2006/07

The work of the Winchelsea tourism cluster this year was primarily focused on the e-guide project.

- Continued work on the creation of an innovative e-Guide to historic Winchelsea, involving the production of reconstructions of historic sites, the drafting of a matching commentary and its technical implementation on a PDA (Personal Digital Assistant or palmtop computer). The project is being funded by the Local Heritage Initiative, INTERREG and Defra, with assistance from Hidden Britain, the High Weald AONB Unit and Action in Rural Sussex.

A pilot version is ready for testing and full public launch is due in autumn 2007.

- Production of 5,000 accompanying leaflets, detailing the guide and offering a non-electronic version of the tour.

Developing strategic and practical solutions

- Production of 1,000 postcard books showing five of the archaeological reconstructions used in the e-guide.
- Production of a Winchelsea map-board, showing key features and points of interest around the town.
- Production of four viewpoint boards, interpreting the landscape at each of the best views from Winchelsea.
- Venue for the Hidden Britain national conference held on 29th November 2006, which attracted 80+ tourism stakeholders, with a keynote address by Tom Wright, CEO of Visit Britain.
- Held a re-enactment day of John Wesley's last sermon, featuring a large cast in traditional costume.
- Reprint of 60,000 copies of the Winchelsea Map & Guide. This was jointly funded by 1066 Marketing, Icklesham Parish Council and Tourism South East.

Seven Wonders of the Weald Tourism Cluster

Achievements 2006/07

- Ongoing press campaign, resulting in local and national coverage.
- Focus on targeting group travel operators.
- Continued networking and sharing best practice, developing stronger bonds between the attractions.
- Launch and promotion of the Seven Wonders Family Pass. Great value for money, enabling local people to explore the attractions on their doorstep, whilst keeping an eye on their carbon footprint and supporting the local economy.

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: Winchelsea Tourism Cluster

Partners

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

Timescale

Initiated 2002, ongoing.



Profile: Seven Wonders Tourism Cluster

Partners

Bedgebury Forest and Pinetum, Lamberhurst Vineyard, Bewl Water, Marle Place Gardens, Scotney Castle and Gardens, Bayham Old Abbey, Finchcocks, High Weald AONB Unit, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

Timescale

Initiated 2004, ongoing.

Developing strategic and practical solutions

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, was subsequently extended into Mid Sussex District and is now being rolled out in Tunbridge Wells District and Ashford Borough. 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, INTERREG IIIB *Lifescape Your Landscape*.

Timescale

Wealden District: start February 2004, completed March 2006.

Mid Sussex District: start October 2005, completed October 2006. Tunbridge Wells Borough: start autumn 2006, to be completed autumn 2007.

Ashford District: start autumn 2006, to be completed autumn 2008. Weald and Downs Ancient Woodland Survey (updating the inventory across West Sussex and the South Downs): start October 2007.

Weald Ancient Woodland Survey

Achievements 2006/07

- Revision of the Ancient Woodland Inventory for Mid Sussex District has been completed. The whole of the District's ancient woodland resource was examined, including woodlands under 2 hectares that had not been previously mapped.
- An additional 865 hectares of woodland in 593 new sites have been added to the Mid Sussex inventory, with an average size of 1.46 hectares per site.
- The District's ancient woodland coverage has increased from 11.5% to 15.8% – an increase of 4.3% of the District's area. This increase is despite a loss of 470 hectares from the original inventory, primarily a result of mapping inaccuracy.
- The Mid Sussex Survey was launched in October 2006 at the Millenium seed bank at Wakehurst Place. Despite the rain, there was a very good turnout.
- The Survey methodology is now being implemented in Tunbridge Wells Borough and Ashford District.
- Tunbridge Wells base mapping and field survey is complete with an expected delivery date of Autumn 2007, alongside a launch.
- Ashford District has had priority mapping done alongside its field survey, with a completion date of Autumn 2008 for the rest of the District.
- The Survey continues to generate a great deal of interest in the region, partly as a consequence of it being cited as 'good practice' in Government Planning Guidance document PPG9.

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.

Developing strategic and practical solutions

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 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the Woodland Trust and the Forestry Commission have jointly funded a project to restore unmanaged plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS). A proactive search to identify owners has been undertaken and creation of a database of currently unmanaged PAWS completed. The resulting database of almost two hundred unmanaged PAWS provides the focus for activity and is the benchmark against which progress is monitored.

In order to encourage gradual restoration of unmanaged plantations to broadleaved woodland, landowners are given specialist advice on PAWS restoration. For each owner, a site visit is arranged and a site-specific woodland information pack produced. To facilitate action, grant applications focusing on addressing threats and improving condition of PAWS are prepared for landowners.

Achievements 2006/07

- Of the 192 identified sites, 43 have been visited.
- Detailed site reports have been produced for 14 properties.
- Woodland Grant Scheme and High Weald AONB funding have been secured to start work on eight properties to restore plantations to broadleaved woodland.
- In October, a training event was organised for thirty woodland owners and contractors to inspect restoration works in practice, discuss approaches to management and raise understanding and awareness of the cultural value of ancient woodlands.

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, INTERREG IIIB *Lifescape Your Landscape*.

Timescale

December 2005 to 31st March 2008.

Rationale

Ancient woodland sites in the AONB cover around 22,000 hectares 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.



Forest workers



The giant felled!

Developing strategic and practical solutions

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

Weald Meadows Initiative, RAMSAK, graziers and landowners of the WGN.

Timescale

Initiated spring 2002, ongoing.

The Weald Grazing Network (WGN)

During 2006/2007, the grazing network database has continued to grow. 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 2006/07

- In total, the database contains 957 ha of grassland, 622 ha of heathland, 143 ha of wetland and 141 ha of wood pasture
- 83 site and 33 grazier records have been maintained on the grazing network database held at the High Weald AONB Unit. The network is still steadily growing.
- 21 sites were grazed by members of the Weald Grazing Network during 2006, amounting to 245 ha.
- In March 2007, all WGN contacts were invited to also have their information on the landowner /FWAG-developed online website www.sheepkeep.org. The purpose of this data transfer was to achieve a higher profile for High Weald grazing. The grazing network is still on call to offer grazing advice and local sites and grazier matches, but it has placed the onus on landowners to keep their information updated with the Sheepkeep modifier.

Rationale

The Weald Grazing Network provides advice on conservation grazing; undertakes site visits where possible and puts site managers who have land of high biodiversity interest that needs grazing in touch with livestock owners.



Developing strategic and practical solutions

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 for the first 9 months of phase 4 of a new funding package, due for completion in March 2009.

Achievements 2006/07*Conserving and enhancing the wildflower grasslands resource*

- 43 owners had an advisor session on management and 40 site visits (providing management advice and a survey) were carried out.
- 24 harvesting operations on 12 unimproved grassland sites resulted in 194 kg of seed and an income to meadow owners of £1,885.
- 11 people contacted the WMI with feedback on their sites and some 24 organisations made contact with queries on seed, site suitability, project set up, seed labelling and grants.
- 1,054 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

- 21 people contacted the WMI for wildflower creation & enhancement advice.
- The un-cleaned weight of all harvested Weald Native Origin Seed (WNOS) was 375kg and the clean out % (once the chaff and unwanted species were removed) was 49% for the seed collected from 9 machine harvested sites. Therefore the final dry clean seed weight was 194kg of WNOS.
- 136kg of dry, cleaned and packaged WNOS was replanted on 20 suitable sites, totalling 40 ha of creation and enhancement. All landowners received technical advice to assist their sowing.
- Purchasers of WNOS included 7 Countryside Stewardship agreements landowners, 1 consultant and 12 private individuals.

Wildflower grasslands project development & research

- Detailed project plans, technical information sheets and site assessment forms were developed after July 2006 – when phase IV commenced.
- The Weald Grazing Network (WGN) survey & information sheets were updated and a contract was finalised with Plumpton College for the share/hire of a Landrover and trailer for use by meadow and stock owners.
- A new WMI Membership scheme was devised and the information was uploaded onto the website.
- 141 landowners in the Heathfield to Battle Ridge area and members of the WGN were mailed about the WMI membership scheme and the availability of a £12,000 grant. The correspondence resulted in 5 enquiries: 3 for fencing and 2 for machinery. The interested parties were sent details of the funding and invited to apply. Due to a very small time frame for delivery, only one application was received and this site was visited by the WMI and assessed by the High Weald Landscape Trust. The application was for a range of small machinery to support species rich grassland management by a farmer & contractor in the Hartfield area. The machinery purchased included a mower/conditioner for cutting the grassland to make hay or silage with a mini baler (round bales) and wrapper. This combination of small machinery (to be used with low impact alpine tractors) will be capable of making

Profile:**Weald Meadows Initiative****Purpose**

To ensure the long term survival of the irreplaceable species rich grassland of the Heathfield to Battle Ridge and the Weald in general and secure their productive and economic use.

Funding partners

Supported by the High Weald Landscape Trust, the Tubney Charitable Trust, INTERREG IIIB Lifescape Your Landscape, Natural England, the Environment Agency and East Sussex County Council.

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

First initiated 1996, Phase IV ongoing.

Devils-bit Scabious

Initiatives

Developing strategic and practical solutions



Grasshopper

traditional hay or be used to cut and remove rough grassland within the surrounding area (Hartfield, E. Sussex). The forage will then be fed to the farmer's Sussex cattle. Access to this type of machinery should increase the grassland management capabilities in this area, particularly for the under-served SNCIs.

- Developed the WMI Geographical Information Systems (GIS) systems to produce detailed site maps.
- WMI contracts were prepared for surveying unimproved grassland from the grassland database meadows to verify boundaries and gain an indication of the National Vegetation Classification of approximately 130 meadows (throughout summer 2007) accessible from public rights of way. This work will herald the next phase of the WMI, enabling Officers to target pro-active advice at meadows in need of restoration or assistance.

Furthering public understanding and enjoyment

- 942 copies of Matrix (High Weald Land Management Newsletter) were sent to land owners and advisors in March.
- 1,243 copies of the Wildflower Grasslands in The Weald leaflet were distributed at events and in response to information requests received by the Meadows Officer.
- 5,000 hits were received on the Meadows pages of www.highweald.org
- 55 meadow hay slabs (wedges) were sold for pet feed and bedding to raise awareness of the nutrient value of species rich grassland hay.
- Meadows filming continued 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.
- 6 Public and Landowner events involving over 485 people and, at schools, over 758 children.

Weald Wildflower Hay for pets



Rationale

As they are man made habitats, wildflower grasslands require ongoing traditional management (hay cutting and grazing) to maintain their rare flora and fauna. Much of the WMI work in 2006/07 has concentrated on promoting meadow products that help support ongoing management, such as 'Weald Wildflower Hay'.

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

Research

The Unit's research programme has been progressing steadily with a number of new areas of research, including Historic Farmsteads and Ancient Field Boundaries, all of which contribute to a greater understanding of the High Weald landscape. Research outputs from the Weald Heathland Initiative and Weald Ancient Woodland programmes have also provided further research data that feeds into the Unit's Geographical Information System (GIS), which can now map two thirds of the components of Natural Beauty identified by the Management Plan. Future research will focus on the remaining elements – notably routeways and sandrock.

Historic Farmstead Research

GIS analysis by English Heritage, using historic mapping, has produced a database of historic farmsteads in the High Weald – categorised by the farmstead plan type:

- dispersed,
- linear,
- parallel,
- row,
- L Plan,
- loose courtyard,
- regular courtyard.

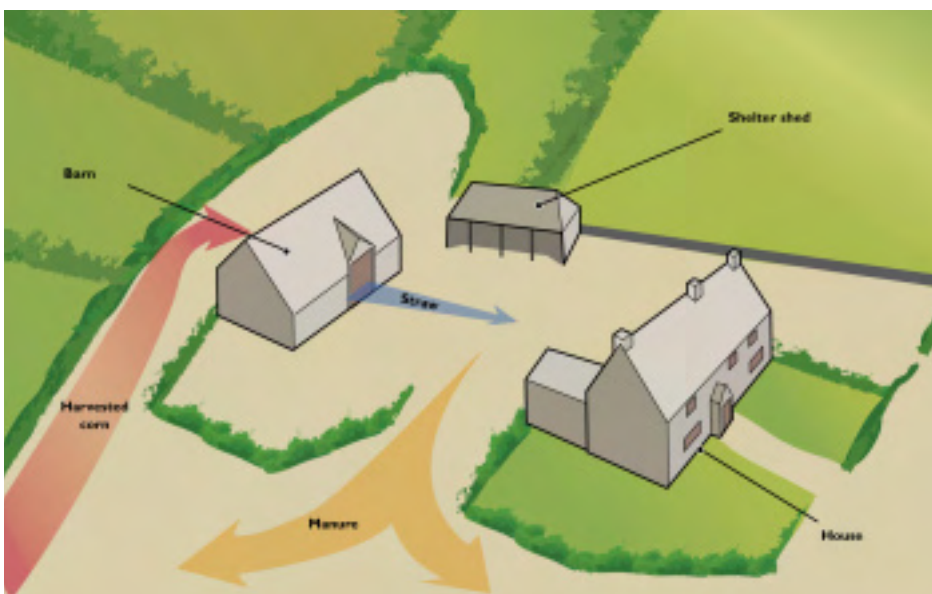
This data underpins the Settlement section of the Management Plan and provides further evidence regarding the dispersed settlement pattern. English Heritage hope to identify the options for the re-use and adaptation of historic buildings and to identify the most sensitive and important surviving examples of historic farm buildings. Work is ongoing to develop advice and guidance on the reuse of the stock of historic farm buildings, which will inform local Councils and the planning process.



Farmstead near Cranbrook



Wealden cattle shed



Typical loose courtyard layout

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



Farmstead near Benenden

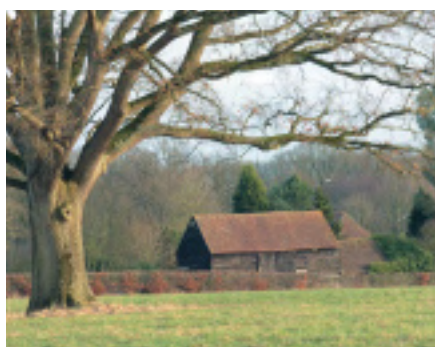
Historic Farmsteads Seminar:

Towards Sustainable rural settlements in the High Weald AONB

Historic farmsteads and their sustainability role in the High Weald landscape was examined in detail at a major seminar on the 12th March. Held at Finchcocks, the event was hosted by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and included a wide audience drawn from across the High Weald and regional and national bodies. The event aimed to look at the role farmsteads play in the landscape and at their future place and purpose – and ultimately how they can be reused and secured for the future.

Speakers included Jeremy Lake from English Heritage, talking particularly about the context of these buildings as a group set within a landscape and how the local character influences our approach to adapt and reuse the buildings. Trevor Cherrett from the Commission for Rural Communities spoke about the sustainable living quality of farmsteads and the role they can play in building and sustaining local communities.

Farmsteads are a key feature of the High Weald and the sympathetic reuse of them can contribute significantly to the enhancement of the AONB – enabling councils, landowners and developers to respect and enhance the landscape. The seminar concluded that farmsteads are a major resource in this landscape that have not been fully understood until now – and which can contribute to the building and securing of sustainable rural communities.



Farm buildings near Slaugham

New historic field boundary dataset

Work to identify surviving historic field boundaries (at least 200 years old) from archive mapping has been completed. By comparing electronic historic map data with current digital mapping, existing field boundaries that form part of the historic pattern of High Weald fields have been identified and mapped. Early analysis indicates that approximately 40% of the boundaries have survived – 16,000 in total! The data supports the Field and Heath section of the Management Plan and contributes to our understanding of the structure of the High Weald landscape. The data will be made available to planning departments to be used in assessing planning applications against High Weald AONB Management Plan objectives for Natural Beauty.

Fields in the Dudwell Valley



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

Policy

The Unit has put in a bid to the EDF Energy Electricity Cabling scheme to underground over 44 spans (about 5 km) of 11Kv power cables at Brightling Down near Robertsbridge. The scheme involves 7 landowners and 3 farms and has the support of Brightling Parish Council. The proposal to the Steering Group has been approved, with work due to start in the summer of 2007. The bid is for over £450,000 of work, delivering positive improvements to the High Weald landscape at one of its highest and most exposed locations.

Public consultation on a range of local development framework (LDF) documents has increased recently, with Kent and West Sussex running consultations on their respective Minerals and Waste Development Framework documents and District Councils releasing LDF reports in increasing numbers. In particular Wealden, Horsham and Mid Sussex councils have consultations running. The Unit has responded to these consultations accordingly.

Mid Sussex has also released the Public Consultation on the East Grinstead Area Action Plan, where road proposals may affect the AONB. Tunbridge Wells has been progressing plans for the location of a new school at Benenden as an LDF document. The South East Plan has also been under public scrutiny and the South East AONB Planning Officers' Group submitted additional comments on the Plan and attended several sessions of the examination in public. The Environment Agency has been consulting on the Rother and Romney Catchment Flood Management Plan, looking at options for flood management.



Power cables at Brightling

Rationale

The Unit's research programme is a vital element of the work that underpins the High Weald AONB Management Plan. The Plan identifies 5 principle components of Natural Beauty and the research role seeks to define, map and build our understanding of the components and how they influence and contribute to the landscape. The policy role then uses that knowledge and understanding to inform and influence decision makers in all sectors that affect the AONB, and by doing so hopes to direct their actions and decisions in the best interests of conserving and enhancing the AONB.

The River Rother in flood



Securing financial support to deliver the High Weald AONB business strategy



One of 5 HLF Bid Reports

Securing funds

A core function of the AONB Unit is to access funds for management plan implementation. Compiling a £3.3 million bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund under its Landscape Partnership Scheme was the focus of the Unit's bidding activity in 06/07. However, a number of smaller bids to enable the extension and roll-out of existing projects were also compiled, with significant success. Following the launch of the Wealden and Mid Sussex Ancient Woodland Inventories, Tunbridge Wells and Ashford Borough Council pledged funds to allow the project to be extended into their areas. Recognition of the value of the Unit's Digital Media project resulted in Natural England pledging additional funds to enable aerial photography with a focus on farmsteads to be undertaken – building on material collected earlier in the year. A sum of £80,000 was secured to allow the Sustainable Development Fund to operate for a second year. Seven of the Unit's projects continued to be supported by the INTERREG IIIB funded Lifescape Your Landscape programme.

High Weald Lifescape – Your Landscape Programme

The profile of the project is detailed under **Partnerships**.

Achievements – securing new funding 2006/07

In addition to the funds already secured for the life of this project, an additional 100% funding was secured through the Lifescape – Your Landscape programme for a school exchange between children from Dohem school in the du Parc naturel regional des Caps et Marais d'Opale and children from Dallington CEP School. During the day children took part in a variety of activities designed for them to explore the similarities and differences between their landscapes and cultures. They enjoyed a game of stool-ball and a local produce picnic. They also exchanged apple trees which were planted in each school's gardens.



Dohem – Dallington School Exchange

SDF-funded Horsmonden Farmers' Market



Securing financial support to deliver the High Weald AONB business strategy

Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme

The High Weald AONB Unit, on behalf of 28 partners, submitted the Stage 1 application (3 copies of 7 reports) to the Heritage Lottery Fund on 29 September 2006. This bid is the culmination of 18 months' work by the Unit and its partner organisations. If successful, the bid will secure £2million of HLF funding towards the delivery of a £3.2million scheme that will conserve the Weald Forest Ridge landscape.

(On 24 April 2007, HLF announced that this bid was successful and £2million has been earmarked to develop and deliver the scheme.)

Achievements 2006/07

- 50 project activities developed to safeguard the Weald Forest Ridge's Natural Beauty, in line with High Weald Management Plan objectives.
- 5 plans produced for the Weald Forest Ridge: Landscape Character Study; Access & Audience Development Plan; Location Plan; Training Plan and Landscape Strategy.
- Stage 1 application completed and submitted by the 1 October 2006 deadline.
- Website pages compiled on the Weald Forest Ridge and uploaded onto the High Weald AONB's website, along with pdf versions of the Stage 1 reports.
- A successful visit by HLF Trustees to the Weald Forest Ridge, which resulted in the SE HLF Trustees approving the Stage 1 application.

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 would secure £2 million in additional resources to conserve the Forest Ridge, a sandstone ridge that runs east-west between Horsham and Tonbridge and covers a large part of the High Weald AONB.

The Weald Forest Ridge is a special part of the High Weald AONB because of its four 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.



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 £2million in funding for the High Weald AONB to protect the Weald Forest Ridge's unique heritage and safeguard its natural beauty.

Partners

There are 28 partners – Ashdown Forest Tourism Association, BTCV, Conservators of Ashdown Forest, Defra, East Sussex County Council, English Heritage, ESUS Forestry & Woodlands Ltd, FWAG, Forestry Commission, Forest Enterprise, Gatwick Greenspace Partnership, Highbrook Village Hall Committee, High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee, Horsham District Council, Kent High Weald Project, Mid Sussex District Council, Natural England, Plumpton College, RSPB, Same Sky, Sussex Gardens Trust, Sussex Wildlife Trust, The South, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Weald & Downland Open Air Museum, Wealden District Council, West Sussex County Council, William Robinson Charitable Trust.

Timescale

Jan 2005 – Jan 2017.
Stage 1 submission October 2006. Stage 2 submission planned for May 2008.

Securing financial support to deliver the High Weald AONB business strategy

Profile: **Sustainable Development Fund**

Purpose

The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) grants are used to bring social, environmental and economic benefits to protected areas, by funding projects that develop and test new methods of achieving a more sustainable way of life in AONBs.

Partners

SDF is a national grant scheme awarded by Natural England, a government body responsible for the natural environment, on behalf of Defra (Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs).

In the High Weald, SDF is administered by the High Weald AONB Unit on behalf of the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC). The SDF panel is made up of the JAC Chair, JAC Vice Chair and 2 other JAC members, the AONB Director, Unit Project Development Officer and 3 community/friends of the High Weald representatives.

Timescale

Annual grant awarded from 1 April 2006 – 31 March 2007.

The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)

In 2006, the High Weald AONB JAC secured £80,000 to operate the High Weald SDF for a second year. The High Weald SDF is a grant scheme to support innovative projects that benefit the High Weald landscape. All sorts of projects are eligible for funding. The common thread is that they must demonstrate 'sustainability'. This means that projects need to benefit the environment and communities and the local economy all at the same time.

During the year, the High Weald SDF supported a wide range of projects: from advising landowners, supporting local producers and working with schools, to safeguarding historical features and helping people appreciate the High Weald.

Over the last two years, the High Weald SDF has helped to turn great project ideas into reality, by providing grants totalling over £170,000 to 57 organisations and individuals in the High Weald. These projects have in turn delivered over £3/4million of benefits to the High Weald landscape.

Achievements 2006/07

- Increased SDF Panel representation by recruiting 3 Friends of High Weald.
- Created High Weald SDF pages on the High Weald website together with downloadable forms and worked examples to help applicants.
- Awarded grants worth £72,000 to 30 projects (but only 27 projects were completed).
- 76 SDF funding enquiries received by the High Weald AONB Unit.
- 42 SDF applications submitted, requesting SDF support valued at £158,933.
- 23 training days delivered via SDF-supported projects to help people sustainably manage the High Weald's woods.
- 11 new groups/partnerships were formed through SDF.
- 221 people supported through SDF funding.
- 34 community/voluntary groups were funded.
- 24 schools/colleges received SDF funding.
- 104 local businesses were directly involved with or benefited from SDF projects – and a further 55 local suppliers provided goods and services to SDF funded projects.
- 2 press releases issued publicizing SDF.
- During 2006/07 SDF funded projects delivered over £300,000 of benefits to the High Weald AONB.

SDF-funded timber processing machinery



Securing financial support to deliver the High Weald AONB business strategy

Organisation	Project Name	Project Description	SDF Grant Award
Horsmonden Farmers' Market	Horsmonden Farmers' Market	To set up and manage a new fortnightly Farmers' Market in Horsmonden.	£3,950
Action in Rural Sussex	Photography & Produce Pilot	To produce marketing material for local High Weald producers.	£3,000
Trainingline UK Ltd	Coppice Worker Training	To provide tailored, formal training for coppice workers.	£4,856
Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group	Advice To Smallholders	To advise landowners below 50 acres on the importance of the High Weald landscape, best farm practice, habitat management and species conservation.	£6,365
Kent High Weald Project	Carbon Footprints	To work with 2 secondary schools and 4 primary schools to raise awareness of their carbon footprints.	£3,912
Mr Strang, Little Scotney Farm	Organic Hop Garden Conversion	To restore 2 hop gardens at one of the last traditional working hop gardens in the High Weald for organic hop growing.	£7,500
Mr Brown	Restoration Of A Medieval Hedgerow	To restore a 100m section of medieval ditch and bank hedgerow.	£918
High Weald AONB Unit	Digital Media Resources	To produce 'My High Weald' educational DVDs for use in primary schools throughout the AONB.	£1,965.50
SE Wood Fuels Ltd	Wood Fuel Development Project	To train 30 local foresters and other potential wood suppliers in the production of quality wood fuel.	£1,853.75
High Weald Landscape Trust	High Weald Heroes – Schools Award	To launch a new annual competition for High Weald schools to actively engage them in conserving the High Weald landscape.	£1,787.80
Mr Podmore	Hoth Wood: PAWS Restoration	To restore parts of this ancient woodland site by felling 3 areas of conifers and replanting broadleaved native woodland.	£1,234
Ashdown Forest Tourism Association	Sustainable Marketing Strategy	To produce a 3 year sustainable marketing strategy and annual action plan for Ashdown Forest.	£2,644
Sir Freddie Sowrey	Quarry Wood: PAWS Restoration	To restore an ancient woodland site by felling conifers and cherry laurel in a woodland gill – a distinctive feature of the High Weald AONB.	£1,750
Kent High Weald Project	Strawberry Wood Culvert	To research and advise on the restoration of a large stone culvert, designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.	£3,100
Kent High Weald Project	Crane Valley Community Day	To involve the Cranbrook community in their local nature reserve through this fun and informative day.	£802.50

continued

Securing financial support to deliver the High Weald AONB business strategy

Organisation	Project Name	Project Description	SDF Grant Award
Plumpton College	The Living Classroom	To fund the rainwater harvesting and a pipeline feeder from the wood burner – elements of this large project.	£4,790
Bellhurst Nature Conservation Trust	Welcome Signs	To fund welcome signs made from local timber, which give a brief welcoming statement to visitors using the Trust's woods.	£5,000
Tunbridge Wells Museum	Centrepiece Art Work	To part fund a local artist to create artwork using natural materials as part of the museum's major exhibition on the High Weald's landscape heritage.	£950
Ring of Agricultural Machinery in Sussex & Kent	RAMSAK Grazing Project	To undertake visits and talks and provide advice to High Weald landowners and link them with suitable graziers.	£5,150
Mr Daniel	Wood Processing Machinery	To support the productive management of High Weald woods for people and wildlife by contributing towards machinery that will produce locally sourced timber goods, e.g. fence posts and logs.	£1,500
Mr Reeve	Church Wood: PAWS Restoration	To restore an ancient woodland site by felling conifers and restore light to the woodland, which is essential for many woodland plants, e.g. bluebells.	£750
Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group	Horsewise	To give horse owners an introduction to the important landscape features of the High Weald AONB and what action they can take to conserve them.	£570.63
Kent High Weald Project	Landscape Enhancement Grants	To contribute to a wider grant pot providing funds to restore the distinctive landscape features of the High Weald AONB.	£650
Great Gardens of the Sussex Weald	Plantsmans' Paradise	To support a partnership between 5 High Weald gardens to promote their common evolution and links with the AONB as a sustainable tourism product.	£1,500
Brenchley & Matfield School PTA	Bringing The Classroom Outside	To fund gardening equipment that will help the school develop and maintain their outside spaces for use as an educational resource.	£588
Conservators of Ashdown Forest	Visitor Surveys & Interpretation	To record visitor numbers at Broadstone car park and part fund the installation of audio-visual equipment for use in the visitor centre.	£2,030.25
Annette Haus	Portable Wood Chipper	To enable High Weald woods to be managed, by converting wood into woodchip for use in mulching gardens or as a fuel in woodburners.	£2,000

Securing financial support to deliver the High Weald AONB business strategy

AONB Unit Staff Resource

During the year, approximately a fifth of the Unit's staff resource moved on, with three staff moving from one project to another.

Caroline Fitzgerald, Heathland Officer, left following the project's end in May 2006. Her departure was followed by that of Sally Westaway, the Unit's GIS and Habitat Mapping Officer, in August and Simon Turk, who had been assisting with data entry and GIS mapping tasks on a temporary basis, in November. Matt Pitts, having worked on the Ashdown Interpretation Project for a year, moved to the Weald Meadows Initiative in November as the project's Development Officer – with Janet Whitman stepping into his shoes, following completion of work on the planning phase of the Landscape Partnership Scheme. Matt Grosse's contract was extended, in part to take on the work that would have been delivered by the Unit's GIS and Habitat Mapping Officer. Gerry Sherwin, AONB Business Manager, went from working 5 days a week to 3 days in May and Samantha Nicholas joined the team as a Team Support Officer (30 hours per week) in November.



Team Visit to Philpott's Stone Quarry

Staff

For the year April 2006 - March 2007

Core

Director (job share) – Sally Marsh (0.6 FTE)/ Jason Lavender (0.6FTE)
Business Manager – Gerry Sherwin (0.6 FTE from May 2006)
Interpretation Officer – Janina Holubecki
GIS and Habitat Mapping Officer – Sally Westaway (0.4 FTE until August 2006)
Administrator (job share) – Kerry Baldwin (0.5 FTE)/John Hill (0.5 FTE)
Policy and Research Officer – Andrew Shaw
Team Support Officer – Samantha Nicholas (0.8 FTE from November 2006)

Project

Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites Officer – Mike Chapman
Weald Meadows Officer, Weald Meadows Initiative – Dawn Brickwood
Development Officer, Weald Meadows Initiative – Matt Pitts (from November 2006)
GIS and Habitat Mapping Officer, Wealden Ancient Woodlands Project – Sally Westaway (0.6 FTE, until August 2006)
Project Officer, INTERREG and Education – Gemma Swallow
Project Development Officer – Janet Whitman (until October 2006)
GIS Access and Habitat Mapping Officer – Matt Grose (FTE April-January, 0.8FTE from February 2007)
GIS Access and Habitat Mapping Officer – Simon Turk (until November 2006)
Ashdown Forest Interpretation Officer – Matt Pitts (until November 2006)
Ashdown Forest Interpretation Officer – Janet Whitman (from November 2006)
Weald Heathland Officer, Weald Heathland Initiative – Caroline FitzGerald (until May 2006)

Team Visit to Hastings Country Park



Financial summary

1st April 2006 to 31st March 2007

Core activity

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

Spend	
Staff costs	199,400
Accommodation/Office Equipment	43,500
<i>Additional ESCC accommodation costs</i>	12,400
Communication costs	36,900
Partnership costs	10,100
East Sussex County Council support costs	25,200
Partnership Enabling Fund	4,500
Total	332,000

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 (** £300) contribution to the Partnership Enabling Funding 2006-2007.

In addition to core expenditure of £332,000 a further £522,000 was spent on project activity.

All of the Partnership Enabling Fund was committed to projects development but only £4500 (as indicated on the next page) was spent in 2006/07. The remaining sum was carried forward as income in advance to draw down grant aid in 07/08 and beyond.

Funded by	
Natural England	236,300
East Sussex County Council*	22,700
<i>Additional ESCC contribution for accommodation</i>	12,400
Kent County Council*	14,500
West Sussex County Council*	11,000
Surrey County Council	2,600
Wealden District Council*	8,700
Rother District Council*	8,500
Mid Sussex District Council*	6,900
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	6,100
Horsham District Council	4,200
Sevenoaks District Council*	5,300
Ashford Borough Council *	2,800
Hastings Borough Council**	1,700
Tandridge Borough Council	2,000
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council**	600
Other	17,500
Partnership Enabling Fund carry forward	(12,100)
Total	351,700
<i>(Surplus)</i>	(19,700)
<i>(Surplus brought forward)</i>	(26,000)
Total JAC reserve (surplus) at 31 March 2007	(45,700)

1st April 2006 to 31st March 2007

Project activity

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

Financial Statement 2006/07

	Spend £000	Funded by £000
Self Funding Projects		
	1000	1000

Sustainable Development Fund		
JAC spend	77.7	
Partner spend	84.2	
Total spend	161.9	
Natural England /DEFRA (formerly Countryside Agency)		-73.2
JAC Partnership Enabling Fund 06/07		-4.5
Local Partnership		-84.2
Total funding		-161.9

LIFESCAPES – PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING AND ENJOYMENT

Ashdown Interpretation Project		
JAC spend	49.7	
Total spend	49.7	
INTERREG		-22.2
Local Authority Partners		-10.3
JAC Partnership Enabling Fund		-8.7
Other (primarily Ashdown Forest Conservators)		-8.5
Total funding		-49.7

High Weald Interpretation Programme including KHWP activity		
JAC spend	85.8	
Total spend	85.8	
INTERREG		-34.3
Natural England (formerly Countryside Agency)		-26.1
JAC Partnership Enabling Fund		-20.0
Local Authority Partners		-5.4
Total funding		-85.8

Weald Forest Ridge Partnership Scheme Development (INTERREG funded)		
JAC spend	9.2	
Total spend	9.2	
INTERREG		-5.2
JAC Partnership Enabling Fund		-4.0
Total funding		-9.2

Financial summary

1st April 2006 to 31st March 2007

Spend
£000

Funded by
£000

LIFESCAPES – CONSERVING AND ENHANCING

Plantation on Ancient Woodlands (PAWS)		
JAC spend	37.7	
Total spend	37.7	
INTERREG		-14.9
Natural England (formerly Countryside Agency)		-4.8
Forestry Commission		-0.3
Other (primarily Woodland Trust)		-17.7
Total funding		-37.7

Historic Farmsteads		
JAC spend	35.3	
Total spend	35.3	
INTERREG		-13.7
Natural England (formerly Countryside Agency)		-3.9
Local Authority Partners		-10.0
Other		-7.7
Total funding		-35.3

Weald Ancient Woodland Project		
JAC spend	20.4	
Total spend	20.4	
INTERREG		-7.7
Natural England (formerly Countryside Agency)		-6.3
Forestry Commission		-6.4
Total funding		-20.4

Weald Meadows Initiative IV		
JAC spend	53.8	
Partner spend	6.0	
Total spend	59.8	
INTERREG		-22.6
Natural England (formerly Countryside Agency)		-3.6
JAC Partnership Enabling Fund		-4.1
Tubney Trust		-20.0
Local Partnership		-6.0
Other		-3.5
Total funding		-59.8

NON LIFESCAPES

Weald Heathland Initiative		
JAC spend	24.0	
Total spend	24.0	
Heritage Lottery Fund		-24.0
Total funding		-24.0

1st April 2006 to 31st March 2007

Spend
£000

Funded by
£000

Weald Forest Ridge Partnership Scheme Development		
JAC spend	18.1	
Total spend	18.1	
JAC Partnership Enabling Fund		-4.9
Heritage Lottery Fund		-13.2
Total funding		-18.1

South East AONB Forest Programme		
JAC spend	5.6	
Total spend	5.6	
Other		-5.6
Total funding		-5.6

South East AONB Regional Co-ordinator		
JAC spend	3.6	
Total spend	3.6	
JAC Partnership Enabling Fund		-3.6
Total funding		-3.6

Weald Meadows Initiative III		
JAC spend	15.4	
Total spend	15.4	
Other		-15.4
Total funding		-15.4

SDF funds allocated to Unit projects	-0.0	0.0
Spend/contributions from Partnership Project Enabling Fund 06-07 Used	-4.5	+4.5

TOTAL	522.0	-522.0
--------------	--------------	---------------

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 (until autumn 2006)

Recreation/Leisure

Mr A Betts
Forestry Commission

Community/Economy

Mr J Leggett
Action in Rural Sussex

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
(until September 2006);
Michaela Frost

AONB Management Board

Councillor Mrs S Tidy
Councillor B Kentfield
Councillor B Acraman
Councillor J Davison
Councillor Mrs E Kitchen
Countryside Agency/Natural England Representatives
AONB Director

High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Membership of the Joint Advisory Committee and Steering Group Officers
For the year April 2006 – March 2007

Chair – Councillor Mrs S Tidy

Vice-chair – Councillor B Acraman (until Nov 2006) **Councillor B Kentfield**

OSG Chair – David Phillips

Countryside Agency (until October 2006)

Adam Wallace

Nicola Davies

Natural England (from October 2006)

James Seymour

Joanne Spickett

East Sussex County Council

Councillor R. Tidy

Simon Hickmott

West Sussex County Council

Councillor B Acraman

Jackie Lewis

Kent County Council

Councillor Mrs P Stockell

Judith Feline

Surrey County Council

Councillor K Rimington

Mike Dawson

Wealden District Council

Councillor Mrs S Tidy

David Phillips

Rother District Council

Councillor B. Kentfield

Frank Rallings

Hastings Borough Council

Councillor M Lock

Tim Cookson; Murray Davidson

Mid Sussex District Council

Councillor C Hersey

Ian Burton; Ms Alma Howell

Horsham District Council

Councillor Mrs E Kitchen

Catherine Howe

Crawley Borough Council

Councillor Mrs C Denman

No OSG representative

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Councillor E Thomas

Gill Harris

Sevenoaks District Council

Councillor Ms J Davison

Caroline Lingham

Ashford Borough Council

Councillor R Taylor

Daniel Carter

Tonbridge & Malling District Council

No member representative

Phil Linskey

Tandridge District Council

Councillor M Sydney

Paul Newdick

JAC terms of reference

- a) To co-ordinate and assist the work of the Constituent Bodies in the implementation of the AONB management plan, and in particular, to develop practical measures to:
 - conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB;
 - promote understanding of the unique identity of the AONB recognising and respecting locally distinctive landscape character and habitats in the implementation of planning and management policies;
 - encourage, where appropriate, quiet enjoyment of the AONB;
 - enable sustainable development which supports the economies and social well-being of the area and its communities provided that it does not conflict with the aim of conserving and enhancing natural beauty, which includes biodiversity, landscape quality and cultural heritage
- b) To promote the objectives of the designation of the AONB and to act as a forum for the discussion of major issues affecting the character of the AONB.
- c) To seek to secure sufficient funding to meet its overall aims and objectives for effective management of the AONB, and to manage its own devolved budget.
- d) To encourage the Constituent Bodies and other organisations to adopt complementary policies which help achieve the Constituent Bodies AONB policies as set out in the adopted AONB management plan.
- e) Promote awareness and support for the AONB both locally and nationally.
- f) To advise and inform relevant bodies of the activities of the JAC in order to raise the profile of the AONB locally and to support national efforts to enhance the profile of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- g) To provide a source of expertise and information on the AONB, its conservation and enhancement.

Adopted by the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee on 13 July 2005.

High Weald AONB Unit

Advising on the management of a nationally valued landscape



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.

Contact

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

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